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SPANDA

THE TOBE PROJECT¹

HOW TO FACILITATE A GLOBAL “WE THE PEOPLE”



Jim Rough is a social innovator, consultant, speaker and author. While working as a consultant to a timber company in the early 1980's he developed Dynamic Facilitation, a way to help people release creativity and feelings for solving impossible-seeming problems. Since then he has taught the “Dynamic Facilitation and Choice-creating” seminar all over the world and through Dynamic Facilitation Associates (www.ToBe.net) has credentialed others who teach it as well. Jim also developed the “Wisdom Council Process,” which supports large systems of people, like organizations and communities, to work together in solving difficult issues. Jim is co-founder of the Center for Wise Democracy (www.WiseDemocracy.com) and author of the book Society's Breakthrough! Releasing Essential Wisdom and Virtue in All the People (www.SocietysBreakthrough.com).



HOW CAN WE SOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE? WARS? Poverty? This essay describes how our socio-political-economic system causes these problems and how “The ToBe Project” can transform the system so we can solve them. It presents this strategy in four sections: 1) The nature of system transformation; 2) Four social innovations to achieve it; 3) The ToBe Project, a plan of action; and 4) The new socio-political-economic system.

SECTION 1 – THE NATURE OF SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

I remember one night watching my wife give our baby niece a bath in the kitchen sink. The tot was enjoying herself, splashing in the water and playing with bath toys. But the toy that caught her interest most was the drain plug at the bottom of the sink. She didn't realize that it was different from the others. She wasn't thinking systemically. She was just playing. The toys are independent from one another and from the bath, so there is not much consequence to playing with them. But the plug was part of a system, and pulling it meant the end of her bath.

In society of course, we are like the baby. We largely assume there is no system and that we can consume

products and create economic growth without serious consequences. But this behaviour threatens to pull the plug on civilization itself.

In another personal story, I once took a walk down the hill from my house, through some woods to meet a new neighbour. When I arrived, he was digging a series of trenches to handle a flood of water. I stopped to talk with him and marvelled at all the piping and ditches he had built. Then, rather than following the path I took a meandering route back home, generally following wet ground. A few weeks earlier, I had become frustrated when rainwater had caused a rut across the front of our gravel driveway. So I took my shovel and smoothed the driveway, redirecting the flow to a ditch nearby. Unknowingly, I had shifted the runoff from the entire hill toward my neighbour's house. Yikes! When I realized this I felt a rush of embarrassment that I had caused his problem. And I hurried to fix it. With just a few well-placed strokes of a shovel I solved his problem in a more comprehensive way than anything he could do. My simple action also solved issues for neighbours below him as well.

Interestingly, when I first saw the canal-building project, I didn't feel like offering to help. It didn't seem like my problem. But “stepping back” from the situation and seeing the system I felt a shift in my motivation. Now, it was easy for me to take responsibility. I wanted to help him and do what was best for the neighbourhood. The state of my driveway was secondary.

One point from this story is how, once we see the system, we may discover a simple solution that can solve many massive problems at once. Another point is how this seeing can transform our motivation from self-interest to serving the whole.

In this essay I'm suggesting a way that we – you and I – can facilitate all of us to step back, think together about our situation, see our system in a new way, and work together to develop a win/win response to our many problems. At the same time we should also notice that just engaging in this new collective thinking process, by itself, is a new more democratic system.

THREE POSSIBLE SYSTEMS FOR SOCIETY

There are three basic ways by which large numbers of people might organize themselves, the Triangle,

Box, and Circle: 1) The Triangle is based on hierarchy, where a “Great Leader” or king is ultimately in charge. 2) The Box is based on a set of agreements like a constitution, which is ultimately in charge. 3) The Circle is based on a conversation where all talk about what’s going on and figure out together what’s best. Each system has aspects of the others. It’s just ... what is the ultimate authority?

In the Circle we take “time out” on a regular basis, talk respectfully about what’s going on, face our problems, evolve systemic understandings, build a shared vision of what we want, create breakthrough solutions, and work together to make them happen. True democracy can arise from this new empowerment of the people, where *We the People* are ultimately in charge. Also arising from this new conversation is an economic system where *We* act more like a global family than a global market.

