Connected
Citizens

THE POWER, PERIL AND POTENTIAL OF NETWORKS

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#netcitizens
www.connectedcitizens.net

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![Knight Foundation logo] **Knight Foundation**
Informed and Engaged Communities.

Ten years ago, a tiny web site asked people to volunteer to write their own encyclopedia. Today, Wikipedia is the most widely used reference work in the world. Rapid advances in digital media and technology are changing how we connect to information and each other. The way we engage in public dialogue, coordinate, solve problems—all of it is shifting. New networks are emerging everywhere. It's exciting—and frightening. What is this new network-centric world? What does it mean for community change?

These questions matter to us because our work at Knight Foundation hopes to create informed, engaged communities. We see digital technology changing our relationship to news and information from that of passive consumer to active participant. We see new civic attitudes and competencies, with individuals less eager to defer to traditional institutions. As we work at the intersection of media innovation and civic engagement, we see the trends of increasing interdependence, decentralization and transparency. How might our grantmaking respond effectively to a world in which loose networks of individuals, not just formal organizations, are becoming powerful creators of knowledge and action? What default practices should we discard and what new behaviors should we embrace?

We asked our partner, Monitor Institute, to take a critical look at the role of networks in community life. Our lens was apolitical. We were not looking for prescriptions for how citizens and government should interact. Rather, we were interested in the potential of networks—to create stronger bonds or to split us apart. This essay highlights groups that are creatively connecting citizens who are making a difference today, and explores how technology might impact public participation and leadership in the future. The pages are rich with useful examples and lessons about how networks are unlocking assets in communities to support open government, care for the elderly, help disaster victims and advance women's rights. Throughout, the report considers the role philanthropy can play in harnessing the best network-centric practices, the ones that might unleash individual interactivity to achieve social impact at a scale and speed never before possible.

We have derived much value from this work and hope that it also has meaning for you. We believe there are considerable insights here that will be of interest to those involved in community change—grantmakers, nonprofits, journalists, activists and individuals. Though some of the examples may soon seem quaint, given the rapid pace of change, it's our hope that the provocative ideas will have staying power—and spark a conversation about how we can strengthen communities by better understanding and strategically supporting networks.

METHODOLOGY

A massive body of knowledge about networks exists—about network and complexity science, about using social media to catalyze networks, and about network effects across sectors and in our everyday lives. This report does not attempt to recreate or summarize that foundation. Rather, it builds on that body of knowledge in order to better understand what's working today, look to the future and recommend steps for supporting a networked citizenry in achieving its potential for good.

In order to accomplish this, Monitor Institute interviewed thought leaders, on-the-ground activists pioneering network-centric practices, and grantmakers committed to effective support of networks (see page 48 for a complete list of interviewees). We also developed scenarios by crowdsourcing input through an open survey and engaging Knight staff in framing stories of the future.

OVERVIEW

Introduction: How Will the Network Age Affect Communities?

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected. How can we ignite the good and mitigate the bad that can come from an increasingly interconnected citizenry?

Seeds of the Future: Connected Citizens Today

Rich and diverse citizen-centered experiments are under way. Looking across them, we find an emerging set of network-centric practices that are making a difference today and hold promise for citizen engagement and community information in the future:

- Listening to and Consulting the Crowds
- Designing for Serendipity
- Bridging Differences
- Catalyzing Mutual Support
- Providing Handrails for Collective Action

Glimpses of 2015: Connected Citizens Tomorrow

How will citizens be connecting and creating community in the coming years? There are some factors we can count on and many questions about what's next that can only be answered with time. We combine these premises for the future and open questions to create three sketches of what the world might look like in 2015 and then explore what these future possibilities could mean for social change and philanthropy.

How Philanthropy Can Make a Difference

Grantmakers can be the spark that ignites the potential of networks for good. We offer recommendations for how funders can take action to tap that potential by:

- Embracing a Network-Centric Mind-set
- Providing Network-Centric Supports
- Contributing to Learning

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

While we hope you have the time and inclination to read this essay from start to finish, we recognize that different readers will be attracted to different sections. We've organized it to allow readers to jump from one section to another in the order that interests you.

If you'd like to dig deeper, we encourage you to read the expanded online edition of the paper available at www.connectedcitizens.net. It includes additional stories of networks in action and data about future trends that our research uncovered, along with space to share experiences and insights of your own. We hope the stories in this report and your contributions will begin to build a library of stories about networks for good.

Introduction
How Will the Network Age Affect Communities?

Over the past few decades the world has become far more inter-dependent: People, things, money, information and ideas rapidly move across boundaries of all sorts.

It's also an increasingly decentralized world, in which the actions of strangers can affect our lives as though they were friends. Activists can assemble large groups of like-minded volunteers in minutes. Donors can find and support grassroots efforts on the other side of the globe with ease. And we're experiencing unprecedented levels of transparency, as we share more and more information about our actions, our preferences and ourselves, knowingly and not. What's less clear at this point is whether this interconnectedness, decentralization and transparency is—and will be—good or bad for the health of communities.

On one hand, misinformation can spread instantly; empowered individuals can wreak havoc in ways never before imagined; and, strongmen can use open access to information to their advantage. In late 2010, rumors that President Obama's upcoming visit to Mumbai would cost $200 million per day spread virally—even after being debunked by government officials. Loose groups of Internet vigilantes called (and acting) "Anonymous" shut down the Visa and MasterCard websites for hours in retaliation for the companies' refusal to process payment to WikiLeaks.[1] The open flow of communications among protesters on platforms like Facebook and Twitter can be co-opted by authoritarian governments, as we saw in the case of Iran, to repress uprising.[2]

On the other hand, the increasing connectivity creates new possibilities for positive and widespread social change. When Silicon Valley entrepreneur Sameer Bhatia discovered he had a rare form of leukemia, his friends organized an online campaign to register 24,611 new bone marrow donors in search of a match—24 times the number

of donors that patients are usually able to muster.[3] The Ocean Conservancy's annual Coastal Cleanup has become one of the largest volunteer events in the world, growing from a single site in Texas to a global coordinated effort that mobilizes nearly half a million people in 45 states and 108 foreign countries to remove 7.4 million pounds of trash from beaches and waterways.[4] Even with the total Internet blackout during the protests against the Mubarak regime in Egypt, protesters were able to make their voices heard by making a phone call and recording a message that was then tweeted for all to see.[5]

As Bill Clinton said, "[Interdependence] could be good, bad or both, and today it's both. My simple premise is that the mission of the 21st century is to build up the positive and reduce the negative forces of interdependence."[6]

For grantmakers, the question is not whether we live in a networked world. We do. The question is how to ignite the good that can come from a networked citizenry and mitigate the bad, for there's ample evidence that the complex social problems of the 21st century can be addressed only through networked solutions that bring together the input and action of *many* citizens.

In the future, we can be sure that people will be more connected and better able to rapidly share information of all kinds as technology advances. The potential for civic engagement and individual empowerment will only increase, as our interdependence changes how we approach everything from service delivery to daily communications to leadership. Yet there are downsides to this interdependence as well. Network connections can be used to hoard power rather than distribute it. Living in dense and information-rich webs presents real dangers of narrowing rather than broadening our worldviews because we're forced to filter in order to manage the overwhelming amounts of information.

Therefore, the future of connected citizens is highly uncertain. What will be the quality of the new citizen engagement? Will our public conversations be more polarized and fragmented, as people choose to connect with others who are like-minded? Or will we see more bridging of differences? With growing digital connectivity increasing the possibilities for borderless communities, will citizens have stronger or weaker ties to their neighbors? Finally, how widespread will the skills be for artfully using the tools to channel this wealth of connectivity toward social change?

In the face of such uncertainty, philanthropy is in a unique position to influence this future and invest in creating the conditions for positive citizen engagement.[7]

This essay examines how funders can help individuals make a positive difference in their communities and the world amid increasing levels of interdependence, decentralization and transparency. We start by looking at leading-edge practices for promoting community engagement and quality information in this networked context. Next, having examined these seeds of the future, we take a longer view and explore what the world might look like for connected citizens as soon as 2015. We paint three future

scenarios and consider in each the implications for those who want to support strong communities and a healthy democracy. In the final section, we return to the present and offer pragmatic near-term recommendations for grantmakers who want to channel their resources and leadership toward harnessing the power of networks for civic engagement.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY NETWORKS AND NETWORK-CENTRIC?

The word "network" means many different things. Our working definitions are:

NETWORK, NOUN: A group of people who are connected through relationships. In this essay, we are focusing on loose networks of individuals that are coproducing information, knowledge and action; integrating online and offline strategies; and, bridging differences across communities. We are looking at both networks that are place-based and those that cut across geographies.

NETWORK-CENTRIC,[8] **ADJECTIVE:** A way of organizing that is transparent, open and decentralized. In previous writing, this is what we have called "working wikily."[9]

NETWORK-CENTRIC PRACTICE, NOUN: Tools and strategies for strengthening, creating or leveraging network connections.

The question often comes up: Do networks have a purpose? Our answer is no: they're simply the relationships we're embedded in. As such, networks themselves don't express political perspectives—conservative, liberal or moderate. But activists can spread ideas and ideologies through network structures and grow groups of people who share a political bent. And strengthening network ties within a group can be a powerful means of aligning and mobilizing action around shared social goals.

Seeds of
the Future
Connected Citizens Today

"The way you explore this space is the way life happens. There are a lot of experiments and most of them die. The ones that work find an advantage in the environment. They suddenly make energy out of light, and that makes everything possible."

– HOWARD RHEINGOLD[10]

Social networks are as old as human society. Everyone participates in networks: In our families, schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. For many activists, from Mahatma Gandhi to current Tea Party leaders, understanding networks, linking together citizens and harnessing the power of network connectivity has been core to creating social impact.

Today there are countless venues where citizens can connect with one another, nurture networks, and create change for themselves and their communities. Many of these efforts were novel experiments just five to ten years ago. The crowdsourcing platform Ushahidi was piloted in 2007 and is now critical to relief efforts in crisis situations. Facebook has grown from zero users in 2004 to 600 million, or nearly one out of every ten people in the world.[11] This story of an increasingly networked citizenry is also about face-to-face relationships. Saddleback Church, for example, has grown from 200 churchgoers in 1980 to 20,000 attending weekly services at the megachurch's southern California campus in 2011.[12] Its growth and sustained participation have been driven by the strong ties that are nurtured through small clusters of members who regularly come together.[13] Small efforts to connect and empower people today could be transformative in just a few years.

What's driving the growing potential for impact through citizen-to-citizen connection? A fundamental shift is under way in how people think, form groups and do their work. As open communications technologies—from blogs to wikis, tags, texts and tweets— become increasingly widespread, a network-centric stance toward leadership that favors decentralization and transparency is being engendered. At the same time, technologies for visualizing collections of relationships are making the abstract concept of networks visible and more easily understood. And the tools are only part of the story.

Throughout history, social change has been possible only through the contributions and dedication of *many* citizens. Today's network-centric citizen engagement builds on existing know-how, drawing in particular on grassroots community organizing and the open-source software movement. Let's look for a moment at the roots of today's potential.

