

# Seeds of Civic Intelligence

## Some Suggestions for Local Deliberative Systems



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I codici della  
democrazia

*piattaforme web per una nuova politica*

# Plan for talk

- Introduction (context, motivation)
- Social and technological models
- Slightly more concrete suggestions
- Encouragement

# Creating the World Citizen Parliament

## Seven Challenges for Interaction Designers

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But we can't spend all of our time  
dreaming either!

— Douglas Schuler



PS. Many of the ideas in the presentation are discussed in more depth in this article.

# We are living in interesting times!

Intriguing challenges and potentially productive social and technological innovations

Yet many of our approaches to governance are not working.

Everywhere there are calls for increased citizen participation.

Today's problems demand strong democracy; they won't be solved without it.

Voting is not enough! Citizens must have the means to engage in thoughtful and sustained collaboration regarding the problems they face.

And although politicians (and citizens) often support these ideas, reality doesn't always match the rhetoric.

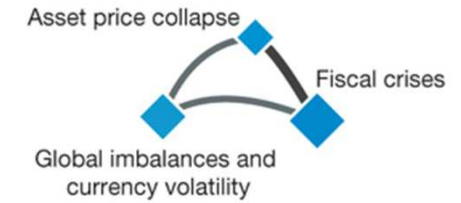
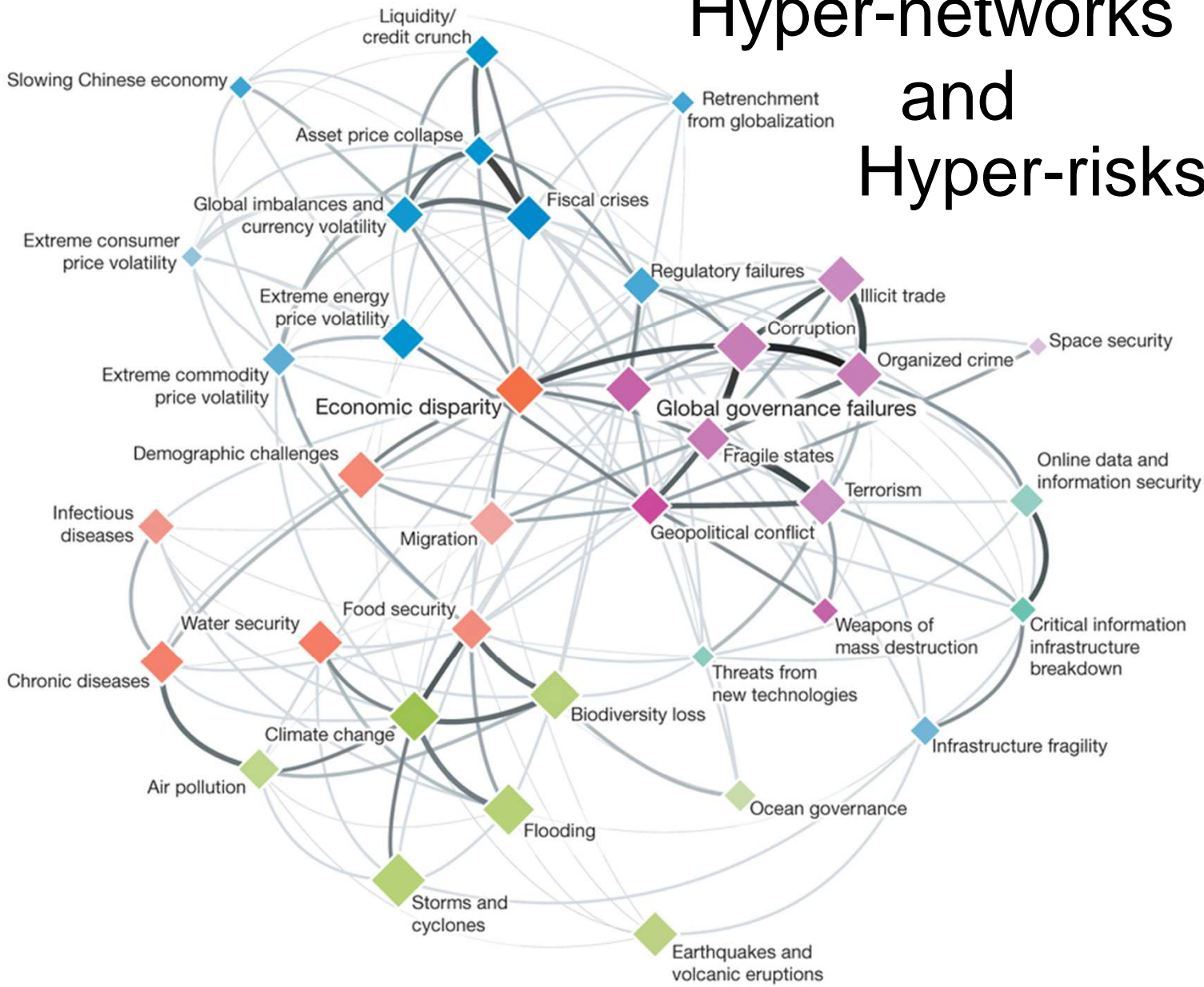
# A New World of Our Own Creation