Each of the three systems has a different underlying structure, promotes a different attitude in people, involves different leadership, generates different results, is appropriate in different situations, causes different kinds of problem and sparks a different kind of conversation.

The Triangle is driven by loyalty to the dictator, king, manager or “Great Leader.” Power is top down, where people at each level know their place, limit themselves and their thinking, suppress diversity and idolize the leader.

The Box works well when people are independent. It was especially well suited for farmers, crafts people and fishers in the 18th century on the North American continent. At that time it was possible to establish a clear set of rules and leave the people alone to make their fortunes. This system is a competition within the rules, like a game. It encourages the pursuit of self interest, while generating innovation and results based on merit. Especially, it has assured new freedoms and rights for individuals and reduced the level of war. There is a longstanding desire to eliminate wars and conflicts by establishing the Box system at the global level. The aim is to begin by revising the United Nations, by uniting existing democracies, or by creating a world constitution. But these efforts seem completely blocked.

But even at the national level, the Box system is an inadequate way for us to manage our future. And besides it’s breaking down. A competitive system can only work to the extent that people and institutions are independent. When they are inter-dependent, then special interests prevail over the public interest. For example, the Box system encourages people and organizations to take from common pool resources – like clean air, fresh water, the effectiveness of antibiotics, fertile soils, ocean fisheries, and the level of trust in

the community. Each “special interest” then gains the benefits of these resources while the “public interest” bears the costs.

This scenario, putting the community at risk in pursuit of self-interest, is normal in the Box system because it sets up the “rules of the game” and then lets go. There is no coming together to talk things over or to figure out what’s best for all. If there is a conversation about these issues it happens through “partisan politics,” another competition that’s turning from win/lose to lose/lose.

So even if the nationalistic chaos of our current global system with autocratic, democratic and failed states was replaced by a global constitutional system it’s not going to work. We will find ourselves polluting the air, soils and water faster than those bodies can heal themselves. We will inexorably draw down the supply of fish in the ocean, add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, and destroy the soils, water and species of our planet. The carrying capacity of our planet has already been reached. So we are inter-dependent more than we are in-dependent.

At this juncture in history, we must progress to the Circle system. We must stop and think periodically, check in to see what’s going on, co-create shared vision, and support one another in creating the world we want. This conversation will likely establish a global social contract and institutions. More important than our ability to establish the constitution, however, is our ability to establish the ongoing *We the People* conversation.

How might we (you and I) spark this coming together of *We the People* at the global level? Conceptually, it’s easy. We just need to call “time out” periodically where people can step back from ordinary life and talk about what’s going on. And we need to facilitate everyone so that people want to engage in this conversation, so they talk respectfully and co-create a vision of what they want and how to get there. Then we need to call “time in” for them to go back to normal. Only of course, once we add this conversation, the old normal is gone. Because now we all see the systemic nature of our problems. And we have an experience of solving problems together. Plus, we have a way to provide responsible leadership to governments, corporations, nonprofit organizations and the culture in general.

SECTION 2 – FOUR ESSENTIAL SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Four social innovations make it possible to for us grow the Circle system.

The first social innovation is to give this special kind of “time out” a name. We call it a “ToBe” (#1).

Mentally taking a “time out” is an old practice sometimes involving meditation, prayer, vacation, retreat, noticing what’s happening, etc. A ToBe is where people step back from normal life, face difficult problems creatively, seek what’s best for all, and achieve unity on what to do. Then in a few months we convene another ToBe, either going further with the same issue or picking another.

