



SPIRIT OF
HUMANITY
FORUM

Towards a Loving World

Leadership and Governance for Well-Being

Resetting the Compass towards core-human values

Annual Report 2020

Foreword by the SoH Forum team

Since 2012, the Spirit of Humanity Forum has brought together, on a global platform, leaders and change-makers who understand core human values such as love to be the most profound, enduring and valuable aspects of being human. The Forum aims to identify and share ways of improving our access to this inner strength of being. It showcases practical examples of how love, compassion and care in our decision-making can truly transform ourselves and our world.

As we move on from 2020, we are beginning to shape our future together. We have an opportunity to bring new energy and awareness to our decision making, our systems and structures, and our relationship with each other and with the natural world. Our shared longing for connectedness, solidarity, and harmonious living gives us the courage and determination to express deeper humanity and move into a new way of being and acting in the world. In a loving world, each human being is valued for who they are rather than for what they can produce, and the greater good of every creature on the planet motivates decisions at the highest level of leadership.

On this ground, the 5th Spirit of Humanity Forum theme was born: 'Towards a Loving World - Leadership & Governance for Wellbeing' that will guide all our work during the two coming years. During this time, we wish to explore the meaning of love significantly. As Prof Ursula King raised at a regional SoH Forum in Bristol, we feel that our ideas of love have become weak. We need to understand love in a new way, or maybe an original way that has been lost. Ursula said that we had made love small, into something we only keep for friends and relatives, intimate connections. But the power of love is so much greater. We must nurture a different kind of love that can reach out in the world.

We invite reflections and experiences of the meaning and power of love from different perspectives. We wish to show examples of what love looks like when building bridges, connecting differences, creating trust, and overcoming significant problems of when love makes us see with the eyes of another and creates harmony among people.

Together we can move towards a loving world.

SoH vision and strategy meeting

The SoH Forum's Executive Circle, along with members of the regional teams, were to come together at the beginning of April in Kalamazoo for a profoundly spiritual retreat as a foundation for developing the future strategy of the Forum. Due to Covid19, we needed to postpone the Kalamazoo retreat, and instead, we had a three day-conversation online with the Executive Circle and members of the regional teams. It was not easy to take strategic decisions in this setting, but essential agreements on what we need to do and be emerged in a deep, honest, and nourishing exchange, like seeds that started to bear fruit during the year: Regrouping ourselves to enhance decision-making

1. Planning the 5th Forum with a focus on love and well-being
2. Developing partnerships and collaborations
3. Connecting with and nurturing high-level leaders
4. Holding the spiritual torch alive, integrating more spiritual practices into our work and the Forum programmes

1. Regrouping ourselves

A Strategic Circle consisting of a few members of the previous Executive Circle was formed as a smaller executive body to make it easier to lead the work with the Director and Secretary.



Scherto Gill (Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace), Mark Milton (Education 4 Peace), Stefania Olafsdottir (Lótushus), Maureen Goodman (Brahma Kumaris), Michelle Scheidt (Fetzer Institute).

A Global Circle consisting of members of the former executive circle, partner representatives, regional teams. Its role is to support the Forum, be consulted, share ideas, participate in meetings, and take initiatives. We want to allow more participants in the Global Circle as the number of close collaborators and partners continue to grow.



Ragnar Ängeby, Pia Hanson (Höfði Peace Center), Óttarr Proppé, Miriam Subirana, Kurian Thomas (Fetzer Institute), Barbro Esbjörnsdotter, Catherine Allinson, Alan Gegenchatz, Sara Caputo, Eythor Gudjonsson, Sylvie Berti-Rossi (Heartfulness), David Cadman.

