

How on earth can we live together?

Visions from the Present

Participant Submissions



From: Designing a Replacement for the UN

By Russell L. Ackoff and Jamshid Gharajedaghi

INTRODUCTION

The world is in a mess. This statement hardly needs documentation. The terrible state of world affairs is disheartening, particularly to those of us who hoped the UN would be able to bring some order and sense into these affairs. Unfortunately, the UN has turned out to provide little more than the defunct League of Nations had. It is clear that it is only through effective, decisive and strong international action that any improvement in the state of the world can be brought about. A unilateral approach by any super power not only places a great and unfair burden on its own people but it does not produce desirable results. In fact, up to now, such interventions have only exacerbated the mess. The only workable solution requires the world community to accept its collective responsibility and act with authority to create a world order that is capable of managing national interactions. Therefore, it seemed to the two of us that a design of a potentially effective multinational organization might minimally encourage some productive changes in the UN. We have chosen to go about producing such a design by employing idealized design. That is, we start with a clean sheet; and then go ahead with no constraints except technological feasibility — no science fiction. The system we design does not even need to be implementable but, clearly, it should be able to improve the world if it were implemented. We do not expect our design to be implemented, but we wish it could be. However, we believe an approximation to it may be possible either as a replacement for the UN or as a new multi-national venture.

SPECIFICATION OF DESIRABLE PROPERTIES

There are certain important properties that we want to design into the organization that we envision. These must provide nations with a good reason for joining; that is, there must be a significant advantage to membership in the organization.

1. It should be a voluntary association of autonomous nations committed to democracy, pluralism, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of development of its member nations and those that are external to it. Because of this we call this organization the Union of Democratic Nations.
2. It should have the ability to dissolve or manage conflicts (a) between its member nations, (b) between its members and nonmembers, and (c) between nonmember nations when invited to do so or when such conflicts endanger one or more of its members.
3. It should provide security for all member nations by protecting them against aggression from any internal or external source.
4. It should facilitate unrestricted economic, cultural, educational and technological exchanges between its members.
5. It should make possible completely free communication and movement of individuals, goods and capital among member nations.
6. It should prevent exploitation within member nations of any group that is based on discrimination and/or segregation by race, nationality, religion, language, sex or age.
7. It should help eradicate poverty, illiteracy, genocide, tyranny, health hazards and environmental deterioration all over the world.
8. It should assist nations that are not eligible for membership but want to join the Union in becoming eligible for it.

Full version in pdf: http://www.acasa.upenn.edu/Replace_UN.pdf

What if?

George Asatiani

'What if, we were never scared. . .

What if, we felt always loved . .

If you had one wish to give, would it be that or world peace?'

Juliet Wyers, songwriter

Any 'system' or 'vision' comes down not to the people who create the idea, but the people who live out the vision in a very real, day to day existence.

A visionary gives people hope for change, But a true visionary lives that change in every interaction- war will not end, and oppressive systems will not change, until every person has value, and a life of meaning in their own community and culture. If the world truly has become a 'global' culture, then when we respect each person, and offer each person a life with meaning and right livelihood, the world will change, and our visions for a better place will become an everyday reality.

A vision about a good company

By Tobias Ladhe

Anton Chekhov once wrote that we must show life neither as it is, nor as it should be, but as we see it in our dreams! As I pondered my vision for Tällberg I decided to describe the “good company” as I see it in my dreams.

The good company in my world meets three basic criteria:

- It is driven by a clear idea, a vision
- It has a humanistic approach towards people
- It lives through its values and it has a flourishing learning culture

Of course, my good company makes a healthy profit. Profits are the prerequisite for the good company. Hence, they are a prerequisite for any company! But, and this is important, is not the meaning of my good company.

My good company has a wider understanding of what business is. It creates value through hard work and long-term steady strive towards its vision! My good company meets demands on the market and its first priority is to innovate – to be alive. Every day is a “building-company-day”. My good company always stays evolving.

My good company understands that it exist in a larger context. It understands its social responsibilities, creating values, new knowledge and building its credibility. My good company helps creating a better world in many senses.

The leaders of my good company understand the soul of the company. They lead by taking decisions in congruence with our vision, our mission and our values. They build strategies always aiming towards the vision. They are principled pragmatists in this sense.

The leadership of my good company understands that the only real assets, making true difference, are in the heads of our employees. Their knowledge is the heart of my good business. This is why the leaders take all possible measures to make sure the employees really feel good. Every employee participates, bringing out the power of this fine company. They do this through an understanding of the whole having a systems approach.

