**SOUNDING THE WATERS: ACTING LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY**  
***A Social Change Exploration through Large-Scale Dialogues***

**A Project of *A New Global We* in Partnership with *SoundWaters***

**BACKGROUND**  
Our world is in crisis. Despite the advancements and promises of globalism throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, coupled with the rise of the internet and its promise of instant global communication and widespread access to knowledge, we find ourselves in the midst of a profound societal rift. Our societies are increasingly polarized and intolerant within our communities, neighborhoods, and even families. Often, it seems we are incapable of agreeing on fundamental truths. Our primary response is to demonize each other. We talk past one another without truly listening, more divided than ever. Ironically, social media platforms, designed to connect us, have instead fragmented us further into isolated groups with growing divides.

Yet, at our core, there is a basic human impulse to belong—to feel unified. Deep down, we recognize our shared humanity on this one planet, with similar hopes, dreams, fears, and needs. There's even a burgeoning awareness that our connection extends to all living beings, and perhaps even to the planet and cosmos itself.

So, why can't we just get along?

With the advent of modern and post-modern mindsets, the traditional ties that once held us together have eroded—our religious traditions, cultural norms, civic engagement, revered institutions, and collective narratives. We are left with few anchors. Yet, in the quiet recesses of our consciousness, there persists a sense of deep connection. However, we lack the practices, rituals, and even the language to experience, reinforce, and re-anchor this sense of connectedness. We are in dire need of a new narrative.

**PROPOSAL - SOUNDING THE WATERS: ACTING LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY**  
In this proposal, *Sounding the Waters*, A NEW GLOBAL WE (ANGW), in partnership with SoundWaters, aims to explore the potential of large-scale dialogues to accelerate and support social change. In this proposal we will specifically explore the use of large-scale dialogue focused on the issue of climate change. We will explore how such dialogues might catalyze a meaningful shift in the age-old environmental movement paradigm of Acting Locally and Thinking Globally, to a new paradigm of Acting Locally AND Acting Globally with greatly expanded impacts. What might be possible if powerful and deeply connected communities could supported at large scale focused on addressing our climate challenges?

Quick recap

Carlos and Patrick discussed incorporating spiritual components into nonprofit organizations to tackle global issues like climate change. They explored using AI and dialogue to foster connection within communities and align efforts towards the Foundation Mission. Additionally, they proposed a collaborative project between Sound Waters and Clear Waters to involve young people.

Next steps

**SOUNDWATERS**

SoundWaters is a Connecticut-based nonprofit organization that was founded 35 years ago to protect the Long Island Sound through education. The organization has successfully run science-based programs for primary and high-school students, summer camps, and after-school programs, which include a sailing component. Recently, SoundWaters approached Danny Martin, to discuss the importance of spiritual connection to their mission and how explore ways to layer a spiritual component to their existing programs.

This naturally led to discussions about spirituality that connects individuals to something larger than themselves. We explored and expanded mission to become a model for other organizations, creating a community of people connected through dialogue and nature, with a regular gathering for a monthly dialogue. Further they envisioned serving as a convener for other like-minded organizations, such as the Harbor School in New York. The goal is to foster a deeper sense of spiritual connection for staff, board members, and the community they serve.

Nonprofits, Dialogue, and AI Integration

Carlos proposed the idea of using nonprofits as conveners to initiate a national dialogue about global issues like climate change. He stressed the importance of building a diverse community with a shared purpose and the potential of dialogue at scale to tackle complex problems. Carlos also discussed the potential integration of artificial intelligence into their work and highlighted the need for a more spiritual connection within their team. Lastly, he identified the Fencer Institute as a potential source of funding and support for their AI project.

Exploring Zoom, Sound Waters, and AI Collaboration

Carlos proposed collaborating with Zoom to enhance their service using his redundant programming work, while Patrick suggested working with Sound Waters for their innovative project, incorporating AI for feedback and discussions. Carlos agreed with Patrick's idea and highlighted the recent improvement in AI technology's potential to solve problems. Lastly, Patrick asked Carlos about his thoughts on the Fetzer proposal, to which Carlos confirmed his past experience.

