TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION · 2016 – 2026

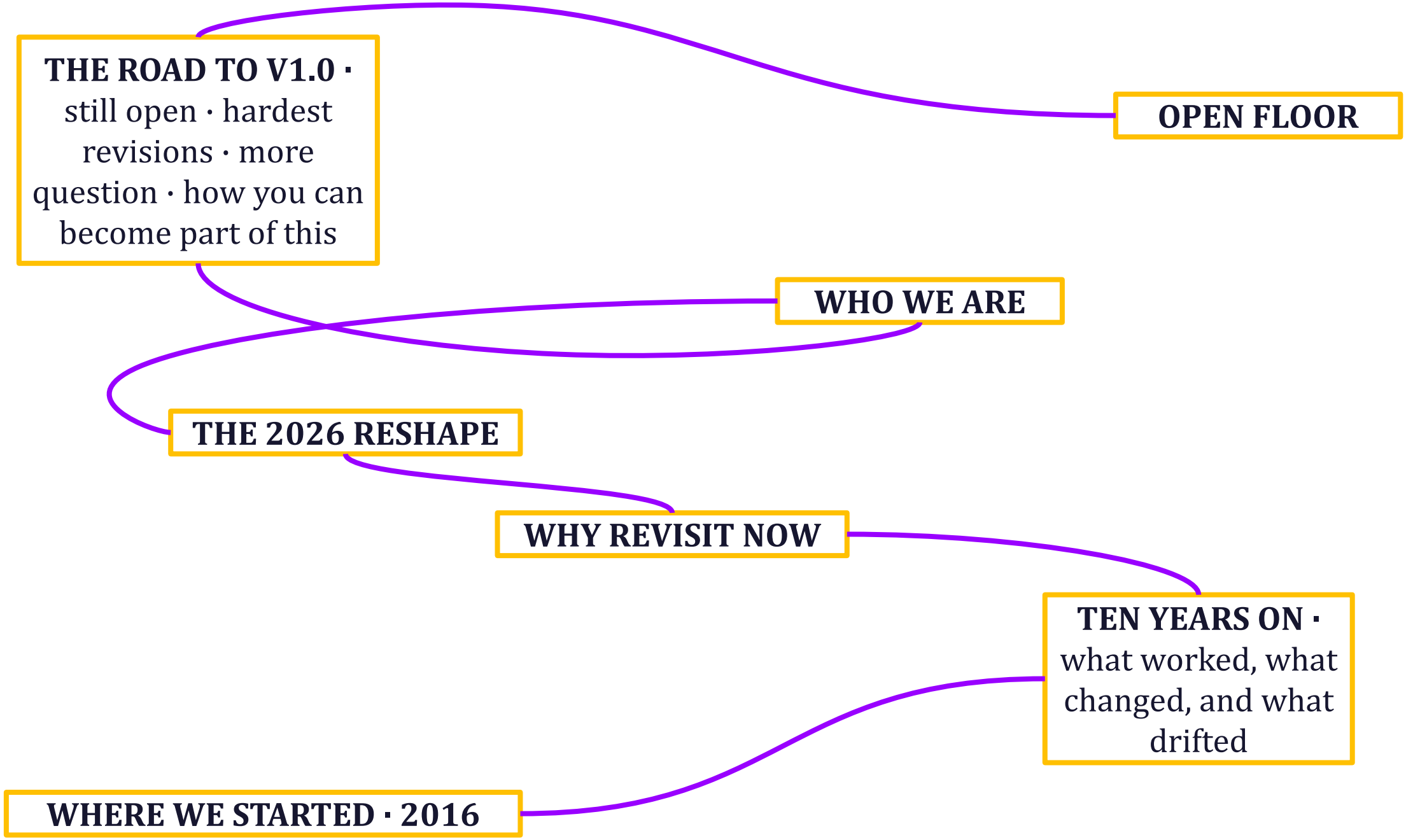
Self-Sovereign Identity

The Next Ten Years

A living community redline – TEN original principles kept and sharpened, SIX new & questions that keep us going [1]

