

Voices for the Future: Global Crises and the Human Potential

Background Paper
by Surendra Munshi, Fellow, Bertelsmann Stiftung
for Trilogue Salzburg 2009



The paper is an overview drawing from a series of qualitative interviews intended for the participants of the Trilogue Salzburg. The Bertelsmann Stiftung would like to thank Prof. Dr. Surendra Munshi for writing this background paper and all interviewees for their gracious cooperation. The series of interviews is likely to be extended after the Trilogue.

About the author:

Surendra Munshi, the noted Indian sociologist, was Professor of Sociology at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIMC) till 2006. He has researched and taught in India and abroad in the fields of classical sociological theory, sociology of culture, qualitative research, and industrial sociology. Among his other engagements he was the academic leader of an international project on good governance that was supported by the European Commission in which several European institutions of higher education took part. The outcome of this project has appeared as a book under the title Good Governance, Democratic Societies and Globalization. More recently, he has published with others yet another book on the theme: The Intelligent Person's Guide to Good Governance. He is a Fellow of Bertelsmann Stiftung at present. He is frequently invited to lecture at national and international conferences. He has spoken recently on such varied subjects as management and leadership challenges in the present century, cultural policy, intercultural dialogue, humanism, and values in the era of globalization. He serves as a Member of the Council of Global Thought Leaders for the project on Globalization, Corporate Leadership & Inclusive Growth, and a project of the Evian Group at the International Institute for Management Development (IMD), Lausanne. He is also the author of the 2008 Salzburg Trilogue background paper.

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Trilogue Salzburg:

Originally launched by Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel, member of the Board of Trustees of Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Trilogue Salzburg has been organized since 2007 in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs. Surrounded by the stimulating atmosphere of the Salzburg Festival its goal is to facilitate a value based intercultural dialogue. An interdisciplinary round table that unites the usually separate and often conflicting areas of politics, business and culture, the Salzburg Trilogue brings together distinguished thought leaders and decision makers to address the current and future challenges facing Europe and the world.

Introduction

“If the success or failure of this planet and of human beings depended on how I am and what I do ... How would I be? What would I do?” — R. Buckminster Fuller

This quote by one of the first global visionaries, American architect, futurist, author and designer R. Buckminster Fuller (1895 – 1983), comes close to the core consideration of this year’s Salzburg Trilogue. The world is at a crossroads. Last year the 2008 Salzburg Trilogue on “Global Visions” revealed a broad consensus that humanity faces challenges that are urgent, omnipresent and interdependent, and that the manner in which they have been addressed so far falls short of what the global community could potentially achieve. All sorts of scenarios seem possible. Based on a computer simulation that took more than 50 days to run, experts at the Palo Alto-based Institute for the Future estimate that the extinction of humankind is likely within the next quarter-century. And the convergence of global crises we currently face may prove them right. Yet, at the same time, those who have prophesied doom for human civilization have been proven wrong time and again by the capacity of our species to both adapt to and transform the conditions we live in. Hence the alternative scenario – in which the world begins working together for the benefit of the majority, if not all of mankind – remains at least as conceivable. It is with this firm belief in our capacity as human beings to take appropriate and effective action that the hosts of the Salzburg Trilogue decided to address the globe’s crises with an eye on solutions and change architectures, rather than problems.

In preparing for this year's roundtable and in order to identify some of the most important enabling strategies for creating a viable future, we decided to conduct a series of interviews with some of the globe's key change agents and select global thinkers. Our intention was to draw on the interviewees' knowledge and experience in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of what is fitting and feasible for redirecting humanity's efforts at this critical moment in time.

Almost all of the experts we contacted kindly agreed to be interviewed for some 60 to 90 minutes, either on video or in a teleconference. To be meaningful, the qualitative interviews have not been carried out based on a list of fixed questions. Rather, they investigated the viewpoint of the person being interviewed from his or her perspective, on his or her terms.

With these considerations in mind, Dr. Surendra Munshi, Bertelsmann Stiftung Fellow, conducted the interviews, trying to glean answers to the following questions: What are the three most important global challenges? How does the interviewee assess past or current efforts to deal with them? What are the conceivable ways of overcoming obstacles, especially in the fields of leadership, education, global collaborative action and global governance? What has the interviewee's personal contribution been to positive global change?

The analysis of these fifteen interviews, which you will find here, proves our approach was the correct one. The findings complement each other, forming a meta-narrative of what leading intellectuals think of the state of the world today and providing meaningful responses to the confluence of crises humanity is now confronted with. None of the interviewees, as I recall, said he or she was pessimistic. Yet they all expressed great concern and called for immediate behavioral and systemic changes in order to reduce and eventually eliminate the activities humans engage in that undermine the sustainability of life and of civilization as we have come to know it.

On behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung I would like to express my gratitude to all the interviewees who took their time to accompany us on this learning journey. I would also like to thank our fellow Surendra Munshi, who has accomplished the challenging task of preparing, conducting, analyzing, and distilling more than 20 hours of rich and meaningful conversations concerned with sustainable development for a more viable future.

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We were living in separate boats earlier. All that was needed was to formulate rules to make sure that there was no collision of boats. The situation has changed with the beginning of modern globalization. All the people of the world are now living in the same boat, and different countries of the world are like cabins in the boat. We take care of our cabins without worrying about the boat as a whole. This is how Kishore Mahbubani of the National University of Singapore, one of the fifteen thought leaders interviewed for the purpose of this paper, sees the world today. Transposing the 'house' metaphor used by Walter Fust of Global Humanitarian Forum to the 'boat' metaphor of Mahbubani, it can be said that the people of different countries occupy cabins at different decks of the same boat, some on lower and some on higher decks. While some people are not doing well or rather are in distress due to poverty, there are others on different decks who are free from such suffering. It is with this understanding of all of us irrespective of our differences being in the same boat, though imagined in different ways, that our interview partners approach the problems posed to them.

I. Present Crises and Borrowing from the Future

What are the three most important global crises facing humanity at present? This was the question formulated in different ways that was asked to each one of them. It is interesting to review their responses. While clear responses are given to this question, there are some who expressed reservations to this mode of asking the relevant question. Jerome C. Glenn of The Millennium Project, for example, draws attention to the fact that in their Millennium Project an attempt has been made to list fifteen global challenges that provide a 'framework' to assess the prospects for humanity. Anthony Judge, formerly of Union of International Associations, sees the danger of listing challenges, for then it is possible to lose sight of the context within which a challenge is to be considered. The key point is to see the interconnection between the elements of the set. The point of interconnection is emphasized by others as well. Thus, for example, Martin Lees of the Club of Rome says that from the point of view of the Club the challenges are interrelated. He prefers, therefore, to talk of 'blocks' rather than 'bits' of challenges. The world is faced for Fust with 'a multidimensional crisis' today.

Having noted these qualifications, what is the crisis that receives the greatest attention? It is the crisis that has been variously described as 'the destabilization of the biophysical environment' (Ekman), 'the environmental unsustainability of our economic systems' (Flavin), 'environmental degradation' (Likhotal), or more commonly as 'global warming' or 'climate change'. The problem of environmental sustainability, as Christopher Flavin of Worldwatch Institute explains, carries with it a number of issues concerning oceans, forests, water systems, loss of species, destruction of fisheries, and the threat of climate change. This is a crisis that has global impact, though the poor are more profoundly affected (Johnston, Pachauri). What needs to be kept in mind, in the words of Fust, is that 'climate change is happening now; it already has a tremendously negative impact'. Moreover, this crisis is made dangerous by the consideration that the changes in ecosystems can be irreversible (Lees). If we do not deal with the problem of global warming, Jim Garrison of the State of the World Forum affirms, we shall bring upon all future generations of human beings 'a nightmare without any precedent in human history', 'a cataclysm without precedent'.

What is the scientific knowledge on this crisis? As Rajendra K. Pachauri of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirms, global warming due to anthropogenic reasons will get worse unless we do something about it. We shall get an increase in intensity and frequency of a series of events such as heat waves, droughts, cyclones, and high tides. The irreversible threat to our biodiversity should not be overlooked. With an increase in temperature, a number of species are under the threat of extinction. There is though an urgent need for further scientific knowledge, especially with respect to the impact of climate change in specific locations of the world. Two large bodies of ice in Greenland and Antarctica, for instance, are melting at a rapid rate. We need to study and find out if and when some of these large bodies of ice might collapse. If they do collapse and slip into the ocean, we shall have high rise in the sea level with consequent damages.

The other crisis that is mentioned is poverty which is generally linked with other issues such as increasing disparities within and between nations (Brown) or 'poverty, ignorance, bad health, and social injustice' (Ekman). Alexander Likhotal of Green Cross International sees poverty as 'the mother of all other problems that we are facing today'. As he sees it, practically 50 per cent of the world population lives without any benefit of globalization and any of the advantages of modern life. The statistics of poverty, he points out, leaves us untouched. This reminds him of what Stalin is supposed to have told one of his generals on war casualties: 'Well, you know, one human life lost is a tragedy, ten is a tragedy, but thousands is statistics'. Lees refuses to become a victim of this mentality. He points out that in fifty years from now there are going to be another 2.3 billion people on this planet, almost all of them will be born in developing countries where the resources are already under stress. This gives us an idea about the magnitude of the problem that confronts us.

