

Zagreb Innovation Ecosystem for Good Journalism (ZIG) Project

(working title; this is the first rough draft of project idea description)

by Dino Karabeg

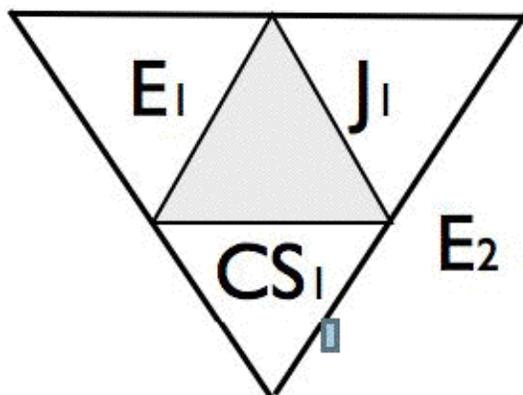
This project idea description will be in two parts, called 'specific' and 'general'. They may be visualized as representing three dimensions of a project space – horizontal plane (represented by the specific description) and the vertical dimension (represented by the general one).

In what follows we first describe the basic specific component; then introduce the 'vertical dimension'; next describe additional three concrete specific components; and end by discussing organization and financing.

I. Basic project specifics ('horizontal dimension')

The starting point of the project is to design and implement an instance of the innovation ecosystem for good journalism, an outline of which has been drafted at the Knowledge Federation workshop Barcelona 2011 last November [1].

A minimal implementation would include four coordinated research projects in three disciplines: journalism (E), computer science (CS) and economics/ entrepreneurship/leadership (E), performed by four (possibly student) researchers. Each of the four research projects would possibly be a thesis in a specific field, resulting also in research publications; or a post-doctoral or other research project (Prof. Nenad Prelog from Dept. of Journalism is with us):



- Project J1 will investigate, develop in detail and implement the systemic solution for good journalism outlined in [1,2]
- Project CS1 will analyze, develop in detail and implement the IT part of the systemic solution in [1]
- Project E1 will develop the relevant business and revenue models (micro-financing, value-based marketing...)
- Thesis E2 will develop and coordinate the resulting innovation ecosystem for good journalism and spin off corresponding startup ventures

The added value from working in this way (compared to four conventional thesis of research projects) is synergy: The specific demands of new journalism will pose natural new tasks for IT designs; new technological components and workflow will naturally lead to demand for new business models etc. Hence **we expect original and relevant contributions to participating disciplines.**

Starting from this minimal version, the ZIG project can develop almost indefinitely, by taking up some of the many adjacent research questions.

II. Larger implications of the project ('vertical dimension')

The larger implications of the ZIG project are on two levels.

The first one is **systemic innovation** – which is an innovation in knowledge work and entrepreneurship – where conventional innovation scales to a new level. This quotation from an article that is begin written will provide a hint:

We highlight the following: By enabling systemic innovation, Knowledge Federation enables also a new way of developing information technology: Instead of marketing new technology to power the old ways of working, which breeds information overload, we first develop new patterns of knowledge–work organization that we wish to support, and then produce the technology that is needed to implement those patterns.

A amore detailed information is provided in article [4].

The even higher level – systemic innovation as natural approach to 'global issues' and other contemporary issues, is introduced by telling the following nine vignettes (short, real–life stories with a punchline). An explanation that weaves them together and with our project idea follows at the end.



Vignette One: Douglas Engelbart 1968

In early 1950s, when the few computers that existed were number crunching behemoths, Douglas Engelbart dared to dream about networked computers enabling people to think and create together: “[...] I dreamed that people were talking seriously about the potential of harnessing a technological and social nervous system to improve the IQ of our various organizations. What if, suddenly, in an evolutionary sense, we evolved a super new nervous system to upgrade our collective social organisms? Then I dreamed that we got

strategic and began to form cooperative alliances of organizations, employing advanced networked computer tools and methods to develop and apply new collective knowledge.” (Engelbart, Landau and Clegg, 2009). This (applying our collective creativity to improve our collective creativity) Engelbart saw as the best investment of our creative potential towards handling the increasingly complex problem that the humanity would be facing. The pursuit of this dream made Engelbart a premier Silicon Valley inventor: in 1968 when the communication with computers was through punched cards and printed output, he demonstrated the use of computers as we know it today – interactive video terminal with windows, collaborative text editing over a distance, video teleconferencing... (Engelbart et al., 1968) – all developed in his laboratory at Stanford Research Institute (Engelbart’s 1968 performance at Fall Joint Computer Conference in San Francisco is popularly called “The Mother of All Demos”).

