

Network

Walk Bengaluru at Cubbon Park



An invitation to touch networks

Dear reader,

Welcome to the Network Walk. This is an invitation to "touch grass", which is a saying in digital spaces that reminds us to get in touch with the world around us.

On this walk, we will go out and find networks. A network emerges when there are connections, and connections are everywhere.

We start our walk with telegraphy history at the Central Telegraph Office. Following internet cables, we meet a tree and learn about the plants-based origins of global communication networks. In the park, we engage smartphones to measure the size of a hotspot and look for traces of internet networks. From then on, fungi enter the scene and we play with ideas like the Wood Wide Web. Fungi, plants, and bacteria form some of the oldest and most robust networks on the planet. In the end, you are invited to consider the networks that you are part of.

How to?

To do a Network Walk, you can join one of our walks during the Travelling Plants exhibition 2025. Or maybe you are reading this later, or in a different place. In this case, this is what you'll need:

- 1-2 hours of time
- this booklet
- ideally a smartphone with mobile data
- some friends will make this more fun, but most things you can do on your own

Your guides are...

Biplab Mahato and Iz Paehr. We met during Iz' bangaloREsidency in 2024, and became collaborators and friends. Biplab is a fungi culturist, and Iz is a media artist.

We went on many walks in Cubbon Park and found more networks than expected. What will you/we find this time?

Network Walk:

Directions and Stops

12°58'51.9"N 77°35'47.1"E

CTO

Find the Central Telegraph Office by searching for Coorg Story's Filter Coffee near M Cubbon Park (Park Side). When you face the café, walk to your right for about 80 metres. The garden in front of the CTO is blocked off from visitors. It is possible to still enter; trust your gut feeling!

tree

a tree at the left edge of the CTO building that is holding many internet cables.

hotspot constellation

Measure the size of a hotspot in Cubbon Park

wood wide webs

Find plant-fungi networks in Cubbon Park

5

lichen songs

Sing a metabolic song of symbiosis

1

2

3

4

M. Cubbon Park

The Central Telegraph Office

Welcome to the CTO! This place is an important part of the history of telecommunications in India. On May 23rd 1854, Bengaluru became part of a 401 km long telegraph line. Telegrams were sent and received from the CTO for 159 years until the CTO closed its doors forever in 2013.

The last telegram

Melissa Arulappan visited the CTO on the last day it was open. You can read about her experience below or listen to her voice on: stickynetworks.net/the-last-telegram.html

"It was in July 2013 that there was this article in the papers about the death of the telegram. And in some ways, there was a sense of excitement, but there was also a certain amount of nostalgia because we grew up with telegrams. Telegrams always came with either news of joy of someone arriving or of sorrow of someone ill or dying.

But I was determined to go to the telegraph office on the last day to send a telegram and I thought who better than to my children who probably had never ever seen a telegram in their lives. It was quite a nostalgic experience just going to the telegraph office. It wasn't the same kind of experience that we had in sending telegrams, obviously because there was a huge queue. There were several queues actually: a queue for collecting a form, a queue for counting words, a third to calculate costs and a fourth to pay. But it was very nostalgic for me. There were a lot of people. We were having discussions about the death of the telegram, what it meant to us, the kind of experiences that we had shared with telegrams growing up. And I just felt it was so important to send one to our daughters as a keepsake of a world that was coming to a close that day. I was a bit bummed though when they did receive the telegram to find that it wasn't the same kind of experience. It came much later than what a normal telegram would, nine days or six days compared to a day. It came in an envelope so it didn't come as a telegram and it came as a printout. But still, it's nostalgia, it's a keepsake for them. And I'm glad they have it."

Love Letter to...

The CTO

We have registered the Central Telegraph Office on Google Maps so that more people can enjoy telegraph history. Let's fill this space with new life!

