



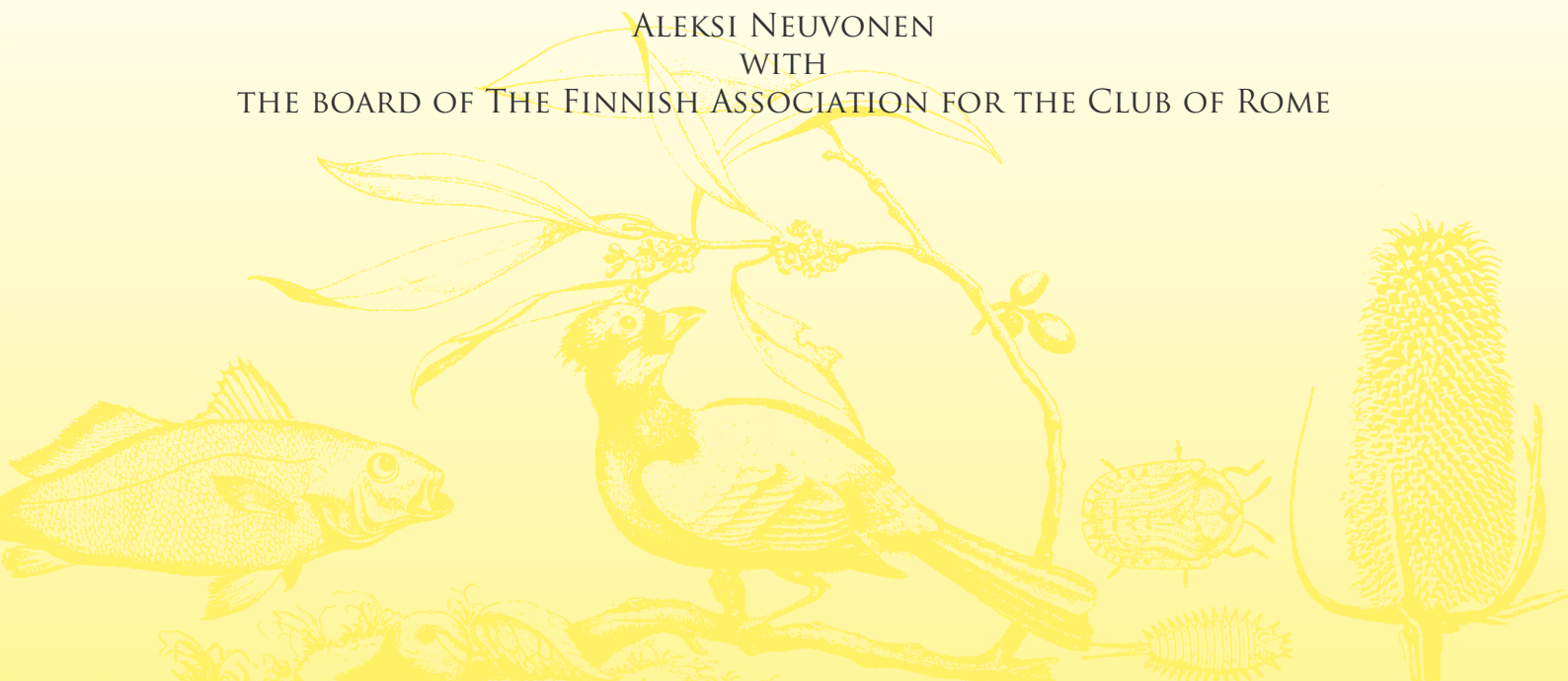
THE FINNISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE CLUB OF ROME

HOSTAGES OF THE HORIZON

THE TWIN CHALLENGE OF
IGNORANCE AND INDIFFERENCE

REVIEW ON ISSUES RAISED IN THE CLUB OF ROME
2004 ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD IN HELSINKI,
11-12 OCTOBER 2004.

ALEKSI NEUVONEN
WITH
THE BOARD OF THE FINNISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE CLUB OF ROME



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- ¹ The phrase 'We are hostages of the horizon' was employed by the president of the CoR, prince El Hassan, in describing limited knowledge and contradictory, indifferent morals, both of which are so profoundly and essentially part of the human existence. Expanding the limits set by these borderlines through increasing knowledge and gaining moral wisdom has always been at the core of civilisation (enlightenment).

Aleksi Neuvonen

Board member

The Finnish association for the Club of Rome

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FOREWORD

Finland's hosting of the Club of Rome Annual's conference last year was greatly appreciated. It is a country that has demonstrated an unusual grasp of the importance of anthropolicies (policies for the people) and energetically promotes civic engagement. Processes such as the Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy and the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, are examples of such initiatives that seek solutions to the dilemmas of global governance.

The Club of Rome has always strived to adhere to addressing challenging issues with a spirit of wisdom and foresight that could make a difference to our world.

In spite of the higher standards of education and globally networked information being more accessible to a growing number of people worldwide, we still appear to be at somewhat of an impasse with regard to effectively tackling global problems of poverty, social instability and degradation of the environment. Unfortunately, profound inequalities exist in today's world, and unless the scales are balanced, backlashes will occur from those left behind. Meanwhile, indifference and inaction, will create a culture of frustration and resentment.

As in the statement of the Club of Rome to the World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva 2003, the emerging knowledge society itself adds new challenges. There are tremendous opportunities involved, but enormous risks as well. Advanced technologies particularly in the information and communication spheres, have created a digital divide. While we recognise an increasing flow of information that has provided more knowledge about the world, simultaneously there has occurred an information overload that has caused confusion and disorientation as well as an increasing tendency to misuse information.

Nevertheless, the onus lies with developing countries to form strategies and mechanisms that will enable their societies to leapfrog into the information age, and transform their economies into knowledge-based ones. Therefore, the digital divide must be transformed to a digital opportunity. My hope is that the challenge of an informed humanity will manifest information as an instrument for development and prosperity.

Free access to information and a reliable media, that is independent from the political agenda of any one state, is crucial if we are to raise the profile of debate on topics that are too often considered of secondary importance by large multinational broadcasting corporations. In ad-

dition, democratic ownership and control of the knowledge organs, and perhaps an alliance between the scholars and media people, is critical if it is to be credible, and not be based on topical issues.

Apart from achieving welfare and prosperity, as the review correctly states, information and knowledge also contribute towards a more democratic system of governance. Meanwhile, civil society organizations should command a more prominent role in national policy decision-making and global governance, as their engagement provides legitimacy to those authorities.

The role of the human element in development cannot be divorced from the notion of investment in human capital, which comes via education. Education also provides a means for enhancing inter-cultural dialogue and participation in a world where people are increasingly interconnected. Therefore, a spirit of respect for other's differences, as opposed to tolerance, should be enhanced within the education system. This year, 2005, marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 which led to the so-called CSCE process (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) that helped end the Cold War peacefully. The Helsinki Process of the 1970s placed human rights and security at the heart of the political agenda and helped bridge the gap between East and West. Economic growth is only worthwhile if it is accompanied by adequate social development.

The participants at the Club of Rome's Annual Conference in Helsinki, 2004, offered valuable contributions and critical reflection in identifying the profound gaps that exist in today's world. The conclusion to be drawn is that the solutions for facing challenges as profound as sustainability, social equity, human security and peace requires a collective global effort and partnership. Subsequently, the current international institutional structure needs to be updated, while alternative approaches are necessary in dealing with the challenges at hand.

*His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal
President of The Club of Rome*

FOR THE READER

This is a compilation of some of the ideas and projections that were presented during the Annual Conference of the Club of Rome, held in Helsinki during October 10–12, 2004. The theme of the event was “Limits to Ignorance: The Challenge of Informed Humanity”. This topic was deliberately suggested by the Finnish organizing committee, as we felt it could raise some new and important issues to the forefront of discussions both within the Club of Rome and among the public at large. This compilation is not intended to cover all of the issues raised during our conference. Rather, what we have tried to do is to give a synopsis of the most relevant and urgent aspects under the umbrella of the topic. Of course, this is essentially a subjective value judgment and we do not claim any “objectivity” in this respect. What we essentially want to deliver is a fresh collection of ideas that we believe touches closely upon the mission of the Club of Rome: to be concerned with large-scale, long-term issues in a holistic way.

I wish to thank our Finnish team of Club of Rome activists for giving their valuable time for the preparation of this document. I appreciate that one of our younger activists, Aleksi Neuvonen, took up the challenge to bear the responsibility for the hardest part of the exercise – writing. I particularly wish to thank our Vice-President of the Club of Rome, Dr. Eberhard von Koerber for his financial support for this post-conference activity.

In Helsinki on March 20th, 2005

Prof. Markku Wilenius

Chair, The Finnish Chapter of the Club of Rome

Member of the Club of Rome

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INTRODUCTION

The 2004 Club of Rome annual conference *Limits to Ignorance – The Challenge of Informed Humanity* gathered over one hundred prestigious participants in Helsinki during 11–12 October. Working through lectures, panel discussions and workshops, the participants of the conference tried to jointly grasp what kind of global problem ignorance and indifference, as its close relative form, pose and what would be the available solutions for overcoming these challenges. Most of the presentations both from the plenaries and the workshop sessions, as well as the reports from the workshops given on the second day of the conference, are available on the conference's website at <http://www.tukkk.fi/tutu/cor04>. All the plenaries and the session of workshop group 2 have been video recorded. The recordings are available on the web-site of the University of Industrial Arts Helsinki's Medialaboratory.

Since the conference has been documented comprehensively in digital format, there seems to be no need to write a systematic summary on the lectures and discussions. Instead, FiCoR as one of the organisers has considered it valuable to try to tie up some of the numerous loose ends that emerged during the two days of the conference. Therefore, you now have in front of you some broad conclusions on the themes of the *Limits to Ignorance* -conference, not just of the conference proceedings and presentations. This report takes its inspiration and views from the spirit and content of the conference, but aims to expand and, on the other hand, focus on the sub-themes and solutions that were considered to be the most fruitful for any forthcoming development work.

The first section of this report focuses on the concepts of ignorance and indifference, on their nature and history as social phenomena, and their emergence into the *world problematique*. The second section presents summaries of the reports reflecting the results of the conference workshops. The complete reports are included in the appendix. Just like the rest of this report, they are not mere summaries of the presentations given and discussions held. Instead, they are independent essays by the respective rapporteurs, reflecting on the themes discussed in the workshop.

The third part of this report aims to seek new views that would enable one to see the problem of ignorance and indifference in a new light – searching for new solutions either separately or together. These conclusions aim to reach towards a *resolutique*-phase, in which the crystallising insight on the problems creates paths towards alternative solutions.

1. VICIOUS CYCLES OF IGNORANCE AND INDIFFERENCE

The outset for the *Limits to Ignorance* -conference was to discuss the twin challenge of ignorance and indifference. Regardless of an enormous increase in the volumes of information flows, research and education both in the industrialized and developing countries, humankind's broadly recognized, major long-term challenges still play second fiddle. This unfortunate situation prevails both in global activities and traditional decision-making, as well as in the thinking of a majority of individuals, inferior in importance to the principles of short-sighted competition. As stated by HRH Prince El Hassan in his opening address: an increasing flow of information may potentially provide us with more knowledge about the world around us; yet it easily turns into an overload causing confusion, disorientation, a tendency to misuse information and obscure the premises of decision-making, thereby increasing public ignorance.

How is this still possible? Aren't we sufficiently aware of the great problems facing humanity? Why isn't the high level of education in the industrialized countries turning into a deeper form of development, upon which joint responsibility on the collective progress of humankind would be embedded? Does "progress" merely signify material economic growth lacking ecological or moral aspects? Will the ever-increasing information overflow and the tidal wave of media produce nothing but a deeply rooted moral indifference within the minds of ordinary people regarding other people and nature? After all, are we *hostages of ignorance*, imprisoned by our own moral adolescence?

Nevertheless, information and knowledge, or rather their possession, distribution and utilization, are now more than ever being acknowledged as crucial means for achieving welfare and prosperity. Hence, the basic challenge of ignorance in its purest form, e.g. illiteracy due to a lack of basic education, is maybe more urgent than ever: *The poorest part of humanity is at a risk of becoming stranded in an ever-growing dead-zone of information, excluded totally from global development*, as professor Markku Wilenius expressed in his welcoming address to the conference.

The challenge of indifference is mainly directed towards the industrialized and newly-industrialized world, in which there is no shortage of information and no limits for its further development. On the other hand, in developing countries the commitment to education and research – expanding the frontiers of knowledge, especially through the education of women – is the

primary way towards which these countries are being encouraged and which they are also expected to prioritize. It is evident that this is the only way the citizens of these countries can have an increased and equal stake in solving humankind's great challenges. *"Limits to Ignorance – The Challenge of Informed Humanity"* is both a statement on the current problematique of humankind and a reference to a vision on the possible resolutique.

The title *"Limits to Ignorance – The Challenge of Informed Humanity"* deliberately included this two-fold significance of the challenge: it refers both to *ignorance* itself and to indifference, which is seen as the major obstacle on the way to an "informed humanity". On a purely behavioural level, whether of individual human beings or groups, we often have very few means to determine whether ill consequences are a result of ignorance or indifference. Is an agent of behaviour lacking knowledge of what he/she is really causing, or is the agent of behaviour knowing, but not bothered by what he/she is really causing? Therefore it has to be admitted that our challenge is somewhat vague. We don't know whether it is a matter of values or knowledge, whether it is more important to move the horizon of ignorance or to decrease the friction caused by moral indifference. Or is it entirely impossible to consider these two phenomena separately from one another?