The leadership of my company also understands that our world is ever changing. Their prime mission as leaders is to prepare for and understand change. To make this possible they understand that real trust - no PR tricks - is the most important brick in their leadership in order to cope with change. They strive for trust - both inside my good company and externally. My leaders have a stakeholder perspective. They understand the importance of trust for the long-term staying power. That’s why we have a policy of sharing the profit among all the stakeholders. When the company excels every stakeholder gets a cut of the cake.

In my good company people grow. They evolve and they change. Hence, they become better human beings. That’s a big part of the reason why this company is so good. My company helps creating a good life which helps people to be a good/better force in their families which helps to create a better society!

I want to be a force for anyone who sets out to build the good company. The entrepreneur in me trembles of excitement!

That’s my dream.

A WORLD OF HOPE

Mary Catherine Bateson

The first thing to say about my vision for the future is that it is not an ideal world by any means. There is still a lot of inequality, local conflict, waste, and redundancy, all of which add up to opportunity and resilience and protection against the dogmatism of visionaries. Freedom has not been sacrificed in the name of order and security.

It is however a world in which the international community has agreed to maintain safety nets of various kinds against widespread suffering: infrastructure and communications are in place for basic monitoring, response and relief so that no community faces starvation, genocidal conflicts and epidemics are swiftly contained, and basic public health provisions and literacy are universal. The most threatening exponential processes have been brought under control, including population growth, nuclear proliferation, and the release of greenhouse gases. As a result, this is an imperfect world but one in which people everywhere have reason for hope, if not for themselves, then for the next generation. The foundations for hope have been laid without exacting conformity to foreign cultural norms or eliminating distinctive cultural identities, and without freezing existing institutions or borders in place or blocking aspirations for change.

This is a world in which ethics and law extend to all peoples. Every village and hamlet has access to news from around the globe. International borders no longer define a realm of Hobbesian amorality, and transnational entities like corporations, religious movements, NGOs and even criminal associations are increasingly subject to internationally defined standards and controls. Every city on the planet now contains multiple racial, cultural, and religious communities, not without friction but with growing awareness that multiple viewpoints are possible.

The common interests of human kind are newly understood and protected. Strong international law protects the environmental commons, particularly the atmosphere and the oceans, but also the diversity of species. Similarly, new international legislation regulates intellectual and cultural commons so that the benefits of human curiosity and imagination are shared. New balances have been worked out so that protections and motivations for intellectual creativity simultaneously acknowledge that all human creativity is derived from a shared genetic and cultural heritage.

Vision from the Present

Arun Maira

India

I borrow some lines from Indian, Nobel Prize winning poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote (in the earlier part of the last century):

"Where the mind is without fear
And the head is held high,
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
In the dreary desert sand of dead habit,
Where the world has not been broken into fragments
By narrow domestic walls,
Into that heaven of freedom
Oh, Father, let (our world) awake!"

We do not seem to have come too far since he wrote, and still have a long way to go from the present. If people change the ways in which they work together, to co-create both the vision, and the new solution to get to the vision, supporting each other, more concerned with what is right and what is wrong, rather than who is right and who is wrong, we may get to this vision of a free world for all.

A vision for the present
Geoff Mulgan

Tallberg

The oddity of the present is that there is probably wider agreement on the big problems we face than ever before in human history. It's no mystery that we need to cope with the new facts of connectedness and interdependence, lives that are intertwined as never before whether through climate change, peace or poverty.

The other oddity, however, is that most of the steps needed to deal with these problems are blocked - not just by powerful interests but because the legacy of ideas, institutions and habits we have inherited are so ill-suited to coping with this new reality.

What we need in this century is not hard to discern: a low carbon world, with a stable population; effective institutions and habits to prevent and mitigate conflict; ubiquitous rights and freedoms; a strong culture of mutual responsibility.

But how will we get these things? Our vision of the present should be one of ubiquitous intelligence focused on the things that matter. It needs to be ubiquitous because the 21st century world will not be shaped much by the visions or blueprints of a few gurus or heroes, or legislated from above by politicians. Even progressives are still too attached to an anachronistic view of change as driven by a tiny elite of leader magicians in politics, business or civil society. Instead, as in the past, we need to encourage parallel processes: the practical innovation and experiment of millions of people doing things in new ways, usually at the margins (in everything from waste to eldercare, learning to mutual support); the argument, passion and imagination of social movements in all their forms, campaigning to change minds; the formal authority of governments and law which crystallise social change (for example in the shape of new rights); new products and services from business; and, partly as a result of all of these, new habits of life, consumption and belief.