But those inventions were only initial steps in a more ambitious project, whose goal was to develop completely new patterns for collaborative knowledge work, which would radically improve our collective abilities. A development that has not yet taken place.



Vignette Two: Erich Jantsch at Club of Rome, 1968

At the first meeting of Club of Rome in Rome in 1968, it was Erich Jantsch who gave the keynote speech to motivate the project.

Jantsch’s message could be condensed in a single, simple sentence: The global system lacked feedback (proper informing or information flow) and therefore control (sustainability).

At the meeting this problem was not only diagnosed, but it was on the way towards being solved: The Club of Rome was being organized to provide required feedback – also directly, by initiating suitable research projects, but primarily indirectly – by initiating the creation of an inter-governmental institution called World Forum.



Vignette Three: Erich Jantsch at MIT Sloan, 1969

Jantsch continued to think logically: If the root cause of our issues is that our public informing (and of course other societal systems as well) are unable to evolve in a manner that would keep them suitable for their function, then how can this 'Mother of All Global Issues' be remedied? And who will do that job? He concluded that university must be the answer, because "no other institution is equally well qualified and legitimized" ([2], p. 7). The answer to "the predicament of mankind" or "the world problematique" (as The Club of Rome called our contemporary condition," Jantsch reasoned, must be this: facilitating systemic change will have to become "the new purpose of the university" ([2], p. 10).

Hence Jantsch decided to spend a semester at MIT and talk to the people in a place where he felt his insights could be most readily taken into practice. The result was a report called "Integrative Planning for the 'Joint Systems' of Society and Technology - the Emerging Role of the University." [2]

The main message of this 129 pages-long report was that "the university should make structural changes within itself toward a new purpose of enhancing society's capability for continuous self-renewal (...) This new leadership role of the university would provide an integrated approach to world systems, particularly the "joint systems" of society and technology" ([2], abstract).

The substance of his report is a detailed plan for the organization of the "new university" that would be capable of fulfilling its new "leadership role." The "basic structure of the new university" hinges crucially upon the development of "System laboratories (which, more precisely, may be called socio-technological system laboratories), emphasizing system engineering in the broad areas of "joint systems" of society and technology (...)."



Vignette Four: Origin and Mission of Knowledge Federation

Through a series of events, Knowledge Federation has self-organized to become a community-and-project capable of bringing IT innovation, and knowledge work in general, to a new, systemic level - where basic systemic patterns (in science, journalism, education, governance...) are being recreated.

The Knowledge Federation community began to self-organize in October 2007, at the Topic Maps Research and Applications conference in Leipzig, Germany, where several of us realized that we were already working on the next stage -

developing socio-technical systems for knowledge work that are enabled by Topic Maps, and indeed by a large and rapidly growing number of other knowledge work technologies. We gave the approach to knowledge work we wanted to support the name 'knowledge federation.' Googling 'knowledge federation' led to Professor Yuzuru Tanaka, a leader in knowledge media R&D in Japan, and he was invited to join us. We also invited to our conversation some of our colleagues we felt needed to be there.

The first Knowledge Federation Workshop, held in October 2008 at the Inter University Centre Dubrovnik, was a meeting of a small group of international researchers working on creative IT-enabled patterns for knowledge work. We chose 'knowledge federation' to denote our shared destination – the good knowledge work practices that can now be enabled by technology – meaningful organization of knowledge resources, and co-creation of community-wide critical insights. At the workshop we began federating our ideas about knowledge federation, and charting the corresponding technical tools and interaction patterns. It was clear to us that the already existing or emerging IT tools could revolutionize knowledge work; but that the progress on putting them into practice had been slow. We realized that the key task was to recreate and change the actual knowledge work practices; and that this task required that we organize ourselves in a different way, and develop a different way of working.

