Global Governance by Cooperative Communities

Background Information

We are the Positivity that we seek.

The Cooperative Communities model emerged within the scope of PacELNoroc – a civil society initiative for global citizens with an open mind and a caring heart who share the belief that a better society can be built when as many people as possible contribute to shaping a sustainable, self-determined and fulfilling future for us all. The model was one of the finalists for the New Shape Prize award by the Global Challenges Foundation (https://globalchallenges.org/en/our-work/the-new-shape-prize), selected amongst 2702 submissions from 122 nations. It is a governance model, an integrated evolutionary approach bridging the gap between contemporary representative governance structures and innovative participatory ones. The following paper is the original submission written in September 2017, which has been developed further since then. For any questions, exchange of ideas, or desire to collaborate please feel free to contact us.
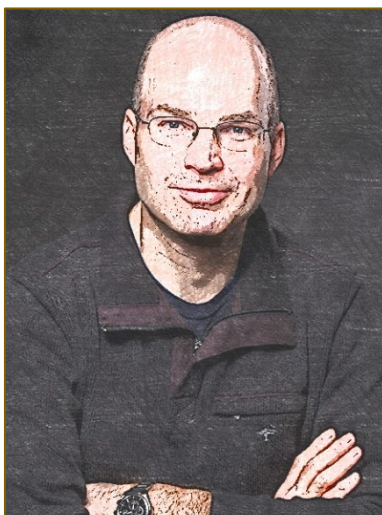
PacELNoroc was founded in May 2016 by Katharina Peter and Stephan Bettzieche:

Katharina was born in 1977 and currently lives in Berlin. She studied linguistics and communication sciences, works in various fields related to education and health, and volunteers in the end-of-life care.

Stephan was born in 1970 and currently lives in Munich. He is managing director of Gemino GmbH Language Services & Solutions and co-founder of several initiatives in the fields of participation and networking, e. g. ASK, an innovative platform for decision-making processes in complex environments.

We develop, promote and share alternative, but practical, solutions for the major questions of our time and encourage the positive development of human attitudes and actions wherever and whenever possible. We see ourselves as societal engineers and an inspirational force.

Our passion for the complex wonder of life is nourished by the belief that everything is possible.

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Abstract

Basic Ideas

- Keep it simple.
- Use existing structures.
- Minimize representation, maximize participation.
- Let local go global.
- Put trust in people.

Decision-Making Procedure: **Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK)**

ASK is a procedure specifically designed for decision-making in the 3rd millennium. It combines sociocratic [1] and holocratic [2] methods with the Systemic Consensus principle [3] in an agile and flexible form. ASK is not a conventional majority voting system, it rather measures resistance against available suggestions and promotes constructiveness, creativity and cooperation.

The Organizational Backbone: **Cooperative Communities Union (CCU)**

The CCU is a newly to be founded international, non-commercial organization (preferably a mutual cooperative entity) of communities who are willing to work together on a wide range of current and forthcoming local, regional and global topics and challenges.

The Basis: **Cooperative Community (CC)**

Any community of at least x (e.g. a million) and a maximum of y (e.g. five million) citizens can apply for membership in the CCU, provided that it is the expressed will of its people. Already existing administrative units (districts, cities, regions) need to be the founding members of the CCU in its introductory phase. Later on other communities based on religion, profession, age and so on might become members as well in case the CCU allows it.

The Supreme Authority: **Combined Electorate of the Cooperative Communities (CE)**

The CE, the entirety of all citizens of all Cooperative Communities with the right to vote, is the supreme authority within the CC model and the only panel with the authority to fundamentally modify the CC model itself after its introduction.

The Main Body of the Legislative Branch: **Cooperative Communities Assembly (CCA)**

The rights and duties of the CCA can be compared to a parliament. Every Cooperative Community sends three representatives. There are three potential ways to become the representative of a community:

- Election by ASK by the electorate of the community
- Appointment by the municipal government of the community
- Selection by random

All representatives have the same rights and duties within the CC model, though.

The Main Body of the Executive Branch: **Cooperative Communities Cabinet (CCC)**

The rights and duties of the CCC can be compared to a government. The CCA representatives select 15 ministers from their ranks:

- Ten are elected by ASK
- Five are selected by random

All ministers have the same rights and duties within the CC model, though.

The Main Body of the Judicative Branch: **Cooperative Communities Jury (CCJ)**

The rights and duties of the CCJ can be compared to an international court of justice. It consists of 3 chambers with 12 jurists each:

- Two prosecutors (one elected by the CCA by ASK, one by the CE by ASK)
- Two attorneys (one elected by the CCA by ASK, one by the CE by ASK)
- Eight judges (four elected by the CCA by ASK, four by the CE by ASK)

All 36 jurists have the same rights and duties within the CC model though.

The Custodians of the Three Branches of Power: **Assembly Guardian (AG), Cabinet Guardian (CG), Jury Guardian (JG)**

The Guardians are special representatives of the will of the people and the custodians of the most fundamental values of the CCU within the three branches of power. One for each branch is directly elected by the CE by ASK. They are arbitrators in case of any stalemate within the branches and have the right to dissolve the constitutional bodies of their specific branch prematurely (a step that means the end of their own term as well). The Guardians must not hold any other office in the CC model at the same time.

A New Consultative Branch of Power: **Advocati Council (AdCo)**

The CE directly elects nine Advocati by ASK. Their function is to encourage and deepen a broad public debate about all governance procedures, especially within the three traditional branches of power. The Advocati ensure transparency and public participation in all governance related processes and integrate the media into decision making procedures. They assume different roles on a case to case basis, but always as a team of three Advocati:

- Advocatus Diaboli (speaks against everything)
- Advocatus Dei (speaks in favor of everything)
- Advocatus Alternationis (offers alternatives to everything)

All Advocati have the same rights and duties within the CC model. The Advocati must not hold any other office in the CC model at the same time.

Governance within the CCs: **Use Existing Structures**

Each Cooperative Community elects its own municipal government according to its own rules, although the fundamental values of the CC model should be respected. The unique features of the CC model (e.g. Guardians, Advocati, ASK) should be adopted, at least in the long run.

Electoral Procedures: **Minimize Representation, Maximize Participation**

All elections are based on the Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK) procedure. Any citizen of at least 16 years of age is entitled to vote, for certain topics this age can be lowered to 12 years. Every two years the members of the CCA, CCC, CCJ, the three Guardians and the nine Advocati are selected.

