

Follow the promise

A free starter for **The Intelligent Ecosystem**

Life and Society in a Superintelligent Era | Idriss Enayat

How does a promising AI service become a practical improvement in someone's life?

A better answer is only one part of a useful service. People may still need time, equipment, permission, transport, support, or a way to challenge a mistake. This starter helps you find one connection that matters and frame a next question someone can act on.

The Intelligent Ecosystem examines the relationships among people, artificial intelligence, institutions, technologies, and living systems. It takes superintelligence as a premise for inquiry: systems that exceed human performance across a broad range of important cognitive activities and can improve significant aspects of their own operation and development. This does not claim that such systems exist today or that their arrival is inevitable.

You can use the questions here with an ordinary service or a present-day AI proposal. No technical background or prior reading is needed.

Keep three claims separate

Better understanding - What do we have stronger reasons to believe?

We learn why some people cannot use a warning.

Better capabilities and methods - What can we do more reliably, under which conditions?

A tested process produces clearer drafts with manageable review effort.

Better conditions of life - Whose circumstances improve, and who bears a burden?

People can obtain useful assistance, retain a voice, and face less harm.

These lenses overlap, but progress under one does not establish progress under another. A faster draft does not establish that help reached anyone. Keep evidence, uncertainty, agency, burdens, and relevant ecological effects visible.

Use this starter

1. Choose one promise and one decision that is open now. Spend about 20 minutes on pages 2-3; short phrases and arrows are enough.
2. Use role names where personal details are unnecessary. Mark what is known, assumed, proposed, or unknown. Missing information is a question to investigate.
3. Read the fictional example on page 4 if you need a starting point. Finish with one bounded next inquiry and a review date.

This is an inquiry aid. Completing it does not authorize action or certify control, safety, legitimacy, or benefit. Participation or silence does not establish consent.

Map the participants and dependencies

Adapted from Worksheet 1 in The Intelligent Ecosystem

Find the connection that must change for a promised benefit to become usable, and identify a role able to change it.

Decision / proposal	Place, service, or version
Prepared by / role	Date / review date

1. Name the action and the open decision

What action is proposed, and which condition of life should it improve? What decision is actually open now?

2. Keep three kinds of role distinct

Who contributes? Who may decide? Whose interests are affected? Include people outside the service, nonhuman beings, living systems, and future interests where materially affected.

Contributors	Decision roles	Affected interests

3. Draw the route to useful provision

Connect the concern to a useful result. Label the knowledge, capability, people, equipment, resources, permission, and continuing support needed. Circle a point where the promise could fail.

Draw or write a short chain here. Add a page if your map needs more room.

Test a connection. Choose a next step.

Continue your map. Keep actual authority, proposed roles, and missing evidence distinct.

4. Separate three boundaries

What does the proposal act on? What does it depend on? Where do consequences reach? Name a role for each important effect outside the sponsor's boundary, without assuming authority over everything connected.

Scope of action

Field of dependence

Reach of consequences

5. Test the weakest connection

What evidence supports its availability? What if it fails, arrives late, or is withdrawn? Could one shared dependency disable the apparent alternatives together?

6. Choose one bounded next inquiry

Name its proposed owner, resources needed, unresolved dependency, and evidence that would require the map to expand. Record whether the owner has accepted; a proposed role is not an assignment.

Next question / action and proposed owner

Acceptance, resources, and unresolved dependency

Evidence that expands the map / review date

Your output: A bounded participant/dependency map and one next action tied to an accountable role. Record unknown authority or resources explicitly.

Revisit: When a missing participant, unreachable service, new dependency, serious burden, or changed operating condition could alter the decision.

A flood warning is only the beginning

Fictional worked example - no real-world findings or performance claims

In invented Linden Reach, a supplier proposes an assistant that drafts flood warnings for staff review. It cannot issue alerts, choose routes, or allocate transport. This is an ordinary-day planning exercise, not an emergency. Funding, permissions, accessibility, and local performance are unverified.

1. Action and decision. The promise is useful warning and reachable assistance. The open decision is which limited inquiry to propose before considering live use. Faster drafting alone would not establish that benefit.

2. Roles and interests. Contributors could include forecasters, translators, staff, and residents. The warning officer's decision authority needs verification. Affected interests include people without reliable phones, unpaid helpers, downstream households, and wetland life if access changes affect habitat.

3. Dependencies. Forecast -> reviewed message -> accessible channel -> understood choice or help request -> available assistance -> reachable destination. Transport availability and step-free access remain unknown. Clear words cannot supply missing transport.

4. Boundaries. The assistant acts on drafts. It depends on official information, reviewers, communications, and support. Consequences reach beyond town limits. Seek the relevant downstream and habitat authorities' input; the supplier gains no authority over them.

5. Weak connection. Assistance may be unavailable when requested. Check staffing, accessible transport, and destination access. A web page and text-message channel may both depend on the same network; two channels need not provide independent backup.

6. Next inquiry. Propose a small, accessible preparedness discussion to check the warning-to-assistance link. A preparedness coordinator is a proposed owner, pending acceptance. Confirm staff time, participation support, and permissions; set a calendar review date. Expand the map if downstream people or shared failures are missing. Keep existing essential services in place.

This example supplies a way to ask questions, not evidence that the assistant works. Any operational decision requires its own evidence, authority, resources, and review.

Make the map useful

Show it to someone who sees the service from another position. Ask what you missed and what would change the next decision. Record their challenge, the response, and your next review date. You can take this step without buying the book.

For the full argument, read Chapters 1, 5, 8, and 20 alongside Worksheet 1. Worksheet 3 develops the three lenses; Worksheet 6 examines bounded delegation and fallback arrangements.

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Adaptation: Worksheet 1, condensed with writing space; reader note and overview; Worksheet 3 lens orientation. The original fictional workshop case supplies Linden Reach. The book's care and watershed investigations are separate.