



agora. a gathering place for shared
conversation, debate, and action

Strategic Plan

June 2020



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**DIRECTOR'S
MESSAGE**

It is my pleasure to share this strategic plan for the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute. Although this plan has been in development for almost a year now, we are sharing it with you in a moment when the work of SNF Agora seems particularly urgent. Events this spring—from the coronavirus pandemic to the unfurling protest movements around the world—are putting into stark relief the profound challenges facing global democracy. It is ever more clear that we need institutions that can create a space for the vital research and learning that will help us make sense of the moment and chart a productive path forward.


The SNF Agora Institute was first created in 2017 with the visionary leadership of our Board co-chairs, Ron Daniels, president of Johns Hopkins University, and Andreas Dracopoulos, co-president of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. With this strategic plan, we aim to begin bringing their vision to life. This document is the result of a long—and still on-going—process of research, consultation, and consensus-building with SNF Agora Institute core constituencies and partners.

For instance, to better understand our opportunity, we researched and/or reached out to a number of similar academic and non-academic institutions to understand their mission, structure, programming, and audiences. We organized individual or group meetings with over 50 civil society leaders, including heads of NGOs in the United States and Europe, advocates, philanthropists, community-based leaders, journalists, and technologists to better understand their needs, existing gaps in the field, and challenges specific to bridging research and practice. We also participated in working meetings with other academic institutions seeking to have public impact to identify and sharpen our understanding of the challenges of doing such work.

To build consensus for our work with key partners at Johns Hopkins, we hosted open meetings for Johns Hopkins faculty. We also specifically organized meetings with ideologically conservative faculty to support our intention to remain a space that is open to people with diverse viewpoints. Over the course of the year, we engaged in a series of more structured ongoing discussions with several departments around campus with whom we expect to work more closely. This included social science departments (especially Political Science, Sociology, and Psychological and Brain Sciences) as well as the Philosophy and History departments, the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, the School of Advanced International Studies, and a few others.

This research has helped us develop a clearer vision both for what the SNF Agora Institute can be, and the institutional mechanisms we need to create to realize that vision. At the same time, as the fast-moving events in the world have shown, our strategy must be ever adaptive to the changing needs around us. We thus offer this as the starting point for what we hope is an ongoing discussion.

Sincerely,



Hahrie Han
Inaugural Director, SNF Agora Institute
Professor of Political Science

**OUR
VISION**

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute seeks to realize the promise of the ancient *agora* in modern times, by strengthening opportunities for people of all backgrounds to dialogue across difference, vigorously contest values and ideas that form the foundation of pluralistic democracy, and act together to have voice in developing solutions that lead to a better world.

**OUR
MISSION**

We are an academic and public forum that integrates research, teaching, and practice to improve and expand powerful civic engagement and informed, inclusive dialogue as the cornerstone of robust global democracy. We work by generating scholarly insights and transforming them into usable knowledge for civic and political actors who can enable real-world change.

**OUR
APPROACH**

Founded in 2017 with a visionary \$150 million gift to Johns Hopkins University from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the SNF Agora Institute draws inspiration from the ancient Athenian *agora*, a gathering place for shared conversation, debate, and action that became the heart of democratic governance in Athens.

Our objective is to translate the best insights from academic scholarship into actionable knowledge in the real world. As we are a university-based institute, our students and faculty are our core constituencies. However, through our research, teaching, and practice, our objective is to impact people who are or will become leaders of the modern-day *agora*. This includes the community leaders, advocates, non-governmental organizations, party organizations, public thinkers, and arbiters of the public information sphere who are catalysts of civil society around the world, and the students at Johns Hopkins who will go on to fill those positions. These leaders of the modern *agora* act as intermediaries connecting people to the political process, to allow proper functioning of the norms, behaviors, and institutions that make liberal democracy possible.

We organize our work around three core functions:

Discovery: At the core of the SNF Agora Institute is a group of Johns Hopkins University-based scholars who will catalyze transformative, multi-disciplinary inquiry to understand democratic decline and resilience, and to identify possible interventions.

Design: SNF Agora scholars will collaborate with practitioners to test practical interventions and translate academic research into usable knowledge for the world.

Dialogue: Created as a forum for broad engagement, deliberation, and education, the SNF Agora Institute will share our work with the public through teaching, training, writing, and convening in order to strengthen citizens' capacity for productive participation and leadership in democracy.

**CHALLENGE
AND
OPPORTUNITY**

Democracy is only as strong as the public's commitment to a set of democratic values, aspirations, and freedoms. Yet, in the 21st century, the norms, practices, and institutions that make democracy possible are fraying around the world. Divisiveness and distrust are replacing basic notions of commitment to a collective good, a willingness to engage in the vigorous contestation of values and ideas, and an understanding of the need to cultivate both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The challenges are not merely about people's changing behaviors, however. They are nested in systemic failures of democracy to meet people's most basic needs, creating opportunities for the rise of authoritarian leaders and ideologies. Exacerbated by widespread economic, technological, demographic, and environmental changes, these trends have brought the vulnerabilities of open, free, and balanced democracy to the fore.

The precise causes, character, and consequences of these trends, which are not unique to the United States but echoed around the world, are complex and contested. Is the fraying of consensus around democratic norms and practices driven by citizenry, political elites, or both? Is it possible for *agora*-like spaces to overcome human beings' inclinations toward divisiveness and parochialism? How has the changing information environment—including the changing speed, quantity, and sourcing of information—affected these trends? Can political institutions, as currently configured, meet the needs of multi-ethnic constituencies? How have increasing rates of inequality, patterns of globalization, and changing migration patterns affected the fraying of democracy?