2. Planning the 5th SoH Forum



TOWARDS A LOVING WORLD Leadership & Governance for Wellbeing

3-5 June, 2021

The aim for the Forum 2021 was to create a hybrid between an online programme, a physical gathering in Iceland with international guests, and small groups meeting locally in different parts of the world connecting online. We decided to take the final decision about including a gathering in Iceland or not at the beginning of March 2021. [Concept Paper](#)

Hubs and regional participation

Three regional Forums were planned in Geneva, Potsdam, and Argentina, but had to be postponed due to Covid-19. The regional teams including Iceland, decided to hold regional forums connected to the 5th SoH Forum, either before or after the Forum. They all wanted to contribute to the main event. Our team in Potsdam intend to bring high-level leaders to the main event with the hope of later involving them actively in a regional gathering after the Forum as a follow-up and deepening of conversations. So, we started planning for:

1. **Online programme**
2. **Simultaneous hubs** - regional events alongside the international Forum in Iceland
3. **Working with the regional teams/hubs:** Integrating the regional teams in co-creating and organising parts of the program – the program team to co-ordinate this work.
4. **The program group** to propose a program from the concept paper - and co-ordinate the program to be holistic and in a good flow.

Theme to be explored for two years

We decided that the theme for the 5th Forum will guide all our work and all our events during the coming two years. We want to invite many different people to explore the topic together in great depth.

Report from Geneva Regional Circle by Mark Milton

For over ten years, the Spirit of Humanity Forum (SoH Forum) has developed organically, giving space to Life's energy taking part in guidance and decisions. After the SoH Forum 2017 in Reykjavik, Sara Caputo from Argentina said, « I would like to bring the SoH Forum to Patagonia ». A wonderful South American Regional event happened in 2018 as a result of that. After the 2019 event in Reykjavik, Sylvie from Switzerland told us the same, mentioning Geneva. At the end of 2019, a Swiss team of 14 motivated souls gathered in Lausanne, inspired by contributing to a world with more human consciousness and love. All was on its way for an event in February 2021, just after the WEF in Davos, to happen at La Maison de la Paix in Geneva. Covid19 changed the plans! The core team, called the « Program Circle », decided to maintain its weekly Wednesday 9 AM meetings.

Facing global and personal uncertainty, simply by being together, taming and enjoying shared Silence, we embraced the depth of being before doing, listening to each other without the need to necessarily respond, without having to give a point of view or an opinion. Listening, simply being fully present, experiencing and sensing Life, others expression, without the need to move to action or even make sense. Naturally, we slowed down. Silence became a friend we all enjoyed being with and listening to at any moment; it was our musical background. Minds slowed down, our verbal sharing too.

We were no longer interrupting each other. Space was there to close each expression softly. Interrupting Silence became conscious and sacred. Creative Silence was born. This deep listening process, another way of being together, is still alive weekly. Since the decision to hold the June 2021 SoH Forum online, action has been introduced in the process. Two primary outcomes have been observed and nourished. Firstly, the attention and caring of each member to maintain beingness in our doing. We are keeping human well-being at the core of all action. Secondly, co-creating while deeply caring for each other's well-being. It happens when we help ourselves to be authentic and openly transcend our egos. It is a journey and a necessary engagement to celebrate true co-creativity, surrendering our individual contributions to the oneness of a collective co-creation.

With the perspective of its contribution to the June SoH Forum, two working groups have naturally emerged, inviting respective innovative leaders in the same co-creative process. One is on *Participative Urbanism and Sacred Territory*, and the second is on *Media and Well-being*. This the inspiration of the evolving SoH Forum journey. A global movement giving visibility to compassionate leaders, continuing to develop organically, organised with increasing co-creativity.

3. Developing partnerships and collaborations

Nurturing connections with the aim of collaboration

The forum partners feel that collaboration is the way forward and nurture the connections with friends and aligned organisations in the mission towards a loving world. In this way, organisations can be of mutual support for each other; they can pool resources, work together on specific programs and help inspire and bring hope to the world.

With this aim, we have been building connections with aligned organisations like Synergos, Heartfulness, Initiative of Change, Well-Being Economic Alliance, The International Leadership Association, The Lunt Foundation, Home for Humanity and more organisations with aligned purpose.

Guidelines for partnerships and collaborations

We developed guidelines for partnerships and collaborations to make it easier for us to initiate collaborations, develop relationships, and work together with confidence.