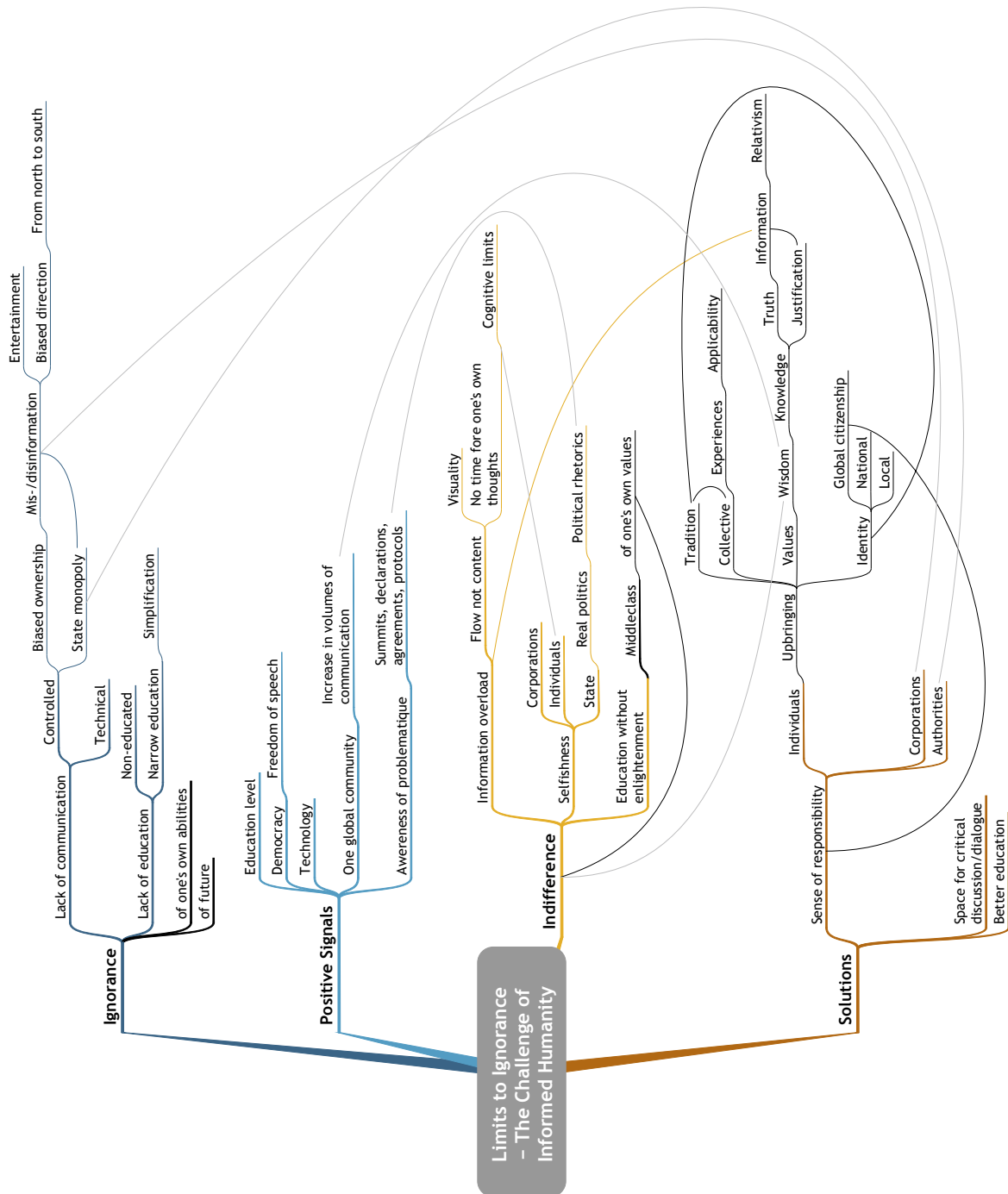


Figure 1. The themes taken up in the annual conference “Limits to Ignorance – The Challenge of Informed Humanity”

The result of this vagueness could be devastating: does it suffice to speak of the importance of education and research, if investing in them does not have a positive impact on our abilities and willingness to take charge of these decisive challenges? What means or options do we have

left for overcoming ignorance, if we don't have a clear picture of the nature of the problem itself nor what could be the first step towards its resolution?

Changing structures of knowledge, power and responsibility

Ignorance and indifference both produce isolation, passivity and a lack of initiative. They serve to maintain false expectations and unrealistic views on available options. Ignorance and indifference are both interdependent preconditions and causes for identical “deprivation phenomena”. It is seldom possible to definitely pinpoint which of the two is the key element causing deprivation in a particular case. Knowledge – current beliefs concerning facts – and values, as well as interests, are closely inter-related within human practices.

The challenge of the *'Limits to Ignorance'* has been a prominent part of ethics since Plato. It is known as the dilemma of acrasia: why do people act (at least occasionally) against their best knowledge of what is good? Despite this incoherence we constantly face, our behaviour as individuals is based on the fundamental assumption that both we ourselves and our fellow humans will behave more responsibly the better we know the possible consequences of our actions. Knowledge is presumed to create responsibility.

Especially because as residents of the industrialized countries, beneficiary to a high level of education, we believe ourselves to be on such a high level intellectually, at least when compared to people during earlier stages of history. Proud of ourselves and the achievements of our culture, we call our age an information society or even a knowledge society, making a distinction to other, less knowledgeable societies, both past and present.

The worn-out phrase, most often attributed to Francis Bacon, states that *“knowledge is power”*. Knowledge (or at least information) is celebrated as the major tool for power and prosperity these days. In the words of the Minister of Education of Finland, Ms. Tuula Haatainen: *“We now believe that the ability to cope with life is in direct proportion to the amount of knowledge we possess. Today, the ability to elaborate information into knowledge is a key to success.”*² This Baconian idea is something that humankind is now identifying itself with; it legitimizes our development towards greater

² Almost an identical testimonial was given by professor Joseph Semboja from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Aid of Tanzania: *“knowledge has always been a critical factor for development. For any society, knowledge is prosperity. Human development is the process of enlarging people's choices so that they can live long and remain healthy.”*

impact on our surroundings and faith. Professor Markku Wilenius, in his welcoming address to the conference, cited Aurelio Peccei, who in his last paper in 1984 described the 20th century as the *“end of a millennium during which humankind emerged from the Dark Ages, set its domain all over the world and skies, and became the basic actor of change in this corner of the universe.”*

One of the greatest achievements of Western culture has been the liberation of a great majority of citizens from the production of basic goods, such as food and drink. It is at least partially explicable through the power earned through increased knowledge. Meanwhile, for many of us, our basic needs are satisfied ever better and their constant satisfaction is virtually guaranteed. Generation after generation has continued to produce commodities and services 'to satisfy the needs of other people. This process has created new variations of needs over time. All this has resulted in an increasingly plentiful and diverse division of labour and intricate ways of collaboration among people.

One aspect of globalisation is the global re-distribution of production and work. Speeding up the diversification of the division of labour, in many cases it also increases the strain on the capacity of the natural environment. HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan formulated this rather rhetorical question on globalisation: *“Is its' main distinguishing feature its' capacity to intensify global effects through a collapse of time and distance?”*

How does this transition alter the self-reflection of man? How does it affect the relationship between totally chaotic views and seek for objective orientation? Citing again the clever words of HRH: *“Does modernity in a Digital Age manifest itself as a more advanced era, succeeding an earlier backward one or as rapid oscillations of message and medium (signal-to-noise ratio), regressive repetitions of images (feed-back loops), and phase-shifts between order and disorder (complexity)?”*

While the material standard of living has risen, people have, in many ways, become more privatized and have drifted away from caring about common problems. At first this happened in a relative sense. Privatization neither increased nor decreased the opportunities of other people. But at the turn of the new millennium, this development has reached the level of absolute changes in the Western countries. Previously the close collaboration among neighbours, colleagues etc., in addition to family and relatives, was a major factor in producing and receiving peer assistance. Likewise, people and corporations who were inextricably bound together by a common belief in work and success were essential in creating local services and safety nets. While nation-states historically turned towards democracies and gained responsibilities as the primary producers of welfare-structures, the need for peer services and social safety nets decreased. Furthermore, attitudes towards community efforts faded and the forms of trust were re-generated. The industrial society, with its diversified division of labour and its production

and consumption conditions, generated even greater effects on the replacement of intimate safety nets by the welfare state. These features – commodity production and mass consumption, the rationality of the industrial society, urban living conditions (and urban culture as its by-product) – are now, in turn, being torn apart by globalisation.

The global economy is no longer bound together by local conditions and relationships among local people. Instead, it is taking a leap towards an independent existence in both an intellectual and moral sense – or amoral, depending on the nature of the forces driving it. Knowledge is expected to increase responsibility, but whether this is truly so is not a logical necessity. Rather, its fulfilment depends on the acknowledged intention of people's actions.

This development raises numerous big questions. Will the moral basis of decision-making still be built on democracy and the ideal of an open society? What are their positions compared to the values and structures of *laissez-faire* and the pursuit of one's own good? At the moment the answers given to these questions lead to an array of various solutions, including contradictory alternatives.

The Club of Rome-esque approach emphasizes alternatives in which global democracy, the global market economy, and a harmonious global civilization (instead of a hierarchy of any type) form the only sustainable basis for a politics of humanity. So far these kinds of social limits have been successfully set up only on the level of the nation state and, as such, with limited results. These achievements alone have required several centuries to emerge. What would be the means and joint efforts that could hasten similar progress on global level?

Towards a Politics of Humanity

“[A] small part of the population of the world lives off the fat of the land and through the ever-growing flows of information, the poor of the world are very much aware of this. Societies have become more complex, partly because of increased information flows. So, when one tries to use information as a tool for greater social awareness and responsibility, the challenge really is one: how to build up a picture of something that could be called “reality”. As we all know, information can be contradictory with some other information. It can be false, and in most cases, it is an interpretation of reality by someone, somewhere.”

– Martti Ahtisaari 11.10.2004

Many of our activities already bear some kind of global impact, regardless of whether we know it or not. Some people are painfully aware of these impacts and their results, whether it is re-

garding the contemporary or future members of humankind or the future of planet Earth. Nevertheless, the politics of humankind – a joint responsibility and agreeing on what that should be – is still hard to grasp and prioritize over one's own immediate benefit.

This need for a politics of humankind has been jointly recognised and acknowledged on several occasions during the last 30 years: in many UN-conferences, in speeches by heads of states, and in a number of declarations and conventions.³ Yet, the actions of everyday real politics still obey totally different principles, as they are targeted to drive immediate benefits.⁴ The President of the Republic of Finland, Tarja Halonen, having witnessed many of these events during the last decade, admitted that *“The real challenge now is to turn these commitments into reality.”*⁵

The future of planet Earth and that of humankind possesses minimal discounting value. In this calculation it cannot stand the comparison with the prospect of immediate profits. Both decision-makers and individual citizens often plead the complexity of problems and the division of duties or the loss of their own benefits as they refrain from responsibility and action.⁶

In the conference, several speakers expressed very optimistic statements on the recent development of humankind. A very comprehensive list was put forth by former president of Finland and prominent figure in international conflict solving diplomacy, President Martti Ahtisaari, who said that *“When looking at the world in a perspective of, let's say the last 15 years, I actually do see quite many promising signals emerging around the globe. Democracy prevails in many societies where it was considered as impossible just a few years ago. Human rights have gained new ground in many areas, where they have been totally absent for decades. Transparency in global politics has been under a serious transformation process. A series of global conferences in the 90's opened a door for that and now there is no going back. The role of civil society has become more and more important.”*

³ Ashok Koshla raised the question of whether there is, after all, ignorance behind these declarations - the parties not understanding what the commitment requires in reality, nor what their true impacts are. As an example, he mentioned the Millennium development goals, in which the goals were defined by percentage but not by numbers, and which therefore will very likely be undermined by population growth.

⁴ This point was made by Mona Makram-Ebeid in her presentation: “Real politics postpone resolving the core problems; therefore we need moral politics, [which could create] moral principles for a dialogue of cultures.”

⁵ Of course one such initiative to change the commitments into reality is the Helsinki Process (www.helsinkiprocess.fi), which was introduced by HE Ambassador Ilari Rantakari in the second panel discussion of the conference.

⁶ This idea was taken up by Professor Markku Wilenius in the following words: “We lull ourselves into technological self-sufficiency and dissociate ourselves from ethical responsibility by appealing to the complexity of the problems or our own interests.”

The President of the Republic, Tarja Halonen, mentioned that awareness of the importance of environmental degradation is considerably higher than just a decade ago. Now we seem to understand “*the deep interdependence of security, development, social justice and environmental sustainability*” better than ever before.

Several speakers, especially representing national authorities, spoke for a strong commitment in enhancing the skills of citizens, the improvement of technical resources for communication and the global spreading of the freedom of speech. The emphasis was on creating preconditions for the further advancement of people’s understanding. Finland’s Minister of Education, Tuula Haatainen, stressed the importance of ICT as a key factor contributing to sustainable development and growth. Yet, as she stated in the succeeding sentences “*...technology can certainly be a powerful tool, [but] it [is] just that – a tool. What is important is information itself and content.*”

However, the importance of content was left without further elaboration, as it was by many other speakers as well. The contents of education and communication are treated as something that happens when the aim is set towards economic and social development. It seems to be some kind of background assumption that there is an external factor determining the quality of education and communication. Alternatively, quality takes care of itself, as long as an increase in volume is safeguarded.

But, as the question was set by HRH: “*At the electronic level, does the speed of transmission matter as much as the content of the message?*” Concentrating heavily on technological development – called “*techno-fundamentalism (as the counterpart to theological fundamentalism)*” and the “*fetishisation of technology, in which secularists seek security, salvation and transcendence,*” again by HRH – puts us in danger of leaving some other, even more crucial options un-harnessed. Professor Markku Wilenius warned that the enormous volumes of scientific and other information available are not being fully utilized. We simply lack the means to evaluate and select what is essential in the great flood of unstructured information. As a result, we are unable to address the great problems of humanity and gradually turn indifferent and unwilling to deal with social and political challenges.

