

# Terra Civitas Chaordic Commons

An invitation to participate in forming  
a self-organizing, self-governing global community  
dedicated to developing, disseminating and implementing  
new concepts of organization that result in more equitable sharing  
of power and wealth, improved health, and greater compatibility  
with the human spirit and biosphere

## An Overview and Introduction for Owning Members

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# Conceiving Terra Civitas

**H**umanity today faces overwhelming challenge and unprecedented opportunity. Advances in technology are reshaping society, dissolving boundaries and fostering new patterns of communication, competition and cooperation among people around the world.

Every organization must adapt to an increasingly complex, knowledge-intensive, relationship-based world. Those willing to take risks lead change rather than resist it.

Every field of human activity — from health care, education and religion to economics, commerce and governance — is busy reinventing itself, to provide a new foundation for the future. Innovation and creativity are required, not optional.

**W**hat once was unimaginable — what we could only dream — may now be possible, if we can evolve organizations and institutions as dynamic and diverse as the emerging world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Organizations that are equitable, inclusive, flexible and resilient, based on our highest aspirations for ourselves, our children and all future generations.

In many different fields and diverse communities, people are working toward that end. Those involved in such efforts seek greater connection. The time is now right for individuals and institutions, around the world, to form and bring to life a more cohesive global network dedicated to transforming and strengthening our organizations and institutions, guided by our most deeply held democratic, ethical and spiritual values.

**W**e call that network Terra Civitas, which loosely translates as “citizens of the Earth”. We envision Terra Civitas as an expanding cluster of self-organizing, participant-governed entities, called Commons, designed to be both independent and interrelated.

Together, the Terra Civitas Commons will comprise a multi-faceted web of collaborative learning, innovation and action. Individually, they will be fully self-governing, free to pursue their distinctive purpose in any way consistent with the shared purpose and principles.

**T**erra Civitas comes into being with creation of the Chaordic Commons, a 501c3 nonprofit organization which supersedes The Chaordic Alliance. The Chaordic Commons is open to all who subscribe to its purpose and principles in conducting the organization’s activities. Those who join are called Owning Members.

You are invited to help form the Chaordic Commons and breathe life into Terra Civitas. Its success will depend on the participation and support of a wide range of visionary, caring and committed individuals and organizations from every country, field and sector. Join us and help shape a continually evolving network of individuals and organizations dedicated to cultivating wisdom and transforming our organizations and institutions!

# Purpose and Participants

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**The purpose of Terra Civitas and the Chaordic Commons is to develop, disseminate, and implement new concepts of organization that result in more equitable sharing of power and wealth, improved health, and greater compatibility with the human spirit and biosphere.**

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**A**t the heart of Terra Civitas are its purpose and principles. They constitute the fundamental body of belief that binds participants together. Any individuals and institutions that subscribe to the purpose and principles in conducting Terra Civitas activities are eligible to be Owning Members.

We anticipate and aim for tremendous diversity among participants – in profession, philosophy, perspective, and approach. Initial Owning Members will be those willing to play leadership roles in catalyzing the emergence of Terra Civitas. They will be individuals attracted to new ways of thinking, those leading transformative organizational or institutional change, and those committed to creating powerful new tools for innovation, learning and action. Among them are:

- **Entrepreneurs and visionary leaders** in many fields, seeking to create businesses and organizations that meet specific needs – addressing local and global environmental challenges, restructuring education, creating new health care systems, coordinating community services, designing new business enterprises, facilitating more human-centered development, promoting peace-building, and creating new governance systems.
- **Consultants, educators and communications professionals** helping people learn about new perspectives and practices, share their knowledge or promote new ideas by creating tools, materials, and programs.
- **Financiers, philanthropists, and influential gatekeepers** exploring new concepts, instruments and systems to the funding and financing of both for-profit and nonprofit initiatives, including activities within the Terra Civitas Commons.
- **Researchers and scholars** working on the intellectual frontiers of science, technology, philosophy, economics, ecology, consciousness research, community development, education, organizational strategy and many other fields.

**I**f this describes you, join us. The initial threshold for entry will be low. Participants are asked to make a voluntary contribution based on their ability and their desire to support the organization and its purpose. The Commons' Council of Trustees, working with Owning Members, will determine an appropriate structure for membership and participation fees as the organization evolves.

# Core Principles

The principles of Terra Civitas are guidelines against which all decisions and acts of the organization and its participants will be judged. They illuminate one another and must always be taken as a set.