Implementation: **Use Existing Structures**

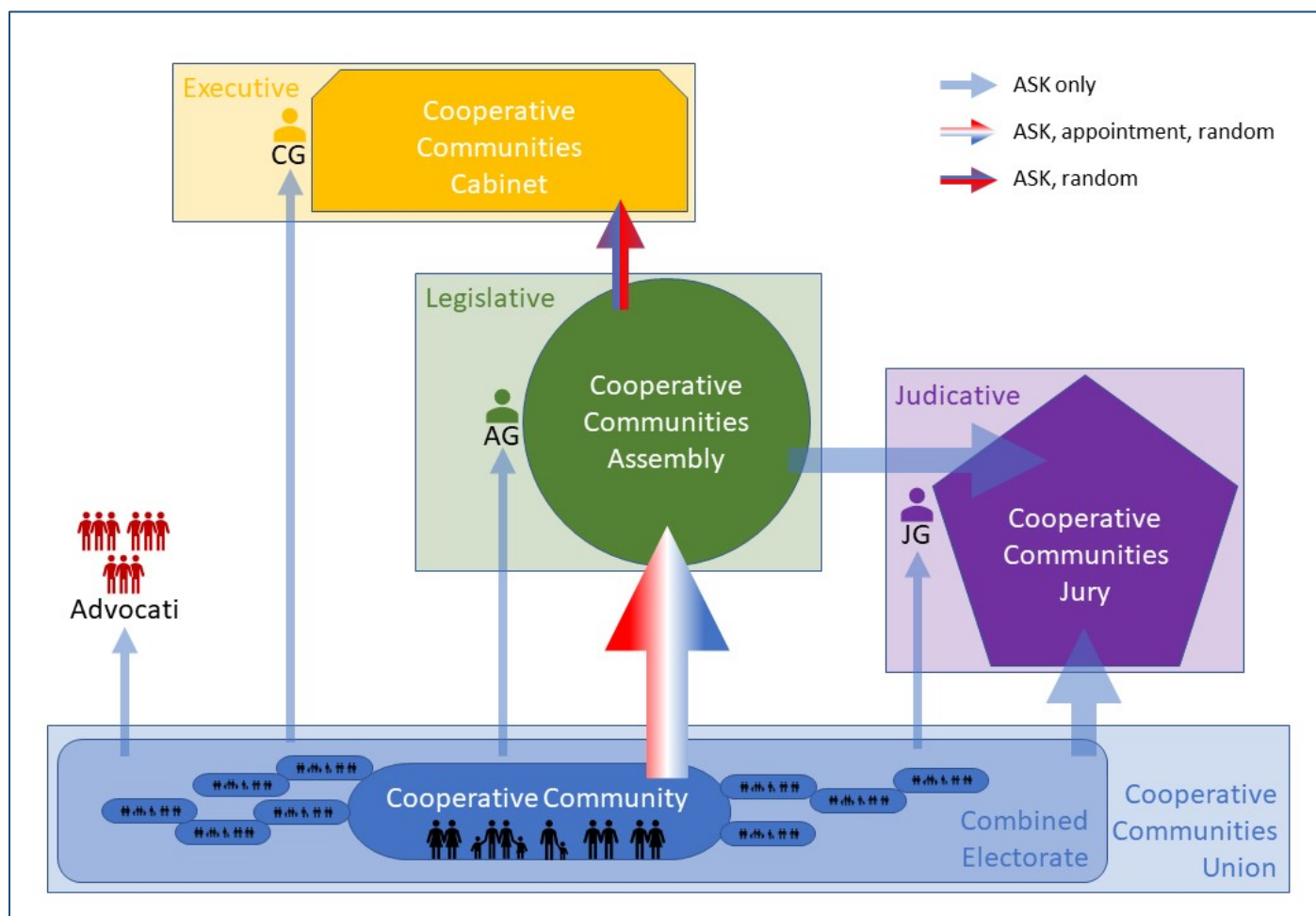Many major cities worldwide already cooperate across borders:

- Twin Towns and Sister Cities (e.g. Sister-Cities.org)
- C40 Cities (C40.org)
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA.org)

These and other already existing organizations and initiatives can not only serve as role models but also as starting points for the establishment of the CCU.

CCU Platform Infrastructure: **Let Local Go Global**

The CC model requires the establishment of a new kind of global IT platform, maintained and administered by the CCU: a reliable, secure, decentralized, transparent, non-commercial open source network, coupled with the necessary hardware infrastructure and software environment. It is not only meant to connect the Communities with each other but the people as well. Valuable know-how, inspiring ideas and innovative solutions can be shared instantaneously across the globe. Decision-making processes by ASK with thousands or even millions of participants become possible.

Fig. 1: Organizational model

Description of the Model

1) Visionary and Well-Known: **An Introduction to the Cooperative Communities Model**

The Cooperative Communities model is quite similar to contemporary (national and supranational) governance models, making it relatively reasonable and easy to understand for most people. At the same time it encompasses quite a few innovative concepts to make it exciting and inspiring for many people as well:

- The model is a hybrid. It encompasses most elements of a traditional representative democracy (a "parliament", a "government", elections, representatives, etc.). The majority of all law-making procedures will take place within those classical structures, at least for the time being. At the same time not only those well-known elements but innovative elements of a participatory and direct democracy (direct elections, random selections, Guardians, Advocati, etc.) are woven into the model as well. There is always an alternative to the conventional method of law-making, the peoples voice cannot be ignored.
- The model is based on communities, national boundaries are not particularly relevant for them, they can cooperate on many topics across borders. This also means that the CC model can be established as a supplementary structure to existing ones, it is not an either/or decision. Its appeal to the people will nevertheless trigger a slow but steady transgression from less participatory and less open governance models to this one.
- Three Guardians, elected directly by the people, oversee the performance of the three traditional branches of power based on the core values of the communities and the expressed will of the people. Complicated systems of checks and balances are normally accompanied by a risk of blockade and an intrinsic lack of transparency. The Guardians can act freely, are as close as possible to the people and can only be held accountable by them.
- Nine Advocati, elected directly by the people, constitute a new, consultative branch of power. Their main objective is to enrich public debates with new innovative impulses, based on alternative thinking. They equally challenge and support old traditions and new concepts, keep people connected to political developments and work against social apathy. Those impulses are sorely missing in most of the contemporary governance systems.
- Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK), the dominant decision-making process within the CC model, is not a simple majority voting system, but a sophisticated decision-making procedure, even for the most complex of questions. It is not dividing but promotes constructiveness, creativity and cooperation. It encourages people to learn about the perspectives of their fellow humans and introduces collective intelligence to decision-making processes in general.
- The concept of the Combined Electorate (CE) of the Cooperative Communities provides the necessary flexibility to adjust the model as needed even on a fundamental level and ensures that the complete model is reformable to the highest degree.