In these moments, institutions of higher education can provide the intellectual and practical foundations to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by democracies around the world. They can do this by creating multiple, layered spaces that act as the *agora*. Doing so enables inquiry into multiple questions at the heart of making democracy work—for instance, how do we create the vibrant, active civic spaces that normalize values of contestation, and make possible the everyday exercise of democracy? How do we rebuild the foundations of democracy in light of changing economic and socio-political equilibria? How do we realize the promise of self-governance, which depends not just on people exercising their right to express themselves through their opinions and actions, but also on cultivating the practices, capacities, and responsibilities people need to act productively with others in a democracy? How do we bolster the ability of civic and political institutions to become the crucibles for democratic deliberation, action, and leadership they once were?

Meeting this challenge requires an entity that engages in a probing investigation of evidence-based practices to open an increasingly closed space for vigorous debate of ideas among publics, and one that seeks to renew the spirit/ethos of the *agora* in modern times. The SNF Agora Institute steps into this gap, marshalling the resources of Johns Hopkins University to create a vehicle through which we can realize the promise of the ancient Athenian *agora around the world*—by seeking to understand not only the individual foundations of this shift, but also the way they interact with shifts in the civic and institutional sphere of politics.

**WHAT
WE
BELIEVE**

To understand and define how we might realize the promise of the ancient *agora* in modern times, we engaged in an (always ongoing) process of research, discussion, and consensus-building with our core audiences and partners throughout the year. Our goals in this process were:

- *Audience Discovery*: We sought to understand the core needs of leaders of *agora*-like spaces around the world, and what challenges they face in partnering with university-based institutions to strengthen their work.
- *Differentiation*: The SNF Agora Institute joins a wide range of organizations working to improve global democracy. While we look forward to collaborating with these organizations, we also wanted to identify the unique contributions we can make to this broader conversation.
- *Consensus-Building*: As we undertook this investigation, we also sought to develop insight from and build consensus with core partners at Johns Hopkins and elsewhere on the work we could do to fulfill these needs.

From our research, a set of core principles emerged to guide our strategic vision. We also built some consensus around a few early areas of focus.

Our core principles:

- **Democracy depends on a robust *agora* that enables powerful civic engagement, the free and open exchange of ideas, and inclusive dialogue.**

SNF Agora's focus on the *agora* as the cornerstone of liberal democracy defines and differentiates our work, allowing us to probe questions of civic deliberation and engagement, and focus on civil society leaders as our core audience. Focusing on the *agora* allows the SNF Agora Institute to explore the vulnerabilities in civic discourse and engagement in the United States and around the world, and the intermediary, interstitial spaces in democracy that connect citizens to the political process and exist to overcome people's natural tendencies towards parochialism. As Alexis de Tocqueville proposed in the early 19th century, "In democratic countries, the science of association is the fundamental science. Progress in all the others depends on progress in this one." If citizens in a democracy are "to remain civilized, or become so, they must develop and perfect the art of associating to the same degree that equality of conditions increases among them." De Tocqueville, like so many others, sees the *agora* as foundational to making liberal democracy work. Unlike organizations that focus on policy outcomes, the SNF Agora Institute seeks to become a space for discovery to understand the behavioral and institutional dynamics of the *agora*, and a public forum through which to normalize the inclusive dialogue, contestation, and debate that are central to making democracy work.

- **A spirit of collaborative, translational inquiry animates our work. Our scholarship simultaneously meets the highest standards of academic rigor and provides actionable insights for real-world actors.** As a university-based institute, SNF Agora will be able to bring an intellectual permanence to the questions and challenges that face global democ-

racy. Our research, like the best research has always done, will explore in depth the nuances of a complex and uncertain world. Importantly, this research will be conducted in an environment that fosters team-oriented, multi-disciplinary inquiry that puts academic research into conversation with the practitioners who can effect real-world change. The strength of our impact will depend on the quality of our scholarship. Academic research and democratic processes are united by the fact that people must accept uncertainty over outcomes in exchange for certainty over process. In research, academics must be able to enter into inquiry without knowing the answers, focusing instead on a methodologically sound approach. Thus, we are committed to protecting the integrity of the research process to enable our scholars to do problem-driven, solutions-oriented work. We seek to promote and model an environment that normalizes the vigorous contestation of ideas that is central to making both scholarly inquiry and democracy work.

- **Our toughest societal challenges are not just informational, but also strategic and relational. These problems require us to break down silos—across disciplines, ideology, domains of practice, and so on—to enable new translational collaboration.**

The SNF Agora Institute will ultimately be judged by its impact on the public domain. In speaking with civil society leaders around the world, two key challenges came to the fore. The first challenge was about building the cross-sectoral, individual, and institutional relationships that allowed new solutions to emerge. The second challenge was about developing tools to help them navigate strategic uncertainty in dynamic political environments. Addressing these challenges will require more than simply communicating scholarly information in accessible ways; we will need to create spaces that foster the strategic relationships—among faculty, visiting scholars, collaborators, civic leaders, and other partners engaged in complementary work—that are needed to solve our knottiest problems. These spaces constitute a form of the *agora*, in which people develop the muscles they need to solve problems together.