Owning Members of Terra Civitas and the Chaordic Commons agree to five basic principles of practice and five fundamental principles of organization. They will:

## Principles of Practice

1. Work to ensure that all people, by right of birth, have adequate necessities of life, including clean air, water, food and shelter; an equitable share of wealth and resources; and opportunity to develop their full physical, mental and spiritual potential.
2. Work to ensure that human capacities, technologies and organizations sustain and support, not systemically alter, degrade or destroy, the Earth, its diversity of life or life support systems.
3. Work to ensure interdependent health and diversity of individuals, communities, institutions, cultures and other life forms.
4. Resolve conflict creatively and cooperatively without physical, economic, psychological, social, or ecological violence.
5. Freely and fully exchange information relevant to the purpose and principles unless doing so violates confidentiality or materially diminishes competitive position.

## Principles of Organization

1. Be open to membership by any Individual or Institution subscribing to the purpose and principles in conducting activities of Terra Civitas and the Chaordic Commons.
2. Have the right to self-organize at any time, on any scale, in any form, for any activity consistent with the purpose and principles.
3. Conduct deliberations and make decisions by bodies and methods that reasonably represent all relevant and affected parties and are dominated by none.
4. Vest authority, perform functions, and use resources in the smallest or most local part that includes all relevant and affected parties.
5. Induce not compel behavior, to the maximum degree possible.

# Practices and Activities

**T**erra Civitas and the Chaordic Commons are fundamentally enabling entities, designed to help participants do things for themselves – and easily to join with one another to pursue common purposes. They will constitute an expanding network of individuals and organizations working on the issues and opportunities that matter most deeply to them while being linked in larger common cause and committed to a shared set of principles.

Imagine a web of dynamic practice infused with deep inquiry, supporting transformational initiatives in health, education, corporate structure, environmental restoration, community development, philanthropy and many other fields.

Imagine an evolving global commons in which business, government, NGOs, the arts and sciences, education and religion, youth and elders, men and women come together using shared principles to create innovative organizations and institutions at every level of human activity.

Imagine a safe harbor for dialogue and deliberation, for the resolution of differences and the discovery of shared purpose, for the collaborative development of solutions to some of our most pressing organizational and institutional challenges.

Imagine a context for learning and discovery – a source of great ideas about organizational innovation – a place to learn about, teach and apply leading-edge concepts and methods for leadership, organizational design and community development.

**T**erra Civitas may be all of these and more. Participants will develop, disseminate and use emerging concepts of organization to address immediate challenges and opportunities (see page 5 for examples of activities by initial Owing Members). By working through Terra Civitas, they are linked to others undertaking similar activities in their own fields or communities. Participants give up no freedom or autonomy, yet benefit from cooperation, collaborative knowledge development, mutual support and information about proven practices.

A core staff will be responsible for general administration and for functions that are common to the whole, including:

- Coordinating activities so they support and enrich one another.
- Creating synergies by fostering connections among participants.
- Managing common properties, such as a technology infrastructure for communication and collaboration.
- Nurturing the intelligence and ability of the whole by helping grow capacities for leadership and innovation among participating institutions.

## **Evolving Landscapes of Practice**

An extraordinarily diverse group of individuals and organizations will be participating in the Chaordic Commons. They are committed to organizational and institutional initiatives in a wide range of fields. We envision the Chaordic Commons and Terra Civitas quickly encompassing:

- A network of educators, learning programs and educational institutions linked on the basis of chaordic principles.
- Health care initiatives that use the concepts of self-organization and self-governance to link citizens, health care practitioners, health care institutions, insurers and payers in new partnerships.
- Community alliances that form around the country to integrate concerns for economic, environmental and community health and sustainability.
- Researchers, thinkers and leading-edge practitioners allied in working groups to advance the leading edge of knowledge and practice organization design, strategic change, corporate responsibility, sustainable development and other fields.
- Leaders and managers in chaordic organizations – or individuals leading organizational change initiatives – participating in networks of collaborative learning and mutual support.
- Evolving partnerships among organizations in business, government and the nonprofit sector to address problems or pursue opportunities that transcend existing sectors.
- Philanthropists and investors cooperating to create new financing or funding collaboratives based on new concepts of ownership, investment, capital and return.
- Multi-stakeholder community groups that undertake community revitalization initiatives, using chaordic principles to organize themselves.
- Business networks that organize around common concerns such as social responsibility, new perspectives on corporate governance, or other issues.
- New international development “marketplaces” where funding agencies, investment banks and philanthropists can learn about and support innovative community-based development initiatives.
- Consultant networks dedicated to developing new approaches to organizational design and development, creative tools and materials, and collaborative consulting opportunities.