A second social innovation is the “Wisdom Council Process” (#2). Here’s how we can convene ongoing ToBe’s in large systems of people, even the global system. The Wisdom Council Process was first conceived in 1993. Since then there have been many experiments with it among members of organizations, employees of corporations, participants in conferences, and citizens of communities, cities, and states. Government leaders in the state of Vorarlberg, Austria, for example, used the Wisdom Council Process to address the refugee issue, facilitating a diverse microcosm of people to speak with one voice on this issue. Basically the Wisdom Council said, “Yes, we need to protect our culture from taking in too many refugees and from the dangers of extremists. But our primary attitude should be one of helping these people.” The Wisdom Council also articulated a way to do this. Afterwards, one elected official enthusiastically responded, “The Wisdom Council is like wind at my back.” Until the Wisdom Council spoke it was politically unacceptable for him to express this position. Now, he felt support, even leadership from citizens on the issue².

In another example, a food cooperative used the Wisdom Council Process to help resolve a long-standing controversy among the Board of Directors. The Wisdom Council expressed the wise and thoughtful voice of the membership and the controversy melted immediately.

Here’s a brief description of how the Wisdom Council Process can spark the people to come together as *We the People*. Every four months or so, twelve to twenty-four people from the world’s population are randomly selected in a kind of lottery. These people are gathered in one location as a symbol of the world’s people. This Wisdom Council meets for a few days with someone skilled in “Dynamic Facilitation”. Dynamic Facilitation (#3) is the third social innovation. How it works is described below. Using it the people selected to the Wisdom Council can face “impossible” issues that involve strong emotions like climate change, the refugee issue, poverty, and racial prejudice in a heartfelt, creative way. The emotions and diversity of views help the group achieve shifts and breakthroughs, and reach unity just a couple days.

Then there are “global community meetings” where the Wisdom Council can share its unity, plus the story of how the shifts and breakthroughs

led to the group results. Participants at community meetings and those online are invited to talk in small groups about what they’ve heard and express their reactions. Then people hear how the broad audience is reacting and often start realizing “Maybe we are all together on this issue!”

Most often the response of people hearing the Wisdom Council members speak their unity is something like, “Yes! I think so too. Why haven’t we been talking like this before?” So, it’s a way that a huge population can use a small group of people as symbolic representation of all, to help it face big issues creatively and come together. These gatherings can happen in multiple locations, at different times, in different languages, and through different venues. The original Wisdom Council disbands. But then in a few months a new random Wisdom Council is brought together to help the whole-system conversation move forward another step.

Wisdom Councils have no official power. Everything about them is voluntary. Each Wisdom Council meets, presents, and goes away. But the overall process facilitates the essential missing whole-system conversation where we can all get involved and speak freely about the important issues. It sparks a “seeing” of the systemic connections, new attitudes, relationships, ideas and actions. People who are usually marginalized find themselves being heard and valued. Shared perspectives develop that most everyone can get behind. Plus the inclusive, creative tone builds an overarching spirit of trust and community.

With enough money and media support, ordinary people like you and me can start this process at the global level. We don’t need anyone’s permission to begin.

THE MAGIC SAUCE IS CHOICE-CREATING

The Wisdom Council Process was originally conceived in 1993 and brought forward in my 2002 book *Society’s Breakthrough! Releasing Essential Wisdom and Virtue in All the People*. Since then we’ve learned a lot. Especially, we learned that the magical-seeming results are due primarily to the particular kind of thinking the Wisdom Council Process evokes, what we call “choice-creating.”

Choice-creating is the fourth social innovation (#4). It’s a name we’ve given to the kind of thinking that often happens during or after a crisis, when people put aside their old views, roles and prejudices to work with others open-heartedly. It’s the kind of thinking where people face an impossible-seeming issue and rise to the occasion. In choice-creating we let go of our roles and preconceptions. We speak with feeling and appreciate the different views of others. And we are creative, not judgmental. Progress happens largely through shifts

and breakthroughs rather than through agree/disagree discussions, negotiation, deliberation, brainstorming, dialogue, problem-solving or decision-making. Dynamic Facilitation can reliably evoke the spirit of choice-creating in the small group of the Wisdom Council. Maybe we can't always expect a breakthrough, but we can expect group progress through *shifts*, where people see issues in new ways, where they feel differently, trust others and come to wise group unity.