If you have a Google account, take some minutes to write a review. Some questions to guide you:

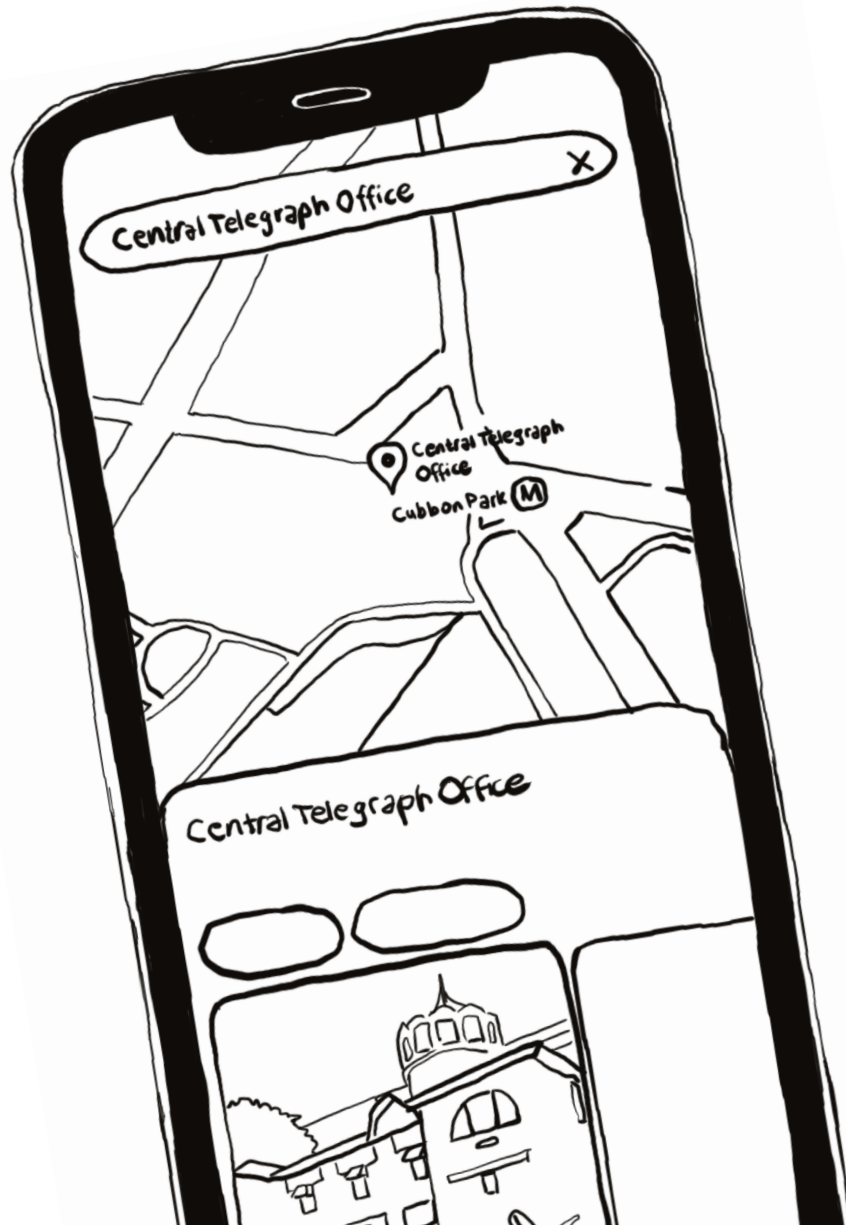
What does this space mean to you?
How does it feel to touch telecommunications history?
What should others know about this place when they visit?
Do you have any personal connections to this place?

You can also make your review a love letter to the CTO.

Dear CTO,

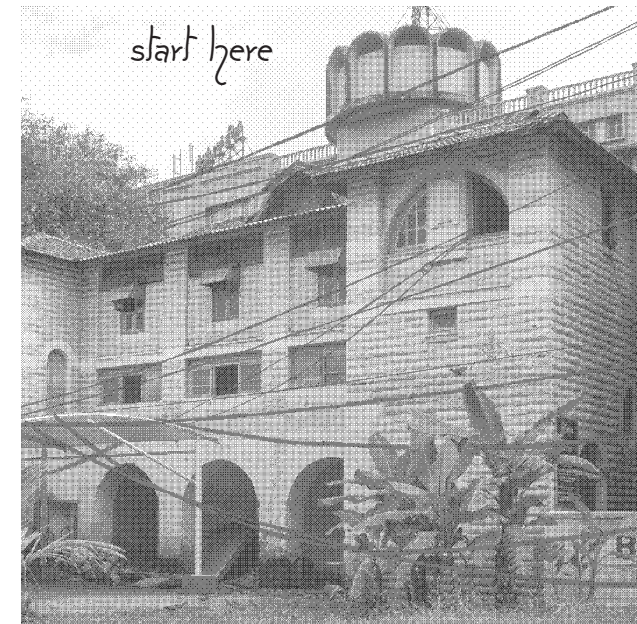
...