Mass communication in its many forms is at the center of attention when discussing the role of information, its use and misuse. Roseann Runte targeted her words to the quality of media when saying that “*there is an enormous quantity of information available, but what is actually reported makes one wonder.*” HRH asked polemically whether the “*global networking of multi-media*” has “*resulted in a public attention deficit disorder that leaves little time for critical inquiry and political action by a permanently distracted audience?*”

President Martti Ahtisaari addressed the problem of the one-sidedness of global information flows. As a result, our capability of fully and fairly comprehending the nature and consequences of global problems is reduced. Already in 1973, when UNESCO studied the matter, over 80% of the world's information flows were controlled by the industrialized countries, which witnessed the lack of domestic structures in many developing countries. It is still self-evident that information and media can be a very powerful tool for reaching development. Meanwhile its significance in building a stronger sense of responsibility is even greater for Northern societies, as president Ahtisaari concluded.

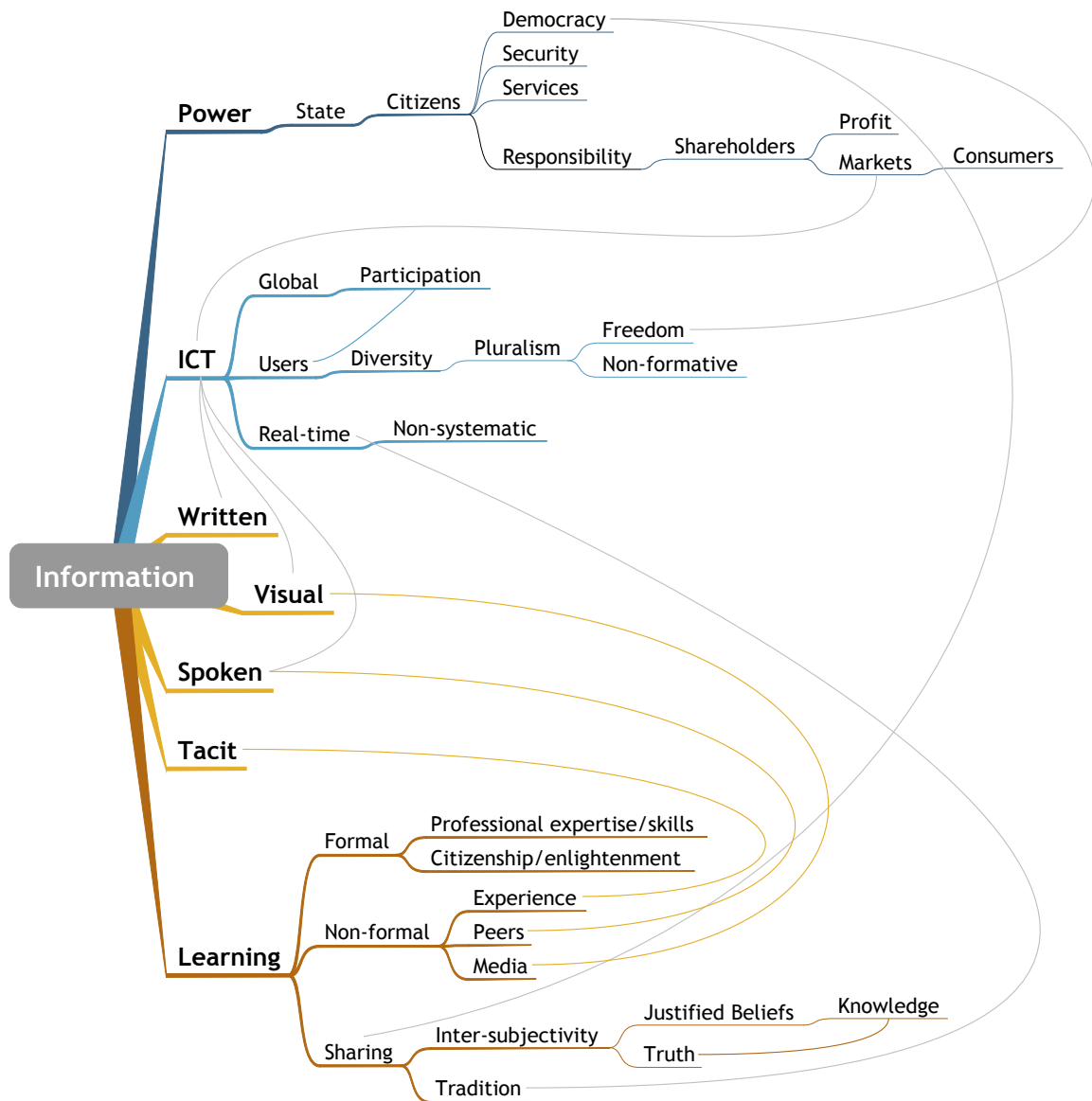


Figure 2. The forms and roles of information.

The key phenomenon here is the ideal of a pluralistic global society. In such a world state there is no space for normative top-down, all-comprehensive grand objectives the way there was just recently within the nation states. Pluralism applies not only to most of the ethical and aesthetic questions, but also to the nature of knowledge itself. The volume of available information – correct or incorrect – on a great number of highly specialized fields, is far beyond the comprehension of any given single citizen. Neither is it possible to meaningfully and universally compare the relevance of numerous authorities and experts. This kind of a sense of constant incompleteness is only a step away from misinterpretation, manipulation, distortion and control of information, as was brought up by President Ahtisaari. Yet “*information sharing is at [the]core*”, he continued, almost in the same breath.

In a world full of information, clashing messages and all-embracing pluralism, it is very easy to fall into an un-critical, melioristic position. It is easy to lull one’s self to believe that the key actors of society – political structures, corporations, researchers and media – already target all their efforts into the creation of a better world, sincerely giving all their best. Meanwhile they are allowed to promote solutions, giving them the best possible results and options for the allocation of power. Adopting the famous thought of Voltaire, optimists believe this means that we live in a world of possibilities, while others are afraid that this is truly the case

The moral of the story is that it really does matter who produces, organizes, controls and distributes information. The power of knowledge depends on the recipients’ ability to use it. Therefore, controlling and sharing information has always been in the interest of rulers, as was taken up by President Ahtisaari. In our time of innumerable information channels, when societies increasingly consist of a large number of separate subjective realities, we face this challenge anew. Citing once again HRH, “*we need critical questions and counter-visions to ensure that IT is not transformed into weapons of mass distraction, deception and destruction...[instead] the challenge of informed humanity is to make certain that IT is safeguarded as a weapon of mass instruction, education and reconstruction.*”

The Dynamics of the Roles Between Citizens, Experts and Consumers

The privatization of individuals coupled by a positive attitude towards this development has been a global trend for more than four decades. This trend consists of a vast number of other phenomena. One of the key changes has been the shifting of emphasis in popular discussion: from the state-orientated thinking of romanticism and Hegel to thinking based on the idea of free individuals in the sense of enlightenment and Hobbes. In its extremity the latter turns into all-inclusive

competition between all men. The typically neo-classical economic presumption that individuals are rational and pursue their own good, fully informed of both conditions and opportunities, has started to dominate politics, and the social and cultural life of societies. This gives them a new way of structuring the images of the basic nature of human societies and their moral codes.⁷

Often these views are supported by explanations based on evolutionary biology. There is also a close connection to the shift of emphasis from *citizens* (as an individual of lifeworld, bearing an inherent value) to *experts* (as components of systems production power). And further, to *consumers* (as components of systems consumption power), who perform their decisions seemingly independently, but obey the conditions of efficiency and economic growth.

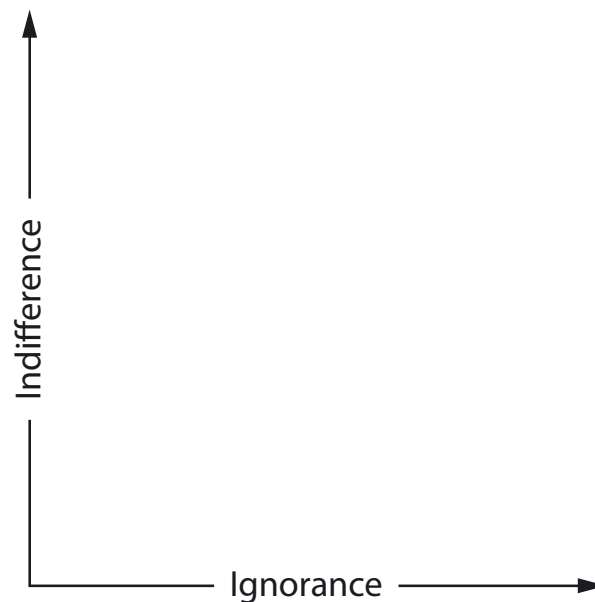


Figure 3. How is indifference proportional to ignorance?

The megatrend of privatization has often been addressed as a cause or a common factor for global problems. These kinds of explanations derive from mythical stories about historical societies, where people lived in local communities without great inequality and in harmony with nature. It is a romantic picture that probably never existed in reality. Yet the myth forms a sharp distinction with our own time defined by individuality, conflicts and risks. The comparison, despite its lack of sound historical backing, is used to demonstrate that the shift from local economies to the global economy has been a big mistake in the history of humanity. The loos-

⁷ Cf. According to Hegel, the rules of economics and states were totally distinct and neither could be understood from the principles of the other field.

ening of past ties that connected people to their community, environment and the production of basic material conditions for life (food, water, energy, building materials) is cited as evidence of this. As a result, or so the accusation goes, we are now entering a new era of nomadism. Responsibility disappears and an individualistic, hedonistic way of living spreads far and wide.

It seems highly unlikely that an explanation based on an assumption of one 'true' way of living could give us viable solutions for future challenges. History is irreversible and a return to past conditions is not an option. The structures of society and current political interventions, or lack thereof, have a great significance for humanity's *material abilities and skills* of adopting and applying new information. Consequently, they also affect the motive to bear responsibility for one's self, one's loved ones, other people and nature. The direction of the politics of humankind practiced is highly dependent on an individual's awareness of these issues.

According to the most critical voices addressed in the *Limits to Ignorance* -conference, the current education system and media dominantly support the *programming* of people into obedient and dutiful experts. Programmed people serve as components of the production and consumption powers of the global system. In all other matters they just mind their own business – their job, livelihood, material consumption, as in entertaining themselves. This is actually how the lifestyle of a well-to-do middle-class is often pictured. It is realized, at least partially, in the lives of billions of people, either in reality or in day-dreams. This lifestyle is dominated strongly by images created by the global entertainment and advertisement businesses. It is often criticized for its ignorance: the ignorance of other people and of the consequences of one's own welfare or, as Ashok Koshla cleverly put it, "*People in villages and slums lack knowledge; knowledge of their living conditions is something we lack.*"

Our societies are built around expert skills and know-how. Skills in terms of official educational systems are increasingly distinct to the skills in terms of the citizens' everyday life. The trend seems to be towards training people to gain narrow professional skills, not competence for the art of living nor for the production of well-being. Minister Haatainen said that "*the fact is that only when used, or applied, information has meaning and influence.*" Applied to what end is the question. In some fields of policy, expenditure in education is justified as society's investment in supporting the know-how basis of production through its citizens' education. On the other hand, it can be thought that citizens invest in their own skills and in their competitiveness in the labour market. Whether specialized competence is more compatible with indifference than with the good life, is a question worth being raised.

One result of specialisation is sector-oriented information. President Martti Ahtisaari warned that, as a result, *“sometimes it is difficult to see the forest from the trees”*, which is not necessarily a good outset for creating serious dialogue and finding ways of working together in global politics. The same trouble hampers almost every field in society, where joint policies and preferences need to be set among people from different backgrounds.

Actually, many of these critical views have been present in intellectual discussions for the last 40 years. The writings of Herbert Marcuse and Marshall McLuhan earned followers from the student generation of the 60’s. They were seeking alternatives for the alienated way of living they saw their parents adopt. This wave began to shatter the family-centred utopia of the industrial society and created space for the emergence of new forms of individuality.

The symptoms of ignorance – or indifference – are probably more visible now than they were in the 60’s or 70’s. Professor Markku Wilenius listed them in his address in the following way: *“It is reflected in social development, the general decline in voting activity, the tightening grip that mindless television entertainment has on the popular imagination, and the advancing of self-centred and individualistic culture. In short, at present, we are heading towards a manipulated world, where infotainment is too often the content and where politicians are too seldom courageous enough to press their agenda over the media’s power.”*

For the last century or so, humanity has celebrated its victorious rise from the dark ages of true ignorance, irrational beliefs and fears. This is, of course, a broad, generalized picture of the knowledge level of humanity at large. Such a general picture possibly hides the fact that we lack the capacity – as individuals and as societies – to master the wise use of these great gifts, for the good of us all. The question is, are we just victims of conditions, or should the change start from our own attitudes? Does the problem lie in the system-created ignorance or in individual indifference? President Ahtisaari reminded us of the words once said by Martin Luther King *“It was not the bad Americans who were the problem, but the good Americans who remained silent.”*

Ashok Koshla asked in the panel discussion: *“Is ignorance, after all, bliss?”* There still seems to be very few rational options for a lifestyle that would be truly morally conscious, not externalizing too many by-products and consequences of our welfare. Alternatives have emerged increasingly during the last decades, though. Despite them, discussions on these basic choices are still held in the margins: *“There is much talk these days that we are drowning in information, but where are the voices telling us that we are drowning in ignorance and indifference? The main dilemma of humanity today is not a lack of information, but that we care far too little about what is happening around us.”*, as Markku Wilenius concluded his welcome address.