2a) Non-Commercial Framework: **The Cooperative Communities Union (CCU)**

The CC model needs a legal and structural framework organization, the CCU.

Within the CC model the CCU:

- Is the custodian of the CCU charter
- Takes care of the maintenance and ensures the availability of the technical infrastructure of the CC model
- Answers all membership-related questions (e.g. the types of communities that can be a part of the union, size restrictions, etc.) by ASK

- Organizes training courses and offers professional training for certain aspects of the governance model (e.g. ASK)
- Is the link to other international organizations such as EU and UNO

The union might be a cooperative or a totally new form of legal entity, but must be of a non-commercial nature and publicly owned. Already existing organizations such as the C40 cities (C40.org) can serve as starting points for the establishment of the CCU.

2b) Down to Earth and Progressive: **The Cooperative Communities (CCs)**

In most countries the central government and the citizens do not closely cooperate. Since there normally are no institutionalized points of contact the interaction between both is minimal, especially between two elections. Without some kind of structural intertwining the mindsets of the officials and the people, their agendas and concerns, often do not go hand in hand. National governments also tend to have quite specific interests, as a consequence there is not always much common ground between different nations.

The situation is much better on a communal level. Most municipal government officials are locals and know the community and its people well. They are often members of local organizations or at least support them or consult with them regularly. In addition, the day-to-day problems of most major communities are quite similar, the questions and challenges relating to the future comparable. Therefore, it makes sense to base a global governance model on communities.

Within the CC model a Cooperative Community:

- Is an already existing administrative unit (districts, cities, regions)*
- Is a community of at least x (e.g. a million) and a maximum of y (e.g. five million) people
- Has applied for membership in the CCU, provided that it is the expressed will of its people
- Is willing to accept all CC regulations and to respect the fundamental values of the CC model (as described in the CCU charter)

* Already existing administrative units (districts, cities, regions) need to be the founding members of the CCU in its introductory phase. Later on, other communities based on religion, profession, age and so on might become members as well in case the CCU allows it.

No individual can be part of more than one CC at any given time, but everybody has the right to choose freely in case there is more than one option available.

2c) Fundamental Influence: **Combined Electorate of the CCs (CE)**

A forward-looking governance model must include means to incorporate future trends and evolutionary processes and to develop itself further.

In a totalitarian system this is a challenge for an individual, a group of individuals or a ruling class, meaning that the system will most likely be incapable to reform itself fundamentally from within. The transparent and participatory nature of the CC model allows only one supreme authority - the entirety of all citizens of all Cooperative Communities with the right to vote.

Within the CC model the CE:

- Elects the 3 Guardians
- Elects the 9 Advocati
- Elects 18 of the 36 jurists of the Cooperative Communities Jury
- Is the only panel with the authority to fundamentally modify the CC model itself by ASK

Of course such fundamental modifications require high quorums and always both standard ASK options: the "suggestion of inaction" (meaning that the model should remain in its as-is state) and the "suggestion of redraft" (meaning that an adjustment of the model is desirable but the suggested solutions are inadequate because the decision-making process has not been set up properly or the question has not been asked in an expedient way).

3a) Traditional and Versatile: **The Cooperative Communities Assembly (CCA)**

The Cooperative Communities Assembly is comparable to a parliament in contemporary governance models and has basically quite similar rights and duties. Each Cooperative Community is represented by three of its citizens, all of them equals, although there are three potential ways to become the representative of a community:

-    Election by ASK by the electorate of the community
-    Appointment by the municipal government of the community
-    Selection by random

At least one of the three representatives of a community must be elected by ASK and another one selected by random. The third representative can be chosen by any of the three methods. This is a decision that the electorate of each community has to make. We know that the appointment by the municipal government might be seen as controversial and non-transparent. We nevertheless included this additional possibility in order to make it easier for existing administrations to accept and introduce the CC model.

Within the CC model the CCA:

-    Is the constitutional body of the legislative branch
-    Is the main source of decision-making initiatives (at least for the time being)
-    Has the budgetary sovereignty (i.e. the CCU budget)
-    Selects the 15 ministers of the Cooperative Communities Cabinet (and their deputies) from among themselves
-    Defines the 15 areas of responsibility for the 15 CCC ministers and assigns them to them
-    Selects 18 of the 36 jurists of the Cooperative Communities Jury
-    Is given direction by the Assembly Guardian
-    Can be dissolved before the end of its two-year term by the Assembly Guardian

The exact details of the CCAs rights and duties, its relationship to the other constitutional bodies (and existing parliaments outside of the CC model, such as national parliaments) and its role within the checks and balances system are to extensive to be described here and should be determined by a collaborative process using collective intelligence.

3b) Collaborative Governance: **The Cooperative Communities Cabinet (CCC)**

The Cooperative Communities Cabinet is comparable to a government in contemporary governance models and has basically quite similar rights and duties. It consists of 15 ministers, all of them CCA representatives and equals, although there are two potential ways to become a cabinet member:

-    Ten ministers are elected by ASK
-    Five ministers are selected by random

We know that the random selection might be seen as controversial in this case. We nevertheless decided to include this method in order to prevent the build-up of political or other structural bubbles within the government. All government decisions are made by ASK, therefore the CCC has no need for a hierarchical structure.

Within the CC model the CCC:

- Is the constitutional body of the executive branch
- Exists in parallel with the municipal governments of the Cooperative Communities in a federal system
- Is given direction by the Cabinet Guardian
- Can be dissolved before the end of its two-year term by the Cabinet Guardian

The exact details of the CCCs rights and duties, its relationship to the other constitutional bodies and the municipal governments of the Cooperative Communities (as well as other existing governments outside of the CC model, such as national governments) and its role within the checks and balances system are to extensive to be described here and should be determined by a collaborative process using collective intelligence.

3c) Efficient Jurisdiction: **The Cooperative Communities Jury (CCJ)**

The Cooperative Communities Jury is comparable to an international court of justice and has basically quite similar rights and duties. It consists of 36 qualified jurists (i.e. candidates must be able to proof their qualifications), all of them equals, although there are three different roles and two potential ways to become a jury member:

- The CCA elects three prosecutors, three attorneys and twelve judges by ASK
- The Combined Electorate elects three prosecutors, three attorneys and twelve judges by ASK

The 36 elected jurists then build three teams of two prosecutors, two attorney and eight judges each.