Today's strongly connected, global networks have produced highly interdependent systems that we do not understand and cannot control well. These systems are vulnerable to failure at all scales, posing serious threats to society, even when external shocks are absent. As the complexity and interaction strengths ... increase, man-made systems can become unstable, creating uncontrollable situations ....

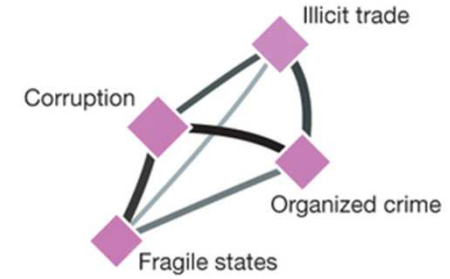
— *Globally networked risks and how to respond*, Dirk Helbing, *Nature* (02 May 2013)



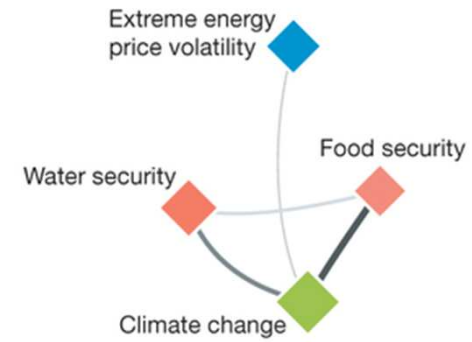
# Hyper-networks and Hyper-risks



The macro-economic imbalances nexus



The illegal economy nexus

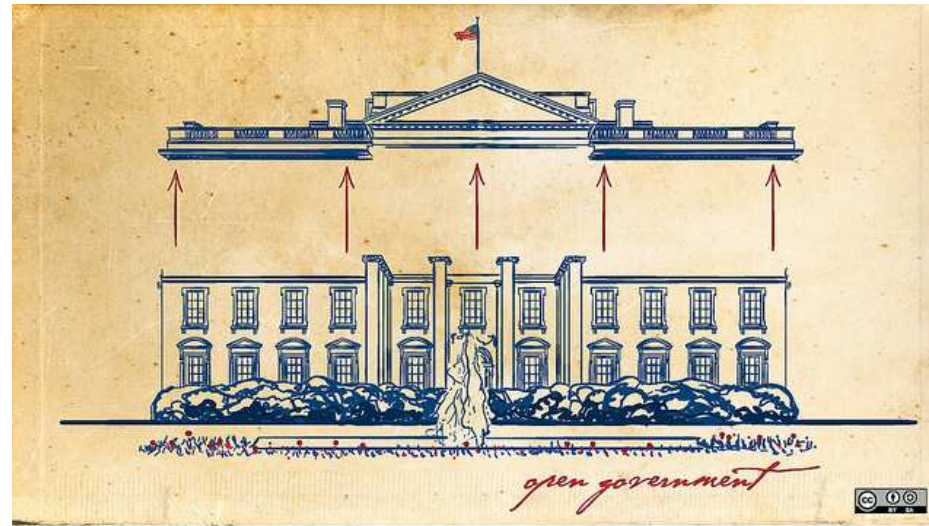


The water-food-energy nexus



## We Want Your Input on Building a More Open Government

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/09/03/we-want-your-input-building-more-open-government>



How can we better encourage and enable the public to participate in government and increase public integrity? How can the Federal government better ensure broad feedback and public participation when considering a new policy? Are there areas of public services that you think could be especially benefited by a grand challenge or incentive prize? What information or data could help you start or improve your business?