At the Second Knowledge Federation Workshop in 2010 at Inter University Centre Dubrovnik, knowledge work system designers were joined by journalism innovators (Paddy Coulter and Øystein Rakkenes), scientific organization innovators (Science Commons Director John Wilbanks, and many of us), and by researchers and field workers in visual communication, business organization, intellectual property law and other relevant fields, as well as by our two initial corporate stakeholders (Cerpus and Induct Software). At the opening of the workshop we were encouraged to perceive ourselves not as individuals pursuing a career in a certain discipline or profession, but as cells in a collective or (at the limit) global mind – and to begin to self-organize as it might suit this larger role. That was the origin of the two key elements of future Knowledge Federation: (1) a community that is a federation (a suitable combination) of experts and other stakeholders (2) practicing self-organization or 'bootstrapping' (using their own community as medium or sandbox to develop and test solutions). During the three working days of the workshop we began to work on systemic solutions for journalism, science and education. After the workshop, self-organization continued around a Ning-based community platform, and through email and Skype.

At the mini-workshop that Knowledge Federation organized in July 2011 at Stanford University, within the Triple Helix IX conference, we were able to introduce Knowledge Federation as 'an enabler of systemic innovation.' This pointed at the commercial / IT aspect of Knowledge Federation – in exactly the suitable environment, where Triple Helix meets Silicon Valley and Stanford University – the global center of innovation. The vision we presented was that the Web and the related technologies made it possible for IT innovation, as well as for knowledge work in general, to ascend to a new level, where complete and entirely different systemic solutions for large and small subdomains of knowledge work (public informing, academic research, education, governance) can be developed. Knowledge Federation was introduced as an organizational structure and a way of working that are needed to enable systemic innovation. After its second workshop in Dubrovnik, Knowledge Federation self-organized as a federation of (currently eight) projects, where each project is innovating in a specific domain of knowledge work, and all the projects together compose Knowledge Federation as the general or generic systemic innovator or as we like to call it, 'The Game-Changing Game.' This organization is currently being implemented in terms of the new Drupal-based community platform KnowledgeFederation.net, which is under construction.

Each of two workshops that followed immediately after the Stanford workshop focused on specific tasks of the large problem domain that opened up before the Federation. The focus of the workshop "Knowledge Federation Dialog Belgrade 2011," which Knowledge Federation organized on September 25, 2011 as part of the Quantum-Informational Medicine conference, Belgrade 2011, was on the foundations for knowledge work. The workshop "Co-Creating an Innovation Ecosystem for Good Journalism" that took place November 13-16 in Barcelona gathered a team of journalists and journalism innovators and knowledge media workers to do the task defined by its title. Paddy Coulter (formerly the Director of Studies at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University and Director of the International Broadcasting Trust, currently the Director of Oxford Global Media and a Fellow of Green College, Oxford) kindly accepted to be the Workshop Chair and Opening Keynote Speaker. The technical keynoter was David Price (FRSA, co-founder of [Debategraph](#) and of [Global Sensemaking](#)). The local part of the team was already well advanced in using social media to innovate in journalism, through Wikidiario and other projects. Among other participants I mention Mei Lin Fung, a leader of Silicon Valley "Program for the Future," a voluntary organization dedicated to continuing Doug Engelbart's life-long mission.

Realizing that the innovation ecosystem for good journalism that resulted so excellently embodied most of our intentions, while at the same time being

concrete and ‘scalable’, already in Barcelona we decided to focus our 2012 work on developing and implementing its various parts and consequences.

The project that is being proposed is a case in point.



Vignette Five: And Now the Really Good News

In Barcelona I gave the second opening keynote speech after Paddy’s, which was conceived as a reply to his. Paddy’s keynote can be summarized as “good journalism is essential for democracy; but journalism is in a crisis.” My task was to point at the wonderful solution space that Knowledge Federation opens up and represents, which I called in the lecture “systemic innovation.”

I began my talk by showing brief excerpts from Charles Ferguson’s two documentaries followed by David McCandles’ Billion-Dollar-o-Gram, and by commenting on them.

