

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL WELCOME AND CONVERSATIONS

ROUBA MHAISSEN

Aspen

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Economist, Researcher, Activist, Development
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ROUBA MHAISSEN

MS. MHAISSEN: I'm glad I -- my idea follows on nicely. Salaam, everyone -- which means peace. My name is Rouba. I'm half Syrian, half Lebanese. I live between Beirut and London and I founded the first organization working with Syrian refugees.

So today there are about 12 million human beings who are stateless, meaning having no citizenship. The number of refugees around the world is at unprecedented 65.3 million people. Add to that the fact that we are all becoming increasingly displaced and increasingly recognizing that in the words of my friend and hero the late Jo Cox we all have more in common than ever before.

Think of --

(Applause)

MS. MHAISSEN: Thank you. Think of the discontentment over Brexit and of the more and more of us who can't identify with our government's systems and laws. Think for instance of the millions of Americans who won't identify anymore if Donald Trump wins the election.

There's an awakening worldwide of our sense of responsibility towards our shared planet and our shared humanity, but also that our systems are failing in providing the young and aspiring generations with what they long for.

Now, imagine a world where we can all instead identify with our core, not with our inherited borders, politics, religion or other, but as humans to identify ourselves with our passions and longings, to all with no exception have equal access to political, economic rights, virtual assets and services. That would be cool, right?

Certainly, globalization might be on its end. But how about a virtual globalization and how to bring it back, as Walter Issacson said "to leave no one out"?

My big idea is one that I intend to start

exploring this summer at Singularity University. It is to include and empower the stateless, the refugees, the humanists, those who recognize this increasing need and value of being global despite all the obstacles.

I propose developing a virtual citizenship in an increasingly online and connected world by leveraging exponential technologies to empower the citizenless and to allow the citizens to forge new identities to form vibrant communities and to think about citizenship and identity in new ways and in fluid dimensions.

So if you like my ideas, drop me a line or talk to me over coffee. I would love for you to challenge me and help me through this idea. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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