

The Future of Wikimedia Movement Governance

Scenarios for Consideration



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Background Recommendation #4

“We will establish a Global Council representative of the Movement in its role and composition. It will be composed of both elected and selected members, in a way designed to reflect the breadth and diversity of participation not only in the Movement at present but also in communities we wish to serve. This body will have authorities and responsibilities outlined in the Charter.”

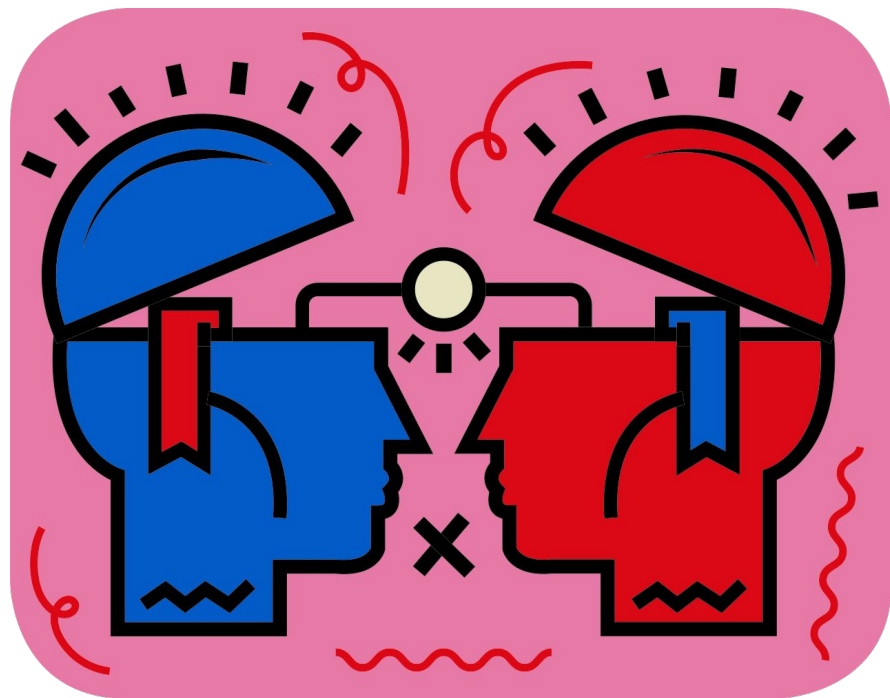
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Global Council & Board of Trustees

“The Board of Trustees of the Wikimedia Foundation presently has legal and fiduciary responsibility for Movement resources and oversight. Initially, the Global Council will be established as an independent structure with a mandate from the Board. This means that when making decisions in outlined areas, the Global Council will work closely with the Board of Trustees. Both entities will cooperate for the overall good of our Movement. Considering its legitimate authority conferred by representing our Movement, **the Global Council may later develop further capacities and take on more responsibilities over time.**

[Link](#)



We have talked about process for a year....

- IGC to drafting group
- Election / Selection
- Representation
- Diversity & Expertise
- Community “ratification”
- Structure and ToC of charter



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**...but main questions
are still to be addressed**

