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Readers’ Guide: Global Redesign Initiative
www.umb.edu/gri

Section by Section Commentary
Five Steps
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This section of website contains verbatim extracts from the report of the Global Redesign project along with interpreted commentary by the Readers' Guide author. At the bottom of all the web pages is an invitation to engage with the relevant issues using a moderated commentary option.

The Global Redesign Initiative report, Everybody’s Business: Strengthening International Cooperation in a More Interdependent World, was launched in Doha, Qatar in late 2009. This report is cited in the website as “GRI”. The page references in the Readers Guide follow the text of the report of the project, Everybody’s Business. This is the version that is provided on World Economic Forum’s Global Redesign Initiative website.


The two versions of the text have slightly different layouts, slightly different presentations of the taskforce reports and therefore different paginations.

Five Steps: Introduction

The five steps are each different in character. The first focuses on a conceptual transformation in thinking about global governance; the second defines the relative importance of the state and non-state actors in international governance; the third and fourth steps are programmatic actions which demonstrate that the proposed new system would work better than the current system; and the fifth is an appeal for a new morality in business. The editors of Everyone’s Business consider that “these five steps constitute a blueprint for renovating and rejuvenating international cooperation in an era of increasingly complex interdependence.”

Step One

Redefine the international system as constituting a wider, multifaceted system of global cooperation in which intergovernmental legal frameworks and institutions are embedded as a core, but not the sole and sometimes not the most crucial, component.

Step Two

Strengthen the state-based part of the system where its rules and capacities are inadequate, while expanding the geometry of cooperation to capitalize on the wider availability of non-state expertise and resources.

Step Three

Deploying this augmented institutional geometry in a results-oriented push to accelerate progress on individual priority challenges.

Step Four

Undertake similarly practical, targeted initiatives to strengthen legitimacy, participation and accountability in the state-based core of the system.

Step Five

Expand the constituency for international cooperation by cultivating a shift in values within societies and professions grounded in a deeper appreciation of the implications of global interdependence for the achievement of their objectives.

1. GRI, introduction, pg 12
Step One: Redefinition

pg. 24 : Redefine the international system as constituting a wider, multifaceted system of global cooperation in which intergovernmental legal frameworks and institutions are embedded as a core, but not the sole and sometimes not the most crucial, component.

Readers' Guide Comment on “intergovernmental legal frameworks and institutions are embedded as a core, but not the sole and sometimes not the most crucial, component”

This aspect of the ‘redefinition’ of the international system implies that the outcome of WEF’s new ‘geometry of cooperation’ should be recognized as superseding intergovernmental agreements. This would also mean that some non-state institutions could, in some undefined manner, be more important than official intergovernmental organizations.

There is, of course, precedence for this. The Kimberley Process is a multi-stakeholder governance system that is expected to prevent conflict diamonds from reaching the international market. It involves private firms, African mining states, international civil society and intergovernmental organizations in a certification system for all diamonds in international trade. The major OECD countries and diamond exporting countries have arranged for the UN to cede oversight of conflict diamonds to the Kimberley Process. However, the Kimberly Process is now on rocky grounds, as some of the ‘cooperating’ states and firms tolerate or support the flow of conflict resources, undermining the legitimacy of this effort.

As with many GRI recommendations, there are functioning precedents on a small or sector scale that WEF proposes to generalize to the wider international arena. Some of these precedents however will not add heightened legitimacy, as they are perceived by key constituencies to be quite inadequate instruments.

At the WTO, the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement gives the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) de jure authority to develop product standards which are to be used by governments in setting their own domestic product import standards. ¹ The unusual feature here is that the ISO is, at its core, a body of corporate executives whose recommendations on specific product groups are largely representative of the consensus view of the dominant firms in that particular sector. In this sense, a private industry-led body sets product standards and the international system (WTO) accepts the outcome as binding on member governments.