- **Our greatest impact comes from strengthening people’s capacity to act together through teaching, training, convening, and shared learning.**

Given the complexity of the problems we face, we recognize that there are no quick fixes or formulaic answers. Instead, we must develop and train students and leaders who will carry the imprint of the SNF Agora Institute into the world. This includes students who become academic researchers; students who go into civil society, politics, business, and other domains of work; and practitioners who adopt our work to help solve problems in their own fields. It also includes our work as a convener, and our ability to bring diverse individuals and organizations together to deliberate and solve problems. Even as we carve our own unique niche and areas of focus, we also seek to exploit the distributed capabilities of scholars and practitioners in the field in the United States and abroad. The questions we are seeking to solve are too complex for any one actor to solve alone; we seek to become the center node of a network of like institutions, inviting and convening comparative perspectives as we address these questions. As Johns Hopkins has

shown in its response to the global coronavirus pandemic of 2020, our university has the human, material, and technological capabilities needed to become an intellectual center of activity for tackling the world's most challenging problems. Thus, even as the SNF Agora Institute focuses on discovery designed to strengthen the modern-day *agora*, we also recognize the need to collaborate with a wide range of partners who can expand our expertise in needed areas.

Although the precise areas of research will emerge and evolve in part as the faculty and fellows come on board, the SNF Agora Institute has developed preliminary areas of substantive focus. These extend existing areas of strength at Johns Hopkins, and represent consensus choices with a core set of departments. We have left them intentionally broad to allow us to select from a wide range of top scholars, who will enable us to narrow our focus in coming years.

- *Challenges of Multi-Ethnic Democracy, Race, Inequality*: A central challenge for any modern democracy is managing the dynamics of race and ethnicity, class and inequality, migration, group identities (including gender and sexuality), community and urban dynamics, and forms of structural inequality in shaping, interacting with, making possible, and challenging the realization of democracy in global contexts and the U.S.
- *Institutions of Democracy Under Stress*: The technological, economic, informational, and demographic changes of the 21st century have stressed institutions of democracy around the world, particularly as related to their ability to incorporate and/or foster civic engagement and inclusive discourse. We imagine seeking scholars who study the dynamics of states and state contexts; political, civic, social, and economic organizations, institutions, movements, and networks, as well as their role in shaping, interacting with, constraining, making possible, and challenging the realization of democracy in global contexts or the U.S.
- *Social Cognition/Political Psychology*: Understanding how to strengthen democracy depends on understanding the behavioral, psychological, and moral underpinnings of human cognition and social behavior. We seek scholars of social cognition or political psychology who examine the cognitive and psychological foundations of social and collective behavior, especially as it relates to questions about civic engagement and inclusive discourse across the globe or in the U.S.

OUR IMPACT

To help us assess the extent to which our work is having impact, we have identified a set of observable goals:

■ **Our scholarship shapes and informs efforts to solve public problems.**

We can observe the ways the scholarship produced by SNF Agora faculty and fellows is used in the public domain, including through changes to laws, policies, and practices that are reflective of the solutions we devise. These solutions will be disseminated through multiple mechanisms, including scholarly and public writing; teaching and training; case studies, action tanks, live events, webinars, and other products; and partnerships with academics and practitioners all over the world. In all of this work we will seek to leverage new technologies to share ideas in multiple formats.