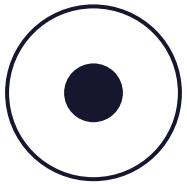
Martina Kolpondinos ·
Kosma Connect | First Person Cooperative| Trust Stackers
with Christopher Allen & from work by the #RevisitingSSI community

Policy Session · Presentation & Open Questions Global Digital Collaboration, Geneva, 2026


THE ROAD TO V1.0 · still open · hardest revisions · more question · how you can become part of this
OPEN FLOOR
WHO WE ARE
THE 2026 RESHAPE
WHY REVISIT NOW
TEN YEARS ON · what worked, what changed, and what drifted
WHERE WE STARTED · 2016



"Any self-sovereign identity is ultimately based on the ineffable 'I' at the heart of identity. ***A system can witness that existence — it does not grant it."*** – *Christopher Allen (2016)*



WHERE WE STARTED · 2016

The 2016 principles

that became the foundation others built on [2]

1 **Existence** - your self precedes any record
2 **Control** - you are the final authority
3 **Access** - no hidden data or gatekeepers
4 **Transparency** - the system is examinable
5 **Persistence** - lasts as long as you want
6 **Portability** - yours to take anywhere
7 **Interoperability** - usable anywhere
8 **Consent** - deliberate, not assumed
9 **Minimalization** - the least needed
10 **Protection** - you before the network

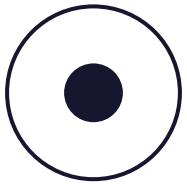
Principles that have to hold for a person to count as a sovereign in a digital space rather than a subject of that space



The overall purpose is dignity, not ownership — you don't own the facts about you, but you're the only valid source of authority over how those facts represent you

“Without that, people are entries in a ledger to be managed”

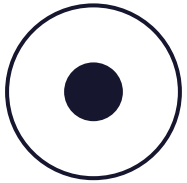
Christopher Allen (2016)



WHERE WE STARTED · 2016

In an **institutional system** the question is whether the requester is authorised

In the **self-sovereign framing** the question is whether you agreed



WHERE WE STARTED · 2016

The 2016 essay set out ten principles[2] to give people control over their digital selves — and they became the conceptual foundation of a field.

10	1,000+
principles, published 2016	academic citations across law, design, policy & engineering

TEN YEARS ON

What worked

Reached binding law

Grew beyond the field

The concept of SSI moved beyond the field of decentralized identity, for example, into geographers[20], ethicists[21], public-administration scholars [22]

Mechanism built

Selective disclosure and consent-based flows went from manifesto to running code

Standards shipped

Decentralized Identifiers and Verifiable Credentials are now W3C standards

A shared vocabulary

The ten principles gave the fractured field of decentralized identity one language – and it is now used well beyond that field itself

Concrete examples

Reached binding law

#2 CONTROL

Agency law - not property law

Wyoming, 2021: digital identity defined as something a person holds principal authority over — which puts it under agency law, not property law, so whoever you delegate to owes you duties and you can revoke [8,9]

#6 PORTABILITY & #7 INTEROPERABILITY

Interoperability – not lock-in

Utah, 2025: under the **Digital Choice Act**, social media companies must give you your personal data record in a portable format — up to $2,500 fine per violation [6,7]

#8 CONSENT & #9 MINIMALIZATION

Selective disclosure - mandated, but bounded

EU, 2024: eIDAS 2 requires wallets to enable selective disclosure - and verifiers must register their intended use and the data they will ask for, and may not ask beyond it [5]
Switzerland, 2024/25: verifiers must deposit their queries and purpose in advance in a public federal register - the wallet warns on over-asking [3,4a,4b]. Either way, the holder chooses, within what the verifier registered

#1 EXISTENCE

Endorsement - not issuance

Utah, 2026: SEDI, turned into a **digital bill of rights** calling identity "innate to the individual's existence and independent of the state… fundamental and inalienable" – the state endorses it, does not create it [10]