A story that continues to have meaning to my family and myself illustrates the connection between a ToBe and choice-creating. Many years ago, we took a drive in the mountains to have a cookout with our young son and his friend. We were going to a campground that on the map appeared to be two or three miles off the main highway. We arrived at the turnoff, a small dirt road, and began a winding drive.

Time passed and as we had gone five or six miles, my driving became more intense. We had not seen another car in either direction and there were no road signs. I rounded the curves more tightly, and everyone became impatient with finding the camp. Finally, we came upon a car approaching from the opposite direction. We flagged it down and asked the driver how much farther it was to the campground. The answer was a shock – another 18 miles of slow dusty mountain road!

I started driving again, but then we did something we later realized was crucial. We stopped the car. We sat for a minute by the side of the road and talked about what we wanted, how hungry we were, when we were going to eat, etc. After mulling the situation and examining our feelings, we kept going.

A little farther on we came to a beautiful valley and got out to take a picture. A little farther yet, we discovered an apple tree and the boys brought us each an apple. The impatience we had been feeling changed to enjoyment. We arrived at the campground, surprised the time had gone so fast. Our trip, hurrying to a destination, had been transformed into a beautiful country drive, a creative enjoyable time.

Prior to stopping the car we were *deciding* between two options: 1) keep going or 2) turn around. Neither seemed acceptable. But in stopping the car we unknowingly shifted our thinking from *decision-making* to *choice-creating*. Unknowingly, we had created a third choice... to enjoy a beautiful country drive. Probably you have had experiences like this. Later we talked about the importance of stopping the car, the ToBe, and how it sparked a different quality of thinking. We just need to help society do the same thing.

Most people use the English words *decision* and *choice* interchangeably. They see it all as a decision

process, like when we created a third choice we still had to make the decision. No, to spark the desired change in society we need to think differently: a *decision* is an act of judgment, while a *choice* is the outcome of a creative process. "Decision-making" arises from a deliberative process of weighing available options, selecting the best, and discarding the rest. It's casting away unwanted options, feelings, perspectives and even people. "Choice-creating" on the other hand is a process of inclusion, where we hold all thoughts, options, feelings and people, allowing a new clarity to emerge. Often this new clarity is a *shift* where we just know what to do. The shift comes with a new set of feelings that were not available before.

Since judgment and creativity cannot co-exist, *decision-making* and *choice-creating* are mutually exclusive. So when we use the words "choice" and "decision" interchangeably we are in danger of losing track of the creative possibilities that choice-creating provides.

DYNAMIC FACILITATION EVOKES CHOICE-CREATING

For us to facilitate the new Circle system and empower the people to solve big impossible problems, we don't need that people understand the special nature of choice-creating or understand how Dynamic Facilitation evokes it. Generally, they can just join into the new conversation or not, depending on their interest. We just want to structure this conversation so it is meaningful and enjoyable to them, where they can talk freely, see progress from the conversation and feel appreciated for their contributions.

However, in this essay I want to give a taste of what Dynamic Facilitation is and how it reliably evokes choice-creating in small groups like the randomly selected Wisdom Council. The facilitator trained in this process (DF'er) works with the energy of people rather than stepping them through an agenda or using guidelines for control. The energy might originate with fear about the problem or anxiety, a conflict, some idea that's stuck, or some frustration with others.

The DF'er sets the room in a half-circle of chairs facing four charts – Solutions, Data, Concerns, and Problem-Statements. These charts are used to capture and reflect what's going on in the meeting, to have a place for each individual comment and to hold the group perspective as well. For example, if one man starts to share his strategy about what should happen to address the problem, the DF'er writes it down on the chart of Solutions. Then if someone else starts to question or disagree, the DF'er asks that person to talk to her. She will then record that comment as a Concern, and ask, "So what would be your solution?" Then she writes that down on the chart of

Solutions. Then she goes back to the first person, to help him finish his answer.

Using this approach, no one is judged. There is no agreeing or disagreeing. Each comment is valued and added to the charts as a piece of the puzzle. The DF'er helps each person share from the heart, keeping everyone safe from judgment. This allows people to drop their roles, become authentic and grow in creativity. People speak freely and seek answers that everyone supports.

