

Nexist Council Handbook

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Crafted in the context of games named under the rubric GetTheIssues, which is now its own entity as mentioned [here](#).

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INTERNAL CONTROVERSY

CODE OF CONDUCT

BACKGROUND

A council is created to deal with particular *kinds of issues* which will arise in the activities of “condo” activities. Overall, many of these issues will become the task of automated background agents (e.g. determining if an issue or quest is redundant), but the council is still needed at least until those tasks are automated. Still, I believe that the council remains valuable going forward.

At the highest level of intentions, TopicQuests is (note: Europeans would say *are*) committed to maintaining high levels of Signal-To-Noise-Ratio (SNR), coherence, and knowledge organization. Presentation of that well-organized collection of information resources entails deep concerns about *findability*.

Overall, this council should be composed of people who didn't get there by popularity or private request: they *earn* the right and are automatically inducted into the council. This is to avoid issues related to public trust, as exemplified by Wikipedia [edit warring](#).

Context

My thinking here relates to what I call a *GetTheIssues*-class context. A GTI-class context is one in which a stated intention is to gather *world views* as organized in *Perspectives* on issues that matter. In the context of Theory U, this is the process of descending the left-hand side of the U. In the context of OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act), it is the OO part.

Note: I injected the notion of a GTI-class platform. In doing so, I imagine another class: GTS-class, for *get the solutions* (right-hand-side of Theory U, DA from OODA). That doesn't rule out other classes of sensemaking frameworks; I just don't know what they might be at the moment. That notion allows us to think in terms of the b-corp for GTI-class platforms (politics, health, ...).

In that context, we can imagine many different *universes of discourse* (highest level contexts) such as these:

- Politics
- Health
- Science
- Religion
- ...

It is reasonable to think of many different ways to conduct GTI-class inquiries in those high level context. For instance, one GTI “condo” could be dedicated to a single context, or one Condo could create spaces for each. In any case, there will be grand overlaps. That is to say:

- In the context of a political inquiry, it is reasonable to talk about health or science, or religion topics.
- In any other context, the same applies

The point here is that, during say a Politics inquiry, Quests will address political issues; during a Health inquiry, Quests will address health issues, and so forth.

The next level of context is that of the *categories* of issues to be addressed. This context level entails all varieties of taxonomy and ontology. It has been stated that there is no single way to organize information resources (encapsulated knowledge artifacts) that will satisfy all ways of knowing, so the issue is complex. However, through judicious use of navigational aids such as full text search, synonyms, tags, different kinds of

tree structures, and so forth, the intention is to make navigating a space of issues as convenient as possible. Having said all that, the primary issue faced by any council is that of maintaining order in that space of issues. This entails issues of redundancy, comprehensibility, and identity (e.g. location in a taxonomy, name strings).

The next level of context is that of Quest design. This is an issue that relates to two important aspects of any quest, neither of which is a trivial aspect:

- The question itself: we say (and will define below) that it must be *well posed*. One of the defining issues in Issue-based Information Systems is this: the issue could be so complex that, frequently, the right question to ask is not known until well into the inquiry. Thus, we take question posing seriously, expecting that the result will represent a *best effort* at the time, expecting further that the Quest itself could illuminate a better question to ask.
- The single category (Issue) under which the Quest will be identified. It is quite possible that a Quest can straddle more than one Issue.

Overall, then, our context space looks a bit like this:

- Universe of Discourse (or, choose another name for it)
 - Issue Space
 - Quests which are categorized by specific issues

Defining an ecosystem in that way facilitates both obvious and subtle navigational features. For instance, an *issue taxonomy* invites, in one case, a *drill-down* navigation system, ala <http://dmoz.org/>; in another case, it invites a graphical *walk the graph* interface, perhaps similar to <http://debategraph.org/> or maybe some form of *mind map*. Always, there are [Stigmergic](#) mechanisms in play such as *tags*, hyperlinks, and so forth. Over time, even more subtle UX queues might grow from compiled *journeys*, user stories, and, of course, *Perspective* documents.

Values

<rough>

It seems that we are co-creating an [ecosystem](#) which is based on a collection of values. It seems worth enumerating what we think of and giving some details. That's because, in the end, what stewards of that ecosystem must understand is the values which guide their operating principles.

