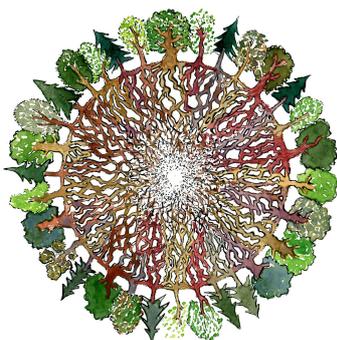


Network global democracy

Building a people's governance structure on a planetary scale

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A possible roadmap

Image: hikingartist (flickr)

A) SUMMARY

Network global democracy (NGD) is a proposal for a political system or model that seeks to respond to the need to radically redesign global power by giving voice to humanity in order to solve democratically and peacefully major planetary threats, such as the environmental crisis, nuclear and conventional proliferation, financial turmoil and extreme inequality, among other challenges.

It consists of a hybrid democracy (combining direct democracy and sortition) in which global citizens regularly deliberate, vote and make decisions through different means. It lacks a central power (World Government) and horizontally coordinates sub-networks and bodies, reporting the people's views regularly and translating them into directives, laws and agendas related to global competences. It covers legislative and executive functions but it doesn't describe judicial power or any other functions (media, educational, etc.) which can be defined later in a constituent process. It has global jurisdiction but it works together with regions, states and local authorities in reporting the people's views.

Therefore, although it differs enormously from representative regimes, it is founded like these on the rule of law that protects and develops all existing and emerging individual and collective liberties.

The NGD decision-making process, step by step, is as follows:

(see figure 1 (p.6) and figure 2 (p.15)):

- 1) Global citizens vote regularly on a regular list of issues/proposals that make up an annual issues agenda (AIA), written up at the initiative of said citizens, and subsequently finalized by the World Assembly (WA.)
- 2) The mini-publics take the results of the referenda and deliberate on their content, making it more specific, in a level of detail hard to manage in direct democracy.
- 3) The WA translates the results confirmed by the mini-publics into global norms or directives, and carries out other management and coordination activities, such as those mentioned in points 1 and 5.
- 4) Externally, and in parallel with points 1-3 of NGD, the World Community Network (WCN) will draw up its own mandate by following democratic processes of its own in each scale of the territory.
- 5) Next, the WA oversees the application of a “primacy protocol” that determines when and where the global mandate of NGD (points 1-3) should prevail over, or combine with, the WCN’s mandate (point 4)
- 6) The regions, states and local authorities legislate and implement policies according to WA directives which, it should be noted, are related only to global issues. The SADE (see actors) monitors execution performance and issues protocols and recommendations on communication.
- 7) Evaluation and the application of any sanctions are the responsibility of supervising local or national authorities belonging to the WCN. Members of these new institutions are also chosen by lot.

The main actors are as follows:

- 1) **Global citizens.** The 7.5 billion individuals constitute the main subject on which this system of governance rests.
- 2) **Mini-publics.** Groups of a few people randomly selected following criteria of age, sex, geographical origin, profession and others. Each mini-public meets for one or several days behind closed doors to choose one option among several, in the context of different participative processes. There are different types of mini-publics.¹ The annual number of mini-publics in the NGD may be several hundred. Each theme voted for in referenda may result in between 10 and 50 mini-publics.

¹ <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/research/research-notes/399-forms-of-mini-publics>

- 3) **World Assembly (WA).** The mission, nature, structure and functioning of the WA differ greatly from modern national parliaments or the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is made up of 400 representatives chosen by lot from the different regions of the world.
- 4) **Supervision Authority on Decentralized Execution (SADE).** This is formed by fifty rotating posts chosen by lot. The SADE observes how the authorities adhering to the WCN adopt the global directives. It makes recommendations for the national and territorial supervision and sanction authorities.
- 5) **World Community Network (WCN).** Members of this network, in addition to the NGD system itself, are international and regional institutions, States, local authorities, civil society and individuals. These actors are free to join the WCN. Because of its subsidiary, coordinated, complex nature, the WCN differs from known federations or confederations. Only those States and communities with advanced or post-representative democracies can fully adhere to the WCN.

Each tool of the NGD model (direct democracy, mini-publics, WA, bottom-up delegation, decentralized execution) **has proved effective separately in getting round representative regimes' limitations. Combining them in a single model** would make it possible to:

- a) counter-balance the disadvantages of some with the advantages of others in order to strengthen the system,
- b) test the viability of each tool on a large scale, and introduce innovations progressively.
- c) elude the problems of rigidity and homogeneity that can represent large-scale use of a single system (i.e. representative global democracy)

A possible roadmap towards this model would start by building a provisional advisory WA, performing embryonic work on policies, law, thematic competences and self-governance.

Four phases are possible:

- 1) First, the WA is merely an independent and voluntary service that makes recommendations on global policies. It increases legitimacy as an actor advocating for global justice.
- 2) Later, the WA receives legal and financial support from pioneer cities and states. Meanwhile its work becomes scientifically robust, so that it gains reputation and political recognition.
- 3) After an undetermined period the World Community is proclaimed, although it exists in an embryonic stage only. From this moment on, the states and other authorities can adhere formally to NGD and the WCN, but these still represent a minority of the planet. They have little influence on the world order.
- 4) Finally, a majority of countries joins the network.

B) DESCRIPTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The world of the coming decades will host the society that must bring order to a world in chaos or bear the brunt of its failure. There are diverse crises converging for the first time today, each of them capable of bringing about the collapse of human civilization.

Furthermore, the possibility of these crises combining amplifies many times the risk of global collapse. The first threat is nuclear war, the risk of which has not diminished since the 1960s and persists with the new populist wave. The second greatest risk is the huge and fragile house of cards of financial debt, increasingly sensitive to instability all over the planet.

Thirdly, irreversible climate change which affects us already and in a few decades will drastically change the lives of billions. The fourth systemic crisis concerns inequality. This unprecedented trend is marked by the accumulation of resources and power in the hands of the few. Other crises can be cited as equally important: the risks of scientific innovation, refugees, pandemics, etc.

Faced with all this, **humanity still has no idea about how to organize global politics differently**. The most important issue of global politics is how to achieve a fairer distribution of power. It is a key factor underlying the possibility of finding solutions to the aforementioned threats. But this has never been a matter of debate for the one player with the greatest interest at stake: global citizenship. Globalization has led us to a world where “there is local politics without power and global power without politics.”² We live in a time when the number of problems that require global action is expanding and diversifying, in contrast with the lack of global decision-making spaces. National representative democracy is exhausted as a political system, incapable of solving social needs, tackling corruption or countering public discontent. **But to set up a global democracy means tackling the two-fold challenge of organizing global politics and giving a new meaning to democracy.**

The NGD model seeks to contribute to the discussion. Although it differs enormously from the existing political systems in its nature and scope, it is founded just like these on the rule of law that protects and develops all existing and emerging individual and collective freedoms. Individuals, organisations and institutions in it are accountable to the law. The whole body of law embodies principles such as equality, justice, participatory decision-making, accuracy, accountability and separation of powers.