Related Ideas: Step One and Two; Opt-in-Opt-outism; new governing actors; Step Four

Step One: Limitations of Universal Frameworks

pg. 18: This [the wider focus and the application of multiple tools] is both because a larger cast of politically influential states makes it harder to attain multilateral agreement on universal frameworks, and because private and other civil society resources are needed to match the scale of many global challenges. While new international laws and institutions are often desirable – and indeed many have been proposed as part of this process – they are not always essential for major progress to be made.

Readers' Guide Comment on “because a larger cast of politically influential states”

GRI’s Step One explains the difficulty of creating new international standards by citing the diversity of nation-state power, particularly the diversification of power to Southern governments. The assumption here is that the breakdown of consensus on new international standards is not from rigid, old power positions of OECD countries or that a strong MNC community prefers that there are not rules and regulations that might impact its management of globalization.

GRI needs a strong rationale for explaining inaction on universal standards by nation-states in order to make its case for a "new geography of cooperation." Only if the inaction on universal frameworks is seen as out of reach by the international system, can WEF effectively make the claim that some new combination of governing Actors is necessary to make significant improvements on universal concerns?

At its core, WEF is advocating against the organization of international affairs based on the progressive development of universally recognized frameworks. In short, its position might be summarized as:

Universal frameworks out, ad hoc private sector and NGO frameworks in;

Inter-governmentally adopted standards out, self-selection of international standards in;

Effective implementation by international organizations and governments out, corporate opt-in/opt-out implementation systems in; and

Progress on international conventions out, self-enforcing systems in.

Readers' Guide Comment on “While new international laws and institutions are often desirable – and indeed many have been proposed as part of this process”

This is not a factually accurate statement. In the 450 pages of recommendations, the number of new international laws recommended is less than a dozen; the number of new IGOs recommended is one (for an ocean Interpol). What GRI mostly proposes are ad hoc multi-stakeholder governance arrangements without legally binding frameworks.

Related Ideas: Step One and Two; Opt-in-Opt-Outism; multi-stakeholder governance; Readers Guide: concluding observations
Step One: G20: Top-Down

The G20 is an important new instrument, but as a top-down mechanism it alone is not sufficient to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of the international system.

Readers' Guide Comment on “as a top-down mechanism it alone is not sufficient”

WEF seems to acknowledge in this recommendation that its own goals of improved effectiveness and enhanced legitimacy are not likely to work without a democratic component; yet it is unwilling to recommend any new form of international democracy.

The international elite know that the G7/G8 has not been acting as an effective global leadership body. The GRI recommendation is intended to improve the G20’s future leadership ability by addressing a communication gap between the G20 and the other 175 countries. GRI recommends that the chairs of the G20 meet regularly other governments during an ECOSOC session. However, by the UN Charter, ECOSOC does not have effective authority over even the specialized agencies, let alone other governments. How this annual visit by G20 leaders is going to address the democratic deficit or increase the effectiveness of the UN system remains unclear.

Related Ideas: Step One and Two; G20 global leaders; Fixes to the G20
Step Two: Strengthen UN Rule-Making and Capacities

pg. 24: Strengthen the state-based part of the system where its rules and capacities are inadequate...

Readers’ Guide Comment on “strengthen the state-based part of the system where its rules ... are inadequate”

It is clearly necessary to strengthen the adequacy and scope of rule-making activities by nation-states and the UN system. Rule-making is needed in the financial sector, in the environmental sector, in the social sector, and in about every sector one can name. GRI’s endorsement of new rule-making is welcome. However, the text following Step Two does not feature any specific recommendations for how to enhance the nation-state role in global rule-making in any field.

WEF chose not to endorse calls made by other international leaders for an Economic Security Council, for new international conventions on the right to information, ¹ for General Assembly standards for corporate behavior, or for stronger rules on the trade of military technologies.