Values worth promoting

- Trust
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Deep Listening
- Scholarship

Use Cases

We provide a partial (extensible) list of council use cases, but they mostly center around the overriding issue of maintaining information order and encouraging high-value contributions. We present a partial list of council use cases:

1. New Issue proposal, where an **Issue** is defined as a *category*, easily viewed in the context of a taxonomy of such issues, where issues serve as categories for quests
2. New Quest proposal, where a **Quest** is defined as a well-posed question, first proposed in the context of a particular Issue (though it might be determined that a given quest straddles more than one issue)

3. Topic Merge proposals, where the notion is that any given topic (any *node*) in the system might be viewed by some members as representing the same subject as another existing node. In theory, the topic map platform will catch those instances, *but not always*, and in the early days, the topic map might not catch many of them.
4. Moderation: from time to time, some sort of controversy will require council-level moderation. For the most part, moderation, specifically in game moves, is supposed to occur inside Guilds.
5. Process Appeals: Not yet sure what to do with this one, but it seems obvious that there will be a need for this.

It is understood that a council is created specifically to deal with such use cases in a manner which is advisory. The very fact that the council serves as an advisor, and not a ~~gateway~~ gatekeeper, means that, while there are specific kinds of guidelines for advice which will emerge over time, there needs to be *default* suggestions which handle instances of any use case which cannot otherwise be served directly.

Use Case Examples

Let us examine a few examples.

1. An issue is proposed, the subject of which is, say, Fracking. Dealing with that issue could cover these cases:
 - a. Redundancy. Suppose there is already an issue titled Hydraulic Fracturing. The Fracking issue would be determined to be redundant.
 - b. Categorization. Where, precisely, would an issue about Fracking go? This turns out to be rather complex. A simple alternative is one giant linear, alphabetized list of issues, but that is problematic since some will come in looking for “hydraulic fracturing” and only see “fracking” and not realize they are the same thing. So, that simple alternative seems not to enable a high *signal-to-noise-ratio* user experience. The complex alternative is to use an encyclopedia or dictionary or published ontologies to determine where in an *isA* hierarchy to put Fracking, and to identify it with all known synonyms.
2. A new quest is proposed. Dealing with a quest is similar but more complex than dealing with an issue:
 - a. Redundancy: A quest which essentially asks the same question might exist, and it might do so under a different category than that which is proposed (assuming a category or list of categories is chosen).
 - b. Categorization: Rendered simple if there is an obvious (to the council) fit between category and quest; rendered possibly complex if not.
 - c. Question Posing: here, a Quest is defined as a *well-posed question*. It is necessary to have guidelines which clearly define ways in which *well-posed* is satisfied.
 - d. Default actions: in order for the council to be able to advise on a quest which does not meet requirements as defined in this document, there needs to be a default action, a kind of “condo”-specific dictate that, in order to properly maintain order, there is a specific way to categorize quests which do not (yet) satisfy all requirements. That is suggested as compared to the need to simply reject a quest as totally out of bounds [which means that this document must define ways in which a quest (or issue) is out of bounds and not eligible to be mounted in the system. It also suggests that the condo needs policies and the portal must have affordances by which, in fact, the council can actually deny a, say, troll from bypassing advice and mounting a quest-- that might entail functionality such as this: A member submits a quest proposal. That proposal, in fact, is the basis for the quest itself; through advice and collaboration with the council, that document is refined (if needed) to a level that is acceptable. That document is then marked by the council as eligible for mounting, and the member does so. Now, that functionality stands in contrast to the notion that anyone can click a New Quest button and just take it from

there, only later to find that it is in violation of some policy and will be removed by an Admin somewhere.]

DEFINITIONS

The primary terms we use in this document.

Appeal Process

Authority

Badges

Badges represent *levels of achievement*. <more>

Condo

Variously called a *Topic Garden*, or simply a *Web Portal*; more esoterically, an *Epistemic Community* since the fundamental category of activity at a condo is *knowledge work*. In a broad sense, a condo serves as a kind of *container* for an *emerging ecosystem* composed of people, research and communication tools, digital library (mutable belief store), and the stuff of metabolisms: an economy and quests to achieve.

In a sense, that definition implies that any condo created to exist in the larger ecosystem that is a *federated global knowledge garden* must articulate its ecosystem in such a way that something the equivalent of *eHarmony*-style mappings can occur among condos.

Condo Ecosystem

Council Member

We have bandied around many *names* for council members; one approach was based on the notion of *badges* which give names, prestige, game points, and perhaps, *authority* to those individuals who become members of the Nexist Council.

