

# Global Citizen – in depth

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## Global Citizen is about finding solutions without borders

We want Global Citizen to become a tool that can be employed in order to strengthen the day-to-day work of this world's problem-solvers. Grassroots, politicians, business people and citizens in general.

The initiative for Global Citizen was taken by New Europe, which organized a millennium conference in Copenhagen in 2000 under the heading of 'Globalisation & Democracy'.

In relation to this conference, Nyt Europa worked out a programme that would constitute the specific framework of a portal about globalisation and democracy. In recent years the Internet has reached a state of development that has made this project realistic.

Global Citizen has thus entered into its on line development phase. The composition of the portal is inspired by the peer to peer networking and the so-called 'prosumer'-dynamics that are characteristic of Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, digg, Wikipedia, etc. See: Clay Shirky "[Here Comes Everybody](#)".

## Global Citizen wishes to contribute to solutions without borders by:

Communicating brief, accurate and factual knowledge that can be used by problem-solvers in their day-to-day work.

Focusing on communicating a level of information that lies between that of breaking news and heavy academic or scientific writing.

Combining overall political actions (legislation) with the opportunities that are present in the market place, e.g. Global Compact (CSR).

Establishing a global and social network that may contribute to the form of innovation that is required for 9 billion people to live side by side in the year 2050.

## Thus, Global Citizen rests on these overall assumptions:

A globalised world must be based more on democracy – locally, nationally, continentally and globally.

Legislation must be able to cross borders as well, thus securing the existence of universal human rights, worldwide legal guarantees and a regime of commerce, based on binding agreements (for instance via the WTO).

In the long run, no one will benefit from a world consisting of islands of riches that exist amid a sea of poverty. That is why we must do everything we can to eradicate hunger and poverty and other such problems. Outline The main menu constitutes the backbone of Global Citizen.

It is this menu, or categorisation, that – later on - will allow the users to save time by sorting this enormous amount of information. And at the same time the user will attain a sense of coherence and correlation with regards to the content of the page.

The categorisation is essential to the descriptions that are necessary if we want to find durable solutions to the challenges and opportunities that have resulted from globalisation. We cannot expect to find precise cross-border solutions unless we have precise descriptions of the cross-border problems (and possibilities) that we face. Including the complicated processes underneath these problems.

The contents of the page are arranged on multiple levels. On the first level, the menu has three categories that each contains sub-headings. In some the nested hierarchy reaches all the way down to a sixth level.

At first sight, this very complex hierarchy might seem confusing, but when you realise the underlying logic you will be able to easily navigate the page. It's intuitive (hopefully), although it needs a little training, but eventually it will make your day-to-day work easier and better.

**The three main categories are:**

- 1: Globalisation
- 2: Political Tools
- 3: Political Actors

Under the heading 'Globalisation' the plan is to describe the wide range of basic processes which constitutes globalisation. This is to say, that we will try to split up 'globalisation' into smaller pieces, thereby ensuring a much more tangible approach.

Under the heading 'Political Actors' you will (soon) find a list of politicians, grassroots, businessmen and citizens, who are addressing the problems and opportunities of globalisation in different ways.

The organization of the page suggests the essential idea: that no political actor (on level three) can properly deal with the problems and opportunities of globalisation (on level one) without employing specific political tools (level two).

The Political Tools – e.g. legislative institutions – are a necessity if we are to secure the transition from individual vision to collective action. In other words, the page contains instructions and a guideline that tells us what we, as global citizens, are required to do if we wish to secure a globalisation with a human face:

**Knowledge:** We are to employ an accurate description of the fundamental processes that constitutes globalisation. Without the knowledge that is embedded in such a specific description, we cannot expect to find proper and precise descriptions of the problems and possibilities we face – and the necessary answers.

**Alliances:** No matter where we may be positioned politically, we must make sure to form strong alliances with other partners. If we stand alone or if we only interact with a limited group of people sharing our own views, we will go nowhere.