Change won't be, and can't be, neat. We should be suspicious of overly polished visions, which always have a touch of hubris. We need a world that is messy enough, rough-edged enough, fertile enough and intelligent enough to continue adapting in ways that none of us can imagine.

Does “One Dream” come from numerous individual dreams?

WU HAI GANG

The new slogan of Beijing 2008 Olympic Games has been designated as “One World One Dream”. What is this One Dream about?

In the name of mankind’s liberty, equality and freedom of creativity, I believe every one has the rights to dream, no matter he/she was born in a city or village, wealthy or poor. It is innate and cannot be deprived.

However, the reality is that many people, as a result of various restrictions, have already lost their ability to dream, not to say being deprived of the rights. A man, who has grown up with a dream to travel around the world, finds that his freedom of movement is confined by his nationality. Being a citizen of an undemocratic and undeveloped nation, he is suspected and restricted by his government and that of the countries he wants to visit.

His motive of traveling is pure: he wants to see the beautiful maple leaves in Canada, the ancient alleys in Paris, and the blue sea in Greece; he wants to hear the music of piano from the Vienna courtyards and the sighs of African refugees waiting for rescue relief; and he wants to take a breathe of air of freedom which has not been polluted.

Martin Luther King says, “I have a dream.” His words were spread from generation to generation, because they placed hope on the dream of all mankind.

A Vision for the World
From Charles Handy

There are two photographs on my desk, taken by my wife in South Africa. The first is the head of a small black boy. He is smiling; everything about his eyes and his face radiates intelligence, enthusiasm, excitement. It is a happy face, full of promise. The second photograph is of the same boy, but this time the photographer has moved back, so that you now see the boy full length. You see the shanty hut behind him, you see his bare feet and the excrement in which he is standing. The two photographs are a symbol of our challenge today, not only in South Africa. The intelligence and the promise are there, in all our people, if we can only release them from the dirt and poverty of their condition.

Our people are clever, most of them, in their different ways. Most people are decent, given half a chance. They are not uncaring, if only because they know that a world that is crumbling around them will do them no good at all. They would, most of them, like to have a chance to make a difference. We need only to convince them that they now have that opportunity because of that crumbling world. Chaos is the seedbed of creativity if we can seize the opportunity.

Ironically therefore, my hope springs from our present discontents and the failure of our old institutions to find the way to a better future, because if they can't, we must. The structures of society are opening up – what we do, what we belong to, why we do it, when we do it, and where we do it – these are all changing as the age of the mass organization comes to an end. I have no formula, but democratic societies are built on case law. Change comes from small initiatives that work, initiatives which, imitated, become the new fashion. We cannot any longer wait for great visions from great people, for they are in short supply at the end of history. It is up to us to light our own small fires in the darkness. That is everyone's opportunity. That is daunting, but that is exciting.

A PERSONAL VISION

Over the past three decades or so, I have tried to transform several concepts into tangible and concrete realities, one of which is the concept of humanitarianism, as elaborated in the Report of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues which calls for a New International Humanitarian Order.

Humanitarianism is a basic orientation toward the interests and welfare of people that encompasses both humanism and human rights, while going beyond the confines of existing humanitarian law. It hinges on an ethic of human solidarity. The cornerstones of the corresponding conceptual framework are the values which from time immemorial have been a part of the collective consciousness of the human species, which have ensured their survival and well-being, and which have stood the test of time:

Respect for life;

A responsibility towards future generations;

Protection of the human habitat;

Altruism nurtured by a sense of mutual interest and a recognition of human dignity and worth.

The challenges presented by humanitarian questions engage both the mind and heart, but thoughts and feelings are not in themselves any substitute for decisive action. Recent years have witnessed a steady decline in the short-term benefits that unilateralism and bilateralism bring. Perhaps now is the moment to devote additional energy to the promotion of multilateralism, the principle which underlies the United Nations and other international institutions.

The time is long overdue for the construction of a peace culture that employs pragmatic and effective methods to eliminate strife and give people tangible proof of the viability of peace. Although agreements and treaties have long been recognised as essential instruments for regulating the conduct of states, far less attention has been given to a more comprehensive approach engaging individuals – the citizens of those same states.

Let us add our voices to the call for a human charter, allied to the ethic of transnational human cooperation, to foster the conviction that the proper focus of politics, economics and security is the individual human person. For however the collectivity may be expressed – as community or culture, civilisation, society or state – it is composed of individuals, each with unique needs, abilities and aspirations.

