



# **#REVISITINGSSI**

## **TEN YEARS LATER**

### **WORKSHOP KICKOFF (EU/US)**

December 2nd, 2025 - 7pm CET, 10a PT

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*Supporting the strategic inquiry to shape  
the next decade of digital identity*

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# TODAY'S AGENDA

1. **Context:** The ten-year question
2. **Lenses:** 15 ways of seeing
3. **Working Circles:** What they produce
4. **Activity:** Breakouts and discussion
5. **Next Steps:** Two kickoffs, one community

**Goal:** Find a lens that calls to you

# PART 1

## THE TEN-YEAR QUESTION

# APRIL 2016

I published ten principles for self-sovereign identity.  
They were aspirational—a compass, not a map.

# THE MOVEMENT (2016–2021)

The principles caught fire.

- Hundreds of articles and academic papers
- Broad acceptance among technologists, policymakers, advocates
- W3C working groups, government pilots, enterprise interest

**A global community formed around  
decentralized digital identity**

***THE PRINCIPLES INSPIRED PEOPLE***

# TECHNICAL SUCCESS...

- DIDs: W3C Recommendation ✓
- Verifiable Credentials: Standard ✓
- Government pilots: Dozens ✓

The architecture worked. The standards shipped.

But somewhere along the way...

***THE PRINCIPLES GOT LOST***

# WHAT WENT WRONG

- Focused on *privacy* instead of what privacy defends: *resisting coercion*
- Followed the money. Death by 1000 compromises
- did:web—"decentralized" in name only
- Google & Apple and winning with more resources & centralized solutions
- Governments focused on "*Four Horsemen*" (*terror, pedophilia, drugs, money*) while the real threat is **autocracy**

# THE RESULT

- We hoped to **reduce** centralized power
- But we became indistinguishable from the very systems we set out to disrupt

*"If we can't maintain semantic integrity of 'decentralized' in our own community, how can we fight for it in the larger world?"*

We may have **increased** centralized power

# THE QUESTION

- *What did we get right?*
- *What did we miss?*
- *What must change for the next decade?*

# WHY YOU'RE HERE

We need diverse expertise:

- Technologists + Lawyers
- Advocates + Academics
- Policy experts + Lived experience

***We are not building specs—  
we are doing a strategic inquiry***

# QUICK INTRODUCTIONS

Raise your Zoom hand to share:

- 1. Name & affiliation** *(if any)*
- 2. One sentence:** What brings you to this work?

*~30 seconds each • I'll go first to model*

*I'm Christopher Allen of Blockchain Commons.*

*I wrote the original ten principles in 2016.*

*I'm here because I believe we lost our way—  
and this community can help us find it again.*

# WHAT WE'LL PRODUCE

# PART 2

## THE 15 LENSES

# WHAT ARE LENSES?

Each lens reveals something the others miss.

No single lens is complete.

Each working circle goes ***deep on one*** while staying aware of the whole.

# FOUR CATEGORIES

- 1. Foundational Principles & Rights (4)**
- 2. Preventing Coercion (4)**
- 3. Relational & Contextual Identity (4)**
- 4. Compliance, Governance & Technical (3)**

# CATEGORY 1: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES & RIGHTS

What makes identity a *right*  
rather than a privilege?

- **Irreducible Person** — Existence before encoding
- **Anti-Property** — Identity cannot be owned or sold
- **Right to Transact** — Digital participation as constitutional right
- **Cryptographic Paradigms** — Assumptions that shape possibility

# 1. IRREDUCIBLE PERSON

## CORE INSIGHT:

Existence isn't earned or proven—it simply *is*.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we protect dignity from being made measurable?

*Example: Aadhaar biometric exclusion—existence conditioned on encoding*

## 2. ANTI-PROPERTY

### CORE INSIGHT:

Identity cannot be owned, bought, sold, or treated as property.

### KEY QUESTION:

How do we resist “data ownership” commodification?

*“Owning your data” legitimizes markets that shouldn’t exist*

# 3. RIGHT TO TRANSACT

## CORE INSIGHT:

Digital participation is a constitutional right.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we prevent exclusion by gatekeepers?

*Operation Choke Point 2.0: Banks weaponized as censors*

# 4. CRYPTOGRAPHIC PARADIGMS

## CORE INSIGHT:

PKI assumptions constrained us for 36 years.

## KEY QUESTION:

What assumptions are we embedding now that will limit 2036?