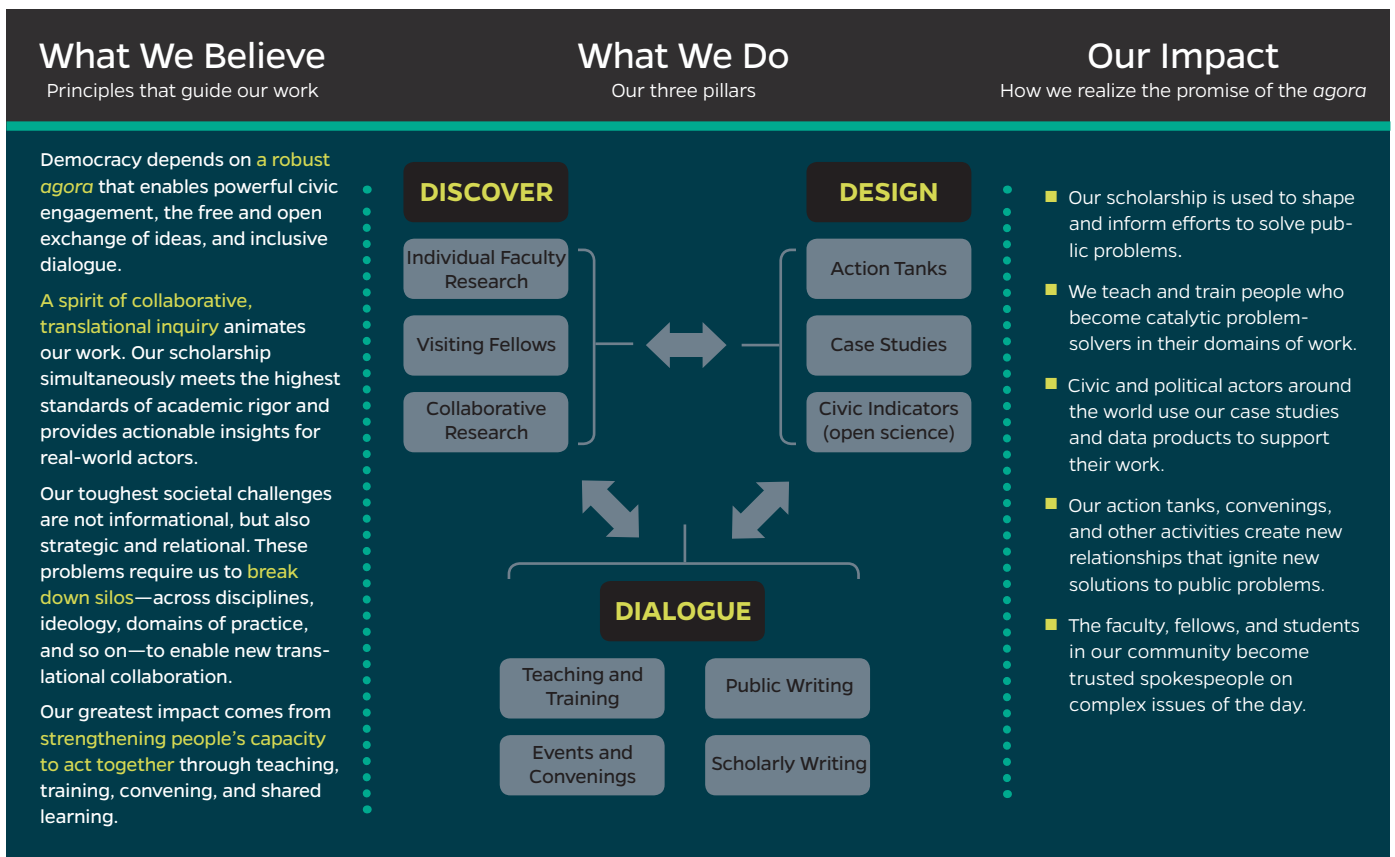


FIGURE 1. The SNF Agora Institute’s guiding principles, programs, and goals

- **We teach and train people who become catalytic problem-solvers in their domains of work.**

As we develop our curricular and training programs, we can examine the numbers, behaviors, and roles of people taught and trained by the SNF Agora Institute. This includes students (who may go on to do research in other academic venues or become civic and political leaders), practitioners, scholars, and others who participate in our programs.

- **Our action tanks, convenings, and other activities forge relationships that ignite new solutions to public problems.**

A key part of our impact is moving people out of ideological silos and into shared problem-solving. We can observe new partnerships that are forged to tackle complex problems at the local, national, and global level, to solve problems of democracy in the United States and around the world.

- **Civic and political actors around the world use our case studies and data sets to support their work.**

We will design a set of products/services to be used by scholarly and public audiences who may not interact directly with us. These include case studies and data sets that can be used for education, inquiry, and strategy development in a range of domains. We can observe the various users and their uses of these offerings.

- **The faculty, fellows, and students in our community become trusted spokespeople on complex issues of the day.**

We can observe indicators of the extent to which academic and public audiences turn to our faculty and fellows as trusted experts on key issues. We can also observe what roles our students take on as leaders in their fields.

**WHAT
WE DO**

Below we describe our work in more detail through a discussion of each of the SNF Agora core functions—discovery, design, and dialogue—and accompanying strategies.

DISCOVERY

The SNF Agora Institute will bring together world-class researchers, from across a range of disciplines, who are thinking about the causes of the decline of democracy and identifying actionable solutions. The process of shared academic discovery is the underpinning that enables our institute to examine these issues broadly and over time, and to engage in truly transformative inquiry.

Key Strategies:

- Identify, recruit, and retain the highest quality faculty
- Develop institutional mechanisms to provide resources and support for scholarship that meets the highest standards of academic rigor and to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Integrate SNF Agora faculty with existing faculty at Johns Hopkins and the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences to expand scope and impact of work and to build on existing institutional strengths
- Expand SNF Agora's reach by providing access to a community of visiting fellows who participate in the institute through short-term engagements
- Create an institutional culture that supports scholarship with a diverse range of perspectives and cultivates the open and free exchange of ideas
- Become the center of a node of like scholars and institutions around the world doing related work, so that we multiply our impact not only through the people involved in the institute but also through the partnerships we create

Related Programs and Activities:

Faculty hires. The institute will hire 10 full-time faculty members from a variety of disciplines who will hold tenure-track/tenured and endowed positions and form our academic core. Our researchers will engage in intense interaction with one another, and will also be fully integrated into the university, contributing to their respective academic departments, teaching graduate and undergraduate students, and engaging in public-facing work.

We will use a few key principles to guide faculty hiring: quality and rigor of scholarship; alignment with both SNF Agora's and the respective department's mission; demonstrated commitment to a multi-disciplinary environment; and demonstrated commitment to teaching and advising both undergraduate and graduate students. As part of Johns Hopkins University, the SNF Agora Institute is proud to adopt the university's principles of academic freedom for all of its faculty (see appendix A).

As hiring evolves, we will identify key areas of scholarly focus where the SNF Agora Institute can become a preeminent leader.

Integration across the university. The institute will create mutually beneficial partnerships with cognate departments across the university. We hope that SNF Agora will be seen as an asset to existing departments. Formal mechanisms to ensure integration include:

- Faculty affiliates: The SNF Agora Institute will create a faculty affiliates program for Johns Hopkins faculty to coordinate with us. Affiliated faculty will have access to SNF Agora resources, such as opportunities to shape public events, speaker series, action tanks, and other activities; early access to certain funding programs; and invitations to certain events. In exchange, we will ask affiliates to commit to participating in the SNF Agora seminar series, contributing to our case study program, and so on.
- Academic seminars: SNF Agora will host a regular seminar series for internal and external scholars to share work and participate in academic talks with faculty and graduate students from across disciplines.
- Graduate student support: The institute will offer departments financial resources to support additional graduate students, which will enable more faculty research.
- Co-location: Many non-SNF Agora faculty doing complementary work will co-locate into the building, creating a community at scale of scholars dedicated to the interplay of ideas and action in the world. We hope their proximity will expand SNF Agora's intellectual focus, as well as their own, and amplify our ethos of ongoing scholarly engagement with the Hopkins community and the world.