The third crisis to come under discussion is the recent financial crisis that is seen not just as a financial crisis. The scale and speed of this crisis, as Keith Johnston of Oxfam International points out, is unprecedented, for the crisis became global within a matter of months. Bo Ekman of Tallberg Foundation sees the financial and economic crises as not coming out of nowhere but as the ones that we have ourselves 'willingly and willfully' created. We need to pay attention to the risks of globalization and seriously ask ourselves what kind of future we want for ourselves. Lees also draws attention to the process of globalization and points out that, while some people have gained enormously by it, millions of other human beings have gained very little or nothing at all. He raises the important question about the fundamental imbalances in the world economy of which the current account deficit run by the United States for many years is an important expression. The sub-prime mortgage acted just as the 'trigger' for the crisis.

Among other crises that have been mentioned, we should note population, water, and security. Regarding population, linked to the problem of increase in population noted above, there is going to be the problem of food shortage (Judge) and related problems when, for example, a country like Pakistan will have in thirty years double the number of inhabitants of Russia (Fust). There is a related issue of migration. Climate change will necessitate large movements of people, argues Likhotal, and he draws attention to the threat of 'total societal decomposition of modern society' when such movements involve more than 450 million people. Water is another crisis facing us.

'We are', says Ekman, 'in for a water catastrophe of huge proportions within the next few decades'. This will be part of larger global environmental and social crises (Johnston). Pachauri notes as well the general problem of water scarcity in different parts of the planet and suggests an objective assessment of the problem. And on security, as noted by Likhotal, the problem is related with poverty. He argues that if desperate people unable to give water to their children try to get water through whatever means at their disposal they cannot be blamed. Pachauri says the problem of terrorism is related with a large number of factors, social and economic as well as political. It is one thing to fight the problem, he argues, when it has arisen and quite another to address the problem at its roots. Glenn draws attention to the potential of SIMAD (Single Individual Massively Destructive) which brings the issue of security down to the individual level where weapons of mass destruction could be individually made and deployed.

Though less often mentioned, the other crises discussed are the energy crisis, human rights violations, injustice, and artificial biology. To consider only one of them here, Widney Brown of Amnesty International draws attention to the fact that the international community has failed to protect human rights and indeed the worst perpetrators are governments who are now tending to work as geographical blocs basically to protect themselves

If this is the range of our crises, how have we handled them so far? The general response to this question is that given the gravity of these crises we have handled them inadequately so far, bordering on, in the words of Garrison, 'criminal neglect'. Though some progress has been made with respect to poverty and local pollution problems in many parts of the world (Flavin), the point to note is that, as Johnston says, we are basically putting the solution of the crisis into the future, borrowing from the future. We are, according to Lees, passing to our children and grandchildren not only vast financial debt but also vast ecological debt by overusing our biological capital. 'That means', says Likhotal, 'that we are simply stealing (speaking openly and frankly) from the pockets of our children'.

The optimistic voice comes from Asia. For Mahbubani, 'history starts a new chapter every day' and he believes 'the world will continue to move forward', becoming a better place to live in. He sees hope in the millions of Asians joining the middle class with the projection that by 2020 there will be 1.6 billion Asians living in the middle class environment. 'And as you know', he concludes, 'the middle classes tend to be responsible stakeholders'.

II. Leadership and Education for Sustainability

To gain by the views of our interview partners on the issue of leadership, it is important to consider how leadership is seen by them. The leadership traits that have been mentioned are, for example, 'moral integrity' (Cerny), 'deep respect for all the living' (Ekman), 'wisdom', and a capacity 'to listen to others' (Fust). The role of the leader, to highlight some of the points that have been mentioned, is 'to assume personal responsibility' (Cerny), 'to look into the future' (Fust), 'to take a stand' and move forward to reach a specific goal (Garrison), to help people think beyond themselves (Johnston), to have a vision and to convey it (Lees), and 'to look beyond the horizon', motivating at the same time the critical component of the population (Likhotal). While the statesman-

ship of leaders is appreciated (Motomura), they are differentiated from managers who are seen to be more concerned with implementing and handling things (Fust). Leaders are also differentiated from philosophers, for, while the philosopher can be alone, a leader needs a support base in one or more segments of the population (Likhotal). Leaders are to be found in different domains, and they are to be found among humble persons as well. Leadership is needed at different levels, from the village to the international level (Fust). A new kind of leadership that is identified in the context of the knowledge economy is what Glenn calls 'self-selected leadership'. In contrast to 'out-front political leaders', self-selected leaders use their knowledge and the possibility offered by technology to take individual initiatives to deal with pressing problems. As an example of this kind of leadership, he mentions the case of a woman who contributed towards changing the UN treaty on landmines through an initiative based on a web site.