From the community organizing world, for instance, United Farm Workers (UFW) and its visionary leader César Chávez achieved impressive gains by connecting the interests and energy of many workers. Since the 1900s large-scale agriculture in the United States has relied on migrant labor and the ability to pay low wages to an unorganized workforce. In 1965, when 800 Filipino grape workers striking under the aegis of the AFL-CIO joined forces with 2,000 Mexican workers and the UFW, a significant civil rights movement began to take shape. Organizing continued steadily in the fields and spread to the cities. By 1970, UFW succeeded in getting many big agricultural producers to accept union contracts, which stipulated gains like a health plan, a credit union and higher wages, and in the process organized the workforce into 50,000 dues-paying members.

Working in a different time and context, the development of the Linux operating systems was made possible by harnessing the power of loose groups around a shared interest. Linus Torvalds decided in 1991 to build a PC version of the powerful UNIX operating system. He posted all of his code to an Internet newsgroup and within a month over 100 people were contributing to the project. The network of volunteers continued to grow, building the code steadily towards a full operating system, released in 1994. The project snowballed from hundreds to thousands of contributors, and by 2000 Linux was running over a third of the Internet's websites.

Chávez and Torvalds were operating from different playbooks and passions. But both were connecting large groups of people together to work toward something they passionately cared about—workers' rights and open software—and, in the process, aligning and coordinating their individual efforts to make a collective impact. Both models offer valuable lessons for community change today.

Community organizing at its most authentic and effective frames the issue at hand in partnership with the people affected; it is led and controlled by the community; there is a deep attention to relationships; and leadership for the movement is nurtured from this base.[14]

Successful open-source projects harness software developers' energy to create elegant software in community with others who share the same passion. Using transparent organizing systems, open-source projects empower people to experiment together. They also follow clear norms for collaboration and put in place governance structures to sustain this process—to name just a few of many ingredients for their success.[15]

Taken together, open-source projects and grassroots collective action are important sources of inspiration for 21st-century civic engagement, enabling us to combine the creativity and transparency of open innovation with community organizing's relational abilities and courage to confront power.

In this section, we explore citizen engagement today and strategies that are helping citizens connect, make their voices heard and take action. We studied more than 70 experiments—mostly in the United States and some in other countries—that are helping individuals make the change they want in the world. We focused our inquiry on projects that are embracing a network-centric approach—a way of working that is open and decentralized. Some of these projects have just launched and others have been evolving for several years. Many of them are technologically enabled. Others are rooted in in-person relationships. Most combine online and offline interaction, as well as insights from the open-source movement and grassroots organizing. All of them are about making connections.

We were scouting for practices that are worthy of attention as possible harbingers of citizen-centered social action in the coming years. Looking across these 70-plus projects, we noticed the following patterns of network-centric practices that are already working today, and could be promising for future civic engagement:

1 **Listening to and consulting the crowds:** Actively listening to online conversations and openly asking for advice.

2 **Designing for serendipity:** Creating environments, in person and online, where helpful connections can form.

3 **Bridging differences:** Deliberately connecting people with different perspectives.

4 **Catalyzing mutual support:** Helping people directly help each other.

5 **Providing handrails for collective action:** Giving enough direction for individuals to take effective and coordinated action.

Like the projects we studied, some of these practices are long established, others are newer, and all represent alternatives to traditional ways of getting things done. (See sidebar: Traditional & Network-Centric Practices.) These are not stand-alone models. Projects using a network-centric approach are likely to embrace many such strategies at the same time.

> Taken together, open-source projects and grassroots collective action are important sources of inspiration for 21st-century civic engagement, enabling us to combine the creativity and transparency of open innovation with community organizing's relational abilities and courage to confront power.

We now take a close look at each of these practices in turn—the underlying theory and pros and cons. For each practice, we've included a few illustrative cases and called out a handful of practical lessons learned that are worth trying out in other contexts and across sectors.

While the field of network-centric civic action is rich, it's still in its early days. Most of the projects we looked at are experiments, just a year or two underway. Therefore, in the sections that follow we are not describing best practices. We are articulating emerging practices, in the hope that social change makers will use these observations to grow and evolve this high-potential field.

TRADITIONAL AND NETWORK-CENTRIC PRACTICES

We've outlined below how network-centric approaches compare to traditional, default approaches to addressing a given challenge. The point here is not to create a dichotomy, suggesting the common method is bad and the network-centric alternative good. It depends on the situation. In fact, traditional and network-centric practices are often combined or used side by side. In the coming years, skillfully blending the two will be an important leadership ability. The question to consider is: Are there opportunities to break out of default ways of working and experiment with network-centric approaches that may deliver increased scale and impact?

CHALLENGE	TRADITIONAL PRACTICE	NETWORK-CENTRIC PRACTICE
Inform designs and decisions	Gather input from trusted advisers	Listen to and consult the crowds
Connect a community with shared interests	Hold a structured conference	Design for serendipity
Build social capital	Connect with people who are like you	Bridge differences
Match community needs with available assets	Provide services to those in need	Catalyze mutual support
Organize community action	Organize a consensus-driven coalition	Provide handrails for collective action

1 Listening to and Consulting the Crowds

For leaders of social change making decisions that impact outside stakeholders or the public at large, there are new opportunities to cast a wide net for input and advice, and to do so fast.

While decision makers have always been able to consult the public through vehicles like town halls and public-interest surveys, it is now possible to pose a question or request using e-mail, text messaging and social networking platforms to however many people you want or are able to listen to, and receive immediate feedback. In addition to real-time access to a potentially massive and diverse collection of minds, experiences and perspectives, consulting crowds of those concerned can confer added legitimacy on the process and increase support for the final product or decision. In addition to starting conversations, you can also follow the conversation with ease. Often, it's equally or more important for decision makers to first listen closely and then ask for input by joining an existing conversation on blogs, Twitter or other open platforms.[16]

Listening to the crowds is important when you're entering a new field and working to understand diverse perspectives on a given topic. Consulting the crowds is especially useful when brainstorming possible solutions: You can lay out your situation candidly and receive input from a wide-range of sources, which can reveal blind spots. It is equally helpful when you need input from people with specialized knowledge who fall outside your personal contacts.

Of course, crowds aren't always the answer. Gathering input has traditionally been done by reaching out to the people you know, and tapping personal social networks for trusted advice isn't going away. Furthermore, since the input you get from the crowds is shaped by who's participating, a diversity of perspectives may not be reflected and there's always a risk that the loudest or most shocking messages will grab attention.

> " In addition to real-time access to a potentially massive and diverse collection of minds, experiences and perspectives, consulting crowds of those concerned can confer added legitimacy on the process and increase support for the final product or decision. "

No doubt, it's better to "smart-source" rather than crowdsource when you know what the question is and who to ask for an answer. However, it doesn't have to be either/or. There are options that blend trusted advice and the wisdom of the crowds. For example, the Public Insight Network, discussed in detail below, draws on the expertise of many while making it possible for journalists to target their requests and build trusted relationships with participants.[17]

CASE STUDY: Give a Minute

"An easy way to lock up bikes." "Tax break for not owning a car." "Cleaner train cars." Chicagoans have posted thousands of ideas in response to an open call for input on how to increase walking, biking and the use of public transportation in their city. This exchange was made possible by Give a Minute, a public-input platform piloted in Chicago in November 2010. The formula is simple: The city poses a call for ideas, citizens post their suggestions on the website or send them in by SMS, and they're read and responded to by the local agencies, nonprofits and other civic groups working on the issue. Citizens are asked the question on billboards, an idea they post shows up immediately on the website, and the city's top leaders respond to at least one insightful concept each day. The result has been 2,893 suggestions as of January 2011, of which 97 percent were on-topic. The most common: Heated bus stops, better train security, discounts on monthly passes, more bike lanes and better clearing of multiuse paths in the winter. The Chicago Transit Authority will incorporate them all into its policy making this year.[18]

In contrast to focus groups, public meetings or other standard tools for gathering input, Give a Minute offers citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions without having to dedicate hours to the process. The intention is to help civic leaders listen to the community's ideas for targeted local improvements. The postings and any exchanges are transparent, making it possible for community members to learn from one another and see for themselves that their input is being heard. Give a Minute's service is being rolled out to cities across the United States for input on a wide range of issues.

CASE STUDY: Public Insight Network

American Public Media's Public Insight Network builds committed relationships between newsrooms and a network of volunteer sources, making it possible for journalists to gather input quickly from a broad or targeted group. Participating newsrooms place a button on their websites encouraging visitors to fill out a profile and become a source. Sources are then tapped by the newsrooms, through open calls for input or more targeted inquiries to subsets of the network that share an attribute such as profession, expertise or location. Responses from sources are shared via email and live conversations. Public Insight Network then thanks the sources and explains how their input was used, thereby deepening the sources' pride of participation.

It's a two-way relationship. Reporters get access to a vast network of sources eager to contribute, and sources have the opportunity to make their voices heard. Sources are never targeted for advertising or contacted for reasons other than their original commitment: To provide input to journalists. Created at Minnesota Public Radio in 2003, Public Insight Network was adopted by the American Public Media business program "Marketplace" in 2005 and opened to other newsrooms in 2007. It is now expanding quickly, with a source network of more than 100,000 people and 30 partner newsrooms at the end of 2010. Input from the network contributed to more than 350 news items in 2010 at Minnesota Public Radio and American Public Media alone.

Lessons Learned

■ **Make participation fast and easy.**
Give a Minute integrates public participation into citizens' busy lives by asking that they simply "give a minute" during their regular activities, like texting or surfing the web.

■ **Show you're listening.**
Journalists using the Public Insight Network build trusted relationships with sources by telling them how their input made a difference. City officials using Give a Minute respond frequently to contributors, and their responses are posted online for all to see.

■ **Develop a clear contract with participants and abide by it.**
Participants in the Public Insight Network are more willing to sign up to offer expertise, trusting that they won't be spammed with advertising or other unrelated communications.

Additional Resources

"The Rise of Crowdsourcing"
The article that coined the term, describing the new ways that people were beginning to use online tools to structure projects around the contributions of many people with varying degrees of expertise.

Jeff Howe, *Wired Magazine*, June 2006.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/gvt8jj.

"Working with Crowds"
A chapter in The Networked Nonprofit that explores a range of ways to tap input from a large group as part of work on social change.

Beth Kanter and Allison Fine,
The Networked Nonprofit, Chapter 8. June 2010.
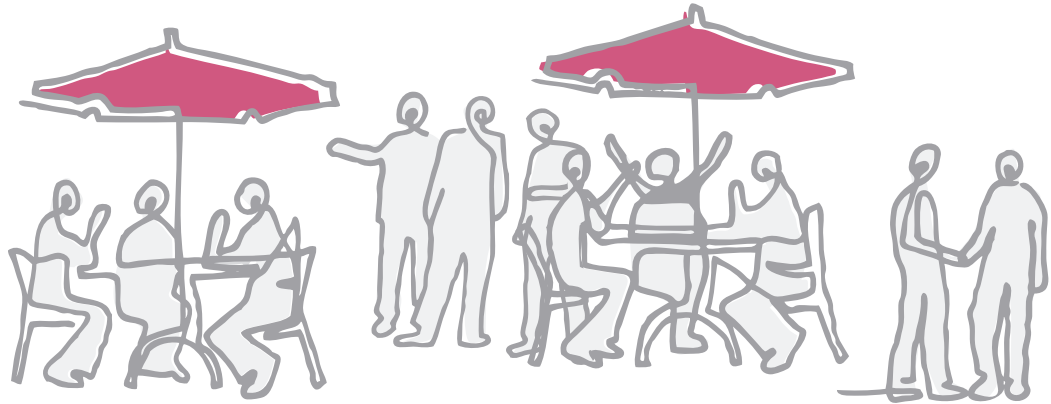SLIDES ONLINE: http://j.mp/hqQEXk.

