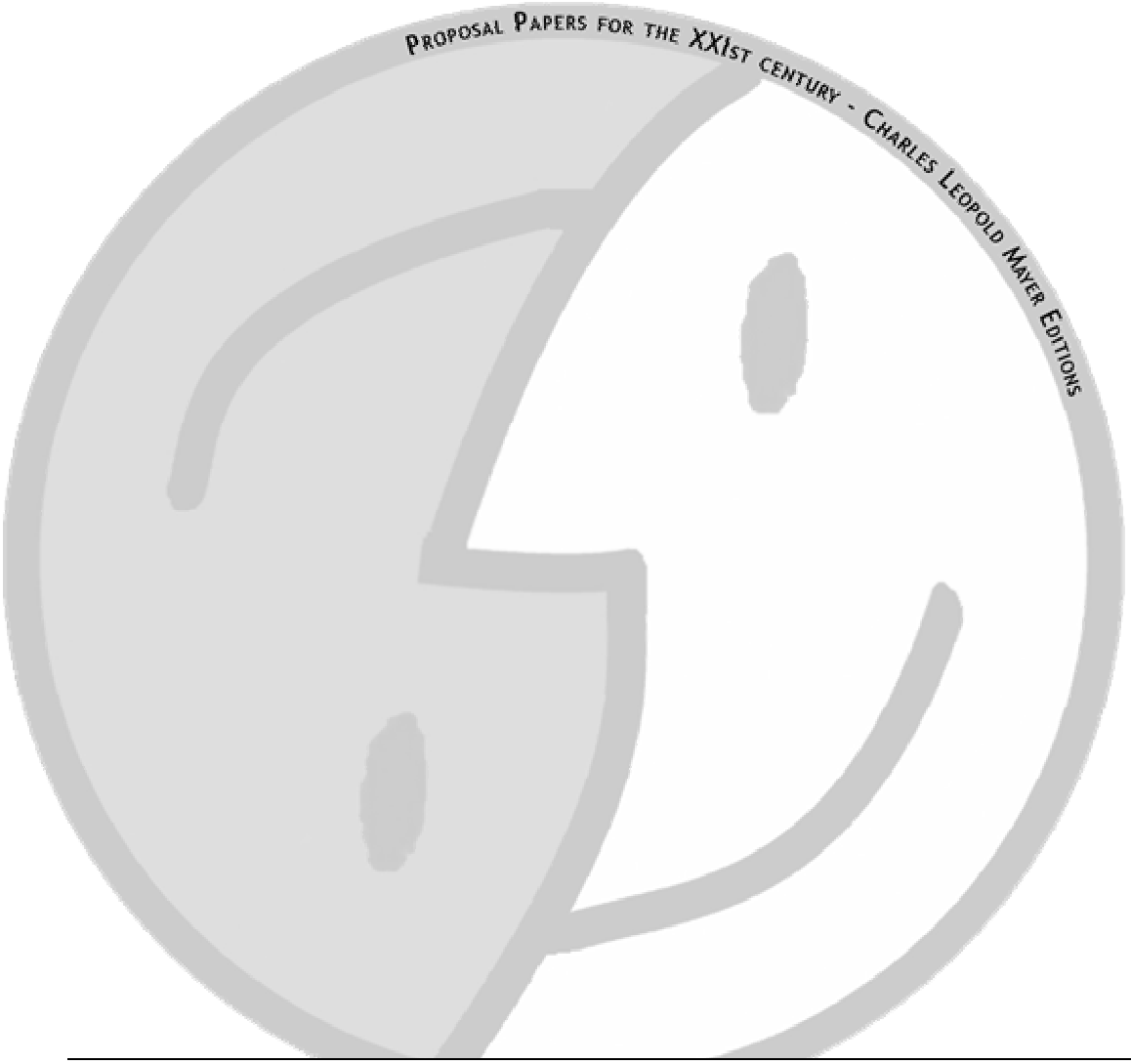
SERIES SOCIO-ECONOMY OF SOLIDARITY

# Production, technologies and investments



# Proposal papers for the 21th century

*The proposal papers are a collection of short books on each decisive area of our future, which assemble those proposals that appear the most capable of bringing about the changes and transformations needed for the construction of a more just and sustainable 20th century. They aim to inspire debate over these issues at both local and global levels.*

The term 'globalisation' corresponds to major transformations that represent both opportunities for progress and risks of aggravating social disparities and ecological imbalances. It is important that those with political and economic power do not alone have control over these transformations as, trapped within their own short-term logic, they can only lead us to a permanent global crisis, all too apparent since the September 11th attacks on the United States.