One way to understand this contradiction is that GRI wants to appeal to the leaders of nation-states for support for its over-all proposals, but remains fundamentally opposed to state-led rule-making, as this would infringe on the potential space for the corporate-dominated, multi-stakeholder governance system. In short, the principle articulated in Step One -- the primacy of the new ‘geometry of cooperation’ over the legally binding conventions -- takes precedence in practice to the goals of Step Two -- a renewed effort for state-based rule-making in the international arena.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “strengthen the state-based part of the system where its capacities ... are inadequate”

It is necessary to rejuvenate the organizational capacities of every part of the UN System. The current disconnect between the stated objectives for organizations in the UN system (e.g. “Health for all by 2000,” ² “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” ³) and the institutional resources available is extreme (e.g. WHO staffing has been dramatically reduced in the past decade and the UN Security Council staff generally has one or two people per crisis area). While the GRI study acknowledges the weakness of organizational capacities in Step Two, it makes significant organizational recommendations for the only for the international finance organizations (IMF and regional development banks) and the employment stability functions of ILO.

Again, it seems that this element of Step Two is designed to attract the support of heads of UN agencies and those who support the UN system than to seriously recommend the resources, the structural skills, or the staffing needed to make the state-based international organizational system an effective one.

In this sense also, the first part of Step Two -- a call to strengthen of the organizational capacities of the UN system -- is also secondary in WEF’s view in the second part of Step Two – to involve non-state actors in the delivery of international services.

Related Ideas: Step One and Two; a public-private UN system; fixing the UN system; Readers Guide : concluding observations
1. Based on Rio Principle 10 and the regional Aarhus Convention. Rio Principle 10 states in part “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities”. For additional information on of the Aarhus Convention (the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters), see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/aarhus/

2. The World Health Organization’s 1990s motto.

3. United nations Charter, First line of the Preamble, 1945
Step Two: Strengthen UN with Non-State Resources

pg. 24: Strengthen the state-based part of the system . . . while expanding the geometry of cooperation to capitalize on the wider availability of non-state expertise and resources

Readers' Guide Comment on “geometry of cooperation”

One of the key elements of the ‘new geometry of cooperation’ is the plan to move some components of the de facto global governance system into the official system. This incorporation of part of the corporate-centered system into the UN system should, from a GRI perspective, strengthen both the legitimacy of the particular de facto practice and enhance the legitimacy of the UN system.

For WEF, this often means identifying those ad hoc multi-stakeholder arrangements currently operating outside the formal system and conceiving ways to formalize them within the official system. There are two distinct pathways for this transformation. In the first instance, GRI identifies some policy areas that are currently inside the formal system and recommends that it would be more effective for the ‘new geometry of cooperation’ to take over the task. For example, it recommends that, as the formal UN system has proved incapable of managing failed states, a multi-stakeholder donor-state partnership be put in charge. Also it proposes to move arrangements that are primarily governed now in the ad hoc governance system under the UN umbrella.

The expectation is that through a public-private partnership, the legitimacy of the current corporate-led governance program will be enhanced.

Readers' Guide' Comment on “non-state expertise and resources”

‘Non-state’ is used in Everybody’s Business to refer to both multinational corporations (MNCs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). Sometimes the ‘non-state’ terminology is used where the meaning is clearly one category of organization and not the other. Here, the phrase is most clearly referring to the use of “wider availability of non-state [MNC] expertise and resources.” For the most part, civil society organizations cannot ‘donate’ staff or resources to the UN system. As much as they might like to, they simply do have financial backbone to loan out professional expertise or resources for extended period of time. However, MNCs, if they perceive a good business opportunity, can opt to work with and through UN system bodies to address matters of ‘common interest’.

Most tasks assigned to UN system bodies are seriously underfunded and understaffed. Missing from the GRI analysis is what happens to the delivery of international governance services that do not attract interest from private firms or align with the priorities of CSOs. One possibility is that nation-states, private foundations and donors increase their contributions to make up the short fall. Another possibility is that some form of international taxation is put in place to fund global public needs and goods. As both of these options are not likely at the moment, the GRI proposal to use non-state (principally MNC) expertise and resources and its non-support for an international taxation system would act to force the UN system into more public-private partnerships to meet obligations assigned to the international system.