MacroWikinomics
Building on their thesis in Wikinomics that collaborative innovation is transforming business, the authors argue here that it likewise has the potential to address our greatest social challenges.

Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams,
September 2010.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/h4JEMV.
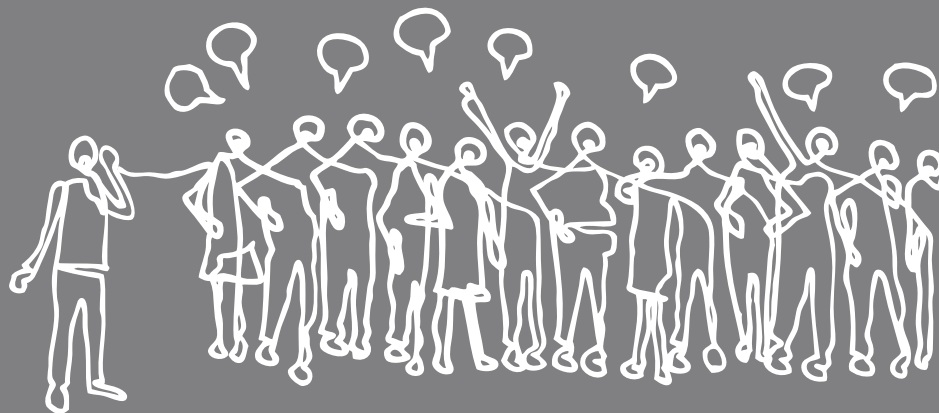
2 Designing For Serendipity

To grow a network is to create new relationships and deepen existing ones. This happens when people come together, online and in person, in inviting environments where there are opportunities for good things to emerge.

> "Designing for serendipity means creating spaces that focus more on people and less on specific results. Such environments welcome people and make it easy to connect with others and with new ideas and resources."

People are often brought together in environments with rigid structures organized around predesigned outcomes, like a training program or an industry conference. Yet, in many cases, the most valuable interactions happen outside or in between the planned sessions—an unexpected conversation with someone you sat next to during a panel presentation or an introduction made during the coffee break. Designing for serendipity means creating spaces that focus more on people and less on specific results. Such environments welcome people and make it easy to connect with others and with new ideas and resources. They are designed to optimize for good fortune, increasing the likelihood that people will bump into others sharing similar interests—or goals. This might happen in a shared workspace, over dinner, in a foyer, a "room" online, or a mixture of venues, virtual and physical. While the tactics vary with the situation, the process is not random. Designing for serendipity is intentional, rooted in insight about complex systems and network dynamics. It requires having a general sense of why you'd like to connect people, such as promoting a healthier community or a more vibrant local economy, while being open to participants determining for themselves how to get there.

New opportunities take time to emerge, especially when relationships need to be forged and leadership distributed. Therefore, in order to be successful, these spaces must be maintained—or "held"—so that people continue to feel welcome and motivated to return. Network expert June Holley refers to people who are dedicated to holding such environments as "network weavers"—people dedicated to making connections, strengthening ties and bringing new people into the network.

The notion of designing for serendipity, rather than outcomes, contradicts much conventional wisdom about how to make change: Be clear on your mission, vision, path to get there and measures of success along the way. While a shared mission and vision are critical when designing for serendipity, you have to be open to a range of actions, and sometimes the outcomes may veer in a different direction than what you were trying to achieve. Plus, it can be difficult to know the impact you've had when activity is decentralized and, at times, happening beyond your purview. The good news is that if you can let go of control and create environments that empower the community to act, the results can be impressive and long lasting. The ultimate goal of designing for serendipity is meaningful connections that lead to exchanges, cross-fertilization and collaborations benefiting the individuals and the community.

> The ultimate goal of designing for serendipity is meaningful connections that lead to exchanges, cross-fertilization and collaborations benefiting the individuals and the community.

CASE STUDY: The Making Connections Louisville Network

Louisville's Making Connections Network is a movement for community change that connects people from tough neighborhoods with each other and with opportunities in Louisville, like jobs, health care and housing.[19] As executive director Dana Jackson says, "It is an approach. It is not a program,"[20] rooted in the fundamental belief that the people in these tough areas have the power to bring about community change. Core to this approach is the creation of intentional environments where members can break bread with neighbors, meet new people, find out about local resources and work together to create new value for the community.

Staff members have come to think of themselves as network stewards and weavers. They create and hold spaces where members can fulfill their own and the community's needs. There are multiple doors of entry—different reasons why residents might want to enter the network. Once inside, members have an opportunity to connect with others, access resources, share their talents and lead. For example, the network's 3,600 plus current members and newcomers are invited to regular "Network Nites" for food and conversation. The staff used to assume responsibility for doing the setup work and recruiting for Network Nite; now it's on the way to being executed, and owned, by members. In 2010 alone, the events were attended by 900 people. According to Davidson, "Whoever can get it done should do it. Leadership is not just about who is sitting in the seat. You have to plant leadership in a lot of different places, cultivate leadership and create room for leadership to come from sometimes the most unlikely places."[21] The network's model of shared leadership is delivering meaningful outcomes for Louisville. Since 2005, there have been over 1,200 job placements through the network, and residents have benefited from $9 million in housing value saved through the network's foreclosure conciliation partnerships, to name just a few of the quantifiable results.

CASE STUDY: The Hardwick Potlucks

The 3,000-person town of Hardwick in Vermont had been on the downswing in the mid-2000s. The granite companies that had been the mainstay of the economy were long gone, and Main Street was dotted with vacant stores. But today the town can celebrate a burgeoning cluster of food enterprises, which has added 150 jobs over the past few years to the town's previous 500 and is attracting a steady stream of businesses from the surrounding area. A simple series of potlucks attended by Hardwick's small-business owners who share an interest in local food has helped make this possible.

Started in 2006 by a small group of friends, the group has met each month at a different business where they share a potluck dinner, tour the business and hold a two-hour "think tank" discussion about a pressing issue for that operation. Now numbering about 40 people, with

15-25 attending every month, the group includes participants from across agriculture and food distribution. It is open to any nearby owner of a business focused on sustainable food, but the founders have intentionally kept the size small, bringing in new members only when there is a clear fit. When there was a sudden wave of interest in 2008, they helped others start their own groups, of which there are now four. All meeting has been done face to face, augmented by an email listserv that averages two to three messages a day. The original group has hosted over 50 gatherings, totaling over 300 hours spent together sharing challenges, offering advice, learning about each others' businesses and forging partnerships. The members share tips about graphic designers, promote one another's products at trade fairs, buy equipment at auctions that they know their colleagues need and have given one another short-term loans totaling over a million dollars. They have even launched a formal nonprofit, the Center for an Agricultural Economy, which has grown to eight full-time employees who work on public education, community-building and other socially focused aspects of the group's broader vision.

All of this is happening without a formal structure. There's no 501(c)(3), no central coordinating body, no strategic plan and not even a name, just word of mouth and a regular meeting time each month among friends and acquaintances who mostly live within a five-mile radius. The key ingredients, instead, include creating the opportunity for business owners from across the system to come together with a shared sense of purpose (improving the local food economy) but without an agenda, creating a welcoming environment by sharing food and convening on a regular basis over the course of several years.

"Things that seemed totally impossible not so long ago are now going to happen," said one member. "In the next few years a new wave of businesses will come in behind us. So many things are possible with collaboration."[22]

Lessons Learned

■ **Make it easy to enter.**
Neither Making Connections Louisville nor the Hardwick potlucks have complex requirements for admission. Participants with a broad shared interest but diverse individual motivation are welcomed, and in both cases sharing food has brought people together.

■ **Build trust through repeat interactions.**
It takes time and trust for opportunity to emerge. The Hardwick potlucks and the Making Connections Network Nites have facilitated this by providing regular opportunities for the participants to meet over several years.

■ **Design the space, not the outcomes.**
Making Connections Louisville catalyzes opportunities for connection, engagement and shared leadership by network members, without predesigned outcomes. With no organizational core, the Hardwick potlucks are simply opportunities for connection; the people who gather create the outcomes.

Additional Resources

"The Essence of Weaving"
Veteran network weaver Bill Traynor offers his reflections on the fundamental work of network weaving: Helping people to build—and connect to—more relationships of trust and value.

Bill Traynor, *The Value of Place*, May 24, 2010. ONLINE: http://j.mp/f1i6Cb.

"Network Weaver Checklist"
A practical self-assessment for gauging your own strengths and weaknesses as a weaver of relationships in a network.

June Holley, 2006. ONLINE: http://j.mp/fuwsL5.

Open Space Technology: A User's Guide
Describes how to use the "open space" approach for facilitating a large group conversation where the agenda and content is driven entirely by the participants.

Harrison Owen, April 2008. ONLINE: http://amzn.to/acous3.

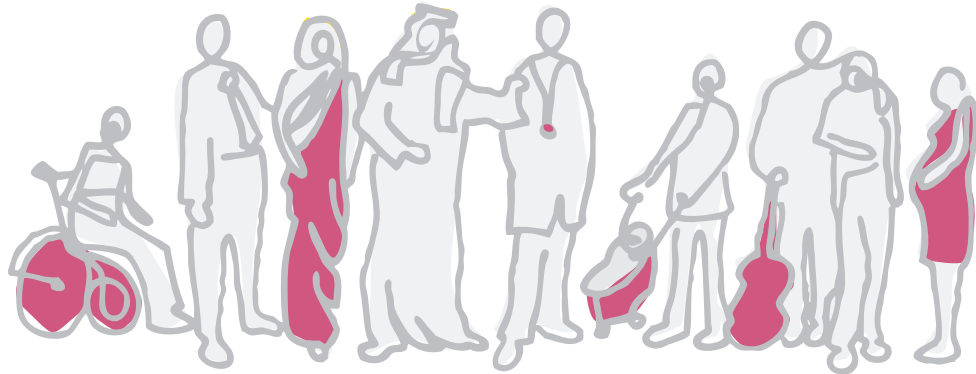### Digital Habitats: Stewarding Technology for Communities
Offers conceptual grounding and practical advice on how to use online tools in a way that helps a community accomplish its goals.

Etienne Wenger, Nancy White and John D. Smith, 2009. ONLINE: http://j.mp/fuKwqr.

3 Bridging Differences

It is a natural human tendency to connect with people like ourselves. As the adage goes, "birds of a feather flock together," because connecting with others who are similar is comfortable and easy.

However, solving complex community problems usually requires breaking down boundaries and bringing together people with diverse perspectives, experiences and priorities in order to spark new insights, foster unusual alliances and lay the groundwork for public problem solving.

As universal Internet access draws near, the potential for connection is exploding. But this doesn't necessarily mean that social networks are becoming more diverse. The proclivity to surround ourselves with our own "flock," combined with information and "friending" overload, is making it dangerously easy to develop a narrow view of the world, filtered by what our likeminded friends see. The social media scholar danah boyd has already documented evidence of this phenomenon, known as homophily, in the choice of many white teens to switch to Facebook as MySpace became more dominated by African-Americans.[23] Given our tendency to divide, it's all the more important that we be intentional about creating connections that cut across divisions.

