

Creating the World Citizen Parliament

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We must not be afraid of dreaming the seemingly impossible if we want the seemingly impossible to become a reality.—Vaclav Havel

We have witnessed amazing historic events in the past few years: the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and the election—and reelection—of an African-American president in the U.S., to name just a few. Technological progress has likewise been impressive. Access to knowledge, and to other people, has been multiplied by several orders of magnitude. At the same time, however, signs of impending danger, from global climate change to economic instabilities and inequalities and beyond, are becoming clearer and more plentiful.

How could interaction designers most effectively participate in the creation of a more equitable and sustainable future? If we, collectively, were to put our heads together to come up with an ambitious project that provided a great service to the people on the planet, what would it look like? Is there something that could capture the imagination of a large number of us, leverage our talents and interests on a large scale, and result in something of truly global benefit?

One answer would be to create systems that helped people better deliberate together to make better decisions. We're already linked together—directly and indirectly—within communities and across political and other borders, but is it possible to collaborate more effectively, with less rancor and distrust? Using new technologies, would it be possible for us to deliberate more effectively, more equitably, and in vaster numbers, to address the problems that face us all?

Like it or not, the ability to deliberate might be the key to humankind's continuing existence. Sometimes people cannot or will not reason together, and the problems they could address (such as climate change) become worse. Wars, even, can be seen as the result of failed or thwarted deliberations. In a large sense, the lack of widespread and meaningful deliberation in society reveals a severely underdeveloped resource: humankind's civic intelligence. The proposal discussed here, the World Citizen Parliament, is a call for action in the face of unprecedented opportunity and historical necessity. It is intended to help address the question that needs to be asked: *Will we be smart enough soon enough?*

Sketches of a World Citizen Parliament

The United Nations is an assembly for the governments of the world's nations. Business, likewise, has an assortment of institutions and events for deliberation and decision making, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the World Economic Forum, that support its goals. At the same time, however, effective and meaningful participation among the world's population in their own governance is declining. It is those realities (presented in the manifesto shown in the sidebar) that supplied the motivations for and helped inform the recommendations of this project.

But civil society (including nongovernmental organizations, foundations, educational institutions, professional societies, and labor unions, as well as “ordinary” people) also communicates with itself (through the World Social Forum, for example). This project encourages civil society and its allies to build on that, to work together to develop the conceptual, social, and material infrastructure for deliberation and decision making that helps level the playing field.

Creating the World Citizen Parliament would require a monumental effort. This project, however, would be managed far differently than monumental projects of the past, such as the U.S. moon landing in 1969 or the building of the Egyptian pyramids. For one thing, the World Citizen Parliament would proceed from the bottom up. For another, the final result is not preordained. In this proposal I use the term *parliament* as the *sum total* of the deliberative spheres (structures and activities) for civil society to deliberate together and to deliberate with people and organizations in the economic and political sectors. This sum total includes deliberative approaches that exist now and those that we may ultimately develop. Deliberative spheres, large and small, formal and informal, make up—fractal-like—a vast deliberative supra-assembly, described by Jürgen Habermas this way: “A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public” [1].

While no one deliberative approach or venue or assembly would (or could or should) ultimately dominate, the idea put forward by Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss [2] of one assembly composed of representatives from the world’s peoples could provide an important conceptual focus. Although the parliament they propose is a single assembly (whereas a vast complex is proposed here), I agree with Falk and Strauss that an assembly similar to the one they describe could be critical. Thinking about what a single World Citizen Parliament might look like could provide an orientation for the project as a whole. Imagining its constitution, processes, and tasks, as well as its potential challenges and opportunities, could help guide us as we develop concepts, design principles, and experiments that lay the groundwork for the World Citizen Parliament, a vast interconnected network of deliberative assemblies.

Within that overall supra-assembly, an assembly much like national parliaments or the general assembly of the United Nations could be possible. The world’s population could, for example, be divided into a thousand representative constituent groups of approximately eight million citizens each. These districts could be drawn within existing political boundaries; care should be taken to craft boundaries so as not to exclude any minority communities from obtaining proper representation and voice. Care should also be taken to ensure that the representatives are chosen in a non-coerced way, that the representatives are free from coercive control, and that they could speak for their constituents and would deliberate with their peers.