Is there any leadership deficit in our world today? For Karl-Henrik Robert of The Natural Step (TNS), the key issue to which all other issues are subordinate is the incompetence of present leadership. He assesses this incompetence in terms of not intelligence or goodness but the capacity to see the world in a manner that takes it towards sustainability. What is lacking is systems thinking to understand complex systems. Speaking metaphorically, 'what leaders need today is to understand the trunk and branches of the challenges ahead of us'. The metaphor of tree is meant to suggest that the trunk and the branches of a tree help to connect the leaves, the details. If the trunk and the branches are taken away then all that one has is a big heap of leaves on the ground. If this is understood and shared, a possibility for 'flat leadership' arises where people can come together, feel engaged, and using their creativity come up with their own solutions. A key point here is trust. If a person does not trust others he ends up with a shrinking mentality where he thinks of himself only, creating in the process a social trap for himself where his personal enrichment is carried out at the cost of others or the larger system as a whole. The social trap can be opened when one moves from mistrust to trust. It is here the Geoffrey Vickers quotation mentioned by Judge in a different context is relevant: 'the nature of the trap is a function of the nature of the trapped'.

Leaders need to educate themselves and see the trunk and the branches and the leaves. Indeed, all us have a leadership role to play. It does not help leaders to surround themselves with experts, for they in turn suffer from their own kind of incompetence. Robert identifies this incompetence as drill hole incompetence and explains that it arises from the tendency of academics to dig deeper and deeper into ever increasing knowledge in a manner that connections with other areas of knowledge are lost. Leaders must learn to ask the right questions to such experts and take the responsibility for the big picture. 'So,' he argues, 'very often inspiration comes from understanding, comes from education, comes from seeing that big picture together, comes from the flat leadership it allows for. Whereas the opposite, if everybody is confused at that level of connection, you end up in a top-down demand and control organization. And that is not inspirational, no matter how many people you meet who talk about that you should be less greedy and nicer to others without knowing how. It is very frustrating'.

Robert draws attention to the manner in which the Scandinavian experiment at opening the social trap was carried out through trust at the individual level as well as the collective level through creating institutions that could be trusted. He also draws attention to the concrete case of a hotel chain that turned around through education and the creativity of flat leadership. This shows there is hope even in the midst of incompetence. Ekman gives several examples of promising leadership coming up in different parts of the world. There is also hope, in drawing from Garrison, in Paul Ray's identification of the Cultural Creatives who are concerned about leading a meaningful life. Indeed, the election of Barack Obama seems to have raised hope all over the world. There is hope, moreover, in the thought, expressed by Likhotal, that 'recognition comes after the success' and so in a couple of years we may see a new set of real leaders who are not visible as yet.

Let us turn our attention to the issue of education now. While our interview partners are clear about how crucial education is, they are also aware how an undesirable process of education is taking place. Television is, as Garrison notes, educating an entire population to be consumers. The idea of linking happiness with consumption is destructive, especially when such goods are produced that damage our atmosphere. This point is further elaborated by Oscar Motomura of The Earth Charter Initiative. He cautions that counter-education provided by entertainment industry, advertisement, the Internet, and through other means is very powerful. No amount of engagement with the educational process can be effective unless the process of counter-education which leads to unsustainable practices is considered and countered in a strategic manner.

This does not mean the rejection of these means. Indeed, it can be said that we live in a changed world today. There are new opportunities available now. A lot of information is available now to the young people through the means of technology. What is needed is to select the information that is good, transform it into knowledge, and then share it. More knowledge should be made available, as Fust says, and the endeavor of the international community of scientists to have the knowledge that is created through public funding made accessible to the public is the right way to go. The move for online access to libraries is a fantastic opportunity for all. It should be kept in mind, as he further says, 'the Internet is like a knife; everybody is used to using a knife every day, but you can do terrible things with the knife. You can also do terrible things with the Internet'. As far as the television and movies are concerned, we can counter them effectively by using them. Glenn suggests taking real science to a movie like Walt Disney's *The Black Hole*. 'If it is true,' he says, 'that people get their news from comedians, and they get their world affairs from terminator movies, then let us take those movies and comedians seriously. If that is what is doing the education in the world, then that is the classroom; that is what we have to focus on'.

This brings to mind the emphasis given by Judge to the right way of communicating the message. He asks: why is there no climate change song? Why should unmemorable documents not be made memorable by putting them to song and music? His argument for sustainability is that unless the documents concerning them are made singable they remain unmemorable documents. People do not engage with them. He narrates in this respect an anecdote concerning the CEO of a multinational corporation who found that the Ghana unit of the corporation had extraordinary productivity compared to all other units of the world. When he went there to examine the reason

for this high performance, he found out that the women on the production line had coordinated their activity with a song that they sang together. He gives also the example of the Biochemist's Songbook which is meant to help students remember the processes concerning metabolic pathways. He gives further the example of Franz Joseph Radermacher of the Research Institute for Applied Knowledge Processing (FAW) who produced a text on sustainable development which was accompanied by a CD consisting of songs reinforcing the message.