While the obstacles are not small, there are promising efforts under way to motivate relationship building across differences. For example, the Peace Dot project at Stanford helped create peace.facebook.com where data is updated by the hour on the number of new friend connections between Israelis and Palestinians, Sunnis and Shiites, and conservatives and liberals. By highlighting connections across ethnic, religious and political divides the Peace Dot project is using real-time data to inspire more such connection.

CASE STUDY: CouchSurfing

Four thousand travelers a day are welcomed as guests by strangers in places and cultures far from home through CouchSurfing.net.[24] Looking for a free place to stay, CouchSurfers often find a new friend as well who is willing to show them their town and a slice of their life. Hosts typically volunteer their hospitality because they've experienced it from others and now relish the chance to connect with a foreigner. This culture of exchange is encouraged by features like an optional background check that make it easier to establish trust.

The CouchSurfing experience frequently shows travelers a more intimate side of life in another country than is available to most tourists. In the words of Matilda McCarthy, a member from Sweden, "The most wonderful thing about CouchSurfing is not budget accommodation or tips on how to avoid tourist traps. It's the fact that CS totally challenges all your prejudices! I have found friends through CS that I would never have had the chance to meet otherwise, and although we're very different, our friendship bridges those differences."[23] Since CouchSurfing was founded in 2004 the site has attracted over 2.3 million members from 243 countries and territories who have formed an estimated 2.8 million new online social connections among them.[26]

CASE STUDY: Localocracy

Localocracy creates online "town halls" designed to bring together citizens with diverse perspectives and promote healthy dialogue and debate on local issues. Since its founding in 2008, the startup site has rolled out to six cities in Massachusetts, choosing locations where the team can work with local leaders to make it a success. Conversations begin when a member of the community, ideally a leader such as a police chief or school committee head, poses a question that can benefit from community deliberation. Community members on different sides of the issue can then engage in discussion, vote on proposals and encourage others in their networks to join the debate. The only restriction is that participants have to be registered voters, use their real name when commenting (although voting is anonymous) and allow their comments to be publicly visible. Localocracy prides itself on its neutrality and works to create a space that promotes engagement on an issue among people who hold varying points of view.

For example, school committee member Catherine Sanderson posed a question in the Localocracy town hall for Amherst about shifting a resource-sharing agreement that the local school district had with the neighboring town of Pelham. She had tried previously to initiate that discussion on her blog but the result was a divisive exchange with many anonymous comments. By contrast, the discourse she hosted on Localocracy productively involved over 100 people who weighed in through comments and votes. As a result of the conversation, Sanderson reframed the issue and established greater common ground between the two sides.

> "
> The most wonderful thing about CouchSurfing is not budget accommodation or tips on how to avoid tourist traps. It's the fact that CS totally challenges all your prejudices! I have found friends through CS that I would never have had the chance to meet otherwise, and although we're very different, our friendship bridges those differences.
> "
>
> **Matilda McCarthy**
> COUCHSURFING MEMBER

Lessons Learned

■ **Develop systems for establishing reputation and trust.**
CouchSurfing builds trust among members through external verification—open member-to-member reviews and background checks. Localocracy does so through transparency—real names and records of activity.

■ **Use influence to recruit diverse participation and catalyze bridging.**
On Localocracy sites there is more participation when decision makers or locals with the ability to mobilize action initiate the forum. These individuals are then well positioned to bridge diverse viewpoints as they moderate the online conversation.

■ **Make it fun.**
CouchSurfing members are able to broaden their worldview by learning directly from the "other."

Additional Resources

Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital
Explains the two core concepts of social capital: Brokering useful exchanges between social groups and creating greater internal connectivity within them.
Ron Burt, 2005.
INTRODUCTION ONLINE: http://bit.ly/ieHAll.

"Blogs and Bullets: New Media and Contentious Politics"
While journalists often connect the adoption of social media directly to resolving simmering social tensions by spurring activism, this report weighs the evidence and finds that its impact varies widely.
Sean Aday, et al, *United States Institute of Peace*, July 2010. ONLINE: http://j.mp/ffUnpM.

"White Flight in Networked Publics? How Race and Class Shaped American Teen Engagement with MySpace and Facebook"
Shows that teens have tended to self-segregate by race between MySpace and Facebook and raises the question of whether communities online will generally tend to reflect existing social divisions.
dana boyd, *Digital Race Anthology* (forthcoming). ONLINE: http://j.mp/eeI96V.

4 Catalyzing Mutual Support

One of the promises of network-centric organizing is the opportunity to help others directly and, better yet, receive help in return.

The traditional and centralized approach to getting people the help they need is "social services." Recipients of social services interact with a bureaucracy, like a local job placement center, as people who need assistance. A network-centric model of mutual support begins by connecting members directly with one another, encouraging them to discover the community's existing assets, and then coordinating their needs and offers through trusted and reciprocal relationships.[27]

Asset-based models for mutual exchange aren't new.[28] Mutual aid or benefit societies have been around for centuries, most recently in forms like credit unions, self-help groups, cooperatives and trade unions. There are countless stories of the power of reciprocity made possible through informal social networks. For instance, immediately after Hurricane Katrina, social ties were critical to effective disaster response. Locals preferred to rely on their personal relationships rather than the bureaucratic formal channels for disaster relief. As one Mississippian expressed: "Nothing compares to having prior relationships in a disaster."[29]

How do you create the conditions for sustained mutual support, so it's a regular practice rather than a product of disaster?[30] And, how do you make it easy to engage? Participating in cooperatives and other forums for mutual exchange can get bogged down by time-consuming consensus-driven deliberations. Moreover, what if some members take more than they give? While there's no blueprint for catalyzing mutual support, transparent and accessible systems for organizing these exchanges are lowering the cost and accelerating the speed with which people can both share and meet their needs, while encouraging high integrity interactions through their openness.[31]

> " A network-centric model of mutual support begins by connecting members directly with one another, encouraging them to discover the community's existing assets, and then coordinating their needs and offers through trusted and reciprocal relationships. "

CASE STUDY: The "Village" Movement in Senior Care

Ninety percent of people over 65 would prefer to live in their own homes, but most of the elderly find themselves on a one-way track toward a retirement community, an assisted living facility and finally a hospice. Confronted by this rigid path, 11 retirees living in the Beacon Hill area of Boston decided to create a new model that would give them the benefits of a retirement community without having to move. In 2001, they started the Beacon Hill Village, a community that has now grown to 440 retirees living in their own homes who volunteer to help each other with everyday tasks and organize their own social activities. What the members can't offer one another directly is provided by a small dues-supported central office that can answer questions, offer advice, coordinate volunteers and recommend discounted services.

This "village" model has now been adopted in 56 other communities nationwide, with about 100 more now being started. All are grassroots creations, building on a manual and set of materials that the founders provide for a small fee. Each one is different, many establishing themselves under the umbrella of existing organizations and some creating a hub-and-spoke collection of affiliated villages that span a broader area. As of January 2010 the villages carried the mutual-support model forward by establishing the Village to Village Network, a dues-supported online space for peer-to-peer connection open to the leaders of any village. The Network currently has about 100 members sharing advice with one another and working together to codify best practices. A small team in Arlington, Va., coordinates weekly webinars, hosts online discussion forums, holds seminars in cities around the country, and spreads awareness of the village model.

CASE STUDY: Front Porch Forum

Arthur Goyette knows the value of good neighbors. While his wife Betty was battling cancer, his neighbors brought countless meals to their home. When the neighbors learned that Betty had always wanted to ride in a convertible, they found a dealership willing to loan them a car and surprised the Goyettes with a Chrysler Sebring. The couple drove down the block with the top down, surrounded by people waving and taking pictures. Arthur marvels that he barely knew some of the people who helped them, and might never have met them at all if it weren't for an online network called Front Porch Forum.

Front Porch Forum's simple service is similar to Craigslist but operates at the neighborhood level, forming groups of between 500 and 1,500 households. The system currently serves 150 such neighborhoods around the city of Burlington, Vt., and a statewide expansion is under way. About 30 of the neighborhoods currently using Front Porch Forum maintain a steady stream of activity (around 100-200 messages per month). Every account is tied to a real name and address, with postings visible only to others in the neighborhood. In the words of founder Michael Wood-Lewis, "People stumble in to find lost Fido or Fluffy and they stick around because they learn about the car break-in two doors away or the house fire a quarter of a mile from where they live, and they're not finding that information anywhere else. It becomes part of their daily practice."[32] The most common conversations are what one would expect among neighbors: Finding a good babysitter or plumber, slowing down traffic or cleaning up graffiti. It is also frequently used as an aid to projects such as fundraising for the school or advocating at a public meeting, since it acts as an easily accessible mailing list for the neighborhood. Over time, these daily exchanges among locals build trust so that when an urgent need rears its head, such as bad blizzard or serious illness for a single mom, the ice is broken for neighbors to be neighbors.

Lessons Learned

■ **Leverage existing and underutilized resources.**
The Beacon Hill Village is coordinating existing community assets and creating a new asset—the community's aggregate demand. Front Porch Forum taps community assets that might otherwise sit dormant—a long-time resident's knowledge of neighborhood history or a seldom-used extension ladder.

■ **Provide enough structure for immediate benefit and enough openness for new opportunity.**
Participants in Front Porch Forum may enter for a targeted reason, like finding a babysitter, and once they're in, find many new reasons to engage in the community.

■ **Build trust in the system.**
Show participants that the system for mutual support is credible and effective. For Front Porch Forum this is achieved through daily exposure to requests and offers among neighbors, and the use of real names. For the "villages," a central coordinator helps establish credibility.

Additional Resources

The Mesh: Why the Future of Business is Sharing
Gives a wide range of examples, with an expanded list online, of new enterprises that provide value by helping people share resources with one another.

Lisa Gansky, 2010.
ONLINE: http://meshing.it/.

The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods
Ideas and practices for reweaving the social ties in a neighborhood so that the community becomes more supportive of a fulfilling life.

John McKnight and Peter Block, June 2010.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/h7z2B5.

Participle
A UK design firm that has launched a variety of social enterprises which address social challenges by creating and strengthening relationships among citizens.

DESCRIPTION OF THEIR PROJECTS:
http://j.mp/f7yedE.

5 Providing Handrails for Collective Action

By setting forth a clear vision and strategy to guide action, individual efforts can be organized so the parts create a whole that produces lasting social change.

> Outline steps people can take to make a difference; offer feedback mechanisms so activists can learn together and see their collective progress; and all the while, push power to the edges, letting participants own the work and share leadership.

Social networks can be a powerful asset for leaders of social change. Ideas can spread like wildfire. Citizens can assemble at a moment's notice, whether for a light-hearted pillow fight or a coordinated protest against an authoritarian regime. Advances in technology have made it cheap and easy to "organize without organizations" and achieve outsized impact.[33] On the other end of the spectrum, playbooks for organizing social and political action typically emphasize strategic focus and solid planning. Policy campaigns have clearly articulated goals and accompanying strategies to get there. Advocacy coalitions invest in deliberative processes for achieving the consensus required to speak with one voice, along with branding and messaging to present a unified front.