HRH Prince Hassan

In 1872, 120 Chinese boys, average age 12, were sent to the US by Chinese government. They stayed with their American host families for 9 years.

These special experiences gave them totally different lives than ordinary Chinese people, one of the most important thing is that they lived in two cultures naturally and peacefully through all their lives.

This is a legend that happened between China and the US 130 years ago.

If I have the chance to ideally design a change of reality, I will "Make the world, freely, openly, willingly to give the chances to all the children and their parents to make their decisions to choose which country, which culture they have the interests to know, to understand, to make direct friends, because it is easy for them to find the host family in every country. It will be the ordinary way in the world for all the children to grow up.

When most of the children are growing up in this way, it is much easier for them to understand different culture, different background, different religions. More than that, to respect each uniqueness, knowing the world consists of differences.

Then it will be close to find the answer: how on earth can we live together.

Jingcao Hu

My hope for the world is for people to find a little more inner peace. Over the last few years, I increasingly find more stark contrasts between the polarities we live with, such as rich versus poor, globalization versus local, or power and influence versus less or disenfranchised. If one steps back and sees the problems of the world external to us, then it is not too hard of a leap to wonder about the relationship of the external with our personal selves or inner worlds. Wouldn't it be marvelous to imagine that a group of friends, a community, even a nation closed their eyes, just for a moment, and asked to feel more peace in their lives? And when they opened them, they experienced that something positive had changed in their external world and the seemingly daunting problems around them. Intellectually, we now know from quantum physics that there is some connection between the external and inner worlds but my sense is that most people, at some level, don't really believe it. Maybe we just need to pause more and imagine what a sliver more peace in our lives - and world - would feel like, innocently, childlike, and in reverent disbelief. Who knows, maybe something magical might happen.

Jim Butcher

Road Song

in the oblivion between the trees
the lyric attacks by dogs
at the end of an endless trip
night turns all the keys of gold
but no door opens for you

a lantern follows
the ancient principles of winter
I walk straight toward you
as you open the fan of history
that's folded in an isolated song

the evening bell slowly questions you
echoes answer for you twice
dark night sails against the current
tree roots secretly generating electricity
have lit your orchard

I walk straightly toward you
at the head of all foreign roads
when fire tries on the heavy snow
sunset seals the empire
the earth's book opens the page of this moment

Bei Dao

Vision

John Kao

I envision a world in which the capability to innovate has become pervasive in society, leading to our enhanced ability to address human needs, create new satisfactions, and our destiny as a race.

This is a world in which the human tendency to compete and contend moves away from the traditional zero sum games of conflict and conquest, and is directed instead towards the infinite games of exploration and conquering all forms of malady. In turn, a heightened level of fulfillment for all mankind becomes possible.

Such a world provides a charter for all its citizens that guarantees certain inalienable rights. Its citizens will feel a sense of “us,” rather than “us” and “them.” It will truly be a “world without strangers.”

the power of invention

Creativity sets us apart from other species;
it is our most abundant resource.
Yet we stand in our own way, keeping the full potential
of our creativity unrealized.
Imagine a world where ideas are heard from every corner.
May we build a global community
with the clarity and foresight to nurture those ideas
that serve the good of all.

Julia Novy-Hildesley

More compromise – less hate and violence

Thorvald Stoltenberg

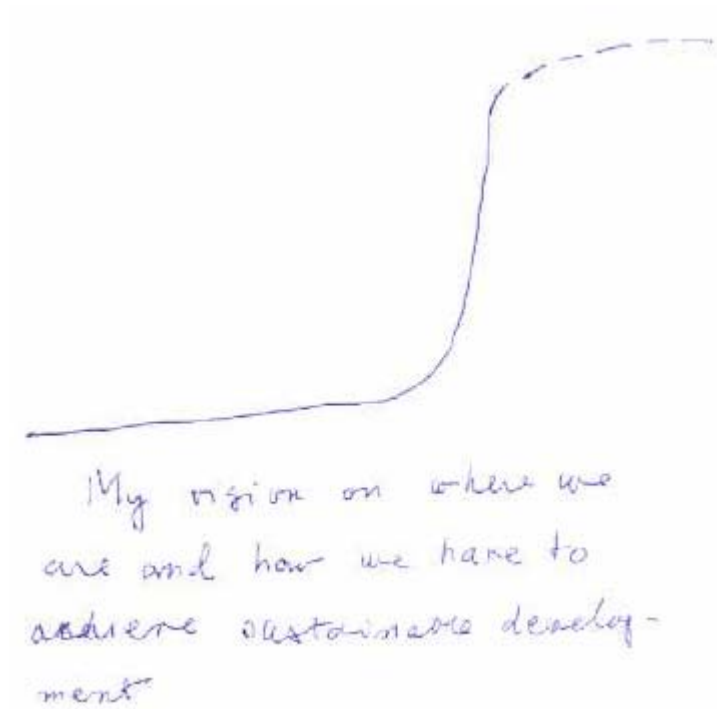
Vision, by itself in a vacuum, is simply a fantasy. Vision needs inseparable partners: love, intellect and will. Each citizen, person, must ask: What do I love? What energizes my love? Is it clean air and water? Equity? Fair trade? Saving gorillas? Preventing the spread of HIV? Without the wisdom and passion of love, vision withers, becomes the passing fad of policy wonkers.