At the national level, one expects that the ‘neutral’ state agencies will balance in some fashion the demands between the commercial sector and wider public concerns. If the strengthening of the organizational capacities of the UN system is predicated on part-time efforts by MNCs and CSOs, then it cannot be expected to provide an analogous balancing function at the international level.
Related Ideas: Step One and Two; New governing actors; constituencies; Opt-in-Opt-outism; United Nations; fix for UN
Step Three: Push for Results

pg. 29: Deploying this augmented institutional geometry in a results-oriented push to accelerate progress on individual priority challenges

Readers' Guide Comment on “individual priority challenges”

WEF’s Step Three has two directives. First, use the augmented institutional geometry in certain sectors (e.g. education and health) to gain experience with the multi-stakeholder governance system. Second, use the success stories from these sector experiments to gain wider acceptance for the new over-arching governance model.

There is a functional chasm between WEF’s concept of augmented institutional geometry and the delivery of progress on individual problems. There is no requirement that the non-state Actors who ‘make policy’ carry out the governance decision. They are invited to participate in the augmented institutional governance arrangement but not obligated to implement the outcome of the process. For WEF, that translates into “accelerate[d] progress” and action on the part of the new international system. There is no discussion of the budgets, staff, time tables, program targets, or project evaluations needed to implement the results of an augmented institutional geometry in order for it to deliver the desired policy outcomes.

WEF’s Step Three does not explain how the augmented institutional geometry will deal with those who may be quite happy with the status quo or would prefer an alternative sector policy. It may be the case that WEF presumes that enough ‘good’ Actors can prevent ‘bad’ Actors from dominating a given market or region. On the other hand, this might be another example of the GRI avoiding addressing public regulation of globalization, even if it means an ineffective implementation of the outcome of a multi-stakeholder process.

Related Ideas: Steps Three and Four; loss of legitimacy; responsibilities of non-state actors; fear of enforcement
Step Three: New Tools

pg. 29: By appreciating more fully the range of tools at its disposal to advance progress, the international community will be in a better position to move forward even if its efforts to create new multilateral frameworks falter or take longer than anticipated. This lesson has particular relevance today given the slow pace of such multilateral processes as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), WTO trade and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) renewal negotiations.

Readers' Guide Comment on “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), WTO trade and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) renewal negotiations”

WEF argues that its new governance approach can resolve nuclear proliferation, trade conflicts, and climate change discord without governmental agreements. All three areas encompass core elements of traditional state functions -- military security, economic growth, and risk management. Additionally, all of the cited negotiations are ones in which the OECD countries have significant differences between themselves, not to mention a disinclination to address concerns of non-nuclear states, least developed exporters, or low lying countries. The GRI makes this major recommendation for multi-stakeholder governance without presenting any evidence that a more effective or more legitimate outcome would result.

As a starting point, WEF could have provided an indication of what configuration of governing Actors could solve non-proliferation, establish a Doha development trade regime, or mitigate CO2E emissions in a more effective and legitimate manner than the traditional, intergovernmental negotiation process, as difficult as this is. WEF’s case would be stronger if the Davos meeting following the release of Everyone’s Business had produced a solution that the rest of the Davos participants would commit to implement in order to address even one of these global challenges.

Related Ideas: Step Three and Four; Step One
Step Four: Legitimacy

pg. 24: Undertake similarly practical, targeted initiatives to strengthen legitimacy, participation and accountability in the state-based core of the system

Readers' Guide Comment on “state-based core of the system”

Not only is this step inconsistent with Step One, it is internally inconsistent as well.

GRI’s recommendation is to strengthen legitimacy in the state arena, which WEF, in this step, takes as the ‘core of the system.’ However, the state cannot be both the ‘core of the system’ (Step Three) and ‘not the sole and sometimes not the crucial core component’ (Step One).