How can the generative and emergent nature of networks be tapped while mobilizing and coordinating action around targeted goals? The trick, as we've seen in various contexts, is to artfully combine clear direction and structure with ample space for participant-driven action. When organizing collective action is your goal, provide handrails for participants: Outline steps people can take to make a difference; offer feedback mechanisms so activists can learn together and see their collective progress; and all the while, push power to the edges, letting participants own the work and share leadership.

Of course, balancing participant-led action with a defined strategy isn't simple. It raises thorny issues around decision-making rights and who leads versus follows. Furthermore, messaging can end up fragmented and conflicting when there are lots of independent actors involved. There are also risks that come with loosening control: What if the movement is co-opted for counterproductive ends? Transparency at

all levels—documenting participant activity and opening up governance—helps with building trust among participants and in the decision-making process. And, as always, there is no substitute for skillful leaders who can effect change from behind.

CASE STUDY: The Crisis Mapping Standby Task Force

When heart-wrenching images and stories began flowing out of Haiti following the devastating 7.0-magnitude earthquake in January 2010, thousands of people around the world wanted to help. They gave money. They sent relief supplies. They went to Haiti to provide medical care.

Patrick Meier, the director of Crisis Mapping at the crowdsourcing platform Ushahidi, who is also a doctoral candidate at the Fletcher School, responded to the disaster by creating a map using the Ushahidi platform. Then, he reached out to friends at Fletcher for assistance. A former student of Meier's in London recruited friends in Britain. Soon there was a tightly connected group of over 100 volunteers in Boston, New York, Geneva, Washington, D.C., London and Portland that was collaborating to create a live crisis map of Haiti. The map provided a venue for nearly 2,000 people to coordinate their desire to assist by translating text-messaged cries for help from Creole to English, placing them on a map, and feeding that information in real time to aid workers on the ground. The project pioneered a new form of crisis response.

That largely ad-hoc response is now being streamlined. Some of the core volunteers who worked with Meier to create the Haiti map have since trained 150 more people from 17 countries to use the Ushahidi platform. They formed what is now dubbed the Standby Volunteer Task Force, a growing group of committed crisis-mapping volunteers who trade advice and train newcomers. Since the Haiti quake, Task Force members have been involved in crisis mapping projects for Chile, Pakistan, Sudan and more recently Colombia during the United Nation's recent earthquake-simulation exercise.[34] The goal: Expand the cadre of leaders who can respond in times of crisis, but also proactively organize social action by creating platforms for collecting and visualizing information. The Task Force is now a growing corps that can strategically guide collective action.

CASE STUDY: The Pink Chaddi Campaign

In the southwestern Indian city of Mangalore in February 2009, a group of orthodox Hindus called Sri Ram Sene (Lord Ram's Army) stormed into a bar named Ambient and assaulted a group of women who were drinking, driving them out onto the street. Passersby shot video of the attacks, and when the footage aired on television, Sene justified its actions on the basis that the women were behaving indecently and promised further attacks on anyone its members observed celebrating Valentine's Day. Responding to the fear that Sene's attacks inspired, a Mangalore resident named Nisha Susan decided to respond with a public rally. She created a Facebook group called the Association of Pub-going, Loose and Forward Women, which attracted over 15,000 members in a matter of a few days, and announced the Pink Chaddi campaign. The instructions were clear: Send Sene as many sets of pink women's underwear (*chaddi* in Hindi slang), a publicly feminine gesture of exactly the kind that Sene was committed to fighting. The Sene offices were deluged with underwear, many carrying confrontational messages, a phenomenon covered by the mainstream news. In response to the campaign and other vocal elements of the public outcry against Sene's actions, police arrested Sene's leaders for several days surrounding Valentine's in order to prevent further attacks, and the Indian Home Minister named Sene "a threat to the country."[35]

> " Transparency at all levels—documenting participant activity and opening up governance—helps with building trust among participants and in the decision-making process. "

Lessons Learned

■ **Give clear instructions for action.**
Both the Haiti crisis map and the Pink Chaddi campaign provided straightforward steps for getting engaged, making it easy for newcomers to quickly be productive.

■ **Make it gratifying.**
Haiti volunteers could see how their work was contributing to the whole as they watched the map grow online. The Pink Chaddi volunteers got to do something fun, confrontational and newsworthy.

■ **Build platforms that structure individual contributions into something greater.**
The Pink Chaddi campaign and the Haiti map aggregated relatively small actions, buying underwear and translating text messages, respectively, into meaningful social impact.

■ **Develop leadership.**
The Standby Taskforce is training people not just in the tools, but in a shared strategy for advancing social justice through transparent access to information, which can be deployed in any number of contexts.

Additional Resources

"Leading Boldly"
Calls on foundations to use creative and systems-oriented leadership practices to make progress on complex social problems.

Ronald A. Heifetz, John V. Kania and Mark R. Kramer, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, winter 2004. ONLINE: http://j.mp/g8Tsj3.

"The Bottom is Not Enough"
An early advocate for the power of decentralized systems, Kelly argues that almost any project that relies on individuals to self-organize can be improved by some top-down management.

Kevin Kelly, *The Technium*, Feb. 12, 2008. ONLINE: http://j.mp/gbrbNZ.

The Practicing Democracy Network
An online forum and library of resources for organizing "to develop leaders committed to making democracy work."

Created by Marshall Ganz at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. ONLINE: http://j.mp/dZR8Rm

Glimpses of 2015
Connected Citizens Tomorrow

In 2004, Howard Dean's campaign for the presidential nomination stirred a sensation with its citizen-centered use of the web.

Though Dean's campaign was an electoral failure, it inspired the Obama campaign four years later to transform the landscape for political organizing, combining online tools with grassroots organizing to mobilize more than 13 million supporters and raise nearly $750 million.[37] What will the 2012 presidential season bring? Will the GOP fueled by the net-centric Tea Party be the innovators and pioneers? Looking further ahead, how will citizens be organizing to make a difference?

We've seen seeds of the future in the five network-centric practices for strengthening community information and engagement—consulting crowds, designing for serendipity, bridging differences, catalyzing mutual support and providing handrails for collective action. These practices will likely move from the edge to the mainstream for how individuals interact to make a difference in the coming years. In this section, we broaden our view to envision what citizen-centered social action might look like in the years to come amid growing interdependence, transparency and decentralization.

A powerful way to explore the future is to tell stories, or "scenarios," about the possibilities for what might come next. These scenarios are provocative and plausible narratives about diverse ways in which issues relevant to our communities might evolve and interact in the years ahead. Exploring a range of future possibilities can help us rehearse what tomorrow might bring, and thereby develop a better understanding of the present and make thoughtful decisions about where to invest time, resources and leadership.[38]

We begin our exploration of the future by outlining a set of certainties. Next, we turn our attention to what's uncertain, looking at important and open questions. Then we

look at how these certainties and uncertainties might come together to create three alternative futures. After a brief sketch of each, we reflect upon how grantmakers can make a difference in that future environment.

We chose 2015 as our timeframe because, as one Knight Foundation program officer said, looking out beyond 2015 is like science fiction, given the rapid pace of technological change. Our intention is to look far enough into the future to imagine new and provocative possibilities for grantmakers while staying close enough to the present to frame insights that have near-term relevance.

Premises for the Future

While it's true that the only certain thing is uncertainty, when we look closely at some trends that are emerging today, their potential for shaping tomorrow becomes increasing clear. Below we examine a select set of certainties—premises that we can count on for the future. Taken alone they paint a relatively foreseeable set of contours for the world in 2015. Combined with the *Questions for the Future* that we pose in the following section, they underpin a wide range of possibilities, three of which we illustrate as scenarios.

Interconnectedness

Individuals will have more connectivity and more information. Specifically:

- **Internet connectivity will continue to grow.** The spread of wired broadband is nearly complete in the United States, with access already available to 66 percent of American adults[39] and with the FCC supporting the final stage of adoption through an initiative to connect 100 million more homes by 2015.[40] Yet the process has only begun at the global level, with Internet penetration estimated at just 29 percent in 2010.[41] The new frontier for connectivity will continue to be the mobile handset, with traffic worldwide expected to double every year through 2014.[42]

- **There will be more information about where people are.** As smartphones proliferate and new services for advertising one's location mature,[43] more data will be instantly available about where people are and where they have been, individually and in aggregate. The market for location-based services like Foursquare and Facebook Places, optimistic analysts believe, could reach as much as $12.7 billion by 2014.[44]

Decentralization and individual empowerment

As power is pushed to the edges, individuals will have an increasing ability to exert influence through social and broadcast media. Specifically:

- **What your friends and people like you think will matter even more.** As people live more of their lives through online social networks, their views will be increasingly shaped by their extended network, and their behavior patterns will be increasingly available to advertisers, through services such as startups Hunch and BlueCava which deliver micro-targeted messages.[45]

- **Information production and dissemination will be highly participatory.** Content-creation models that tap the audience continue to be on a pronounced upswing, with user-submitted content now commonplace not only in Wikipedia and online media but also in mainstream network news[46] and even Super Bowl advertising.[47]

Transparency

More information that's accurate and inaccurate will be available for use and abuse. Specifically:

- **More personal information will be online.** The mass adoption of Web 2.0 social-networking tools and daily online transactions are placing massive amounts of personal information online, as witnessed by the 30 billion pieces of content that Facebook users have been publishing each month[48] and the four million users of Mint.com's personal finance management tools that operate entirely online.[49]

- **More news and information will be available.** The breakneck increase in the volume of news and information shows no signs of stopping, as can be seen in both the growth of tweets from 27 million in late 2009 to 90 million in September 2010[50] and the 196 percent annual growth of bloggers from 2006 to 2010 on the popular Tumblr.com.[51] It's no surprise that 70 percent of Americans are reporting today that they are overwhelmed by all this information.[52]

> " As people live more of their lives through online social networks, their views will be increasingly shaped by their extended network, and their behavior patterns will be increasingly available to advertisers. "

Questions for the Future

The fact that we'll be living in an increasingly interconnected world with greater levels of transparency and individual empowerment raises questions about the health of our democracy, civic engagement and community information. How will people be engaging, leading and behaving in this context?

Here are the questions that emerged as most central to our exploration of networked citizenry. They are not yes or no questions, but rather represent spectra of uncertainty that will play out in different ways in different contexts.[53]

How much trust or mistrust will there be?

In an age of accelerating information flows and transparency, how will people relate to one another? What new criteria will we use for deeming relationships developed online trustworthy? Will experiences connecting with people through online platforms like CouchSurfing.org and in-person venues like the Hardwick potlucks result in a tendency to trust, or will our default be suspicion?

Underlying these questions of trust are questions about privacy. There will be more and more transparency, but how comfortable will people be with openness? Will we tend to put walls around information, or will the default be towards sharing freely? While we can be fairly certain that people will be sharing more personal data, what controls will be available to manage access to personal data online?

What will be the nature of public participation and the public conversation?

We've seen the rise of the empowered and super-empowered individual over the past decade, enabled by communications technologies. As we look forward to 2015, what impact will decentralization of power have on participation in civic life?

With online spaces for deliberation, like Localocracy, and vehicles for citizens to make their voices heard, like Give a Minute, will participation be more widespread, cutting across divides of race and class? Or will it primarily be the domain of the educated elite?

And, what about the quality of the public conversation? Will we see continued and deepening polarization and self-segregation? As people increasingly access their news and information through online social networks and searches that filter based on previous preferences, will we largely access information and insights that reinforce existing beliefs? Or will we be able to intentionally bridge differences?