Broadening our academic community. A robust program of visiting fellows will enable the institute to expand its reach, broaden its scope, and plug gaps in its research and teaching efforts. When fully up and running, this program will host a minimum of 10 visiting fellows from a range of domains, including academia, government, civil society, media, industry, the arts, and elsewhere. This program will include:

- Longer-term appointments of senior fellows who contribute full time to the mission of the institute through teaching, scholarship, and public events
- Shorter-term appointments, ranging from one week to an entire year, of resident and research fellows who will:
 - o Work with SNF Agora faculty on a specific project, or participate in a community of practice “action tank”
 - o Teach, train, write cases, or do other work that provides a match between their interests and the institute's needs

Space has been allocated in the building to integrate fellows in a meaningful way among the full-time faculty and staff.

DESIGN

Through action tanks, case studies, and other projects and programs, the SNF Agora Institute will bring empirical research to bear on core questions facing governments, policy leaders, civil society leaders, and others. Working with these partners, SNF Agora will identify challenges and design research studies that will enable them to prototype and test solutions on the ground.

Key Strategies:

- Create “action tanks” or formalized mechanisms through which real-world practitioners and multi-disciplinary groups of scholars can work together in sustained fashion to solve discrete public problems that relate to SNF Agora’s mandate
- Develop case studies that provide practitioners with readings and teaching tools they can use to inform and strengthen their own practice
- Support the development of “go-to” open-source data on the modern-day *agora*
- Support an organizational culture that upholds the following values:
 - Cultural norms and a work environment that fosters collaboration and applied problem-solving
 - An environment that is equally welcoming to non-university civic and political stakeholders regardless of background
 - Respect and support for a diverse range of perspectives

Related Programs and Activities:

Action tanks. Variously called “working groups” or “communities of practice,” the action tanks build on the model of Harvard Kennedy School’s “executive sessions.” The assumption underlying these action tanks is that to solve the most complex problems confronting our democracy, the challenge is not just for scholars to develop insights, but also to figure out how to make those insights actionable for the real world. Thus, we need mechanisms that bring together thinkers and leaders from a wide range of domains to work collaboratively to solve problems. Action tanks are characterized by:

- Long-term time frame: Groups will convene over a longer time horizon in order to develop insights that fundamentally transform and advance that field.
- Diverse group composition: Groups will be comprised of 30 to 40 experienced, creative, and collaborative leaders such as crisis managers, leaders of state courts, police chiefs, and many others.
- High level group commitment: Groups will commit to analyzing, experimenting, and learning together, during and in-between meetings over a multi-year period (Figure 2).
- Virtuous feedback structure: Groups will create opportunities for positive learning feedback loops between scholars and practitioners that foster the development, testing, and refinement of solutions to problems in the real world.

Universities have been increasingly developing such models; at SNF Agora, we imagine a process something like the following:

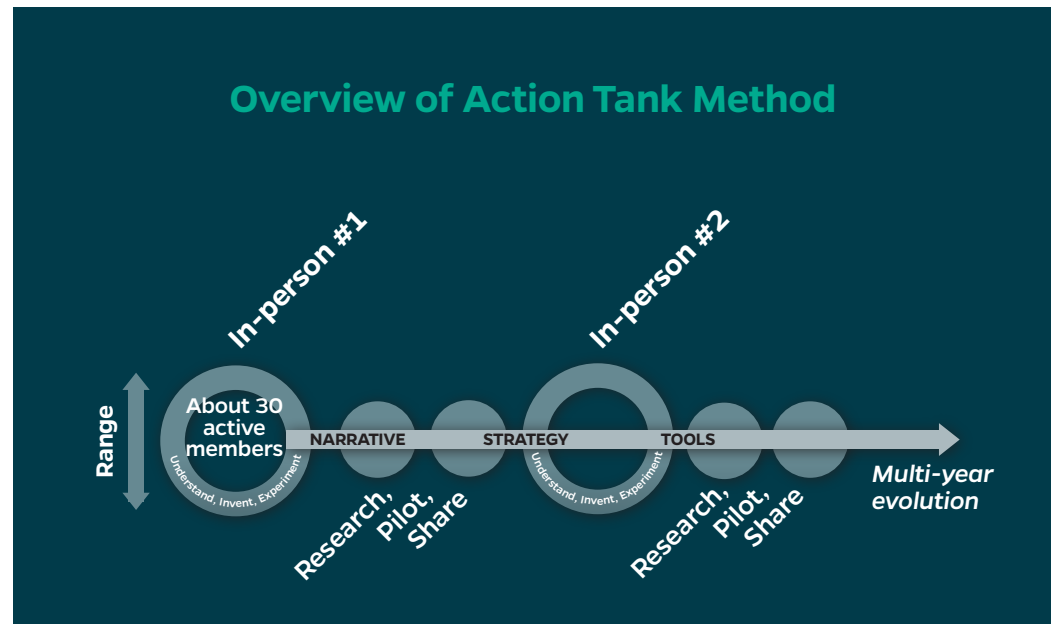


FIGURE 2. SNF Agora action tanks will commit to analyzing, experimenting, and learning together over a multi-year effort.