FROM THE 1st DRAFT TO BINDING LAW
–
SELF-SOVEREIGN IDENTITY EARNED ITS PLACE

THE 2016 PRINCIPLES WERE SOUND

–

THEN, OVER THE PASSED DECADE, THE GROUND MOVED

TEN YEARS ON

What drifted

Political concentration

Digital identity became national infrastructure — often through mandate, concentration, and single-wallet models

Economic incentives

Behavioral data became a commodity — creating incentives to ask for more than is necessary. Free wallets are paid for somewhere

Technical inference

Selective disclosure provides control of what you hand over, not what can be derived across disclosures. AI made that inference cheap enough to run at scale [23,24]

Conceptual ambiguity

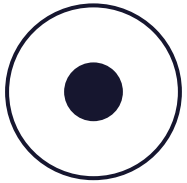
"SSI" became a claim anyone could make. With no boundary for what still counted, the claim turned into a label that protected systems it was written to constrain

TEN YEARS ON

And so?

- **Political concentration**
- **Economic incentives**
- **Technical inference**
- **Conceptual ambiguity**

The creation of ***honeypots*** the architecture was designed to avoid, holding whole populations[11]. The selective disclosure built to put the holder in charge, exercised on ***verifiers' terms***[12]. The consent built to protect the holder, becoming a ***tracking event***[13].



If the principles still work, but the world around them has changed, our duty is to extend them



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“This is an attempt to extend Self-Sovereign Identity, not to replace it — to make these principles worthy of the next ten years.” – *Christopher Allen (2026)*

THE 2026 RESHAPE

10 → 16 (for now)

ten revisited, six new

principles, kept and sharpened

4 layers

foundational · relational · technical · political

The first reorganisation of the principles since they were written

Principles as duties of care

Not a description of a *good* system, instead each principle names who owes what to whom, the obligation falls on whoever holds the power

A living draft

reviewed principle by principle, month after month

Community-authored

THE 2026 RESHAPE · SHARPENED, NEW, REORDERED

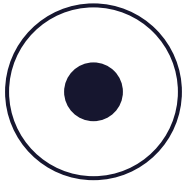
THE TEN — 2016 → 2026

Existence	1 → **1**
Control	2 → **4**
Access	3 → **6**
Transparency	4 → **13**
Persistence	5 → **9**
Portability	6 → **10**
Interoperability	7 → **11**
Consent	8 → **5**
Minimalization	9 → **12**
Protection	10 → **14**

&

SIX NEW PRINCIPLES

- 2 — Inalienability
- 3 — Cognitive Liberty
- 7 — Relational Autonomy
- 8 — Stewardship
- 15 — Equity
- 16 — Anti-Coercive Design



THE 2026 SHAPE · ADDED LAYERS

16 Principles, four layers [14]

FOUNDATIONAL

Principles 1–3

What cannot be derived

- **Existence**
- **Inalienability** NEW
- **Cognitive Liberty** NEW

RELATIONAL

Principles 4–8

Persons, systems & others

- **Control**
- **Consent**
- **Access**
- **Relational Autonomy** NEW
- **Stewardship** NEW

TECHNICAL

Principles 9–13

Testable system properties

- **Persistence**
- **Portability**
- **Interoperability**
- **Minimalization**
- **Transparency**

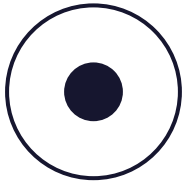
POLITICAL

Principles 14–16

Holding up under pressure

- **Protection**
- **Equity** NEW
- **Anti-Coercive Design** NEW

Under discussion: *merging Access into Control, and Portability with Interoperability. The structure is a draft too.*



Principles 1–3 · the ground everything else stands on

1

Existence

Sharpened – resists operationalization, and refuses foundational personhood for **AI agents**

2

Inalienability NEW

Core **identity cannot become property** – no credential marketplaces, no identity-token trading

3

Cognitive Liberty NEW

Mental self-determination and privacy – as neural interfaces arrive, the skull is a privacy boundary

Principles 4–8 · identity as it actually forms, through relationship

4 **Control**

Meaningful, not nominal – with scoped authorization for AI agents acting at machine speed

5 **Consent**

Deliberate, reflective, revocable – not manufactured by fatigue or urgency

6 **Access** MERGE → CONTROL?