AI Enhancing Storytelling in Gatherings

Carlos recounted a successful extended weekend event focused on spirituality and leadership from two decades ago, which was funded by the Kellogg Foundation. He highlighted the significance of storytelling in capturing the spiritual essence of people and proposed the idea of AI assisting in telling a new, unified story that emerges from large-scale gatherings. Carlos and Danny had previously explored similar concepts in their workshops. Patrick responded positively to this idea, noting the AI's ability to highlight new ways of conversing and storytelling.

Exploring Crowdsourcing and Climate Change Tool

Carlos and Patrick explored the concept of crowdsourcing and its potential application to their project. They discussed how Google's search algorithm uses collective searches to determine the most relevant results and considered the possibility of applying this approach to gather their best ideas. Carlos proposed the development of an AI tool for this purpose, while Patrick noted that their events did not incur any costs beyond their time. They also discussed the creation of a dialogue tool to promote community building and accelerate the climate change movement, with Carlos outlining a year-long plan and emphasizing the need to demonstrate potential impact and return on investment to potential funders.

Spiritual Mindedness and Aligning Efforts

Carlos and Patrick discussed the concept of 'spiritual mindedness' and its potential for positive change in the world. They focused on the idea of aligning individual efforts and life energies with the Foundation Mission to tackle global problems in a proactive manner. Carlos emphasized the importance of scale, the potential benefits of having people with power and influence aligned with their cause, and the necessity of aligning with larger historical and traditional forces. Patrick seemed to agree with Carlos' perspective, highlighting the interesting combination of physical and spiritual goals with the Thomas Berry group.

Sound Waters and Clear Waters Collaboration

Patrick and Carlos discussed the potential of a collaborative project between Sound Waters and Clear Waters, with Carlos drafting a comprehensive proposal. They expressed optimism about the project's prospects, noting that Danny was also supportive. The initiative was seen as beneficial and straightforward, and they planned for upcoming meetings with Alton and Grace. Additionally, Carlos proposed a new initiative to involve more young people, which Patrick supported. They ended the conversation anticipating their next week's meeting.  
**PARTNERS  
A NEW GOBAL WE**

A NEW GLOBAL WE’s mission is to provide individuals, communities, nations – the world – with a set of tools and practices to help users experience this omnipresent reality of our connectedness, of our belonging to each other - our interbeing. ANGW believes such profound experiences are essential to developing the skills, the new rituals, the compassion, the caring, the new stories, the fortitude that is needed if we are to come together to drive the changes necessary to address the world’s most intractable problems and challenges.  
  
**MINDULLNESS DIALOGUE**

Over the past three decades, the ANGW’s leaders, Danny Martin and Carlos Monteagudo, have studied, gathered, developed and successfully deployed methods and practices for dialogue amongst diverse participants. Their most current methodology, called Mindfulness Dialogue, enables groups to experience safe, creative dialogue spaces where a collective WE consciousness can consistently and predictably be experienced. It was initially developed for in-person gatherings but more recently has been successfully deployed virtually via Zoom.

**SOUNDWATERS**

With 30+ years of award-winning programs with kids and youth to restore and protect the waters of the Long Island Sound through educational experiences, SoundWaters is ready to take their work to a new level to more effectively reach the 10,000+ members on their mailing list, plus the communities beyond.

In January 2024, based on prior connections and an intuition of what was needed, SoundWaters approached Danny Martin for help in adding a spiritual element to the mostly scientific education that they already provided. They had a deep intuition that the scientific based educational approach that was at the core of their programming would only get them so far. They wanted much more and perceived that Mindfulness Dialogue could be a missing element.   
  
In further conversation with project leaders, they began to wonder if in fact, they could leverage their years of success by convening dialogues with other like-minded environmental organizations to truly scale up their efforts. Thus the project Sounding the Waters was born.   
  
**THE PROJECT**

With a key convener Soundwaters, ANGW proposes to engage in a year-long experiment to bring together committed stakeholders on the climate crisis to experience a sense of their connectedness to something much larger then themselves and to see what emerges.  
  