Success will depend on selecting participants who:

- Represent diverse approaches from relevant domains
- Have a track record of accomplishment in their areas
- Have the ability in their fields to pursue change based on our findings
- Have demonstrated openness to new ideas, approaches, and partners
- Have the potential to carry insights and contributions forward for years to come

After an initial pilot program, we anticipate having one or two action tanks working at any given time, led by faculty from the institute, and focused on solving problems together with practitioners.

Case studies. We will develop a range of case studies on democracy that can be used in both formal and informal settings by civic educators, researchers, and organizational leaders. Just as case studies in business school feature real world challenges faced by business leaders, these case studies will show how civic and political actors navigated real-life challenges related to democracy, and can serve as another publicly available tool that makes sense of the scholarly insights generated in the institute.

These case studies will be developed by a mix of core faculty, visiting fellows, research team members, and others and will cover a variety of topics. We expect practitioners, teachers, organizational leaders, and trainers working with civic and political leaders,

students, and trainees to use our case studies to deepen their skills, to develop insights about how to approach strategic choices and dilemmas, and to get to know each other better and work together more effectively. These cases will also be appropriate for curricular use, especially at the college level.

Open-source civic indicators. In the 21st century, ideas are often encoded into data, meaning that a free and open exchange necessitates open data. The SNF Agora Institute will explore the possibility of becoming an incubator for open source civic data, taking advantage of existing capabilities at Hopkins in groups like IDIES and Center for Civic Impact.

This data would track everything from people's civic engagement to their affective orientations to each other and politics. It would also use newly available geo-coding techniques to link individual survey responses to neighborhood and community-level data on the availability of civic spaces (such as libraries, parks, public museums, and so on) and civic opportunities. Such a dataset would create the first in-depth picture of civic engagement and discourse across the country and around the world, and would enable us to create heat maps of polarization, engagement, and opportunity.

A pilot data project will roll out in FY21 to test this approach and to help develop data capabilities on the SNF Agora team.

DIALOGUE

The SNF Agora Institute is committed to being a forum for open and productive engagement, deliberation, and education, and we welcome the free exchange of ideas from all viewpoints. Through our courses, trainings, symposia, conferences and workshops, publications, lectures, author talks, and other activities, we will share the best research-oriented social science with students, policy makers, and the broader public. In doing so, we aim both to model and develop the skills citizens require for participation and leadership in democracy. We are particularly interested in highlighting pockets of democratic resilience in this context, in order to identify and scale solutions for the challenges we face together.

Key Strategies:

- Develop and coordinate a variety of educational offerings and opportunities for students
- Provide training for leaders from civil society
- Convene scholars and other thought leaders in a variety of forums and formats to teach, train, deliberate, and debate
- Develop a culture that seeks out and welcomes diverse perspectives in public conversations and convenings
- Utilize a variety of traditional, digital, and social media platforms to disseminate insights, dialogue, and training widely, including the development of digital content
- Create a network of partners to amplify the work of the institute

Related Programs and Activities:

Curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. SNF Agora will ensure that there are ample opportunities for students to learn the knowledge and skills needed to engage as productive and engaged citizens. In addition to regular coursework and research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, the institute is considering a range of different types of structured curricular programs we might develop.

Student grants and research opportunities. To engage students more fully with SNF Agora research, and to help with skill development, we will fund research assistant opportunities with core faculty and visiting fellows. We will also launch a student grant program to fund student research and other activities that align with our mission.

Convenings on campus and beyond. SNF Agora will host a variety of events, with different formats, audiences, and venues and locations around the world. In all cases, we will seek to ensure that participants and audience members feel welcome and heard regardless of background or views. These convenings will include:

- **General events/programming:** Held both on and off campus, these can include training sessions, panel conversations, lectures, book talks, dinner series, webcasts, and more. Examples include our “SNF Agora Conversations” webcasts, “Democracy Dialogues” series, SNF Agora Book Talks, and our 2020 election year training workshops.
- **Large public conferences:** The institute will convene annual conferences in the United States and abroad to tackle critical topics in depth and to share with a larger audience. These conferences will provide an opportunity for scholars from the institute to engage with a variety of thought leaders from across academia and the real world to explore issues, to spotlight groups/programs that are succeeding in promoting engagement or dialogue, and to model debate.

Publication. Publishing is at the core of academic work, and at SNF Agora, scholars will continue to publish books, articles in peer reviewed journals, etc. But we will also encourage and support our faculty as they engage with the public through blogs, op-eds, social media, and other public forums to ensure that their work is translated and amplified to an audience beyond academia. The institute will provide support for these efforts, enabling scholars to develop broader reach and impact for their work.



OUR BUILDING

The SNF Agora Institute draws its name from the ancient Athenian *agora*, a central space in the city that was a place of open conversation and debate for all citizens. Designed by world-renowned architecture firm Renzo Piano Building Workshop, our new building on Johns Hopkins University's Homewood campus will pay homage to the ancient Athenian *agora* by creating a space for civic engagement and informed, inclusive dialogue in the modern era.

Piano designed the building to be a portrait of the institute, telling the story of our work and serving as a portal for the community to connect with us. The design draws from principles of openness, accessibility, and harmony with nature. Two “floating” glass cubes will create transparency between the inside of the building and the broader world outside. One side of the building will support our scholarly work, housing faculty offices, labs, classrooms, meeting and seminar rooms, and co-working spaces. The other will be a gathering place with several *agora*-like spaces for conferences, speaker presentations, art exhibitions, and other events. Specifically, the building will include:

- Private offices for faculty
- Shared offices for visiting fellows
- Open workspace for staff and research teams
- Small and large labs for collaboration
- Small, medium, and large meetings rooms
- Classrooms
- A large community convening space for conferences, events, and meetings
- Community breakout rooms
- Amenities for gatherings such as a café, outdoor seating, large kitchen/dining area for faculty/staff, comfortable soft seating areas and lounges

The new building, which will be LEED Platinum certified and landscaped to reflect the natural environment of the mid-Atlantic region, promises to be an iconic structure for Johns Hopkins and for Baltimore.