As far as the classroom is concerned, there is a pressing need to ensure that the right to education is made operational by all states providing free compulsory primary education for all. The right to education, as Brown says, needs to be promoted in developing and developed countries alike, making sure that girls do not get left out. If girls receive education, they are more likely to acquire economic independence and less likely to end up in an early marriage. Sustainability needs to be made a part of the curriculum like other subjects such as history, geography, chemistry, or biology (Likhotal). The educational system has been slow to respond to the need to have the young people educated on sustainability issues. No basic level of literacy exists as yet about our being dependent on a healthy natural resource system. But, as Flavin points out, some good courses have started in colleges and universities. It is heartening to learn that the publications of Worldwatch Institute and The Millennium Project are being used in these courses (Flavin, Glenn).

There is another kind of education that needs to be carried out, and this is best illustrated by the initiatives covered here, from Amnesty International to Worldwatch Institute. This kind of education is concerned with creating awareness about our rights and responsibilities as human beings, and it is carried out in different ways. Thus, for example, Motomura tells us that there is a need for leaders in different sectors to become sensitive about 'the global society of all human beings'. It is not enough to think of sustainability as something concerned with protecting our natural resources. The concept of sustainability as conveyed by the Earth Charter goes beyond it. We put life, he says, at the centre of everything. We honor all forms of life. When all forms of life are honored it leads to ecological integrity and also to economic and social justice. It leads to concern about keeping different forms of violence away from this world. Ecological integrity, social and economic justice and peace--they are all connected with each other. Thus, for example, injustice brings violence and it in turn endangers the ecological integrity of the planet. It is when leaders in different areas and the general public work together with this consciousness that we start healing our systems and the planet.

III. Frameworks for Collaborative Action

If we learn to see connections in a world faced with a multidimensional crisis, we need to take the next step and understand that neither 'one brain' nor 'one organization' can solve our problems (Lees). We need to come together. There is a need to work across disciplines, sectors, cultures, and countries. Within 'the non-governmental community', there is a growing awareness that different disciplines can learn from each other. As Brown puts it: 'I would argue that the environmental movement has been far more effective, in many ways, than the human rights movement in terms of getting governments to commit resources to addressing issues around the environment and climate change. That is something that we have the potential to learn from. The collaboration is

not just about learning; it is also about understanding that human rights violations don't happen in a vacuum. For instance, in the context of climate change there are direct human rights implications in that discourse'.

The promoting factor is technology. The revolution in communication technology makes it possible for people to connect in ways that were inconceivable only some years ago. For Garrison, while globalization is weakening institutions, it is empowering voluntary networks of individuals. These voluntary networks can be powerful and harmful as shown by the example of Al-Qaeda. Voluntary networks can also play a very positive role as shown by, for instance, Amnesty International. Through an inexpensive mode of communication, voluntary networks of committed people can come together and achieve much. It is possible to build the multi-stakeholder approach as well through these networks. Networking is serving the chosen cause together. Though such networks can be strong, we should not overlook the hindrance provided by prejudgments and clichés. Drawing from his experience, Fust draws attention to the manner in which many people from the private sector have reservations about the government officials and they in turn are hesitant to talk to people from civil society or foundations, not that the apathy is not reciprocated. As Judge sees it, there is a long way to go, for in global collaborative action we find 'global' is not global but rather selective, collaboration is not effective, and the resulting action constrained.

Having noted these problems, there is no reason not to look forward. Judge himself is enthusiastic about the idea. He finds much value, for example, in Wikipedia and considers it possible to think of its extensions in important ways. His own web site is meant to encourage the experience of something like Wiki solutions. Glenn sees in Wikipedia a model for making it easy for people to participate globally to do what is good. If we are all in the same boat, he argues, we have to form an idea about the boat, how big it is, what it looks like, and how to make it work. 'How do we make the Earth, with humans,' he asks, 'work as a whole'. A similar question is asked by Ekman and his foundation: 'How on earth can we live together?' Wikipedia has shown that global collaboration can take place cutting across different boundaries. And yet with all its success, for Glenn, Wikipedia is just a pointer to what is possible in the future by way of different kinds of 'collective intelligences'.

There are other models for global collaborative action, and the fifteen initiatives covered here provide a rich variety that is rewarding to look at closely. There is space here only for three initiatives for a selective view. They should serve to illustrate how global collaboration can be organized in different ways within an organization. The first initiative to be considered here is Oxfam, the oldest of the three selected initiatives. Oxfam traces its origin in England way back in 1942. The initial campaign was for the supply of food through an Allied naval blockade to the starving people in Greece during the Second World War. Today, Oxfam international is a confederation of fourteen, going on sixteen, organizations working together with a large number of partners for fighting poverty and related injustice around the world. Johnston explains that Oxfam is consciously a confederation which means that power lies with its affiliates rather than the centre. There are other models available such as networks with no centers or organizations that are more centrally organized. Each of these models has its own strengths and weaknesses and reflects in

the context of an organization its purpose and history. There are networks that come into existence for a particular campaign and last for a limited duration, while others grow from small beginnings. There is no perfect model as such, though there are questions of accountability that are relevant across different models. Oxfam has played a role in developing International Advocacy NGO (IANGO) accountability charter.