These represent only a few of the myriad possibilities. Over time they may all choose to continue participating in the Chaordic Commons, or new Commons may form to focus on specific dimensions of the whole.

# Self-Organizing Structure

Terra Civitas and the Chaordic Commons will grow through self-organization rather than through a centralized decision-making process. Owing Members have the right to create new parts of the whole – whether enterprises, communities of interest, councils or resource exchanges – as long as they do so in ways fully conforming to the core purpose and principles.

Such self-organizing “fractals” are a microcosm of Terra Civitas and carry the full power and authority of the whole in exercising their chosen function. The constitution specifically allows for the creation of:

- **Communities** composed of individuals or institutions.
- **Alliances** composed of one or more Communities together with other individuals or institutions. They may form when issues or opportunities involve more than a single Community, and those concerned want to work on them collectively in a sustained way.
- **Leagues** composed of one or more Alliances together with other Communities, individuals or institutions. Similarly, they will tend to form when there are issues or opportunities that involve more than a single Alliance.

Communities, Alliances and Leagues are fully responsible for their own activities, while observing those common principles and operating procedures essential to the smooth functioning of the whole. They help balance the autonomy of the parts with the need for coherence at all levels of the system. As Communities, Alliances and Leagues evolve, natural organizational hierarchies will form based on actual function and the interests of participants rather than administrative considerations.

Communities, Alliances or Leagues only bind those who participate in them to the extent that participants specifically authorize them to do so. No Owing Members are required to belong to any Community, Alliance or League, and individuals or institutions may participate in multiple Communities, Alliances or Leagues.

On a larger scale, Terra Civitas self-organizes as new Commons form. The Commons might prove to be functionally distinct, or geographically organized, or based on the application of chaordic concepts in different fields of activity. Or they might be conceived on some other basis we can't yet imagine.

The Commons will be both independent and interrelated, unified by their commitment to a common purpose and to a shared set of core principles. As originally envisioned, they would also have overlapping boards, while being loosely aligned through a Coordinating Council that will have no formal power or authority. Participants could become Owing Members of one or more Commons with rights of participation in any or all parts of the system.

# Owning Membership

Those who join Terra Civitas are called Owning Members. In Terra Civitas, ownership refers to nearly irrevocable rights of participation in the organization, including the right of access to common properties, not to a financial stake in the organization or its assets. There are six classes of Owning Members in the Commons, in three major groupings:

- **Individuals and Institutions** can apply for direct membership if they subscribe to Terra Civitas' purpose and principles in conducting their activities within the Commons. Institutions need not operate in accordance with the purpose or principles internally – that is, a private company need not become chaordic in order to join as an institutional participant.
- **Leagues, Alliances and Communities** are centers of activity within the Commons that fully subscribe to the purpose and principles and observe them in all their activities. They must be capable of contracting but need not have the same legal structure as the Commons to which they belong.
- **Derivative Owning Members** are those whose membership derives from their participation in a Community, Alliance or League that is a fractal of the Commons.

Correspondent Members only agree to pay a subscription fee in exchange for products or services, and do not have Owning Members' voting rights in the organization.

In joining, participants will enter through one of six broad categories that we term Origins. The only purpose served by these Origins is the creation of a balanced Council of Trustees. They do not constrain members' participation in any way beyond election of that Council. The initial Origins are:

- Citizen / Citizen Group
- Commercial / Economic
- Nonprofit / Nongovernmental
- Philanthropy / Investment
- Public / Governmental
- Science / Academia

When individual or institutional Owning Members join a Community, Alliance or League, they become Derivative Owning Members of the Commons. Their voting rights – for Trustees, or on the rare issue that requires a decision by the entire community – are exercised by the fractal to which they belong. The participants in that fractal will determine how these rights are exercised.

Becoming a Derivative Owner does not reduce a participant's rights within the Commons. It does help strengthen Communities, Alliances and Leagues in relation to the whole and reduces the administrative burden on the central staff.



# Organizational Design

The design of the Chaordic Commons – and our vision for Terra Civitas – is chaordic. It is modeled not on the machine but on the fundamental organizing principles of nature. It harmoniously blends apparent opposites such as competition and cooperation, self-organization and coherence, freedom and concern for the common good. A few simple perspectives characterize its structure and function. Terra Civitas is:

## **Multi-centric and distributive**

There is no single center of power in Terra Civitas – they are everywhere. The design enables participants to organize themselves at any scale up to the global while keeping power, authority and decision making at the smallest or most local level that includes all relevant and affected parties. The Chaordic Commons, and any others that evolve, will be made up of an unlimited number of participant-led enterprises that create new centers of activity.

