



Dhillon Marty Foundation


Every Decision Counts
State of the Community 2017




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Conference Report



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

In partnership with



Management of
Social Transformations
Programme

1. CONTEXT

The fifth edition of the *State of the Community Conference: Every Decision Counts* took place at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France on 12-13 September 2017 and brought together youth, political leaders, artists, entrepreneurs, diplomats, academia, civil society and representatives of international organizations.

The objective of the conference was to investigate sustainable solutions, anchored in the knowledge provided by the social and human sciences, for our interconnected world to discuss about how to empower the public to drive social and political change.

The conference, organized by Dhillon Marty Foundation, took place under the aegis of UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme, and built on the outcomes of the World Humanities Conference, held in Liège, Belgium, in August 2017.

The title given to the conference derived from the 2016 State of the Community conference's student competition for the *Phrase of the Year*. *Every Decision Counts* was the winner of the 2016 competition, highlighting the significance of the impact of every decision each citizen makes on the individual and on the well-being of society.

The conference operated in English and French, with simultaneous translation.



Visuals of the *State of the Community Conference* editions exhibited in the Foyer at UNESCO

2. THEME

The conference was organized to develop critical thinking and civic engagement to strengthen civic culture, especially among the youth, by revitalizing the concepts of Citizen and Community.

The dialogue revolved around capitalizing on disruptive technologies, evolving perceptions of identity and fresh approaches to democracy to create sustainable well-being for our interconnected global community.

The theme of the event was anchored in keynote addresses and three major panels:

Panel I: Technology: Opportunities and Challenges

Panel II: Identity, Why and for What Good

Panel III: Deliberative Democracy

The speakers debated on the possibility of building a civic culture based on democratic citizenship, often perceived to be undermined by:

- a) technologies of surveillance, control and communication that trivialize public debate,
- b) exclusive and aggressive identities that leave little space for social pluralism, and
- c) the decline of traditional modes of political organization.

The panels exploited the opportunities offered by new technologies for networking and exchange, along with more horizontal forms of politics, which offer the hope of alternative and more fluid identities that can underpin new forms of social solidarity across the borders of states and nations.

3. HIGHLIGHTS

SPEAKERS



(names in alphabetical order)

❖ **OPENING REMARKS**

Sonia Dhillon Marty, President, Dhillon Marty Foundation



The vitality of democracy depends on the strength and viability of its institutions as nurtured by the people they serve, thus the civic conviction of the citizens is at the heart of democracy.

We call upon citizens, especially the youth, to be the change makers that revolutionize our civic values to build a democratic global culture of peace.

John Crowley, Chief of Section of Research, Policy and Foresight and Sector for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO



Technology, identity and the mechanisms and processes of democracy may seem to be separate, but they are actually intertwined areas, in which threats go hand in hand with new opportunities to support societies to respond to the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Inclusive and Sustainable Development. As knowledge challenges and action challenges, these issues are of great importance for UNESCO's Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme.

I agreed to work with the Dhillon Marty Foundation to organize the State of the Community conference because of the great relevance of its topics, especially as it continues the dialogue started at the World Humanities Conference in August 2017, in Liège.

❖ **PANEL I: TECHNOLOGY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The panelists debated on the transformative and disruptive technologies of the 21st century – including robots, artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things (IoT), biotechnologies – which do not just offer new ways of doing things, or even simply new things to do. As they provide rapidly changing options to address needs for security, food and shelter, and emotional contact, and reshape the spaces of democratic practice, disruptive

technologies also raise questions – speculative and increasingly practical – about what it means to be human.

Alongside analysis of technological transformations in areas such as energy, agriculture, transport and information, the resources of the social sciences and the humanities are required to make sense of a world in which technologies are available to enhance human potential – but not equally available everywhere and to all; in which some non-human entities may interact with us in ways that are difficult to distinguish from ordinary language; and in which important aspects of our identities are constructed through participation in algorithmically governed networks.

Georges Képénékian, Mayor of Lyon and Vice-President of the Metropole of Lyon, France



We must move towards an ever more increased participation of the inhabitants and increased information sharing, putting humans at the core of our concerns.

We must build smart cities, cities with a strong participatory dimension, cities with a major environmental dimension, and new technologies are at the heart of these efforts.

Paul-Peter Verbeek, Professor of Philosophy of Technology and co-director of the DesignLab, University of Twente, the Netherlands



Technology is a link between us and the world, changing the way we perceive our reality and behave.

Technology is not about humans vs. objects but how to bring them together in a responsible way.

In this context, how can we put values and ethics into the design of new technologies?

Louis Montagne, Co-founder & CEO, AF83



In a consumer world, IoT, Robots and AI mean user data, automatisations, sales, manipulations, politics, and as technology becomes more and more easy to use, we stop paying attention to understanding it.