**Tools:** We are going to need (political) tools with which, on the basis of specific knowledge and in collaboration with a wide range of allied partners, we will be able to put into practice a specific proposed solution. This means securing the transition from individual vision to an accepted form of communal conduct. In a similar way, the framework contains messages about proportions and priorities in the debate about globalisation.

'Economy' is thus the first category under the heading of 'Globalisation'. Herein lies a message about us having to give first priority to the study of the global economy if we want to understand the forces that, for better or for worse, constitute the framework of our existence in a world of connections.

The political institutions have been placed at the top of the hierarchy, under the heading 'Political Tools'. This is because these institutions potentially can introduce legislation and if necessary supplement particular decisions with funding.

The political institutions thus have the opportunity, both via legislation and economic means, to secure the transition from individual vision to collective action. In most cases this is a very effective combination. The framework is not an answer sheet, but what is important, is to know that this framework rests on several specific terms and contains a general guide that offers clear messages, such as:

It is unlikely to ensure a globalisation with a human face, unless we are in possession of, and continue to develop political tools which supplement national legislation with legislation across borders. Just as is the case in the EU.

It is hard to make the world a better place unless we employ market forces as one of these tools.

It is not possible to create a better world for ourselves, if we do not use the existing world as our starting point. Here and now.

Thus, Global Citizen rests on a clear cut dissociation from all 'visionary' endeavours that base their aims on

a dream world that is far beyond the real world. In reality, such 'visionary' endeavours are reactionary. They cannot make any meaningful changes in the real world.

Therefore, it is not a matter of choosing whether we want to be pragmatic or visionary. There is no short cut. Together we have to develop the pragmatic-visionary strategy for a world community characterized by globalisation and democracy.

Basically human beings are not that different - as a rule of thumb none of us can live without air for more than three minutes, we cannot last more than three days without water and we cannot go more than three weeks without food.

Basically, the citizens of the world share the same wish: that we are able to live secure lives and that we continue to evolve, both personally and collectively. If we are provided with the right conditions, we, as citizens, will be able to work across borders and create a better world together.

The world's businesses will be met with a still stronger demand to operate in harmony with the surrounding community – which will ultimately prove to be of global nature.

It is possible to combine politics with the market place. Commerce across borders is a progressive activity, because, basically, this activity rests on a relationship of trust between seller and buyer. Through political initiatives we may ensure that the positive sides to commerce are promoted.

It is necessary that obligatory agreements be linked with commercial policy agreements in order to establish an effective system of sanctions and endorsements. It should be possible to impose sanctions against countries that violate any collective rules – sanctions that may be of great consequence to a country's possibilities of being allowed to trade.

We cannot create a better world through ad hoc military solutions. There are no short-cuts, we need to take the long road and walk it, which means being patient as we carefully build the gradual development that will inevitably take place over decades – and across various election terms. As an example, the 'foreign policy' of the future must also work to strengthen the global civil society in which citizens meet with other citizens – across borders.

The internet has provided us with new and very exciting opportunities. If only a fraction of the dynamics, which we are currently seeing on YouTube, MySpace, Facebook and Wikipedia, could unfold within the framework of Global Citizen, then we have a good chance of finding those common answers to our communal challenges.

During the 21st century it will become even clearer to all of us, that all people are responsible for themselves and for everyone else.

## Approach

**Why problems are at the fore:** All too often 'thought' and 'theory' are goals in themselves, e.g. many students find that what they are actually studying and learning, has nothing to do with the real world that exists beyond the classroom.

In much the same way, many social scientists write enormous amounts of articles that are primarily read by other researchers in that field. As such, there is nothing wrong with this. But it is just not farsighted enough; it will not suffice.

'Thought' and 'theory' ought to be used as tools to solve concrete problems, as suggested by the American philosopher John Dewey. It is all about using the knowledge that we possess in solving the problems within society that we are faced with every day. Not least those cross-frontier problems that are significant to people on entire continents - and maybe even all over the world.

Poverty is one of the many problems that require correct, applied theories that deal with the cause and the nature of the problem. These theories are indispensable tools for solving human poverty.