Even if a specific assembly à la Falk and Strauss was an ultimate goal, the project should consider that goal as one among many. Globalization has altered many previous assumptions. On the one hand, many people are now officially stateless, which translates into being rights-less, as well. On the other hand, nongeographically based deliberative groups are extremely important. And in an increasingly globalized world, people are routinely affected by decisions they have no legal opportunity to influence. James Bohman [3] captures many of these important aspects with the distinction he makes between *dêmos* (the people), who are connected to a specific territory, and *dêmoi* (the peoples), who are linked in other ways. The idea of *dêmos* captures a traditional hierarchical state-based model of deliberation, in which the ultimate body is government and the levels are reflected in concentric circles, from the local to the national. Whatever the historical (or conceptual) necessity of this view, the reality of our globalized societies and the situations we now must face compel us to take a more complex view. This new view must account for multiple and hybrid hierarchical and peer-to-peer network configurations; it also forces us to abandon the state as the ultimate, perennial, and sole authority at the top of the network.

The idea of a world parliament is not new, nor are its goals. Intellectuals and activists from Thomas Paine to Karl Marx have wrestled with these issues. The work of these scholars is still relevant, as is the work of the thousands of people and organizations currently working in this area. This proposal is different because of the participatory *build it as we go* orientation and the complex of deliberative venues that this orientation promotes. The circumstances are also different due to the incredible opportunities afforded by new communication technologies and the urgent and potentially catastrophic “deliberative emergencies” that we ignore at our peril.

The goal of this effort is to launch a decentralized, heterogeneous, loosely linked network of people, online and offline resources, institutions, and deliberative and other collaborative systems. Ultimately we would expect that the findings resulting from this work could play important roles in future policy development. The new civic

infrastructures that we develop over the next few years will necessarily be advisory at the onset, but the ultimate objective is to engage people directly in their own governance.

Seven Challenges

There are countless ways for this project to fail. Yet spending at least as much time seeking solutions as cataloging reasons for failure seems wise. The seven challenges described here encourage us to consider the particular responsibilities we would need to face, which, in turn, would help us identify the skills and other resources that our community could offer, in addition to the tasks we should undertake.

Deliberative emergencies. *The first challenge takes the form of the urgent issues now facing humankind. These are issues that generally grow worse when there is no agreement about how to proceed. And without viable deliberation, no agreement between stakeholders is likely to be reached. It is ultimately the success in addressing these deliberative emergencies that will determine the project's success.*

The threats brought about by climate change, burgeoning population, and degraded natural resources are unprecedented (see [4] for a cogent wake-up call). And although they don't affect everyone equally, these threats do affect us all. Unfortunately we don't seem to have changed our behavior to meet either these new challenges or age-old problems such as natural disasters, social inequality, and war. In many ways our psychological predilections, as well as our institutional and cultural inertia, are particularly unsuited to these issues. Our ingrained habits of pursuing short-term economic gain, our zero-sum mind-set (where benefits accrue to me *or* to you), our tendency to retreat into denial, and our impulse to ignore, denigrate, and demonize people who aren't like us may be the house lights dimming before humankind's last act.

Solutions to the vast problems we face will not be developed or implemented without the cooperation, if not the leadership, of ordinary people. For that reason, deliberation is central to the future of the planet. But deliberation is not trivial. We won't stumble across solutions or develop viable plans through Facebook "likes." To this end, four basic assertions about rich or strong deliberation have been identified. The first is that the input that is allowed from participants must be substantive; it is not simply a yes or no vote (or "like") or a numerical rating. This assumption argues against the conventional wisdom that people do not have the time, interest, or intellect to engage in reasoned deliberation. Second, deliberation is a *process*; the decision or other product of deliberation is formulated over time. Decisions are not isolated events that happen once; assumptions, biases, new learnings, and prior decisions are fed forward more or less perpetually over time into more deliberation. Issues rarely die. Third, it will probably be necessary to establish constraints on the ways in which people can interact—at least at critical phases within a larger process. A recent study revealed that group intelligence depends on the relatively equal distribution of conversational turn-taking [5], a feature that is generally incorporated within parliamentary procedures. Fourth, deliberation should be devoted to substantial, real issues, and there should be a reasonable expectation that the results of the deliberation will be taken seriously.