APPENDIX A:**Academic
Freedom
at Johns
Hopkins**

Academic freedom is the wellspring of an open and free university.

Academic freedom protects the right to speak and create, to question and dissent, to participate in debate on and off campus, and to invite others to do the same, all without fear of restraint or penalty. It is designed to afford members of the community the broadest possible scope for unencumbered expression, investigation, analysis, and discourse. Indeed, among the measures of an academic community is its success in creating a culture of active discussion and debate, one where its members open themselves to the views of others, even when those views are provocative or unfamiliar.

Our university is committed to the steadfast protection of the right to academic freedom. This commitment emerges from the university's time-honored role in the creation of knowledge and the sifting and winnowing of ideas. Without full and vigorous protection of this principle, the university's capacity to discharge its hallowed mission would be compromised.

However, academic freedom is not unbounded. As with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, on whose precepts it is based, academic freedom does not guarantee the right to defame or threaten, to deface or harass, or to incite violence or infringe on privacy. And reasonable and viewpoint-neutral rules for the time, place, and manner of expression are a legitimate way to ensure the orderly conduct of the university.

Further, academic freedom entails academic responsibility. There is no right to plagiarize or otherwise engage in academic or scientific misconduct. The exercise of judgment on the basis of professional criteria and the highest intellectual standards, in matters such as academic quality and performance evaluations, is both permissible and necessary. Even so, limits such as these, essential to the functioning of the university, should be seen as narrow exceptions to the presumption of open and vigorous expression.

A professional and respectful exchange of views is integral to creating a positive environment for learning, teaching, and research. Each of us has a critical role to play in cultivating a climate of intellectual diversity, dignity, and respect. But academic freedom necessarily permits the expression of views that even the vast majority of the community may find misguided, ignorant, or offensive. The appropriate response to such statements in an academic setting is not to censor or punish, but to challenge, criticize, and persuade.

Johns Hopkins continues to expand its connections to a range of partnerships with external entities. Some funding sources may seek to control data and research findings or to limit their dissemination. And the university's mission, its influence, and its presence reach far beyond the traditional campus, to countries and cultures and institutions that do not share the same understanding of free speech and academic freedom principles. In these situations, special care must be taken to maintain the university's core principles of free and independent inquiry.

Johns Hopkins was home to the early development of the concept of academic freedom in this country. The torch of free inquiry is a critical part of our heritage and our mission. Each of us, in our time as members of this community of scholars, bears a responsibility for nurturing its flame, and passing it on to those who will follow.

**Johns Hopkins
University's
statement on
academic freedom
can be found at
<https://provost.jhu.edu/about>**

APPENDIX B:
Landscape
Review

A number of different kinds of organizations around the world are tackling the challenge of strengthening democracy. As we defined our place and strategic direction, it was important to understand this landscape. Figure 3 provides a high-level map of two types of organizational clusters: those that are housed in university settings and those that are not.

The clusters of organizations that sit outside of university settings can be further divided into two sub-categories: non-governmental-organizations (NGOs) and research-based organizations, including think tanks. Such organizations share a set of unique capacities that differentiate them from the SNF Agora Institute.

- First, because these organizations sit outside university environments, they are able to be relatively more nimble than academic institutions in responding to current news cycles or current trends.
- Second, NGOs that are not driven by the notion of inquiry can be focused on the production and dissemination of particular products, outcomes, or methods. Often, this focus makes these organizations stronger at implementation than university-based centers might be.
- Third, historically, many of the research-based organizations and think tanks have evolved to have a partisan bent or particular issue or policy focus that drives their work. This focus is reflected both in their funding streams and areas of work.
- Fourth, many of these organizations develop particular strengths in either research (and communications), teaching (and training), or practice (and implementation), but few have the institutional scope to integrate all three.

Each of these differentiating factors represent natural opportunities for partnership for the SNF Agora Institute, as outlined in Figure 4.

Figure 3 also further subdivides organizations that sit in university settings into three sub-categories: public policy schools, curricular or co-curricular university centers, and research-focused university centers. Like SNF Agora, all of these organizations draw on the strengths of university settings. Each of them is slightly different as well.

- Public policy schools are similar to the SNF Agora Institute in that they integrate research, teaching, and practice. As free-standing schools within a university, however, all of these public policy schools have a scale and scope that far outweighs the SNF Agora Institute's. In addition, as public policy schools, their focus is often on policy and policymaking, as opposed to the civic processes that underlie the *agora*. The one exception to this focus on policy and policymaking might be the Tisch School of Civic Studies at Tufts University in Boston. Although they are not technically a school of public policy, they are institutionally similar because they are a free-standing school, unlike SNF Agora.
- Curricular and co-curricular university centers include a number of different centers that are focused primarily on providing curricular and co-curricular experiences for students.

This category includes but is not limited to: (a) the network of Institutes of Politics at universities around the country; and (b) co-curricular centers and programs focused on providing service and civic opportunities for students. As centers focused primarily on students, these centers are similar to SNF Agora because they produce and curate learning opportunities for students. They are distinct, however, primarily because they do not have a focus on research.