# Our Current Situation

- Hyper-networked, hyper-risky state-of-the-world
- Political stagnation and desperation
- Social unrest
- Moves towards greater participation — but progress is unsteady and sometimes dangerous



# Deliberative Emergencies

As problems grow more intractable — and the resources (cognitive and otherwise) we need to address the problems become less capable, the likelihood of success becomes less likely. *Sooner or later, the task could outgrow the tools for addressing it.*

Our ability to collaborate, to reason together, is one of our most important — yet under-utilized assets.

And, we, humans, don't always do it  
right.....

## Some Home Truths of Civic Deliberation

The informed contribution of citizens to public decision-making is not *optional*; it's absolutely indispensable. (It's necessary but not sufficient)

We need more creativity, dedication, humor, reason, compassion, etc. Fortunately, people often have these attributes!

Remember that deliberation is not solely a technological matter.

And deliberation is not “one size fits all”

Nor is it a “silver bullet”

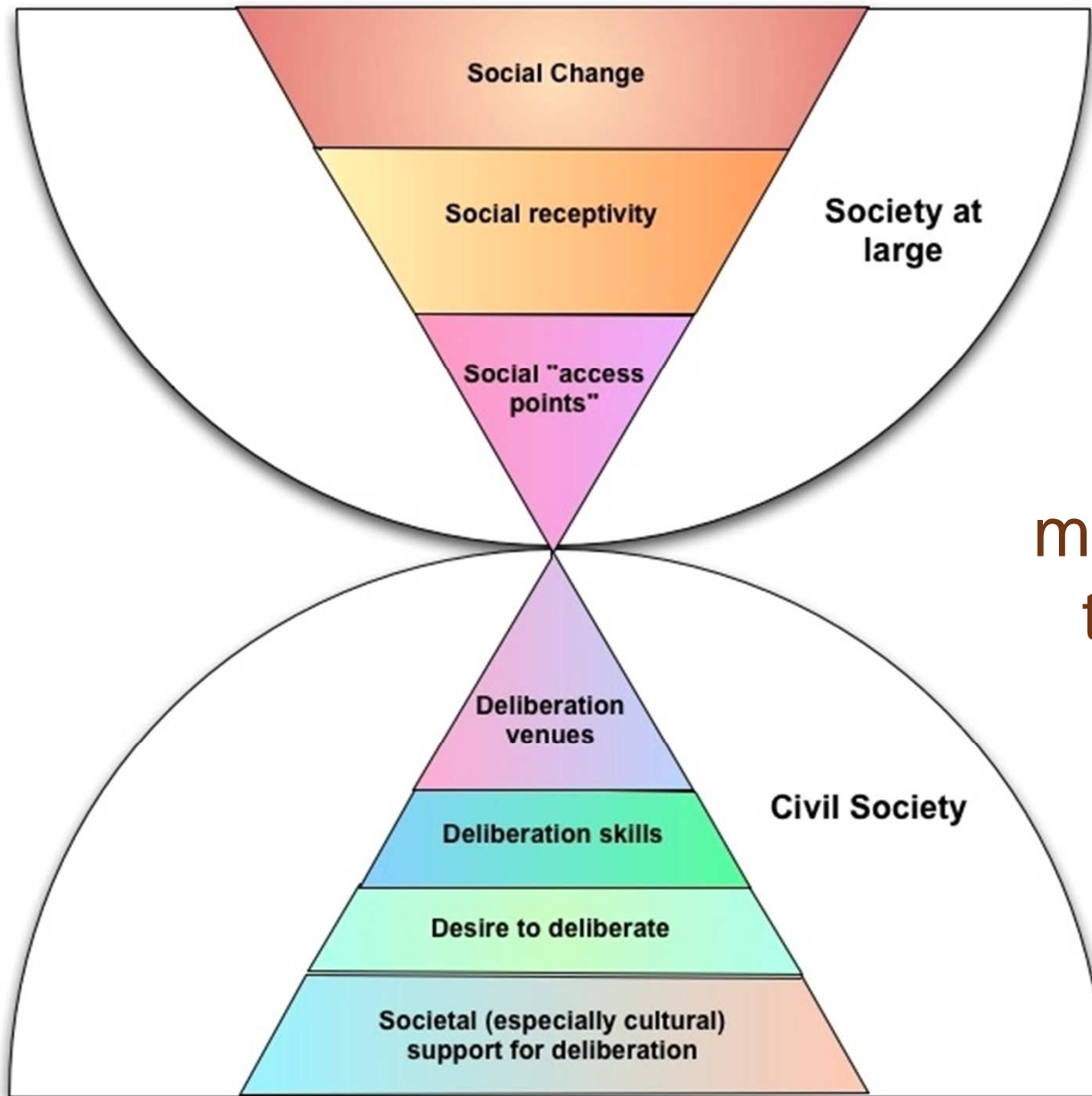
# What prevents equitable and effective citizen deliberation