This description is divided into three parts. The short first part shows the elements and functions of the model, the second part shows how it works, namely the decision-making process and the cycle of public policy making, and the final chapter deals with implementation strategies.

² Bauman, Zygmunt; *Múltiples culturas, una sola humanidad* ; Katz Editores, Buenos Aires, 2008

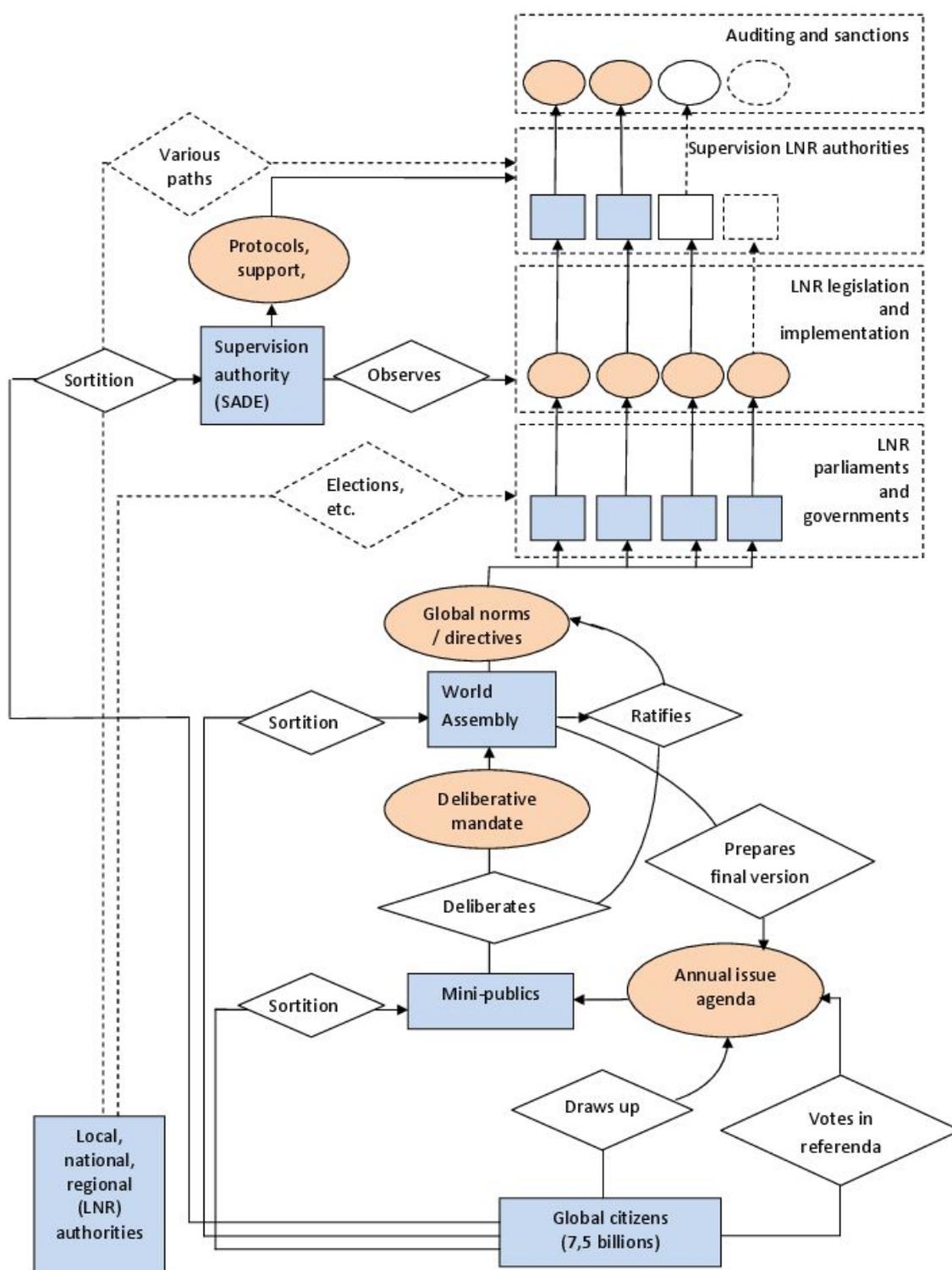


Figure 1: Network global democracy - flow chart of legislative and executive functions. Key: blue rectangle=institutions and other actors; white rhombus=actions; orange ellipse=results, contents; continuous lines=global scale; discontinuous lines=other scales/future relations planned; discontinuous rhombus=actions outside of global scale; discontinuous rectangles and ellipses=future results and institutions/LNR clusters

2. ELEMENTS AND FUNCTIONS

The NGD model applies to the following elements and functions:

- a) The constituent elements of the new system (constituent function): the values that define society, law and institutions; the design of government, the political structure, and the public agendas.
- b) The administrative competences of the global scale. Global citizens will vote in referenda which are these competences. But only after local, national and regional constituencies have voted to retain those related to their own sphere of action.
- c) The global norms or directives and the agendas of the new powers. These are subject to the people's mandate and will lead to regulations, plans and projects, which in turn will be subject to further accountability.
- d) Interaction with other scales within the WCN. Global decision-making has two entrance doors. First, directly through the NGD system. But also by means of the scaled subsidiarity system on which the WCN is based.

3. DECISION-MAKING AND INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURES

3.1. The architecture of network global democracy (NGD)

In NGD, global citizens can participate, deliberate and take decisions regularly. This proposed system is an advanced democracy that coordinates with the states and other territorial administrations, and at the same time it keeps its own unique global decision-making structure as described below and introduced above in figure 1.

This system can be defined as a hybrid democracy containing the following elements: direct democracy, deliberative democracy, representative democracy by sortition, a decentralized executive function, and a decentralized system of evaluation and sanction. These elements cover the legislative and executive powers. The judicial power and other emerging functions, such as education or communication, will be arranged later, throughout the constituent process.

1) Direct democracy on a global issues agenda.