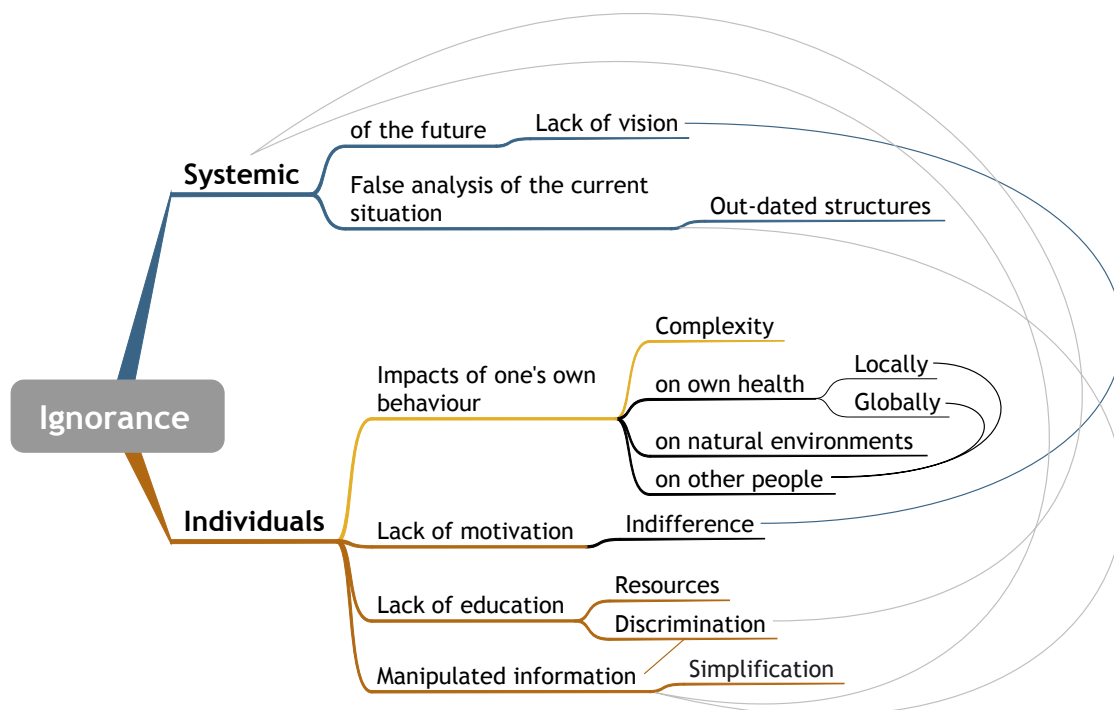


Figure 4. The forms and roles of ignorance.

One possible consequence of “over-informing” is losing one’s own courage and initiative for creative thinking. Adopted external information is just a tool that can help us some of the way ahead, but there is also a need to find one’s own voice. In the conference Professor Antoni Kuklinski told a very illustrative story of the famous 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who never left his hometown of Königsberg and as his last words said “Genug!”, enough, enough of reading! In this day and age are we still able to find such a free space for our own thinking, questioning the doctrines while accepting intellectual responsibility? HRH, referring to the writings of Paul Virilio, called the problem “*sightless vision*”, which is “*itself merely the reproduction of an intense blindness*” – we need to get back to “*the political subject, be it the accountable leader, participatory citizen, the deliberative process itself*” and set “*Cogitosphere’ (or the realm of thinking and reflection) above that of the Infosphere*”.

Should change start from the system or from individuals, or from both? Again, in the words of President Martti Ahtisaari: “*Still, we need to go further than just blaming people and urging them to be less ignorant.*”

2. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

Working Group 1: Overcoming Ignorance – NGOs and Civic Engagement

Besides the illiteracy and lack of basic education there are numerous other forms of ignorance. Many of them hamper the educated no less than they do uneducated people. It is education for life, critical independent thinking that is needed and not just the programming of professionals into obedient and passive producers and consumers. If this requirement has been overlooked, it seems evident that democracy won't function well.

Behind the world *problématique* there are three common forms of ignorance. People can be ignorant of other people, how they live, what they think and what they really mean. Secondly, people are not aware of the hidden agendas, ideologies and presuppositions upon which mass media and educational systems are built. Thirdly, we are not only ignorant of other people, but also of other living beings and our entire biological environment. Although the world *problématique* has been on the agenda for decades, it is not only a matter of indifference: global impacts are hard for anyone to grasp fully.

NGOs and other forms of civic engagement have had many kinds of tasks throughout history. They provide many services that authorities are unable to provide. One form of service is raising the awareness of the common challenges societies face. On many occasions, NGOs dare to say out loud things that the authorities lack the guts to admit as being true. This is done through interpreting specialized (scientific) information to larger, partially fragmented audiences, or through creating feasible alternatives to the current models and systems of society. The need for this seems to be increasing, as societies are fragmenting into mutating sub-cultures and people share fewer things in common. Therefore, it seems that NGOs and yet-to-be-discovered forms of civic engagement build the structures that traditional nation states can no longer deploy in the post-industrial global society.

However, what still seems to be missing, are the new forms of professional ethos, which would foster civic engagement in workplaces. The question is how do people consider themselves to participate in society through their work? How could a large amount of working people start considering themselves as creating public good through their work?

The great challenge that the new emergence of a civil society could facilitate is the broader awareness of the world *problématique*. As a result, people would start practicing *resolutive* in their everyday life instead of just passively receiving news on a worsening state of the world.

Working Group 2: Information Overload, Infotainment and Responsible Citizenship – Challenges for Democracy

Working group 2 described the challenge given in the title consisting of three phenomena:

1. Information overload, which makes the relevant information disappear in an over-abundance of information, thus making it more difficult to reach well-justified conclusions in decision making.
2. Education for the Information Age consisting of new requirements to combine local and global, historical and past information, to enable people to synthesise information into knowledge and to communicate effectively in order to create new kinds of networks.
3. The question of the ownership and control of media, consisting of the threat of information manipulation and the opportunity of decentralizing and democratizing knowledge creation.

The group highlighted four critical issues that constitute the principles for sound solutions:

1. Equity and participation: The current development seen as strongly driven by technology and economy very often excludes the views of special groups, democracy aspects, cultural viewpoints and global equity.
2. Ignorance and decision making: The current reality, full of uncertainty both on a personal and social level, leaves us constantly going through decision making processes with potentially far-reaching long-term effects. Yet, it is harder than ever to separate fact from fiction in our decisions and analytic views from emotions. Thus, the critical questions are: How to help decision-makers to increase their knowledge and care about future possibilities, threats and the long-term consequences of their decisions in the constant inflow of information? How to improve decision-making processes to combine the available facts with peoples' genuine needs to produce sustainable actions in different scales?
3. Internet and Media: The internet offers people deeper and emotionally stronger forms of entertainment, while also opening a nearly limitless source of information. Totally new forms of building networks and interactively creating content have emerged. Utilizing the vast quantities of available information is heavily dependent on available search en-

gines. Naturally, this raises a question on the possibilities to manipulate and control the content of current media. How is the Internet safeguarded to remain an easy forum for social dealings, enabling pluralism instead of becoming a hegemonic entertainment tool?

4. Constituting values and identities: The current social reality combines a sense of personal omnipotence with deep-rooted pluralism and (imaginary) freedom of choice. Therefore, it is very difficult to be conscious of one's own values, or how to apply them. Life consists increasingly of projects, loose commitments and experimentation. Personal identity is a stream of changing life-styles and peer-groups. All this forms remarkable challenges for practicing parenthood, the evaluation of values and building harmonious self-identities.

Working Group 3: Irrationality of Markets in the Information Age

The idea of markets as a universal coordination mechanism is close to realization, as an increasing share of objects enters the sphere of trading and markets themselves turn global. By exerting their evaluative pressure to almost everything, markets allocate material resources among every one of us. Optimists consider this development as a march towards the greater rationality of societies. For pessimists, increasing market dominance is mostly another form of irrationality. Optimists believe that ignorance and social exclusion can be overcome, whereas for pessimists a market is neither universal nor an objective standard of excellence, but one form of the exercise of power. Therefore, some kind of control and protection against the market mechanism is always needed for the weak.

What exactly are the harmful effects of markets' irrationality? Some blame the basic irrationality of markets for causing many of the global problems, such as poverty, corruption and environmental degradation, at least in part. For many economists the major form of irrationality is inbuilt in internal features of markets, such as volatility, systemic risk, short-termism and a lack of transparency.

Both pure optimism and pessimism have *lost their attractiveness* in recent years. Balancing propositions have entered the discussion on the role of markets in society, while some concrete balancing mechanisms have already been practiced for some time. Yet the working group agreed that there is no need to be too complacent.

Financial markets have even been asserted to provide the very logic of control of our economic system. The question is whether this assumption over-simplifies complex reality too much. Is finance, after all, up to the task and how much does it need external assistance? These questions are ever more urgent, because of the unprecedented size and versatility of *financial markets*.

- Since the crises from East Asia to Enron, management and regulation discussions have grown more varied, acknowledging both quantitative and qualitative methods, new frameworks and models of governance. In business, where credibility has traditionally been highly valued, acknowledging one's ignorance is no longer impossible. Today values are back in the economy and ethics have entered the MBA-curricula. Shouldn't these positive signals then make us expect the conflict between our optimist and pessimist to subside?
- At least the door seems to be open *for even more ambitious ways of* grasping the true nature of both the problématique and resolutique around the (assumed) irrationality of markets. Now that systems thinking has been used for quite some time in risk management, not to mention other fields and sectors, there is enough material for formulating ever better questions about: how to combine systemic analyses made in different contexts into a bigger whole,
 - how this could facilitate conflict, acknowledging discussion instead of adversarial politics on the regional and global levels,
 - how values and politics is part and parcel of this whole enterprise and, finally,
 - how other ways of social valuation could co-exist with financial valuation?

Working group 4: Ignorance as Limit to Development

Applying the traditional Club of Rome-esque systemic approach to the topic of ignorance and knowledge, the group defined a *knowledge system* as consisting of 1) *information actors*, 2) *the knowledge content* of information, and 3) *the cultural processes* by which knowledge is generated, shared and disseminated. The workshop covered all of these aspects in larger or smaller components, which put together and complemented, provide a basis for further questions and analysis.

Considering the role of information actors, there is clear evidence that the education of the population increases the wealth of a nation. It is the ignorance of the masses, including the poor and marginalised, which is one major problem. On a rhetorical level this is strongly acknowledged, but still there is not enough investment in primary education in many developing countries. The question was raised: what is the cause of this ignorance, or is it about the value base of the decision-makers rather than ignorance?

Answering the question of “ignorance of what constitutes limits to development”, the group listed several things: ignorance of global issues, ignorance or indifference on local issues, ignorance of the relationship between these two, ignorance of the decision-makers about the consequence of policies, ignorance about alternative ways of development.

Basic development skills can be facilitated and empowered, but cannot be taught in the same way as teaching how to read and write. Contacts, connections and networks are in a key position of the development of a group or society. They are built into the idea of knowledge sharing.

Not all cultural processes provide knowledge that would function as a tool towards development. Some aim at mere entertainment, while sometimes what matters is the speed of the flow, not the content of information itself. Of course, one of the crucial tasks is to consider the mindset of the educational process. The goal should be to enable people to generate new knowledge and to seek solutions to problems, not to fill passive receivers with information created elsewhere. Science and technology face parallel challenges.

The world seems to be currently divided into two worlds: the centre and the periphery, separated in the degree that they participate in the generation of scientific knowledge and the development of technology. The closing of divisions in the knowledge system requires changes in actors, knowledge content and processes. The seeds of possible change need to be identified on a local, national and global level.

3. THE WAY FORWARD – CONCLUSIONS ON THE EMERGED QUESTIONS

“Ladies and gentlemen, the organisers of this meeting claim that ignorance in the world has reached a limit where it has to end. What logically follows from this claim is a question; who is being ignorant and in respect to what? And if we are able to identify these ignorant people, we need to ask what is the reason for their – or maybe our – ignorance. And more; what are the things needed to change this ignorance?”

– President Martti Ahtisaari

Very often ignorance is seen foremost as the problem of poor and uneducated people, whereas indifference is seen as the plague of the well-to-do middle-class. The cure for ignorance is thought to be more visible and more straight-forward than that of indifference: education, education and education. Getting this panacea available for all people everywhere is thought to be a question of resources: the problem will be solved as soon as enough money is found for comprehensive, high quality education. In fact, the problem is more complex. The lack of education is still often named as the biggest reason for ignorance, whether due to a lack of information or a lack of responsibility. Therefore, investments in education remain at the top of the list when talking about ways to overcome humanity’s problems.

The Art of Programming

Education has unproportionally served the interests of the ruling class and the prevailing system to “program” citizens throughout history. The goal has been to make them obedient and direct their frustrations and critique somewhere outside of the foundations of the system. On the other hand, this “programming” has offered the citizens direction and meaning for their personal life. Personal interest and caring require some kind of direction and scoping of one’s attention. The flip side of the coin is denying the relevance of knowing about some other things. This facilitates legitimizing the prevailing belief that it is beyond our capacity to care for everything and everyone. Thus, it is not necessary to take responsibility for many non-immediate things.

This is the way the system's ignorance appears: everybody resigns from responsibility for certain issues through silent agreement. It is rather naive to think that this would be the case only among the least educated. The same goes for the highly educated who have an uncritical attitude towards the things they have learned, towards the surrounding society and its values and towards their own interests. In order to learn and to know things, you need motivation. If it is acceptable to not bother with some issues, then you probably don't feel any pressure to learn more about them, neither to understand their deeper nature. And, as it was noted in one intervention during the first panel discussion of the conference, current education systems are still controlled by national interests and real politics, not by moral politics and global governance. It is no wonder that we still have a long way to go to achieve informed world citizenship.