## **Self-organizing and self-evolving**

Every Owning Member has the constitutional right to create a new part of the system as long as it embodies the common principles and seeks to advance the overall purpose. Participation is always voluntary, and no one can be forced to participate in something they do not support. Communities, Alliances and Leagues provide a way for Terra Civitas to grow through self-organization rather than through the decisions of a few or a centralized planning process. Every aspect of the organization can be changed as the Commons evolves, sometimes by its Trustees, sometimes by its Trustees and Owning Members together.

## **Participant-owned and participant-governed**

Owning Members govern themselves and the parts of the network in which they participate. All Owning Members participate in electing Trustees to the Council of Trustees. Representation on the Council is balanced to ensure that all categories of membership – and any other Commons that might form – have a voice in decision-making and that no particular interests dominate. There is no self-perpetuating board that governs the organization.

Within Communities, Alliance and Leagues, or any other center of activity that self-organizes within the network, participants themselves determine their own self-governance processes. We expect many different approaches – consensus, voting, and others – to be used. Proven practices can be expected to proliferate.

## **Diverse and adaptive**

There are few constraints on innovation and experimentation in an organization free of self-perpetuating boards, vested interests or the pet programs of management. Rich collaboration can occur. Competing strategies can be pursued simultaneously. One size need not fit all. Good ideas

spread rapidly, and bad ideas are likely to be choked off before they do much damage. Minority views need not fear a usurping majority. The majority need not fear a disruptive minority. All can pursue their objectives in good faith in a complex ecology of continually evolving ideas, perspectives and practices.

**Strongly cohesive, with an unshakable focus on common purpose and core principles**

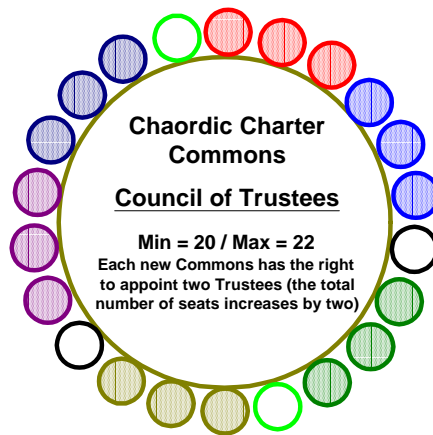
All participants are dedicated to the same overarching purpose and share a common set of core principles. In addition, Trustees have a fiduciary duty of care to the whole of their Commons and the fiduciary duty of loyalty to the whole of Terra Civitas and its purpose and principles.

### The Council of the Commons

The Chaordic Commons has a governing Council that is responsible for those and only those deliberations and decisions that affect the whole of the Commons and its Owing Members. All decisions and deliberations that affect only a part of the Commons are the province of the smallest or most local part that represents all relevant and affected parties.

The Council will initially have a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 22 Trustees, including:

- 18 Trustees representing the Origins of Owing Members (3 Trustees each from 6 Origins)
- 2 At Large Trustees selected by the Council at its discretion
- 1 Managing Director
- 1 Coordinating Director



Each time a new Commons forms, it will have the right to appoint two Trustees to the Council of every other Commons. They in turn will have the right to appoint two of their Trustees to its Council.

Trustees on each Council will have the fiduciary duty of care to the whole of their Commons and the fiduciary duty of loyalty to the whole of Terra Civitas and its purpose and principles.

# How to Become Involved

**D**uring a charter period lasting till December 31, 2000, interested individuals have the opportunity to become founding Owing Members of the Chaordic Commons and Terra Civitas. The first three Owing Members in each Origin have the right, by constitution, to appoint themselves as Trustees on the initial Council. Thereafter, the Council will be elected at the annual meeting of Owing Members.

**A** charter package will be sent to anyone interested in joining the Chaordic Commons. The charter package includes a copy of the constitution and agreements binding Owing Members to the terms of participation it spells out. The constitution has been approved and adopted by the directors of The Chaordic Alliance, transforming the Alliance into the Chaordic Commons, Inc. It will be filed and become effective as soon as the initial Council of Trustees is fully formed.

**T**he Chaordic Commons is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. It depends on a combination of program revenues and donations from individuals and organizations to meet its annual budget. While no predetermined fees for participation in the Chaordic Commons have been established, Owing Members are strongly encouraged to make an appropriate contribution to express their support for the organization and its purpose. Contributions are tax-deductible.

We invite your participation and support. Please let us know if you would like to receive a charter package. For more information, contact:

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