First of all, citizens vote directly on a regular list of issues/proposals that make up an annual issues agenda (AIA) drawn up by citizens themselves and later finalized by the WA if necessary. The two following tables show a possible example of the steps to prepare and implement the AIA (table 1) and setting this into a schedule (table 2)

Period		Action	Actor
Preparation AIA 01 (months 1-3)	Collecting proposals and issues (2 months)	Drawing up proposals and issues in meetings and on the web.	Citizens

Mini-publics are groups of a few randomly selected people, in which the different ages, sex, geographic origin, professions, and others, are represented. Mini-publics meet for one or several days behind closed doors to choose one option among several, all of them in line with the result of the background referendum. A public administrative team or an independent citizen commission, chosen by lot, organizes and manages the mini-public (contents, coordination and facilitation). The mini-public attend briefings by third parties (individuals, civil society, professional groups, public institutions, corporations) representing disparate, exclusive or opposed viewpoints. However, in the NGD architecture these viewpoints are not supposed to be opposite or go beyond the results of the corresponding previous referendum. Mini-public members alternate their attendance at briefings, readings, documentary films, etc., with closed deliberative sessions. They are prohibited from leaving or communicate with the outside. Any person who is selected from a WCN global census can resign from participating in the mini-public and a new invitation will be sent to a substitute. The participants will receive a daily payment equivalent to their salary or to a real working wage.

Action	Referendum (direct democracy)	Deliberation (Deliberative democracy)	Draws up directives (Democracy by lot)	Execution (decentralized)
Actor	Global citizens	Mini-publics	World Assembly (WA)	Various LNR authorities
Issue, sub-issues, proposals	Universal basic income	Global competence (yes-no-partially)	Corresponding global norms or directives drawn up/ratified by the WA.	(In the cases of partial global competence and full supervision competence) = LNR authorities transform directives into laws and execute them. Supported by SADE.
		Supervision competence (yes-no-partially) attributable to (WA-ESC-WB-others)		
		Proportional to income (yes-no) + (global-regional-national-weighted)		
		Global solidarity fund for a cross-regional balance (yes-no)		
		Plan for reducing the Gini coefficient (redistribution of resources) (yes-no)		
	Global quality education for all	Fund to support global education (yes-no)	Idem	
		Widespread of new educational models (gender, environment, consumption, health, civics, etc.) (non-exclusive choices)		
		Strengthen and extend "Global Citizenship Education" (an existing civil society initiative) (yes-no-others)		
		Etc.		
	Global disarmament	Gradual plans to completely eliminate nuclear weapons (non-exclusive choices)	Idem	
		Proportionate disarmament plans for conventional armies (idem)		
		Begin proportional reduction of weapons spending (Idem)		
		Small international army for rapid intervention (Idem)		

Table 3: NGD's content-based subsidiarity mechanism. It shows how three sample policy proposals about basic income, education and disarmament, evolve from referenda issues to implementation plans. In brackets=voting options, e.g. (yes-no.) The table does not show the possibility of consecutive series of mini-publics.

Mini-publics have been held all over the world in past decades, with diverse formats and variable results. However, on the whole they have been successful as democratic exercises and solving conflict tools.

The degree of complexity of public issues at a planetary level, suggests the need of various levels of mini-publics in which the findings from a first series lead to a second series being held and so on. The mini-publics will reach their results by voting on various options over two rounds. At the end, these results are sent to the WA to be translated into legal text (global norms or directives.) Mini-publics may draw up their own legal texts if they wish, which the WA then reviews and ratifies.

The mini-public deliberation and the other NGD tools operate together under a principle that we have called *content-based subsidiarity*. CBS can be defined through this theorem: “many decide on the most important, a few decide on the least important,” meaning that global citizens vote in referenda about the key global policy orientations, and only after do mini-publics, WA and the other smaller NGD bodies take decisions, make specific laws and executive plans, etc., following the referenda results, since these are operations that cannot be performed regularly by society as a whole.

As an example of this, table 3 shows a fictional list of sample policy proposals evolving through CBS from plebiscite results (referenda) through specific resolutions as a result of deliberation in mini-publics, to global norms or directives (WA). These will eventually become decentralized laws and executive plans.

3) World Assembly (WA)

The NGD World Assembly does not centralize power but supports a “real democracy” open to the decision-making capacity of the whole of the global community. It is a key mission of coordination and support to the true protagonist of this system: the people. Its purpose is to give proper legal form to the people’s mandate. Its functions are:

- 1) Translate mini-public results into normative texts (global norms and directives.)
- 2) Review and ratify some directives previously prepared by mini-publics in exceptional cases.
- 3) Coordinate, accompany and monitor these two processes (sections 1 and 2).
Namely,
 - a) Launch a public consultation on new issues and proposals for the AIA.
 - b) Once they are collected, finalize the list if necessary by closing the thematic gaps as defined in a previous agenda drawn up by the Assembly itself.
 - c) Call the referenda.
 - d) Monitor the results management, carried out by a specific independent institution, also chosen by sortition.
 - e) Accompany the mini-publics processes.
- 4) Implement the *primacy protocol* if needed, i.e. if there are parallel democratic processes on the same issue or proposal on other territorial scales.
- 5) The WA symbolically represents the global community. In this regard, it will handle certain protocol and ceremonial functions.

- 6) The WA has full legislative powers in exceptional circumstances in which NGD may cease to be operative.

The procedure for the sortition of WA representatives is as follows:

- 1) An examination covering general and legal knowledge is held, open to all citizens with no maximum limit of participants. This will be at the same time a valid examination for various civil service positions.
- 2) Those attaining a certain score will be candidates in the sortition, although they have the right to decline both before and after its holding. It is understood that many others are only interested in job opportunities in the public sector.
- 3) This random selection will be held separately in each of the 400 regions or constituencies around the world.
- 4) Before taking office, the new members will be trained for one month on everything related to their new position.
- 5) The representatives will serve four years and will be ineligible from the draw for the rest of their lives. Draws will be held every year to successively replace one fourth of the house.

The WA must help stability and inspire unity in a complex system of governance. This organism may be seen as the successor of traditional and historic assemblies such as African palaver trees, the assemblies of Ancient Greece, Indian *swaraj*, Russian Dumas, *majils* in many Muslim countries, *musyawarah-mufakat* in Indonesia, among others. In NGD, the true function of a public assembly has been transferred to the 7.5 billion human beings and most of the WA work is done by commissions, although the plenary has to ratify it.

By eliminating elections, parties cease to behave like rival blocks competing for government or channelling the interests of sponsors. They become mere ideological pressure groups who participate in the public debate, becoming counter-opinion agents in the context of rule of law and fundamental freedoms.

By eliminating the professional political class, structural corruption is also eliminated, although not occasional corruption. The NGD representatives are ordinary citizens who return to their condition of non-representatives at the end of four years and for the rest of their lives.