Social innovation. *The second challenge reflects the inevitability that a World Citizen Parliament is primarily a social innovation and that social considerations must play a dominant role in all aspects of establishing it.*

The idea that purely technological solutions can be found for vexing social problems is not realistic. Therefore, *social innovation* must be given special attention as the driver of technological innovation. This means that a wide variety of people, including interaction designers and the ultimate users of the systems [6], must be involved in the design process. In general, emphasizing social innovation is likely to result in approaches to deliberation that are unlike those driven by economic incentives. We must also remember that meaningful deliberation without genuine social inclusion is not possible. Although the have-nots, who often bear the brunt of the problems caused by the haves (climate change, for example), constitute the majority of the world's population, it is all too easy for the haves to disregard their absence in deliberation. While true and total social inclusion will not happen overnight, we can and *must* make progress in this area if deliberation is ever to become more commonplace and legitimate as a societal problem-solving strategy.

Another central point is that deliberation is meaningful only when it is integrated into the rest of the social fabric. And deliberation takes place—and takes a variety of forms—in all countries. Compare, for example, the differences in approaches to deliberation taken by China [7] and the U.K. [8] that are shaped by each country's particular history, culture, and material circumstances. Moreover, deliberation with no potential to effect change is pointless. This means that articulation or "social access points" [9] that connect deliberative sessions to the rest of society, including media, educational institutions, public hearings, and governmental bodies must exist.

And it may be through these articulation points that democratic deliberation could spread and become more powerful and prevalent.

Barriers to participation in deliberation come in many shapes and sizes. Some are relatively minor (such as not knowing about local opportunities), while many others are more profound (such as systematic oppression). Of course, believing that participation is forbidden or futile is not the same as actively rebuffing invitations to deliberate, or worse, trying to disrupt or delegitimize deliberations that are already in progress. In the first case, identifying and removing barriers or reducing their impact, while at the same time encouraging people to deliberate together by establishing equitable deliberative settings, is the recommended antidote. The second case is more vexing. One reason is that participating does have inherent risks, as any deliberative refusenik knows or at least suspects. For one thing, a deliberative process may simply be a waste of time. On a more profound level, there is a risk that the decision might not be to your liking or to the liking of your colleagues, and that your participation in the process may actually endorse the process as well as the outcome.

If deliberation, online or otherwise, were easy to do and universally desirable, it probably already would be in place. The truth is that obstacles to deliberation and citizen engagement are ubiquitous. Media concentration and lack of citizen access to media, corporate front groups, intentional obfuscation, lack of citizenship training, repression, economic prerogatives, lobbyists, among other obstacles help make the idea of ubiquitous citizen deliberation seem distant and unrealistic. Each stage of the deliberative lifecycle is subject to specific obstacles that will often vary from context to context. Sometimes the obstacle is malicious and comes from outside; sometimes, of course, well-meaning people can't come to an agreement or they are confronted with a strong natural obstacle, such as the lack of a common language with which to communicate.

For deliberation to actually have a chance to be more of a prominent decision-making technique worldwide, building *across* boundaries as well as *within* boundaries will be required. This means working across national (and other political) borders as well as across social and cultural borders. It also pertains to the necessity of building beyond purely Internet-based approaches into media, education, and placebased venues (e.g., public libraries). This means including and engaging groups from across the political spectrum, groups that are marginalized, and groups across various divides and boundaries.

Reinventing research. *The third challenge suggests several ways in which present approaches to research may discourage projects like this. Can research norms and practices be transformed in ways that would make it more relevant while remaining rigorous and vital?*

While the ideas in this section are not universal, many of the conditions that orient current research processes tend to work against a full realization of projects like this. Some of these constraints are more or less inherent. The “tyranny of funding,” for example, has been with us for a long time: *He who pays the piper calls the tune*. Moreover, the vagaries of funding argue against long-term, sustainable projects. While interaction designers and other professionals often choose to donate time to outside projects, this is not likely to be the general solution to that problem. Another set of constraints result from the partitioning of knowledge and actions. This can result in isolation, the blood enemy of relevance. One of the problems is due to academic towers of Babel, in which the lack of common vocabulary and shared intellectual touchstones makes interdisciplinary projects difficult to devise and implement.

Unfortunately for those of us who believe that a stronger role for research in pursuit of shared, public objectives is desirable, the rate of change of research in relation to technological change is making this increasingly difficult. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann suggested, “Special problems arise as a result of differential rates of change of institutions and subuniverses” [10]. Particularly in regard to cyberspace, the phenomenon, system, or event upon which a study or software tool is constructed may become irrelevant, nonexistent, or otherwise unsuitable for further consideration within a relatively brief span of time. Technology doesn't stand still waiting for its reasoned consideration to catch up.

