The following groups of questions merit some attention when considering a new collective initiative -- notably those of an international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral, intercultural and/or interfaith nature. The questions build on related articulations in papers identified in the references below. Through Mankind 2000, the author participated in the processes leading to the creation of the World Futures Studies Federation in 1973, and the production of the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential in 1976 (online since 2000) in collaboration with the near-centennial Union of International Associations. A series of papers have been contributed to futures related conferences and projects [more]. The author has also participated in a variety of "save-the-world" initiatives.

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Learnings from the past
With respect to the many honourable new initiatives to add to the number of world bodies concerned with the future of the world, such as the World Future Council:

1. Has understanding of the initiative benefitted in any way from the past history, even the recent past history, of such initiatives -- in which some of the participants may themselves have been key players?
2. Have we not been confronted with very similar initiatives before? What happened last time? Are the previous initiatives still continuing in some form? Or are the apparent similarities an illusion?
3. Does the new initiative make reference to past initiatives having the same or related ends -- whether to show how it builds upon them, or complements them, or to show how it is avoiding the errors previously made?
4. Why have those who select themselves into such groups not been more successful in the past? Are the learnings they bring from such experiences to the articulation of the new strategy of greater significance than the assumptions they bring about what they have failed to learn?
5. What is the insight that is encouraging those undertaking the initiative to believe that they have the key to success in the future?

Naming the challenge
1. Reports on such initiatives tend to focus on the events with which they were associated, the key participants, the publications, the projects, the recognition accorded to them by mainstream authorities. Why is so little mention made of what went wrong and how mistakes might be remedied -- as in any healthy experiment, whether in cooking, music-making, gardening or in a scientific laboratory? Or is the cause of failure too awful to name, or too intimately associated with the characters of those involved to be mentioned in polite society?
2. Have save-the-world initiatives got into the habit of avoiding reference to the nature of the dynamics -- whether between factions or personalities -- which undermine their potential for success? Why is such analysis left to outsiders, who may not necessarily wish them well?
3. To what extent is the initiative based on an unstated compact amongst participants: "I'll acclaim you as a 100% good-guy if you'll acclaim me as a 100% good-guy -- I will not mention how you tend to inhibit the success of such collaborative initiatives, if you avoid mentioning how I tend to inhibit the success of such initiatives"?
4. In order to sustain the potential for such an initiative, is it vital to deny the possibility of failure? And to reject comparison with any previous initiative -- or with other existing initiatives with which they might more fruitfully collaborate?
5. To what extent is the power-mongering and influence-peddling associated with launching the initiative of the same nature as that used by those undertaking initiatives that it seeks to counterbalance and constrain?
6. Given the existence of seemingly similar initiatives in the past, often of only modest success, is the tendency to adopt the same structural pattern and dynamic not a matter of concern? Is it possible that there may be something inherently problematic in the formula itself, if not in the unquestioning use of it?
7. Why might some people continue to favour use of that same formula given its propensity for failure? Does using what amounts to the same medium effectively guarantee the same message -- and the same benefits to those involved?

**Calls for self-awareness**

1. In collectively calling for "new thinking", "new paradigms", and "alternative approaches", does the initiative effectively address the need to apply that call to its own processes?
2. Is it not the case that even amongst the most wonderful people, some have a marked tendency to:
   - speak excessively or inappropriately, notably as keynote speakers?
   - monopolize any dialogue situation, or avoid those situations where their views are not allowed to predominate?
   - have considerable difficulty in hearing and integrating useful perspectives from outside their field of concern?
   - polarize dialogue in order to assert their preferences and to devalue, marginalize and stigmatize complementary concerns that they perceive as threatening?
   - promote preferentially other initiatives with which they are personally associated?
   - covertly seek funding for their own initiatives?
   - seek to affirm, confirm and promote their own status, possibly irrespective of the status of others or of the new initiative?
   - simply enjoy the travel opportunities offered by the initiative and the pleasure of the encounters they offer?
3. Does the initiative effectively attract "professional do-gooders" who, like those classically described as the "development set", always benefit disproportionately from involvement in such initiatives -- irrespective of the benefits derived from it by those for whom it was purportedly conceived?
4. As a measure of their action out of a new paradigm, what constraints are participants in the new initiative endeavouring to impose on their own behaviour, or is it expected that it is others who should be required to make the necessary sacrifices for the project to succeed?
5. In calling for transparency, and in deploring the secret agendas and conflicts of interest widely associated with conventional decision-making, does the initiative openly acknowledge the interest groups supportive of its agenda?
6. Is any association of key participants with particular belief systems, and various semi-secret societies, appropriately acknowledged, or is avoidance of such issues considered acceptable and irrelevant to the outcome of the undertaking -- despite the suspicion it now arouses in a society with increasing reason to question such lack of transparency?
7. To what extent is any individual (or collective) pattern of denial acknowledged amongst participants in the initiative -- to the point of encouraging dysfunctional groupthink?