*What can't we invent because current paradigms block it?*

# CATEGORY 2: PREVENTING COERCION

How do systems compel behavior—  
and how do we resist?

- **Coercion Resistance** — Privacy defends against force
- **Self-Coercion** — When control feels like your own idea
- **Choice Architecture** — Small choices become structural traps
- **Binding Commitments** — When constraint enables trust

# 5. COERCION RESISTANCE

## CORE INSIGHT:

Privacy is the shield. Coercion resistance is the goal.

## FOUR DIMENSIONS:

- Interface (dark patterns)
- Inference (profiling)
- Structural (lock-in)
- Psychological (self-censorship)

## 6. SELF-COERCION

### CORE INSIGHT:

The most effective control feels like your own idea.

### KEY QUESTION:

How do we counter chilling effects?

*You modify behavior based on imagined consequences—no rule needed*

# 7. CHOICE ARCHITECTURE

## CORE INSIGHT:

Small voluntary choices accumulate into structural dependency.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we ensure real exit rights?

*"The 18-year trap": Credentials that won't transfer*

# 8. BINDING COMMITMENTS

## CORE INSIGHT:

Not all lock-in is harmful. Voluntary constraint enables trust.

## KEY QUESTION:

When is commitment productive vs. exploitative?

*Kenyan chamas: 200,000+ groups managing \$1.7B through mutual stakes*

# CATEGORY 3: RELATIONAL & CONTEXTUAL IDENTITY

Identity exists in relationship:  
to others, to context, to scale.

- **Relational Autonomy** — “I am because we are”
- **Context Boundaries** — Keeping life spheres distinct
- **Multi-Scalar Sovereignty** — Individual, community, nation
- **Stewardship** — Caring for those who cannot consent

# 9. RELATIONAL AUTONOMY

## CORE INSIGHT:

"I am because we are" —Ubuntu philosophy

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we credential relationships, not just attributes?

*Immigration systems separate families;  
bonds are invisible*

# 10. CONTEXT BOUNDARIES

## CORE INSIGHT:

Your employer shouldn't see therapy notes.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we prevent correlation attacks?

*Unlinkable identifiers keep life spheres  
cryptographically distinct*

# 11. MULTI-SCALAR SOVEREIGNTY

## CORE INSIGHT:

Sovereignty operates at individual, community, AND national scales.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we prevent re-centralization?

*Technical distribution ≠ political distribution*

# 12. STEWARDSHIP

## CORE INSIGHT:

When caring for others' identity, are we empowering or exploiting?

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we protect those who can't exit or refuse?  
*18 years of credential accumulation without child consent*

# CATEGORY 4: COMPLIANCE, GOVERNANCE & TECHNICAL

How do our principles survive contact  
with law, standards, and power?

- **Principles to Compliance** — Not everything can be measured
- **Regulatory Frameworks** — Voluntary erodes to mandatory
- **Principal Authority** — Restoring accountability to agents

# 13. PRINCIPLES TO COMPLIANCE

## CORE INSIGHT:

Not everything important can be measured.

## KEY QUESTION:

What must remain ethical commitment vs. technical test?

*Treating all principles as measurable destroys the ones that matter most*

# 14. REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

## CORE INSIGHT:

Legal “voluntary” erodes to practical “mandatory”

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we enable SSI without mandating it?

*Utah model: Recognition without government monopoly*

# 15. PRINCIPAL AUTHORITY

## CORE INSIGHT:

Platforms violate every duty agents owe principals.

## KEY QUESTION:

How do we restore accountability?

*Centuries of agency law—enforceable duties of care, loyalty, disclosure*

# LENS CONNECTIONS

These aren't silos.

- Stewardship ↔ Relational Autonomy
- Coercion Resistance threads through everything
- Context Boundaries ↔ Multi-Scalar Sovereignty

Each brief acknowledges connections while going deep on one

# THESE ARE STARTING POINTS

The lens briefs are early drafts—**provocations, not conclusions**

- New lenses may emerge from your work
- We won't tackle all equally, and that's okay
- Coverage will be organic, based on interest and expertise