After the terrorist attack of 9-11, for example, I was teaching a seminar on Dynamic Facilitation. People were in small groups to practice the skills. Each group was asked to choose an impossible-to-solve issue they cared about. With some encouragement, one group chose the topic of "terrorism."

Often in meetings people show up with answers. But not this case. People were still taking in what happened. For a while all they could do was share information, which was captured on the chart of Data. With prodding however, the DF'er asked someone to say what he would do if he was in charge. That person started to express his solution idea, how he would use diplomacy. But one woman reacted, starting to judge, "that won't work because..." The DF'er jumped into the middle, turned this judgmental remark into a concern. And then asked the woman to express what would be her solution. She started to say something, pretty much what others had been saying. Then she became quiet. Her energy of criticism and frustration disappeared. Tears rolled down her face. Haltingly she said, "I don't know. I'm just terribly afraid."

That shift to authenticity was a sea change for the group. After a period of silence someone said, "I'm realizing that when I feel like a terrorist, I just want someone to listen to me." The DF'er wrote this down as a new solution idea: "Find some way to listen to the terrorists." And this sparked a burst of energy as people started thinking of ways this might work. As the session continued people became more empowered about what they could do and the group determined a new statement of the problem: "How can we create a global listening capability to hear the voices of marginalized people and potential terrorists?" This excited the group, by how the UN, or citizens, or churches could actually set this up.

In this small group people shifted from not wanting to face the problem to feeling overwhelmed by it, to feeling empowered about solving it, to being excited about a new vision for the world. After the exercise was over they were able to look backward in appreciation to the woman who started sniping at the group. Her feelings of frustration and fear were key to sparking the shifts that

enabled choice-creating. In normal meetings these expressions of frustration are avoided. They can easily ruin group progress. In fact, group guidelines might specifically forbid criticizing the ideas of others. But with Dynamic Facilitation these frustrations and criticisms can become contributions.

THE WISDOM COUNCIL PROCESS EVOKES CHOICE-CREATING IN LARGE SYSTEMS

Dynamic Facilitation is for small groups. The Wisdom Council Process is a way to extend the range of Dynamic Facilitation to encompass large systems of people.

Here is the basic design: we randomly select a small group from the world's population. They are DF'er to enter into the spirit of choice-creating where they face some impossible-seeming problem like nuclear threats or climate change and come to unity. Then they present this unity and the story of how they achieved it in a global ceremony. Then everyone is encouraged to keep talking through the web, media, and face-to-face in a spirit similar to choice-creating. Then in a few months another Wisdom Council is randomly selected and the whole-system conversation continues another step, building a shared perspective, a vision of what's possible and a widely accepted strategy for achieving it.

So how does the spirit of choice-creating in the Wisdom Council get transmitted to all of society? One point to remember: Choice-creating is different than problem-solving or decision-making. If the small group were analyzing and deliberating among a set of options, voting on which is best and presenting their results it wouldn't work. But in this process, a small symbolic group faces an impossible challenge, one that affects all of us. And they make surprising progress. And they tell the story of their heroics, how they accomplished the miracle of reaching unity on a description of what is going on and what to do. People respond to the story. It's our issue. The one we are working on. This is part of *our* journey, one that continues between Wisdom Councils.

In the terrorism example described above, you may have been reading that story in a spirit of resonance, feeling relief as the group overcame their stuck period and support for their results. This is an example of what the Wisdom Council Process aims for. The purpose of the Wisdom Council is NOT to make a recommendation about which people agree or disagree.

Instead, the purpose of the Wisdom Council is to help the whole population engage this issue and continue building on what the small group started. Each new Wisdom Council helps articulate the progress we are all making together. Our job is to invite everyone in

the global system to know about and become part of this conversation, working on issues that matter, valuing different people and co-creating win/win solutions. Before we talk about the specifics of *The ToBe Project*, I'd like to note that although I was just an observer for the conversation on terrorism, it affected me in a way that lasted well beyond the seminar. For instance, now I'm writing an essay describing how we can create this global listening apparatus, with confidence that it can happen and that it will work. Choice-creating conversations often stir this kind of resonance in the field of thinking, so all kinds of changes can begin to self-organize.

