

Once upon a time, thirty people gathered in an old farmhouse overlooking a lake in northern Sweden. The pale autumn sun slowly set as the conversation ended. Together, they had designed a way to jumpstart a global governance system based on a winning entry to the Global Challenges Foundation.

They had worked through many differences and were now ready for the next step, nervous and excited. The ticking of the grandfather clock punctuated the moment as their facilitator, a young Sri Lankan woman, called each person's name to see whether all concerns about the wording had been addressed. When the last person said "yes," the room exploded with applause. Cameras clicked as the facilitator let her index finger fall on the "SEND" button. They were inviting fifty people to form the Global Initiating Circle: young and old, female and male, mostly Nobel Peace Laureates, religious leaders, political figures, and activists. All were chosen from around the world because of their fame, stature, and integrity. They were trusted to serve the whole of life on planet Earth and to initiate the new global governance system. Would they, too, say "yes"?

Across the globe, those invited opened their emails to discover they were asked to lend the transition credibility and cohesion; to usher in a new phase for humanity: collaborative, global self-governance to solve the biggest global challenges. Their tasks were to:

- Convene 5,000 people chosen randomly to represent the entire world, to identify the most pressing issues facing humanity;
- Convene small groups to attend to the issues named through facilitated, deliberative dialogues aimed at decisions that work for everyone;
- Produce massive training in facilitation to support these bodies and the many others that would emerge over time;
- Initiate a multi-year process of gradually giving people, everywhere, full authority to decide their own fate in collaboration with others;
- Accompany these processes until they extended to the entire globe, and a Global Coordinating Circle could assume their responsibilities.

The email included all documentation for the emerging system, starting with this description:

*We designed the system to be strong enough to reach the powerful and get them involved, and creative enough to work for everyone in the world. The design ensures a gradual transition over fifteen to thirty years to a system with three components, all of which are circles reaching unanimous decisions through facilitated dialogues. We trust that without an exit fallback, participants would lean in towards convergence, discovering wisdom and creativity, instead of leaning out towards compromise or domination. The facilitators support the groups to find solutions that build on principles all participants agree represent the issue. We are building on knowledge about collaborative decision-making, starting with Mary Parker Follett's articulation of the distinction between integration and compromise, and on many examples of such processes in use around the world.*

*The first component is an elaborate system of Local-to-Global Coordinating Circles to address routine decisions for which there is enough trust and enough clarity. Eventually, we anticipate Coordinating Circles making most decisions. The system will build gradually, starting with the most local circles, comprising everyone in a population coming together. Depending on local*

*cultural variations, this sometimes happens in mixed groups, and sometimes in separate groups. In this way, everyone in the world has a chance of participating in making decisions that affect them.*

*Decisions that involve effects or inputs beyond local circles are made by unanimously selected representatives to widening circles. Anyone selected for a wider circle, even for the Global Coordinating Circle, remains part of and accountable to their own local circle. If selected people are recalled, they lose their standing in all the circles to which they were selected and are replaced everywhere.*

*The second component is Ad-Hoc Randomly Selected Circles, whose purpose is to address problems that require more research and deliberation. Each person enters the circle as an individual, not representing any role or group. These circles are empowered to invite experts to support their work and to initiate new processes for public deliberation such as pol.is [Ref#1].*

*The third component is Ad-Hoc Multi-Stakeholder Circles. When the issues to be decided involve significant controversy, mistrust, or systemic power differences, the requirement of stepping into the circle as a person without a role may be too stringent. In such cases, those invited occupy their role and advocate for needs and perspectives that arise within their role. For example, an integrative solution about climate change would likely require the presence of CEOs of energy companies, acutely affected communities such as Pacific Islanders, climate activists, politicians, scientists, and others to carry sufficient moral authority to sway the entire global population. Confronting each other's perspectives instead of demonizing each other is what would bring the depth of issues and the needed solutions to the table.*

*Feedback is built into the entire system, along with conflict-resolution agreements. The system is based on trust in people's wisdom and goodwill, and on moral authority, with no coercion.*

*As transition begins, and a global random selection of 5,000 people identifies the most pressing issues, the Global Initiating Circle will identify stakeholders for each of those issues, and continue to identify and invite additional stakeholders so that everyone needed for the decision will be there.*

*To help populate the Coordinating Circles, we offer a toolkit with suggestions for attending to conflict, too. If any geopolitical dispute prevents a regional circle from forming, the Global Initiating Circle can call a multi-stakeholder circle to solve that dispute. Eventually, large bodies of nonviolent peacekeepers will be trained to make war a thing of the past.*

Far away from Sweden, teenage sisters in Bali looked at each other in amazement. Melati and Isabel Wijsen [Ref#2], whose campaign to ban plastic in Bali was on the verge of implementation, were ready. Who wouldn't say "yes" to starting a voluntary, collaborative, and peaceful turning around of humanity's march into extinction?