“Programming” and the “collective delusion” of educated, prosperous people consist of two factors. On the one hand, information overflow inflates the significance of messages. On the other, it is how people are put in a consumer-individual role in the current economy-driven system. Unlike other mechanisms creating indifference, these factors form a rather loose and ambiguous, even amoral ideal for the way of living of a community. People are given no joint direction, the pursuit of which could result in something better and more significant than just separate and private achievements and often hedonistic pleasures. Ideals, such as religion and civilization, entailing collective understanding, become less and less compatible with the current ideal of consumer-oriented society.

The horizon of ignorance is withdrawn in the case of educated people, but not symmetrically in all directions. This asymmetry is partly due to a slower receding of the horizon of indifference; we do not have the motivation required to expand our understanding to many of those directions containing knowledge that would be relevant for safeguarding our future welfare.

From the Club of Rome-esque point of view the principles of holistic, global and long-term thinking are seen as a major tool for even expanding the horizon. Adopting these principles would imply some kind of deeper responsibility.

Table 1. *Who is being ignorant and of what? Who is being indifferent and of what?*

	Of what?	By whom?
Ignorance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future consequences (e.g. of poverty) • Natural systems • Other people and groups, how they live • Own basic needs • Own abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneducated • Narrowly educated • Nation states, corporations with narrow interests
Indifference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External costs of ones' own welfare • Supporting own local community • Global consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle-class • Deprived people lacking hope • Media focusing on real-time information • "The programmed" • Decision-makers in new circumstances and outdated structures

The Speed of Change Challenges Educational Systems

A central phenomenon concerning ignorance is the broadening of requirements for understanding. This challenge remains unanswered by education systems all over the world, including the most developed countries. At least if the standards are set by the way the global system has expanded both in time and geography, gaining complexity in the meantime. In this sense, the past has been easier. Anyhow, the question can be raised whether our current education systems are somehow weaker in relation to the challenges they now face when compared with the systems of past. Or are the contemporary challenges of understanding simply so much more demanding in relation to the learning abilities of humans, that the difficulties are to be expected and inevitable? If this is the case, the role of education as the driver of development has to be evaluated from a new perspective.

Development towards an information society is one of the key elements, which strongly reforms education in its own right. It opens up educational resources for new uses: there is no longer a need to "pour" information into the heads of pupils the way it was done in the past; the availability of information has changed dramatically and fast. In the years to come it will become increasingly crucial to teach solid basic skills and abilities for learning, abilities for searching for and applying information, abilities for a constructive critical attitude and abilities for participation. So far it has been assumed that the resources liberated from traditional learning by rote are best used in studying advanced special skills earlier than before. This leads to nothing but the promotion of strong professional skills. The understanding and awareness of duties and responsibilities are currently being overlooked. Instead, we should (quoting a slogan used by Günter Pauli

in his presentation) *“change system to system, not product for product”*. It is not just few new skills (like ICT, media comprehension etc.) that need to be incorporated into educational systems. It is about a broader understanding concerning the role and purpose of learning and education.

The New Coming of Participation

We have been on the lookout for alternative models for existing forms of society that would be built on the responsibility of individuals for decades. More than ever, this has been the case after approaches beginning from radical changes in the basic structures of society went out of fashion with the collapse of totalitarian ideologies. One result of this new era has been a discussion on the re-emergence of the civil society and NGOs, partially helped by the development of ICT. President Martti Ahtisaari mentioned the theories of Douglas Kellner, which advocate a globalization-from-below. This means individuals and their groups utilizing new technologies for setting a new agenda for globalization, resulting in a multicultural, egalitarian, democratic, and ecological globalization. HRH defined information technology affecting *“the international ‘politique’ of the revolution’ by creating new platforms and short-circuits for participation, changing forms of democratic accountability and identity (legitimacy), re-defining state-interests (security) and centralizing state control on information (governance).”*

Partially it is also about events and changes that have taken place. The civil society has occupied roles that only recently could be imagined to be handled by none other than public authorities. The spectrum reaches from new forms of local services to transnational alliances working towards such goals as social and political justice, environmental protection or transparent democracy.

We have also witnessed several cases in which the global network society, powered by the clever use of ICT, has made remarkable interventions in main-stream global politics. New kinds of mass movements and coalitions have been formed around separate groups of active citizens. Simultaneous e-mail campaigns in a large number of countries targeted to ministers packing their bags for global trade negotiations has already made minor deviations to the progress of processes once designed to be very linear. Demonstrations have been gathered up via mailing lists and sms-chains on short notice, totally surprising the politicians facing the masses and their loud voices. Weblogs⁸ are creating new forms of media, giving a voice to peo-

⁸ The word “blog” was picked as the word of the year 2004 by by US dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster; “Bloggers” were the runners up for Time magazine’s person of the year 2004, losing only to re-elected president George W. Bush.

ple and groups who were previously unheard and even unreachable. This is both replacing the traditional forms of mainstream media and giving it new sources of information. Indeed, there seems to be strong evidence that several forms of civil society are now laid in new fertile soil and with powerful nutrients, creating opportunities for steady growth.

But, as HRH said in his speech about the real impacts of information society and globalization on the role of civil-society and new forms of democracy, *“Positions differ widely... They range from those who think that this impact has been grossly exaggerated, to those who consider that this revolution is no longer of benefit to civil society and has fallen under the control of governments.”* So far relatively little has changed, when approaching the issue from a broader perspective, if solving the problem of ignorance and indifference is at stake. Actually, different kinds of volunteer groups and other forms of civic engagement are commonplace for the majority of citizens in many countries. Yet people are not trained for active and responsible citizenship in school. In the media, forms of civic engagement are very often dealt with as the activities of curious people and therefore their activities are minimally supported from common resources. Participation in demonstrations, let alone organizing one, has not very often been part of the curriculum.

The Civilisation of the Information Society

“Our objective in the Club of Rome is to tap into what one scholar has described as the surplus capacity of information networks to awaken a global critical consciousness.”

– His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan

The culture of a community (nation, religious group) – as a means to “program” its citizens for ideals, goals and a way of living typical for that particular community – has had a crucial role in the educational systems of communities throughout history. Culture defines a person’s way of belonging to one’s immediate local community, while also building a basis for the circle of moral duties. It endows upon the members of community essential principles for recognizing what is good, beautiful and true. Globalization has put the common culture of humanity – civilization – on the agenda. In the reports to the Club of Rome *The First Global Revolution and Ten Thousand Cultures but One Civilization*, this concept has been brought into the arena of public discussion. The fundamental values common to mankind are embedded in all the variations of humankind. It is just that recognizing these common values straightforward has turned out to be more difficult than what was expected in the less global society.

In the conference there was a good deal of relevant proposals concerning the need to strengthen new forms of global civilization. Roseann Runte presented a good list of features for future education:

1. *We need a global education, where we meet the other, where we gain the ability to see ourselves and to see ourselves as others see us.*
2. *We need an education, which includes global issues: the environment, the economy, work, health, transportation. The curriculum must not only be interdisciplinary, but demonstrative of the fact that we share the future and are interdependent.*
3. *We need an education, which transcends ethnic and cultural divisions.*
4. *We need an education, which uses and fosters the creation of new technologies. An American poet, Wallace Stevens, called our frontiers a geography of hope. Today we need to recreate the geography of hope in the minds and hearts of young people around the world.*

Runte concluded her presentation by summing up the challenge of civilization: it is to form a coherent picture of the reality we all share, a picture common to all the humanity. This would lead to *“education, which allows us to make wisdom from knowledge.”*

Pauliina Arola, speaking in the panel discussion on the second day of the conference, named the *“identity-reflectiveness of society”* as the goal that would enable us to bridge the gap of responsibility. *“Identity-reflectiveness”* would include such features as *“openness, a communicative attitude, greater need for community, the need for a shared global humanity and interdependence; to understand how different forms of community contribute to creating welfare; more participation, less consumerism; and critical education for empowerment”*.

Prince El Hassan called for the ethics of human solidarity and critical thinking to be brought to the forefront of the current discussion on globalization. Roseann Runte went very much along same lines in saying that *“we need to hear voices of compassion”*.

What, then, could be the role of civilization – the culture of humanity – in the education of an information society? The study of the alternative costs of manipulated information was proposed during the first panel discussion of the conference. This gives rise to the first central question on a solution for ignorance. We could try to elaborate it through a search for answers to the following questions: what would it mean to change the emphasis of school education from traditional culturally-bound and expertise-laden thinking towards new, horizon-expanding civilization or enlightenment? What would a global civilization ideal be like, created through an emphasis on long-term thinking (awareness of the future), holistic views (awareness

of wholes) and wide impacts (global responsibility)? How would the cornerstones of global basic education be defined, ensuring the inclusion of all basic skills, information searching abilities, critical attitude and the basis for participation?

These fancy attributes for a new, better era of humanity, defining brave characteristics for morally noble individuals, are neither new nor uncommon. There is nothing wrong in repeating the high ideals, which still apply in the minds of many of us as goals that we all should strive for and lay our hopes upon. Yet, we are all very aware of the structural barriers that constantly cause our failures and turn ideals into nothing but – ideals. These iron cages seem to be inherent in all societies, keeping short-term benefits ahead of the long-term ones, encouraging the choice of one’s own interest over the common one and letting us remain indifferent instead of pursuing wisdom.

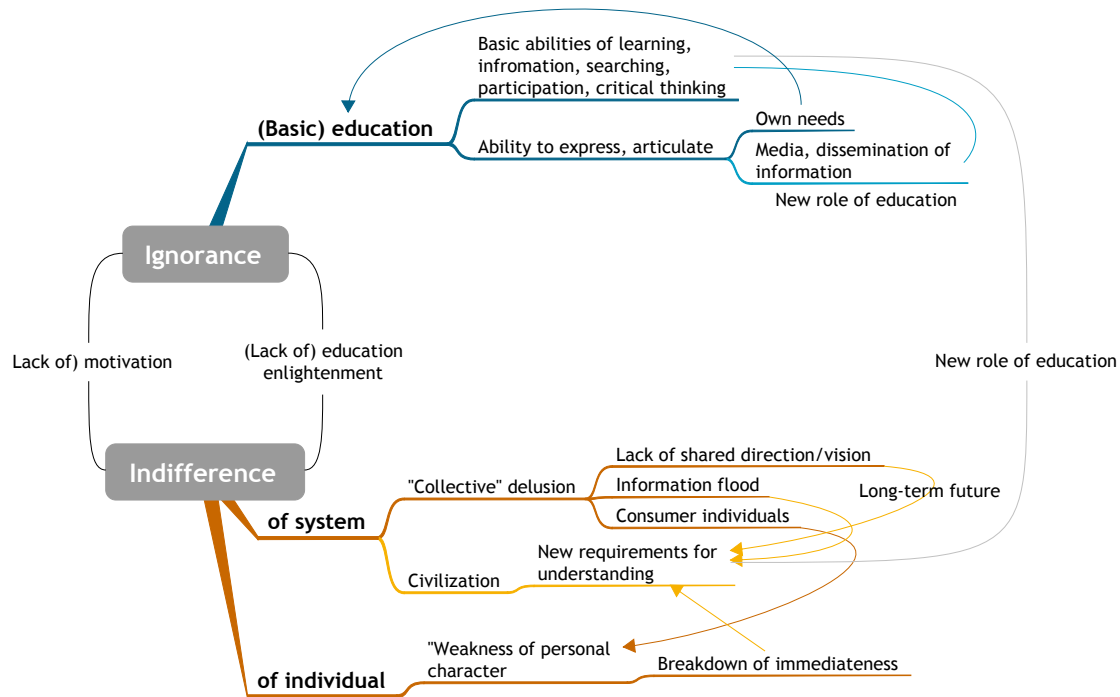


Figure 5. The vicious cycle of ignorance and indifference.

It seems evident that in the short-term, changing the structure and goals of our education would create both losers and winners. Some of us prefer probable, tangible income over an insecure common good that is hard to measure. Therefore the various effects following from such a major paradigm shift should be studied with the help of systems thinking. The diverse, multi-levelled studies could be accompanied by an analysis of other cumulating pressures pushing against contemporary cultures and societies. What would be the impact on professional

skills, on productivity within different fields of production, on the global division of labor, on the individual citizens' proactive responsibility on their own health through their lifespan? What would it lead to within nations, how would it change the contacts people have across the borders of countries? Would the common conceptions of knowledge and skills alter if the emphasis of civilization would be in general citizen-abilities and if training for specialized professional skills would take place where the particular skill would mainly be used? How would the welfare and happiness of individuals be affected by the idea that the expectations for knowing and caring, as signs for civilization, would be greater than now?

Civilization Education Creating the New Horizon

Ignorance at its most fundamental form, as the lack of education, requires new kind of attention if we set our goal as the shaping of an entirely new form of educational system. In each country the primary concern has been the development of culture-bound basic education and competence. For several decades now a widely popular mantra among people familiar with development issues has been that poor people have to be able to define by themselves what their primary needs are and how they should be satisfied.⁹ This also applies to decisions on the content of education: basic education has to enable people to look for solutions to problems rising from their daily life. This requires that uneducated people have to be able to articulate their needs in order for them to be notified in education. Correspondingly, the educational system has to be agile to conform to the messages concerning these needs.

What if broadening education and competence just produce ever-increasing indifference, repeating the patterns already experienced in the industrialized countries, while there would actually be a growing need for responsibility and caring as civilized values? Where are the seeds for such a developing global democracy, in which relations between nations and global responsibility would be seen as similar issues within the moral scope just as joint responsibility and trust are considered within nation states at the moment? In the longer perspective this seems even more tragic. It is evident that humanity cannot afford to repeat the development patterns of the Western countries on a global scale. Surely, basic education has to be broadened and built up in the developing countries. Simultaneously it has to be prepared to face the same challenges of global culture and civilization as education in the developed countries. In order

⁹ In the conference this issue was highlighted by President Martti Ahtisaari: *"It is not about transferring what we (in the North) know, but about partnership; otherwise we should let our friends (in the South) make their own mistakes."*

to build a basis for the civilization of the global information society, all its basic ingredients – critical thinking, seeking information, applying relevant information and individual participation – have to be taught in every part of the world.

