



# FOR DEMOCRACY AND AGAINST AUTHORITARIANISM

EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION THROUGH RADICAL CHANGE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN, 21-24 NOVEMBER 2022



Today, we are facing an array of challenges intersecting the political, economic, social and environmental spheres, threatening our stability and security. These challenges have fostered an inescapable cycle of grievance, apathy and mistrust, increasing the risk of autocratisation in democratic regimes. Therefore, we have decided to take action by developing an alternative, critical and innovative, yet practical, set of recommendations to strengthen democratic societies and individuals' well-being. The Youth Fellows and the moderators of the **4th International Youth Conference** are delighted to present 11 proposals to encourage personal empowerment, building an inclusive future through radical change.

## Youth Fellows

Alice Smith, Alina Arslanova, Anastasia Hansen, Anita Sammarini, Antoan Blangev, Benedikt Schuegraf, Benjamin Galbraith, Federica Baggio, Greta Maria Grossek, James Mottram, Jonathan Ziener, Joseph Earnshaw, Luca Guidoboni, Mahek Anil Bhatia, Nathan Collins, Olle Hansen, Ollie Gee, Rabia Turnbull, Shu Yu Lim, Silvia Papic, Sofia Marini, Vinkha Adinda Khairunnisa, and Wiktoria Morawska.

## Moderators

Anders Leitzinger, Julia Strandquist, Erik Toshach, and Urban Strandberg.

# THEMES

PEACEFUL MINDS, PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

ENGAGED CITIZENS, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

RETHINKING DEMOCRACIES

COMMON GOOD ECONOMY

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The proposals are organised under four themes, and originate from the assumption that it is necessary to refocus democratic development on the livelihood of individuals and communities. Psycho-physiological needs are necessary internal precursors to ensure basic human survival, which serves as a fundamental basis for human innovation and security, as proposed under the first theme titled “**Peaceful Minds for Peaceful Societies**”. Subsequently, we recognised the necessity to foster a sense of cross-communitarian trust. The second theme, “**Engaged Citizens, Active Communities**”, focuses on implementing infrastructural reforms and providing opportunities to build skills and knowledge within the citizenry to increase civic

engagement. The multidimensional approach presented so far, simultaneously tackling individual and communitarian tensions, is fundamental to address the lack of trust in democratic institutions. This can be facilitated by directing the reforms to enhance a local and bottom-up understanding of democratic participation, as we propose in the section “**Rethinking Democracies**”. Lastly, health, social and political reforms need to be backed by a wider, long-term strategic societal planning, as developed in the section “**Common Good Economy**”, proposing an unconventional understanding of growth and development, based on other dimensions of wealth and a holistic conception of societal well-being.

# PEACEFUL MINDS, PEACEFUL SOCIETIES



**Greta Maria Grosseck**



**Nathan Collins**

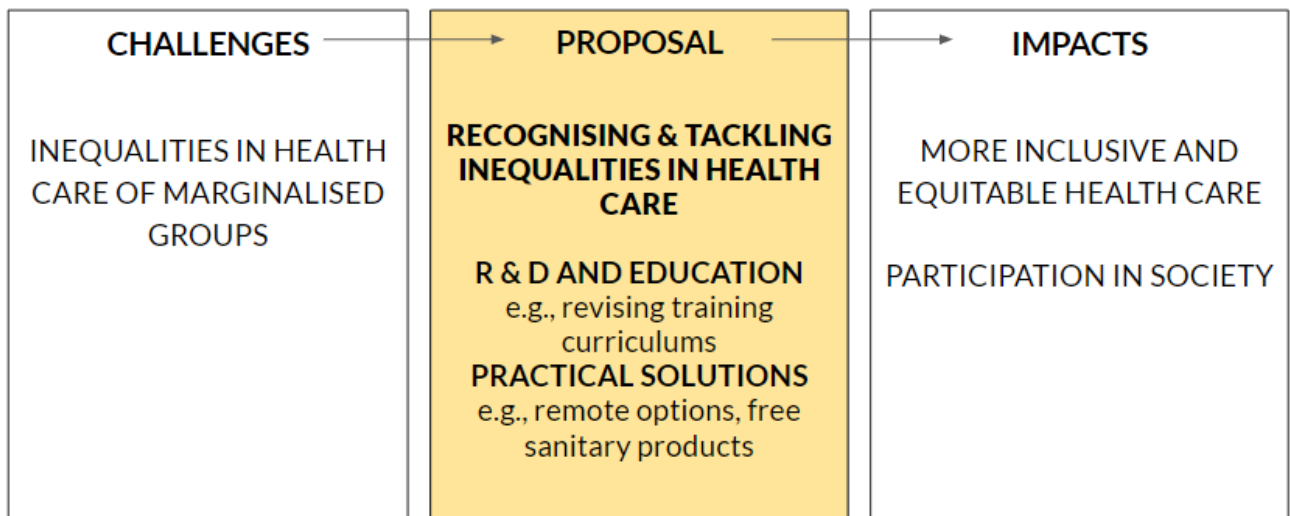


**Rabia Turnbull**



**Wiktoria Morawska**

# PEACEFUL MINDS, PEACEFUL SOCIETIES



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Following the thesis that peaceful minds make peaceful societies, our three proposals focus on how an individual's physical, mental, and social wellbeing has an impact on the democratisation process.