"**Good guys" vs **Bad guys"

1. If those who select themselves into the initiative explicitly portray themselves as the wisest and best of humanity, does that not effectively define and stigmatize the rest of humanity as lacking in these finer qualities?
2. To what extent is the proposed initiative an example of "good-guy-itis"? Is it a case of the "good guys" who care versus the "bad guys" who do not? With nothing "bad" in the "good guys" and nothing "good" in the "bad guys"?
3. How good are the good guys? If they have failings like other humans, how are they recognized in relation to the initiative? Or can they be politely ignored? Or are good guys assumed to be without "shadows"?
4. How is it that so many of the "bad guys" are perceived as "good" people by their own communities? How is it that some of these purportedly "bad guys":
   - may start "good guy" foundations and projects, seemingly without any intention of tax avoidance or self-aggrandizement?
   - may take up what are hailed as "good guy" initiatives on their retirement (or in preparation for their "maker")?
Do such considerations affect evaluation of the resources made available to the initiative? How "bad" do "bad guys" have to be before their funding is unacceptable? To what extent should the initiative offer a process through which "bad guys" can redeem themselves in the eyes of others?
5. If those associated with the initiative claim to represent the "good", for the good of all, are those who have reservations about the initiative necessarily part of the problem, rather than of the solution? Another case of "either you are with us, or against us"?

**Appropriate assessment**

1. How are the claims of the representativity of the participants in the initiative to be evaluated? Or of their support?
2. To what extent is the support of a purely token nature? Or possibly conditional, as in modern democratic processes ensured through the generosity of backers who expect due return on their investment?
3. Given the value of the association of the key participants with other complementary initiatives, do such cross-linking relationships work to the benefit of the new initiative -- or do they serve to drain scarce resources from it (or to it)?
4. From where does the initiative draw its resources, at whose expense, and why? Who will subsequently -- as time goes by --
deprive the initiative of its resources, and why?
5. If conventional failings are assumed not to apply to the new initiative and its members, how is this to be proven or -- despite the hard lessons, now widely learnt, concerning the duplicity of the most eminent and respectable authorities in many sectors -- is it still a case of "just trust us" and "we know best"?
6. In a period when value manipulation is becoming the norm, how are those claiming to represent particular values to demonstrate that they are not themselves manipulating values in ways they do not declare? Should this be a concern for any new initiative?
7. In highlighting the vital key values it claims to uphold, will the initiative make it possible to determine whether it does more than exploit the popular appeal of those values to enhance its own image -- as so many initiatives have done in vainly appealing for peace in a world increasingly embroiled in violence?

Strategic merit
1. Are such initiatives a fruitful example of hope-mongering to counter-balance the tendency to doom-mongering? But just as there is both manipulation and truth to doom-mongering, is there not both truth and manipulation to hope-mongering?
2. In systemic terms, how is it possible to account for the multitude of uncoordinated, unrelated, and even mutually unknown, save-the-world initiatives -- faced with the worsening conditions, instigated by humanity, which they all claim to address?
3. Is the new initiative to be understood as a panacea? A beacon of hope where all others have failed? Or as a short-sighted undertaking that will take its place with others struggling to fulfill the hopes they inspired?
4. Should any new initiative to save the world be welcomed, if it can attract the resources to act? Irrespective of its ability to learn from the past? Or its destabilization of initiatives with which it competes for resources in the present? Or are there some valuable constraints that can usefully be inspired by past experiments?
5. Why does the emphasis on cooperation in such contexts disguise the extent to which the initiative itself is in direct competition with other initiatives which it may destabilize, undermine or supercede?
6. If the process of undertaking such an initiative is itself valuable, irrespective of the outcome, why do so many change agents and social pioneers die in circumstances that history subsequently deplores?
7. What are the global strategic implications of the "unsaid", and is the initiative failing to address them through reinforcing any collective pattern of denial?

Image and metaphorical framing
1. Has the initiative been adequately envisaged to respond to the complexity of the challenges and the probable higher dimensionality required of any response -- or is it framed in the expectation that an appropriate shift in the pattern of belief may well be all that is required?
2. Could the initiative be best understood as a spaceship (a "knowship"), with its own community, travelling on its own journey through the knowledge space of the information society, picking up resources, and planting colonies, as it may?
3. Do those involved believe themselves to be "Knights in Shining Armour", gathering to slay the "Dragon" threatening their World Community -- or as "Warriors of Light" engaged in battle with the "Dark Force"? To what extent should the initiative then be understood as a "crusade" or a "fortress" -- rather than simply as a gated conceptual community?
4. How does the initiative distinguish itself from the multitude of distinguished "think tanks" that may themselves be constrained by an inappropriate root metaphor? [more]
5. If such social darwinism is the underlying message in the emergence of the new initiative, what is to be expected of the outcomes of the new initiative for those for whose benefit it was purportedly designed?
6. To what extent do those undertaking the initiative find themselves trapped by the nature of their very mindsets in patterns of the past -- in the light of the classic insight: "A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped" (Geoffrey Vickers (Freedom in a rocking boat: changing values in an unstable society, 1970))
7. By what metaphor will the future frame the fundamental flaw in the response of the best and the brightest, gathered by the initiative, in response to the current situation of planetary society?

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