After the rather difficult task of knowing what you love, the intellect must ask: What do I know? Not just the facts but also the leverage points that, if tweaked, might make a difference. As an elected official, I have had many visions for my town but my intellect told me: go for broke on some (a zero-discharge sewerage plant to stop ocean pollution and create a green belt) and be careful in others (e.g., education policy where my constituency was divided). What-one-knows, grounds vision.

Finally, vision comes down to personal will or willingness. What will I accept as I enact my vision in the world? If its racial segregation, will I go as far as a spiritual warrior like Nelson Mandela and spend years in jail? If I am an elected official, how much will I compromise to get re-elected and still feel I have kept my integrity? If I am involved in trade, how many special favors should the colonialist nations give to their former colonies to compensate for the cruelties of the colonial period?

Vision is an approach to the world, not a transcendent image.

Peter Warshall



"My vision on where we are and how we have to achieve sustainable development."

Erkki Tuomioja
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Sixty thousand years ago a small band of our ancestors walked out of Africa into an unknown world. Their ceaseless search for a better and more secure life over the millennia led humans to eventually occupy virtually every inhabitable corner of the globe.

That first globalization of the human species also brought divergences – from the colour of our skin to the shape of our nose to the languages we speak. Our different lives and different histories evolved over thousands of years have made exchanges of goods and ideas and cultural interconnections more rewarding. Webs of interconnections have grown through violent encounters and peaceful exchanges alike, and have shaped the world we live in today.

Although separated by oceans and mountains, thanks to instantaneous communications, we are in closer contact than ever before. The growing proximity has made us realize how profoundly similar are our hopes, fears and ambitions. At the same time, the economic, political and religious differences, and painful historical memories that separate us have also been magnified by this accelerating communication and closer contact - often clouding the awareness of our common future.

More than ever, we are able to see ourselves for what we are – six billion souls clinging on to a fragile blue planet hurling through space. We not only depend on the diminishing resources of the same planet, but despite our many superficial differences, we share the same destiny. We know who we are – children of the same African parents – and we know our planet's limitations as well as its wealth. The challenge before us is to tap our collective wisdom and summon our humanity to forge a common vision. There is simply no other alternative.

Nayan Chanda

Vision from the Present

For my vision from the present, I can do no better than to turn to the Preamble to the 1996 Constitution of South Africa. Having regard to the over three centuries of racial oppression and discrimination the resolve of our new leaders is remarkable and a beacon to other societies seeking peace.

We, the people of South Africa,

Recognise the injustices of our past;

Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;

Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and

Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to-

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;

Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;

Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and

Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Richard Goldstone

Vision from de Present

Sofia Santos

Respect for difference.

Many problems come from the fact that people don't respect the differences between themselves. Human beings, generally, want to promote their egos, to become the best. In most situations that can become an obsession and a perversion to the world. Selfishness, greed and incapability of saying "I'm sorry" when it's necessary, makes the world an imbalanced system with many injustices. The weaker can't stop suffering.

If all human beings were able to acknowledge their virtues and mistakes, maybe most of the wars wouldn't exist, maybe the world could be better, maybe managers would feel more comfortable in assuming sustainability in their daily management, and maybe governments would have a longer term perspective rather than the next elections. Maybe we could live in a better world.

Identity

The movies are one of the most important communication and information media that have developed over the past decades, and it has helped to create and destroy hope.

In attention to this phenomenon, I would like to share my vision from the eyes of those that decided to communicate a world, a situation, a story, a life and informed the tragedy of those that don't have, that look and can't discover, from those that have illusions, but also of those that fight and find, those that have faith and recover hope.