Across the globe, we witness staggering **inequalities in health care among marginalised groups**. This challenges the values of democracy and social justice and consequently participation in society.

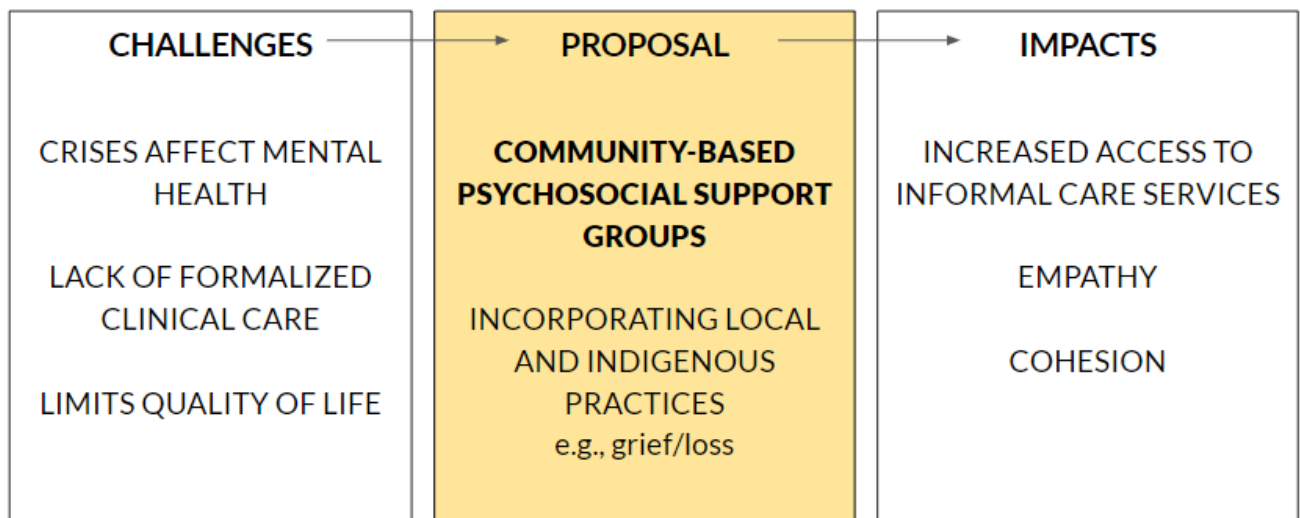
To solve this, we propose two solutions. Firstly, **addressing inequalities within research and education**. Concretely, this includes the revision of training curriculums and reworking of textbooks and research to

be inclusive of the diverse physiology of People of Colour, of diverse genders and sexual orientations.

Secondly, we call for **practical solutions**, including strengthening remote options for health care access for rural settings and less mobile people, and the elimination of taxes on sanitary products as well as their free provision.

Ultimately, these measures can create a more just society, including **equitable health care for everyone in all their diversity**.