Within the CC model the CCJ:

- Is the constitutional body of the judicative branch
- Is the court of competent jurisdiction for all legal issues concerning CC officials and the CC model itself
- Is given direction by the Jury Guardian
- Can be dissolved before the end of its two-year term by the Jury Guardian

The exact details of the CCJs rights and duties, its relationship to the other constitutional bodies (as well as other existing courts of justice outside of the CC model, such as the International Court of Justice in the Hague) and its role within the checks and balances system are to extensive to be described here and should be determined by a collaborative process using collective intelligence.

4a) Orientation and Guidance for a Dynamic society: **The Three Guardians**

People tend to look for orientation and moral guidance, especially in turbulent times. The overwhelming speed and dynamic of the profound social transformation processes and megatrends of today (globalization, digitalization, mass migration, etc.) often give us a feeling of disorientation and helplessness. Traditional structures, such as worker unions, political parties, religious communities, etc., are often too slow or too dogmatic to offer viable solutions in an increasingly "liquid" environment. This leaves room for all kinds of predominantly backward-looking, often populist movements with so called "simple solutions" primarily based on fear and anger.

On the other hand often individuals step up to fill the gap by offering innovative, inspiring and forward-looking solutions. They usually have a lot to offer - foresight, moral integrity, maturity, a visionary perspective, wisdom - but no appropriate platform to have a significant positive impact on society. Within the CC model those individuals are perfect candidates to become one of three Guardians:

- Assembly Guardian (legislative branch)
- Cabinet Guardian (executive branch)
- Jury Guardian (judicative branch)

Within the CC model the Guardians:

- Are directly elected by the Combined Electorate of the Cooperative Communities (CE) by ASK
- Can choose their deputies freely
- Are arbitrators in case of any stalemate within "their" branch of power (i.e. in that case, and only in that case, they have a vote)
- Control the functional capacity of "their" branch of power (in a holistic sense)
- Represent the will of the people within "their" branch of power
- Give society in general (and "their" branch of power in particular) direction
- Monitor the compliance of "their" branch of power with the fundamental values of the CC model
- Have the right to dissolve the constitutional bodies of their specific branch prematurely (a step that means the end of their own term as well, but does not exclude a possible reelection, and is only valid if it is not opposed by both other Guardians)
- Can be removed from office when the other two Guardians together with five of the nine Advocati decide to do so by ASK or when the CE decides to do so by ASK

The Guardians must not hold any other office in the CC model at the same time.

4b) Different Perspectives, Creativity and Pluralism: **The Nine Advocati**

Contemporary governance models usually describe only three branches of power, legislative, executive and judicative. They all have concrete responsibilities and often act within a narrow and unimaginative mindset. Alternative courses of action are too often ignored or won't pop up at all within the administrative machinery. In addition, the public is excluded from most decision-making processes. A huge creative potential goes to waste. Within the CC model this is prevented from happening by several key elements such as ASK, but also by the addition of a "fourth", consultative branch of power, the Advocati.

There are nine Advocati, three teams of three Advocati each:

- Advocatus Diaboli (speaks against everything)
- Advocatus Dei (speaks in favor of everything)
- Advocatus Alternationis (offers alternatives to everything)

The roles within the teams are not fixed but flexible.

Within the CC model the Advocati:

- Are directly elected by the Combined Electorate of the Cooperative Communities (CE) by ASK
- Can choose their deputies freely
- Integrate all kinds of medial processes into governance procedures and developments
- Offer alternatives and put the public focus on all kinds of advantages and disadvantages of possible results of ongoing decision-making processes
- Are valuable public consultants for all officials
- Keep the public debate about all ongoing decision-making procedures transparent, lively, inspiring and creative
- Create a "trans-factual" rather than a "post-factual" environment for public debates in a sense that they do not only integrate hard facts but soft factors (social and emotional parameters) as well
- Can be removed from office when five other Advocati together with two of the three Guardians decide to do so by ASK or when the CE decides to do so by ASK

Their example and their contributions most certainly lead to a similar attitude of "out of the box" thinking in an increasing number of citizens, so that more and more decision-making processes will be accompanied and enriched by a steady growth of collective intelligence.

All Advocati have the same rights and duties within the CC model. Five Advocati together have the right to dissolve the AdCo prematurely. The Advocati must not hold any other office in the CC model at the same time.

5a) Parallel Structure and Iterative Progression: **The Implementation Path**

The best ideas are quite useless if there is no way to implement them. The CC model's backbone is basically a sophisticated union of communities, so the main question is: How that union can be established? Most likely in the following way:

In almost all major cities of the world you will find many committed citizens, hoping for an intense involvement in the local decision-making. This is quite understandable since most of the factors that have a profound and immediate effect on our well-being (e.g. jobs, infrastructure, environment, crime rate) are local ones.

At the same time, it becomes increasingly clear to local politicians and municipal officials all over the world that many of the most pressing communal problems cannot be solved without the active participation of the local population. In many communities, there is great willingness to work together more closely on both sides. What is generally missing is an appropriate interface for this kind of interaction.

Nevertheless amazing developments, such as the Transition Network [4], still happen in many communities in diverse areas despite this lack of established interoperability. But then other questions arise. How can communities mutually benefit from their achievements? How do they even get to know about them? Can potential solutions be even better if not only local people are involved?

Considering all this, the time seems just to be right for a solution like the CC model. At the beginning only a few progressive communities (preferably already organized like the C40 cities, for example) need to be convinced that the benefits of the CC model outweigh the costs and risks by far and – as a consequence – to become a candidate community.

Each candidate community then holds a municipal referendum on participation in the CC program. As soon as at least five communities vote for joining the CCU, a founding congress can be held. Some of its objectives:

-    To draw up the CCU Charter
-    To develop basic membership rules
-    To prepare the set-up of the CC Platform

When the Platform has been developed, build and thoroughly tested, it can go online. The first elections within the CC model can be held. The first CCA, CCJ, CCC, Advocati and Guardians are selected.

As soon as the model proves its potential and aptitude other communities will notice and the weight of the public opinion will convince more and more communities to join the CCU as well.

All of this can happen in the form of a parallel structure with only advisory functions. The results of the decision-making processes within the CC model would only be offered to existing governance structures as possible solutions to local or regional questions, the conflict potential is minimized.

