

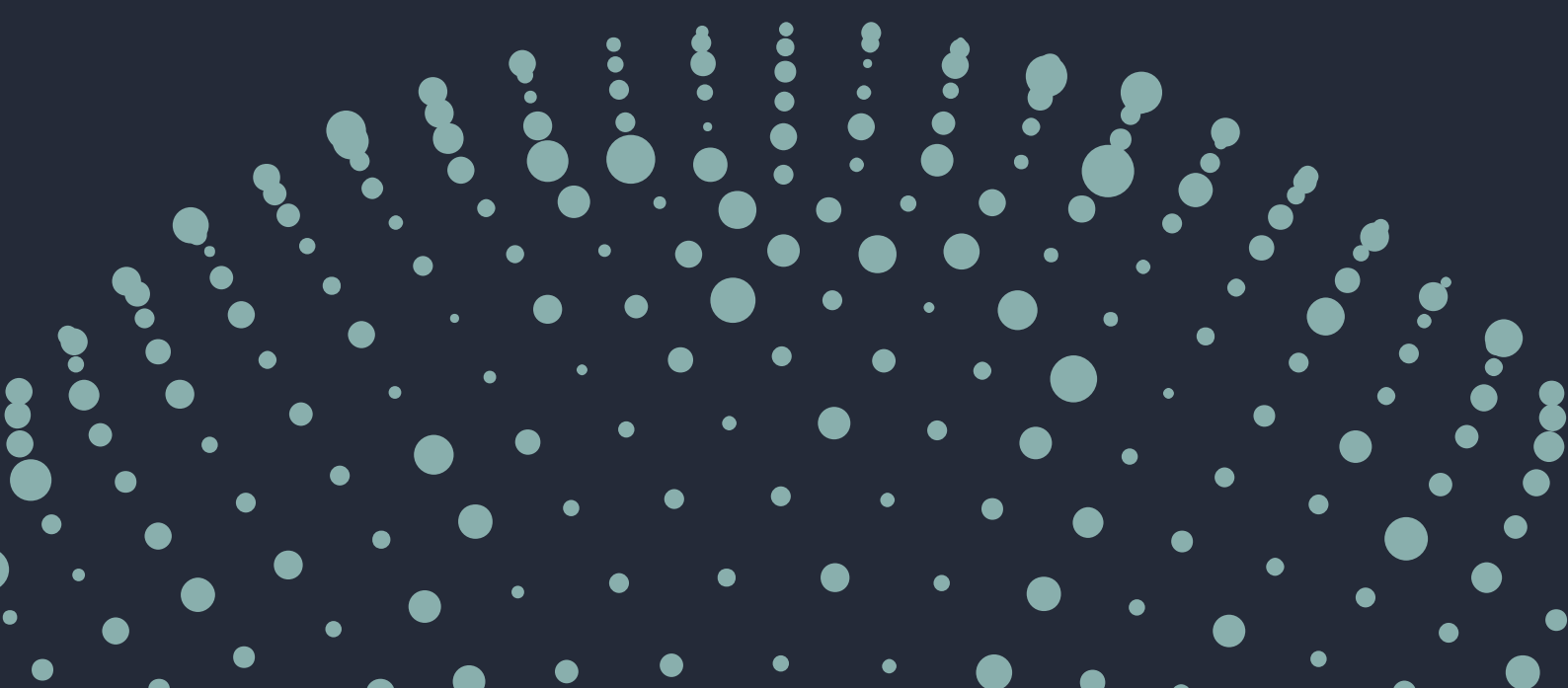
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Citizens' Track on AI Governance

Agency, Alignment and
Accountability



Tim Davies, Octavia Field Reid, Susan Oman and Rich Wilson



Executive Summary

People across the world affected by rapid AI developments must be engaged in meaningfully shaping decisions about its future, otherwise efforts towards both AI deployment and AI governance will lack legitimacy and risk public backlash.

A commitment is needed to embed public participation into the architecture of AI governance. This will link bottom-up capacity building and deliberation with top-down global fora: driving more responsive and inclusive governance decisions while mobilising local communities as allies for governance reform and action. The citizens' track is a mechanism to do this: **listening** to, **connecting** with, and **embedding** spaces for public voice from around the world.

On current trajectories, AI risks being misaligned with public interest, human rights, sustainable development and safety. Despite substantial benefits and harms of AI already being experienced, evidence frequently lags impacts and fails to represent much of the world's population. To date, AI governance fora have excluded much of the globe, and AI-related hopes and fears of affected communities have been given little space.

However, the evidence is clear that participatory processes can successfully bring people into high-stakes, highly technical, global governance discussions. Inclusive models demonstrate that participation builds deep public legitimacy, cuts through geopolitical and corporate gridlock, increases resilience to capture, and ensures that the communities most impacted by systemic transformation have a direct hand in shaping guardrails and goals.

The new UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance, and the 2027 edition of the AI Summit Series in Geneva, Switzerland provide key moments where the current trajectory can be reversed. By leveraging recent developments in participatory democracy, and tapping into a growing network of national, local and grassroots groups organising participatory processes on AI, power-holders in AI governance can create the conditions to build legitimacy into AI.