This is precisely what we need to check: what is simple must be comprehensible. Democracy needs Code learning and Open Source, so that Digital can safely become part of our lives.

Sonia Dhillon Marty, President, Dhillon Marty Foundation



Technology is changing who we are as human beings. It is changing the dynamics of our personal relationships, our interaction with institutions, and our social and physical environments.

Technology should be accountable to humanity. Thus, we demand technology to abide by the UN conventions.

Marie-Hélène Parizeau, Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Laval University, Québec, Canada



Reflected on the obsolescence of humans in front of the machines, on the techno-cosmos that we live in today and on the power of technology as object.

As such a complex product of our society, the modern technology changes the relationship we have between ourselves and with the nature.

Davide Storti, Programme Specialist - ICT in Education, Science and Culture Section, UNESCO



Technologies are changing our lifestyles and our behaviors. They impact every side of our livings, including political and social institutions.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand how technology impacts our future, cultures and civilization, and, above all, how it can be sustainable.

Divina-Frau Meigs, Professor of American Studies and Mass Media Sociology, Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France



Pluralism and diversity are essential in the way we build information and contribute to the development of our society.

We need to reestablish the humans - technology balance by putting the Internet of Citizens in relation to the Internet of Things to understand our data.

Valerie Ferret, Public Affairs & Sustainability Director, Dassault Systèmes



Technology generates a revolution that is, most of all, social and societal, a revolution of the economic model.

We need to have critical thinking and a free spirit to understand how this new machinery functions.

❖ **PANEL II: IDENTITY, WHY AND FOR WHAT GOOD**

The panel focused on the major role played by identity in contemporary social and political debate. We care about how others recognize and misrecognize us, both as individuals and as members of groups. Most people wish to be able to define the terms in which they are perceived, and may feel hurt or devalued when required to fit into others' preconceptions or stereotypes. On the other hand, overemphasis on ethno-religious understandings of group identity may foster political tensions. Finding a reasonable balance in this regard implies pluralizing identity: recognizing that who we are, how we are perceived, and how we categorize others, are processes with multiple dimensions that respond to diverse contexts and situations. It is important to elaborate a language in which the well-known results of research in the social and human sciences can be connected to public debate in order to provide a basis for an inclusive and civic public culture.

The panel built on the findings of the "Identity, Why and for What Good?" Workshop, organized by the Dhillon Marty Foundation at the World Humanities Conference, in Liège. The findings are available for consultation in the report published online on: <http://www.dhillonmarty.org/identity-workshop>

Lionel Veer, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Netherlands to UNESCO



Identity is a struggle and a permanent process.

The challenge is in finding balance between being unique and the pressure of resembling to a group.

Sonia Dhillon Marty, President, Dhillon Marty Foundation



Since identities are a man-made concept, we are responsible for directing our identities towards meeting our present and future needs.

Nurturing personal identities over group identities preserve peace and enable fluid interaction in our interconnected world.

Bahjat Rizk, Cultural Attaché to the Lebanese delegation to UNESCO



In order to build a society that embraces cultural diversity, we need to fill in the gap between the humanistic discourse and the framework used in political negotiations. We need a framework provided by the writings of Herodotus (father of History) and the charter of UNESCO that combines both political and philosophical concerns, and that gives us the opportunity to negotiate before the clash happens.

Erin Moore, Associate Professor, Department of Architecture and Environmental Studies Program, University of Oregon, USA



The design of the built environment structures the way we relate to one another, it shapes our identities and it determines the movement of ideas and values.

❖ **PANEL III: DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY**

The panel explored on whether we can have a democracy of thoughtful empowerment rather than a democracy of sound-bite manipulation that serves simply as an adjunct to technocratically conceived “governance”. “Deliberative democracy” summarizes a range of ideas and institutional developments that seek to engage the public in thoughtful and informed discussion oriented not just towards aggregation of interests but also, more ambitiously, towards the elucidation of the public interest. How can the normative idea of deliberative democracy, which reflects key democratic values of equal citizenship and public reason, be approximated in real-world conditions at various geographical scales? Can new technologies and new methods of organization, mobilization and discussion play a role in revitalizing really existing democracy?

James Fishkin, Janet M. Peck Chair in International Communication, Professor of Communication and (by courtesy) Professor of Political Science, and Director of Center for Deliberative Democracy, Stanford University, USA



We have a massive need for deliberative democracy to fill in the gap that exists in the legitimacy in our political processes and institutions. Through deliberative democracy, people think in depth about policies and come to a considered judgement.

You do not have to be a philosopher to participate in change and policy making. You can understand the reasons and issues that affect your community.

Yves Sintomer, Senior Fellow, French University Institute; professor of political science and member of the “bureau” (president’s advisory council), Paris 8 University, France



Organizing a good deliberation among lay citizen will be a real advance for democracy when linked to real social and political changes.