This also allows to use an iterative progression, improving the CC model step-by-step. With each decision made the model shows its strengths and weaknesses and can be adjusted accordingly for the next decision-making process. The more communities use the model, the faster the progression will be.

Since the model is steadily optimized the solutions will become increasingly convincing and binding. Finally, the public opinion will convince the traditional governance structures to transfer more and more of their competences to the CC panels.

5b) Trust and Efficiency: **Financing**

Money is always a difficult topic. It is therefore important that the annual budget of the CCU is kept completely separate from the budgets of the communities, at least until the communities decide otherwise.

Our financial concept is based on the trust we put in the altruism of people (and complete transparency) in this area, but not without a backdoor. Basically, we want to ask the people to finance the CC model on a voluntarily basis. Once a year, e.g. in the period of one month, everyone can give as much as they want in a totally transparent manner (based on the basic principles of social crowdfunding initiatives). The individual (tax-deductible) amounts do not matter in a sense that no one benefits politically from giving more than others.

After the fundraising the CCAs objective is to build a budget around the available money. This ensures a most efficient use of the assets at hand. In addition, several other factors should keep the running costs low:

- Existing municipal structures can be used (infrastructure, buildings, know-how, personnel, etc.)
- Synergies arise from the cooperation of communities (collaborative consumption, sharing economy, etc.)
- Complete transparency and public awareness will prevent extreme cases of money-wasting
- Due to the digital component of the CC model administrative costs can be kept down

In the first years it might be difficult to collect significant amounts of money, until the positive effects of the Cooperative Communities model become more and more clear to the public. This means that an initial financing of some sort must be considered. Possibilities are public subsidies, public bonds or – in some cases and only under the right circumstances - private-public partnerships. The initial financing would also cover non-recurring implementation costs of the model (platform development, professional training, Public Relations, etc.).

If there is no other way the last possibility (the backdoor) is to raise a special communal "top to bottom tax" among the citizens in the upper half of the wealth pyramid. The bigger the income the more a citizen has to pay. If someone earns x% of the complete income of the wealthier 50% of the population, he has to cover x% of the budget deficit. Voluntary contributions are offset against the tax amount.

An additional financial aspect is the wealth distribution among the Cooperative Communities. Richer communities (or even corporations and individuals) are encouraged to accept (temporary) stewardship of poorer communities. This does not necessarily mean the transfer of financial assets. This can also mean the exchange of materials, know-how or personnel. A cultural exchange might even "enrich" all participating communities in equal ways.

6a) A Decision-Making Procedure for the 3rd Millennium: **Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK)**
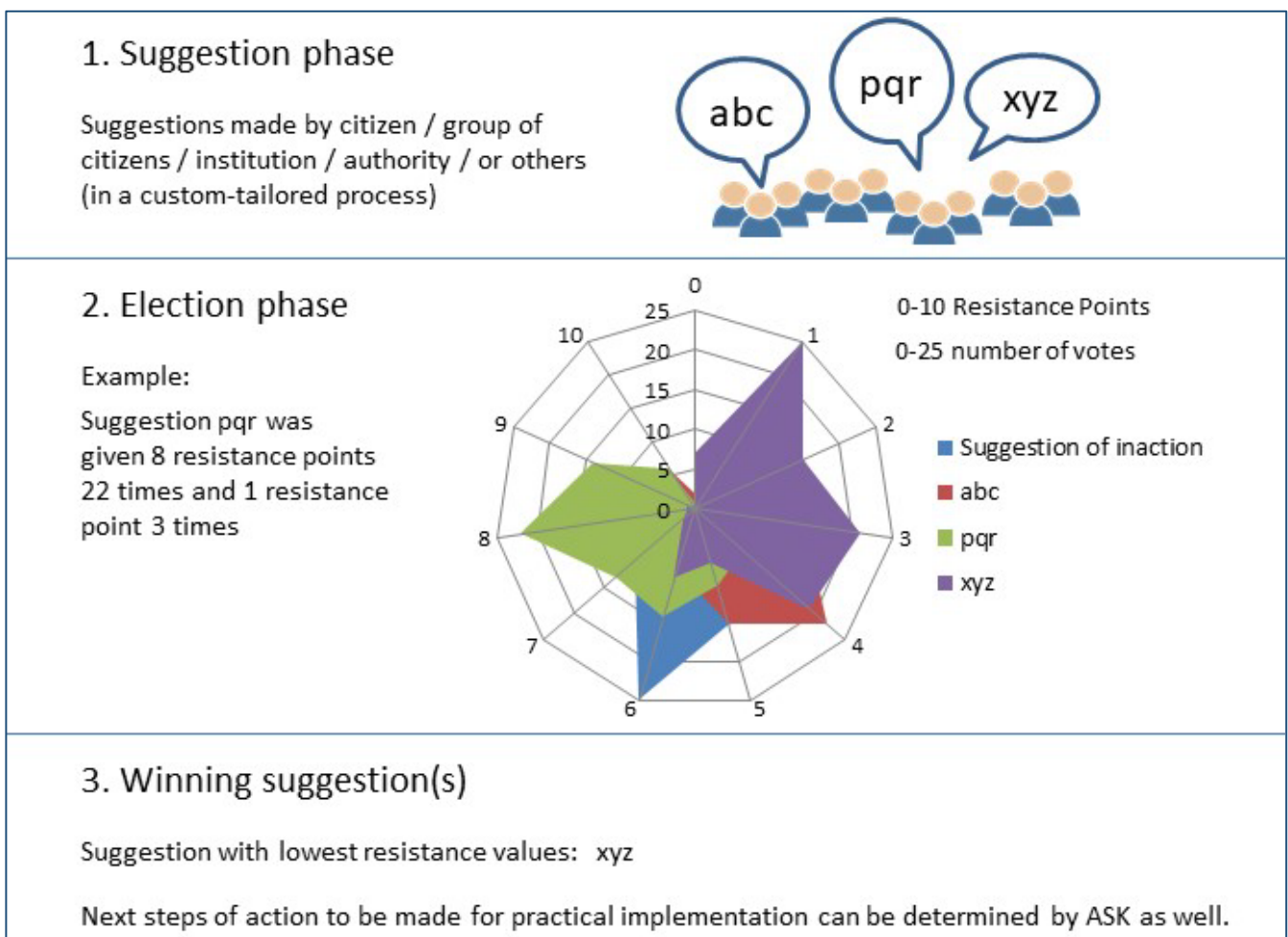
ASK is basically an instrument to pose any kind of question to any kind of desired target group (participants). The outcome can be a single answer or a predefined number of answers (as necessary for the election of a group of representatives for example). Possible answers can not only be suggested by the initiators, but by all members of the target group as well. The objective is to generate as many creative suggestions as possible at an early stage of the process.

