#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

…AND MY MONTHLY GITHUB PATRONS

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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

Phase	Output	Timeline
1	Lens Briefs	Dec–Jan
2	Drafts of Papers	Feb–Apr
3	**Revised Principles** *(Exactly ten years after the original)*	April 26th, 2026
4	Papers and articles based on the Revised Principles	May-Dec

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

Be an organizational patron of workshop:
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THANK YOU!

Ten years of learning. A decade of impact ahead.

RevisitingSSI.com

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available for trust architecture, technical consultation, and policy review