This is why the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World (see appendix) initiated, in 2000-2001, a process of assembling and pinpointing proposals from different movements and organisations, different actors in society and regions around the world. This process began with electronic forums, followed by a series of international workshops and meetings, and resulted in some sixty proposal texts, presented at the World Citizen Assembly held in Lille (France) in December 2001.

These texts, some of which have been completed and updated, are now in the process of being published by a network of associative and institutional publishers in 6 languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Arabic and Chinese) in 7 countries (Peru, Brazil, Zimbabwe, France, Lebanon, India, China). These publishers work together in order to adapt the texts to their different cultural and geopolitical contexts. The aim is that the proposal papers stimulate the largest possible debate in each of these regions of the world and that they reach their target publics whether they be decision-makers, journalists, young people or social movements.

# Presentation of the Paper « Production, technologies and investments »

Societies which have had free markets and have had bad experiences loudly proclaim the merits of a socialist state controlled economy, while those societies which have suffered the ills of socialist state controls are crying out for a need for liberalization. There is such diversity in the experiences of different countries with different political and economic systems that it is very difficult to make general statements on the merits and demerits of any particular system. How can one prepare a strategy for the future that is more equitable and cares for the human being, who should ultimately be at the centre of this whole debate? Is it at all possible to prepare such a strategy that is applicable all over the world? Secondly who is to prepare such a strategy? In this paper, the issue of who is to prepare and implement such a strategy should be first addressed, as the issue has become very complex. it was decided to clearly structure the discussion into selected topics so that the impact of the changes in Technology, Production and Investment on all aspects affecting people and societies could be discussed.

# Production, technologies and investments

Paper coordinated by **Ramesh Ramaswamy**

# 1 - Findings And Diagnosis

## The Diversity of Societies

The biggest challenge of evolving a new paradigm or new strategies for a better world is undoubtedly the diversity that need to be contended with – diversity in perceptions, in needs, in aspirations, political ideologies, social constraints and cultural backgrounds.

This was more than amplified during the deliberations of the forum through the Internet based discussions, the meeting held in Bangalore and in the meeting held in Findhorn. What appears to be critically important to the European mind seems irrelevant in many parts of Africa or Asia. Very often the thought processes and ideologies are affected by the economic conditions of the region. Any political ideology that can provide dinner on the table is acceptable in the poor societies of Asia or Africa however "inequitable" or "unfair' that it may sound to the European. Any system of Governance that can provide security of human lives and material is acceptable however dictatorial or "tyrannical" that it may sound in other parts of the world. Hence the locally perceived basic human needs of food, shelter, clothing and security (or any other felt need) determine the priorities of local populations. Any strategy has to necessarily address these priorities of local populations.

## Diversity of Experiences

The other major issue that was highlighted during the interactions was the old adage "the grass on the other side is always greener". Societies which have had free markets and have had bad experiences were loudly proclaiming the merits of a socialist state controlled economy, while those societies which have suffered the ills of socialist state controls were crying for a need for liberalization. There is such diversity in the experiences of different countries with different political and economic systems that it is very difficult to make general statements on the merits and demerits of any particular system. While many South Americans talk about the ills of a capitalist society, there have been many cases of socialist societies that have failed to deliver a good life to their citizenry.

How can one prepare a strategy for the future that is more equitable and cares for the human being, who should ultimately be at the centre of this whole debate? Is it at all possible to prepare such a strategy that is applicable all over the world? Secondly who is to prepare such a strategy?

## The Role Of The State

In this paper, the issue of who is to prepare and implement such a strategy should be first addressed, as the issue has become very complex. A few decades ago, the state was the ultimate authority to decide what was "good" for the society. The state's political, economic and cultural ideologies were imposed on the population through the legal or fiscal tools. However, the revolutions in technology and the

process of globalization have changed all that. Globalization has not been just a chosen political strategy. It has been rendered inevitable with the technology revolution of the last few decades. Even countries like China have found it impossible to maintain their insular status. The role of the state in dictating ideologies has been steadily eroded over the years.