Ferguson’s second, Oscar-winning documentary “Inside Job” came first. ““Inside Job” director Charles Ferguson subjected Wall Street players, economists and bureaucrats to a fierce cross-examination to depict the economic crisis as a colossal crime perpetrated on the working-class masses by a greedy few. His film examined the financial crisis of 2008. His speech lamented the lack of accountability three years later,” writes Huffington Post. What made the crisis, and the bailout possible, however, was a sequence of deregulations of the US financial system and economy that continued from the Ronald Reagan era until recently; and by the influence Wall Street has acquired over the American political leadership.

Ferguson’s first, Oscar-nominated documentary “No End in Sight” is about the consequences that the (I guess this is becoming obvious, so we may as well say it aloud) no longer democratically controlled or democratically accountable leadership of the world’s most powerful country had on a specific spot in the world: Iraq. The film shows a situation where a country has been occupied, it’s basic infrastructure (military, police...) put out of business, with no replacement made; the film shows a country falling into chaos, caused by incompetence, negligence, it shows the frustration of American professionals who were brought into Iraq to take care of the critical issues as the ones above, but were not given power to act. Because, as the movie shows, something else was in play, not what appeared to be the case. The movie makes it clear that the reasons for this war were not what was told to the public... My comment was

that this was really just an example pointing at something that is in more subtle ways happening everywhere, or can happen anywhere; showing for ex. why the climate-related negotiations have not really been getting anywhere.

“But where’s the good news?” you might ask?

To introduce the good news, I took the listeners from the US to Great Britain, where David McCandless (who is incidentally a journalist) created his [Billion-Dollar-o-Gram](#), showing how much handling various (global and other) issues might cost. Interestingly, the two issues represented by Ferguson’s two films, obviously dominate the scene (I spent a bit of time comparing).

I offered the following conclusion (while showing a photo of Buminster Fuller):



Bucky may have been right, when he predicted (around 1968) that by the end of the millennium we would reach ‘the end of scarcity’ – that science and technology would advance to the point where everyone’s needs could be taken care of. Ferguson’s two films combined with the Billion-Dollar-o-Gram suggest that we may well have enough resources to solve our problem; the real problem is the way those resources are allocated and used.



Vignette Six: Continuing Doug Engelbart’s Work

Not wanting to use his celebrity status and our friendship for personal or KF promotion, I have earlier resisted the temptation to have a ‘Doug and Dino’ photo taken. Last Summer in Palo Alto, however, we took this photo, because I knew that one day I would be telling the story about the conversation which had just taken place.

This was at a party in Mei Lin’s house where I was staying, on the Sunday before we would have our Stanford workshop and tell the news about Knowledge Federation as ‘enabler of systemic innovation,’ as I already mentioned.

Doug was then 86 years old and already quite senile. During the twenty-minute conversation he asked me five times “So, what do you do?” But as it turned out, to my pleasant surprise, his senility affects only his memory for facts; the rest

of his beautiful mind seemed to function quite well. “We are continuing your project,” I answered. “Bringing it out into actual practice. Bringing technology-enabled collective intelligence into journalism, research, education, governance...” Doug paused for a moment and said: “You know, I feel I have pushed the thoughts about my project somewhere into the back of my mind. But when you speak to me like this, it’s as if a crack opens up, and those thoughts come back; and I feel lots of emotion.”



Vignette Seven: eSTUDENT

I am not the one who should be telling this story. I can only say that I was most favorably impressed when I discovered that in Croatia, which was after becoming independent (like so many other places) struggling with a mismanaged economy and bad politics, there was an organization – an excellence network – of young people wanting to make a difference. The wonderful young people I met through the organization recovered my belief in Croatia’s future. We kept in touch, did sporadic projects together. But I kept thinking about a really big one.

I should perhaps only mention (if this is confusing just skip it for now) my lecture to eSTUDENTS in 2007. The title “Through The Mirror” suggested a theme that opens up another, we may call it ‘fundamental’ or ‘epistemological’ dimension of our project, see this [translation of Vesna Skuflic’s Article in Novi List](#), and [my corresponding blog post](#).