# PEACEFUL MINDS, PEACEFUL SOCIETIES



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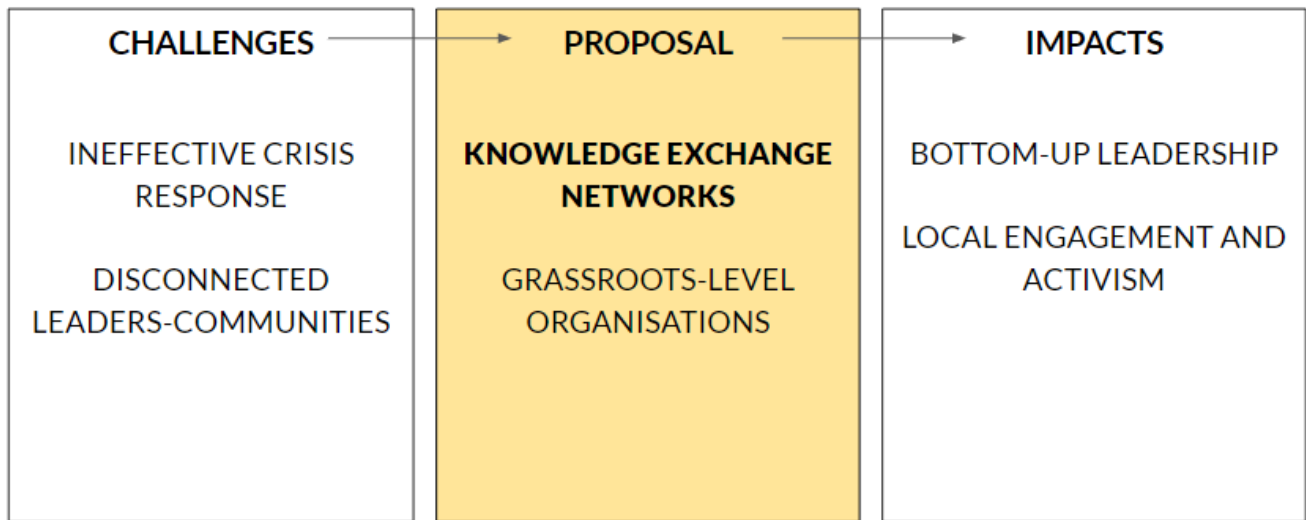
As a global community, we have experienced a variety of crises that expose people to a huge amount of stress adversely affecting mental health, both in terms of **intergenerational trauma** in post-colonial societies and general **public mental health issues**. At the same time, there is a substantial lack of trained clinical professionals in many countries leading to people suffering silently from possibly debilitating experiences.

and loss, the artistic expression of trauma, or other shared concerns. Ultimately, these support groups must be attentive to the uniquely affected communities.

Through this community-based approach, we **increase access to informal care services** and strengthen empathy, societal cohesion, and political participation through healing and enabling voice.

We propose to address this societal challenge through the establishment of **community-based psychosocial support groups** taking into account **local and indigenous practices**. These can be focussed on themes such as grief

# PEACEFUL MINDS, PEACEFUL SOCIETIES



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Apart from supporting people to cope with crises and stress, we also propose a **systematic change to crisis response**. Top-down leadership has often provided inadequate solutions thereto. This has further alienated individuals from the actual issues at hand, making them feel like politics has failed them.

To combat this, we are recommending the formation of **knowledge exchange networks of local grassroots organisations**. By sharing experiences and ideas of local communities, potential effective responses to crises can be scaled up to regional or even national levels. Hereby, it is crucial to facilitate communication, for example, through

increased telecommunication access. By enabling leaders and communities to share local solutions, knowledge exchange networks can **increase awareness and accountability** to individuals' needs, hence, furthering the democratic process.

In essence, we are calling for a human-centred approach to issues of mental and physical health and local leadership and community engagement to make our societies more inclusive and equitable.

# ENGAGED CITIZENS, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES



**Sofia Marini**



**Antoan Blangev**



**Alice Smith**



**Federica Baggio**



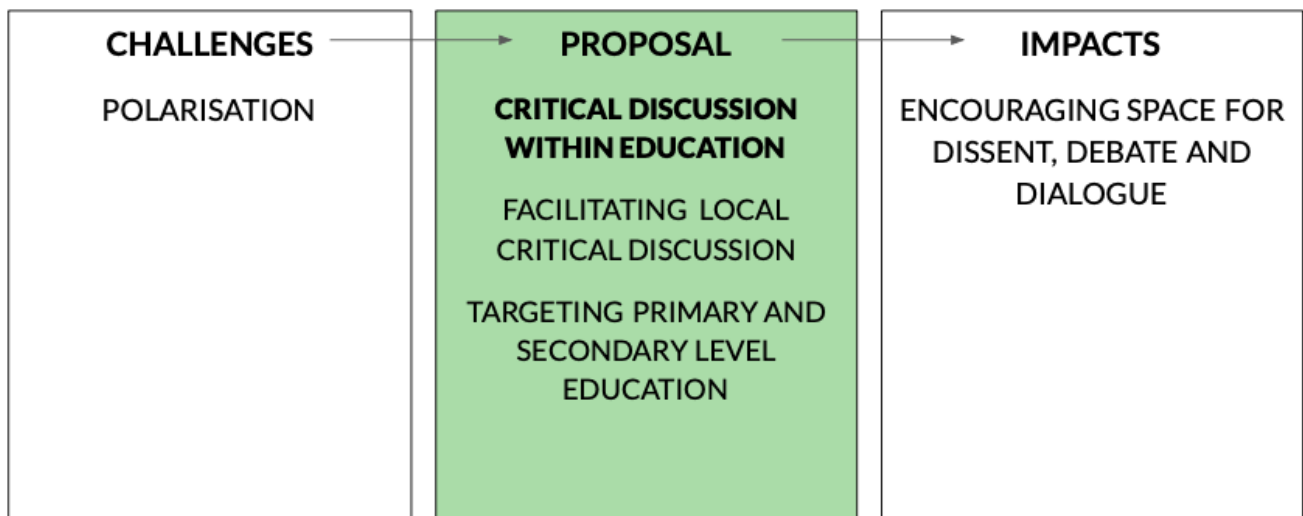
**Shu Yu Lim**



**Mahek Bhatia**



# ENGAGED CITIZENS, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES



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The breeding ground for anti-democratic thought is polarisation. Polarised viewpoints come from a lack of critical thought.

