

Long Term Vision for The School for the Future

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I've written this short document to help instructors, students, partners, and extended community understand better the originating intention behind the School and where I would like it to go. I hope that this summary gives instructors some insight into how they can best craft their courses so as to be most supportive of the School's long term vision and students some context so that they can both decide whether they would like to attend the School and envision which specific projects they would like to create while studying at the School.

First, I started the School because it seemed to me the right combination of my interests, abilities, and the likely needs in the world such that the School would be the way in which I could have the most positive impact on the future. The school is specifically responding to three current and likely future social needs/opportunities:

1. In the coming decades, environmental destabilization may significantly disrupt physical resource distribution and political decision making at all scales.
2. Automation increases due to improvements in robotics and application specific artificial intelligence may eliminate many millions of jobs faster than they can be replaced.
3. New digital infrastructures (e.g. blockchain), decision making and resource allocation tools (running on sensors + big data + AI), and affordable manufacturing equipment (e.g. 3D printers) may support the emergence of new forms of governance and economy which are more effective in some respects than current systems (e.g. Opt-in/Opt-out semi-digital "nations" replacing land-based, representative democracies and commons economies replacing global capitalism).
4. Increased risks from easily accessible powerful technology, e.g. pandemics from gene editing, digital infrastructural attacks, etc.

The School is intended to mitigate these risks and take advantage of the opportunity by training people to:

1. Survive and thrive in a more chaotic world by learning adaptive, broadly entrepreneurial skills.
2. Create new worlds that are better for themselves and others than the worlds they currently live in and which are more antifragile and incorruptible, i.e. both more secure against being reabsorbed into aggressive, strategic inferior systems and better at outcompeting them.

If we are seeing serious cracks forming in how things work now, then there is a profound opportunity for many people to learn the skills needed to create better worlds. If these risks and opportunities do not play out, if those cracks are not in fact forming, then we still have an opportunity to give people the skills to create better futures, the stakes will just be lower, happily, and the task will be more difficult, unfortunately.

However, I am not neutral about what the School ought to contribute to specifically. These foundational intentions for the School's long term impact include:

1. Participatory Societies which serve the interests of those who participate in them while supporting other societies' abilities to support the interests of their own participants. Here, the model is an ecosystem of collaborative societies built up of collaborative, individual participants.
2. Life-supporting Industries that support biological diversity and healthy ecosystems. For example, specific industries using manufacturable, biological raw materials such as industrially produced fungus and animal muscle and collaborating to create relationships that model the relationships between plants and animals in healthy ecosystems.
3. Ever-increasing Empathy so that we ground our concrete goals in the desire to create as much positive experience in the future as possible, taking into account the experiences of current and future conscious beings, regardless of their relations to us.

The School is meant to both model these intentions in response to the risks and opportunity named above and to support the creation of other high-leverage movements and organizations that do the same.

Stage 1: The School succeeds as a for-profit, commons-building, participatory organization providing the highest quality, highest impact, project-based training in entrepreneurship, activism, and self-transformation. These three learning categories - entrepreneurship, activism, and self-transformation - were chosen because they, more than any others, when taught as facets of one whole discipline in a single learning community, give people the greatest leverage to change systems and create new ones. Along the way, the School will be a model for others on creating commons-building, participatory businesses. The school is created as a cooperative-inspired entity with investors, the founder, staff, instructors, and students are all eligible for equity share and governance rights. Students are incentivized to begin creating a commons library of student-created courses to add value to the community.

Stage 2: The School becomes an incubator in addition to an educational institute. Early stage activist, entrepreneurial, and self-transformation projects launched by teams of students, instructors, staff, and partners, will be supported by the School. The School is in turn supported by revenue from equity in entrepreneurial projects and from the expanded network of friends generated by other projects.

Stage 3: The School adds a research component to its mission, creating in-depth research reports on 1. how the School can best to achieve the greatest positive impact, 2. what skills current and future students need to have the biggest positive impact, and 3. how individuals in general can have the biggest positive impact. The School hires individuals to join this altruistic think/do tank full or part-time. It also contracts with other individuals, communities, and institutions to offer consulting along these lines.

Stage 4: The School uses the profit from its online courses to build, and subsidize the tuition for students to attend, a residential campus. The residential campus will give students the opportunity to immerse themselves more fully in a community of learning centered on building businesses and movements for beneficial world transformation/creation. The campus will be physically beautiful, and model life-supporting infrastructure and industrial systems.

Stage 5: The School expands its educational offerings beyond its core courses in effective activism, entrepreneurship, and self-transformation to include courses that train high leverage, domain/industry-specific applications which support the foundational mission of inquiring into and teaching how to bring the most benefit into the future. For example, the School will begin teaching engineering, though only in the context of how to bring concrete cradle-cradle designs into modern industrial production systems and it will teach computer science, biology, and neuroscience in order to teach students the necessary skills to build tools for richer communication between humans, other animals, and plants.

Stage 6: The School builds a network of residential campuses around the world. These campuses will be organized as a confederacy, with each campus held to the foundational intentions of the organization as a whole while offering courses that are especially relevant to the particular desires of those attending and the surrounding local communities. If local economic destabilization becomes significant these campuses will also draw on the financial resources of the entire network to provide some measure of material support to the local populations. This network of campuses will provide a model for successful large scale, participatory governance.

Stage 7: The school transitions the residential campuses to something more like villages centered around learning and global benefit-providing. These would be places where students, staff, their families, and some other local people live together to support the creation of the many movements and organizations born from the School, which can have larger impact than previous projects because of the continual, sustained investment by these communities. The federated villages model new forms of distributed governance, supported by digital infrastructures.

Even if the School is wildly successful along the lines laid out here, its primary impact will come from the many organizations and movements built by its students. Therefore, it will be very important for the School - through collaboration between staff, instructors, students, and extended community - to actively constrain and enable student projects so that they best support the School's foundational intentions.

If you have questions about the long term goals of the School, or would like to participate, please contact us.