The crucial question for Oxfam is, given the fact that national Oxfams run their own programs, how Oxfam international can be more effective in coordinating efforts for the purposes of international advocacy and humanitarian response. Where Oxfam perhaps needs to do better, says Johnston, is to integrate advocacy work, program delivery work, and humanitarian response. The challenge the organization is working on is to think of them as one program rather than as multiple streams of activity and to find ways of increasing impact through a more integrated response.

Technology does provide enabling function for international networking but it also raises issues of accountability for an organization that is a confederation of national bodies. There may be other organizations, reflects Johnston, that may come along and take advantage of this technology without being constrained in this manner.

The Natural Step (TNS) is the second initiative to be considered here. TNS is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to education, advisory work, and research in sustainable development. It started with Robert seeking consensus from a broad cross-section of scientists on what is needed to sustain life on earth. The idea of consensus was pursued later as well. The core program of TNS is funded by cross-sectoral cooperation between five Swedish agencies, and it helps to initiate cross-discipline cooperation among growing number of scientists from different parts of the world and at the same time allows local governments and businesses to work cooperatively across different sectors. TNS was constituted with focus on agreement. This is vital to it. The question regarding agreement is raised time and again. 'So', Robert emphasizes, 'it is a consensus approach. And what is explored from that question grows behind us as the wake of a steamer or a boat moving forward. And in that wake behind the boat we have an increasing knowledge which is based on consensus'.

The third initiative to be considered now is The Millennium Project of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) The Millennium Project was co-founded by Glenn in 1996. It is a participatory future research think tank that collects and assesses judgments from its several hundred participants to produce the annual State of the Future report which is highly valued. Glenn gives importance to the fact that The Millennium Project has a participatory system which is unique in the world of think tanks. When self-selected institutions and individuals collaborate, for one thing, the problem of manning people becomes less complex. The model of institutional structure that has been attempted is called trans-institution, meaning basically that the governing body or its equivalent has on it persons representing UN and government systems, businesses, NGOs, and universities, without giving a majority claim to any of the institutional categories. This has the advantage of acting through all these institutional categories and thus creating in effect, though not legally, a new institutional category itself. It has been already noted how Glenn sees in

Wikipedia a way to go for the future. Here is a possibility offered by technology that can be used for the human family to find in a participatory manner answers to key questions.

It is quite clear that Oxfam, TNS, and The Millennium Project are different kinds of initiatives. They represent, given their differences of purpose, different modes of organization, and, given their differences in age, different ways of relating with technology. The Millennium Project seems to be more comfortable in using technology for innovative purposes than others and yet all three of them cannot function the way they do without it. At a deeper level, all three of them, like the other initiatives covered here, represent a serious concern for addressing some of the problems of humanity through collaborative efforts, efforts that are voluntary and are undertaken with the best of intentions. They show us how to move out of our narrow individual concerns, think beyond, and look forward. We need to find innovative ways to bring coherence to our activities to achieve greater effectiveness.

IV. Global Governance Revisited

Why do we need to revisit the issue of global governance? The question is related in the first place with the manner in which the world has changed since the Second World War and the manner in which the United Nations systems are seen to be functioning within the changed global situation.

The world has changed in so far as we live in a world of interdependence and the problems that we are faced with are far beyond the ability of individual nations to handle. For Lees, 'the national-international interface' is going to be a crucial concern for all of us. While different people need their different senses of involvement and identity, the interests of all the people of the world considered together need a collective way of handling global problems. We are also in the process of adjusting our perspective on how to approach these problems. As Johnston sees it, we have had a tendency to follow absolute solutions, for some socialism was the answer and for others the market, and 'both of these absolutes have been found fundamentally wanting'. Nearer our financial crisis, it is now clear, as seen by Lees, the idea that the market should be left free and governments should effectively reduce levels of their regulation has been behind the current financial crisis. 'We have to find a proper balance', he says, 'between the role of the market and the role of government which is the custodian of the common interest'. This ideology of giving the market a free run and reducing the role of government has had implications for the role of international institutions as well. Lees concludes: 'it is this combination of weakening government, international governance, and the extreme freedom of the market which has got us to the point where we are today'.

There are other aspects that need to be considered in this respect. The United States, as Garrison argues, is unable to play for a variety of reasons the leadership role that the world needs. More basically, in the analysis of Mahbubani, we are witnessing an important power shift in the world: 'the end of the era of Western domination of world history' and 'the return of Asia' on the world scene.

As far as the United Nations systems are concerned, they find their defense in the voice of Glenn. For one thing, they are evolving a 'global culture of governance' where people from different cultural backgrounds learn to work together 'trying to make the world work for everybody and not doing it for just one country'. Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that the United Nations is not just the Security Council, for, while there may be valid reasons for wanting to bring changes in the Security Council, it cannot be denied that organizations such as the World Health Organization or the International Atomic Energy Agency are serving us well. Thirdly, the need for global norms to make global systems work is met by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN treaties that lay out for all of us the manner in which we are to behave with each other. Finally, the UN is in a sense like 'training wheels for global civilization'. We are learning how to make it work, and if there are deficiencies that does not mean we throw out the baby with the bathwater.