Yours,



Follow a cable

The Central Telegraph Office is covered with internet and electric cables. Pick one, and draw it onto these pages. Follow the cable with your pen. Can you trace it to the tree at the edge of the building near the entrance to Cubbon Park?



*Want to touch the internet?
Some of the cables are hanging low
enough to trace them with your hands.*

2

1

Telegraphy grew with a tree...

... but not this tree that you are currently in front of. But what better place to tell the story of telegraphy's origins than in the shade of a Bengaluru tree that is literally holding internet cables?

Global communications were only possible because of the sap of a tree from Southeast Asia.

When colonizers in the 1850s wanted to lay telegraph cables across oceans, they encountered a problem: cables lose currents when they are in touch with salt water. An insulator was needed to keep wetness at bay. It was found in the material gutta-percha. Palaquium trees make a tree sap that shape-shifts into a plastic at room temperature. This plastic was used to surround cables and to protect them from salt water. In the decades that followed, the gutta-percha tree was harvested into near extinction while the telegraph network grew.

Palaquium trees are native to India and while you will not find them in Cubbon Park, the forests of the Western Ghats host trees such as Palaquium ellipticum that is also called Indian Gutta Percha. These trees produce a similar sap as the Palaquium gutta trees that were felled for the growth of the telegraph network in Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra and Borneo. There are stories of Palaquium gutta growing in Lalbagh... maybe you can find them on a future walk?

Hotspot Constellation

As you walk into Cubbon Park, you will notice less and less trees carrying internet cables and more and more people looking at their phones. For our next stop, try and find a tree with some free space around it.

How to Measure a Hotspot

This is an invitation to measure the size of a mobile hotspot. A mobile hotspot allows others to share a phone's internet connection. This little performance is designed for at least two people carrying smartphones.

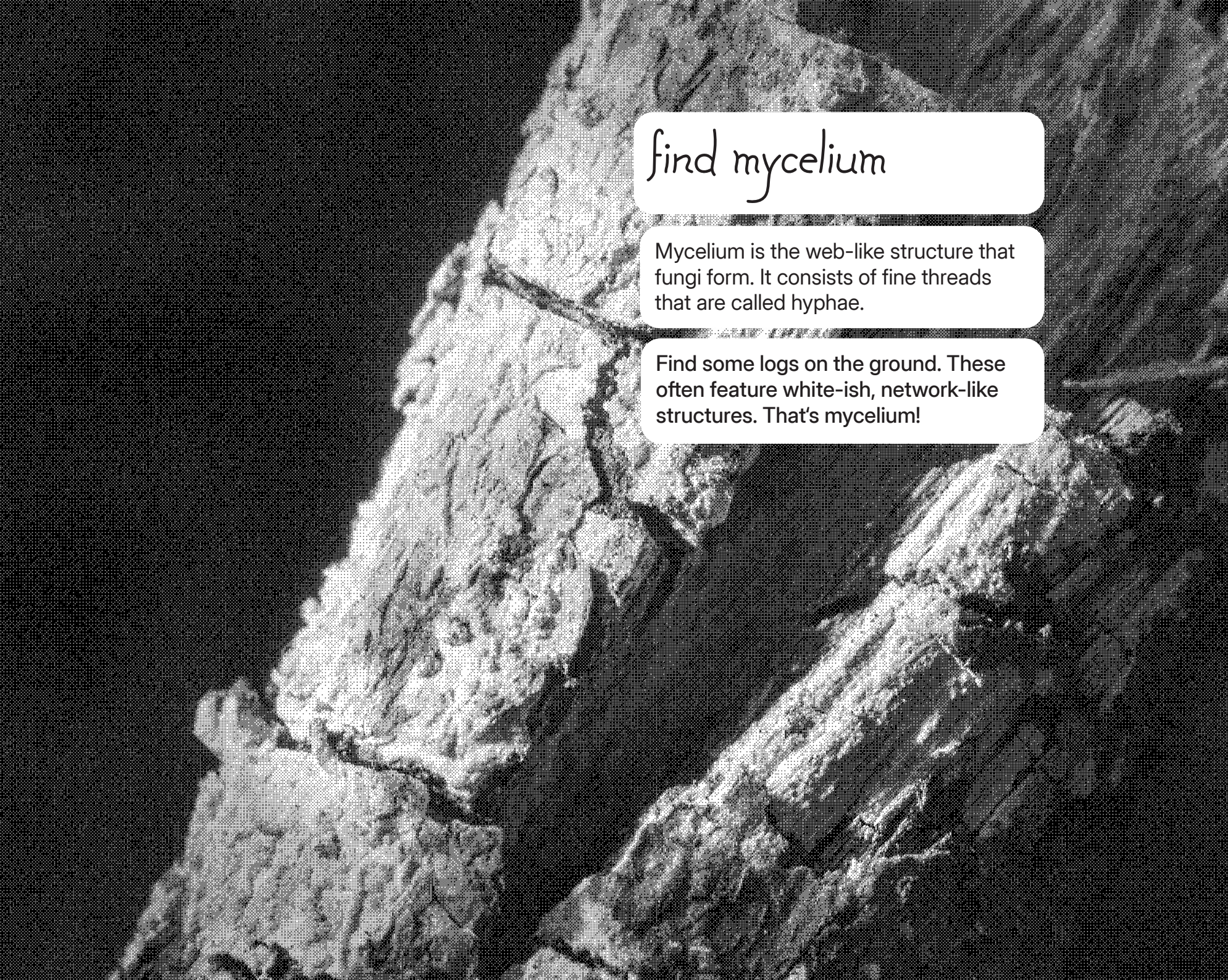
- 1) Person 1: Open a hotspot on your phone. Usually you will find this setting within the Mobile Data settings on your phone. Make sure your hotspot is protected with a password.
- 2) Person 2: Open the network settings on your phone. Under Wifi there should be a list of all the public networks available nearby. Can you see the hotspot made by Person 1?
- 3) Person 2: Move away from Person 1 until you can no longer read the name of their hotspot in your network settings.
- 4) Congratulations! You have measured the size of a hotspot. What do you think about it?