In addition, ASK is not a conventional majority voting system, it rather measures the resistance against/acceptance of all available suggestions among the participants. If desired, the participants' assessment of the validity of suggestions can be measured as well.

ASK is not restricted to the public sphere, but can be used for all kinds of decision-making processes, e.g. in a family or work environment. It can be used to make decisions or to just prepare them for hierarchical decision-making structures. Within the CC model anyone can initiate an ASK-based decision-making process at any time.

ASK combines core elements of some of the most innovative communication and decision-making concepts of the last decades: Sociocracy [1], Holacracy [2], Systemic Consensus [3]

Fig. 2: Illustration of the Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK) process

It is designed to run on a platform that makes big-scale decision-making procedures manageable, even on an international or even global level with millions of participating "decision-makers". It can also be used "offline" for decision-making within smaller groups (with up to approx. 100 participants).

6b) Agility: **Custom-Tailored Decision-Making**

Meaningful decision-making in the best interest of as many people as possible requires not only a platform that lets as many (affected) people as possible participate. It is also necessary that the decision-making processes are well-prepared. Questions need to be asked in a meaningful way, timeframes need to be defined, procedural steps need to be determined, etc.

The first step of an ASK-based decision-making process is always the specification of the framework conditions. A few basic examples:

- Wording of the questions to be asked/decision to be made
- Start dates, terms and end dates (of intermediate steps and the whole process)
- Participants (in consideration of the subsidiarity principle, democratic legitimacy and the need for collective intelligence input)
- Degree of transparency (full, partial or no anonymity at all)
- Number of "winning" suggestions (one or more)

A set of predefined framework conditions for the most common types of decisions will be made available. A good example of an election process that needs to be standardized is the election of the Cooperative Communities representatives in the CCA.

For all unstandardized decision-making processes the framework conditions can be set up freely by the initiating party (a citizen, a community, a constitutional body, etc.). Effective protection against any form of abuse is secured as follows:

- The set-up needs to be completely transparent to the public.
- Only meaningful set-ups have a chance to reach the necessary quorum of the participants to validate the voting.
- Unstandardized public ASK processes always incorporate the possible choices "suggestion of inaction" (leave everything as it is) and "suggestion of redraft" (set up the decision-making process in a different way). Both enable the participating electorate to effectively nullify a decision-making process.

The flexibility of the ASK decision-making process can make it seem confusing at the first glance. But most types of decision-making processes only need to be set up once and can be used continuously afterwards. They only need to be adjusted from time to time to reflect social, technical and other fundamental developments. At the same time, some complex questions, especially on a global scale, require decision-making capabilities that are able to produce equally complex answers. ASK can offer that.

6c) The ASK Process: **Open, Flexible, Lean and Powerful**

Public decision-making by ASK basically works as follows:

1. A citizen, a group of citizens, an organization, a company, an authority, in fact anyone with a concern or a question can initiate a public decision-making process by setting it up on the CCU Platform.
2. Part of the setup is the specification of the target group (participants). The so defined target group is automatically invited to take part in the decision-making process by the CCU Platform. The applicability of a decision made strongly depends on the selection of the target group.

A neighbourhood might be entitled to change certain street names but not the city name, for example.

All participants can make and evaluate suggestions without restrictions and cast their votes. This phase of the process can be custom-tailored in many ways (timeframes, age restrictions, degree of anonymity, enabling of comments, separation of suggestion making, evaluation and voting steps, enabling of sociocratic elements, etc.).

3. Within a certain timeframe (e.g. a month) a required quorum needs to be reached (i.e. a certain percentage of the target group must have cast its votes). Otherwise the process effectively ends without any "winning" suggestions.
4. If the required quorum is reached the process ends regularly and the predefined number of suggestions with the lowest resistance values is elected (or enters the next stage of the decision-making process), provided that those suggestions have reached the required quorum as well.

Most of the decision-making processes can be based on a set of predefined framework conditions that is accessible to all. They do not need a complex preparation. Very specific and controversial issues on the other hand might require a perfect fit of the underlying framework conditions. Even the addition of sociocratic elements to the process (e.g. intermediate steps of consent building) could be a requirement. ASK makes it possible to combine the most innovative concepts of the last decades and to make decisions iterative in a multi-step process.

6d) CCU Platform: **Secure and Effective Decision-Making Processes for Millions of Participants**

In order to make international or even global decision-making processes practicable, the establishment of a new kind of global IT environment, the CCU Platform, is necessary. It needs to meet highest security standards, must be publicly owned and decentralised as well. Some basic requirements:

- The CCU Platform (as well as the CCU itself) must have a non-commercial basis.
- Any kind of electronic (hacking, trolls, bots, etc.) and personal manipulation (e.g. casting votes for others) must be close to impossible.
- The technical infrastructure needs to be absolutely stable and fail-safe, continuous availability (e.g. by mobile devices) and multi-language capabilities need to be guaranteed.
- It might be necessary to keep the CCU Platform completely separate from already existing Internet structures.

On the CCU Platform custom-designed applications for sophisticated decision-making processes on very large scales can be run. Although the meaningful handling of big data (e.g. thousands of suggestions) remains a challenge, several ideas exist how to do it:

- Users are enabled to define their own filter and sort settings (e.g. suggestions with high/low resistance or validity values, suggestions with many/little votes, suggestions with certain keywords, etc.).
- Users can choose to evaluate random "packages" of suggestions.
- Artificial Intelligence can be used to build "blocks" of suggestions of sufficient similarity (not to hide or even eliminate them, but to enable the individual proposers to merge their suggestions if desired).
- Suggestions with too little votes and/or too high resistance values (and/or too low validity values in case they are measured) can be excluded from the list at regular intervals.

Although these goals are ambitious they are not totally unrealistic any more. Latest social and technical developments like blockchain-based smart contracts, MOOD (Massive Open Online Deliberation)

platforms [5] or Neural Machine Translation engines show the possibilities (and risks) of the digital transformation of our society. We only need to give it the right direction.

7) Faith and Evolution: **Closing Words**

A few general thoughts of fundamental importance at the end.