My vision identifies with an Argentinean movie called "Polaquito". Polaquito is a story of a fourteen-year-old boy, living like many other children in the world, with not many economic resources, misery, working with effort, idealism and dreaming with a better future.

Polaquito is conscientious of where he is and what he does in the world, he is conscientious that in the world there's injustice, destruction, fear, that the big boys destroy and abuse the small ones, but he wants to be a singer, he wants to sing Tango, to create his own company, but most of all he believes that people and situations can improve.

He has a friend, "Pelú", the difficulties of life made her a prostitute at an early age, but he's convinced that he will take her out of that environment. He always has words of hope for her, words that a better world is possible for them, THAT OTHER ONE, that place where everything is achievable.

But like in all stories, there's people that like the way the system works, they want to maintain things in status quo, where they like to rule and govern the biggest amount of people and don't like individuals like polaquito, because they think and have other opinions, he destroys the "order", create chaos, and that is something that they can't allow.

The end of the story is very tragic, because in his battle to get out of that world, he gets caught with people that want to kill him because he is disturbing the system, and on his struggle to liberate himself and his friend, he discovers the betrayal of the system and when he wants to take "justice" over his own hands, but him and his dreams die in the hand of those that defend the system.

This is a present that I see, people that are fighting for a better future, for dignity, freedom and human rights, and I see children that can't develop their dreams because of those that don't see the convenience in it, those that don't let them believe, prefer them sad and mummies in the world. A world where fear for one self and the other domains.

The future is empowerment of our selves, is being conscience of the beauty of being humans, and sharing our capacities and weaknesses with others, respecting who we are and discovering our own dignity makes the first step to help create a fair world.

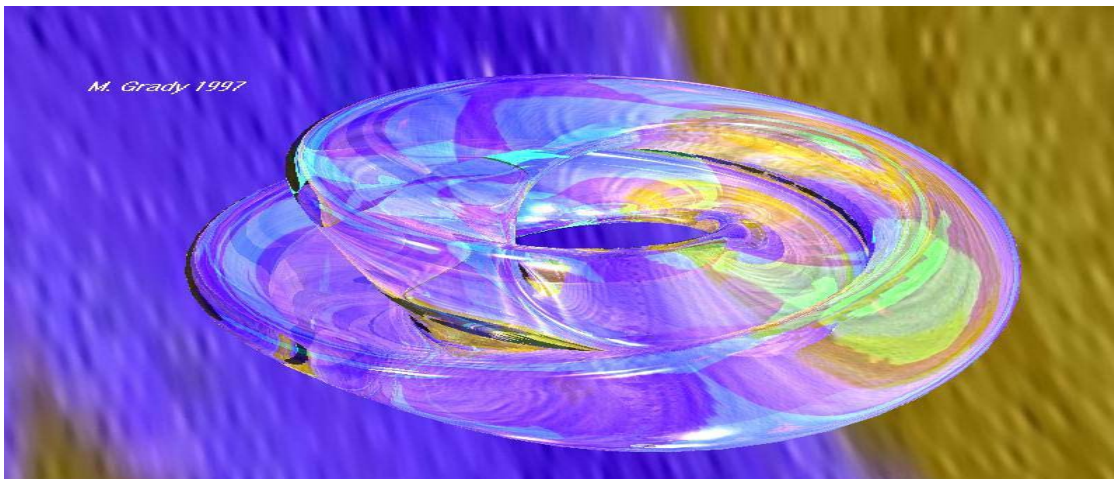
Boriana Benev

Somewhere in the future.
Josephine Green. Philips Design.

Following the tumult of the last years, a new consciousness is now starting to emerge. This new consciousness revolves around the awareness that all things are connected and interdependent. It is a loose concept, so while different people call it different things, it is increasingly bringing together religions, races and cultures around its central vision of co-dependency. This new consciousness is giving much more attention to the quality of life of all people and to sustainable development and these are becoming the building blocks of an emerging world view.

While we accept that we don't know, and may never know, exactly what the source is, we do know that this new awareness is making us think and act differently. Ideological and religious differences are losing their former power to separate and divide as we increasingly pool our knowledge, our imaginations and our efforts to attain a more meaningful quality of life. As such we are becoming much more mindful of the future.