4) *Primacy Protocol*

This mechanism determines the circumstances in which any of these things happen at the moment of drafting the global norms or directives, a) the NGD mandate prevails, b) the subsidiary mandate from smaller territorial scales (local, national and regional authorities) prevails, or c) the two are combined. Primacy protocol is a tool that regulates the coexistence of two parallel systems of decision-making. These two systems are necessary: the first for its effectiveness in terms of advancement of the agendas for global democracy and global justice, and the second as a territorial counterweight and defence of the sovereignty of countries and regions.

Some criteria of the protocol are: the democratic quality of each of the regimes or authorities involved; the nature of the issues concerned; the type of WCN membership of the territories

affected; etc. The complete design of the protocol will be prepared by mini-publics throughout the constituent process (see implementation section).

5) *Decentralized executive*

WA global norms or directives are transferred to the national legislative systems, and where necessary to the regional blocs and local authorities. LNR legislative bodies turn these directives into laws. From there, the respective governments start the executive phase.

The entire process is monitored by the Supervision Authority on Decentralized Execution (SADE). This organism subsequently draws up recommendations and protocols that it sends to the national and territorial independent supervision and sanction authorities (SSA). These institutions do not exist at present but they will be needed as part of the future WCN governance. SSA has the sole competence of supervision and eventual sanction if laws are not enacted or not endorsed, and if executive plans are not implemented. No country or territory can fully adhere to the network until it has such authorities, as is currently the case of most countries. Figure 1 shows arrows and figures in dashed and uncoloured lines (top right) symbolizing the gradual SSA institution-building process.

The SADE is comprised of 50 rotating positions, drawn by lots, supported by public administration teams with managers, consultants and officials. SADE should be explicitly banned by law from accumulating new powers and competencies, reinforcing existing ones or modifying its structure in order to gain more power or enlarge its authority. The reason is to prevent this organism evolving towards an executive authority in itself, that is, a World Government.

6) *People's supervision and reconstruction of mandate.*

One or several further institutions are needed to *develop* supervisory competence.³ As this is the case of the SADE, they will have randomly selected small staffs. Their functions would be:

- a) develop and implement mechanisms for accountability and comprehensive transparency along the global public policy cycle (referenda, mini-publics, WA, SADE.)
- b) coordinate the surveillance of all WCN institutions; establish the procedures and protocols, the promotion plans, the organizational structure and the collection of reports from citizens and whistle blowers.
- c) hold regular audits of these institutions and facilitate alternative audits by third parties like CSOs or LNR authorities.
- d) facilitate the processes of *retrospective reconstruction of the mandate*.

The incumbents of political posts (WA and SADE representatives) would be subject to immediate revocation if they are found guilty of corruption, bribery, malfeasance and the like. The indicted representatives would be temporarily suspended and a method for fair and expeditious trials would be established for all abuses of public office. The privilege of immunity will be banned at global level.

³ For simplicity, these smaller institutions are not mentioned in the summary or represented in Figure 1.

NGD contains a procedure that we call *retrospective reconstruction of the mandate*. This is an independent complaint that can be filed by anyone, either individual, organization or institution, who believes that the next actor in the public policy cycle has misinterpreted the mandate of the previous one in that chain, because he or she understood that it was dealt with either in an inadequate, inaccurate, insufficient or biased manner. If the competent supervision organism rules in favour of the claimant, the relevant authority is obliged to restart the corresponding part of the process.

This affects the following scenarios:

- a) the way a question is framed in a referendum can lead to understanding that it does not conform to, or even contradicts, the mandate of the people that initially formulated the issue or proposal to be voted;
- b) the solutions dictated by a mini-public seemingly do not conform to, or contradict, the mandate of the parent referendum;
- c) the solutions dictated by a further mini-public seemingly do not conform to, or contradict, the results of a previous mini-public;
- d) a WA global norm or directive apparently does not conform to, or contradicts, the mandate contained in the ruling of the mini-public that originated it;
- e) a WA resolution on which system of decision-making prevails for drafting a given directive is appealed against for not correctly interpreting the rules of the primacy protocol;
- f) a national law or a regional directive, etc., is appealed against for not conforming to, or contradicting, the WA parent directive.

3.2. The scale issue: mixing with and overcoming the Westphalian System (WCN)

The World Community Network (WCN) is a new kind of international bloc whose members, in addition of the NGD system itself, are international and regional institutions, States and local authorities. All these actors become members willingly and gradually. CSOs and individuals from non-WCN territories can join the network too. The progressive membership entails the gradual construction of WCN portions separated by non-adhering communities. The WCN differs from other federations or confederations in being cross-scale, fully subsidiary, and horizontal, and by following transparent rules, protocols and responsibilities. This network does not have any representative institution of its own. Its fundamental normative core must be defined during the constituent process and the rest of mechanisms will be decided by using the NGD system itself.

This section will define: the categories of WCN membership; the steps for accession; the commitments and responsibilities of States and other members; and finally the right to self-determination allowing split and merging processes within the network.

There are three categories of membership: full, restricted and observer.

- **Full membership, with more rights and responsibilities, is given to political units fully ruled by post-liberal, post-representative democracies (i.e. direct, deliberative, sortition, liquid, participatory budgets, etc.)** which have abandoned or subordinated other forms of government. At present, only a few municipalities entirely governed by direct democracy could be accepted as full members.

- **Restricted membership, involving limited rights**, is given to units that don't fully meet the WCN standards. Their participation is limited given that their democratic and socio-economic responsibilities are considered also limited. At present, this is the case of many liberal representative democracies
- **Observer membership** is given to countries, whether democracies **or not**, that freely decide to follow all or some of the NGD global norms or directives because they recognize their relevance. However, observers do not have obligations (shared commitments), the right to vote or representation within the WCN.

One of the reasons that can lead a country or territory to apply for membership is the socio-economic appeal. Indeed, economic, educational, media, and intercultural improvement should become evident for many in countries where everybody—not only the representatives—can participate regularly in decision-making. In addition, due to the scale effect, the greater the WCN, the more individual and collective security can be guaranteed to its citizens.

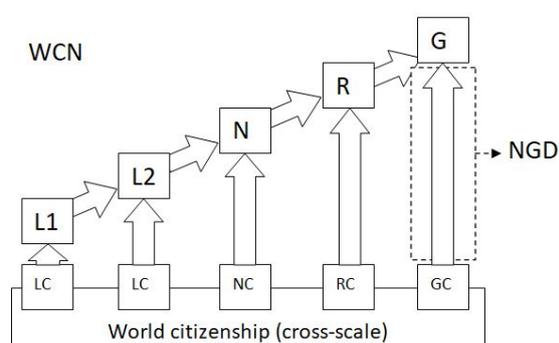


Figure 2: the World Community Network (WCN) (Key: L1 = small locality (e.g., cities, districts), L2 = large local unit (e.g., regions, provinces, federated states), N = national (sovereign states)); R = regional or continental; G = global; GC, RC, NC, LC = global, regional, national, local communities / citizens; NGD = this arrow represents the whole flow chart of figure 1.