Partner	Supporting organisation
Requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aligned in terms of values• Relationship needs to be built, to know each other.• First step to participate in a Forum and then see if interest deepens – we can only understand values through interaction over time.• Actively support the Forum – funding or in-kind.• Representative part of Global Circle• Possibly part of the Strategic Circle	Requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aligned in terms of values• Giving support towards a specific event/Forum• Supporting organisations could become long time partners over time
Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand and strengthen their network with values aligned organisations• Unique contribution depending on the organisation• Co-create programmes and carry out research projects• Co-publish appropriate literature in support of the Forum• Invite their members to the SoH Forum• Place and space at the Forum e.g. workshops• Their organisation is visible on all material as a Partner• Co-create, support and gain exposure at smaller SOH events and Regional SoH Forums	Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A number of spaces secured at the Forum for people they wish to invite• Possible special projects connected to the Forum decided in co-operation• Unique contribution depending on the supporting organisation• Their organisation is visible on all relevant material as a supporting organisation, define exactly where and how?

School project in Iceland in collaboration with Höfði, GHFP, and Lótushús

Leading from within - Courage to live from the heart as a key to a holistic well-being society

We were planning a inspiring school project on well-being and values with 14 - 16-year-old students in Iceland in collaboration with Höfði, GHFP, and Lótushús. Due to Covid-19, we could not start last autumn as was planned. We hoped to go forward with the project beginning 2021, but there are still uncertainties due to continuing measures against Covid-19. See the proposal below. [Fact Sheet](#)

DOC Research Institute

Webinar on the impact of Covid-19 on religious and faith communities, featuring speakers from the world's foremost academic and civil society organisations specialising in religion.

- Katherine Marshall, Senior Fellow, Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University, Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue
- Victor Kazanjian, Executive Director, United Religions Initiative
- Patrice Brodeur, Professor, Institute of Religious Studies, University of Montreal & Senior Adviser, KAICIID and moderator Scherto Gill, Senior Research Fellow and Executive Secretary, Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace.

Heartfulness

Creating Peace Together on UN International Day of Peace

SoH Forum collaborated with Heartfulness in holding a Worldwide meditation for Peace on UN International Day of Peace on the 21st of September 2020. Members of the Strategy Circle sent wonderful video messages of peace that played on social media and encouraged people to create peace together in the world.

4. Connecting with and nurturing high-level leaders

Small dialogue circles

We created a concept for deep, intimate conversations in small circles of leaders from diverse backgrounds having a conversation about Love in Leadership & Governance with an SoH facilitator. A first dialogue, facilitated by Maureen Goodman, came together on the 10th of December and was a great success. It was easy to create, went deep and honest, and was very rich. There is an obvious need for this type of exchange. To have a heart to heart conversation with peers without the pressure of being watched by an audience. The group represented Sustainability, Education, Indigenous Wisdom, Science, well-being, Politics, Peace, and Business. The size will be 5 participants and one facilitator. [Fact Sheet](#)

"I just wanted to thank you for inviting me into this group; what a lovely space that I then found it. One of the things that I have most missed this year is the opportunity to spend time in quiet contemplation with others, as I usually try to go away on retreat (or to do breathwork) two or three times a year. What was particularly interesting about this group was that we are all very active in the world, with all the challenges and possibilities that this brings. That has meant that many of us have been involved in a huge number of public-facing zoom calls, which have demanded of us our wisdom and expertise but have not necessarily dropped us into the kind of deep listening space that occurs when we can come together simply to share what is true or emerging in us at that time.

I think such spaces will be a great resource for leaders around the world, especially as we are increasingly seeking to collaborate." Quote from a participant in the 1st group

- The regional teams of Iceland, Geneva, Potsdam and Argentina decided to prepare dialogue circles and explore similar smaller events focused on high-level leaders and/or youth.

The emerging "SoH Small Dialogue Groups on Love in Leadership and Governance" is an ideal opportunity for inviting collaboration and will very likely be opening many doors as we gain experience developing them.

'A Narrative of Love' conversation series

with leaders and change-makers on love in leadership and governance

Dr Scherto Gill started hosting conversation series on Love in Leadership and Governance with various leaders to prepare for the 5th SoH Forum, an initiative in collaboration with GHFP and the 'A Narrative of Love' research project. This series received beautiful responses from the beginning, and it is published on our youtube channel, website and shared on the social media platform of our partners.