- *Possible problems with Government*
  - Sometimes it's only concerned with money and power
  - Government doesn't know how to engage people
  - Government doesn't want to engage people
  - Politicians often spend their time yelling at each other
- *Possible problems with the Citizenry*
  - They'd rather complain
  - They have short attention spans
  - They feel helpless
  - They feel unwanted and ignored
  - They don't think that citizen participation is cool
  - Citizens yell at each other (or don't talk at all)

## Collaborative Culture\* is what we need most

- Active, informed, concerned citizenry
- And self-efficacy, creativity, empathy, ...
- Active, informed, concerned, receptive government
- Means to address real problems equitably and effectively
- Inclusivity; The playing field is far from level. (In many cases technology has made it *more* uneven.)
- Processes
- Technology
- Integration of critical elements (see “hourglass”, next slide)

\* A key element of what I call *Civic Intelligence*



## The Context of Deliberation

Deliberation must “connect” to the rest of the world

And it rests on a social base.

# Suggestions (1)

- Change incentives and processes
- Develop shared visions
- Involve intermediaries (libraries, schools, media)
- Elect people who promote citizen engagement
- Work with diverse groups
- Work in your area — but with informed collaboration with others: *Keep your eyes on the prize!*



# Suggestions (2)

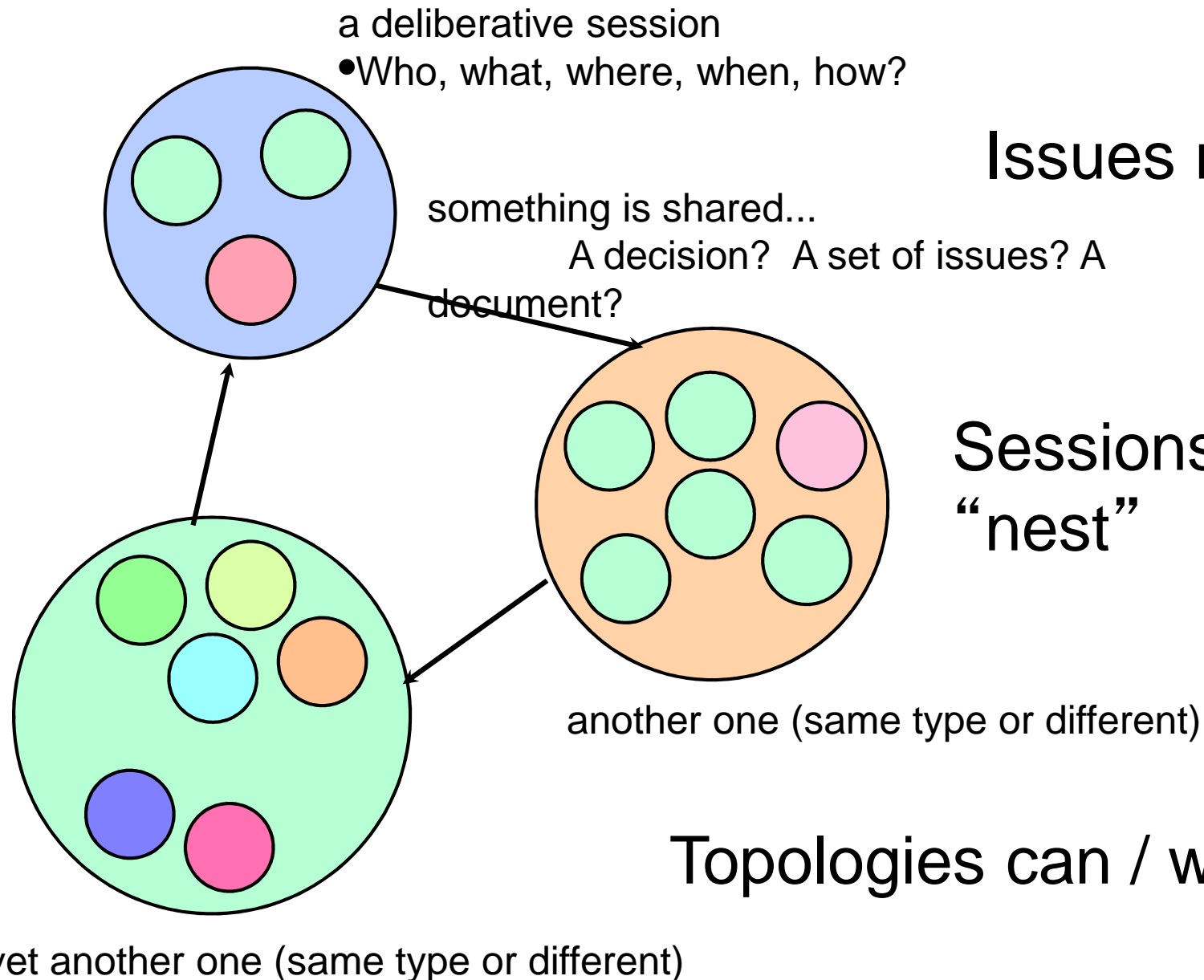
- Experiment — different people, goals, topics, and approaches — and share results
- Build on (small) successes
- Design and build social and technological architecture — connect conversations and groups and the evolution of ideas (the *movie*, not the *snapshot*)
- Engage citizens in co-learning

Deliberation in the small: few people,  
informal

What's in the  
Middle?!?!?

Deliberation in the large: lots of people,  
formal

# Deliberation-in-the-middle: One way to look at it...



Issues never die...

Sessions can  
“nest”

Topologies can / will change

# Even Attitudes are Important

While the situation is urgent, we need not face the future with pessimism or dread.

This would not only diminish our quality of life but it would make success less likely.