We propose that **critical education be integrated into national school** curriculums to develop critical thinkers and engaged participants in a democracy. Students would be aware of their peers' identity and their societal struggles, making them more empathetic.

We want to create a safe space for students to voice their opinion on issues and gain political knowledge. Local critical education would be emphasised where students could learn about alternate perspectives on contentious social and historical issues.

How do we go about this?

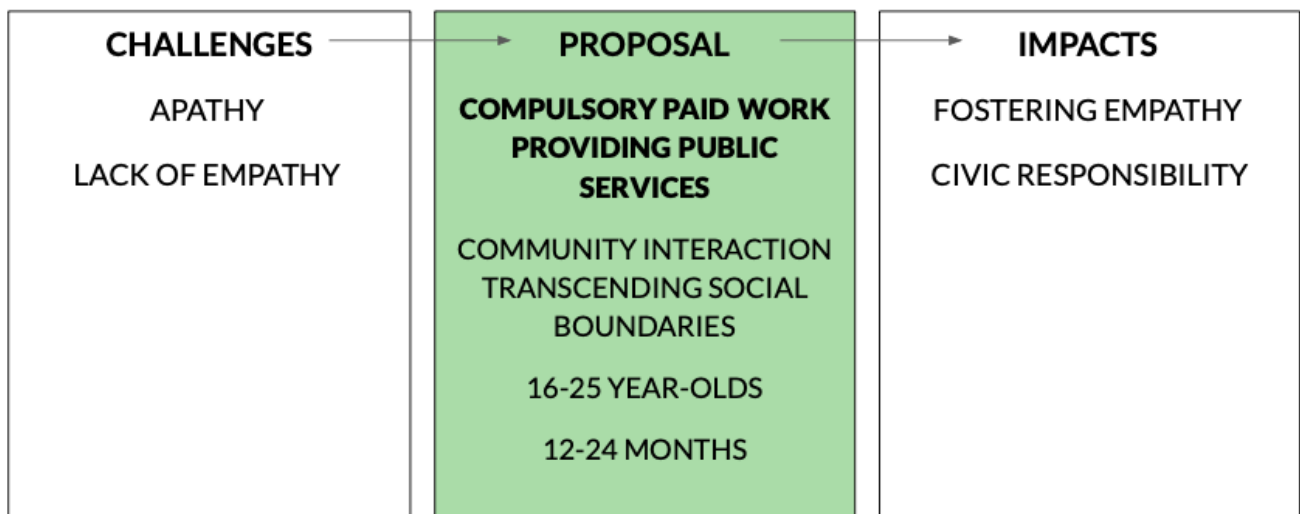
We must encourage the faculty to be trained to have the depth of information and competence surrounding culturally diverse issues, alongside developing critical pedagogy as the norm.

We also want to build on current critical programmes to make them more diverse and efficient.

The main outcome of this policy is a safe space for **Dissent, Dialogue, and Debate** - three essential aspects of democracy.



# ENGAGED CITIZENS, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES



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Alongside a lack of empathy, a second challenge is political apathy. Our solution fosters cooperation within and between communities, creating an appreciation for the services provided by modern democracies.

This solution is a **government funded local work scheme**, including but not restricted to services such as healthcare, policing and homelessness, with the ability to share best practice on a regional level.

Being involved in the workforce of key but undervalued services builds work relationships transcending age, socio-economic, racial, ethnic, and gendered boundaries.