Vignette Eight: IUC Dubrovnik

Croatia too had its ‘Spring’ in 1971. Ivan Supek, Croatian physicist, philosopher and humanist, who was then the Rector of the University of Zagreb, initiated the Inter University Centre Dubrovnik as a place where scientists and thinkers from the two sides of the Iron Curtain could meet and exchange ideas. (...)



Vignette Nine: Europe House Zagreb

... & Croatia coming into Europe – and **bringing** new creative impulses...

WEAVING THE VIGNETTES INTO A SINGLE STORY

The point of my story is that the solution to ‘the world problematique’ including the contemporary issues such as the climate change, the economic crisis etc. etc. should be even more obvious to us today than it was to people like Erich Jantsch and Doug Engelbart in 1968: the solution is not ‘climate negotiations,’ but systemic and cultural evolution.

We can now also look at what for ex. The Club of Rome and Erich Jantsch did, and learn from their mistakes as well – what they undertook to do did not really work out. And there too the error is not difficult to see (we might call it ‘the systemic thinking paradox’): They believed that just diagnosing what needed to be done, and telling that to people in power (politicians; or university deans; or...) was enough to start the process of change. Yet they already knew – and claimed – that it is the inability of the systems to change that is the problem; and as it turned out (the example of President Obama might testify this, among others) that the people in power do not have the power to induce systemic change.

What we undertake to do is similar in motivating insight and the goals we wish to accomplish, but radically different in method: Yes, we open up the work on systemic change; but we develop the change organically, by beginning with simple acts which require no systemic change to begin with, but fit perfectly into the existing scheme of things. We do not rely on convincing the people in power; rather, we enable the people who are at a beginning – students, entrepreneurs... – to open up new possibilities for their own life and career by opening up similar possibilities to the world; we empower young (in spirit...) people to co-create the world they want to live in.

So we begin with the four dissertation projects I talked about in Section One. The ideogram (it’s the first version, ready to be improved) should suggest that what we have is an element of a structure that can be extended indefinitely... The idea is that we begin a small project and make provisions so that it can scale globally.

You will have no difficulty noticing that the specific task of the ZIG project – the re-creation of public informing, along the lines drafted in Barcelona – address directly the ‘feedback’ issue Jantsch was pointing at in his 1968 keynote to The Club of Rome. Furthermore, the systemic solution that is being developed – where the public is invited to ‘create the news’ by telling about their problems;

where there is a collective sensemaking process (based on DebateGraph) that leads to organization, systematization, highlighting of what is relevant... and then there is the 'systemic loop' making sure that the true, systemic causes are discovered, and that the leverage points are found (what do we need to do to make real change, i.e. put into effect a systemic solution); a loop in which experts are involved in a creative way... It doesn't take long before this sort of solution is recognized as a true paradigm shift – along the lines I suggested recently in a letter to an eSTUDENT student leader:

I remember this brief story from one of my first school books: The grandmother prepared a 'remedy' for a sick boy, which consisted of a frog leg – so that the sickness would spring out of his body, and seven pebbles – so that it may jump over seven mountains etc. Then his mother gave him a real medicine, and the boy recovered quickly.

I mention this story because it illustrates the notion of a paradigm: if you happen to see some part of our conventional social reality in similar terms as you see that grandmother's 'remedy,' then you might be on the track of a new paradigm. At my recent lecture in Europe House Zagreb, which you attended, I showed how Knowledge Federation is developing a new paradigm in knowledge work as a whole. We are not claiming that the sciences are like that grandmother's 'remedy;' and even the commercial journalism has its place and its reason for existence. It is, however, not difficult to see that the whole thing – specialized, isolated sciences, journalism whose aim is to attract attention... – is neither the best way to take advantage of human talent and of technology, nor a 'collective mind' that can give meaning and direction to an advanced civilization.

You will also have no difficulty noticing that the ZIG project also has a meta-level: By working on the concrete systemic solution, the students (and researchers, of course) are self-organizing in a way that can lead to the 'new university' organization – that Jantsch considered necessary. (...)

When the members of our Zagreb Innovation Ecosystem for Good Journalism has done their work, their project might well end up being called 'The Mother of All Student Projects.'