Extended to inferred data – shadow-profiles must be legible and contestable

7 **Relational Autonomy** NEW

Sovereignty over relationships: bilateral consent, unilateral exit, graph privacy

8 **Stewardship** NEW

Caring for another's identity is not owning it – duties scale to the power gap

Principles 9–13 · the original engineering commitments, widened

9 **Persistence**

Surviving the technology, not just the certificates – narrative continuity that survives paradigm rotation

10 **Portability** MERGE?

Open standards; the narrative moves too – where the polity ends, the person does not

11 **Interoperability** MERGE?

Pluralistic, not a monoculture – community issuers equal to governments

12 **Minimalization**

Extended to inferred data and the full lifecycle; anti-aggregation across contexts

13 **Transparency**

Now covers governance and incentives – not just code

Principles 14–16 · how the system holds up under pressure

14

Protection

Expanded to the full coercion spectrum – structural, economic, normative, cognitive

15

Equity NEW

Must not reproduce structural inequality; non-digital alternatives preserved **(Name debated)**

16

Anti-Coercive Design NEW

Coercion – the conditional 'or-else' – works through conditional pressure – do this, or lose something you can't reasonably do without – Design becomes coercive when it sets up such conditions – refusal must stay available, safe, unpunished

***Anti-Coercive Design**: the 'or-else' – refusal must be*

Available

A person must be able to decline a data point, offer less, defer, or walk away. A buried refusal path doesn't count as available.

Safe

Saying no must not mark a person: neither visible to a requester in a way it invites "retaliation", nor stored as a strike.

Unpunished

Refusal may cost nothing beyond the refused request. No flags, no downgrade, no repeat prompt.

Technology paternalism**:** "for your own good" is the most insidious form. Protective measures must be revocable and transferable — controls that pass to the child at majority, not a permanent override.

** Spiekermann & Pallas (2006), "the right to the last word"; applied to SSI by Martina Kolpondinos (2026)

*Distinct from manipulation, which Consent, Protection and Transparency handle

PRINCIPLE 5 · CONSENT

Consent

"Attention is the only non-renewable input. Consent that is merely clicked through is not consent."

The 2016 principle assumed a user who chooses — but choice can be engineered away by fatigue and overload. The open tension is friction: too much traps people, too little makes commitment meaningless.

PRINCIPLE 1 · EXISTENCE

Existence & AI

"Existence is a property of persons. Machines may act and be governed, but do not possess it."

Existence now refuses foundational personhood for AI agents. The tension: keep it a principled distinction — persons are witnessed, not issued — without it reading as a war on agents that legitimately act for us.

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Worked examples: Portability (#10)

A structure from Lisa Dusseault is now used across the drafts

PRINCIPLE

What must be true

Identity information and services must be transportable – the surrounding narrative must be included: credentials, reputation, relationships moves with the person

PROBLEMS

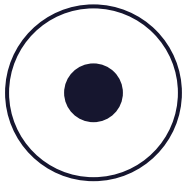
What it addresses

Issuers disappear. People move jurisdictions or change requirements. Proprietary formats turn "voluntary" platform choice into lock-in.

PRACTICE

How it can be done

Open standards, standard-format data export, (credential) migration tools, universal verifier acceptance — extended to relationship graphs with community-issuer fallbacks.