Harvest and share wisdom from these conversations

Besides the wish to nurture and inspire leaders, we aim to harvest wisdom on love in leadership and governance and share with a broader audience to encourage the practice of spiritual principles in life and work. We wish to create a treasure of hands-on wisdom on the topic of love in leadership and governance which can help us understand and to inspire leaders to integrate love and core human values into leadership and decision-making.

5. Holding the spiritual torch – spiritual practice

As part of holding the spiritual torch, connecting with our core values and each other, we started the simple spiritual practice of connecting in silence every week where everyone is welcome to join us. Active silence is also an excellent way to nurture the community of values-based leaders.

Fridays for Silence

Every Friday at 11 GMT, we offer a meeting in Silence on Zoom during 15 with a short guided commentary at the beginning. We started this practice with the Global Circle as part of our practical spiritual work and to hold the **spiritual torch**. Now the whole community is invited to join us in this spiritual practice. Between 20 – 40 participants attend every Friday. It is very touching to see contributors from previous Forums attending regularly.

Saturdays for Silence and Sharing in Iceland - in collaboration with Lótushús in Iceland

The Icelandic SoH Team has been hosting a silent space in Iceland every Saturday on Zoom. Then one participant shares from the heart something about the human spirit for 5 minutes - altogether 15 minutes. Up to 70 people participate every Saturday.

Three Pillars – Silence, Listening & Dialogue

We developed guiding principles for our work. These three pillars emerged as a result of working with the past Forums. It became evident that these elements were essential for creating and upholding a Spirit of Humanity Forum experience.

Silence

In a world crowded with messages, our minds often go in circles thinking the same kind of thoughts over and over again. To see a different perspective and think new thoughts, we need to give the mind a complete rest in between. In silent reflection, we digest impressions, let insights sink in, and prepare ourselves to learn something new.

Listening

We often listen while simultaneously interpreting, drawing conclusions and having our own interests running in the background. But to listen deeply with only a sincere intention to grasp what the other is trying to express is a very different experience. It is a level of listening that can open up for the dialogue and build bridges of new understanding.

Dialogue

Dialogue is about building our understanding of something, together with others, without the pressure to make decisions or be "right." We explore a subject rather than advocate for specific ideas. A dialogue begins when we listen from a space of silence that can welcome what the other has to offer.

Renewal Website

We decided to update the SoH Website. A new system that is much easier to work with and less time consuming, and easier to navigate for users. More like a newspaper. The aim is also to make the community more visible.

Thór Barddal – in memoriam

In October 2020, we lost the Chairman of the Board, one of the founding partners and main instruments behind the Spirit of Humanity Forum, Thór Barddal, from Lótushús in Iceland. Thor played a crucial role in the SoH Forum. Together with his wife Sigrun Olsen, representing the Brahma Kumaris in Iceland, he paved the path for the Forum in a very hands-on way. Their extraordinary generosity, practical work, and important connections opened the gates for the SoH Forum to hold its international Forums in Iceland and establish its base there. They took care of the Forum organisers with royal hospitality and brought in a whole team of hands from the BKs who served the Forum from early morning until late night during the events. Soon after Sigrun left us in the spring of 2018, also after a long-term illness, Thor himself was diagnosed. That seemed to fire up his enthusiasm for the Forum and his general desire to serve humanity spiritually.



The following two years became his most active time with the Forum. He set an outstanding example for us all by having an unwavering outlook of hope and positivity, stable like a rock, always encouraging others, thinking big and wanting to benefit many, never afraid to put in extra work to complete a task with quality. He kept on travelling the world, taking part in many events with great interest. Thor never worried, not even at the end, but he had a constant smile on his face like a carefree king. For him, it was evident that the end means a new beginning. So with his usual pragmatism, he prepared for his coming journey and was able to close all his worldly affairs very neatly with great dignity before taking flight like the powerful eagle he is. It is now time for us to learn to practice the qualities Thor shared with us and not only admire them. Thor was a great sculptor. See his work: [HERE](#)

Although we miss him dearly, he has planted such a powerful seed of dedication, positive vision and faith in all of us that we can feel his support, pushing us to move forward. We are deeply grateful for having had the opportunity to experience this friendship and learn so much from Thór.