Some people might say that the faith in the good of humankind, which obviously is part of our model, is more or less naïve (especially the financing model). In fact, one of the pillars of todays' representative form of democracy is the deep concern of many that most models of a participatory and direct democracy open the door to populism and can only lead to totalitarianism or anarchy. This point of view might even carry some truth if the underlying conditions of such a model are not set up wisely.

In general, we all have concerns and wishes. A good job, safety for our loved-ones, a life full of possibilities. In a hierarchical structure and under competitive pressure we struggle to meet our needs. Since an uneven distribution of wealth is the norm under these conditions, the circumstances do not leave much room for mutual consideration and empathy. But that does not mean that they are not an integral part of us. When the conditions change (as can be seen after a natural disaster, for example) and the predominant feeling is "we are all in this together" people will act first and foremost caringly and compassionately [6]. All we need to do is to embed this feeling in our governance model and to provide room for the good in people. This will also be the ultimate reason for most people to accept the model sooner or later.

This proposal is not carved in stone, many gaps and open questions remain. It is a starting point for further considerations and will greatly benefit from the collective intelligence of as many people as possible. Especially all numbers (2 year term, 15 ministers, 16 years of age, 50% of all CC citizens, etc.) can be adjusted if it becomes clear that alternatives make more sense. Expert panels can help to develop specific areas of the model (technical infrastructure, financial basis, organizational structure, etc.) further.

Even fundamental adjustments are possible. An example: Using collective intelligence we might come to the conclusion that the model works better without community size limitations and that each community should have a proportional number of representatives in the CCA, not a fixed number of three. Another fundamental consideration could be that the model does not really require the constitutional bodies of the three traditional branches of power, that the Guardians and Advocati can do without the CCA, CCC and CCJ as well. Or even that the CCU Platform running ASK is all it takes.

We are not only open to but indeed hope for an evolutionary process that includes us all and delivers the best possible result in the end - although it is also clear that the further development will never really stop. Humanity deserves a governance model that grows in line with the tasks ahead of us.

Argumentation demonstrating how the model meets the assessment criteria

Participation and Consensus: **Foundations for Global Solutions to Global Challenges**

The CC model is designed to give everyone equal access to local, regional and even global decision-making processes. This potential for personal and active involvement in all kinds of political, cultural, economic and social developments is missing in almost all contemporary governance models. Democratic representation alone is not enough anymore, our increasingly globalized and intertwined world is getting too complex for that. The collective intelligence of millions of people is needed.

But participation alone is not sufficient as well, it is also clear that decisions can no longer be made by simple majority voting systems. They are not helpful in any way to promote creativity, to encourage open communication and to bring people closer to each other, especially people with contrary opinions. Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK) does exactly all of that (as part of the governance model):

-   Promote creativity: Everyone can initiate a decision-making process, make suggestions and discuss all available suggestions with everyone else.
-   Encourage open communication: All decision-making processes are transparent, all suggestions publicly observable. They can be discussed freely in private or in public at any time.
-   Bring people closer to each other: ASK measures the resistance of people against possible solutions, an important first step to a better mutual understanding of personal motives, concerns and wishes.

This combination of real participation and sincere consensus building is a fundamental game-changer for society. Fear and anger are more and more transformed into initiative and vigor. The attitude of the people improves steadily, their actions begin to show more self-confidence. This new kind of public deliberation space has other positive effects as well:

-   People learn to look at problems (and possible solutions) from different angles, not only their own, and start to understand underlying causes.
-   Solutions filtered and refined by collective intelligence are more sustainable, do not only treat symptoms but causes as well, and get the immediate support of almost everyone.
-   People remain open to change and begin to collaborate and to take personal responsibility, indifference and resignation subside.
-   Decisions are increasingly made based on fundamental virtues like compassion, trust and understanding.

All these positive effects together are the foundation for global solutions to global challenges based on the Cooperative Communities governance model.

Basic Necessities: **Implementability and Holistic Nature of the Model**

Before we take a closer look at the seven assessment criteria, a few words regarding the implementability and the holistic nature of the CC model.

Since the CC model can exist in parallel to current governance structures and even supplement them, there is not much potential for conflict between the "old" and "new" systems. The introduction will not be severely obstructed, on the contrary it will be quite welcomed in progressive communities. Other factors contribute to the minimization of public reservations and make the implementation of the CC model comparatively easy as well:

- It is not cost-intensive
- Existing structures can be used
- It can be implemented in a step-by-step process
- It has the familiar look of already existing, traditional governance models

At first glance the CC model might not make the impression to be especially holistic. But it was designed to give all people equal chances to develop their potential and to become an integral part of the future development of humankind. Some key elements in this area:

- Anyone can initiate a decision-making process and make contributions to other decision-making processes.
- People are encouraged to develop solutions based on creativity and thoughtfulness.
- The ASK procedure causes people to interact with each other in a meaningful way and to work together closely.
- Through the use of collective intelligence as many different perspectives as possible are taken into consideration within all decision-making processes.
- The cooperation at the communal level on a global scale enables people to take a closer look at things at hand and to broaden their view at the same time.
- The CC model has an impact on both, acting and attitude of the people.
- Even the basic structure of the model is part of a fundamental evolutionary process and can be adjusted as needed in the future.
- Instead of treating symptoms, the CC model was designed to tackle the roots of problems in general and global challenges in particular.

Core Values: **Equal Opportunities for all People**

The main goal of the CC model is to guarantee equal opportunities for all people and equal access to relevant information.

Since anyone can initiate a decision-making process by ASK and the CCU Platform is not only technical infrastructure but a free public forum for the exchange of ideas, concepts and innovations as well, the concerns of minorities, small groups of people or even individuals can gain widespread public support quickly, all without strong financial or other resources.

In addition, the Agile Socio Konsensing (ASK) procedure does not only give everyone a direct vote in the distribution of paramount public offices on an international, even global level. It enables everyone to run for those posts as well. Large campaign budgets, nepotism, cronyism and deals behind closed doors are no longer the decisive factors they are today, standardized candidate profiles ensure a level playing field. The CCU Platform is the perfect environment for that, too.

This effect is further strengthened by the addition of random selection elements within the model as well as the participatory nature and inherent transparency of all public decision-making processes by ASK.

Decision-Making Capacity: **Suggestions Made in the Best Interest of All People**

A real veto by a minority or even a single person is not possible within the ASK procedure, but nevertheless a small group of participants can express disproportionate high resistance to some suggestions. This is an essential part of decision-making processes by ASK and guarantees a comprehensive protection of minorities, provided that they have good reason for their resistance. In case their behaviour is incomprehensible to the rest of the participants they will not be able to block the decision-making process for a long time.