WHO WE ARE

People from across the world · with diverse perspectives · working together

Participants from different disciplines, backgrounds, and roles are **welcome**

Academic & Research Participants
All outputs are designed as citable scholarly contributions

Developer & Builder Participants
Your implementation experience grounds principles in reality

Policy, Regulatory & Legal Participants
Essential perspectives on feasibility and institutional adoption

Advocacy, Community & Lived-Experience Participants
Irreplaceable knowledge about how identity systems function in practice

Early-Career Researchers & Students
Fresh perspectives that often bridge gaps between communities

SO FAR WRITING IT WITH US

Christopher Allen · Shannon Appelcline · Lisa Dusseault · Otto Mora · Gerald Glickman · Rich Streeter · Michael Leahy · Michael Proper · Martina Kolpondinos

FURTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

around 90 members in the signal group · 40 active discussions on github · participants in monthly calls ·

THE ROAD TO V1.0

How this draft is being built

APR 2026

First community redline published — the 10th-anniversary draft

THROUGH SUMMER

Volunteer-authored drafts, reconciled in monthly meetings & the W3C CCG

SEP 2026

Draft presented here at Global Digital Collaboration, Geneva

DEC 2026

…



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“Where we hold power, we hold duties”

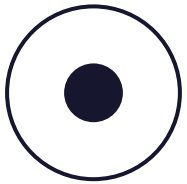
Christopher Allen (2026)

That is what has to be worthy of the next ten plus years

The goal always has been an identity people can still stand outside of

witnessed, not owned, free to say no, not now, or later, and to leave at equivalent dignity

It never was designing about a perfect system or a particular technology



THE ROAD TO V1.0 · STILL OPEN – SELECTED QUESTIONS WE ARE ACTIVELY WORKING ON

Foundational

Existence — How can SSI refuse personhood for AI agents without reading as a case against them?

Inalienability — Should the ban on selling credentials name the property, or the cryptography meant to enforce it?

Cognitive Liberty — Is psychological continuity its own right, or just the border it shares with Persistence?

Political

Protection — Does an existing coercion literature already name structural, economic, normative and cognitive coercion better than we have?

Equity — What should an SSI system refuse to build where no non-digital alternative remains?

Anti-Coercive Design — Is algorithmic ranking the same principle as interface design, or a second one?

Relational

Control — When agents act faster than anyone can review, what stops "authorise the scope, not each act" from becoming blanket consent?

Consent — How cheap can exit be before commitment means nothing, and how costly before it becomes a trap?

Access — If an inference is recomputed on every query rather than stored, what does a right to access it actually get you?

Relational Autonomy — Does social-graph privacy belong with relationships, or with disclosure?

Stewardship — When a stewarded child turns eighteen and inherits ten years of identity, is "reissuance assistance" anywhere near enough?

Technical

Persistence — If post-quantum migration breaks the cryptography, should persistence fail in favour of the person rather than the system?

Portability — When a state dissolves, who issues the fallback credential if no community is left to issue it?

Interoperability — If plural vocabularies still agree at the bridging layer, what stops the bridge becoming the new gatekeeper?

Minimalization — If every disclosure is minimal but the sum is revealing, does aggregation need bounding as a separate rule?

Transparency — If demanding disclosure of money flows drives systems to jurisdictions that don't require it, is transparency of incentives enforceable at all?

THE ROAD TO V1.0 · HOW YOU CAN BECOME PART OF THIS [18]

Read the redline, and tell us where it is wrong

Weigh in on the merges: Access, Portability & Interoperability

Contribute to the anti-coercive design principle [19] or to any of the other already drafted ones

Bring the hard deployment cases that break clean theory

Take a principle, or join at CCG, IIW, and RevisitingSSI.com

Join the Signal Group [14]

Participate in Monthly Meetings [16]

Discuss on github [17]

Become an author

? Merge Access into Control?

Can't control what you can't access. Proposal: fold #6 into #4. Rich Streeter is drafting Access to test it.

? Merge Portability & Interoperability?

Lisa's combined draft treats them as one data-access problem. Decision deferred for now.

? Is “Equity” the right name?