Steps for accession

The WCN is a multi-scale system of governance with a bottom-up democratic mandate. It encompasses cities of the same department or province that join willingly; provinces of the same sovereign State join willingly; States of the same region or continent join willingly; and regional blocs join willingly at global level. We can observe this gradual progress in figure 3. 3a and 3b are templates for the other six. 3c and 3d represent the basic structure of centralized and decentralized or federal political units. 3e to 3h show successive stages of an expanding WCN. That is, an unequal and disorganized pattern of gradual inclusion resulting from the voluntary nature of accession. In them, the increasing number of “spontaneous” bonds between individual political units, represents both subsidiarity between scales and a stakeholder approach among same scale units.

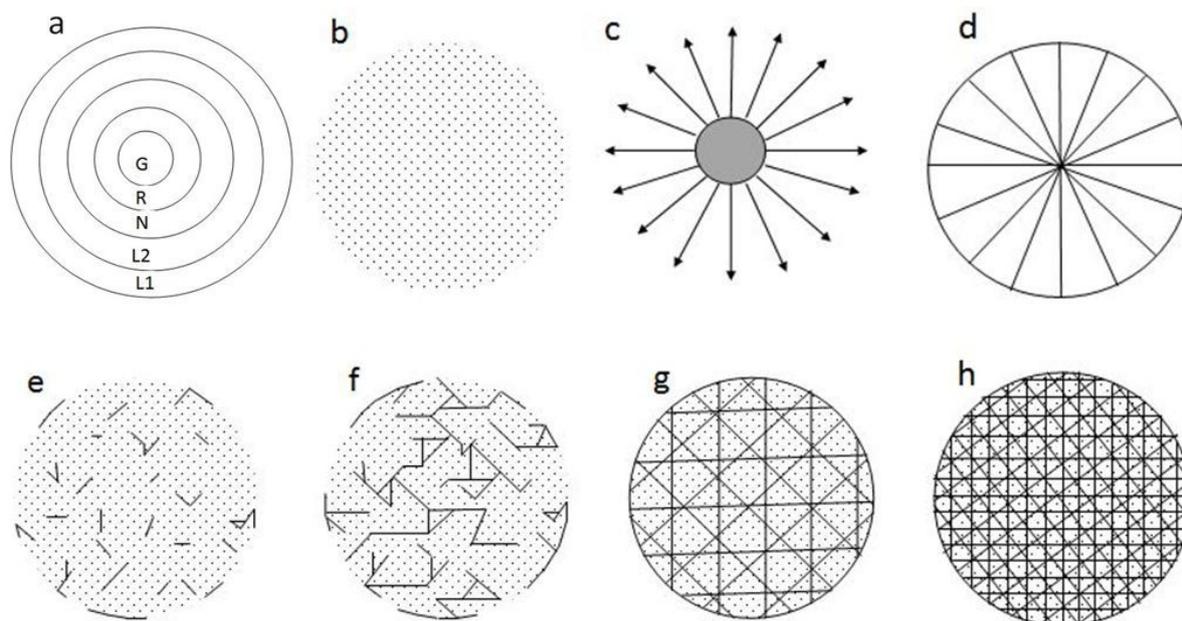


Figure 3: Accession to the WCN: a) territorial scales (global, regional, national, local 1 and 2). b) individual political units. (a) and (b) serve as overlapping templates for the following figures. c) centralized structure (World State) d) federated structure (World Confederation) e-h) successive stages of an expanding WCN in which political institutions joining the network develop both cross-scale subsidiary, and same-scale horizontal governance links.

Obligations of WCN full members

1. Integrate into the subsidiary mandate system. a) If some lower scale institutions have already joined the WCN prior to the candidate institution, they keep proportionally their voice in the reshaped decision-making system. b) Those joining have a degressively proportional voice equal to other territories on the same scale.

2. All categories of members are equal in rank regardless of their territorial scale. No institution is above the other, and all of them follow the principle of subsidiarity.

3. Inclusive and mandatory mutual obligation to co-operate on:

- Assistance and protection against a third-party attack.
- Non-observance of cultural, social and economic rights (i.e. concerning food, security, shelter, education, health, liberties, minority rights.)
- Global commons.
- Safeguarding social diversity.
- Assume responsibility as participant member institutions in rotational co-ordination WCN tasks.

4. Provide civic and political rights to everybody. Ensuring access to these rights must be dissociated from the nation-state or another scale of the territory. Every human being shall have the inherent right to be part of the WCN and take part in its decision-making. The WCN shall ensure these rights to everyone, regardless of their place of origin and residence, race, religion, sex, economic situation, etc.

5. Accept the vision for, proceeding and actual usage of democracy renewal.

WCN and NGD governance structures can be regularly questioned and improved in light of stakeholders' demands while pursuing the ideals of social and environmental justice.

6. The States shall endorse the WCN concept of subsidiary co-sovereignty. Without prejudice of the right to quit the network and the right to self-determination (see below), the states formally lose their exclusive sovereignty.

Self-determination, unification, secession.

Members can be suspended from the network for repeated non-compliance with the conditions of accession. In turn, each member indefinitely retains the right to dissociate itself from the WCN, and each non-member territory has the right to apply to join. Within the network, if conducted democratically, self-determination from a larger unit, merging of two or more territories, and border modifications are also guaranteed.

3. KEY ARGUMENTS

This section will examine some pros and cons of an advanced (post-liberal, post-representative) global democracy. Firstly, in relation to Neoliberalism. Secondly, the nature of democracy and the limitations of representative liberal democracy. Thirdly, the chances of developing advanced democracies in mass societies, and specifically the feasibility of NGD mechanisms. Lastly, the evolution of sovereignties and the construction of global identity.

1. Globalization, neoliberalism and the construction of a Democratic Community

The neoliberal adventure has been widely documented in key works such as Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*⁴ and Noam Chomsky's *Requiem for the American Dream*.⁵ This film brilliantly exposes how the global elite is concentrating wealth as an instrument for concentrating power and thus destroy the economic, social and political conquests of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Modern capitalism is ruled by highly interlinked⁶ financial elites smaller than the richest one per cent of the planet but richer than the poorest half of the globe's population. This wealth gives them huge economic and political power; enough power to rule over citizens, civil society and governments, and decide the world's fate.