What will be the impact of technology on civic information and engagement?

Technology's impact on society can be summed up in one word: More. It enables greater connectedness and faster sharing, and it results in more information.[54] All of these things spell more civic engagement. But what will be the quality of that engagement?

Clay Shirky, a leading expert on the Internet and social life, suggests that the web can dilute the levels of committed engagement. "The web is the best medium in history for bringing people together around shared interests. The problem is that it brings people around a shared interest at a very low cost so that the commitment can also be minimal. In almost every other sphere of our lives the low cost of communications is fabulous, but for generating community, the low cost of communication can turn out to be damaging rather than elevating."[55] Will we see effective strategies for connecting people around shared interests and then maintaining that connection? In an era of e-mail petitions and one-click "liking" of a cause's Facebook page, what will it take to strengthen ties and thereby deepen commitment so citizens take the extra step to act, whether that's buying underwear for the Pink Chaddi campaign or, better yet, organizing such a campaign?

With all of this connectivity, will people know what to do with the tools? How widespread will digital literacy be? Will we see more efforts to build skills for digital activism, like the Crisis Mapping Standby Task Force? And what will work? According to Howard Rheingold, scholar and Internet pioneer, "The critical uncertainty about collective action and the question, 'Is the Internet and mobile device era good for us or bad for us?' depends on the percentage of the population who know what to do with the tools. The knowledge itself isn't a capital intensive resource. How you get it to people depends on institutions. How will learners organize together, and how will they be facilitated?"[56]

Moreover, what impact will technology have on place-based civic engagement? How connected will people be to places and local communities? With projects like Front Porch Forum, will we see more people using the web to catalyze deeper local relationships? Or will the potential to connect with people who have similar interests irrespective of geography undermine local knowledge and engagement?

The question of connection to place is further complicated by the increasingly dynamic relationship that people have with a given location. People are on the move. Yet, according to network-centric organizer Bill Traynor, "Some of the traditions of the community-development and community-organizing world are based in notions of semi-permanence... People are moving a lot but they're circulating through neighborhoods that are alike. The idea of neighborhood is becoming a little less important than the idea of larger geographic areas."[57]

> " In almost every other sphere of our lives the low cost of communications is fabulous, but for generating community, the low cost of communication can turn out to be damaging rather than elevating. "
>
> Clay Shirky
> EXPERT ON THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL LIFE

# What will be the nature of leadership in a network-centric world?

What will leadership look like in this interconnected, transparent and decentralized world? And, where will it come from?

As more people have the ability to make their voices heard and organize others at low cost where will new sources of influence pop up? What will be the impact of generational change—as young people who are digital natives and more attuned to network-centric work—step into leadership? How will future leaders interact with formal authorities? There is a new ability to speak truth to power, but what happens next, once voices have been heard? Will we see more autonomous actors asserting their individual power? Will we see citizen leaders open to engaging and ultimately working with formal authorities?

How will leaders balance autonomy with synergistic action? One of the promises of a network is that leadership can be distributed, as we saw with Making Connections Louisville. At the same time, we know that bottom up often doesn't sum up when you want to get something done. Seasoned community organizer Marshall Ganz questions the feasibility of real self-organizing. According to Ganz, "How to enable a group to work has to be learned. It's not just in the DNA... You can't take for granted that people are going to be successful at collective action."[58] There need to be some handrails for getting things done, like the crisis map provided for people who wanted to help after the Haiti earthquake. What venues and opportunities will help leaders learn common frameworks and come to understand their individual actions as part of a greater whole?

Future Possibilities

How might these driving forces—both certain and uncertain—come together in the future? It's impossible to forecast with precision. But it's helpful to rehearse a range of possibilities that challenge our assumptions about what's next. We started by envisioning many different future scenarios. What follows are three sketches of 2015 that we felt, taken together, were most provocative for citizen engagement. They explore how communities might be brought together or pulled apart, the ways in which citizens may be well-informed, or misinformed. All of these futures could happen at the same time in different places, and there are signs that aspects of all three are already playing out today. For each, we start out by exploring what the world could look like in 2015 and then we examine the particular implications for leaders of transformative social change and grantmakers.
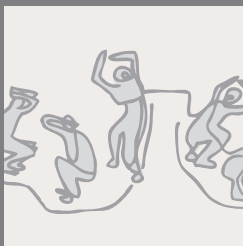
Digging Foxholes

- A world of extreme distrust and polarization
- People cocooning themselves according to their interests

Know Your Neighbor

- Trusting, vibrant local communities with grassroots social action
- Myopic at times

MobileME

- A hyperconnected, transient world
- Stark class divisions

Digging Foxholes

Imagine a world in 2015 in which fear is the dominant mentality. Authoritarian regimes use intelligence from open social media channels toward their own ends. Citizens push back against overwhelming information flows and privacy breaches. People are "digging foxholes." They're retreating to protect themselves.

This world comes about as people are sharing more and more information online, oftentimes unintentionally. At the same time, proliferating wiki leaks and other efforts at democratization through radical transparency begin to create a culture of paranoia. People are obsessing about how their actions today might be recorded and used in the future. Attempts to regulate and curb the drive for total openness and transparency are unsuccessful.

Eventually, there is a backlash. People begin to seek greater security and control. One way to do so is to look for opportunities to simplify and filter the massive amounts of information by relying on single or select sources of information. People see only what they want to see and fringe ideas quickly gain power.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND PHILANTHROPY

In a "Digging Foxholes" future, transformation is led by people and initiatives that project authenticity and provide clarity of direction amid distrust and uncertainty. Civic engagement is fueled by conveners who can foster trust, a renewed comfort with openness and new connections that help people dig out of their foxholes. Many funders will be well-positioned to serve as trusted, neutral conveners and bridge builders, providing a safe harbor for important civic conversations. This may require disassociating from partisan groups in order to play an authentic bridge-building role, or actively bringing people together across partisan divides.

Other strategies for fostering trust and connection across diversity include: Investing in network weavers to broker new relationships, supporting the development of "anti-filters" that bring together diverse information sources and perspectives, and funding efforts to build digital literacy—the ability to navigate and assess information, effectively use online tools and make meaning in this complex and information-saturated world.

In this highly individualistic and partitioned world there will be deep divisions among grantmakers, resulting in less funds pooled, fewer efforts aligned and more mom-and-pop shops operating with blinders on. There will be a need to help grantmakers get out of their own foxholes, connect with one another, build trust and (re)align their efforts.

Know Your Neighbor

Imagine a world in 2015 in which people sincerely know their neighbors. Residents are connecting with one another regularly. They're coordinating online in order to share used furniture, rides and babysitting. They're cleaning parks, reporting potholes and mounting campaigns for improved social services. The more they interact, the more residents come to trust one another. There is no central hub or single organizing force driving their activity. People from across the community are taking action and inspiring others to do the same.

This world comes about as federal and state governments become increasingly bankrupt and an upswing of grassroots activity strives to preserve basic services such as schools, police and firefighters. As local infrastructure degrades, residents come together—connecting in-person and online—to fill the gaps.

Online connections help people self-organize to meet their personal and community needs. Information can be filtered to match residents with one another in new ways: Bartering professional services, coordinating care for ailing neighbors and raising money for street repairs. Online town halls make it easier to participate in local civic events.

There are some downsides to all this togetherness. People who live in homogenous neighborhoods develop myopic worldviews, disconnected from broader global issues. Some communities become so tightly knit that it can be hard to bring in new ideas. Residents may be highly engaged but poorly informed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND PHILANTHROPY

In a "Know Your Neighbor Future," social change is led by those who are helping people see beyond their immediate communities and link diverse people and ideas. Philanthropies can serve as conveners, helping people connect with the world outside. They can also support the creation of tools and campaigns for broadening worldviews.

Promise will also be found in efforts to sustain neighborhood connections with support for informal resident-led activity. This could happen through creating and investing in platforms that help citizens support one another and participate in the public debate, especially around local issues. These platforms will benefit from drawing on what is known about asset-based community development and supporting efforts to find, connect and activate community talents and resources.

> " Social change is led by those who are helping people see beyond their immediate communities and link diverse people and ideas. Philanthropies can serve as conveners, helping people connect with the world outside. "

In order to support resident-led efforts, grantmakers will need to convince policy makers to expand existing regulatory structures and develop smart systems for funding individuals and informal networks that don't necessarily have 501(c)(3) status. They will also need to develop creative approaches to due diligence that emphasize factors like individual reputation rather than organizational track record. This will require a shift in thinking about assessing impact from looking at metrics linked to an organization's activity to considering individual or group performance in the context of the broader field they're trying to change. Community foundations will be well-positioned to understand and invest in individuals and loose groups and to work with other community foundations to connect these local networks.

In a "Know Your Neighbor" world, grantmakers will also be called on to fill gaps in a public infrastructure devastated by budget cuts. Recognizing that this is a short-term and untenable solution, funders can support advocacy for putting existing dollars to the best civic use.

MobileME

> This world comes about as personal portable devices continue to drop in cost and rise in popularity. They're used for everything from coordinating shopping to forging relationships.

Imagine a world in 2015 in which people are hyper-connected and hyper-mobile. Someone may have a home in Charlotte, but most of his professional and social communities are in New York and Los Angeles. Someone may be highly engaged in organizing to end mass atrocities abroad, but disconnected from the upcoming election for her local supervisor. Community is a mobile and fluid concept that is shaped more by personal preferences than by geography.

This world comes about as personal portable devices continue to drop in cost and rise in popularity. They're used for everything from coordinating shopping to forging relationships.

It is less and less necessary to be grounded in a particular place. Even citizenship becomes mobile as people cast their votes for the "mayor" of their towns of interest, not necessarily their towns of residence.

As the economic downturn continues, local infrastructure deteriorates further. The response: Do it yourself. Parents turn to home schooling, accessing world-class curricula and instruction for their children online, and turning their attention away from failing local schools.

The trends toward mobility and self-sufficiency are concentrated among the elite. As the educated and the wealthy disengage at the local level and forge connections across locales, a new class structure is beginning to emerge: The connected cosmopolitan elite and the disconnected place-bound.
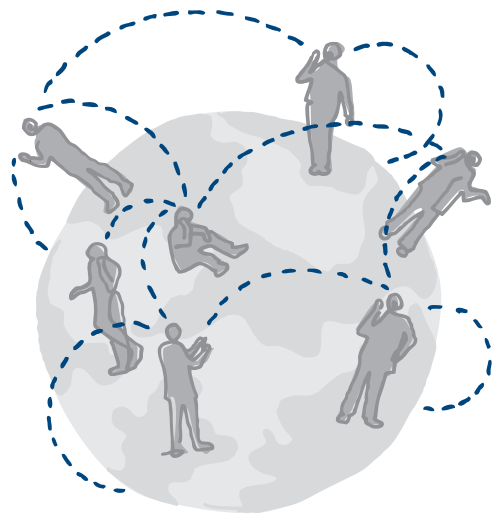
IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND PHILANTHROPY

In a MobileME future, social change may mean making place and civic life relevant. National grantmakers that focus on local communities will have a particular responsibility to engage the elite mobile class in the value of place. Funders might support creative ways to capture their attention and reframe their worldviews. This could include efforts to diversify sources of quality information, and thereby help people see the power of place, and applications for personal portable devices that refocus attention at the local level.