Will we be smart enough,

*soon  
enough?*



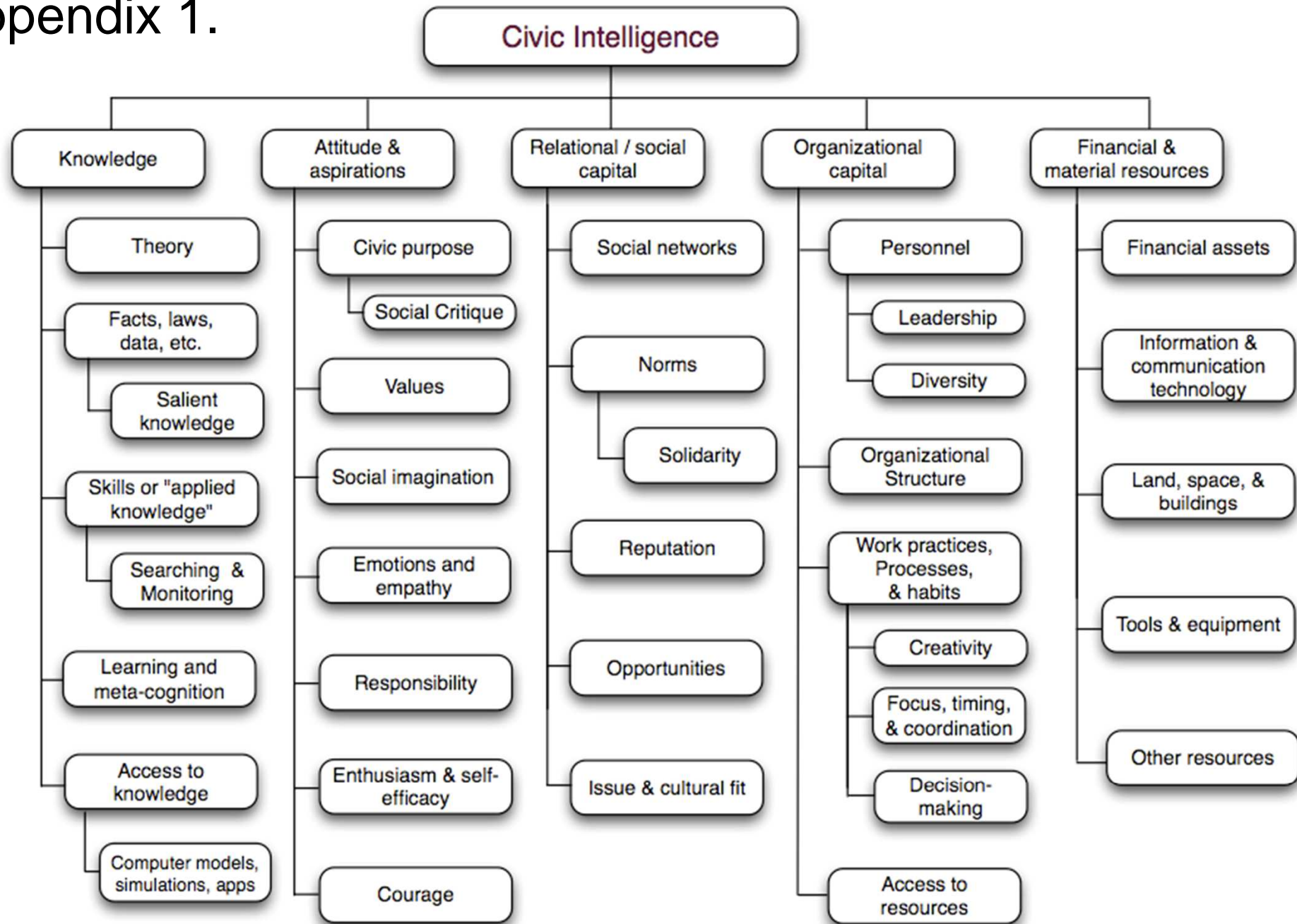
*The good news is that there's enough work to keep everybody busy!*

**Grazie!**

**Any questions or  
comments?**



# Appendix 1.



# Appendix 2.

## 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.

**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.

**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?

**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?

**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.

**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.

**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.

## Appendix 3. Ideals of Citizenship, from *Networks and Citizenship: Using Technology for Civic*

- *Informed* citizenship: access to independent and accurate information about the doings of government and other powerful institutions. Neither income nor rural location should be a barrier to access to the core information that makes for informed citizenship.
- *Participatory* citizenship: meaningful opportunities to participate actively in the deliberative processes of government through which public policy is made.
- *Empowered* citizenship: genuine power, in combination with others, to affect the outcome of policy debates.
- *Educated* citizenship: the civic education, virtue and spirit it takes to engage others in public dialogue, deliberation and open exchange of ideas about the common good.
- *Mobilized* citizenship: the partisan idealism it takes to join with others to fight for a cause or candidate.
- *Local* citizenship: the need for public squares, town commons, town meetings and Speakers' Corners to bring citizens out of their homes and into conversation and collaboration with their neighbors.
- *Global* citizenship: the understanding that we live in a global village and have the capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance and to protect human rights everywhere.