There has been no talk among our interview partners to throw out the baby, though there have been points of criticism that have been raised. Thus, Brown sees the Security Council suffering from 'absolute paralysis' due to its inability to function effectively for protecting peace and security. Mahbubani considers it 'the most undemocratic institution in the whole world', not accountable for its action or rather inaction. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994, for instance, took place because the permanent members of the Security Council failed to exercise their responsibility. Mahbubani's criticism should not be seen as his criticism of the United Nations, for he asserts as well that the United Nations Charter, the treaty that established the United Nations, is a document that contains 'some excellent principles of global cooperation'. If all the countries of the world respected these principles, the world would be a much safer place to live in. Apart from the Security Council, it is the manner of the functioning of the governance systems of United States that has come under examination. 'What is very important is not to confuse efficiency with effectiveness', says Likhotal. 'I have been a part of several sessions within the United Nations efforts to discuss the environmental governance systems of the United Nations. I was absolutely shocked when I realized that there are close to forty institutions of United Nations that are responsible for environmental activities. Predictably, when talking about the governance system, the majority of the UN effort is focused on efficiency, meaning that they are talking about how they can smoothly coordinate the work of all these agencies and institutions. Nobody is talking about effectiveness, the impact of this activity, the real solution of the problems that the world faces. All the effort is concentrated on the efficiency of it'.

The idea then is to make the United Nations more representative, more efficient, and more effective. The most persistent demand is to broaden the membership of the Security Council. As to the emergence of G20, though its emergence is seen as a good sign, there are demands that if G20 want to be global leaders they need to lead by setting the right example (Brown). Also, it is not clear whether G20 is sufficiently democratic (Fust). As to institutional change, Lees cautions, it is 'a very tough assignment'. There is a long honorable tradition of efforts to reform the United Nations, but the results have not been very encouraging. There is a long way to go.

The overall purpose of global governance that needs to be differentiated from global government which is not under discussion here is served by inclusiveness, 'normative diversity' (Fust), and a

recognition that global governance is emerging through a variety of mechanisms. Glenn mentions in this context the International Standards Organization and notes how standards are being created for industrial and commercial purposes. The other mechanism, to which Motomura draws our attention, is the informal process that is taking place with the help of technology. We must consider all these mechanisms for drawing a more refined governance structure. We need to ensure that existing institutions do not operate below their optimum levels and only when that is ensured there will be any sense in thinking of creating new institutions. When they are created they must function in systematic interaction with the existing ones.

A different line of thinking is suggested by Garrison who thinks that the present reality has superseded the existing institutions the way reality superseded the League of Nations. He feels the need for redesigning or replacing most of the existing international institutions. Moreover, global governance for him has to do with sovereignty as a global citizen. He believes that we should have voting rights to elect the Secretary-General of the United Nations. If this appears to be a goal that is far away, we can for the present learn from the emerging forms of regional cooperation. They provide models of global cooperation. The European Union is a remarkable example in this respect and so is ASEAN. The ten member states from South-East Asia, as Mahbubani points out, have created the second most successful form of regional cooperation in the world. This is an important development.

The problem of global governance can be approached from the other end. Robert suggests that we have to build role models at a smaller scale and then try to design larger institutions and cooperative units based on these experiences. He mentions here his experience with municipalities where people have been able to transform them and with them the quality of their own lives through a shared mental model. A shared vision of what these municipalities might be like in the future helps individuals to work towards it with faith in each other. This can be related with Ekman's observation that international institutions are unlikely to reform themselves into a new system of global governance. He too talks about vision in this context. The need for vision is emphasized from yet another angle. Lees notes that for designing or redesigning an institution it is important to be clear about its objective. While the United Nations will need to find a way of 'addressing systematic problems in an integrated way', we need at the same time to develop globally a vision of the world that we want, the world which is desirable and hopefully still possible. We are unable to interest people in what is negative or problematic in the absence of a vision, for 'there is no fire, hope, nor excitement'.

V. The Next Sensible Step

We live in a world that is devoid of visions. Economic growth, as Ekman observes, over the last twenty-five years has been based on false promises, 'visions that really aren't visions'. Our educational system, as Motomura points out, is too fragmentary to impart a broad vision of a really better world. We need, following Lees, an integrated picture of the problems that we are faced with, the way to handle them, and the direction in which we wish to move.