The description of this challenge – a leap from the lack of education to global civilization – forms the second central research question. With a closer look it reveals a kind of kinship with another famous great question: How to ensure that the development of society would be fundamentally sustainable? What does the root of this idea of global responsibility and the requirements of an expanded horizon of its understanding imply for societies in which people still struggle to satisfy their basic needs? It would be vital to get views from these societies included into this consideration: what does the challenge of global ignorance look like in the eyes of the ones that live in their society surrounded by immediate problems? The general remark in the conference by Ashok Koshla on the nature of world *resolutique* “*global views are not sufficient for many things that require to be decentralized*” is very important. Discussion on the action required is very different when the fire is seen from a distance and when one is actually engulfed by flames!

During the first panel discussion Eberhard von Koerber posed a question to professor Semboja on what the discussion on the indifference of the informed Western countries looks like from a Tanzanian point of view. There was no straightforward answer to the question. Yet the question is of highest relevance, from the perspective of both developing and developed countries. Further elaborating this question and a search for an answer could shed some light on the ways to a better understanding of the twin challenge of ignorance and expanding the horizons of ignorance and indifference in a more balanced way than in the past.

The Next Level of Limits

“The Limits to Growth did not change the world, but it was a crucial piece in the process whereby humanity became conscious of the physical limits of its own actions. What we need now is to turn our focus on the mental limits of humanity, those boundaries that prevent us from caring and understanding.”

– Professor Markku Wilenius

Few will deny that education is the key to solving the great problems currently hampering humanity. Yet the role of education cannot be stressed too much, at least not as long as there are still billions (?) of people lacking primary education. Of course the question of how to get

them educated is on the top of the priority list. But this huge challenge should not overshadow the vast number of other great puzzles relating to ignorance, indifference, responsibility, education, citizenship, media and other forms of communication. They need to be addressed now, not after the basic challenge of education and poverty have been solved.

For those of us highly conscious of the world *problématique* and its complex nature it does not suffice to say that ignorance will be overcome by providing any kind of education, freedom of speech and access to key technologies. Yes, these are all prerequisites for informed humanity. Still, they are just first level answers to a very complicated dilemma. In order to find feasible answers and solutions we have to break the vicious cycle consisting not only of ignorance but also of indifference. Grasping this extension of the challenge takes us deeper towards considering the meaning of culture, civilization, identity and humanity.

When we start questioning the contents and motives of education and media, we need to keep in mind that they are an essential part of the structure of society. As HRH El Hassan said, culture is the software of politics. Without software, any machine is pretty useless. Neither structures nor parts of software can be replaced without causing changes in other parts of the system. Therefore, there are always barriers, which have to be studied carefully from a holistic perspective. Yet we need to be able to look at the challenges from local angles, in order to identify the different forms that ignorance and indifference take in different situations.

Our challenge is to raise the discussion on the physical limits to the next level, the level of the socio-cultural foundations that the over-shoot is built on. The Club of Rome has chased elements for an intellectual awakening to the consequences of the current state of the world system. Yet we have to admit that the strong intellectual message has not been turned into action and a deep-rooted change of attitudes. What seems to be required is an even broader and more holistic vision of the alternatives to the world system, containing views on the dynamics of our current societies, their competing, partially implicit ideologies, which affect the way people are brought up and educated. As Ashok Koshla summarized in the last moments of the conference, *“The flip side of limits are opportunities. We are about to understand the limits, maybe we’ll start to see the opportunities.”* The opportunity emerging here seems to be a vision of global civilization, rising from the radical changes that our societies – and the personal identities of their members – are now going through.

APPENDIX: REPORTS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

Working Group 1: Overcoming Ignorance – NGOs and Civic Engagement

Report by Aleksi Neuvonen and Pauli Saloranta

Chair of the session: Raoul Weiler

Interventions by: Wouter van Dieren and Ruth Bamela Engo-Tjega

1. Defining Ignorance

Illiteracy

The basic form of ignorance is illiteracy and the lack of education. However, this is not necessarily the form of ignorance that worst hampers the world in our time. Although there is still lot to do in achieving at least the goal defined in the UN Millennium development goals (“Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling”), we are facing several other forms of ignorance, many of which are common among the educated.

In addition of basic illiteracy, there are also other forms of skill deficits forming grounds for ignorance. In a technically advancing world where cross-cultural communication and interdependence are the key phenomena defining the future course of development, humanity is very much dependent on the few universal languages it has been able to develop throughout history: mathematics, science, art and music. Unfortunately only a few are truly literate in all of these languages. Yet their role as essential tools in building and maintaining our societies is tremendous. This form of illiteracy and the scatteredness of our “languages” renders many messages available only to some segments of people. Of course “full literacy” would be possible through extensive training and liberal education. Anyhow, this doesn’t seem to fit current thinking on the global division of labor very well.

Learned & Educated People

Trained people also suffer from ignorance: In many countries, in many school systems of several nations, education and training aim at building good, obedient professionals lacking true “education for life”. Critical, autonomic thinking is not supported in systems shaping and

“programming” people to just mind their own business and not question the status quo of the surrounding society. It doesn’t help if people attain a high level of education, if they cannot think properly by themselves or imagine starting reforms, if they discern emerging problems and short-comings in their society. Narrow professionals without a broader vision on society are easier to govern and lead than critical, independent thinkers. The tendency to “outsource” most of the individuals’ responsibilities to “those thinking on one’s behalf” finally undermines the basis of democracy. So, this is not only a problem of non-democratic states. Once again, people trained, but not educated are able to receive only processed, segmented information, making them ignorant of all the rest.

Mass Media as a Source of Information

Finally, education and training form only a minor part of the information we receive; roughly 70% of what we learn comes through informal forms of education, such as mass media. What is our shared responsibility for the content and quality of information we all are exposed to as passive viewers and readers? As a total, is it increasing or decreasing the degree of ignorance in our societies?

2. Common Characteristics of Ignorance

All these partly cross-sectioning groups of people suffering of ignorance share several things of which they are ignorant.

Firstly, people are ignorant of other people, how they live, what they think and what they really mean, regardless of whether “others” live on the opposite side of the road or across the globe. Normally the further apart they are, the worse their level of awareness of one another.

Secondly, people are not aware of the hidden agendas, ideologies and presuppositions upon which mass media and schooling systems are built. Therefore, many of us don’t have the required means to question the information we receive through both formal and informal education. When things just remain the same and society’s mechanisms are not revealed to citizens, many feel disempowered and turn to escapism, which our current forms of digital entertainment facilitate very well.

Thirdly, we are not only ignorant of other people, but also of other living beings and our entire biological environment. Industrial society has very much detached us from the natural processes of

our surroundings. It is even harder to become truly aware of the effects that we as entire societies and humanity have on a global level. Although the world *problématique* has been on the agenda for decades, it is not only a matter of indifference: this kind of impact is hard to grasp fully.

3. NGOs and Civic Engagement as a way to Overcome Ignorance

Traditionally, in several stages during the history of humankind, civil society and NGOs have been key players in overcoming a variety of ignorance. Most of the services nowadays provided by public authorities in many Western countries – police, primary education, health care, nursing homes – were originally established through volunteer citizens joining forces to improve the general welfare of their society. Only later, when the idea of enlightenment brought forth questions of citizenship and the relationships between the sovereign and the citizens to the spotlight, did the state begin to develop into a service provider, investing in the welfare of its citizens – a role it still has today.

Of course the debate on the role, duties and the division of labor between civil society and the public authorities is a continuous one. In many developing countries civil society still takes care of the duties that the state is not willing or able to take. On the other hand, in the so-called developed world, many of the states have shed some of the service tasks just recently deployed by them. Providing the public good is now being increasingly delegated to NGOs.¹⁰ The other side of the coin is the broad discussion on the role of state and society, which forms the basic dimensions of the political map in most Western countries.

NGOs as Creators of General Awareness

Regardless of the immediate contributions that civil society has been performing for the general welfare of society, we can also outline an even broader field which it has impacted. Many of the philanthropic tasks NGOs have performed have also served to raise public awareness of the existing problems, thereby forcing public authorities and political decision makers to re-consider the state's role in deploying its resources to solve these issues. However, rolling up one's sleeves and getting one's hands in the mud is not the only way that the need for change in policies and public behavior can be communicated. In general the question is about overcoming ignorance; the

¹⁰ The growing role has given rise to a debate on the mandate and accountability of the NGOs as participants of public discussion: who do they represent and why should they be heard? This phenomenon could be seen as a proof of the impact the NGOs already possess in many societies.

ignorance of both the general public and the so-called rulers (in democratic societies with ideal conditions, these groups should be equivalent). NGOs are knowledge providers in many processes. They are the ones that dare to say out loud things that other people are not aware of or simply lack the cognitive or emotional needed for transferring knowledge about them into action.

NGOs as Complementary to Government

We have had several examples of NGOs acting when the government cannot deploy sufficient tools to deal with the *problématique* of public ignorance. The impact that the report to the CoR 'Limits to Growth' had on public discussion was, of course, one of the most remarkable ones. It challenged an entire paradigm and showed that nobody should be ignorant of the fact that there are limits to economic growth.

This function can be performed in several ways: NGOs can be watchdogs in policy making and in securing the accountability of public authorities. NGOs and other civil society groups can offer an alternative to the views and ideologies offered by the schooling system and media under the elite's control and command, with the intention of indoctrinate people to ("break the programming"); civil society groups build confidence among their members that the problems they see and the views they share are legitimate and deserve to be heard by rulers and other citizens; NGOs translate scientific, legal and political information on broad, important issues into messages that their target groups or members are really able to grasp thoroughly.¹¹

Fragmentation of Nations and People

One of the major phenomena during the past decades has been the fragmentation of nations and peoples towards a mosaic of sub-cultures. The older, rather clear and evident class structure of the industrial society lost its significance. People no longer act solely according to the interests inherited from their economic and professional background. This poses a new ground for ignorance. There are two basic reasons for this:

¹¹ Of course there are lots of alternative typologies on NGOs and their roles. For instance, a basic one could be the division between NGOs raising public awareness on certain issues for the sake of the public good; NGOs delivering help and services for "those suffering", left outside decent support; NGOs representing certain interest groups and communicating views and stakes of the group to other citizens to be considered when important decisions are taken.

1. The state can no longer be considered as a generally accepted forum for public debate, in which all the (member) groups gather and have their say. There simply is no structure of state automatically recognized by all the citizens, nor clear groups through which people would feel able to participate naturally. Some lose confidence in the state and public decision-making and become indifferent to these issues.
2. Although information delivered top-down carries a clear threat of “programming”, the loss of traditional structures also signifies the loss of a possibility for all-inclusive information sharing. People start to live in separate realities formed among their own subgroup, concerned about a diminishing number of public issues and uninclined to share knowledge with random fellow citizens.

NGO's New Mission

This development has been possible due to increased cross-border communication, which previously dominated our worldviews. Now we have global interdependence, threats and responsibilities, which an increasing number of people somehow acknowledge as part of reality. There would be no point in trying to form exactly similar structures that dominated industrial nation states; local solutions do not necessarily apply for global problems. Therefore, it is evident that NGOs and new forms of civil engagement need to be part of the solution in a new way.

NGOs often shape and differentiate messages for their target groups. Ideally they are built around people's ways of making sense of what is really happening around them and therefore provide them with feeling of significance; they (as groups of peers) answer questions like “what is important in general?” and “what kinds of things have a personal relevance for me?” They form – or are at least the best candidate to do it – the structure that could otherwise soon be replaced by a void, while the structures of industrial society gradually fade away. In this sense, they could be (or become) an answer to the question of fragmentation and the segmentation of information required by this kind of development, accepting the normative view that there really are some “big issues” or “world *problématique*” with great relevance for each and every member of society.

The major task here is to reduce and hamper the looming indifference by connecting people in new ways. The possibilities of this approach should not be evaluated only on the basis of current forms of civic engagement; we need new forms of civic engagement in order to reach the segments of citizens that are not covered by existing NGOs at the moment. In other words, we need to make broader civic engagement tempting to those people who don't feel that today's NGOs are something for them. In the simplest form this should be incorporating the education of civic engagement in school systems and curricula.

Ethics within Professions

NGOs are not the only vehicle for civic engagement. Most professions have traditionally had their own “ethos” and “ethics”, which have highlighted the group’s role in delivering public good and legitimated their position in society. Only recently, while the formation of the current prevailing economic system has been under way, has a new ethos for work and professions entered the picture in a dominating way. It encourages people to think for themselves as individuals strongly secluded from other citizens and strongly pursuing one’s own economic security and prosperity. The other side of the coin is the increasing importance of shareholder value in motivating the behavior of private enterprises.

Questioning this view on work and the role of an individual citizen, we could outline new forms of civic engagement within the traditional first and second sectors. How do people consider themselves as participants in society through their work? It seems tempting to think that there are big differences between different professions, e.g. there being a Nobel Peace Laureate professional group – Médecins sans Frontières? Could their behavior change if they’d start thinking of their work as a way of creating public good? Would this make them more conscious of the “world *problématique*”, being more informed and less ignorant or indifferent? Could this change of paradigm alter the prestige that different professions nowadays receive? There is perhaps no need to further stress that all this would require enormous changes in education systems and again place more emphasis on liberal education at the cost of narrow and focused professional training.

The third dimension of civic engagement, along with civil society groups and professional life, would be the wielding of larger consumer power. As this issue has been recently considered very broadly in several public discussions, it need not be elaborated further here.