Any government has to necessarily take into account this erosion in formulating policy as otherwise it will make policy that will be impossible to implement or make policy that will be detrimental to the economic well being of the society.

If the individual states have been weakened, who should be the "governor". In the new context, it is obvious that such a "governor" or a "referee" is essential. Should it be the World Bank, the UN, the WTO..?. Loud protests have been expressed about the roles of these international institutions, however, few suggestions have emerged about a viable alternative. Is it necessary to replace one WTO with another "WTO" whatever one may choose to call it? Is the protest against the concept of bodies such international institutions or is the protest against their way of working or a few specific strategies adopted by these institutions? These issues need to be addressed and analyzed if a viable new strategy is to be formulated.

## Constraints to Planning in the New Context

Many of the traditional economic concepts need to be reviewed in the context of the changed circumstances brought about by technological innovations. Hence any new thought process on an alternate paradigm or even just a strategy has to keep in mind the drastically changed circumstances Easiest to illustrate the point is the concepts relating to employment. The labour market has become international and a state cannot restrict employment of "foreigners" being employed, just by imposing visa restrictions. Workers can be "hired" to work over the Internet. This has a great impact on political and economic ideology. The best example of this was probably felt in the process of translation of documents for this very forum. The rates were compared across continents and translators were "hired" for different languages from different countries! Greater investment in the US can lead to better employment opportunities in India and not necessarily within the US!

## The Discussion Process of the Forum

In planning the process, the Internet discussion and the initial text were kept as open as possible to enable the participants to air their views without conditioning them to any fixed pre-conceived ideology. At the end of the Internet forum, it was decided to clearly structure the discussion into selected topics so that the impact of the changes in Technology, Production and Investment on all aspects affecting people and societies could be discussed. This also ensured that some issues were not ignored.

The topics that were selected for discussions were:

1. Media
2. Information Technology & Communication
3. Society & Culture
4. Ownership of Knowledge
5. Infrastructure
6. Education
7. Small & Medium Industries
8. International Investment Patterns
9. Production systems & scales of production
10 Environmental Concerns
11. Ethics & Governance
12. Role of Governments
13. Health Care
14. Resource Management
15. Legal Framework

The Internet discussion group saw representation from 6 continents and there was participation from the developed and the developing countries. An attempt was also made to ensure that a diverse group, representing different professional groups, attended the meeting of the Forum, which took place in Bangalore, India.

The discussion group consisted of:

- Journalist
- Science activist
- Environmental Scientist
- Former President of an Indian Conglomerate and well known engineer,
- Former Director from a Telecom Multinational
- A Medical Doctor
- President of a large Indo-US Software Development Company
- A Politician who s a member of the Congress Party in India & A Social Activist
- A Small-scale industry owner
- A Senior Advertising and Media consultant
- An Investment Consultant and Financial Analyst
- A Senior Executive of an Infrastructure Development Company now in charge of a major project aimed at capacity building in the Indian education system.

The perceptions of problems, priorities and indeed, suggested solutions greatly differed over different professional groups and different nationalities.

The findings and diagnoses of the issues by the group were as follows:

The explosion in the ***availability of media*** enabled by new technologies has had a profound impact on different societies. The impacts have been both positive and negative. On the one hand the improvement in the availability of media has improved the awareness levels of the public. In many cases, where the governments have been traditionally controlling the information flow to the public

(particularly the illiterate and the poorer sections), the easy availability of information has been a blessing. New technologies have made it nearly impossible for bad governments to hide facts from the public and to an extent made them more accountable. In many cases, the improved awareness has helped the electorate to elect better people to represent them.

On the other hand the free and open availability of media has also created many social problems. In some cases the new media, such as the Internet, have been used by unscrupulous elements to sell products that are detrimental to their individual health or to society, such as drugs and illegal arms. In some cases, the new media have also been used to instigate violence.