III. Further specific components

* The idea is that the ZIG project begins in Zagreb and 'scales' globally. Concretely, our plan is to implement the ZIG project in Zagreb by September, and then use the already scheduled international Knowledge Federation Course at IUC Dubrovnik, September 30 – October 6, to internationalize the development.

- * Another idea is to combine entrepreneurship with research. We are developing this module of the ZIG project in cooperation with Startup Weekend, BICRO (Director Dalibor Marijanovic) and several other local and global actors. Our value proposition to entrepreneurs is:
 While an investment into oil drilling and gas stations would make little sense in a world where the only means of transportation is the horse, it made lots of sense in the world where Ford had just undertaken to mass-produce automobiles. Systemic innovation in any domain offers similar first-mover advantages to its participants.
- * The Club of Zagreb will have its inaugural meeting in Europe House Zagreb on May 24, 2012. This international institution will be working on a similar agenda as The Club of Rome – systemic change – but in a radically different way: Instead of trying to convince the people in power, it will empower young (in spirit) people and entrepreneurs to co-create the world they will want to live in. The Club will take up one systemic issue each year and do whatever it can to move it forward (this is not a restriction, because those issues are all related). This first year the theme will be public informing/ journalism (and its collaboration with academia and with ‘the crowd’). The Club will meet only twice a year, once (in Spring) in Zagreb, and once (in the Fall) at IUC Dubrovnik, where an IUC course ++ will be organized (...)

IV. Organization and financing

So far the work of Knowledge Federation has been financed by relatively small donations from its Corporate Stakeholders, and small grants from University of Oslo and the like. We have until now not given a high priority to finding sponsorship, but focused on creating relevant and interesting events, and developing core ideas and our organizational structure and way of working.

Now that we are beginning to work with students and young people, and also need professional help, our situation is different (then when we worked mainly with researchers and professional people whose institutions can pay their bills).

We intend to pursue the following possibilities for financing:

- * Private sponsorship. I am now thinking about Soros as role model, knowing that he is not only a likely donor for similar projects, but also a person who understands the contemporary problematique exceptionally well. Doug Carmichael is for ex. in a group Soros organized to seek solutions to financial crisis. There is a man in Paris who is Soros’ right hand and who recently joined the Advisory Board of IUC Dubrovnik. Prof. Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund – the IUC Chair of Executive Committee who is conveniently at University of

Oslo – said “let’s fly to Paris and talk to him.” And then there is also the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation... My sense is that there is far more money out there that wants to be given, than truly meaningful projects. And of course that some of the people who made that money are exceptionally smart; it should not be too difficult to convince one of them that the systemic approach to issues is more meaningful than symptomatic focus on ‘problems’...

- * UNESCO. Prof. Slavica Singer conveniently holds the UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurship Education, and she seems extremely well networked. Mrs. Singer was at our workshop at Stanford and she offered us help. We have postponed contacting UNESCO until we know we can make them an offer that they will not be able to refuse. Also A(...) (I have his business card at home) one of the leaders of European Students’ Union was at our Stanford workshop, and offered to connect us with his organization.
- * An EU-sponsored research project has been in preparation around KF for a long time, and an international team is gathering and becoming stronger. Now that Croatia is coming in, things should be even easier.
- * BICRO’s, SW’s, IUC’s and other contacts.

NOTES

[1] The Innovation Ecosystem for Good Journalism is being described and developed in the IEforGJ meta-article on DebateGraph, see <http://DebateGraph.org/IEforGJ>. The substance of the design is in the detailed views corresponding to nodes ‘GJ prototype’ and ‘GJ transdiscipline.’

[2] DK’s Prezi “Wikileaks for Insights” provides hints for a federated media channel,

http://prezi.com/y-9_x-zu_2_p/wikileaks-for-insights/

[3] See the translation of Drago Pilsel’s article “Knowledge Federation” (subtitle: “What will the creation of knowledge look like in the future?” in Croatian Novi List of Dec. 7, 2008) at <http://heim.ifi.uio.no/~dino/KF/NL2008.pdf>

[4] See D. Karabeg: Knowledge Federation – An Enabler of systemic Innovation. Proc. Triple Helix IX Conference, Stanford University, July 2011. <http://knowledgefederation.project.ifi.uio.no/Articles/DK-3H9.pdf>