- Research-focused university centers have also burgeoned in recent years and are probably institutionally most similar to the SNF Agora Institute. In fact, in a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nicholas Lemann, director of the Columbia World Projects (CWP), notes that the magnitude of the societal challenges have pushed universities to reconsider cloistered approaches to scholarship and create centers like SNF Agora and CWP that are focused on translating scholarship to impact. Like SNF Agora, all of these centers have scholarly research at the center. They are distinct, however, because the centers vary in the extent to which they also focus on the translational work of integrating research and practice, and the extent to which they have a particular focus on democracy. Very few of these centers also hold faculty lines.

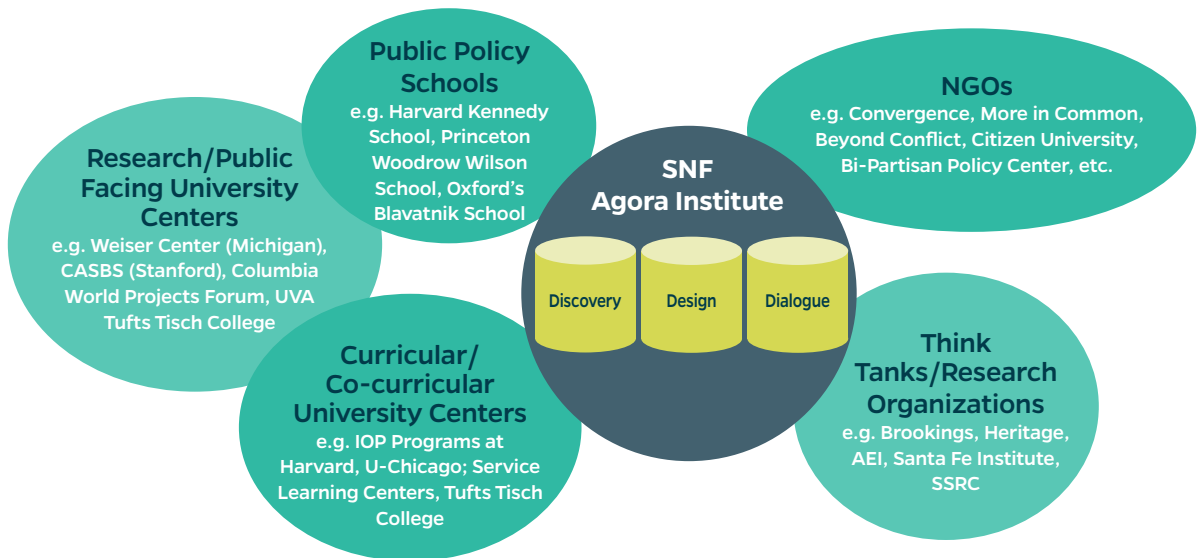


FIGURE 3. Types of Organizations

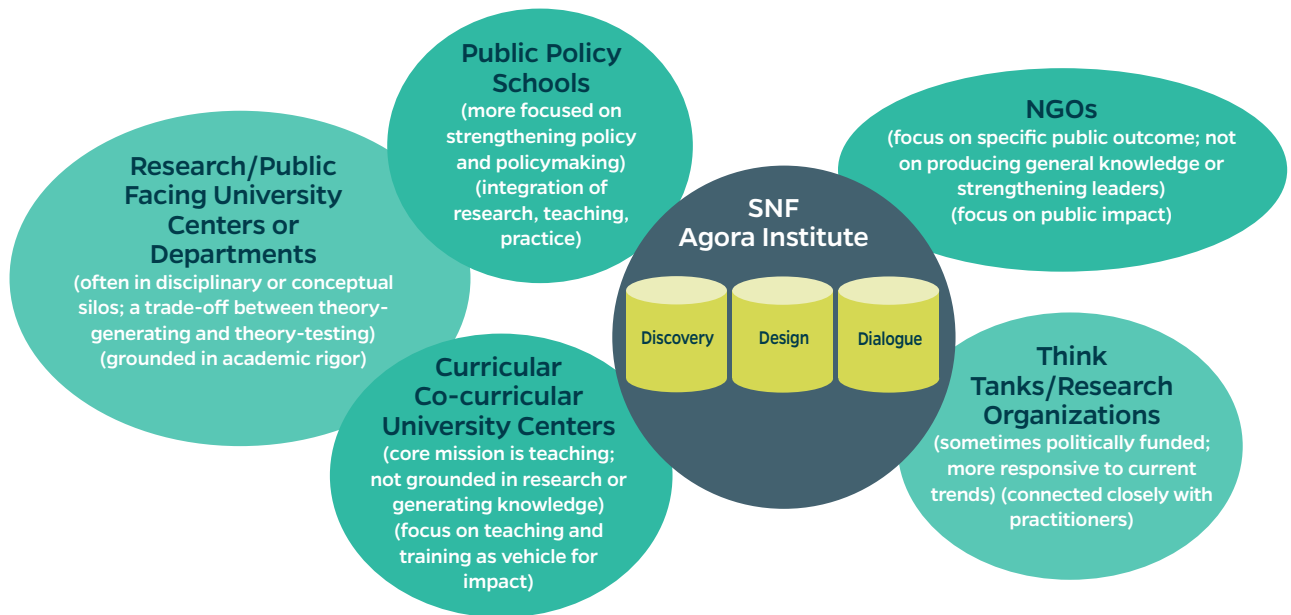


FIGURE 4. Key differentiating factors and key opportunities for partnership