Instead of conceiving of the future merely as an empty space, to be colonized by the present and driven by the market, and time merely as a linear concept, we search for new conceptual models and new metaphors. We re-think how to think about the future, how to envisage the future and how to safeguard the future. In doing this we become stewards or custodians of that future



An example of such a new metaphor is the swirl. The swirl contains the past, the present and the future and the challenge is to discover and explore ways to tap into its latent potentialities and tantalizing possibilities and to make these tangible. To be mindful of the future, however, what we do, why we do it and how we do it is changing. In a post-capitalist, pluralistic and interdependent society, success is defined less in terms of power, status and wealth and more as collaboration, compassion, care and stewardship. Business is less about money making and more about sense making, harnessing the creative energy of entrepreneurship to help and facilitate individuals and societies to prosper and grow. To grow we combine the rational and the intuitive, the creative and the analytical, the efficient and the inefficient to create a more human and more humane world.

Everyday democracy
Tom Bentley

My hope is that, in all parts of the world, people's practical efforts to create a better life for themselves can evolve into a wider sharing of responsibility. A sustainable world is one in which billions of people contribute to common goods through their personal choices and their everyday behaviour.

To achieve this, the dynamism of wealth creation must be better aligned with human needs and capabilities; from universal basic rights like freedom from poverty and disease, to the thirst for knowledge and the ability to innovate and adapt.

Reconciling responsibilities with our differences and appetites means building institutions which can mediate perpetual conflict; creating rules and cultures which generate peace and legitimacy.

For me, this is the next form of democracy. It is most likely to flourish if we invest in our capacity to learn; firms which can innovate because they support personal development, families which nurture children's curiosity and wellbeing, neighbourhoods which work out how to solve shared problems.

Connecting these capabilities through governance could then become the global challenge of our age.

A vision of enlightenment

I have a dream. And sometimes a nightmare.

The nightmare is straightforward. A world with shrinking natural resources, vanishing biodiversity, ever new billions of humans being born into miserable lives of poverty and degradation. No way out of our Hobbesian predicament.

The dream is a bit more complicated, but a lot more plausible. It is a dream of enlightenment. If the human race is the first species with an ability to plan generations ahead and remember generations back, the first animal aware of both its mortality and its responsibility, then there is no stopping our development into a gentler existence than what we have seen so far.

There is no such thing as perfect harmony, neither in nature nor in human society. But there is good hope that in the long run reason will prevail over prejudice, science over ignorance, freedom over oppression and ecological wisdom over shortsighted waste. We have a collective learning curve, and every stupid mistake brings new important lessons. Humanity is still a toddler, learning to walk, learning to interact. These things take time. Thousands of years.

In many ways the 20th century was the worst in human history. But it also saw the triumph of liberal democracy, the birth of the United Nations and the European Union, incredible gains in the fight against poverty and unbelievable scientific progress. We are now in the process of creating a global community, dealing with our common ills and adjusting some of our bad practices. It is a race against time, but there are no problems that the human brain cannot solve, no wounds that Mother Nature cannot heal.

When in doubt we can always find consolation and inspiration in Arthur Koestler's idea that the universe must be full of benign civilizations, because the bad ones destroy themselves when they discover how to split the atom. Since we are still here, according to this law of cosmic evolution, there must be something good in us. Let's build on that.

Niklas Ekdal

Robert Cooper
Vision

“Throw away respect, tradition form and ceremonious duty”

As we became free we began to think we could do without authority.

As we became democratic we began to find voting a bore; but that did not stop us from criticising the people who were elected.

As we became well off and fat we lost our sense of the tragic; and our humour turned to irony.

As we became secure we began to think we could do without armies; or we thought we could hire armies when necessary, as the Romans had thought before us. We certainly did not think of dying for our countries or for our civilisation. You die only for things you believe in and did we believe in anything?

But still there were people who did believe; and in the end we were defenceless against them.

“The best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity”

And yet it need not be so. Most of us want something better; and “the growing good of mankind is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.”

But we have to understand; we have to organise. And we have to believe.

My Vision for the Present

By Sean Germond

All life is one. Now perhaps more than ever before are we even beginning to understand and appreciate the significance and extent of the interconnectedness and interdependence of life on Earth. At the most fundamental levels of all the natural sciences we are realizing how impossibly complicated life is, but are also beginning to appreciate how there must also be an underlying simplicity in all of this as well.

My vision for the Present is that we all have the courage to “suspend judgment” to enable us to begin to explore, understand and appreciate the complexities of this only world that we live in.

By “suspend judgement”, I mean two things: firstly, to also see how we as humans are *of* this Earth, not merely living *on* this Earth; and secondly, to open our eyes to see beyond the obvious complexities of a globalised world and identifying the underlying universal principles that would enable us to truly “live together”.