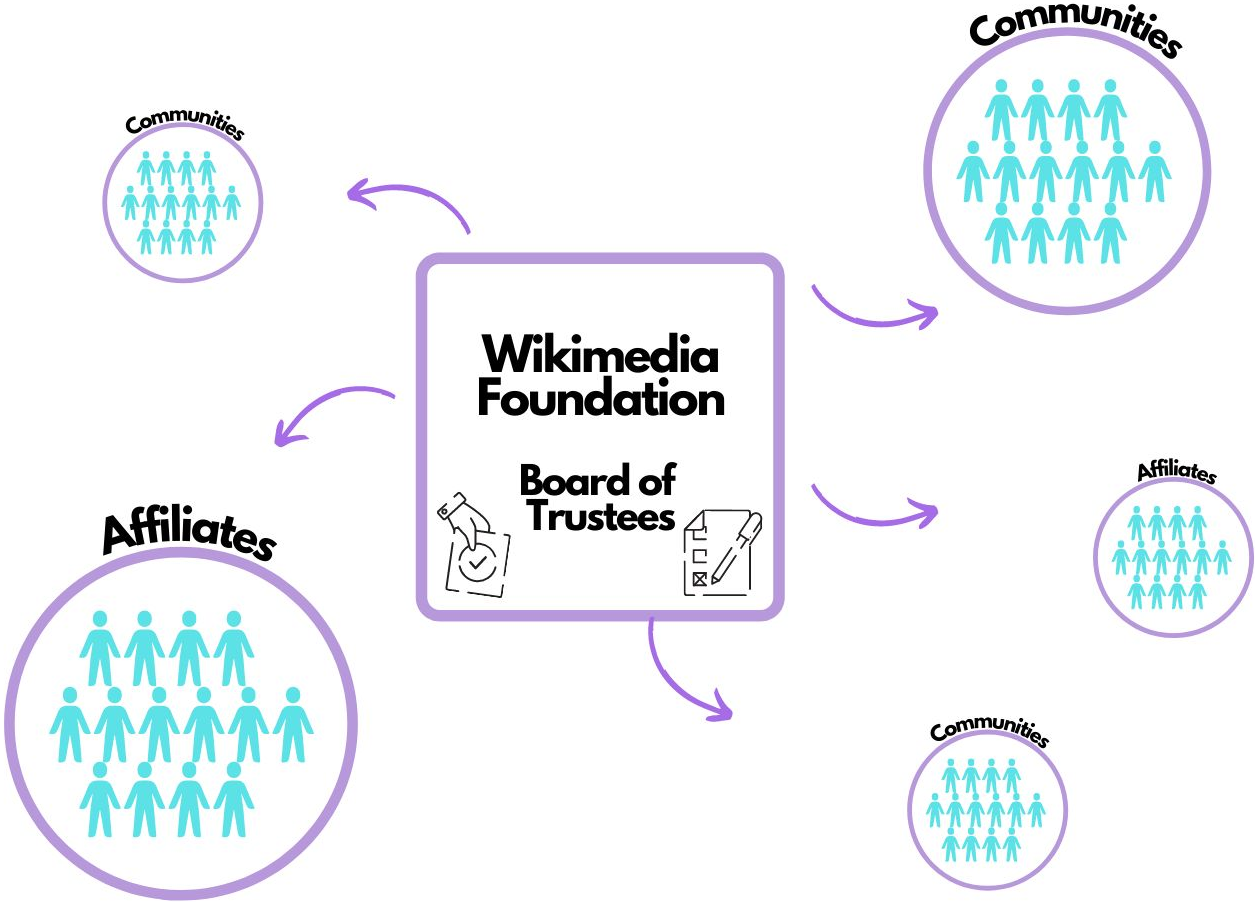


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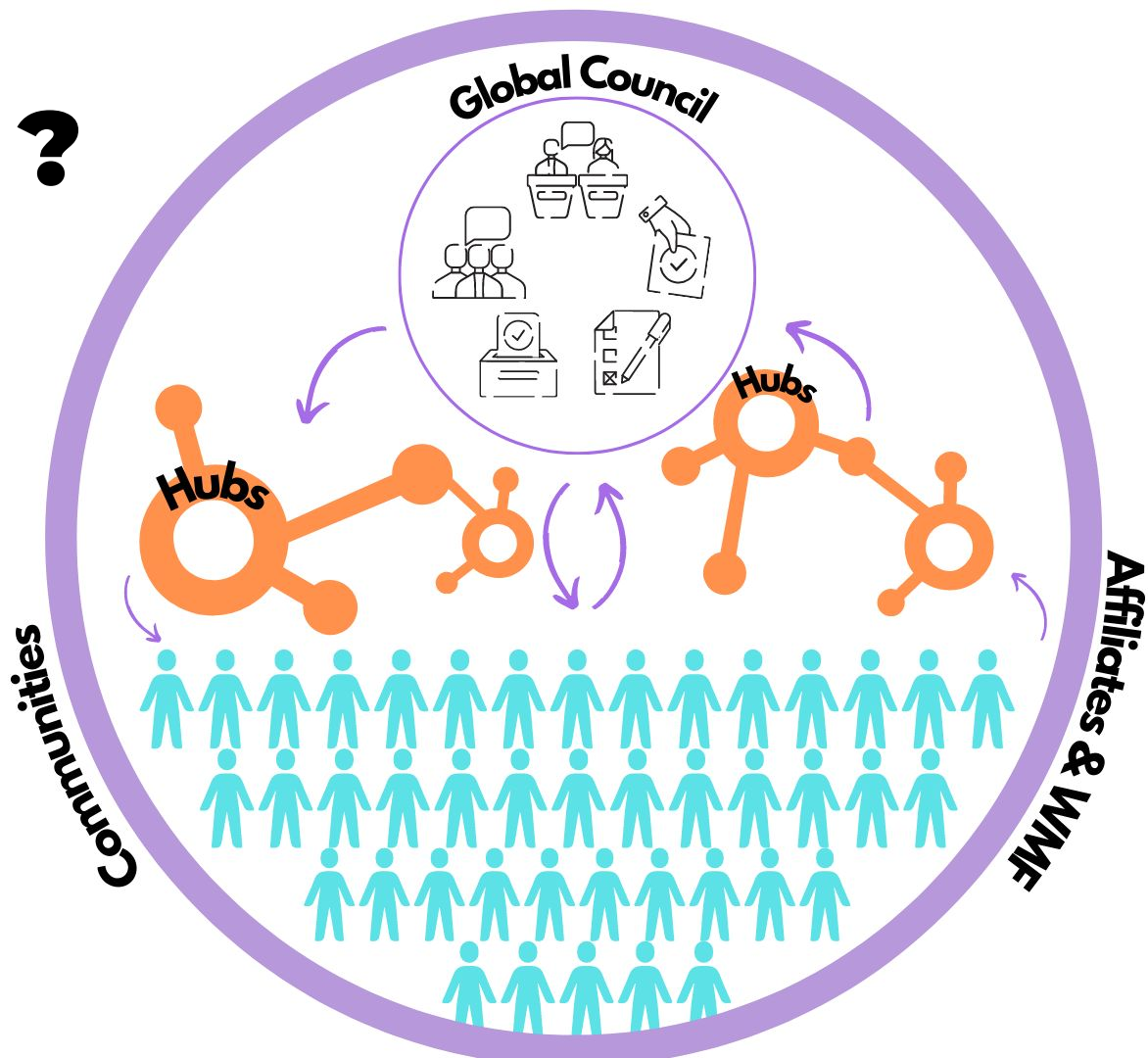


- Who governs what? Which body will have which powers?
- Are all the powers of the Global Council only dependent on the WMF Board of Trustees?
- And if not, how can the transfer of powers be guaranteed in the long term? And is a transfer of decision-making even possible if the council is only added to the current structure?
- What ‘further capacities’ would make sense?
- How do we create the decentralized movement we had envisioned, while ensuring core functions such as trademarks, platforms, software development and endowment?

Now



2030 ?



Two Scenarios

There may be more scenarios....

1. An addition of a global advisory board to the current structure, with WMF continuing as the central organisation.
2. An international membership organisation as the coordinating body of an international Movement made up of members including the WMF.



(This aligns with standard governance practice of international NGOs.)