Deliberative democracy cannot rest only on top-down mini-publics, as it has mostly been the case until now. Social movements and grassroots democracy are necessary so as to make it practical.

George C. Papagiannis, Chief of Media, UNESCO



One of the key questions is what are the elements, the two legs of democracy perhaps, through which we can enhance and increase our capacity, as citizens, to be more engaged?

Political parties are not the only ones who want to have a say in the way public opinion is crafted and solidified.

What is the state of democracy today?

Stephen Boucher, Managing Director, ConsoGlobe.com



We need to convince our governments to create better conditions for deliberation, as collective intelligence and cognitive diversity can lead to more effective governance.

At the same time, we have to remind ourselves that democracy is the best regime to make collective intelligence emerge.

Go Okui, PhD student, Graduate School of Advanced Integrated Studies of Human Survivability, Kyoto University, Japan



Raised the philosophical reflection on deliberative democracy:

Should we leave it up to well-educated elites to devise policies according to their specialized knowledge? Isn't it enough for citizens to continue the business as usual and only intervene periodically through voting to entrust certain people to implement the right policies for them?

❖ **KEYNOTES**

Keynote Address: 'Making Deliberative Democracy Practical' by James Fishkin, Janet M. Peck Chair in International Communication, Professor of Communication and (by courtesy) Professor of Political Science, and Director of Center for Deliberative Democracy, Stanford University, USA



Besides the competitive, elite, participatory democracies, there is a fourth: deliberative democracy.

Deliberative Polling proved to work in 27 countries in more than 100 projects.

Public consultations should be representative and should be thoughtful.

Art-installation presentation: ‘Our: Collective Future Project’ by **Erin Moore**, Associate Professor, Department of Architecture and Environmental Studies Program, University of Oregon, USA



The best future is one that is bio-diverse.

“Our” is an interactive installation that offers exploration of the physical space of urban habitat and of the role of design and literature in envisioning ecological future.

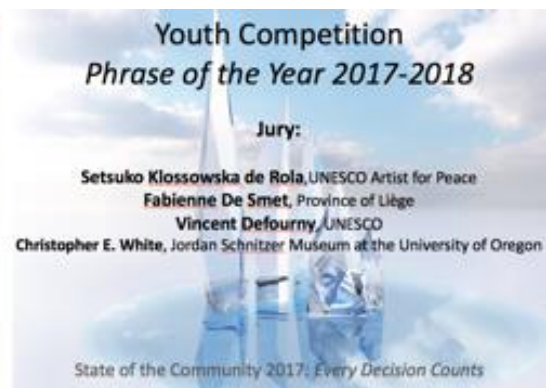
Through Critical Thinking we can create the future we want.

Keynote Address: ‘Humanity and Its Future’ by **Andrés Roemer**, Mexican writer and public figure, Goodwill Ambassador, UNESCO



We live in an era characterized by exponential innovation growth, but in which we still have linear processes thinking. An era with high tech needs experiences of high touch. We cannot predict how the future will look like, but if there is something we can be sure about is that, even in 2100, we will still be attending Rock concerts!

4. ‘PHRASE OF THE YEAR’ YOUTH COMPETITION





The winning Phrase of the Year 2017 is [#ShareYourHumanity](#) by Zoe Van Schoor, from the United Kingdom.

The winning phrase has been selected from 34 submissions received from young people, aged between 13 and 35, from 19 countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Haiti, India, Italy, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Slovenia, Sweden, UK, USA.



Eric Falt, Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Public Information, UNESCO

Announced the winning Phrase of the Year 2017-2018 and invited the jury members to explain the rationale for choosing #ShareYourHumanity.

UNESCO will promote the phrase, contributing to building the #ShareYourHumanity dialogue worldwide.



Vincent Defourny, Director of the Division of Public Information, UNESCO

Through its reference to humanity, the phrase encompasses both the idea of being unique and that of living together on this planet.

#ShareYourHumanity confirms the conversation started at the World Humanities Conference in Liège, in August.



Setsuko Klossowska de Rola, UNESCO Artist for Peace and Honorary President of Balthus Foundation, Switzerland

I appreciated the message of the phrase, according to which we are all citizens of the world, to which we all contribute with our nationalities and cultures.



Fabienne de Smet, Coordination Unit for the Major Events of the Province of Liège, Belgium

#ShareYourHumanity embodies a strong connection between education and social, being in line with the approach undertaken by the Province of Liège in its actions in education, social and culture, in particular. It corresponds to the impetus instilled at the first World Humanities Conference, which has had an international resonance.



Christopher E. White, Collections Manager at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, the University of Oregon, USA

We like this phrase because it prompts action from the public – it requires engagement.