Computer scientists and other technology designers could become more central in the ongoing evolution of deliberation. They could extend their work beyond the one-offs, demos, proof-of-concepts, and experiments—in the lab, not in the streets—and into the development of open, evolving, and enduring infrastructures. There are many ways in which a transfer to civic use might be accomplished, including anything from making their products open source, to involving community members in the design of artifacts or services, to establishing and serving in a local community-innovation organization.

A deliberative project of this magnitude could also be a boon for research. Since theory and practice co-evolve, this work is actually likely to benefit theory and research projects. The findings, significantly, could lead to new contexts that were less tied to commercial systems, and would lead to an increased amount of relevant and integrable data. William Dutton presents useful frameworks and strategies for designing more effective citizen consultations [11]. The deliberative polling work of James Fishkin and Robert Luskin provides another useful example of co-evolving theory and practice [12]. The online tool that we are developing, e-Liberate [13], which allows groups to host online meetings using Robert's Rules of Order when their members are dispersed geographically, provides numerous opportunities. Some of the many research questions we could pose include: How do (and *could*) people become more competent with the process over time? Do certain people tend to dominate (and under what conditions might this shift)? How could the process evolve to better suit the needs of the groups? How well do the rules work at a variety of scales (from intimate to stadium-size and beyond) and in which ways could the approach be changed to accommodate larger and larger assemblies? And how could meetings using e-Liberate be linked or integrated with different meetings and other deliberative approaches?

Our social innovation challenge reinforces the need for a cyclical *envision, build, and evaluate* process. Since the end state is not known, we have no choice but to adopt a process that is forever evaluating before proceeding. This process encourages experimentation and does not lock us into unproductive paths. We can, however, improve the process in various ways, such as planning with evaluation in mind and being aware of other approaches that are exploring similar terrain. This approach, it should be stressed, does not preclude theorizing. In fact, if anything, it calls for more theorizing and for the diffusion of theoretical concepts that can be put to use—and to the test—in actual situations.

The design of approaches to deliberation within more repressive societies also presents a variety of interesting research issues that mix ethical and moral dimensions with technological and life-threatening challenges. More focus on the establishment of multidisciplinary teams and research projects could be extremely useful for those extraordinary cases, and for the more “ordinary” ones, as well.



Hyper-Project. *The fourth challenge is building a coherent project that is really a hyper-project, a project of projects. Ideally, this project would encourage millions of experiments and projects. But what can we do to ensure that the lessons learned in one can be used by another, and, in general, how should we leverage our successes?*

Over the past few decades, political scientists and others have begun seriously experimenting with new deliberative venues, including video, the Internet, and even commercial broadcast television. We need to continue to explore a diversity of deliberative spaces and approaches. Of course, this implies the parallel necessity of learning from them all as well as integrating and bridging them. Facebook and other social-networking sites will necessarily play roles, but they should not be seen as the final word on deliberation. The capability of providing, for example, testimony [14], while not explicitly deliberative (in fact, it was put forward

as an *alternative* to deliberation), is an important aspect of awareness of issues that becomes useful for decision making and, hence, can rightly be considered an integral contribution to the deliberative process.

We acknowledge the existence of useful new(ish) ideas, such as Web 2.0, crowdsourcing, telepresence, and serious games, as well as time-tested approaches, like Robert's Rules of Order, as important conceptual blocks to build upon. At the same time, this legacy need not prevent us from charting new paths as well. Affordances of the Internet have helped promote new opportunities and relevant ideas in the political realm, such as transparency and open government. Other researchers are involved in collective intelligence work that could be seen as public deliberation. This field is vast; characterizing it adequately is an important chore that is still before us. Climate CoLab and the Deliberatorium, both operating out of MIT, are attempting to promote collective intelligence to help address some of society's "wicked problems," while other work in argument mapping and sensemaking explores the processes through which people come to understand their environment.

Around the world there are also a number of initiatives that support dialogues between groups with substantial differences. These initiatives acknowledge the deep divisions between groups of people and attempt to slowly and sometimes painfully work through them. People on opposing sides also risk reputations (and often, more) when they at least implicitly acknowledge that their side may need to budge from a traditional non-negotiable position.