1

Wikimedia Foundation

WMF Board of Trustees

Global Council

working groups and committees

Movement

Community, Hub, Project, Affiliate

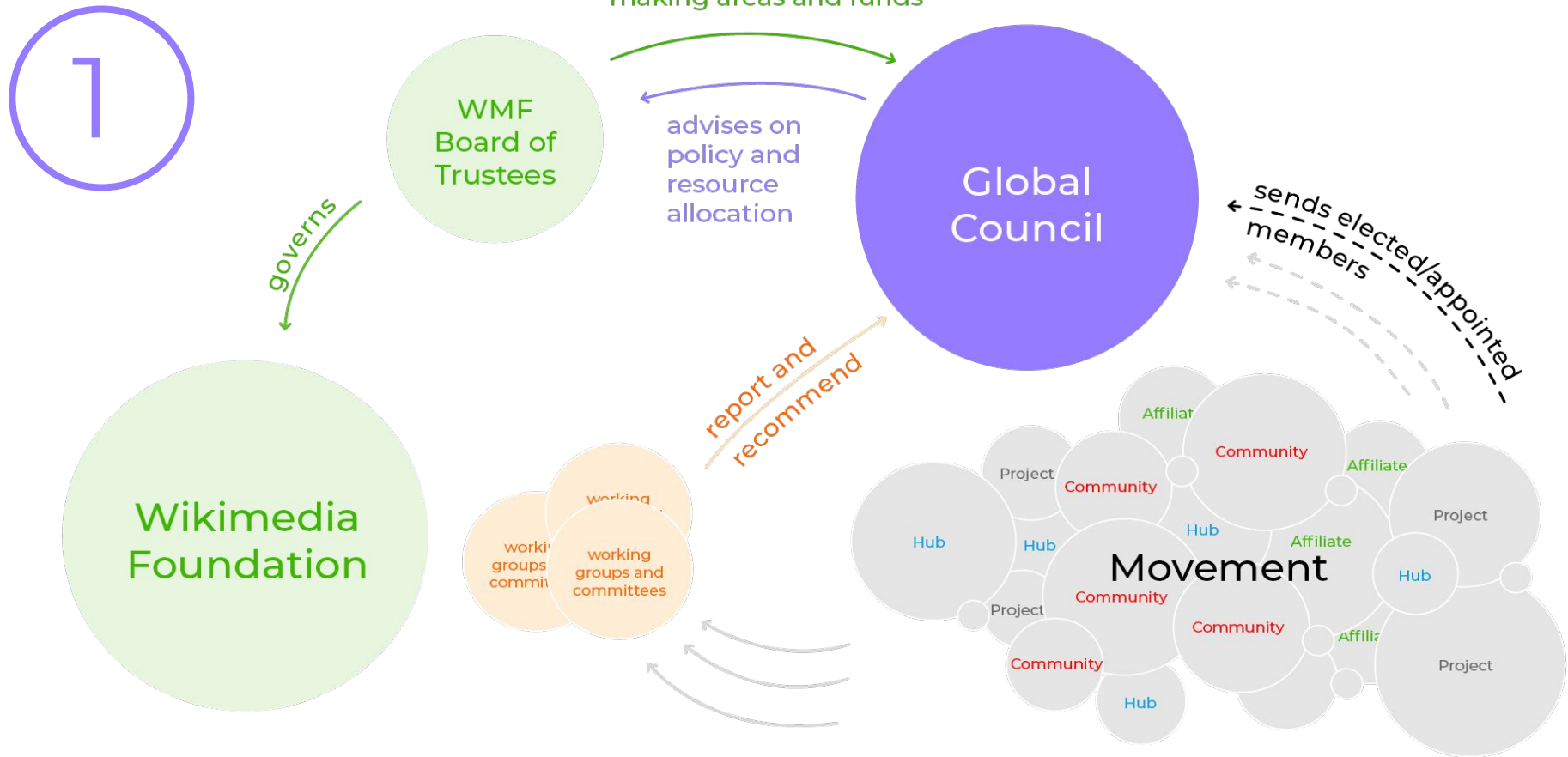
governs

delegates decision-making areas and funds

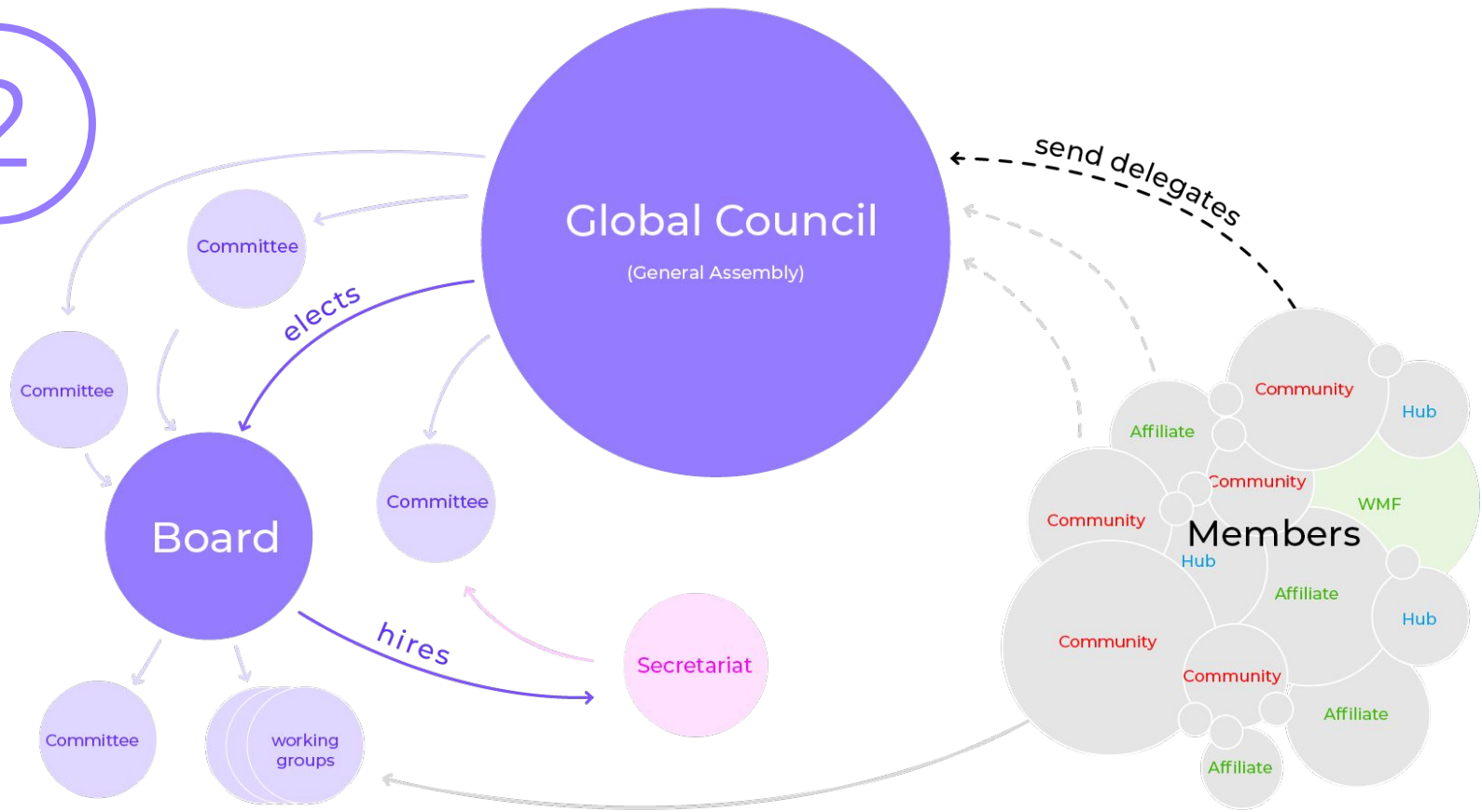
advises on policy and resource allocation

report and recommend

sends elected/appointed members



2



How are other international movements governed?

Sample: 7 movement-based INGOs: Amnesty International, Greenpeace, MSF, CARE, Transparency International, Save the Children, WWF

Result: The most practiced governance model in our empirical sample is that of an international membership association. This aligns with Scenario 2 described above.



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The following characteristics are standard:

- Governance is described in a formative document such as a charter or a statute.
- The highest governance body is a general assembly, representing the members.
- This body elects a board of directors, which in turn appoints or hires a secretariat.