SECTION 3 – “THE TOBE PROJECT,” THE PLAN OF ACTION

Below I've described *The ToBe Project* in three phases and eight steps. Notice each phase and each step is doable. There is nothing impossible about setting this up. For potential organizers it's just a matter of experiencing and understanding the theory enough to have confidence that this will spark the needed systems change. But even if someone cannot appreciate the potential for systems change, it's straightforward to see that each step by itself would yield immense benefits to society. And if there is any risk it's really hard to find.

PHASE 1 - GATHER THE CONVENERS

First, a core group of people interested in this approach comes together to understand how it can work and to plan a strategy. This group meets face-to-face in a DF'er setting. Topics may include:

- A - How are issues selected for the Wisdom Councils?
- B - How to gather a truly random selection of citizens from the world?
- C - How to assure adequate funding? Media support? Computer networking capability?
- D - How to handle different languages within the Wisdom Council? In the presentations? In the global conversation?
- E - How to assure a global audience for the Wisdom Council presentations?
- F - How to facilitate one global conversation that continues after the Wisdom Council presents?
- G - How to help national governments and international organizations like the UN, health organizations, the EU, etc., see this as an asset to their aims so they take advantage of it?
- H - How to assure that Wisdom Councils are ongoing and that they become officially structured into the international system?

PHASE 2 - SET UP THE GLOBAL WISDOM COUNCIL PROCESS – “THE TOBE PROJECT”

Here are eight steps the conveners will likely structure.

- 1 - DETERMINE THE ISSUE. The issue can be pre-selected by the convening group or the global population, or by each Wisdom Council itself. It should be a hot, ill-defined impossible-seeming issue like global warming, wars, poverty, racism, etc.
- 2 - RANDOMLY SELECT GLOBAL CITIZENS. Use a lottery process to select 12-24 people from throughout the world. This should be done periodically, possibly three Wisdom Councils per year. The task of gathering people can be turned over to an internationally respected polling firm.
- 3 - PROVIDE WHAT'S NEEDED SO THE WISDOM COUNCIL CAN ADDRESS A HOT ISSUE AND REACHES UNITY. Each global Wisdom Council will gather in a different city. They will work with people skilled in Dynamic Facilitation. The meeting should last three to five days, less than one week. They may need a short presentation by different stakeholders on the issue, to kept short – less than one half-day.
- 4 - ASSURE A LIVE FACE-TO-FACE “GLOBAL COMMUNITY MEETING”. Immediately after each Wisdom Council there should be a large, live media event, where the Wisdom Council presents its unity and the story of how this unity was determined to an on-site and a live broadcast audience. Then all are invited to talk in small groups, hear from one another and report their level of resonance with the conclusions. Then they have the opportunity to “look around” the virtual room and notice the extent to which all share this perspective.
- 5 - PROVIDE FOR MANY REMOTE GATHERINGS. Help community organizers, NGO's and governments convene local events where people gather, hear the Wisdom Council presentation, visit in face-to-face conversations, and report their conclusions.
- 6 - PROVIDE FOR ONE ONGOING WHOLE-SYSTEM GLOBAL CONVERSATION. Between Wisdom Council presentations there should be a way each person can continue talking about these issues, as much as possible in the spirit of choice-creating. Using social media and web-based technology we can set up safe, anonymous small group gatherings, so people from around the world can meet and talk.
- 7 - PROVIDE FOR RESPONDER MEETINGS. Encourage governmental agencies, NGO's, stakeholders and experts working on the issue to come together in different regions. These meetings can be in “Open Space” format where attendees consider the perspective of the Wisdom Council and coordinate their responses.
- 8 - SUPPORT THE CHARTERING OF THE WISDOM COUNCIL PROCESS. Ultimately the Wisdom Council Process

should be added to the charters and constitutions of nations and global institutions. This assures that the process is ongoing so *We the People* can come into being and assert ongoing leadership.