**Why descriptions count:** Everything is connected. No field of research would ever be able to say all there is to say about a given issue. It does not matter whether our descriptions of a given issue are long or short (e.g. descriptions of poverty) – there will always be conditions and things that we, either deliberately or unintentionally, will omit from a particular description.

Nonetheless, these descriptions are very important. It is within these descriptions of a certain issue that we come to express what we consider to be good or bad or in between. We use our descriptions as a means to let the world know what should be done for the cause in question. We always use these more or less inadequate descriptions as starting points when trying to solve an issue. Good, concrete descriptions may increase our chances of finding good, durable solutions to these problems.

In our daily lives, the choice is not between long, elaborate descriptions on the one hand and brief, superficial descriptions on the other. The reality is that very few of us have the time in our daily lives to make decisions based on those elaborate descriptions. Typically the choice is between short descriptions that are good, bad or somewhere in between. The task is therefore to draw up the best possible short descriptions of the problems and possibilities that we are faced with in our globalised world. This is exactly what Global Citizen is all about.

**Why 'process-interest-process' is decisive:** Interest never 'comes first'. There are always other processes that take place prior to individuals or groups expressing an interest in a particular subject. Nonetheless, it is often the case that many of the issues that we are faced with in our world are described as though 'interest' collides with other 'interests' – with no previous history. 'Interest-process-interest' is the conventional way of viewing things but Global Citizen has taken a 'process-interest-process' approach.

In time we will work out a comprehensive outline of parties, grassroots, interest groups, etc. In brief, a line of players that represent a wide range of different interests. These interests stretch from 'a better environment' to 'liberal weapon laws'. But instead of viewing these numerous interests as ideas that are directly obtained, we assume that we are also dealing with complex processes that take place beforehand.

The description of these processes will be available under the heading 'Globalisation'. If we wish to solve the many conflicts of interest that make themselves felt, it is necessary to take a closer look at the processes that take place beforehand. If we understand the context and the connection properly, we will increase our chances of finding the solutions and of carrying them out – new 'processes' – e.g. through legislation.

**Why categories are not only for philosophers:** We make use of categories to get a grip of a complex world. By choosing specific categories instead of others we indicate what we consider to be important. By choosing the overall categories Globalisation, Political Tools and Political Actors we pinpoint these categories as an important path to solving the problems that we have in front of us. Under the heading 'Globalisation' we find a number of great possibilities not yet turned into reality. Also, we find a variety of severe problems that are still unsolved. Basically, these problems and possibilities can only be addressed by Political Actors if they have (democratic and) efficient Political Tools at hand. Being an activist is good, but never enough. Even the best craftsmen need tools.

**Why 'proportions' is a linchpin:** In the daily news coverage, papers have to be sold and viewers have to be drawn to the many TV channels. We have never had easier or faster access to world news. So far so good. Unfortunately the massive news coverage does not mean that the global development and the really important news get the necessary attention.

We are not advocating a puritan and strictly "scientific" news coverage but we believe that a new medium is needed that tones down the focus on "breaking news" and instead focuses on more fundamental global development areas. This focus also gives us the possibility to zoom in on what is really important for the development in the 21st century.

**Why 'adjectives' don't do the work:** In the modern media world there is a constant struggle for attention. A struggle that a.o.t leads to an increasing use of adjectives to underline certain messages. We want to try a different approach. Whether or not we as individuals find something "scary", "terrible", or "absolutely fantastic" does not make any real difference. What counts are there actual conditions. At Global Citizen we will try to let the numbers and the actual conditions speak for themselves. The straightforward description is what is needed.

**Why 'production' and 'use' are the starting point under 'Globalisation':** The life we lead as individuals and together presupposes a lot of bare necessities. Food, clothes, shelter and a lot of other things. That is the

truth today and that is how it has always been. Anytime and anywhere. Of course the production of bare necessities takes a more advanced and substantial form today than earlier. At least if we look at the world society as a whole.

