

PHILOSOPHY

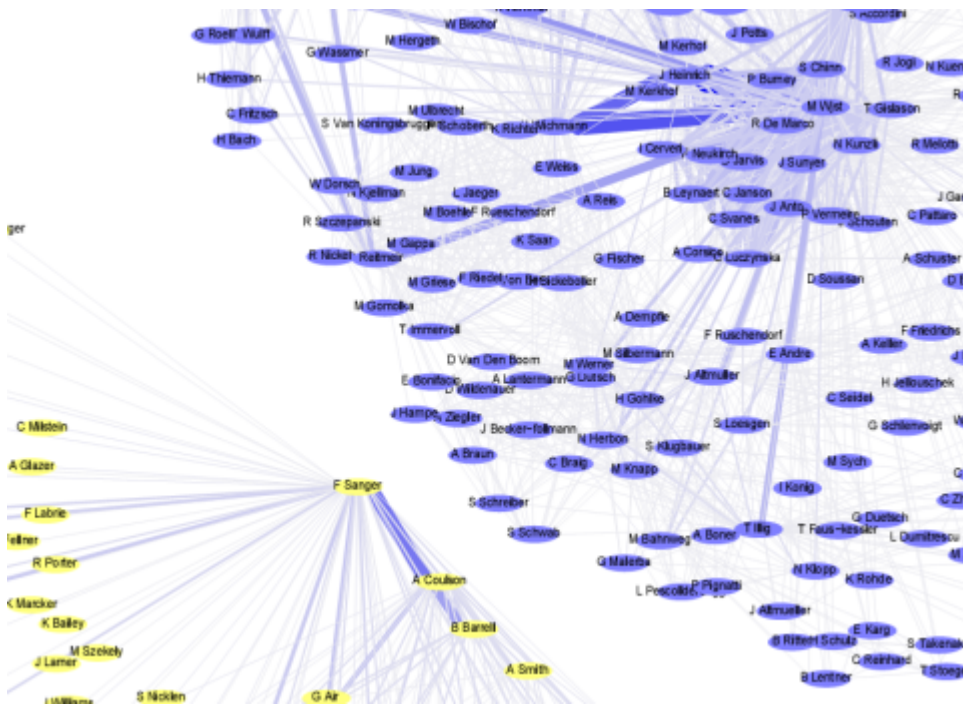
IT' S A SMALL WORLD

12.03.2007

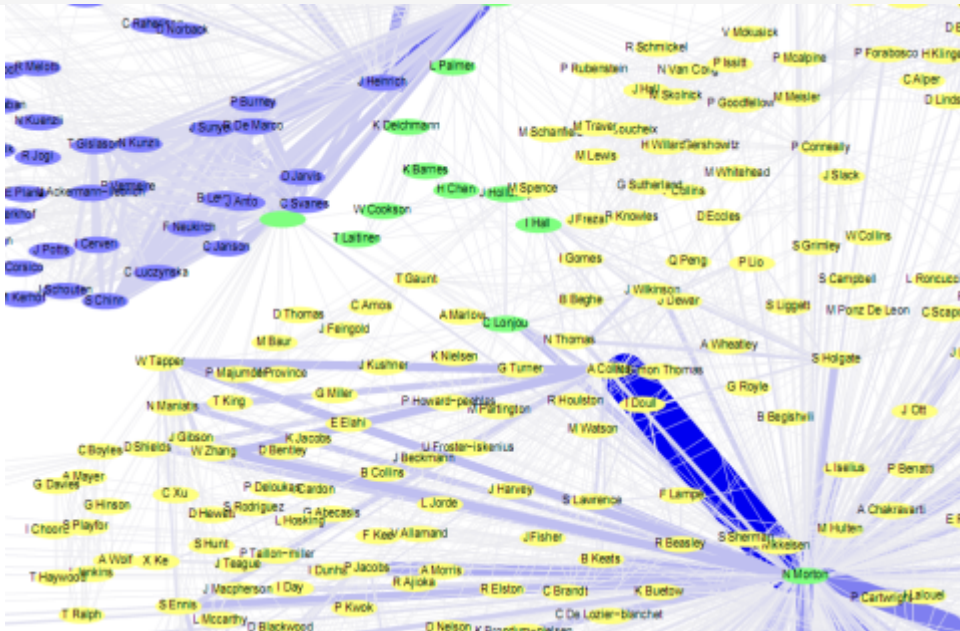
Sometimes erroneously described as [global village](#) phenomenon the notion of a [small world](#) goes back to an experiment by Stanley Milgram (who became famous with the “obedience to authority” experiment – I did not know until last weeks that the punishing experiments had been repeated here in [Munich](#) where 85 percent of the subjects continued until to the end!).

The small world theory says that everyone in the world can be reached through a short chain of social acquaintances. The concept gave rise to the famous phrase of phrase six degrees of separation – I believe that a scientist may even reach another scientist in 4-5 steps.

My first [PubNet](#) example here is to reach F. Sanger by joint co-authors. This doesn't work – my estimate would be 3 intermediary steps.



My second PubNet example is to reach N. Morton (the foreword of his anniversary book says that a qualification of a genetic epidemiologist can be counted as “Newton”-points – the number of joint publications with Professor Morton).



Addendum 8/7/08

[Arxiv.org](https://arxiv.org) has the largest study so far: 6,6 steps in 30 billion messenger conversations among 240 million people.

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