Some read it as demanding a God's-eye view of fairness; “accessibility to all” may fit better.

? Where does the body belong?

Existence reads as cognitive and narrative but barely embodied — and continuity overlaps Persistence.

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Thank you

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&
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Read & Comment: RevisitingSSI.com · **Participate:** W3C Credentials Community Group · IIW

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Thank you

What is you story to self-sovereign identity?

What deployment in your world would break this draft?

Join Us
(RevistingSSI website)

Get these slides
(pdf from gDrive)

Let's get connected
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Read & Comment: RevisitingSSI.com · **Participate:** W3C Credentials Community Group · IIW



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[1] Community questions: https://revisitingssi.com/library/ssi-principles-2026-redline/#footnotes--rationale-for-each-change-since-2016
[2] The 2016 essay set out ten principles: https://www.lifewithalacrity.com/article/origins-SSI/
[3] Swiss e-ID referendum results: https://www.admin.ch/en/e-id-act
[4a] Swiss e-ID - e-ID act (binding law): https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/fga/2025/20/de
[4b] Swiss e-ID - Changes after audit: https://www.bj.admin.ch/de/newnsb/L6Nbf7gStnDm
[5] EIDAS selective disclosure in wallets (binding law): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/910/2024-10-18
[6] Utah - digital choice act: https://ash.harvard.edu/resources/utah-digital-choice-act-reshaping-social-media/
[7] Utah - digital choice act (binding law process): https://le.utah.gov/~2025/bills/static/HB0418.html
[8] Principal authority: https://www.lifewithalacrity.com/article/Principal-Authority/
[9] Wyoming (binding law): https://wyoleg.gov/Legislation/2021/SF0039
[10] Utah SEDI - state endorsed identity: https://sedi.utah.gov/
11] Honeypot claim - Privacy International — *ID systems analysed: Aadhaar: https://privacyinternational.org/case-study/4698/id-systems-analysed-aadhaar*
[12] Selective-disclosure claim - ACLU — Identity Crisis: What Digital Driver's Licenses Could Mean for Privacy, Equity, and Freedom:
https://www.aclu.org/publications/identity-crisis-what-digital-drivers-licenses-could-mean-privacy-equity-and-freedom
[13] Phone-home claim - No Phone Home — public statement: https://nophonehome.com/
[14] SSI Principles Revised (first community draft) - https://revisitingssi.com/library/ssi-principles-2026-redline/
[15] Participation - Signal Group: https://signal.group/#CjQKIGvXAxLVq2z08-ckRWSlUIdRvX95lFh2APQaE0Oh_KFvEhB1R_7kkWDa9Oi3fh7R_I-a
[16] Participation - Monthly meetings: https://revisitingssi.com/meetings/
[17] Participation via github: https://github.com/RevisitingSSI/Community/discussions/categories/lens-discussions
[18] How to participate: https://revisitingssi.com/#how-to-participate
[19] Anti-Coercive Design (new principle) - help create: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1C3zzjFhr_Gkq_H1QXdm4PiVZnWTu5NavsLN0eRKWRig/edit?usp=sharing
[20] Cheesman, M (2020) - Self-Sovereignty for Refugees? The Contested Horizons of Digital Identity: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14650045.2020.1823836
[21] Ishmaev, G. (2020) - Sovereignty, privacy, and ethics in blockchain-based identity management systems: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10676-020-09563-x
[22] Government Information Quarterly- The construction of self-sovereign identity: Extending the interpretive flexibility of technology towards institutions:
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[23] Lermen, S., Paleka, D., Swanson, J., Aerni, M., Carlini, N. & Tramèr, F. — Large-scale Online Deanonymization with LLMs. ICLR 2026 Workshop on Agents in the Wild https://arxiv.org/abs/2602.16800
[24] Chaturvedi, R. & Chaturvedi, S. — It's All in the Name: A Character-Based Approach to Infer Religion. Political Analysis 32(1), 34–49, 2024 https://doi.org/10.1017/pan.2023.6