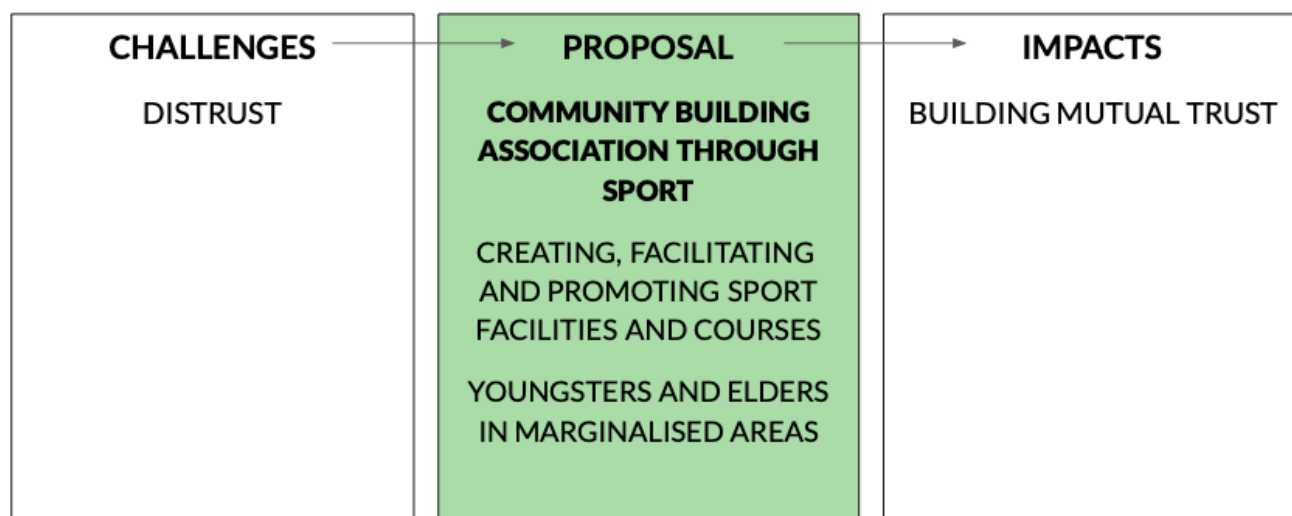
The focus is countering apathy from a young age. This is paid work, essential to the inclusion of those who lack resources to volunteer.

This will create new responsibilities for those who already work in these services, injecting more money into local economies.

By being exposed to vulnerable communities and understanding people within this workforce, empathy will be fostered. Feelings of **self worth and civic responsibility** will be increased alongside a tangible improvement of public services.

Overall, this will show what's at stake when being an active citizen in democracy.

# ENGAGED CITIZENS, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES



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Our third proposal **centres sports as a transversal means of aggregation** to counter distrust, which fuels polarisation.

The proposal consists in creating, facilitating and promoting sports venues and courses for community members from young to old in marginalised areas.

Our action is twofold:

On one hand, we are stepping in to guarantee accessibility to sports by creating venues, facilities, and courses that are either totally free or have reduced fees (you pay as much as you can).

On the other hand, we set out to foster the growth of grassroots sports associations already in place by providing funding, given that these comply with requirements – non-discrimination upon entry etc.

Partaking in sports together entails a reciprocal obligation, a feeling intrinsically linked with **mutual trust**.

# RETHINKING DEMOCRACIES



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**Luca Guidoboni**



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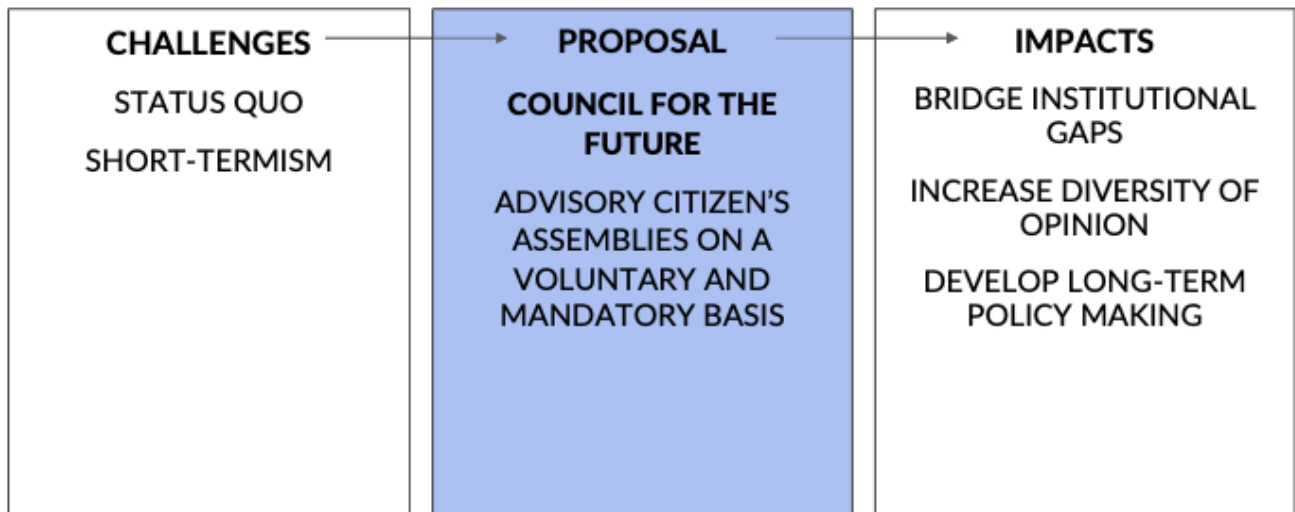