Liberal representative democracy worked for the people and their needs for a long time, but its positive social effects have been significantly reduced with globalization. This can be seen in the extreme accumulation of wealth and power and its effects, not only in regards to the decline of the middle classes in the global North, but also in the why this corrupts, degrades and ultimately destroys liberal democracy itself as the political system that has accompanied the existence of these middle classes.

⁴ Klein, Naomi; *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, New York. Metropolitan Books / Henry Holt, 2007

⁵ *Requiem for the American Dream* (2016) <http://lstu.fr/Edm25cWT> Accessed on 3.3.2017

⁶ Vitali S, Glattfelder JB, Battiston S. (2011) *The Network of Global Corporate Control*. PLoS ONE 6(10): e25995 <http://lstu.fr/Mkcd3hzo> Accessed on 7.3.2017

Therefore, rebuilding from scratch a liberal representative system on a global scale, which is the project of global federalists, does not solve the problem since the powers that be have already learned to tame that political system. New values and models are needed as a basis for a new political order that can meet humanity's needs and potential. They should also contain the rules that contribute to reducing and if possible breaking up these powers. We cannot depend on the good or bad luck of voting for leaders who are good sometimes, while mostly displaying mediocre performance, far removed from people's interests, while others become increasingly populist and authoritarian. In recent years, this reality has raised the idea of questioning the whole system, leaving it behind and building global political alternatives.

As mentioned above, the heart of the problem is the extreme concentration of power. This power can be understood as the influence one agent exerts on another to do (or not do) something, by various means such as coercion, force, persuasion, manipulation, diversion or dissuasion. This power is currently exerted on citizens and governance systems by the global economic actors of the planetary plutocracy. However, before the emergence of modern capitalism, it was exerted by the elites of ancient empires and feudal estates. Thus, instead of reforming capitalism or replacing it with something else, the real challenge nowadays is to distribute power, facilitating in turn a redistribution of income and wealth. If this revolution is not enforced in the coming years, the elite agenda won't stop moving forward and it will replace financial capitalism with any other system more suitable still to the ultra-rich, leading to a dystopian scenario (more wars, more repression and authoritarianism, robotization of all work, dissolution of the welfare state, etc.)

Against this a new paradigm is needed, one that lays new foundations for the distribution of power and the empowerment of people. This concerns not only politics but also the economy (fair international trade, co-operativism, social and solidarity economy, common goods), environment, education, the media, interpersonal relations, among others. However, this paper does not deal with this whole paradigm but only with its political aspects.

Returning to political issues, any alternative to liberal representative democracy and neoliberalism must stop the accumulation of power. It cannot be a liberal (capitalist) federal global republic, or a soviet-style left-wing autocracy with a top-down centralized program. In both cases, the fewer decision-makers, the more chance of perversion due to the more effective lobbyism of the powerful over small groups of representatives or public officers, than on the whole population. In contrast, the more people involved in democratic processes, the more transparency, accountability, mutual surveillance and co-education occurs, and therefore there is a greater opportunity to fully develop social agendas and to detect and halt the interests of the elites.

Of course, there are historical exceptions to this trend, with strong leaders known for their commitment to the service of the people. But ordinary citizens should stop trusting innocently in rulers who are exemplary only sometimes, while they mostly undermine governance and neglect the common interest.

2. The functioning of representative governments and their limits.⁷

The propagation of modern systems of representative government has been historically related to the various industrial revolutions, the growth of the middle classes and the expansion of the welfare state and the rule of law. Liberal representative democracies are also called *polyarchies*. *Polyarchy* means the “government of many”, thus somewhat different from the “government of the people”, a theorem wrongly related to the liberal democracies.⁸ Critics see⁹ polyarchy as a political system allowing wealth and power accumulation, while respecting civil liberties, providing some benefits to the many, but maintaining exploitation at its core, instead of pursuing the common interest, even if they make of it their main dogma.

Representative government systems enhance the voting ceremony and all of its institutions and mechanisms are secretly co-opted in variable proportions by the powers that be. In this section, I will describe how these two trends shape the different elements of representative governments.

Firstly, elections. In representative systems, citizens delegate power to party representatives in a single day’s vote, and renounce deciding for themselves during the remaining four years. This delegated, vertical system does not correspond to the meaning of the expression “government by the people” but to its opposite, government by a few, over the people. Although activism has historically managed to enlarge the number of those with voting rights (rich and poor, women, minorities), the voting system remains the same as when it was invented over 200 years ago.

Secondly, the political platforms should have the function of social contracts between representatives and represented. However, their promises are barely fulfilled, while the media tends to be more interested in showing political party games than in reminding the parties of these broken obligations. In contrast, in an advanced democracy citizens can regularly and transparently write proposals and deliberate about them (*participatory mandate*¹⁰) and they can stop them later along the way if necessary through the *retrospective reconstruction of mandate*. In this way party discipline is removed; the system can resist the strong influence of pressure groups; and in addition, strong sanction and revocation measures would be implemented for non-compliance.

The third element is the influence of the powerful who fund political campaigns. They consequently want their favour repaid and this often occurs by restricting social and environmental policies. Partitocracy is a system of rivalry between factions that penetrates, perverts, swallows up and destroys people’s voices. In an advanced democracy without elected representatives, parties cease to be a pillar of politics to become pressure groups that defend specific visions or ideologies.

A fourth element is the modern spectacle of politics. Politics as a media show helps the system’s permanence. It stresses the conflicting, partisan and frivolous side of politicians, and does not give enough information about substantial issues on the governments and

⁷ This section is inspired by the work of Manin, Bernard *Principes du gouvernement représentatif* Cambridge University Press, 1997 (1995), and the thoughts of Etienne Chouard, activist, teacher and blogger.

⁸ Dahl, Robert A.; *Polyarchy; Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971

⁹ I. e. Gills, B; Rocamora, J; Willson, R; (eds), *Low Intensity Democracy: Political power and the New World Order*, Boulder, Westview, 1993

¹⁰ “El mandato participativo” <http://lstu.fr/52FvB3TF> Accessed on 8.3.2017

parliaments agendas. This is indicative of the way the people are separated from and subordinated to politicians, and also how difficult or impossible, or even illegal, it is for the people to shape the political agenda.

A fifth element is corruption. Corruption in politics consists mainly of the co-opting of politicians by the elites and other forces. Its higher visibility in recent years has led to a widespread distrust that stresses the crisis of the system. In NGD, corruption would disappear thanks to regular referenda and randomly selected representatives with single terms in office. However, occasional corruption would still need to be prevented, audited and sanctioned through different tools.