Phase 0: The Soundwaters staff will be introducing Mindfulness Dialogue with its youth programs. In addition, they will bring this practice to the board leadership in their strategic planning session scheduled for the summer of 2024.   
Phase 1: SoundWaters will begin by calling for a monthly dialogue amongst the 10,000 people on it’s mailing list. It will host monthly dialogues to

**THE CHALLENGE**  
Until recently, scaling of this methodology has been a primary challenge. The method works efficiently for groups of up to 10-80 people meeting in person. But for larger groups, even the most well-designed dialogue process can become cumbersome and lengthy. Using Zoom's breakout groups has been beneficial, but the reporting back is vastly unsatisfactory.

Engaging groups of 100 or 1,000 in dialogue is difficult, and engaging groups of 10,000 or more has been unfeasible. How can we ensure every voice is heard within a reasonable timeframe, to maximize engagement?

**THE OPPORTUNITY**  
The recent advent of Large Language Models presents an unprecedented opportunity. It enables us to transform dialogues, which are traditionally conducted in "series," into "parallel" processes without significant loss of detail or impact. Our goal is to combine this emerging AI technology with our refined structured dialogue processes to facilitate

dialogues at scales previously unattainable. We believe this development could represent a profound disruption for social change initiatives and potentially even redefine direct democracy.

**SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH MASS SCALE DIRECT ENGEGEMENT**

Direct stakeholder engagement is a well-established cornerstone in transformative social change work. The highest degree of engagement, particularly from those most impacted, fosters broad-based buy-in and aids in developing long-term, effective, sustainable solutions. However, implementing this efficiently at scale needed when tackling large intractable problems poses a significant challenge.

Common solutions tend towards "representative" stakeholder engagement for practical reasons. However, this approach has limitations, including risks of corruption, undue influence through lobbying, inadequate representation, and lack of genuine engagement and ownership by the majority of constituents.

Even when highly motivated stakeholders are assembled, practical concerns arise: How can individual engagement exceed tokenism? How can constituents participate in meaningful conversations, meet effectively, maintain their interest, ensure all voices are heard, and record the outcomes? The time investment is an enormous challenge.

Thus, the primary challenge lies in creating a practical, inclusive, and efficient process for direct stakeholder engagement in the field of social change.

**GENERATIVEDIALLOGUE.AI**

In response to the significant challenge of facilitating inclusive, meaningful dialogues on a large scale, we are seeking funds to create a GenerativeDialogue.AI platform.

1. Utilizing a customizable interface reminiscent of Zoom, our system will virtually gather participants in a manner that is infinitely expandable. This allows us to accommodate various community sizes, from local gatherings to large global assemblies.

2. Unlike conventional Zoom meetings where most engagement is passive, our dialogues methods are structured to engage every participant actively and continually. Our goal is to foster an environment promoting deep sharing, active listening, to cultivate mutual understanding. We leverage the strategic use of breakout rooms and pointed questions in small dialogue groupings, thereby ensuring every participant has the opportunity to voice their unique perspectives on the issues being discussed.

3. Every breakout room in our system is enhanced by an AI extension of the human host, an AI companion. This AI functions as a transcriber, summarizer, observer, a witness of the dialogues in each room. It tracks all parallel discussions and summarizing them in real-time. Upon the group's reconvening, the AI swiftly presents a comprehensive summary of the dialogues, reflecting the diverse voices and viewpoints, and providing instant insights into global themes and statistics.

4. Our process is iterative and structured, generating a “wisdom field” and surfacing emerging themes and insights.

These in turn serve as the basis for further exploration and dialogue.

**INNOVATION**

The capacity to hold structured dialogues at scale has never been possible in human history. With the platform we aim to create, the potential for groups of any size to meet simultaneously across physical and cultural distances, and even

language barriers, with every voice contributing to the emergence of shared meaning (the definition of dialogue), is truly staggering. And just as Google crowdsources search for best results, this new capacity can be conceived of as a way to crowdsource meaning for collective wisdom.

**VISION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Imagine the possibilities of an entire city, such as Chicago, engaging in a dialogue on how to prevent gun violence, called for and hosted by the mayor, following yet another tragic mass shooting?

What about UN sponsored, massive, simultaneous, regional dialogues on climate change?

What could we learn from these and other such dialogues? What kind of impact would such dialogues make on the public consciousness?

Big Picture

Our vision involves initial development and testing of a minimum viable product (MVP). We aim to refine this through user feedback, initially from our supportive community, focusing on the value and user satisfaction derived from scalable, structured dialogues. Our goal is to ascertain if organizations find it useful in furthering their mission or resolving issues,

and to identify potential feature additions.