The Wood Wide Web

find mycelium

Mycelium is the web-like structure that fungi form. It consists of fine threads that are called hyphae.

Find some logs on the ground. These often feature white-ish, network-like structures. That's mycelium!



Lichen Songs

Fungi love to build and become networks with others. Lichen are a symbiosis between fungi and photosynthetic organisms such as algae or cyanobacteria.

In this symbiosis, fungal partners offer protection and structure, while the photobiont provides food.

Did you know that lichens cover 8% of terrestrial ecosystems and can even survive in outer space?

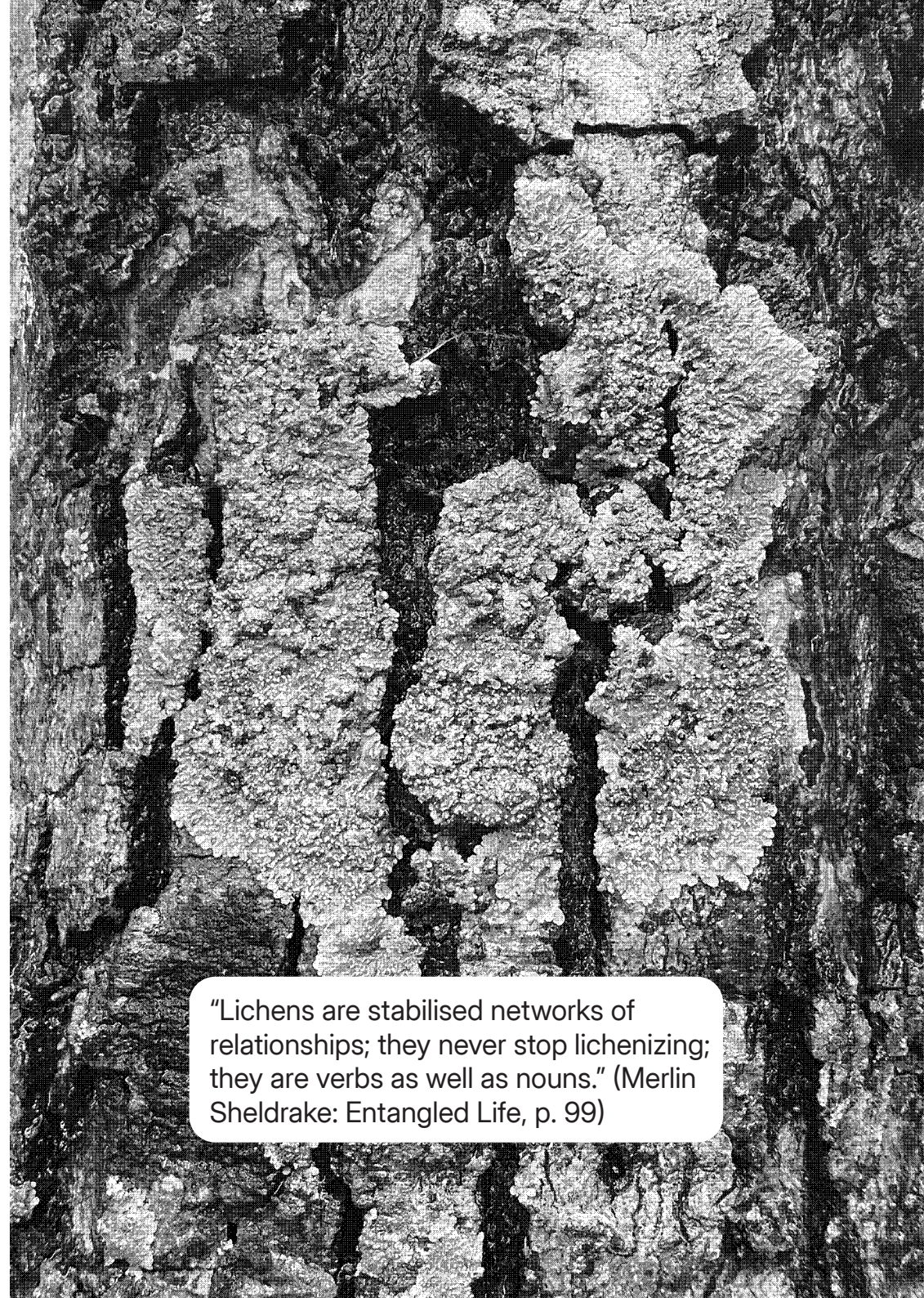
find lichens

Search for leaflike, branching or crusty structures on trees, rocks, or even pavement.

Lichen Songs

To understand lichens, let us collectively sing a metabolic song. Let's become like lichen, and open up to symbiotic ways of being and becoming. You will need at least one other friend to sing along.

- 1) Hum a frequency that comes easily to you.
- 2) Listen to others. Find your own rhythm. Meet other rhythms.
- 3) Move around slowly. Where is your rhythm, your frequency, your sounding repertoire welcome?
- 4) As you move, how do you meet other songs? What new songs emerge? Collectively build clusters of singers and songs.
- 5) Hum and sing your songs with others. Slow down. Wait a thousand years. Become lichens.



"Lichens are stabilised networks of relationships; they never stop lichenizing; they are verbs as well as nouns." (Merlin Sheldrake: Entangled Life, p. 99)

Drawing Fungal

Networks

Found some logs? Spotted some mushrooms?

If you are in a group, collect your logs and show each other what you found. Use this double page for drawing the fungal networks you spotted.



Space for notes

Some ideas: do you want to stay in touch with anyone you got to know during a Network Walk? Note down their contact information. Or maybe you have some questions or ideas about networks? Here is some space to sketch, draw, write.