Public deliberative sessions or consultations are currently required in many countries and other governmental jurisdictions. In the U.S., President Obama recently rolled out several new online participative initiatives, including a system for citizen-originated petitions. Community networks, an important civic innovation that arose in the early days of the Internet [15], although not as prominent as they once were, provide intriguing potential for deliberation. Fiorella De Cindio, who helped create the Milano Civic Network in Italy in 1994 and the OpenDCN platform [16], has been exploring these uses for nearly two decades, including most recently using LiquidFeedback, initiated by the German Pirate Party, to help a political coalition articulate their program in some detail.

The broad thrust of this proposal is to promote not only a large number of deliberative projects but also the coalescence of much larger constellations of deliberative projects that are loosely coordinated and working in common directions. The trick to all of this lies to some degree in increased cooperation and communication. The most important key, however, is likely to be the ability to establish *indirect* coordination between efforts. This is the sweet spot between the not too orderly and the not too chaotic, the not too autonomous and the not too subservient. The authors of the influential *collective impact* approach [17] present relevant insights designed to help somewhat heterogeneous organizations work together, including a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and the presence of a backbone organization. While this provides some areas to focus on, a sizable deliberative project produces other sharable items that can foster coordination. Sharing research findings, source code, protocols, formalisms, and building blocks are all key, as of course is connecting people directly.

Interaction and interfaces. *The fifth challenge is actually designing the interaction and interfaces that support this project. While the six other challenges are all important, this challenge is critical—and of particular significance to the interaction design community. If the systems aren't compelling, accessible, and rewarding—or if they don't work or aren't used—the project is doomed.*

It will be interesting to see how the Internet's vast potential for expanded citizenship will or will not be realized as the many players who help determine the character of the Internet make their intentions and actions felt over the critical next few years. The Internet (and the constellation of networked information and communication technology that includes mobile telephones—increasingly the access points for the world's poor—as well as other devices, services, and capabilities) offers unprecedented potential for expanded citizenship. Although the access (and the *quality* of the access) to this critical platform still heavily favors the privileged [18], ICT can provide the necessary glue that will help integrate the venues, conversations, languages, and media that will be needed to realize strong citizenship. The online environment offers many new options that were much less plausible a mere decade or so ago [19]. Two new exciting approaches include deliberation with documents and "social objects" generally (e.g., *patterns* [20]) and with processes and content specific to the domain under deliberation.

Interaction designers will be critical to the success of deliberative systems. One of the most demanding challenges will be presenting the complexities of a deliberative process that is in progress. This must include at

a minimum a readable record of the contributions and visibility of the participants. The interface should also allow participants to find out more about the situation they are involved in using approaches that work well for them. This could include information on the process itself—*when can I make a proposal? How do I obtain permission to speak?*

Because ICT is so central to deliberation and to our future, it will also be important to ensure that the Internet continues to provide a platform that supports civil society. On the other hand, it's important to assert that the Internet (and ICT generally) is not magic—it in general does not seem to be immune to surveillance and censorship by authoritarian governments (see, for example, a recent survey by Dan Drezner [21]). The “architecture” of a hyperproject like this will necessarily require an extensive socio-technological substrate. While this is beyond the scope of this article, it's clear that work in technological as well as social protocols, multiuser and multimodal interfaces, frameworks, toolkits, support for large-scale conversations, and security considerations—among other issues—will be crucial.

Project sustainability. *The sixth challenge is addressing and assuring the project's sustainability. To be successful at this enterprise, it will be necessary to obtain the resources we need. And in the absence of ongoing and reliable funding, this is no trivial task.*

Ultimately, actual support for the project must be considered. What resources would be needed and how can these be secured reliably over time? Support includes a wide variety of material and intellectual resources, including conferences, online resources, case studies, shared problems, comparative studies, open protocols, transformable systems, online tools, links, references, and source code. And while this project is proposing and exploring the idea of a monumental project without having secured substantial funding, financial support would still be welcome, especially that which promoted collaboration focused on realizable goals, the development of shared resources, and articulation linkages, as well as experiments that yielded useful information.

A key element is the lack of top-down, hierarchical control or an adequate, reliable stream of resources. One of the major challenges of such an approach is turning a bug into a feature. The shared attitudes and goals of the participants should help compensate. And the consciously developed yet loosely coordinated network structure that we develop should help promote the growth of the effort, regardless of whether the players change, which they undoubtedly will.