Comparing scenarios in terms of functions



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| | Current | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 |
|---|--|--|---|
| Trademark | WMF | WMF | WMF or WMI (Wikimedia International) |
| Fundraising | WMF; WMDE, WMCH via fundraising agreements | WMF, Affiliates, Hubs (tbd via fundraising agreements) | WMF, WMI, members, Affiliates, Hubs |
| Budget | WMF BoT | WMF Board of Trustees. Sections of budget possibly entrusted to regional HUBs and global council | WMI and WMF will have separate budgets |
| Resource Allocation | WMF, through grants | WMF, through grants, intermediary/hub contracted funds, stipends; GC for its funds assigned by WMF | Through a distribution formula decided on annually by GA, in addition to grants, stipends, etc. |
| Endowment | Endowment 501(c) (3) | Endowment 501(c) (3) | Endowment 501(c) (3) |
| Enterprise | LLC | LLC | LLC |
| Movement Infrastructure (software development, capacity building, conferences, knowledge base, evaluation, innovation) | WMF, WMDE | WMF, Affiliates, Hubs external actors via WMF grants and contracts | WMF, WMI, Affiliates, Hubs, contracts |
| Liability for Content in Projects | WMF, protected by section 230 US Law | WMF, protected by section 230 US Law | TBD |
| HQ | San Francisco | San Francisco | TBD (Amsterdam, Geneva, London, Singapur, Cape Town, other?) |

Comparing Scenarios in terms of Governance



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| | Current | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 |
|--|--|---|--|
| Highest governance body | WMF Board of Trustees (self-perpetuating, accountability to US tax code) | WMF Board of Trustees (self-perpetuating, accountability to US tax code) | Global Council as a General Assembly (comprised of members, representative of movement stakeholders such as, Affiliates, Communities, hubs, WMF) |
| Corporate Forms | private charitable US 501(c)(3) Organisation with a self-perpetuating Board (half of the directors are ‘community-sourced’) + independent Affiliates | Co-existence of private charitable US 501(c)(3) Organisation with a self-perpetuating Board and a globally representative advisory body, + independent affiliates | International membership organization with a nonprofit status dependent on the country where it is incorporated. + WMF with special functions (see below) + independent affiliates |
| Other decision making bodies | Board Committees, such as the community affairs committee, AffCom, etc. | Global Council, Working Groups, Committees | Global Board, Secretariat, Committees, Working Groups |
| Policy Ratification (Charter, Universal Code of Conduct, Fundraising, Affiliates, Hubs, Strategy) | currently unclear | Matters of movement importance go through GC and a set community engagement process. Matters of WMF importance go through WMF BoT. | WMI General Assembly or Board, after a set community engagement process |

There is a diversity of choices in how...

- Members of the general assembly are defined
- Policies are developed
- Communities and volunteers participate
- Operative functions are distributed among members and the international secretariat. There are more distributed models and more centralized ones.
- Resource allocation is structured. Some models involve a conscious redistribution of funds from countries of the global north to the global south.

These choices are detailed in each respective Charter, and in some cases in related policies.