Join our network

You can find more information about networks on Iz' website artwork stickynetworks.net. The website is a multi media experience that works best on a desktop computer / laptop.

We would love to learn about you and the networks you have found during this Network Walk.

You are invited to post on Instagram using the hashtag #networkwalk. Our usernames are @izpaehr @shroomin.

To upload any photos of the networks you have found to our Google Drive folder, please use this link or scan the QR code. <https://tinyurl.com/networkwalk>



You can reach us via email:
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Gratitude and Credits

Network Walk is a project by Biplab Mahato and Iz Paehr. This booklet was written and designed by Iz Paehr in conversation with Biplab Mahato. It is part of the 2025 exhibition Travelling Plants at 1Shanthiroad Studio/ Gallery Bangalore curated by Suresh Jayaram.

Travelling Plants is a transdisciplinary project initiated by the Goethe-Institut Chennai, in collaboration with the Alliance Française of Madras and the Institut Français de Pondichéry. In Bangalore, Travelling Plants is presented by the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, in collaboration with Alliance Française de Bangalore.

Gratitude to our network of colleagues and friends:
Goethe Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore
1Shanthiroad Studio/Gallery Bangalore
Archives at NCBS

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About Network Walk

by Iz Paehr & Biplab Mahato

Network Walk is a gentle exploration of Bengaluru's hidden infrastructures, where telegraph buildings, internet cables, trees, fungi, and lichens appear as interconnected webs. Beginning at the Central Telegraph Office and moving into Cubbon Park, the walk invites you to trace signals, measure hotspots, and notice the quiet work of mycelium.

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