**Silvia Papic**



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# RETHINKING DEMOCRACIES

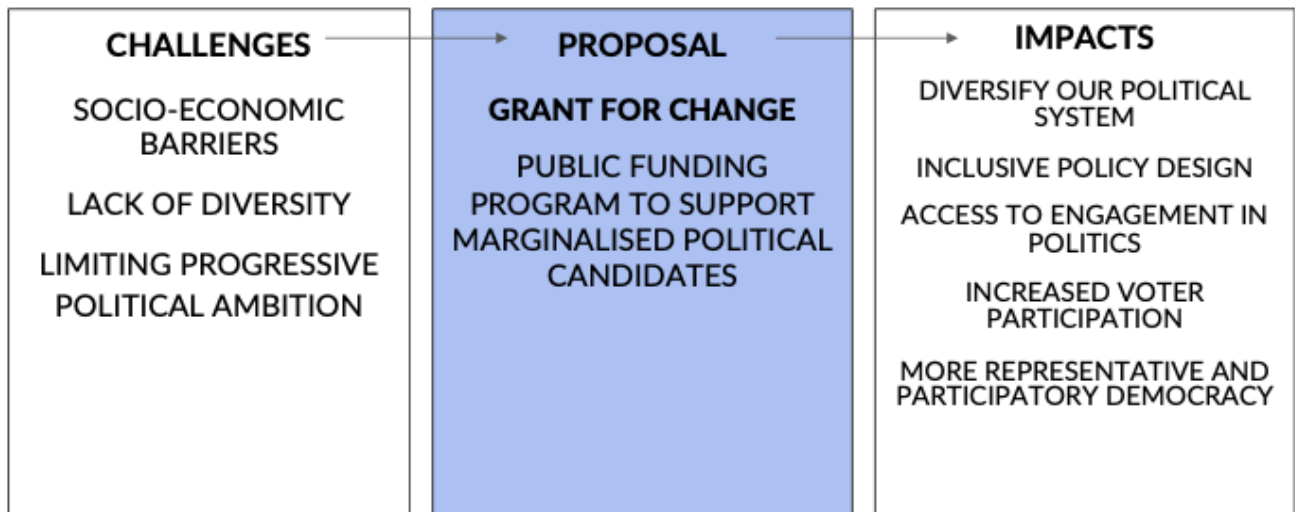


In today's world we must go beyond the political status-quo, and the short term visions of our politicians. But how do we best resolve this? We propose the establishment of **citizens' assemblies**, entitled '**Councils for the Future**', that would bridge the gap between institutions and citizens. These advisory panels, constituted of a representative sample of society, would draw in individuals through a blended approach of mandatory and voluntary association.

The councils for the future would **empower local communities**, whilst enabling governments to best act upon citizen's feedback. The reports that would be produced by such councils would serve to influence policy direction, and would specifically tackle long-term problems that concern the citizenry.

The damage that has been dealt to our political systems through the short-term framing of politics, has been highlighted by recent waves of anti-democratic populism, thus requiring a fundamentally new way of allowing citizens to **engage with their politicians**, and hold them accountable beyond their electoral period.

# RETHINKING DEMOCRACIES



Our next proposal targets **marginalised people** in society who are active in their communities but lack the resources to finance a political campaign.

This is where the **grant for change** comes in. Through our proposal, such people would be able to apply for a **government grant** that would be dependent on net income and a predetermined number of signatures.

The amount received would be based upon certain **criteria**, and recipients could use the money to cover childcare costs, and other expenditures associated with the running of a political campaign.

The grant serves to **bring new voices into the political system** so that

communities feel better represented. Furthermore, grant recipients from marginalised communities could serve as an inspiration to others, countering the political status quo, and bringing ever **greater diversity** into our systems.

Such a grant would also come to affect politics more broadly, and in funding individuals, this would increase the number of people who can compete within political parties, and outside of them. Reorienting the focus to individual candidates thereby forcing parties to reconsider their hierarchy.