There will also be ample opportunity to build on the elite's globally oriented interests, channeling them toward aligned action on issues that require spanning geographic borders, like global poverty and disaster relief. Similarly, there will be opportunities to harness the energy of the DIY movement toward civic engagement—connecting together what is being learned about, for example, home schooling.

Promise will also be found in increasing connectivity for those who have been cut out of the MobileME world—increasing their access to global communities and helping them find new meaning and wealth in their local communities.

In this future, as with the other two, supporting individuals and loosely connected groups will be important, along with the need to rethink due diligence and impact assessment practices for a network context. Again, in this scenario, philanthropy will be poised to connect people from across divides and keep alive important conversations about civic values.

> National grantmakers that focus on local communities will have a particular responsibility to engage the elite mobile class in the value of place. Funders might support creative ways to capture their attention and reframe their worldviews.

How Philanthropy Can Make a Difference

As we've explored, harnessing the power of networks and enabling individual-to-individual connections can result in impact at a scale and speed unthinkable until recent years.

Constructive ideas can spread like wildfire, but so can destructive ones. Understanding network structures and acting with intentionality on this knowledge can yield impressive returns—for good and ill. Philanthropy is in a special position to accelerate the positive effects and mitigate the negative for communities in an increasingly interconnected world.

In the following section we offer practical recommendations for how funders can make a difference today. We integrate reflections from present-day efforts to create network-centric social change and the emerging future, offering a set of possibilities for how grantmakers can invest their resources and assume a leadership stance that tips the scales toward positive outcomes in a networked world.

Funders can ignite networks for good in three key ways:

1 **Embracing a network-centric mind-set**—experimenting with work practices that favor transparency, distributed leadership and working with whole systems.

2 **Supporting network-centric work** through the smart allocation of resources.

3 **Contributing to learning** about what makes networks work and how funders can best support and participate in networks.

We'll explore each of these opportunities for increasing philanthropic impact in turn.

Embrace a Network-Centric Mind-Set

Funders can embrace a network mind-set in their daily operations inside their own organizations and also in the ways they work with other funders and communities. Working in more transparent and decentralized ways, like "consulting the crowds" on a program strategy, can deliver immediate benefits for the task at hand, and also can serve as a way to model important behavior for the communities in which a funder is working.

Here are a range of practices that can help grantmakers nurture and participate in all aspects of a network's evolution, from knowing the network, to knitting the network, to growing the network.

Know the network

- **Understand your position in networks.** Map and reflect on your position in the networks or communities you support. Consider what your role has been and the ways in which you can and do exert influence.

- **Listen to the community and act on this input.** Consult your own crowd, synthesize what you learn and incorporate these insights into your decisions. As Knight Foundation president and CEO Alberto Ibargüen said, "Our biggest challenge is to overcome our instinct to believe that we know what to do and being open to ideas where we're skeptical. The hardest thing in foundations is to not go out and look for your ideas, but to fund ideas that the community is interested in."

Knit the network

- **Make connections.** Be intentional about building connections. Funders are in a privileged position for weaving networks themselves, by simply making introductions or implementing more ambitious efforts to bring people together.

- **Engage with the key players across sectors.** Business and government can be an important part of community problem solving. When weaving and investing in the network, move beyond the traditional sectoral distinctions and experiment with ways to engage important network "nodes" and infrastructure providers that may be commercial or public sector entities. For example, Localocracy is for-profit, as is Facebook. Philanthropies can explore the ways in which they can help these infrastructure providers maximize their contributions to social benefit.

Grow the network

- **Grow the "periphery."** Funders have access to a wide range of stakeholders. They're well positioned to bring fresh perspectives into the network and bridge the network to unusual suspects.

- **Keep up with the network.** If something is urgent at the community level, move at the same pace. Experiment with special rapid grant cycles that can provide just-in-time support when necessary.

Support Network-Centric Work

There are a number of ways you can support networks through your grantmaking. Many of them require investing in infrastructure and individuals, in addition to common grantmaking domains like program support and organizational capacity building. To do this well, you need sensitivity to networks and network dynamics, since traditional and organization-centric models of effectiveness may not be applicable to the network context.

Here are a number of things funders can do to use their grantmaking to know, knit and grow networks. Since networks are continuously changing and evolving, many of the investment opportunities mentioned for one stage will continue to be relevant in later stages of evolution as well.

Know the network

- **Assess network health.** To effectively diagnose network health requires a shift away from typical due diligence considerations. Start by understanding the health of the network across the following dimensions: Value, participation, form, leadership, connection, capacity, and learning and adaptation. The "Questions for Consideration When Investing in Network-Centric Project" tool (see page 43) can help frame the inquiry.

- **Map the network.** A first step for many new citizen-centered efforts is to develop an understanding of the surrounding network. This can be done by mapping the network through a variety of methods, like social-network mapping, systems diagramming and mapping funding flows across foundations and potentially other sources. Network and systems maps can reveal the current and potential network resources, providing important insight on how a project might be organized to maximize these assets.

- **Develop mechanisms for supporting individuals and informal networks.** As we saw in the scenarios and in the case studies of network-centric action like the Hardwick potlucks, meaningful social impact doesn't require formal organizations. Funders can experiment with approaches to due diligence and grants management that don't assume organizational infrastructure. This will, as mentioned, require overcoming and/or expanding the currently regulatory limitations that often limit funders to investing only in 501(c)(3)s.

> "To do this well, you need sensitivity to networks and network dynamics, since traditional and organization-centric models of effectiveness may not be applicable to the network context."

Knit the network

- **Contribute to the flow of reliable, quality information.** This will help ensure that people working in networks are well-informed enough to make good choices. For example, support the development of tools that counter the current trend toward hyper-personalization of information and act as "anti-filters" that broaden world-views while moderating the information flow.

- **Create and maintain spaces for weaving the network.** This might be a physical space, like the building where Making Connections Louisville holds its Network Nites, or an online space like the virtual town halls that Localocracy is building for communities around the United States. In both cases, establishing environments where network connections can flourish requires investing in infrastructure.

- **Support dedicated coordination capacity.** While openly engaging large groups makes it possible to connect with and coordinate lots of people in a short period of time, this also requires dedicated capacity. It takes time and skill to design processes to coordinate participation, engage people and synthesize their input.

- **Support catalysts for connection or "network weavers."** This could be a person or a group of people whose job it is to weave the network by introducing people to one another, encouraging new people to join the network, and brokering connections across differences. A network weaver might also assume coordination responsibilities.

- **Invest small amounts of money.** At this stage, modest funds are needed to make things happen. It is possible to do more with less. Sometimes what is most needed is a little bit of "glue money"—funds to support the little things that allow people to participate and the knitting to happen, like food, transportation and childcare.

Grow the network

- **Support individuals and groups who mobilize network participants to act.** Identify and nurture key individuals who serve as catalysts for others, as Nisha Susan did when she announced the Pink Chaddi campaign through her Facebook network.[59]

- **Establish innovation funds.** Make available modest amounts of funding for projects led by network participants who want to get together and collaborate on an experiment.

- **Provide leadership development for the network.** Rather than focusing on strengthening isolated individuals, foster leadership in and across networks. For example, the Standby Task Force is building a cadre of leaders who are skilled in crisis mapping and, in the process, is nurturing connections across this community.

- **Build digital literacy across and beyond the network.** Build capacity for working effectively in a networked world by helping people strengthen their digital organizing skills, as well as fundamentals like the ability to assess the credibility of information and manage online reputation.

Contribute to Learning

We don't know all the answers to how to work well with networks. Experimentation and a commitment to shared learning will be needed. Share what you're learning so others can learn from you and open yourself up to learning from others. Invest in feedback loops and learning systems that help everyone build understanding together.

- **Experiment.** Learn by doing, just like the networks you're supporting. This could mean conducting an experiment, like designing inviting spaces for leaders to connect around an issue area you and they both care about.

- **Develop approaches to assess the impact of networks that reflect their emergent and complex nature.** Different participants typically have different reasons for participation, making it hard to align with and clarify desired outcomes. Networks are decentralized and constantly changing systems, making it difficult to measure causality. Some of the most powerful impacts of networks may be unexpected and hard to track. On top of all this, it can take a very long time to achieve measurable impact. You need to be patient and perhaps willing to continue providing support even if the outcomes you'd like to see aren't yet being delivered.[60]

- **Look at indicators of impact in both the process of network formation and the field you're trying to change.** Networks can be a powerful means for making progress on tough social problems, like public health and education reform. And, the process of weaving networks can be an end in itself with stronger webs of relationships creating new potential of all kinds.

- **Evaluate networks collaboratively.** Engage network participants in developing a system-wide picture of what is being tried and achieved by the various players. If you build a shared vision of the change you'd like to see, it becomes possible to collectively develop shared indicators that you can all track progress against.

- **Learn openly.** Capture what you're learning, from your own experiments to work with a network mind-set and from the networks you're supporting. Actively and openly share these insights along the way from both successes and failures.

> "Share what you're learning so others can learn from you and open yourself up to learning from others. Invest in feedback loops and learning systems that help everyone build understanding together."

Conclusion
A Vision for Connected Citizens

The future is here.

Many aspects of the scenarios we explored are already playing out. People are withdrawing into their foxholes with concerns about sharing information. Neighbors are banding together and making a difference in their neighborhoods as the public infrastructure deteriorates. The highly connected are finding community in far-flung places and issues that cut across borders. What, then, is the future grantmakers might help create?

Imagine a world in which diverse citizens are working together to make a difference. Their default is to trust, rather than doubt, neighbors. Community assets are accessible and in use. Relationships are reciprocal. Both place-based and borderless communities are thriving. Effective responses to information overload and the tendency to listen to a narrow set of perspectives have been developed, and citizens are accessing and acting on high-quality information. Civic engagement is at an all-time high. The discourse is diverse and civil. Our democracy is vibrant.

As we look to the future, much is uncertain. However, we can be sure that making progress on complex social problems will require the participation of many citizens and perspectives. There will be more connectivity, transparency and decentralization. And people will continue to network for both social purposes and self-interest. Funders have an opportunity to capture and accelerate these trends toward meaningful civic participation and the greater good. Grantmakers can use their leadership and resources to direct the energy of fast-moving ideas, distributed power and the social webs that surround us all to foster a healthy and connected 21st century citizenry.

Tips and Tools for Network-Centric Grant Making

Questions for consideration when investing in a network-centric project

What are the characteristics of a healthy network or a network-centric project? Just as the meaning of "healthy" differs for people depending on factors like age, gender and genetics, there's no universal picture of network health. However, as with people, there is some consensus about what healthy tends to be, and conversely, what unhealthy looks like for networks. Here are important attributes of healthy networks, followed by several related questions to consider when you're investing in network-centric projects.[61]

1   **VALUE.** Effective network-centric projects offer multiple doors of entry—a range of value propositions that will resonate with diverse motives for participation. They also outline clearly for participants what can be expected from the network and what will be expected of the participant in return.

- How broad versus targeted does the purpose need to be?

- Is there a range of value propositions available?

- What value do members get? What do they give? Is the exchange clear?

2   **PARTICIPATION.** Participants in healthy networks are connecting with others and engaging in network activities. There is an environment of trust and reciprocity nurtured through distributed leadership, and an established and enforced code of conduct.

- Is there ample trust and reciprocity? Are there systems, practices, capacity in place for nurturing trust and reciprocity?