Then there is the possibility that the "suggestion of inaction" causes the least resistance among the participants, i.e. they prefer to leave the status quo unaltered, at least for a while, until a suggestion is seen as a real improvement to the current situation. The "suggestion of redraft" on the other hand can lead to short-term delays, but actually is a shortcut to better solutions as part of an iterative step-by-step process.

The public nature of all decision-making processes within the CC model, including the distribution of all public offices (with the possible exception of the CCA representatives appointed by the municipal governments of the communities), also makes it extremely difficult to block reasonable suggestions made in the best interest of the people.

At the same time the basic intrinsic ideas of ASK are cooperation and considerateness. Only suggestions that take the concerns of as many people as possible into consideration have a chance to succeed. As a consequence the acceptance of the "winning" solutions is already much higher among the population, when the time comes to implement them.

Last but not least the CC model inhibits political inaction since everyone can initiate a decision-making process - it is not necessary to wait for somebody else (e.g. an official) to do it - and by always defining timeframes for them.

Effectiveness: **Strong Impetus to New Ideas**

In our opinion all different kinds of global challenges can be handled best by a global union of communities that are both, small enough to let all of their citizens participate in a meaningful manner, and large enough to provide strong impetus to new ideas. Solutions can be developed and tested (in an iterative way) on a regional level, supported by the broad consent of the local inhabitants. The nature of the ASK procedure provides the necessary framework to encourage widespread creativity, to create transparency and to ensure bottom-up support for all decisions (strengthened by the directly elected Guardians and Advocati). Local initiatives that are a success and have the backing of the citizens can then be presented and made available for other communities on the global platform of a worldwide network.

The CC model is nevertheless flexible enough to leave room for a top-down approach to pressing global challenges as well. This is especially important when a solution, in case it would be found by a representative structure like the CCA alone, would not be sufficiently supported by the people. In those cases a decision-making process can be initiated by the CCA and the Combined Electorate of the Cooperative Communities (CE) decides what to do by ASK. This ensures broad public support for top-down solutions as well.

Resources and Financing: **Know-How, Resources and Capital on a Non-Profit Basis**

The costs for the introduction and maintenance of the CCU and its global platform should be comparatively reasonable, similar to a mid-sized multinational cooperation. A big part of the necessary political and administrative work can be done within the communities and their already existing structures, these costs will therefore be covered by municipal budgets. The necessary budgets for the constitutional bodies (CCA, CCC, CCJ, Guardians, Advocati) of the CC model are comparable to those of a medium-sized nation state for the three traditional branches of power.

A participatory and transparent structure like the CC model will also encourage people to commit themselves voluntarily and organizations and cooperations to bring in know-how, resources and capital on a non-profit basis as well.

Moreover, after a while the increasing global cooperation will decrease financial and material costs in areas such as military spending, environment protection, development aid and others immensely. On the contrary, forward-looking concepts like Sharing Economy, Smart City and sustainability in general flourish, saving even more resources on a large scale.

Part of the CC model - and true to its values - is therefore the idea to finance it first and foremost by contributions on a voluntarily basis. All citizens can give as much as they like. Since all financial transactions happen in a totally transparent environment there is no danger of corruption or an exertion of influence. A special CC tax will only be employed in case of an underfunding, and only among the citizens in the upper half of the wealth pyramid.

Trust and Insight: **Meaningful Public Debates**

The CC model and the ASK procedure guarantee a maximum of transparency and public insight into all decision-making processes. Only suggestions following an open information policy have a chance to succeed, secrecy on the other hand leads to resistance.

Then there are the Advocati. Their main function is to ensure meaningful public debates about all aspects of decisions that have to be made, to counter political disenchantment and to raise awareness of the importance of political participation.

All citizens have a reasonable chance to be a representative of their community in the CCA, not only the members of a "political caste". Electoral terms of just two years will ensure a dynamic and lively exchange of ideas, perspectives and attitudes. Social evolution and political action become increasingly inseparable from each other. Since people are an integral part of the CC model, they will be more willing to put their trust in it.

Finally the Guardians - special representatives of the will of the people and the custodians of the most fundamental values of the CCU - inspire confidence and promote trust among the people by way of example.

Flexibility: **The Expressed Will of the Combined Electorate (CE) of the Cooperative Communities**

The agility of the ASK procedure alone makes it already possible to adjust all decision-making processes quite easily to a high degree to new circumstances, social developments, technical advances, etc.

Furthermore all constitutional bodies (CCA, CCC, CCJ, Guardians, Advocati) of the CC model, their structure, their rights and obligations can be amended by the expressed will of the CE by ASK. But even ASK itself and its methods can be fundamentally changed by the expressed will of the CE by ASK, if necessary or desired. Finally the existence of the CCU and the complete CC model can be terminated by the expressed will of the CE by ASK as well.

All these amendments need to meet specific quorum and other "winning" requirements to be valid of course.

Protection Against the Abuse of Power: **Collective Decisions**

The CC model incorporates several control mechanisms. The most basic and important one is the public eye (further sharpened by the Advocati). Since all decision-making processes are totally transparent, it is highly unlikely that anyone gets away with overstepping a mandate. In addition, all decisions are collective decisions, taking the concerns of as many people as possible into consideration, not only the wishes of special interest groups. Lobbyism of any kind is practically impossible.

Another control mechanism is the institutional division of power between the legislative, the executive and the judicative governance branch. The Cooperative Communities Jury is the court of competent jurisdiction for all legal issues concerning CC officials and the CC model itself. Not a brand new concept, but proven and reliable, so it has been preserved in the CC model.

The Guardians on the other hand are a new addition to the system of checks and balances, representing the direct will of the people and protecting the basic values of the CCU in all three governance branches. Should a branch prove to be continuously gridlocked, severely dysfunctional or otherwise strongly compromised, the associated Guardian can easily dissolve it (a move that means the end of the term of this specific Guardian as well).

Accountability: **Close Participation of a Global Community**

The CC model has been designed to integrate global governance into the heart of human society in a simple and transparent way. Local goes global, creativity and thoughtfulness, mind and heart, move forward together. Public debate, social evolution and worldwide decision-making are interlocked. Without this kind of closeness it is hard to see how any of the Global Challenges can be met.

Any global governance system that is supposed to be functional and benevolent at the same time, requires the close participation of a global community of as many creative and proactive citizens as possible. The CC model can make it happen. It is the decision-making structure we need. The rest is up to all of us then, finally.

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