

#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

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
- **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/

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

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available for trust architecture, technical consultation, and policy review