A more recent innovation is to recognize the roles of all Council Members as *ecologists* working as stewards of the Condo Ecosystem.

Council Member Role

It seems to me that there is a definitional link between the concept of a *role* and the concept of *authority*. It might be that each *badge* defines a role or roles, and prescribes constraints on that role (one might say: constrains authority).

Default Behavior (outcome?)

Evidence

Federated Global Knowledge Garden

Game

Game Move

Game Points

Guild

Issue

Issue Application

Moderation

Nexist Council

Perspective

A *perspective document* is akin to an editorial document; it is a narrative which documents a collection of beliefs about issues related to a specific Quest as articulated by a specific Guild. Any guild is free to create more than one perspective, each looking at the issues through different lenses (e.g. progressive lens, conservative lens).

A key point about a perspective is that it is restricted to narrative which already exists in the game moves created by the Guild itself. A perspective may *not* introduce new information or arguments.

An interesting aspect of a perspective is that its creation can be as dynamic as desired by the Guild. For instance, a Guild might choose to spend time articulating a perspective, then create game moves to back it up; or the Perspective might grow as game moves are in progress; or, it might be crafted at the end of game play.

Quest

Quests, in one view (used here) exist in *classes*. Two classes are these:

- GetTheIssues: Seek to accumulate omni-partisan well-justified *beliefs about issues* related to a specific *context*; a *truth-seeking* mission; the goal is not *truth*, but *information*.
- GetTheSolutions: Seek to accumulate omni-partisan well-justified *beliefs about solutions* related to a collection of *issues* as collected in a GetTheIssues Quest. The goal is to support decision making.

Quest Application

Removal Process

Well-Posed Question

Universe of Discourse

Definition of Role:

Assist new Quests get started on a good path:

- Not a redundant quest.
- Properly categorizing a quest (where it goes in the issue taxonomy)
- Not producing redundant perspectives. (??what's "perspective" doing here???)
- Rephrasing of Quests
- Help to suggest possible quests from an existing Perspective
 - Yes! It seems that one approach to proposing a quest is precisely a perspective created either within a guild or by an individual member (someone who did some homework, maybe brought in some evidence, and who then wrote a scholarly perspective on some issue)

Title of Roles:

Where does the Council live?

Council is condo-specific. It is part of the governance of the condo.

Other parts of condo governance:

* Moderation, where trolling and "what can be posted" policies are enforced.

* Appeal process, where someone can appeal their case if they feel the moderation, or Council, is being implemented inappropriately, or to report that they see the TQ system is being gamed somehow.

What the Council "can do"

- Assist participant set up a Quest
- Assist participant to add an Issue
- Suggest Quest question wording.
- Suggest Quest categorization

What the Council "cannot do"

- Cannot tell people how to word their Quest.
- Deny anyone the ability to start their Quest as the person sees fit.
 - See comments about *default actions*. It seems that there are going to be trolls who need to be controlled, so a set of default actions will still be required.

How does the Council work on the Taxonomy and Topography?

How does the Council get created? election, reputation, etc.?

- Council is a Guild (with an ongoing quest, the topic of which is taking care of the Condo)
 - *If you start the Condo, you get the Condo Guild* (aka Council) by default [MS]
 - Beyond that, I would keep it very light, especially now, re specifying how that guild operates
- Bootstrap: we just install ourselves
- Over time: leveling up: badges, which are different from “reputation” since badges reflect demonstration of particular skills
- Election is a nice idea, but one entailed by gamability, popularity (which is sometimes a good thing, sometimes not)
- Initiation is another idea - you go through a process to join the Condo Guild. Not meritocracy (like many Open Source projects), and not democracy (popularity).

What is the mechanism to remove someone from the Council if abusing his/her authority?

- Strict guidelines in this document which clearly define authority and how it is abused.
 - That still begs the question: how do execute the task of removal.
 - Perhaps that task falls on what are known as Senior Nexiologists (or maybe the guild owner?)

Summary

INTERNAL CONTROVERSY

There is the issue of how this is viewed by public: *asking for permission*.

Pro Comments

JP: can't really come up with a *pro* regarding “asking for permissions”; I think, instead, in terms of *policies* which are put in place to prevent offensive, off topic, ignorant, etc. contributions at levels which are *not* curated by guilds and game mechanics. Martin is talking in terms of a *legal system*, with *juries*, *courts*, etc. As he says, *someone needs to make that final call*. I agree.