PHASE 3 ~ SUPPORT EMERGENT RESULTS

The ToBe Project promises two kinds of benefit: 1) *Improvements to our system* and 2) *Transformation of our system*. So far we've talked almost exclusively about the need for system transformation to the Circle system. We've considered how, as we become more inter-dependent, our current Box idea of democracy is breaking down. And we've shown how the *The ToBe Project* can facilitate the choice-creating *We the People* conversation needed for the next level of democracy.

But before we talk more about system transformation, consider how the steps of *The ToBe Project* offer breakthrough improvements to our society. In fact, the benefits of each step probably outweigh the costs, risks and effort involved.

Some improvements to be expected from *The ToBe Project* are:

1 ~ ESTABLISHING NEW SYMBOLS OF GLOBAL COOPERATION.

Just picking an issue and drawing attention to it can be a powerful way to spark people and organizations to coordinate their efforts. Randomly selecting people and bringing them together in one place is another powerful symbol. Taking their picture, along with the story of their individual journeys, could become a transformational meme in the same way as the first picture of earth from space.

2 ~ REMOVING BLOCKS.

Political gridlock exists in many nations, holding back important change. For example, powerful interests encourage people to stay in denial about the reality of climate change. But when the Wisdom Council speaks with unity on this issue, this could catalyze a shift in our collective denial, helping us all to acknowledge the issue, adopt new technologies and support needed policy changes.

3 ~ SOLVING IMPOSSIBLE-SEEMING ISSUES.

Some issues are described in terms like "a decision between two options," like when autocratic leaders threaten to use nuclear weapons. But a Wisdom Council of the world's people could open a new door of possibility. It's a "stopping the car" where national leaders take a back seat, and where the world's people co-create the new choice.

4 ~ ESTABLISHING NEW LEADERSHIP.

When the Wisdom Council emerges from its meeting it does so with a perspective on what is going on and a shared vision of what we need to do. This perspective is resonant with people. It's a way that a large system of people can self-manage, not just to say "yes" or "no" to some top-down proposal. But this is

a way *We* can think through issues and provide responsible proactive leadership in heading off ecological disasters, for example.

5 ~ FACILITATING THE NEW PUBLIC CONVERSATION.

After the Wisdom Council speaks they disband, but they model and promote a new way diverse people can work through issues. In the new conversation we include minority views. We appreciate diversity and the voices of disenfranchised people. Here's a constructive way to address and solve the "fake news" and "hate radio" conversation of the present. We do it by having a way to hear these voices along the way in our process of arriving at shared truth.

6 ~ EDUCATING ABOUT THE ISSUES.

This is a shared exploration of difficult issues. And it's a shared exploration of possible solutions issues around those solutions. For instance, in the "responder meetings" experts, elected officials, agencies and NGO's who know a lot about these issues are presented with a prime opportunity to educate people on what they've discovered. For example, people who fear vaccines will have a safe way to re-examine fears, anecdotes and scientific evidence in making personal decisions.

SECTION 4 - "THE TOBE PROJECT" EVOKES THE NEW SYSTEM

"*We need to...*" People often use these three words when starting a conversation about society's most pressing issues. In looking at the issue of global warming, for example, they might say, "We need to reduce our carbon footprint." Or "We need to get money out of politics." Or, "We need to change our economic system." Or, "We need to enact a global carbon tax." Who is the *We* that is capable of making these changes? Is it all of us as individuals? The United Nations? The rich and powerful elite? A group of national representatives? No, presumably, it's all of us acting together as *We the People*. If this *We* existed, then we could implement the solutions. *We* would just figure out what's needed and choose to do it. Plus, *We* wouldn't have caused these problems in the first place.

Lots of work is being put into developing "solutions," articulating what happens on the right side of this phrase, the "We need to's..." But if you and I work with the left side and facilitate *We the People* into existence, which changes everything. It has the potential for solving all the problems.