5. OUR: COLLECTIVE FUTURE PROJECT

"Our" is an installation by architect Erin Moore, in collaboration with author and philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore, which was exhibited during the two days of the conference in the Foyer at UNESCO, Paris, France.

"Our" is a framework made of nesting space for the larvae of solitary bees that houses the collective ecological future of the city as written in the future of 100 individuals. Deconstructed into 100 bee nesting blocks distributed throughout the city at the end of the conference, "Our" embodies the boundlessness of the ecological design site in architecture, the biodiversity of the living city, and the indivisibility of our ecological future.



© Erin Moore's Photo by Alecia McKenzie

The art event included a performance by Paris-based opera singer, Veronica Antonelli.

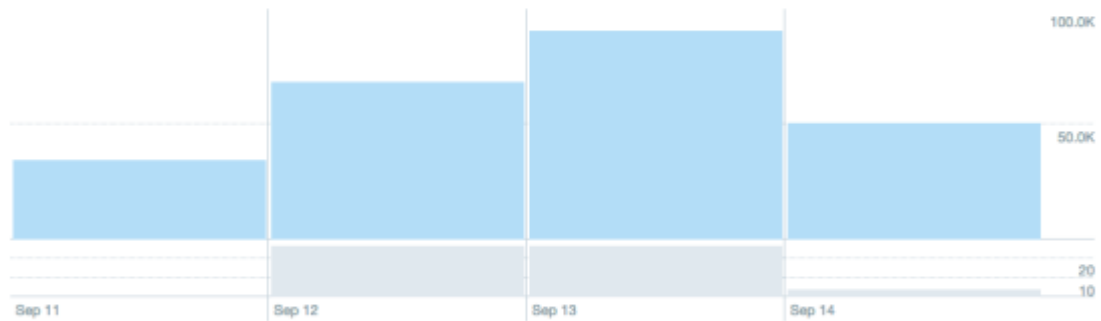


6. AUDIENCE

The dialogue reached a broad online audience from around the world, as the conference was broadcasted live on Dhillon Marty's Facebook channel, and the Twitter conversation kept the participants engaged on the debates.

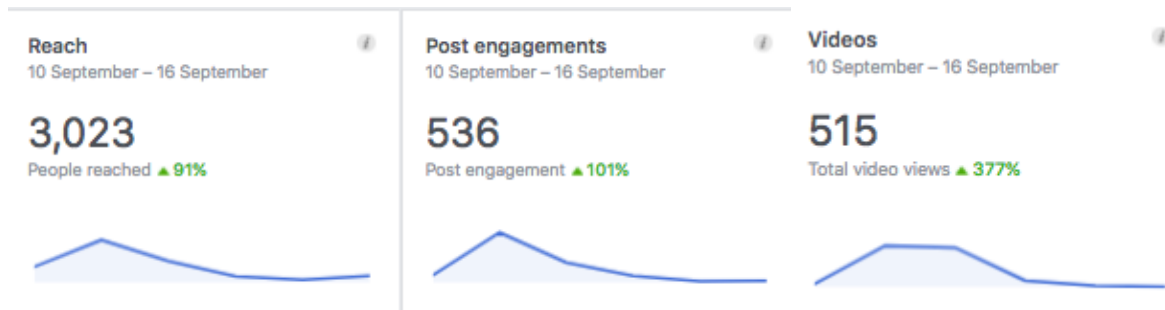
- ✧ **Twitter:** 243.500 impressions and 1640 engagements, during the timeframe of 11th-14th of September, respectively during the two days of the conference, as well as one day before and one day after the event.

Your Tweets earned **243.5K impressions** over this 4 day period



Twitter impressions on the State of the Community conference, during 11th-14th September, 2017

✧ **Facebook:** 3000 reach | **Instagram:** 2000 impressions



On-site, the conference registered 564 attendees during the two days of the event, ranging from youth, political leaders, artists, entrepreneurs to diplomats, academia, civil society and UNESCO representatives.



7. Call to Action

The future cannot be predicted and the technological developments are modifying who we are as human beings, our relationships with others and with our environments. So, our healthy survival can only be achieved through our ability to direct our future in the age of technology. To negotiate this rapidly transforming world, on a daily basis, each and every one of us must be equipped to make choices through critical analysis. Critical thinking is the only chance for survival.

We must build common civic values that enable both the individual fulfilment of human beings and the sustainable development of our society. We will use critical thinking as a tool through which these values can be modeled, and we will build capacity in youth to maximize their energy for building a civic culture that can strengthen and sustain our democracies.

We are taking the dialogue online, and we are inviting all the youth change-makers around the world to [join our Change-Makers Alliance](#) to revolutionize together the values for the sustainable future we desire.

#ShareYourHumanity

Youth Change-makers:

Register & Join the Alliance!
<http://www.dhillonmarty.org>



State of the Community 2017: *Every Decision Counts*