3. The tools of Network Global Democracy

The system of checks and balances that play a key role in representative democracy would also be necessary, but insufficient, in an advanced democracy like NGD, where another kind of balance between “dimensions”¹¹ would be also crucial. That is, by combining its different tools the system as a whole is protected from the weaknesses and defects of each one of these tools. This way, deliberative democracy adds depth to the decision-making process (informed choice); direct democracy enlarges the scope (universal vote); sortition allows everyone an equal opportunity to access representative positions; and finally, decentralized execution avoids global centralization and brings nation-states closer to WCN. Thus hybrid advanced systems like NGD are seen to be more effective than simple advanced democracies based on a single system or tool.

Direct democracy (continuing referenda)

Direct democracy allows everybody to make decisions directly. In small communities, the direct vote was and still is used in people’s assemblies open to all inhabitants. Switzerland, with 8.5 million inhabitants, is a semi-direct democracy where citizens can propose constitutional changes (*popular initiatives*) or create a petition for a referendum on any existing law.

Is it possible to establish a regular system of referenda on a global scale? In 2009, a global vote was held with thousands of participants from 171 countries¹² with questions on various human needs. Two major obstacles to the development of direct democracy on a large scale have now been overcome: first, 85% of the world population has been educated to primary level, and secondly with simple, brief training anyone can access electronic voting machines or vote via the internet, while access from areas without coverage can be covered by satellite connections.

It can be argued that low participation makes this illegitimate. However, low participation (i.e. less than 30%) during the first implementation years of NGD may merely be a sign of a lack of experience. After this period, forty to sixty per cent would be a high voting rate, similar to Swiss voting percentages in the years 2010-2016. Even twenty per cent would be similar to the average attendance at the *Ekklesia*, the main assembly of ancient Athens.

¹¹ James S. Fishkin in his “trilemma of democracy reform” proposed three “dimensions”: political equality, deliberation and mass participation. Fishkin, James S.; *When the People Speak. Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*; Oxford University Press, 2009.

¹² World Vote Now (Global Human Referendum) <https://is.gd/GiEz4i> Accessed on 3.3.2017

Deliberative democracy (mini-publics)

Since 1972, different forms of mini-publics have been held (deliberative polls, citizen panels, etc.), in many countries of the world. Maybe the most extensive series held to date was the World Wide Views on Biodiversity¹³ organized in 2012 in preparation for the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Three thousand people from twenty-five countries participated in these mini-publics.

NGD Mini-publics should be designed to produce binding results. This obligation is considered to be a key element of the system, if compared with the advisory nature of mini-publics at the present time. On the other hand, a major argument against this binding character in mini-publics in general is that a randomly selected group is still just a limited number of individuals that does not properly represent the whole global community. Against this, NGD considers mini-publics a necessary but incomplete tool, which is why they are positioned second in the decision-making circuit, behind direct democracy, which obviously is the most representative system possible. Therefore, among the principles represented in the model, first comes government of the people (universality) through direct democracy, followed by deliberation, for dealing with complex, detailed issues and make reasoned and informed decisions. Deliberation comes together with political equality from Ancient Greece¹⁴ (equal chances of being selected to be a juror or a WA representative).

Hundreds of mini-publics have been held around the world in recent years, especially at local level, and many have been criticized for being a smokescreen for vested interests, often related to the convening authorities. For example, in the case of many participatory budget initiatives, these concern issues perceived as unimportant to the population, or the amount at stake is only a tiny part of the budget of the organizing institution.

In contrast, NGD mini-publics would take place regularly and deal with all issues, not just the issues that are the interests of the convening authority. Furthermore, personal interests would be mostly removed if WA members were non-professional representatives chosen by lot for a single term. In spite of all this, the World Assembly would contribute to shape the final results in three aspects only: a) by finalizing if necessary the list of topics for the Annual Issue Agenda, as mentioned in the WA section; b) by establishing the lists of sub-issues for mini-publics, from within the range of results of the referenda; c) in translating the confirmed results into global norms or directives.

The World Assembly thus accompanies and guides a regular deliberative process in which citizens make decisions and parliamentarians observe, organize the process, and marginally shape the contents. But at the same time parliamentarians do not have the “independence” that leads to them working for the elites to pay back favours, but rather the interdependent mandate limited by the decisions of referenda, mini-publics, and evaluation processes. In short, unlike the checks and balances in representative systems, it is this dynamic bottom-up mandate—an example of what Zapatistas call “rule by obeying”—that makes it difficult to hijack the system.

¹³ Biodiversity Worldwide Views Project <https://is.gd/6AkBu7> Accessed on 3.3.2017

¹⁴ Hansen, Mogens H.; *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes. Structures, Principles and Ideology*, Oxford 1991

World Assembly (sortition body)

Can a large body (300-500 representatives) chosen by lot ever work efficiently? Two thousand five hundred years ago, Ancient Athens made it possible. The *Ekklesia* or Popular Assembly brought together an average of 6000 citizens in attendance from a census of about 30-60,000 men (excluding women, foreigners and slaves). The *Boule* or Council, made up of 500 citizens over thirty and chosen by lot, prepared the Assembly sessions and subsequently implemented its decisions. Each group of fifty out of these 500 came from each of the ten tribes of the city in differentiated draws held annually. Each one of these groups was in charge of the executive function in the Assembly on a rotating basis. Any citizen could be a member of the *Boule* twice in his life, and with Pericles' reforms they received a salary or stipend. This ensured a higher attendance of the lower classes.

It can be argued that the differences with the present day on a global scale are huge. Firstly, in terms of the total population represented. Secondly, partly as a consequence of this, in terms of the complexity of the issues. Thirdly, the challenge of coordinating the mandate of the several bodies and lastly, the use of new technologies. However, the first and second challenge would also be faced by any other global governance system. With regards to the third challenge, the mandate coordination will be NGD-specific. And finally, new technologies will help correct the organizational adversities of the other three challenges.

On the other hand, as the only global democratic institution in the framework of a networked, decentralized system, the future WA could be seen by some as an embryonic self-empowered institution able to build hyper-bureaucracy that in turn may lead to a centralized World Government. In order to prevent this scenario, due recognition must be given to this trend (accumulation of power) as part of human nature¹⁵ and its risks. Awareness about it is needed at many levels: global and local law, education at all levels, news and media, popular culture, so that it can always be tackled appropriately.

Supervision of decentralized execution

The key element for a proper functioning of the decentralized execution of global norms and directives would be to follow the principles of *obligation of result* and *obligation of conduct*. Under obligation of result, executive authorities have full autonomy in action, method and time to properly implement the laws and directives they receive. On the other hand, obligation of conduct means acting in a certain way or refraining from acting in a certain way, such as respecting human rights or pursuing best experiences.

