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network

Also contains definition of: covalent network

in polymer chemistry

A highly ramified macromolecule in which essentially each constitutional unit is connected to each other constitutional unit and to the macroscopic phase boundary by many permanent paths through the macromolecule, the number of such paths increasing with the average number of intervening bonds; the paths must on the average be co-extensive with the macromolecule.

Notes:

1. Usually, and in all systems that exhibit rubber elasticity, the number of distinct paths is very high, but, in most cases, some constitutional units exist which are connected by a single path only.
2. If the permanent paths through the structure of a network are all formed by covalent bonds, the term covalent network may be used.
3. The term physical network may be used if the permanent paths through the structure of a network are not all formed by covalent bonds but, at least in part, by physical interactions, such that removal of the interactions leaves individual macromolecules or a macromolecule that is not a network.

Source:

PAC, 1996, *68*, 2287 *(Glossary of basic terms in polymer science (IUPAC Recommendations 1996))* on page 2298