We are “*Of this Earth*”, and not merely “*On this Earth*”. I see a world where we (as incredibly diverse individuals and communities) are able to collaborate together in a symbiotic and mutually rewarding way. A world where no one nation can claim that “our lifestyle is not up for negotiation” simply to preserve a national, myopic and short term view that disregards how interdependent we really are in the long run. Where “*sustainability*” is about: collaboration, co-operation and by implication, compromise (both historically advantaged and disadvantaged nations) for the benefit of the whole. Where sustainability is about acknowledging that we are all equals in this great and miraculous equation of Life where “an injury to one is an injury to all” (to quote the famous anti-apartheid slogan of the liberation struggle in South Africa). As long as we continue to see ourselves as living *on* this earth, we are unable to see how we are divorcing ourselves from a marriage of necessity with all other living entities (other people included!). I see a world where humans have reconciled themselves with the reality that we are *of* this world and by implication, are living *with* this world.

I see a world where we participate in enjoying the “shared inheritance” that is both impossibly abundant yet incredibly fragile beyond our wildest dreams.

We have identified, understood and implemented a framework to enable us to truly live together. I see a world where people are able to appreciate the complexity of life within an open system. Where we have collectively devised, developed and agreed upon the fundamental principles that govern our global ability to live together in unity and diversity. Where we are committed to living with each other, not despite each other. Where interdependence is about acknowledging that there is only one world (and not “first” or “third” worlds) that presents itself in an astonishing array of economies, cultures and “best” practices. Where people recognise grossly simplified “truisms of a global reality” as an intentional distortion by a few to the benefit of the few. Where global institutions (such as the UN) provide a governance framework which enables nations and civil society to ensure a quality of life for all. Where people are unwilling to pursue “national interests” that run counter to “global interests”.

I see a world where, despite the obvious differences that underpin the remarkable diversity amongst us, we see each other for whom we are: “we are people through other people”.

6th August 2005.
Cape Town, South Africa

True progress is made when the individual incentives of people living in poverty are the starting point and driver of development strategies, not an afterthought.

Yann Risz

My Vision

We don't own the earth, we just borrow it from our children, somebody said!

I see that all children of the world have the opportunity to be children

I see that all children of the world get love and care

I see that all children of the world get education

If I could guarantee this vision, I am convinced that we would not need to ask – How on earth can we live together?

Thomas Bergström

Let us not forget the blueness of the sky For our children no longer see what we saw We risk forgetting that
blueness For the haze clouds over what we once saw

Let us not forget clear clear air
Where we saw far and wide
We risk forgetting that clearness
For our children no longer see what we saw

If we can lift this heavy mask
Our children will see what we saw
If we can do this one thing
We will not risk forgetting what we saw

Christine Loh

At daybreak we act?
by Ged Davis

At twilight we see...

Hot air burning
Angry men killing
Unfed children crying
More species dying

At night we dream....

Fresh air caressing
Wise men discussing
Healthy children smiling
Strong species thriving

At daybreak we act?

WE ARE A CHILD OF OUR PAST; MASTER OF OUR PRESENT;
CREATOR OF OUR FUTURE

Being Peace
Breathing in, I calm my body,
Breathing out, I smile
Dwelling in the present moment
I know this is a wonderful moment
"The Wisdom of Thich Nhat Hanh"

My Vision for the World
A world without borders
A world without colour
A world without status
A world without pain and suffering
A world of love and compassion
A world you and I can build,
A world where you and I can live;
Our world

How to achieve this vision
Recognize the pain and suffering in the world today
Recognize that our action or inaction is part of the problem
Remember that the perpetrator can become the victim
Accept our past mistakes
Agree that we can do something to end suffering today
Begin to do those little things that can end suffering
in the world today

See others as an extension of oneself
Promote peace, love and compassion
Devote your life to serving humanity
Become a social entrepreneur, or
Assist those that support social entrepreneurs (e.g.
Ashoka: Innovators for the Public)

My New Inspiration
My wife, Oby Benjamin Mbakwem, died saving a neighbor
(11:00pm, 25 June 2005)
Although I miss her physical presence (and I feel so much pain)
I am comforted that someone is alive because of her
Oby is now my inspiration, motivation and role model
In her memory, I will keep serving humanity (despite the cost)

Why have I come to the Tallberg Forum?
Although I am still mourning, I have come to;
See my brothers and sister,
Ask why we are killing each other,
Learn how to end suffering in the world,
Learn how to become a better social entrepreneur,
Learn how to change the world,
At the end of the Tallberg Forum; find out "how on
earth we can live together"

Benjamin Chigozie Mbakwem, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
(25th July 2005)