Building civic intelligence. *The seventh, final, and probably most daunting challenge is building civic intelligence [22]. The goal of this project is to help make individuals, and especially groups, actually smarter in relation to our shared problems. This is the conjecture that motivates this project: We won't successfully address our problems if we don't increase our civic intelligence.*

Civic intelligence is the ability of people working together to address shared problems. It's a type of community capacity or collective intelligence focused on shared goals: the capability of *addressing civic ends through civic means*. Although this idea has been explored by countless authors (including, somewhat prominently, John Dewey), it has not historically been the orientating idea it needs to be.

Intelligence means addressing the routine problems effectively. Critically, it also means addressing non-routine problems, which are likely to be more urgent and less amenable to routine approaches. It also means learning and steadily increasing our collective capacity to solve problems. Under many conditions and settings, it has been shown that people collectively *can* be wiser than individuals. How effectively we work toward the establishment of opportunities that encourage peaceful and productive deliberation could have enormous consequences for our children and their children.

The list of civil-society organizations working in this area is already vast. It includes the World Federation Movement, Citizens for Global Solutions, and the World Constitution and Parliament Association. Other organizations are devoted to fostering dialogue and deliberation, such as the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation. Also, although the United Nations is an assembly for governments, the potential for more dialogue and support for participatory deliberation is there, and some work in that direction is already under way in agencies such as UNESCO, ILO, and WHO.

The world is abuzz with projects that promote civic intelligence. Sometimes they are driven by government, sometimes by commercial aspirations. Often, however, they are not motivated by power or money, but by the desire to leave a world that was made better through their efforts. Simultaneously fostering the development of

a more informed, engaged, and inclusive citizenry while we endeavor to create useful deliberative platforms—what we call the World Citizen Parliament—is our obvious, and arguably, only, option.

Conclusion

The seven challenges described here do not really begin to capture the enormity of this project. *But we build the path by walking.*

Looking at deliberation, with real people and real issues, reminds us that our work is important, that it matters, and that it has the potential to change things—for good or bad. Deliberation has the *potential* to address conflicts and complex shared issues in legitimate, thoughtful, and nonviolent ways. As the 21st century looms before us, citizen engagement is not optional, nor merely a good idea.

Unfortunately, it is not at all clear that systems that support citizen-to-citizen deliberation will ever be effectively established while the environment is dominated by the power of governments and commercial interests. The short answer is that other types of power besides money and the threat of violence exist in our social world. With eyes wide open to the difficulty of following an explicitly meliorist course, I submit that the legitimacy of collective deliberation can become a power in its own right and can, over time, and through sustained engagement that could include protest and civil disobedience, become a viable institution for a more peaceful and sustainable future.

The World Citizen Parliament project could help propel our work forward, while building on our knowledge and enthusiasm about computing and design, and make a difference in the world. Every day millions of decisions, mostly small, help determine what type of future we'll be inhabiting. The systems of governance of the future are being shaped now. The big challenge is determining and implementing our role in relation to that reality.

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Sidebar: Manifesto

All over the world, attempts are being made to trivialize citizenship and reconstitute people as users, consumers, and spectators who have little input into the political process. At the same time, real power is in many ways being transferred to large corporations and other non-democratic organizations such as the World Trade Organization. We, the signers of this manifesto, hope to help counter that trend with this project.

Realizing the growing and critical importance of citizens and civil society in addressing humankind's common problems, we propose the initiation of a prolonged and multipronged focus on citizen deliberation. We realize that this is an extremely complex project that will require years of complex, nuanced, creative, and thoughtful negotiation and collaboration. We are aware that this project must address an extremely broad range of social and cross-cultural factors. We, however, believe that beginning this discussion in an explicit and open way is preferable to many other varieties of globalization that lack this transparency.

Moreover, we realize that precisely defining an ideal system in advance is impossible. For that reason, we propose to begin a principled, long-term, incremental, participatory design process that integrates experimental, educational, community mobilization, research, and policy work all within a shared orientation: specifically to provide an inclusive and pluralistic intellectual umbrella for a diverse, distributed effort with a strong focus on civil society.

Civil society historically is the birthplace of socially ameliorative visions. This effort is intended to help build a more effective platform for these efforts to help address humankind's shared problems, such as environmental degradation, human rights abuses, economic injustice, and war, that other sectors—notably government and business—are seemingly powerless to stem.

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