# COMMON GOOD ECONOMY



**Alina Arslanova**



**Anita Sammarini**



**James Mottram**



**Jonathan Ziener**

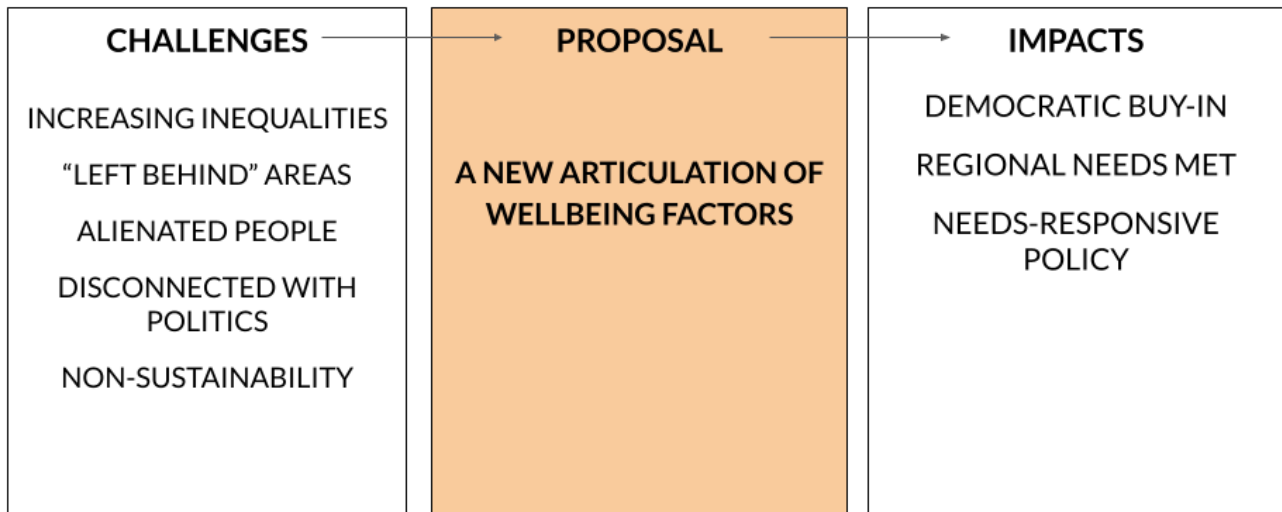


**Joseph Earnshaw**



**Ollie Gee**

# COMMON GOOD ECONOMY

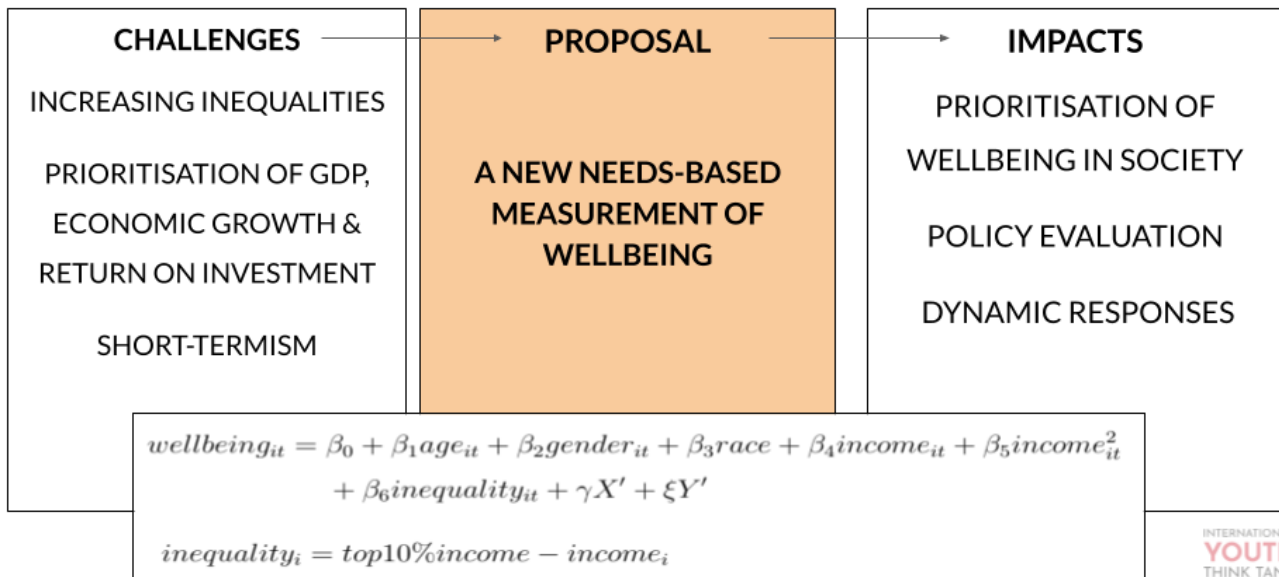


Our macro-scale proposals for a **Common Good Economy** aim to address the increasing inequality and profit prioritisation, which are damaging our democratic culture. They are founded in **degrowth theory**, a human-centred economic approach suggesting that the socially and environmentally damaging infinite growth goals of indicators like GDP should be replaced with that of **wellbeing**. Determining new indicators to address these issues are at the core of our proposals, with the Common Good Economy.