There is a wide range of examples of international decentralized execution that can serve as a precedent for this NGD stage. Both at global level (UN Conventions, Sustainable Development Goals, OECD directives, etc.) and regional level (UNASUR, ASEAN, AU, EU and others.) Of course, these institutions encounter all kinds of problems. One of them is the aforementioned trend to accumulate power. Thus, one way of highlighting this problem is to provide security against the abuses of the powerful, the stature of a fundamental right. This new right would be ensured through preventative political, economic, legal and social measures against the monopolizing of goods and power by anyone, and fighting oligarchies of all kinds.

¹⁵ The famous Iron Law of Oligarchy (Michels, Robert. *Political Parties; A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York: Dover Publications, 1959 (1911))

Auditing tools and sanctions

Global examples from 2017 include the peer-to-peer national progress reports (“voluntary national reviews”) of the SDGs organized by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), and the OECD. In 2017, thirty-one countries participated, and in 2018 a further forty-eight are expected. They reported on SDG progress and challenges and the implementation of the 2030 agenda.¹⁶ In the NGD model, the Supervision Authority on Decentralized Execution (SADE) observes and advises the local, national and regional supervision authorities. The latter do all the auditing work and decide on evaluation and sanctions. Who controls them? They can control each other through regular peer evaluation mechanisms, in coordination with the SADE.

4. Democracy and radical plurality of the global identity

The future existence of a global political community would lead to a reflection on its identity. Again, as in the case of sovereignty, the term “identity” can lead to confusion because it transports us to the “identical” and therefore global homogenization.

If we want to build a planetary common narrative and even a planetary identity, we need to be cautious in how we proceed, as with the excuse of giving primacy to the idea of unity, there is a risk of imposing standardizing tendencies and denying or minimizing cultural, philosophical and other differences, as well as developing beliefs of perfection, inspiring totalitarianism and supremacy. In this case, such a global democratic system would not be different from the colonial “civilizing mission” and current neocolonial paternalism. In short, instead of claiming unity at any cost, it may be preferable to celebrate diversity first and adopt the idea of an intercultural “ethical threshold” arising from a global dialogue.

Hence we should imagine global identity as radically plural. In that sense, global identity in NGD:

- a) Would favour socio-diversity and grant peoples the prerogative to directly represent and defend cultures, especially minority cultures, as a complement or even substitution of the prerogative of States.
- b) Would not replace, exclude or marginalize other identities but would accompany them.
- c) Would endeavour to define common rules constructed from principles originating in or inspired by different cultures.
- d) Would reject the idea of unity at any cost and the exaltation of global institutions of any kind. Instead, it would respect and celebrate life, humanity and the planet.
- e) Would facilitate restorative actions concerning global injustices (South-North, poor-rich, women-men, nature-humanity).

To start the process of building this plural identity, one starting point should be an own and new system of values built from or inspired by the different cultures. This system of values would set the groundwork for the political system as well as other systemic global dimensions. Perhaps one of the most reprehensible Western core concepts is that of democracy, as it has been considered both an external element to many non-Western cultures,

¹⁶ High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: Voluntary National Reviews
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/#vnrs>

and a new form of ideological colonialism. In this sense, NGD bottom-up democracy, especially including the WCN structure, is closer to the idea of local assemblies, which is common to many cultures, and can be dissociated and opposed to modern representative governments that, although they have spread to many countries of the world, have a Euro-American cultural origin. Furthermore, such a transcultural vision of democracy should be contrary to the authoritarianism of different cultures but also to the authoritarianism of the markets.

All the cultures of the world have or have had their own assembly traditions, in different historical times and in very diverse forms (see WA section). These “democracies” are based on values and worldviews alien to ancient or modern Western culture. Thus, although the idea of “democracy” was coined in ancient Greece, it is possible an intercultural debate concerning the visions and collective values that sustain assembly traditions around the world, with the purpose of inspiring and supporting a “global democracy” with an intercultural narrative at its core.

In all cases, it is legitimate to ask whether the resulting system can be called “democracy” in the sense this term is used here, or whether new words or expressions will be required.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The deployment of NGD will encounter strong resistance from local and global, de facto and official powers, as well as from some sectors of public opinion. On the other hand, a large-scale pilot experiment with some or all of the model tools (direct, deliberative, sortition, subsidiary democracies) would facilitate improving the system throughout the experience gained. This pilot experiment could already take place in some volunteering national-level ministries or parliamentary commissions.

A Possible Roadmap

Regarding the milestones and strategies that can help towards the global political transformation put forward here, one first step could be to set out a consultative provisional World Assembly working on a constituent process, a global agenda, the definition of competences and the emerging network-based governance. This first “isolated” version of WA would evolve towards the full NGD variant by gradually adding competences and recognition while in parallel the WCN steadily increases as shown in figure 3. Here is an example of evolution in four stages:

Stage 1: a provisional, independent WA with a majority of global civil society members would draw up facultative directives on global public issues. Thanks to its members’ experience and contacts, the Assembly would gain recognition as an independent actor defending a global general will. In this stage, the support of pioneering authorities (States, regions, cities, etc.) would be sought to establish bonds of trust and expand areas of collaboration. Members would be selected from participating CSOs, respecting regional and gender diversity.

Stage 2: some pioneering local and national authorities provide regular support, whether financial, logistical, etc. The Assembly’s production goes beyond the unofficial nature of many CSO’s studies, and **achieved the reputation of other international**

institutions. Its reports and recommendations become important references for public authorities, civil society and private actors. These are cross-sectional analyses setting great store by transparency and power relations, among others. Furthermore, at this stage a participatory constituent process begins.

Stage 3: proclamation of the Global Community in an embryonic or emergent state. The cities, regions and states that already collaborated with the WA would be invited to be a part of both NGD and the WCN, whether as full or restricted members. In this third phase the “Global Community” is made up of scattered countries, cities and territories that represent a minority on the planet as a whole. In figure 3 this phase is represented by figures e) and f). At this stage, NGD has a certain influence on the global agenda, perhaps similar to other international medium-size agents, but far from affecting the core of the global order. The NGD decision-making system (Figure 1) begins to operate in the member countries and territories, as well as a first version of a Global Constitutional Charter.

Stage 4: the WCN includes a large number of territories and populations around the world. The global policies drawn up by the people are implemented by the sub-planetary authorities and possibly, as a result of this global participatory decision-making system working only for global peoples and the environment, an agenda is developed that could solve the most critical problems in the world in a period of 10-15 years.