Although the production of bare necessities and other goods have always taken place the production has not always had the same characteristics. The necessary realizations can, in our view, be found in what and how we produce. And how and where the consumption of the produced takes place.

This approach is linked to the process-interest-process approach that we have described above. By using this approach and carefully examining 'production' and 'use' we can gain insight into the global community that we are all part of. One way or another.

**Why 'tools' might do the work:** At Global Citizen we put a lot of focus on 'tools' especially 'Political tools' like for instance WTO, EU and national political tools like USA and China (in the meaning 'the American administration' and 'the Chinese government').

The fact of the matter is that we people can't do a whole lot without tools. Neither as individuals nor as a group. This is true whether we talk about constructing buildings or politics which is about establishing the type of society that we want.

Properly functioning political tools are a prerequisite for us to turn our joint visions into reality. And a prerequisite for us to translate our individual and common dreams into something that also in real life makes an impact on millions, maybe even billions of people.

**Why science-politics-communication is an interesting trefoil:** 'Science' is known for studying the 'real' facts based on seriousness, objectivity and some ground rules which mean that the theses that are presented are constantly being tested. The downside to a lot of modern science, not least social sciences, is that the scientific practice sometimes goes overboard and the scientific work is thus cut off from the surrounding society.

In 'politics' this tendency is often reversed. Politicians need votes and are therefore eager to maintain a connection to the surrounding society and the citizens. But also sometimes go overboard thus compromising the nuances and facts that science is so focused on.

The exciting possibilities can be found by combining science and politics in a balanced way. If the (social) sciences to a larger degree could focus on the actual societal problem areas it would be a huge step in the right direction. And especially if we in the political scene to a larger extent would commit each other to discussing the descriptions that science produces.

At Global Citizen we will try to develop the kind of communication that can help produce the right balance between science and politics. Let's call it a fact based world view.

**Why CSR matters:** The challenges - and possibilities - that we are faced with in the modern world requires a number of cross-border solutions to gain a foothold. That is why it is so important that we as political actors have access to political tools and thereby legislation and massive investments.

The problem is that the political tools are falling behind, not least when it comes to regional and global political tools. And even if (when) these political will be developed it is not for certain that this will suffice. This makes it all the more interesting to look at CSR, which in a Global Citizen context can be placed in the field between Political Tools and Political Actors.

In a UN context CSR also has the headline Global Compact which is an initiative that was launched by former General Secretary Kofi Annan. CSR and Global Compact concern companies' social responsibility.

Important circles in the global business life believe that the contradiction no longer exists between making money and at the same time helping the world society in the right direction when it comes to social and environmental areas.

At Global Citizen we are following this development closely. We know that CSR is still in it's early beginnings and that it in some points still seems too vague. But we believe that stronger ties between politicians, grassroots and business people will greatly benefit the development of CSR.

**Why 'we' and 'them' is yesterday's agenda:** Often people in the so-called 'Third World' are spoken about as 'them' as opposed to 'us' in the 'West'. These titles can be useful in a lot of contexts but at Global Citizen we will (as the name implies) choose a different approach.

Our starting point is that we all live on a single planet in one of several solar systems which are all located in one universe. We are all part of an evolutionary process which - with its many branches - is believed to go back almost 14 billion years.

We all belong to one species, that is the human species and we all live, at least in practice, within a framework of a globalised economical system. In this connection it is interesting that globalisation is symbolized by the fact that even those who stand outside the vortex of globalisation are still part of globalisation. They are so to speak part of globalisation by standing outside globalisation.

The fact of the matter is that nobody today is so outside globalisation that they aren't at the same time a part of it. Therefore Global Citizen is about a 'we' that entails all the people on Earth. At Global Citizen we are concerned with the concrete things in the world that unite and separate.

The point is that what separates us does not have much to do with 'nationality', 'ethnicity', 'religion', or 'culture'. It is every bit as important where we as countries and individuals are placed in the global work

categories. And the 'global work categories' also include the millions of people who as unemployed are not part of the global work force of over 3.1 billion people.