The phrase *We the People* means something different than what most people imagine. It's not a big gathering of people in the streets demanding change. Nor is it an overwhelming vote in favour of or against some candidate or policy. *We the People* is when all

the people of a large system face problems together, get clear about what they want and work together to make it happen. It's a new system of self-governance. Many people imagine this *We the People* will come into existence naturally once the crisis of civilization comes upon us. In the face of this crisis they expect we'll all pull together, elevate our thinking and overcome the challenge. And after the crisis passes we'll restructure our systems to fit the times in which we find ourselves. Many assume this restructuring will build on models currently being used in local communities and organizations. For instance, there are state and city banks, local land trusts, nonprofit credit unions, business co-ops, and investment circles, which have proven themselves to work. So perhaps in this crisis, we will "scale up" these models to replace our current economics. I wouldn't bet on this. But I would bet on *The ToBe Project*.

The ToBe Project is similar but more reliable. It also relies on the inherent power of crises to bring people together and accomplish miracles. In *The ToBe Project* we face an impossible-seeming issue, only we are also facilitated into the spirit of choice-creating. We address this impossible-seeming issue in a way that sparks shifts and breakthroughs and brings people together. And we keep doing it into the future. Plus, with *The ToBe Project* we start now before the crisis happens in its full fury.

By establishing regular moments of "stepping back to think," *The ToBe Project* provides the necessary structural adjustment to our chaotic global system that allows *We the People* to provide responsible leadership to governments, organizations and people. For instance, here's a new way to set up a global constitution and legislature to practically eliminate the prospect of wars between nations. But as described this desirable structuring for democracy, the Box system, is not enough. Ultimately for our society to work today, we need a transition to the Circle system. And that's the real purpose of *The ToBe Project*.

This offers the prospect of "true democracy," where "the people" actually are in charge. Where they responsibly self-govern in a way that serves life. Of course, this doesn't mean that the natural motivation of self-interest, to "win the game," would go away. This project doesn't touch the existing structures of government or the marketplace. It just stops the action long enough in short bursts so can explore what's really happening, talk creatively together and choose what we want.

In economics there are big questions to answer like "What products shall we produce?" "How shall we produce them?" "Who gets the benefit?" "What resources shall we use?" and "How should we each contribute?" In our current system we trust the market to answer these questions. But late-

ly something is going wrong with that market mechanism. Today, when our food industry maximizes profits, it reduces the nutritional value of our food. When our health industry maximizes profits it keeps people chronically ill. When our defence industry maximizes profits we unnecessarily go to war. When our media maximizes profits the level of partisan gridlock and disinformation soars. Obviously, a continued reliance on this approach to answering the economic questions is ultimately life-threatening.

The ToBe Project promises to set up a self-management system where we take responsibility for answering many of these questions directly. It's a new economics beyond capitalism, socialism, communism, feudalism and the other "-ism's." It's "Circle system economics," where we still work with the market but where we also talk things over and figure out together what we want. It's where *We* thoughtfully and continually restructure our institutions so they work for people.

I hope you see from this essay that there is a way to establish the kind of global conversation we all want, where we come together as "We the People." The steps are doable and accessible. The Wisdom Council process has already demonstrated its effectiveness in supporting large systems of people to think creatively together and generate wise collective change. We know that it can elevate the quality of public conversation where people listen more, contribute more and where they are more open to different ideas.

Key in all this is for some of us to distinguish choice-creating from decision-making, and to recognize that using Dynamic Facilitation, for example, we can reliably evoke choice-creating in groups of people. But most people do not need to be acquainted with these theoretical underpinnings. They just need to care about the issues being addressed by Wisdom Councils, hear about the results, and share their ideas with others. This is all it takes to facilitate one global "We the People" conversation, where *We* face one issue, make progress together, and feel empowered as *We the People*.

Of course, Wisdom Councils should also happen at all levels of society, not just globally. They should happen at the national level for each country, plus in cities, states, communities, corporations, government agencies, schools, etc.



1 *The ToBe Project* is a project of the Center for Wise Democracy (www.WiseDemocracy.org).

2 See a five min video in English on this at <http://bit.ly/2rKo7Zw>.