Ideally, our technology becomes widely adopted due to its perceived value, potentially catalyzed by high-profile use. However, our realistic expectation is organic growth amongst organizations recognizing the unprecedented opportunity for scaled direct engagement.

Our schedule:

\*MVP development/testing

\*Version 1.0 development and business model formation supporting future development, offering free usage and a potential paid subscription for advanced features.

\*Version 2.0 will allow for fully customizable dialogues by end-users.

\*Version 3.0 will incorporate AI-powered feedback and evaluation features, providing both comprehensive objective summaries of dialogue outcomes and individualized participant feedback.

The most critical issues society faces are often the most intractable. These issues are complex, multifaceted, and multidimensional, necessitating solutions and approaches shaped by the diverse lived experiences of those involved.

Widespread direct stakeholder engagement often proves best for discovering and implementing these solutions.

Our initiative extends support to a diverse array of groups, from local community organizations to global NGOs. Our ultimate goal is to facilitate constructive, inclusive, and transformative dialogues to help any community address their most complex challenges.

Your Engagement

My life's work is rooted in my childhood experiences as a Cuban immigrant, which involved navigating two cultures while maintaining a balance between my original identity and assimilation into US life. This exposure kindled my interest in psychiatry and the inner life, leading eventually to my work as a Kellogg National Leadership Fellow. During my

fellowship, I focused my learning plan on understanding the conditions fostering better connections between one's inner spiritual life and outer actions, which I came to understand as critical for social change and leadership. This exploration

led to the co-founding of two nonprofits, SEED and SolarNation, incorporating insights and tools from the fellowship as their mission's foundation and strategies. Over the years, working with groups and with dialogue, I've honed in on the challenge of scalability, which has led to my present initiative.

PROJECT LEADERS BACKGROUND

After my Kellogg Fellowship, in 2000 I partnered with another Kellogg fellow, Melinda Lackey, to co-found a nonprofit,SEED. We used the lessons we both learned during the fellowship to help other nonprofits engaged in social-change work, to learn the skills to better organize communities across differences to increase their effectiveness and impact. In this work, I began to develop the dialogue tools and methods that became integral to all my subsequent work. SEED's impact continues and has a far reach (www.seedimpact.org).

Learning from this effort, in 2013 I founded another nonprofit, SolarNation. Our aim was to harness the capacity of diverse groups, powerfully organizing around commonly held core values, to engage communities to self-organize and self-finance community solar projects as a means of combating climate change. This project, funded in part by the DOE,

was on the brink of being piloted in three major cities when the Covid shutdowns occurred, effectively stalling, and eventually ceasing the projects. Our methodology, which relied heavily on on-the-ground, face-to-face meetings, became impossible.

My current work with my colleague, Danny Martin, started during Covid. Our aim is to build and expand on the dialogue tools we both had previously used, translating them into a more scalable online offering. Our goal is to elevate structured dialogue to a new level, leveraging society's newfound comfort with online conferencing via Zoom. The unexpected

emergence of AI in November 2022 led us to pivot, as we immediately recognized the profound significance of this technological breakthrough to our work.

Support & Other Funding

Rilke once wrote, "Much stands behind me..." and in my case, the support I've received throughout my journey is too vast to fully acknowledge here. The most impactful support came from the Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship I received from 1997 to 2000. This

experience and the enduring fellowship with colleagues propelled me to a higher level of thinking and creativity than I previously imagined. It deepened my understanding of social transformation, transformative leadership, and community organizing, ultimately leading to a theory of transformation that underpins my work and this current project.

Furthermore, foundational support (Fetzer, Rockefeller, Fund for the City of NY, NY Women's Foundation, Daphne Fund, DOE, others), seed money (Illinois Department of Health), philanthropy (Disney, Delaney, Kaplan, Stewart), board service, mentorships, teachers, volunteers, have all been instrumental in informing and advancing the work of SEED, SolarNation, and now A New Global We. I am eternally indebted and privileged.

Project Size

What is your initiative, project, or organization’s annual operating budget (annual expenses) in USdollars? Less than $100,000 USD

How many full time, paid staff are on your team (including yourself)? 0

Vision