Drawing on learning from the field of climate governance, and a new case book describing participatory AI governance processes from every

continent, this report sets out a power-aware theory of change for public participation, which is able to deliver:

- Greater **alignment** of both AI models and governance policies with a deeper and more inclusive understanding of diverse global public interests, and of human dignity and flourishing;
- Increased **agency** of individuals and communities, through critical understanding, local decision making, and involvement in global AI governance debate;
- Stronger **accountability** through social license, community audit and hard civic power.

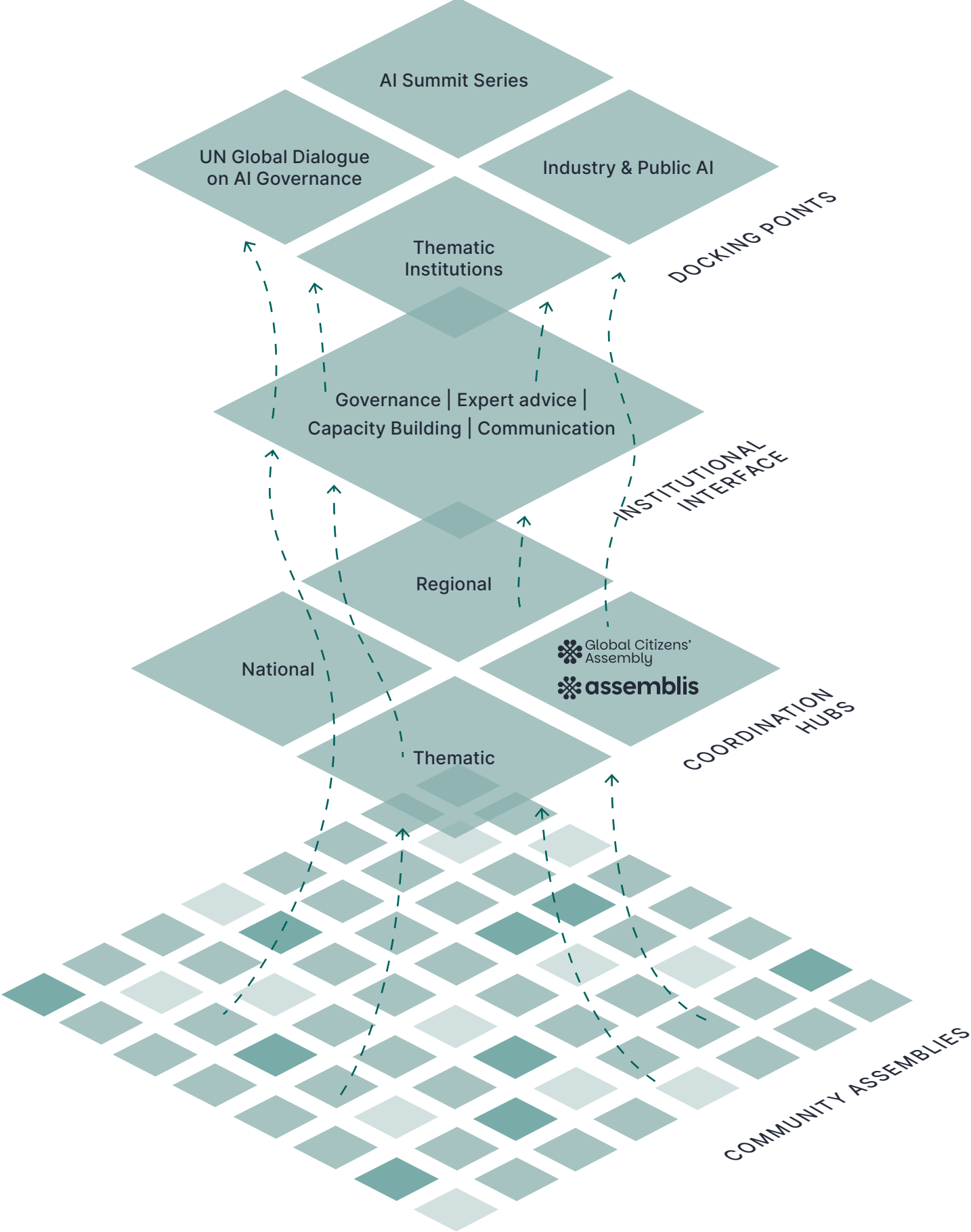
To get there requires complementary actions from three domains:

- **Leaders** of the emerging AI governance architecture must build political will for participation and commit to creating 'docking points' that provide space to hear, consider and engage with evidence from public deliberations across the world;
- **Funders** should support democratic approaches to AI that prioritise inclusion, plurality and agency, by investing in both grassroots community assemblies on AI, and in the institutional infrastructure needed to link top-down and bottom-up processes, including transnational public deliberation;
- **Practitioners** should collaborate in the creation and use of high-quality evidence and resources for informed public deliberation on AI, supporting community assemblies that build critical AI literacy and meaningful participation linked to a powerful theory of change.

We invite you to work with us on taking the next steps towards building a citizens' track: for a future alongside AI that puts people in the lead.

www.citizens-track.org

Components of a citizens' track



Read the full report at <https://www.citizens-track.org/2026/report>

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