A major problem, according to Likhotal, is complacency. While we may see the danger in the direction in which we are moving and wish to live in a sustainable world, nobody is willing to make any sacrifice, neither governments, nor businesses, nor even ordinary citizens who are used to such little conveniences as remote controls. He recalls Mahatma Gandhi in this context who had said that the sin of humanity is faith without sacrifice. We have already noted the problem of incompetence to which Robert draws our attention. Motomura sees a general lack of recognition that 'we live in a system that must be studied, and in many ways, questioned'. Indeed, he sees the need for us to go beyond and to recognize that there is something more to life than what the Chicago School can teach us.

What are the obstacles to moving forward? They are, for Ekman, 'to be found within ourselves, in our mindsets, and how we exercise the values'. They lie in our 'shortsightedness' and that of our leaders (Brown). They are to be found within our 'prejudgments' about others (Fust) or 'thinking stereotypes' (Cerny) which come in the way of our cooperating with each other. They are also to be found in different kinds of traps that Judge and Robert talk about to which reference has been made earlier, and they are, moreover, to be seen in our inability to consider with Johnston that human beings operate with a 'duality', commitment to themselves and their own go with the noble desire to be part of something bigger than themselves.

We need to make a mental shift. We need to tell our political leaders, with Brown, you cannot afford to be shortsighted any longer. You need to think beyond your terms of office. We need to tell them, as Glenn would, to connect the ideas, people, and resources. 'There are a lot of good answers out there, but the world is so full of noise that we can't get the good answers through all the noise'. Above all, we need to tell them, listening to Fust and our other partners, please listen to others, for there is virtue in listening. We need to listen to politicians as well. We need to recall what Mikhail Gorbachev told Garrison when he asked him the reason for his fall after the Soviet Union had been dismantled. Gorbachev told him: 'There were many political reasons why I fell, but in the end I fell because I was not analyzing reality ruthlessly enough'.

We need to look at our reality as closely as possible and not escape from it. If we escape from our reality, not examine it clearly, we shall not have the answers or the capacity to act on them. Delaying action may take away the need for action when it is too late. It is useful to recall here the metaphor of lily pads that Lees brings to our notice. There is a pond where the lily pads double in size every month. It is possible for a long time to watch this happening in the belief that there is no problem, for there is still quite a lot of water left. But eventually as they double and double there comes a day when half the pond is covered, and then the whole of it. As far as drawing the best from individuals is concerned, we need to learn from Robert's experience as a cancer specialist who saw a stream of parents coming to his clinic with their diseased children. He tells us: 'people are just wonderful when they need to be wonderful. How can we release that power and that wonderful quality which, as I see it, most people have? Well, by providing contexts whereby people can believe again, where they see the picture,...and where they can co-create futures in that direction'.

With 'cataclysm' noted earlier and co-creation, despair and hope, what is the long-term scenario that we can make for humanity? For Ekman, the chances are that there will be just one billion of us left and the rest will not survive food and water shortages. This is a chilling thought. As the full impact of this comment sinks in, we need to keep in mind that this is his worst-case scenario. It is useful to listen now to Oldrich Cerny of Forum 2000 Foundation. Reflecting on his experiences in Czechoslovakia in 1989, he says with pride that we proved that 'even in the midst of gloom, there can still be hope'. But what hope can we have now? For that we need to turn to Ekman again, to his best-case scenario. His best case scenario is that 'we come to our senses and say that Albert Schweitzer was wrong when he said that humanity has lost its ability to foresee and to forestall'.

Let us draw from all that is best in us and then take the next sensible step, all together, and resolve to prove Schweitzer wrong. Nothing would have made the gentle physician who had reverence for life happier than this step.

APPENDIX

Persons Interviewed

The following thought leaders, representing major initiatives from all over the world, were interviewed during the months of May, June, and July 2009, the first interview being conducted on the 19th May (Ekman) and the last one on the 9th July (Motomura). The gracious cooperation of all of them is gratefully acknowledged. The present paper is based on the transcripts of these qualitative interviews.

BROWN, Widney, Senior Director, International Law, Policy and Campaigns, Amnesty International

CERNY, Oldrich, Executive Director, Forum 2000 Foundation

EKMAN, Bo, Founder and Chairman, Tallberg Foundation

FLAVIN, Christopher, President, Worldwatch Institute

FUST, Walter, CEO/Director General, Global Humanitarian Forum

GARRISON, Jim, Chairman and President, State of the World Forum

GLENN, Jerome C., Co-founder and Director, The Millennium Project (of the World Federation of the United Nations)

JOHNSTON, Keith, Chairman, Oxfam International

JUDGE, Anthony, Retired Director of Communications and Research, Union of International Associations

LEES, Martin, Secretary General, Club of Rome

LIKHOTAL, Alexander, President and CEO, Green Cross International

MAHBUBANI, Kishore, Dean and Professor, Practice of Public Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore

MOTOMURA, Oscar, Council Member, The Earth Charter Initiative

PACHAURI, Rajendra K., Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

ROBERT, Karl-Henrik, Founder, The Natural Step International