Our proposal of a new articulation of wellbeing factors focuses on the challenge of inequality, which has been increasing exponentially in "left behind" areas and groups. It also focuses on the disconnect between people and politics and the unsustainability of current economic models. Therefore, our proposal to address these is to introduce **regular, regional surveys** allowing people to identify sectors they feel need investment, such as transport, healthcare or the environment, and then allow those to be targeted with **investment**. Seeing how these needs are listened to and acted upon will encourage a **democratic buy-in** as regional needs are met and flexible needs-responsive policies put in place.



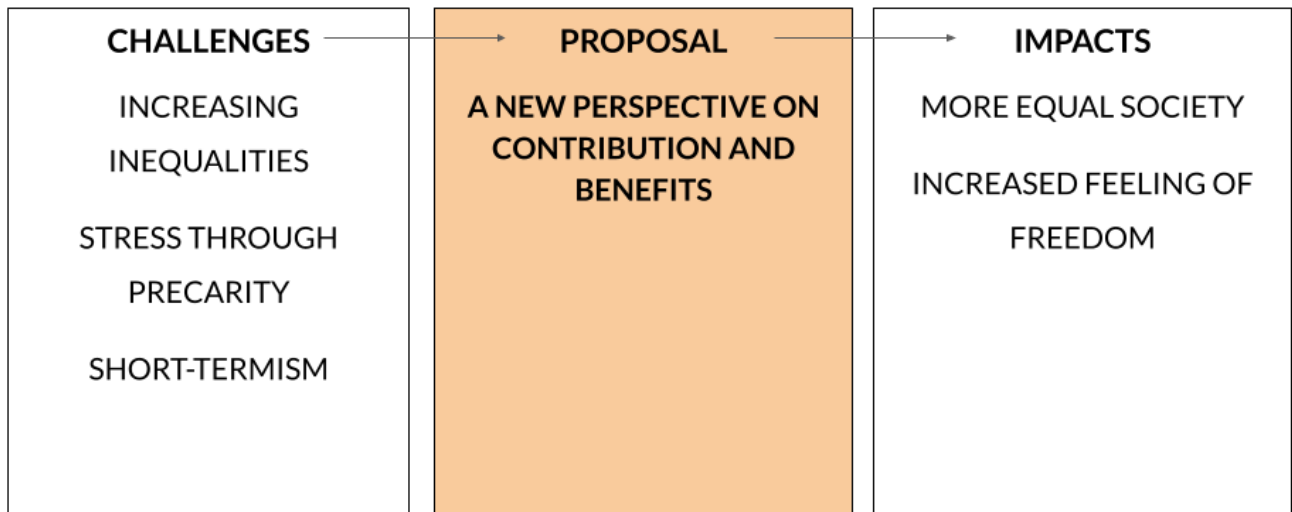
# COMMON GOOD ECONOMY



However, we need to know whether this will be effective in increasing well-being. To ascertain this, we have created a proposal for a new **needs-based** measurement of wellbeing for the success of policies, that discounts GDP and returns on investment. We will take into account age, gender, race, income, inequality, surveyed public spending preferences, and surveyed wellbeing articulation in our empirical measure of wellbeing. This serves as an alternative model to GDP that prioritises the **needs of citizens** and focuses on reducing inequality within society.

Above is our model. This model can be adapted to address specific challenges if particular variables and factors are deemed to be a priority by the public from the survey results. This proposal will allow us to evaluate policies in relation to their effect on wellbeing whilst encouraging and engendering a **democratic culture**.

# COMMON GOOD ECONOMY



Furthermore, to further tackle increasing inequalities which are damaging to people's wellbeing, we have a proposal for a new perspective on **contributions and benefits** in a way that also **reduces short-term vote-buying** through tax cuts and economic stress. This is situated in a Keynesian economic approach to spending and tax.

Specifically, we want to introduce a **Universal Basic Income** to allow people to meet their basic needs. More importantly, it will change the perception of human beings as a unit that must constantly contribute economically. This will be financed by increased **progressive tax rates**, that also allow people to continue being entrepreneurial and pursue life as they want to without fear.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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/ "PUBLICATIONS" / "IYTT PRELIMINARY REPORT 2022"

It is possible to find a more detailed version of the proposals in the preliminary report on our website - scan the QR code above or go to <https://iythinktank.com/> -> **Publications** -> **IYC 2022 Preliminary Report**. Furthermore, a collection of all policy proposals incorporating reports from previous conferences will also be available in the IYTT Handbook for Innovative Democracy which will be published early 2023. We aim to keep inspiring an increasingly broader audience of citizens, policymakers, and entrepreneurs: share this leaflet and follow the IYTT on our website and on social media, and support us in disseminating innovative ideas around the world!

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