- What stakeholder groups are present? Are some groups more heavily engaged than others? Who is not participating who ought to be?

- How porous are the boundaries? What are the relationships with other networks?

- How big does the network need to be?

3 **FORM.** The network form should reflect the purpose. For example, if the purpose is innovation there should be a large "periphery"—individuals who are loosely connected around the edges of the network and who bring in fresh ideas.

- What form is needed at different stages in the network's life cycle? What is the ideal network form in one year? Three years? Five years?

- How tight or how loose is the network structure? What's the balance needed?

- How important are strong versus weak ties? Do some relationships need to be strengthened? Do new connections need to be added to the network?

- What's the role of the periphery, if any? Is it being optimized?

- What's role of the center, or hub, if any? Is information and action flowing through the hub(s)? Is there a bottleneck?

4 **LEADERSHIP.** Leadership in healthy networks is shared and distributed widely. Ideally there are many participants exercising leadership, by weaving connections, bridging differences and inspiring participants to recognize and work toward shared goals.

- What are the leadership roles needed in the network? Who convenes it? Facilitates it? Weaves it? Coordinates it? Champions it? Is there ample leadership capacity?

- How is responsibility shared across the network?

- How are decisions made?

5 **CONNECTION.** Connectivity throughout the network should be dense enough that if highly connected participants leave the network remains strong. Ample well-designed space, online and in person, and effective use of social media can facilitate these connections.

- What are the spaces for network connection? When and where does the network meet?

- What infrastructure is needed to maintain and/or strengthen connection?

- Are there multiple venues for making connections? How are online and in-person opportunities for connection integrated?

- How open versus closed should the spaces for network connection be?

6 **THE CAPACITY TO TAP THE NETWORK'S ASSETS.** Healthy networks operate on the premise that the assets they need are resident within the network. They have systems and habits in place for revealing capacity—like talent, resources and time—and tapping that capacity.

- Can the network find and tap network assets (e.g. money, relationships, talent)?
- How quickly does information about network assets flow through the network?

7 **FEEDBACK LOOPS AND ADAPTATION.** Networks are dynamic; what is needed and works today may be different tomorrow. Healthy networks have feedback loops in place that enable continuous learning about what works and what's needed, with input from across the network. Then they adapt and act based on their new knowledge.

- How does the network know if it's working or not, and how does it make needed adjustments?
- How does the network listen to its participants?

> Healthy networks have feedback loops in place that enable continuous learning about what works and what's needed, with input from across the network. Then they adapt and act based on their new knowledge.

Supporting network-centric projects: pitfalls to avoid

Don't:

- Assume that by investing in networks you're solving a lack of democratic participation. Creating network space alone won't increase participation if there are still barriers like language and digital access.
- Invest in networks without a commitment to understanding network dynamics and experimenting with a network mind-set.
- Hire someone to be the "network person." Initially it may be helpful to have in-house leaders to help spread network capacity. But ultimately the responsibility for working with a network mind-set needs to be shared.
- Push networks to centralize and create formal structures in order to manage the influx of money when the network doesn't otherwise need to establish these structures.
- Assume that models of organizational effectiveness can be applied to strengthening networks.
- Apply conventional evaluation criteria to assessing network impact.

UNDERSTANDING NETWORKS FOR GOOD

Building Smart Communities Through Network Weaving

An introduction to the basics on networks, how they evolve and how they can be shaped for social impact, illustrated through a case study.

Valdis Krebs and June Holley. 2006.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/ql8Pd

Net Gains: A Handbook for Network Builders Seeking Social Change

A handbook covering the basics on networks –including their common attributes, how to leverage networks for social impact, evaluating networks, and social network analysis.

Peter Plastrik and Madeleine Taylor. 2006.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/hRzYJc

"The Networked Nonprofit"

An article about how nonprofit leaders are achieving greater impact by working through networks. Includes detailed examples.

Jane Wei-Skillern and Sonia Marciano. 2008.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/bqN4ZL

The Networked Nonprofit

A book rich with examples on how nonprofits are using social media to "power social networks for change."

Beth Kanter and Allison Fine. 2010.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/du78Sq

Net Work: A Practical Guide to Creating and Sustaining Networks at Work and in the World

Theory and practical advice for how to create and sustain networks.

Patti Anklam. 2007. ONLINE: http://j.mp/eQbqCz

Working Wikily

An article about social change networks and how to work with a network-mind-set.

Diana Scearce, Gabriel Kasper and Heather McLeod Grant. 2010.
ONLINE: http://j.mp/d98g0a

INVESTING IN NETWORKS FOR GOOD

While grantmakers have been investing in networks for years, there have been limited efforts to codify and capture effective network-centric grant making practices. Contributors to this essay and others are working on the development of materials that will help advance the practice. Specifically, stay tuned for:

A Funder's Guide to Networks

The Network of Network Funders, Monitor Institute and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations are developing a how-to guide for grantmakers who are intentionally investing in networks and asking questions like: What should I invest in? How should I approach due diligence and impact assessment when supporting networks? How can I work with a network mind-set?

Fall 2011.

Leadership and Networks: Bringing a Network Lens to Leadership and a Leadership Lens to Networks

The Leadership Learning Community, a learning network dedicated to transforming the way the social change leadership development work is conceived, conducted and evaluated, is spearheading a collaborative research project on leadership approaches that are more inclusive, networked and collective. The publication will address questions such as: Why do networks require a different kind of leadership and what does it look like? How can grantmakers and leadership program designers develop leadership with a network mind-set and skills?

Summer 2011.

Appendices

Glossary

CITIZEN: All people who are stakeholders in their community (not the term's narrow political meaning).

COMMUNITY: A group of people who share a common interest— whether their place of residence or an issue that cuts across boundaries.

NETWORK, NOUN: A group of people who are connected through relationships.

NETWORK-CENTRIC, ADJECTIVE: A way of organizing that is transparent, open and decentralized.

NETWORK-CENTRIC PRACTICE, NOUN: Tools and strategies for strengthening, creating or leveraging network connections.

NETWORK WEAVING: The art of making connections among a group of people, in order to strengthen existing ties, bring new people into the network and bridge divides.

NODE: The people who are connected together through relationships (links) in a network. Nodes can refer to any component that can be connected together in a network, like organizations, ideas or data. In this essay we focus on networks of people (social networks).

PERIPHERY: The collection of nodes that are at the edge of the network and therefore less connected to others by than the highly connected nodes in the center of the network.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Technologies that use broadly accessible and expandable publishing tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites and Twitter. They are social in the sense that they facilitate interaction among people; they allow "many-to-many" connections, between and among virtually any number of people, however small or large; and, in many cases, they offer both simultaneous and asynchronous interaction, enabling communication either in real time or over long periods.

SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS (SNA): The analytic process of mapping, understanding and measuring the networks of social relationships that connect people to one another, using specialized software and techniques.

SPACE: The venue where the members of a network form and renew their connections, whether a physical place or an online meeting-space.

STRONG TIES: Relationships in a network that are comparatively deep or binding.

WEAK TIES: Relationships in a network that are comparatively light or fleeting.

Credits and Sources

- Paula Ellis, vice president for Strategic Initiatives
- Alberto Ibargüen, president and CEO
- Judith Kleinberg, program director, San Jose and Silicon Valley
- Eric Newton, senior adviser to the president
- Mayur Patel, vice president for Strategy and Assessment
- Brenda Price, program director, Detroit (former)
- Trabian Shorters, vice president for the Communities Program
- Damian Thorman, program director, National Program

EXPERTS AND ACTIVISTS INTERVIEWED AND CONSULTED

- David Batstone, Not for Sale
- Charles Best, DonorsChoose.org
- Rachel Bigby, ForageSF
- Joseph Chamie, Center for Migration Studies
- Jane Chesher, Social Interactive
- Hillary Cottam, Participle
- Roberto Cremonini, Cremonini Consulting Network
- Jennie Jean Davidson and Dana Jackson, Making Connections Louisville
- Joellen Easton, Public Insight Network
- Joe Edelman, Citizen Logistics
- Kathleen Enright, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
- Marshall Ganz, Harvard Kennedy School
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- Beth Kanter, author of Beth's Blog and co-author of The Networked Nonprofit
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- Rita Kostiuk, Village to Village Network
- Andrew Lih, the School of Communication and Journalism at USC Annenberg
- Stephanie McAuliffe, David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Patrick Meier, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and Ushahidi
- Sheela Patel, Shack/Slum Dwellers International
- Noah Raford, Global Business Network
- Howard Rheingold, author and researcher
- Sonali Shah, Foster School of Business at the University of Washington
- Clay Shirky, Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University

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28. The Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, founded by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, has created a library of tools for designing asset-based social services. http://www.abcdinstitute.org/.

29. Tirado, M., S. Tuneberg, J. Coates, J. Butts, M. Matthews-Sterling, L. Sinha and D. Lee. "The Role of Social Network Analysis and Informal Actors in Emergency Preparedness Planning and Response for Disasters Involving Total Loss of Communications." Unpublished manuscript. 2006.

30. Rebecca Solnit explores this question in great depth in her 2009 book *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*, where she examines a series of histori-cal cases in which the members of the affected population provided one another with remark-able amounts of mutual aid.

31. The trend towards reciprocal sharing is also on the rise across sectors. The Mesh by Lisa Gansky (2010) makes the case that business models based on sharing are the cutting edge, while *Wiki Government* by Beth Noveck (2009) pro-vides a similar set of arguments and examples from the world of participatory governance.

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53. As our own effort to consult the crowd, the Knight Foundation and Monitor Institute conducted a survey about the future of citizen engagement and community information, which was circulated to Knight staff, experts and the general public. The 63 responses helped shape these questions and the preceding premises for the future.

54. For an in-depth historical and theoretical discus-sion of how technology acts as a force in society, see Kevin Kelly's *What Technology Wants* (2010) and W. Brian Arthur's *The Nature of Technology: What It Is and How It Evolves* (2009).

55. Monitor Institute interview, Jul. 15, 2010. Also see "Small change: why the revolution will not be tweeted," by Malcolm Gladwell in *The New Yorker* on Oct. 4, 2010. http://j.mp/efA8t2.

56. Monitor Institute interview, Aug. 23, 2010.

57. Monitor Institute interview, Jul. 26, 2010.

58. Monitor Institute interview, Aug. 30, 2010.

59. The idea of individuals or groups who mobilize network action (or network "drivers") comes from Marty Kearns, founder and CEO of NetCentric Advocacy.

60. "Funders' Guide to Networks." Forthcoming in summer 2011 from the Network of Network Funders, Monitor Institute, and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO).

61. This tool for assessing network health is based on diagnostic tool developed by the Philanthropy and Networks Exploration, a multi-year partnership between Monitor Institute and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. http://j.mp/cgmNXi.

Origins of the Work

This project builds on the Knight Foundation's deep experience supporting community-centered change and social networks as well as Monitor Institute's work to understand and activate the potential at the intersection of networks, social change and philanthropy. Monitor Institute's work in this space has been done in collaboration with many partners, most notably the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Hawai'i Community Foundation. The ideas here also draw on the work of the Network of Network Funders, an ongoing community of practice for grantmakers who are intentionally supporting and working through networks.

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This report is part of Knight Foundation's Technology for Engagement Initiative, which invests in projects that use the latest digital tools to help people take action in their communities. For more, visit www.technologyforengagement.org.

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