**Each working circle will take ownership of where the lens goes next.**

# PART 3

## WHAT WORKING CIRCLES WILL DO

# WORKING CIRCLES

**Size:** 2-5 members (3-4 ideal)

**Composition:** Seek diversity

*Technical + Policy + Advocacy + Academic*

**Commitment:** 2-3 sessions × 90 minutes

**Goal:** Rough consensus on worthy insights, not standards, specs, or product designs

*Ground your work in references or lived experience, not speculation*

# THE LENS BRIEF TEMPLATE

1. **Territory / Focus** — Core insight, concrete grounding
2. **Relationship to Other Lenses** — Connections, distinctions
3. **Why This Matters for SSI** — Architectural gaps, design implications
4. **Harms, Risks, Questions** — What goes wrong when ignored
5. **Constructive Directions** — Strategic pathways forward
6. **2026 Principles** — Draft principle language
7. **Resources** — Foundational literature

*1500–3000 words • Full template at [revisitingssi.com](https://revisitingssi.com)*

# BEYOND THE LENS BRIEF

**Phase 2 (selective):** Strong briefs may advance to:

- Full academic paper
- Policy brief
- Principles synthesis

**Credit:** Substantial contribution = authorship

# THE STAKES

Your work informs principles published

*APRIL 26TH, 2026*

Exactly ten years after the original.

These will guide digital identity systems  
affecting **billions of people**.

# PART 4

## WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

# SMALL GROUP WARM-UP

*Zoom will auto-assign you to rooms (3 people each)*

In your breakout:

1. Introduce yourselves briefly
2. Each share:

*“If you had to focus on **one lens just for today**—no long-term commitment—which would you choose and why”?*

*~10 minutes*

# SHARE YOUR INTEREST

When you return:

1. **Type in chat:** Your chosen lens for today
2. I'll call out lenses with 2+ people
3. When yours is called, share your "why" (~30 sec)

*Starting with the most popular*

# LENS DEEP-DIVE (*TIME PERMITTING*)

*Choose your room—named for each active lens*

Your task:

- Discuss:  
***“What’s the biggest risk if this lens is ignored?”***
- Pick someone to report back

*~10 minutes*

# LENS REPORTS

One person from each room:

- Which lens?
- What risk did you identify?

*~30 seconds each*

# WHERE'S THE ENERGY?

Based on what we heard:

- Which lenses have momentum?
- Who wants to continue working on these?
- Any lenses we should combine or table for now?

*This shapes our working circles going forward*

# PART 5

## NEXT STEPS

# TWO KICKOFFS, ONE COMMUNITY

**Today:** EU/US timezone-friendly

**Next week:** Asia/EU timezone-friendly

Working circles may form at either—or span both.

*Cross-timezone? Work asynchronously or find  
overlapping hours*

# WHAT'S NEXT

## **If your working circle has momentum:**

- Announce on GitHub Discussions
- Seek diverse points-of-view  
*(from workshop or invite from outside)*
- Schedule your first session

## **Still exploring?**

- Share interest on GitHub Discussions or Signal
- Connect at next week's Asia/EU kickoff

*No pressure to commit to a circle today*

# HOW WE WORK

- **Licensing:** All outputs CC-BY 4.0
  - *Open for others to build on*
- **Conduct:** What's shared here stays here
  - *Don't quote members without permission.*
  - **See also [RevisitingSSI.com/conduct](https://RevisitingSSI.com/conduct)**
- **Facilitation:** I'm the initial host, facilitator, and academic referee
  - *Want to help at this level? Let's talk*

# RESOURCES

**GitHub Discussions** — Cross-circle dialogue

**Signal Group** — Quick coordination

**Citations Library** —  
[revisitingssi.com/library/citations/](https://revisitingssi.com/library/citations/)

**Facilitator Office Hours** — [TBD]

# KEY DATES

Milestone	Date
Lens Briefs Due	End of January
Mid-Point Check-in	[TBD]
Phase 2 Kickoff	[TBD]
Principles Publication	April 26th, 2026

# CLOSING

The original principles were written by one person  
in a moment of inspiration.

These revised principles will emerge from  
**a community wrestling honestly with hard  
questions.**

**THAT'S YOU! THANK YOU!**

# SUPPORT THIS WORK!

Your support enables my work as host, facilitator, and academic steward:

- Community infrastructure
- Workshop & working circle facilitation
- Research coordination & publication

**Be an organizational patron of workshop:**

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# THANK YOU!

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**RevisitingSSI.com**



**Christopher Allen**  
<*ChristopherA@LifeWithAlacrity.com*>

*available for trust architecture, technical consultation, and policy review*