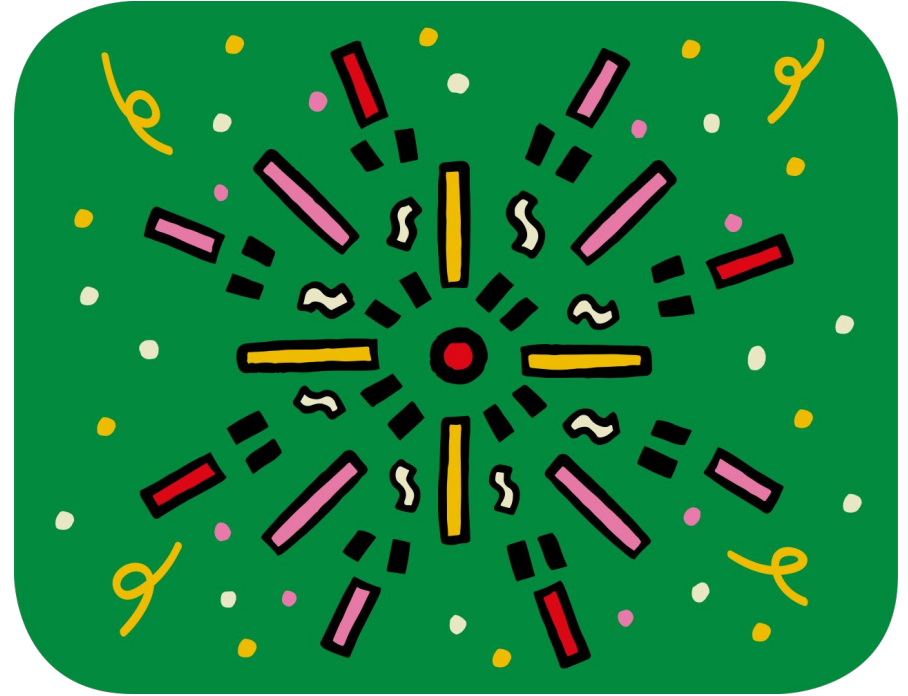


Alignment with Movement Strategy



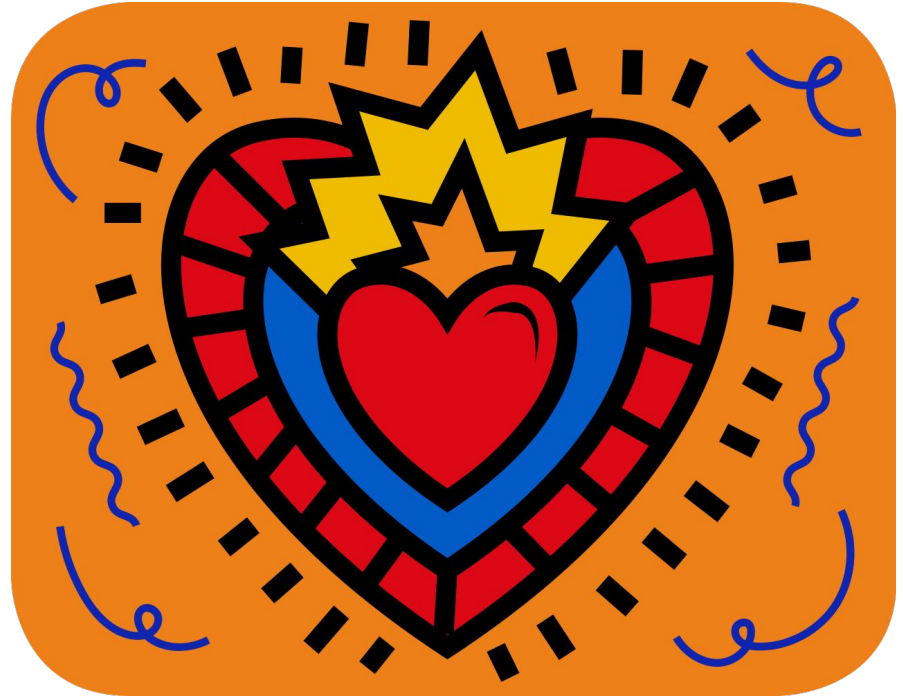
Subsidiarity & Self-Management

this will be important when defining which movement entity in a federative system will make decisions about which issues.



Inclusivity & participatory decision-making

This will be important when defining how we are going to make access to community processes more equitable and how to assure representation of emerging and future communities, for example through a flexible membership and candidature policy for the general assembly.



Decentralization

As a common desire this was often mentioned during Phase II of the strategy process, but it never was defined nor included as a principle.

Designing a federated governance structure now provides new opportunities to think through how decentralization, together with subsidiarity, could manifest itself. For this, it might be helpful to think of the jobs in the movement as functions, and have rational conversations about where and with which entity those would be best located.



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The path forward



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What are possible paths for the drafting committee?

Rather than collecting content items without a direction, milestones could be:

- Reviewing governance scenarios and questions
- Deciding which scenario the committee will base their work on
- Identifying what components go into the charter and what goes into other documents, such as policies and agreements
- Then drafting the document



Thank you!

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