Moreover, WEF advocates the expansion of participation, accountability, and legitimacy in the state system in the same sentence that it advocates for “…embedding the G20 in a manner that achieves both greater legitimacy and effectiveness for the system as a whole.” These two goals, while not antithetical, do stand in opposition to one another. The G20 is an elite body of powerful states that, if it were to assume a role of power and authority in the international system that WEF envisions, would presumably best serve the constituents of its member states. This would erode the legitimacy and accountability of the international system for citizens living outside of G20 states, as they would not be represented in this powerful governing council.

Readers' Guide Comment on “accountability in the state-based core of the system”

The concept of ‘accountability’ is nowhere given a definition or any new institutional form. It is also used only in reference to the state-based accountability, not to accountability for the outcomes of the ‘geography of cooperation’ or in relation to accountability for impacts of globalization or of individual multinational corporations. This is probably not an oversight. One advantage of WEF’s ‘geography of cooperation’ concept and of its multi-stakeholder governance proposals is that in both concepts, responsibility is so diffused that it is difficult, if not impossible, to hold anyone responsible, let alone accountable, whatever that means.

Related Ideas: Step Three and Four; Step One; Step Two; non-state Actor responsibilities
pg. 33: Practical, results-oriented ways are also needed to make the principal international institutions more representative of and accountable to our more interdependent, bottom-up world. . . . based on the many views expressed over the course of the Global Redesign process, including particularly the country hearings in Switzerland and Singapore, there are three additional areas that require special attention if the multilateral system is to retain the confidence of the international community: updating voting structures, consulting more directly with citizens and their elected parliamentary representatives, and embedding the G20 in a manner that achieves both greater legitimacy and effectiveness for the system as a whole.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “bottom up world”

While the initial part of the text argues for increased “consult[ation] with citizens and their elected parliamentary representatives,” the recommended actions deal only with increased consultation for parliamentarians. Invoking ‘citizens,’ the ‘people,’ and the ‘bottom-up world’ is disingenuous, as there are no GRI proposals that focus explicitly on reducing the democratic deficit in international relations.

The use of the phrase ‘bottom-up world’ invites attention away from international elites. The GRI report seems to use this phrase principally to discredit the intergovernmental UN system as not ‘representative of and accountable.’ It does not mean that WEF wants to invite to the governance table the billions of people who live on a dollar a day.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “updating voting structures”

WEF’s recommendations for ‘updating voting structures’ apply in practice only to the international financial institutions (e.g. IMF, regional development banks, World Bank). They do not refer to decision-making processes in any other intergovernmental social, cultural, health, trade, or ecological organization. The voting structures in these bodies, too, could use an updated voting structure, say one that reflected relative population size or that used majority voting for normal organizational decisions or that treated democratically elected states differently from authoritarian states. Consideration of such new voting structures could act to spark a debate on democracy at the international level. That is not something that is a major goal of the GRI process (see other references below).

Readers’ Guide Comment on “consulting more directly with citizens and their elected parliamentary representatives”

If one wanted to address ‘representative of and accountable’ decision-making on the international level, one ought to tackle the disproportionate power of the international financial institutions (IFIs) and WTO structures over the rest of the universal membership UN system organizations, the imbalance in voting structures in the Security Council, and obstacles to accountability in ministries of foreign affairs and state departments. Instead of addressing these longstanding concerns, 1 WEF concludes its call for greater bottom-up engagement with the world by proposing that the elite G20 group be given greater legitimacy.

The GRI process missed an excellent opportunity to demonstrate how to consult more directly with citizens and their elected representatives when it prepared its proposals for a new global governance system. WEF could have hosted panels to exchange ideas with the public in various cities around the world, as typically done by UN-
sponsored commissions for the past 40 years, and it could have posted a draft version of its recommendations on WEF’s website for comment, as is routinely done by government departments in a public comment period. The inconsistency between the GRI’s recommendation for enhanced public participation and its own practice seriously undermines the creditability of its position.