Since different players have been fighting for a share of the mind of the people, many unethical tactics often tend to be adopted. With the new technologies becoming available, any kind of control on the information dissemination has become impossible. While it may be argued that the media explosion is corrupting many societies and cultures, some others ask – who has the right to be the moral guardian of society?

This is specially a problem of many conservative countries such as India or China, which have been insulated from foreign cultures to a large extent, through strict laws restricting the media. Many countries like Singapore and Malaysia are yet trying to find ways of restricting information flow to the population, though not very successfully.

More than just viewing objectionable material, there has been a cultural change in such traditional societies, which are changing attitudes of people. In India, concern has been expressed that the exposure of the poor to affluent lifestyles projected in the media is increasing the aspirations of people, which they are unable to fulfil, thereby increasing their frustration. This phenomenon has often been cited as the cause of the spiraling crime rate.

Similar technologies that have spawned the growth of new media have also been responsible for the revolution in the fields of ***Information Technology/ Communication.***

The IT revolution has changed the way people live and think. It has had a pronounced impact on every aspect of life. Improved communication has helped the people of Senegal to ensure that the election process is more transparent. Even in a developed country like the Netherlands, IT has helped in greater participation of the people in policy formulation. It has helped the peasant in Africa to realize a better value for his crop, thereby bypassing the middlemen who misuse the ignorance of the peasants for profiteering.

This improved communication system may not sound significant in a developed country, but it has very far-reaching implications in developing countries. Inadequacy of information has been one of the main causes of the exploitation of the poor and less exposed. Often, a poor farmer neither knows the price that his crop can fetch outside his immediate market environment nor does he have

information on how he can reach the produce to a new market. This creates a good opportunity for the unscrupulous trader to exploit his ignorance. With improved information systems, there is better opportunity for a more equitable return to the farmer from his produce.

For many poor countries, such as India and the Philippines, the IT industry has been a blessing. The engineers are able to live in India and work offshore for companies in the developed countries, thereby bypassing restrictive immigration rules. In addition to software development, many companies in Europe and the US are outsourcing their back-office operations to developing countries. For example the entire accounting operation of some of the leading European companies has been sub-contracted to companies in India. Many of the Call-Centres of US companies are located in developing countries.

Assuming that a country has the necessary skilled manpower, IT could become a major source of employment to people in the third world.

With people being able to work across distances, intelligent use of communication technologies can make physical transportation less necessary. This could help in two ways,

- it could help reduce rapid urbanization. As the transport and communication infrastructure in developing countries is poor, most people want to move as close to their place of work as possible.

- By making information and facilities available to people closer to their homes, it can reduce the strain on the transport system and reduce the resultant pollution loads.

Use of the new technologies has greatly helped the process of governance, particularly in developing countries. Delivery of public service is improving and the government is becoming more transparent.

In many developing countries, the increased prosperity of the knowledge workers, could create a "digital divide", with wide disparities in standard of living, incomes and power. Traditional fears about labor redundancies caused by higher levels of automation continue to exist and developing countries need to be wary about their choice of technologies.

As countries become more "advanced", they also become more vulnerable. With greater automation and greater use of computer systems, countries can become victims of "Info Terrorism", which effectively means that their information systems can be hacked and normal life paralyzed. This would pose serious security challenges.

It is increasingly becoming obvious that the ***ownership of knowledge*** is becoming more critical by the day. Industrial and agricultural practices are becoming dependant on the products and processes developed by a few companies/ countries and the poor countries are likely to be the major victims –

the seeds are patented, health products are patented and now, with the IT systems, many economic processes are patented.

This raises two very important issues:

- How will traditional knowledge be dealt with? There has been some concern that many traditional systems, primarily healing systems and agricultural strains, are being patented by multinationals.
- Who will study the impact of and regulate products of new technology in different countries
- What will be the impact of a concentration of power in a few companies? Who will be the arbiter?
- What is a fair price for a proprietary product or service that a society has become dependant on?

All these are serious issues that need to be addressed with the seriousness they deserve. As of now, although such debates are not uncommon, the information base on which these debates are founded is totally inadequate.

Each country/ society will have to invest time and money in firstly keeping themselves well informed and being aware of the pros and cons of different technological developments and secondly having ownership of some key technologies. If the development costs are unaffordable for some countries, it may be necessary to have multi country syndicated research projects in key sectors.