4. Conclusions

Concluding the way forward, it should be once more emphasized that the underlying question behind the forms of civic engagement as a (partial) solution to ignorance and indifference still bewitching the humankind is the issue of world *problématique*. It deserves to be more of an issue in our societies. It seems that this could only be achieved through making it more attractive from the perspective of people’s everyday life. They should be encouraged to make sense of the complicated issues, signals and messages they occasionally face in newspapers, television, magazines and the Internet. A prerequisite is that people accept that there are issues, which deserve an extra attention and ought to be valued above a random concern. This kind of a clear

and strong valuation would probably enable people to care about what they learn through different informal channels.

As a result, we could see people starting to practice *résolutive* for the world *problématique* in their everyday lives. This should, of course, be the ultimate goal of good education: education for life, education towards an informed humanity and towards the common good.

Working Group 2: Information Overload, Infotainment and Responsible Citizenship – Challenges for Democracy

Report by Matti Penttilä and Anita Rubin

Chair of the session: Tobias Lengsfeld

The challenging and multidimensional title of the workshop was highlighted from different angles by the prepared contributions of Professors Roseann Runte, Ernst-Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Susana Chacon, as well as comments by other participants in the vivid discussion. More than an exact documentation, this report tries to raise new themes and questions as novel research initiatives for the Club of Rome.

Addressing the topic, we must to admit that some distance ought to be taken to the information mess. In the Conference, the immediate reporting of our workshop by the chair and rapporteurs emphasized the following major issues:

1. Information Overload: There is an over-abundance of information, but the ‘right’ information remains unavailable. There was special concern for “immediate reporting”, causing the flattening of the past and a disappearance of the future. The exponential growth of information, lacking organizing principles and synthesis makes it more difficult for citizens and decision makers to find the relevant information and reach conclusions.
2. Education for the Information Age: Overcoming ignorance in the Information Age requires new dimensions for the objectives and methods of education. Education has to be relevant in the local context and, at the same time, needs to give tools for understanding the global and historical consequences of one’s actions. Education has to create an ability to orient, select and synthesize information into knowledge. Technology has to be utilized to create communication among peers and to grow networks of educational institutions. Cultural diversity has to be supported in order to avoid the narrowing effect that the digital information and communication has on the world.

3. **Ownership and Control of Media:** Even in the Information Age, mass media is an essential source of information for the majority of people. Media is a complex and complicated system of infrastructure, technology, content production, manipulation and distribution. The democratic control of the organization of knowledge and the ownership of mass media are crucial issues in fighting ignorance. The decentralization of content production offers untapped opportunities for new democratic ways of knowledge creation.

The borders lining our every-day life are under constant and inevitable change. Challenges, such as globalization and the global market economy, networking, the access to and distribution of information, virtual realities, as well as the real-time nature of media and electronic communication are more and more notably labeling reality.

The development processes towards the emergence of a true civil society, stated in so many public strategies and national and inter-government programs, has much too often remained nothing but beautiful thoughts. The technical-economic sector eats its way through the cultural, the social, and the political sectors (e.g. Malaska & Lemma: Africa beyond Famine).

When the process of change accelerates, the meaning of the logic of cause and effect diminishes and becomes blurred in the reality we live through. We have to use new concepts, words and metaphors to define our reality and future both for ourselves and our society. While the meaning of 'experientialism' and transience grows, our in-depth understanding of the logic of time gradually crumbles away. The ability to forecast the future becomes difficult, when the systems of wholes become harder and harder to comprehend. The fervency of action widens the limits of reality in a fundamental way, even though our own human capacity to receive and handle information or experience emotions and events has not changed in the one million years of human history. In the field of handling information we are still similar to our ancestors.

Equity and Participation

If we look at the change and the challenges that this course of development brings about, we end up with ideas and solutions, which are technologically deterministic in nature. Society's functioning, development and future are generally seen as dependent on technological advancement, innovations, and ideas. As a consequence of this development, human beings are treated only as production factors and/or consumers in the market economy. The special groups in society, such as the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the ethnic minorities, and the young are much too often danced over in such a rumba. The tendency to understand develop-

ment through merely technological and economic aspects, terms, and trends leaves the majority of humankind out of the course of development.

The first set of questions arises from the thoughts above:

- How to enhance democracy and equal rights for all members of society in the rich countries to participate in decision-making and individual empowerment?
- How to increase the influence of cultural aspects, viewpoints and ideas to development programs and solutions?
- How to ensure that all people, regardless of their level of education, race, language, gender, age, etc. can have the access, motivation, and skills to participate in the development processes of the information society?
- How to ensure that all people around the world can have their say in what ways and needs the information and communication structures will be built?

Ignorance and Decisionmaking

In a reality where people are unable to know whether they still have work, food and shelter in the coming month on a personal level, or to assess next year's GDP on a socio-economic level, they still have to make decisions that may affect the future of several generations yet to be born. A somewhat extravagant feeling of omnipotence is gaining way, while fiction and fact get more and more mixed up and unclear in the human mind. This leads to a situation where people can no longer point out the difference between true and analytic knowing from emotional, normative knowing in decision-making.

The whole Conference dealt with the questions of ignorant decision making processes, both on individual and social levels. Two formulations of these problems:

- How to help decision-makers increase their knowledge and caring about future possibilities, threats and the long-term consequences of their decisions in the constant inflow of information?
- How to improve decision-making processes to combine available facts with the genuine needs of people to produce sustainable actions on different scales?

Internet and Media

The deeper the move into a society of dreams and emotions becomes, the more surfing the web becomes a healing experience, the net acting as the therapist. People search the net for virtual comfort in loneliness, in the feeling of loss, growing insecurity, lack of vision, and fear of rapidly changing reality. Through the net an illusion of control can be attained. Each time people surf the net, a vast ocean of information opens up for free utilization. It is more and more difficult to bind things together in a logical way, when information flows in as bits and fragments. We are such recent newcomers in this limitless information society that we have been able to develop only the most primitive tools to classify and evaluate all this information available on the web.

There are two dimensions to improve the structures, understanding and evaluation methods in a world of borderless digital information spaces: communication and search. The Internet was originally a social phenomenon, which reflected the needs of research and learning societies. Its content was created, modified, distributed, stored and evaluated by the communities of users. That is why it was considered to be a revolutionary medium compared to e.g. television. The democratic and critical structures of interaction are still there, just covered by the production of a huge amount of commercial or irrelevant information of today. This is especially important as millions of users (first in universities and other educational institutions) in the developing countries are reaching access to the facilities of the Internet. The second aspect is the search engines that can reveal any detail in 500 billion public pages in a fraction of a second. The real power of the Internet is hidden in the logic of the search, which we are all critically dependent upon.

The ownership and control of the biggest mind manipulation apparatus was raised as a critical issue of the ignorance fighting *problématique*. Even if we are not able to solve the global dilemma of media control, we can still state some questions regarding goals:

- How to foster the original communal and communicative nature of the Internet, how to improve the Internet as a means to form an easy forum for social dealings?
- How to create methods to differentiate between right and wrong, good and evil, true and untrue, relevant and irrelevant, strictly factual and merely entertaining information?
- How to increase general awareness and knowledge so that the Internet and/or the globalizing media cannot be turned into tools for any hegemony?
- How to ensure the diversity in content production and content search despite the centralization tendencies visible in the Internet/Media?

Constituting Values and Identities

One of the basic beliefs of a Western individual is that everything can be researched and that most things and phenomena can be affected somehow, if so desired. There are only a few things, which are understood to be such that we cannot affect them in any way. When our everyday reality becomes more opaque this way, also the human sense of proportion grows dimmer.

The importance of peer groups and the network society is growing among young people, while grown-ups (or more static groups) are losing touch with the reality that young people struggle through their everyday life today both on the level of information and practices, and on an emotional level. The outlining and repossession of everyday events becomes more difficult with the continuous, unstoppable and unchecked movement of parallel world-views and values. Although some complain in the media about the loss of values, others say that perhaps there are much too many values to choose from, causing confusion in deciding which ones should be chosen to guide our lives. As long as everyday choices can be made on a routine basis, it is not necessary to consider values. It can be assumed that the values of human society are in-built in the ways of acceptable action.

In sociological discussion, our contemporaries are sometimes referred to as creatures who avoid far-reaching commitments, long-term planning, and long-lasting identities. Therefore the communities formed over the Internet do not last either, but provide a safe forum of experimentation and an outlet to realize different roles and styles. The chosen roles form an element in a constant flux of changing identity formation. The self and one's own body becomes a testing field for new lifestyles. At the same time, different projects attached to oneself become the only field, which people can completely control. The roles adopted through the Internet become more and more important as a tool in identity formation.

This discussion has its utmost importance when we are searching for and learning the values of humankind, and at the same time honoring local societies, cultures and encouraging independent (sustainable) life-styles.

- How to guarantee that people won't lose their sense of understanding which things they can influence and change and which they cannot?
- How to help families (growing communities and societies) and increase good parenthood in the processes of globalization?
- How to evaluate values when facing a situation where routine methods no longer work?
- How to create tools eligible for healthy identity building and sound and harmonious selves?

Working Group 3: Irrationality of Markets in the Information Age

Report by Ismo Räävi¹²

Chair of the session: Keith Suter

Interventions by: Patrick Liedtke and Martin Lees

A market is a place at which trade is conducted and publicly displayed. In a market economy, it is this public trading that keeps production and consumption in balance with each other. Traditionally, there have been many kinds of markets in the world defined by geographical borders and a type of product. Today both of these limiting factors can be questioned when it comes to the financial markets. First, local is turning into global, because electronic trading systems do not recognize any borders. Second, the financial market is becoming the universal economic coordination mechanism¹³, since more and more objects, both material and intangible, can be transformed into financial ones. Finally, if privatization gains momentum worldwide, the financial market has the potential to grow into a battlefield for all human values and interests stated in terms of money.

Even these new kinds of markets are not, however, without limitations of their own. In what follows, I point to them by presenting three definitions of irrationality. I also list some challenges the limitations bring with themselves and some possible solutions in sight, respectively. To conclude, I reflect on the relation between politics and markets.

1. The role of prudent knowledge management and disclosure

Especially in the short term, successfully pursuing profits depends on the ability to skillfully predict the future. When business is going as usual, there is something of a balance between the right and false predictions. Sometimes, however, most market actors seem to have guessed wrong. As a result, crisis follows and critics blame the market or the market actors for being irrational.

The questions and challenges involved with this kind of irrationality focus on the epistemic capabilities of actors – persons, organizations and states – and on the structures of the market that influence their action. They include:

¹² I thank Veera Laitalainen for helpful comments on this report.

¹³ Fligstein, N. (2001): *The Architecture of Markets: An Economic Sociology of Capitalist Societies*.

- How to make sure that economic actors honestly disclose information about themselves in order for others to evaluate them properly?
- How to find the best (technical) practices of prediction and foresight to overcome the challenges of complexity and the speed imposed upon us all by today's markets?
- How to make all the actors, including lay people, more aware of the need to constantly reflect and act on the markets?
- How to decide the problem with systemic risk and the implications thereof for investment activity that purposefully takes oversized risks?

Progress has been made on these points:

- Regulation imposes ever more strict rules on economic actors to disclose increasingly specific information.
- Some governments have begun to educate their citizens about the dangers and possibilities inherent in investing.
- In business, methods of risk management and valuation have become more inclusive, reflecting the multifaceted nature of markets. Blind faith in numbers and quantitative analysis based on historical data is fading. More attention is being paid to what is left unknown and to the need to nurture precaution.

2. Problems with attempts to unify separate markets

Reckless trading¹⁴ and gross misjudgments are here to stay, if we go on thinking about a market as a mere collection of technical trading and knowledge management processes. Instead, a real market is always a culture in its own right. Even the processes of the global financial market rest on numerous implicit rules, norms, values, and practices, which is why they cannot be taken out of context without affecting their functionality. It is hard, if not impossible, to restructure a market without paying attention to the history of its emergence. This fact has received insufficient attention in recent attempts either to connect national markets into the globally dominating one or to regulate market actors through purely technical means and incentives. Crises follow, once again, because parts of one market can be irrational from the point of view of the whole of another.

¹⁴ The kind of culture in the financial industry that was part and parcel of the financial crises in the late 90's has been called the risk culture (Green, S (2000): 'Negotiating with the future: the culture of modern risk in global financial markets').

The questions and challenges imposed by the second definition include:

- How can we properly analyze markets as multifaceted cultural entities?
- On what basis should we plan and design economies globally and locally, when modeling-as-usual seems to bring inferior results?
- How should we aim to harmonize different markets? Should we, instead, strive to keep some limits and borders between them?

Some progress has been made:

- Along with (neoclassical) economics, other academic disciplines have gained credibility in analyzing markets.
- Ethics are back in the MBA-curricula and controls on and incentives for too independent managers have been reworked.
- Institutions like the IMF have conceded the problems in trying to quickly change and integrate whole societies by using a one-size-fits-all model.
- The Tobin tax –movement has raised attention to the influence, which tying down investments to a locality could have on how carefully investors pay attention to the real risks inherent in different societies.

3. Market vs. other mechanisms of social coordination

While the first two definitions brought out the multiple prerequisites needed for markets to work in an orderly way, the last one leads us to ask: what roles can a market have in a historically developed culture/society? It is the existing and potential functions of and limits for markets in relation to the whole society that we want to define. In the final analysis, markets are part of one's idea of a good life. Problems inherent in them cannot be solved without getting involved in politics. Even if one of today's real markets was to develop into a universal method of valuation, it would still be up to us to decide whether that market would reflect the views of cosmopolitans, proponents of a financial civilization or citizens cherishing their current, local way of life.

The questions and challenges:

- Even if it were possible, would we really want to become perfectly reflective members of a financial civilization, knowing the strain that the need to stay constantly alert puts on us?
- How to include tacit, local knowledge in the global valuation processes?

- How to protect values that are held by too few people to make them attractive from the global point of view of businesses?
- How to prevent a multi-aspect value from collapsing into its economically translatable aspect?¹⁵
- How to develop and support a political system capable of imposing regulations on the market actors, especially, political action based on face-to-face deliberation?