Related Ideas: Step Three and Four; democracy; missing issue; G20; global leaders; fixes to the G20; managing financial globalization; rules, procedures and culture

Step Four: Challenges to UN System

pg. 24: The second legitimacy challenge [the first was rebalancing voting strengthen in the IFIs] was to international institutions posed by the transformation of the international community in recent decades relates to changes among their ultimate stakeholders: people... international organizations would appear to be even more implicated by this general trend [of new demands on institutions to explain and account for their strategies and performance] than national governments, businesses, universities, NGOs or religious organizations

Readers' Guide Comment on “international organizations would appear even more implicated by this general trend”

A major concern of the overall GRI report is the legitimacy of the entire international system. Here it is asserted without any evidence that international organizations suffer from a greater lack of legitimacy than that of multinational corporations, international banks, or national militaries. With MNCs now exercising very significant international economic, social, and environmental power, it is a bit odd that WEF asserts that IGOs are more implicated in the failure to deliver international goods and services. One explanation is that is an effort to draw attention away from the illegitimacy of globalization as a phenomenon.

Nowhere does Everybody's Business examine the potential legitimacy challenges to the governance of MNCs, international banks, and military forces. There is significant work done on the international aspects of corporate governance (the recommendation that global boards need to be regionally balanced), on too-big-too-fail financial institutions (the recommendations from the Financial Stability Board), and on demilitarizing international relations (the recommendation on the work of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute).

Everybody's Business also glosses over the de-funding of nation-state bodies by corporate tax avoidance strategies. These practices significantly cut tax payments to national authorities and serve to limit the financial resources available for Official Development Assistance (ODA) and to the multilateral system. In this sense, international corporate tax avoidance practices greatly add to the inability of the international system to provide appropriate social service programs in developing countries and to perceptions that the IGOs are not delivering the necessary support in various part of the world.

Related Ideas: Steps Three and Four; UN and private, non-state world; public-private UN; Tool Two
Step Four: Participation

pg. 24: There are two concrete steps that could be taken to lessen this distance in the state-based core of the international system: harnessing the potential of social media to expand consultations with and accountability to citizens; and establishing a UN consultative body for parliamentarians. These could significantly strengthen citizen participation and accountability within the system without diluting its essential governance characteristic as a framework in which decisions are made exclusively by sovereign states. . . . The UN system should regard the establishment of such a body, perhaps set up in cooperation with the Interparliamentary Union, not only as a necessary means for advancing democratic participation and accountability in a more bottom-up world but also as an opportunity for building stronger political constituencies around the world for the international cooperation and governance it seeks to deliver.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “harnessing the potential of social media to expand consultations with . . . citizens”

Social media can be used to expand consultation with a broader range of public organizations and concerned individuals. Two perquisites are necessary – a web-based arrangement to invite consultations on a proposal in a timely manner and an organization willing (or obligated) to take these comments into consideration. In the Global Redesign Initiative project, WEF did neither. No drafts of its proposals were posted for comments before their release; no voluntary commitment was made by WEF to incorporate public comments in any form.

This is in line with GRI’s governance proposal, called here opt-in-opt-outism, where the key participants decide who they want to be part of their multi-stakeholder governance process and who they do not.

Readers' Guide Comment on “UN consultative body for parliamentarians”

As the paper calls for ‘practical, results-oriented’ solutions, it is notable that there is no discussion of how parliaments would select their international representatives. This is problematic in parliamentary majority governments, coalition parliamentary governments, and checks-and-balances congresses. In parliamentary democracies, where the control of parliament translates into control of governmental and foreign affairs, a parliamentary UN body would only provide two votes for the prevailing domestic party in power – one cast on behalf of the minister of foreign affairs and the second cast on behalf of the prime minister as head of the dominant parliamentary party. In coalition governments and in congresses, a partisan selection process would probably send a proportional, balanced number of opposing voices, effectively cancelling out any possibility for meaningful decision-making. In all of these cases, it is unclear how these recommendations would result in a more practical or a more effective global governance system.