JP: Current legal system is based on *adversarial positions*: argument rather than *learning*. My view is that we are a *learning* community. A council of “elders” that provides advice -- not as a gateway -- makes more sense to me rather than letting things get out of hand, pissing contests, arguments that *the jury is rigged* -- *all the things now going wrong with the Wikipedia model*.

Con Comments

Martin’s comments: not positioning us as an oligarchy (can go with *benevolent dictator* if we want). Suggesting following current legal model.

Alternatives

Martin is proposing a model based on current legal systems.

Mark: Guilds can pose quests.

Summary

JP: Posing Quests or Issues requires a threshold level of achievement (Badge?). Below that, anyone, that is, an individual or guild, can create a proposal (think: a Quest or Issue proposal form to fill out), and work with the council. The council does not say “no” but has a way to place a really thought to be poor quest so that it’s, e.g. “unclassified” or “orphan”, but not visible in general views.

This solution entails system-wide feedback. A quest that does get posted (just as an issue) could get dinged through some commentary mechanism or even participation mechanism (e.g. no guilds take on the quest); feedback in that situation means loss of points to the entity which posed it. As a dynamic system, people’s points could go up and down over time. Badges won, Badges lost.

GetTheIssues-class Quests

Note: this is about a particular class of quests. Another class might be, e.g. GetTheSolutions

They are all about collecting omni-partisan belief systems which are well-justified by evidence. They *orbit* the space called *truth-seeking journeys*, but, explicitly, quests do not seek to identify *truth*, whatever that might be.

This means that a well-posed quest seeks issues, not answers.

Pathological Questions:

How Old Was President Kenndey when he died?

Why did the cop kill the kid?

Ideal Questions

What are the known causes of climate change?

What are the issues related to a sustainable ecosystem?

Quests should be posed in such a way (starting questions using “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” “how”) for informational gathering. The “why” questions should be avoided.

“Who” could, if not well posed, be answered by a specific name; that’s not a quest. “Who” in a well-posed quest would seek a “class” of persons capable of dealing with some issue.

Then why not simplify this process by making people pose “what” and “how” questions as quests?

That’s a reasonable starting guideline. “How”, itself, could be problematic, just like “Who”, “When” or “where”.

What, itself, can be abused. There’s no slam dunk here.

Rules for “How”: must avoid *answer-seeking* versions

e.g. how much does it cost...; how do I cook cabbage?

Try to shape a “How” question around *discovering issues*.

Rules for “What”: same as “How”, e.g. avoid “what are the names of the presidents?”

All that to say that there are metalevel questions to ask of any quest:

What are the *kinds* of issues surrounding that quest?

What are the ways in which guilds can perform research and respond to it?

Are there adequate resources available to bring into the garden to serve as evidence?

Is the quest well posed? <that’s the biggy, since it begs definition of *well posed*, which entails evidence fields for the quest itself; e.g. statistics which suggest the nature and urgency of the proposed quests’ central issue(s)>

FAQ: It make sense for the council to maintain a FAQ which enumerates issues considered as it goes along. That FAQ would be hyperlinked in the Quest (or Issue) form.

See [Logical Fallacies](#) for correcting problematic questions. Most questions would probably commit the [Begging the Question](#) fallacy. See some [examples of Begging the Question fallacies](#). Here is the [fun version of explaining Fallacies](#).

CODE OF CONDUCT

- The Nexist Council is condo-specific. It is part of the governance of the condo.
- Council members moderate where trolling and “what can be posted” policies are enforced.
- There will be an appeal process, where someone can appeal their case if they feel that the Council moderation is being implemented inappropriately, or to report that they see the TQ system is being gamed somehow.
- Council members can assist participant set up a Quest:
 - As a way to evaluate the quality of a proposed Quest, Council members can question the participant of the body of research (which should contain multiple sources) the participant’s guild can bring into TQ.
- Council members can assist participant to add an Issue.
- Council members can suggest Quest question wording, but cannot insist that people take their wording suggestions.
- Council members can suggest Quest categorization.
- Council members can deny anyone the ability to start their Quest as the person sees fit (via a judicial process).
 - See comments about *default actions*. It seems that there are going to be trolls who need to be controlled, so a set of default actions will still be required.