Instead of progress, there are opportunities for looking more closely into this problem:

- What are the real effects of initiatives like ethical funds, corporate social responsibility and reporting of non-financial information?
- A bit surprisingly, values seem to be considered not only as tools for making employees more dependable. Advances in the UN Global Compact to persuade companies to side with human rights hint at a real concern about the effects that the separation of market actors from the rest of the society can have.
- Future advances in governing through modeling that could function despite a lack of global democracy. It would be more inclusive, i.e. taking into consideration not only experts, but also laypeople.
- The developing new ethical basis for organizational cultures and for the self-restriction of business. Business needs whole persons, not greedy maximizers. This shows the limits for what seemingly radical moves, such as the democratizing of knowledge management, can eventually bring about in a business.
- The multiple problems that the project for global political system is facing.

4. Conclusions

Globalizing markets, especially the technically sophisticated global financial markets, are a relatively new phenomenon. Therefore, it is not surprising that their true complexity is only just unwinding. While this complexity has brought crises and alleged irrationality, it also has the potential to remind us once again about the inadequacy of simple solutions that ignore the social nature of economic problems.

In this new atmosphere, we can try to change the situation in many ways. Participating in consumer activism in order to reveal the role that attitudes and worldviews have in the markets is

¹⁵ There is, of course, disagreement over whether this issue really exists or not.

one. Strengthening the odds for change from within by making the insufficiency of technical regulation more visible is another. Nevertheless, above all, we need to find ways of creating and measuring wealth that have not been previously thought of in this economic system. It is after all, economy that we are talking about, and we have to have a clear idea about how we create the material resources that we need.

By this, I do not refer so much to new products or even social innovations, but to societies. What we need is to be able to show convincingly that by keeping some resources in isolation from the market evaluation we can end up with better economic results.¹⁶ In the presence of speed, short-term gain and impatience, this can be difficult. Developing holistic perspectives and showing their effectiveness takes time and “non-accountable” funding.

Finally, there is the question of financial markets as a global coordination mechanism. When it comes to consumer activism, it leaves the market mechanism to make the final decision. It cannot replace deliberation between parties, who realize their common faith and what conditions that faith sets for the decision they have to take. Now, the basic logic of taking everything into pieces in the process of valuation seems to attract many in this complex world. Opponents cry for new global mechanisms. However, could politics be it? After all, it may not be a bit more complex than the financial counterpart when the complexity and opacity of the latter is fully realized.

Working Group 4: Ignorance as Limit to Development

Report by Sylvia Karlsson and Salla Koivusalo

Preface

The workshop was chaired by Mr. Pentti Malaska (Finland) and co-chaired by Mr. Heitor Gurgulino Souza (Brazil). In addition to the opening speech of the chairman, Mr. Heitor Gurgulino de Souza, Mrs Eleonora Masini (Italy), Mr. Ahmad Mango (Jordan) and Mr. Jyrki Luukkanen (Finland) presented their thematic views about the subject for discussion. Mr. Thomas Schauer served as the rapporteur of the workshop to the conference workshop plenary. Our views and observations are reported in the following essay.

¹⁶ I am looking forward to the new Limits to Privatization –report.

Framework

The hallmark of the Club of Rome is to take a long-term and holistic systems approach in the analysis of issues. Applying this approach to the topic of the present conference, i.e. to ignorance and knowledge, widens the scope of interest and also enables the identification of system properties, which usually evade scrutiny. A *knowledge system* is composed of 1) *the information actors*, i.e. producers, senders, transmitters, processors, and receivers of information, 2) *the knowledge content* of information, i.e. meanings carried by the coded forms and interpretation of information to meanings and 3) *the cultural processes* by which knowledge is generated, shared and disseminated. The workshop covered all of these aspects in larger or smaller pieces, which provide a basis for further questions and analysis when put together and complemented.

The actors

Whose ignorance constitutes the limits to development? Knowledge is prosperity for any country and is embedded into human and social capital. The clear correlation between the educational level of the population of a country and its development in terms of economic growth, is empirically well established, such as in the case of Japan (correlation diagram provided). It is the ignorance of the masses, including the poor and marginalized which is the problem. Knowledge is an actor's ability to identify, search and incorporate new things into one's own knowledge structure and content. On the other hand, there is no ignorance of this fact among the education ministers of the world. On a rhetorical level, this is strongly acknowledged, but still there is not enough investment in primary education in many developing countries. The question was raised, what can transform rhetorical statements into firm conviction, political will and action? Perhaps there still is a different degree and type of ignorance on the part of the minority who are in decision-making positions regarding the living conditions of the great majority at both national and global levels. The question was raised: what is the cause for this ignorance, or is it more about the value base of the decision-makers rather than ignorance? That majority themselves know about their dire survival problems. What are the most important knowledge gaps to be filled in the different actors?

The knowledge¹⁷

What type of ignorance, ignorance of *what* constitutes limits to development? There were a number of comments on the content of ignorance, or rather the content of the knowledge we do not have, which sets limits to making appropriate choices for development. There is ignorance about how to live in a world community. There is local ignorance of global issues. There is global ignorance – or perhaps it is indifference – of local issues. Or is it just human nature to look at far-away problems rather than solving those which arise in one's own neighborhood, which could be solved by changing one's everyday behavior? This raises questions concerning what knowledge can and needs to be generated locally and what knowledge cannot be generated locally, but needs to be incorporated into local mindsets across the globe? And what type of local knowledge can and needs to be brought to the global policy making table and how can that be achieved? Keeping in mind that knowledge is always bound into location, time and culture, and with these references emerges as feasible knowledge (with the means to make changes).

There is ignorance of our condition and what causes it, ignorance by the decision-makers about the consequence of policies. There is a need to decompose the factors, which affect social and environmental change into meaningful components that, for example, lend themselves to reflective discussions about goals and possible policy interventions (an example of Advanced Sustainability Analysis is provided).

The definition of development impacts the type of knowledge considered necessary to produce it; knowledge seen as asset, one building block of the house of development. If the goal of education systems is only the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society, then theoretical learning preparing for higher education is emphasized. But it is a problem, when no skills applicable to the local development context are taught in schools. These development skills can be facilitated and empowered, but they cannot be taught the same way that reading and writing can. In other contexts, such as in IT-education, it is the ways of thinking and basic ideas that need to be focused on rather than mere skills – citizenships skills in an information society. (An external reference about information age ignorance could be made to Maija Viherä's dissertation about the so-called MAS (motivation, access, skills) model.)

There is ignorance about existing possibilities for creating solutions, ignorance about those seeds of change that provide hope for development, e.g. in the contribution of women for de-

¹⁷ Knowledge is seen as virtue in Chinese culture. Culturally sensitive definitions should be examined.

velopment (examples of women as main household decision-makers, as builders of solidarity networks in crises situations are provided). Contacts, connections and networks are in a key position of the development of a group or society. They are built into the idea of knowledge sharing. Sharing presupposed trust and trustworthiness.

Not just any knowledge is good for development. Still half of the money spent on education and research goes into military technology etc. One needs to critically address the ‘invisible hand’-theory, according to which an individual’s acts of self-interest lead to the common good. This is delusion, which hides the values behind the policies.¹⁸

The processes

The question was asked, what processes can bring shared perspectives across sectors? This relates to questions about the processes by which we generate and share knowledge, learn and reflect. With the media sound-bites, oral cartoons and a general lack of reflective discourse, the process of information dissemination does not function as the tool towards development that it could be. The questions of whether it is the speed or content of the information flow that is of greatest consequence for development was raised, perhaps at the backdrop of the heavy focus on the digital divide.

The formal education system is one of the major actors in the process of information and knowledge dissemination and its role cannot be overemphasized. Demands on the education system are broader than just overcoming illiteracy. The education system should equip one with the ability to verify sources of knowledge and to combine pieces of knowledge into a body of knowledge. It faces considerable challenges to provide not only sufficient ‘quantity’, but also the right ‘quality’ of knowledge. There are enormous demands on an expansion of the number of teachers etc. in developing countries (Brazil is provided as an example). It is even more challenging to consider the mindset for the educational process. Is education oriented towards filling passive receivers with a set view of the world, built on knowledge generated elsewhere? Or can the process of generating new knowledge (scientific and other types) oriented towards solv-

¹⁸ Adam Smith’s theory, as he himself put it, says that “that individual self-interest acts leads into common good” but only if assumed that the actor observes what is good and just for the other people. If this is omitted, then we are not talking about Smith’s market economy theory with the invisible hand of free and non-manipulative markets, but we are talking about capitalism without any other moral commitment but self interest (right or wrong it does not matter if I profit!).

ing both local and global development problems be incorporated in curricula and if so, how? Can institutional partnerships be forged between knowledge institutions as networks of excellence, to empower and unleash the knowledge potential?

The formal system of science and technology production faces similar challenges of providing quantity and quality. A mere increase in the volume of investment in science and technology is not enough. More elements are needed to make that investment lead to economic growth (an example was provided of Brazil, which has invested significantly, but failed miserably in innovation in spite of succeeding in increasing agricultural productivity). What is the missing element? The role of knowledge institutions and science in society is a key issue. (It may relate to the question of whether we teach people to eat fish or whether we teach them to fish for themselves.) It was pointed out that there is a need for less formal systems of technology transfer. Technology is itself a concept incorporating technical innovation, feasibility, and social innovation in every local condition. But perhaps the real issue is the need for expanding the formal systems of science and technology production to incorporate new participants. Whether it be school children collecting water quality or local epidemiology data or farmers who become experimenting scientists themselves, the key is creating one's own knowledge to fulfill one's own needs.

The system and closing the divides

The knowledge system of the world is characterized by a number of divides, if not gulfs. There are huge divides between people in their degree of knowledge (basic literacy, level of education etc.) and in the degree to which they participate in the generation of knowledge. The divide in access to information flows, digital and otherwise, is equally enormous. The world is divided into two worlds, the centre and the periphery in the degree they participate in the generation of scientific knowledge and the development of technology.

“There is a real risk of two civilizations emerging, with two ways of viewing and relating to the world: one based on the capacity to generate and utilize knowledge; the other passively receiving knowledge from abroad and deprived of the ability to modify it.”

{Sagasti, 2000 #871}

“In a large majority of countries, science, at best, is a marginal activity.”

{Arunachalam, 1999 #864}

Even though the division of knowledge is unequal, knowledge necessarily leads to a 'better or good life'. We need to examine more closely our disability to change our behavior according to our knowledge. The closing, or at least narrowing of those divides requires changes in actors, knowledge content and processes. But what changes does it really entail in the mindsets, structures, institutions and explicit governance at global and lower levels?

Project ideas:

- Identify those seeds of change at the local level where individuals and communities are seen not only to produce local and indigenous knowledge, but also scientific knowledge of benefit to themselves and the greater scientific community and explore the changes in mindsets, structures and institutions involved.
- Identify and analyze the seeds of change at the national level, where investments in primary education and/or R&R has been most effective and explore the factors contributing to this. E.g. the effects of R&D investments on sustainable development indicators.
- Identify and analyze seeds of change at the global level where relevant knowledge is systematically incorporated from beyond the scientific knowledge system and explore the impact of this on governance processes, as well as the constraints and obstacles.
 - Modeling of an Innovation System (national or local), looking at information society more closely.
- One possible case to explore is the following. The Johannesburg Summit painted a picture that successful paths towards sustainable development (or, in the language of the workshop, the positive seeds of change) exist locally in individual places. The question was how to share those best practices and success stories across countries and regions and how to upscale these to multiple localities. Partly as a reflection of this view, the format of the Commission on Sustainable Development was changed to function, particularly in the Review Years, as a knowledge and experience sharing forum for governments and multiple other stakeholders. Learning centers, partnership fairs, and expert panels entered the scene and Major Groups were expected to provide their share of locally grounded experiences. Questions that arise are: What type of learning can take place in this setting where the goal seems to be for the local to meet the global? What are the constraints and possibilities? How do the participants, governmental and non-governmental, adjust to this new setting? Will it enable better informed global policies? ASA information system is just for this kind of comparisons.

Possible project links:

1. Link to the Sustainable Development Governance discussion processes, which the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is engaging in. What gaps exist in the global governance system, that have implications for improving the knowledge system?
2. Link to the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, which Finland should have a committee established for. What gaps exist in education systems for merging local and global knowledge?
3. Link to the World Science Forum, November 2005 in Budapest organized on the theme of Knowledge, Ethics and Responsibility. What gaps exist in the science system for generating more relevant knowledge about our condition of global change and living in one community?

Beyond ignorance (general comments outside the workshop theme)

There were a number of references during not only the workshop, but also the plenary that often it is not ignorance that is the limit to development, or action in general, but indifference. It is not that we do not know, but that we do not care. Knowledge is not the same as wisdom. The role of values in the educational system was highlighted. It was stated that we have knowledge and awareness of it all – environmental degradation etc. – but no wisdom. The question is who is “we” in this statement? “We” who think we know best what the world needs? “We” who think we can solve the problems on behalf of the world, because have the resources and power to change the underlying structures? These comments link well to the discussions in the internal CoR meeting where its role as a promoter of values vs. taking its positions from the basis of science was discussed at length.

Project idea:

- Identify the type of knowledge, education systems, media structure, science and technology system that can facilitate not only bridging the gulf of ignorance with information and knowledge, but doing so in a way that facilitates bridging the gulf of indifference and loyalty between us and them, the local and global. Surveys/interviews on all continents – the business community, governments, academia... all UN Major Groups. This would reflect the two types of development – as ‘progress’ – of humanity referred to in the workshop, the cumulative improvement of knowledge and the ever expanding moral quality of human nature. The former was addressed in detail, whereas the latter needs a much more systematic analysis and attention from the scientific community, as well as other groups.



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