Related Ideas: Steps Three and Four; UN and private, non-state world; public-private UN; democracy; missing issue; crowdsourcing
Step Five: Shift in Values

pg. 12: Expand the constituency for international cooperation by cultivating a shift in values within societies and professions grounded in a deeper appreciation of the implications of global interdependence for the achievement of their objectives

Readers’ Guide Comment on “shift in values within societies” and “their objectives”

As a practical matter, Step Five is undermined by these two quite ambiguous concepts.

The phrase, "a shift in values," presumes that there is clarity about which are the ‘new’ values and which are the ‘old’. The text provides none. In other sections of Everybody’s Business, the ‘old’ values are identified as those that are state-centric, but, taken in this context as the next step to a better world, that identification is not particularly insightful.

The report does include a comparatively lengthy explanation of the ‘new’ values: these are the values "grounded in a deeper appreciation of the implications of global interdependence for the achievement of their [societies and professions] objectives." Again, the key phrases in this moral exhortation are quite ambiguous. To what does the phrase "their objectives" refer? Does it refer to the ‘constituency for international cooperation,’ a particular society, a specific profession, and/or some undefined moral community? And what does ‘deeper appreciation’ mean? Does it refer to the results of a particular study, a religious recognition, or an enhanced cultural, esthetic understanding?

Without clear references for these two items, Step Five cannot provide the basis for any practical steps forward.

Related Ideas: Step Five; aligning values and governance; experts by constituency; gaining acceptance
Step Five: Global Business Oath

pg. 38: The YGL Business Oath Task Force has proposed a Global Business Oath, which is intended to be a modern day Hippocratic Oath for business that spells out a commitment to doing no harm through the practice of management. It commits managers and graduates of business schools throughout the world to a common code of ethics and to raise their awareness of ethical values such as integrity, honesty, reliability and responsibility. The project is developing a series of practices that help Oath takers to live the Oath on an ongoing, lifelong basis.

Readers' Guide Comment on "Global Business Oath, which is intended to be a modern day Hippocratic Oath for business that spells out a commitment to doing no harm through the practice of management"

By 2011, this project became simply, The Oath Project. The Oath Project outlines seven promises for ethical business executives. They include promises to “not advance my personal interests at the expense of my enterprise or society;” “to refrain from corruption, unfair competition, or business practices harmful to society;” “to report the performance and risks of my enterprise accurately and honestly;” and “to oppose discrimination and exploitation.”

The Oath contains no reference to the goals or objectives of any multilateral agreement, only an indirect reference to sustainable development, and no reference to equity, democracy, labor, or any broadly accepted ethical guidelines. While the driver for the YGL re-write of the Hippocratic Oath was to help shift commitments toward development, there is no reference to any developmental principles, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

Related Ideas: Step Five; Aligning values with governance; Gaining acceptance; Civic culture not robust enough; Too prone to treat human dignity as outside legitimate purview; Sense of ownership
Step Five: Sense of Ownership

pg. 38: Indeed, this report has emphasized how the state-based core of the system should adapt to a more complex, bottom-up world in which non-governmental actors have become a more significant force. But what is also required is a corresponding sense of ownership in the health of the international system by these very non-state stakeholders, which until now have tended, with the notable exception of certain NGOs, to leave such matters entirely to their national governments...

Readers' Guide Comment on “corresponding sense of ownership”

While this sense of ownership is worded as a requirement for non-state Actors, it seems targeted at corporate executives. Note the choice of the expression a "sense of ownership." These words are reflective of the language and ideas employed by those working in the private sector. In the public and civil society sector, ‘stewardship’, ‘responsibility’, and ‘ethics’ would more accurately capture the sense of motivation and function.

WEF recognizes that this lack of global public awareness in the corporate world is a significant challenge for the effectiveness of its proposals. Not only do the GRI proposals need a corporate citizenry that is well aware of the realities of the world, they also need to have these corporate executives more self-consciously involved in formal global governance. WEF apparently feels that corporate executives need a sense of ‘global ownership’ in order to appreciate fully their newly assigned governance role. Its two principle solutions to help transform corporate executives from global market experts to global governors are the YGL Oath and the active involvement of ‘certain NGOs’ as ethical teachers and leaders.

Related Ideas: Step Five; aligning values with governance; gaining acceptance; Global business oath
Step Five: When Obligations and Norms Are ‘Not Possible’

pg. 39: Specifically, by widening our conception of the modes and means of cooperation available in our more complex, bottom-up world, and applying this expanded cooperative geometry in a pragmatic, targeted push for results, we can achieve transformational change even when an expansion of universal norms and legal obligations is not politically feasible.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “we” and “our conception”

The lack of references for the ‘we’ and ‘our’ make this recommendation rather hard to implement in any practical fashion. See the earlier comment on the use of the first person plural.

Readers’ Guide Comment on “can achieve transformational change even when an expansion . . . is not politically feasible”

Universally accepted frameworks are difficult to work out, just as major national legislation can be difficult to work out. The fact that a new legal standard is difficult or that it is seen as politically unfeasible is not a reason to abandon the normal legislative or diplomatic process.

To take one international matter, intergovernmentally adopted standards for human rights, the environment, and worker safety are challenging to develop. During the negotiation process, some Actors are intent on having the lowest possible standard or no standard at all. International religious organizations, civil society bodies, professional associations, and trade associations produce their own versions. Globally recognized international legal standards, whether convention-based or soft law, are more than the standards of any one constituency. Yet somehow over time, governments have managed to create new internationally recognized standards.

What GRI is proposing is that a self-selected group of Actors, some of whom may well have a financial self-interest in the formulation of a particular standard, will now be welcomed to generate standards which WEF hopes will be seen as new forms of internationally recognized standards. With this approach in place, it will be increasingly difficult to gain agreement on intergovernmentally binding legal standards, as opponents can block consensus and then ‘adopt’ their own more lenient standard since the international undertaking ‘failed.’ GRI’s recommendation is to create a situation in which the major firms and states can develop the international ‘rules of the game’ that benefit – or at least do not restrict -- the presumptions behind the existing global market or existing military alliances.

Related Ideas: Civic culture not robust enough; Step Five; Tool One; second objective: greater effectiveness
Step Five: Three Facets

The challenges of scale, information and coherence inherent in deep interdependence imply that, if the international community focuses its cooperation on only one of these components of progress, it is much more likely to be disappointed with the results.

Readers' Guide Comment on “challenges of scale, information and coherence inherent in deep interdependence”

The challenges of the world today are deeply interdependent. Actions in one part of the global system can impact people, nations, and businesses in another part; inaction in one group of countries can force unnecessary challenges on communities, ecosystems, and cultural values in other groups of countries. Witness the unexpected speed of the global transmission of the 2008/2009 US mortgage crisis, the extent of global ecological impacts on polar regions from releasing carbon dioxide in temperate regions, and the daily ups and downs of global financial indicators. It is unclear how joint implementation of GRI’s Five Steps would mitigate these or other high speed transmissions of harmful effects.

Readers' Guide Comment on “it is much more likely to be disappointed with the results” By undermining the roles of nation-states in the international system, this reference strengthens claims for ‘plurilateral or multi-stakeholder coalitions of the willing and able’ to take on global tasks (see Building Block Three). Yet GRI does not provide any evidence that the outcome of these coalitions will be any more coherent or more capable in managing ‘deep interdependence’ than the existing system.

Related Ideas: Step Five; Building Block Three; missing issues; beyond boundaries of nation states; Plurilateral coalitions