***Societies and their cultures*** have been severely impacted with the advent of new technologies. With many of the knowledge workers migrating to the developed countries from developing countries, family structures have been changing. The elderly, for whom there are inadequate support systems, are being left behind uncared for. In many societies in Asia and Africa, this is emerging as a social problem. This is because, traditionally the children provided the parents with the emotional and material support during their old age.

As native cultures could also be under threat, societies need to make a conscious effort to preserve their local cultures. Societies will have to make a special effort to ensure that local style, food habits, family values do not get excessively influenced from foreign cultures, which may not be entirely suitable in the local context.

The “Brain Drain” or the exodus of many trained persons from the developing countries to the developed countries is also a serious cause for concern. Many countries and societies invest considerably in training a person and if such trained persons leave the country, it is a major loss to society. Local societies have to create conditions so that their “knowledge” workers find it attractive to work at home rather than seeking foreign employment.

Interestingly many large multi nationals are setting up their research laboratories in developing countries, where there is plenty of local talent available. The local societies are happy, as there is better employment opportunity. However, the ownership on the products of the research does not remain with the local society.

When issues of ***Infrastructure*** were discussed, all along, the matters were restricted to Roads, Bridges and similar physical infrastructure projects. While this is important and vital, what has also become critical is the development of a "knowledge' infrastructure. This should include primary schools, secondary schools, technical education, vocational training schools and research institutions. With knowledge becoming the key factor in the lives of the people, the investment that a country makes in developing the knowledge infrastructure will determine if the society will gain or lose from the new technology developments.

Of course, in addition to the knowledge infrastructure a country has to develop the enabling conditions such as good telecom networks, power, roads, etc.

The new developments in technology and the enormous pressure on efficiency to be competitive internationally has made the investments in the traditional infrastructure sectors very high and beyond the reach of many developing countries. Such countries have had to invite private participation, although on very specific terms to ensure that the societies do not become victims of the greed of the investor. Even now, the rate of return on many infrastructure projects is not adequate to attract investment into the developing countries. The governments in these countries are struggling to find the resources to fund such projects.

The development of the "knowledge infrastructure" ultimately leads us to the issue of ***education.*** In developing countries, there has been a constant debate on whether the governments should concentrate their efforts on primary education and improve the literacy levels or should the focus be on technical education. In many countries like India the basic literacy levels are less than 50 %, which is very poor. There has been a debate, as discussed earlier, about the exodus of trained manpower from India. However, India, which has prepared a good foundation for higher education, has reaped the benefits of this effort with the development of the computer and communication related industry in the country.

The debate has also been raging about whether the government or the private sector should make the investments at different levels of education. This is a debate with too many opinions and too much emotion.

However, the new technology developments can be of great use in imparting education (including long distance) through use of multimedia. This could also be used to standardize the quality of education in the different schools. At present, in countries like India, the quality of education available to the poorer sections of the people is of very low quality.

The ***Small & Cottage Industries***, which provide employment to thousands of people in many countries, have had to face the brunt of the technology trends. Newer systems are making the old production systems obsolete. The small industry, where the owner has limited resources is unable to keep pace with the changes. The higher cost of raw materials because of small lot buying, lower economies of scale and the high cost of marketing products have made the survival of the small and cottage sector difficult in the traditional industry segments. India, like many developing countries had, as a policy, encouraged the small-scale sector all long. The small scale, because of lower automation, employs more persons per unit of production than the large scale.

Traditionally it is believed that most technology innovations have had their origins in the small-scale sector. If the innovations in the small industry are to come about, new financial instruments such as venture capital will become essential in the developing countries. Currently the funding for such start up firms has come form private venture funds.

A culture of Research & Development and a culture of entrepreneurship need to be inculcated in societies that have traditionally sought regular corporate employment. This is essential to the development of new knowledge tools that can be marketed worldwide.

***International Investments*** have been pouring into many developing countries with the ease provided by the new technology tools and improved communications. The investments have been helpful to many countries that have limited resources. The local governments have been in a dilemma as to the level of investment that should be permitted and the sectors in which investments should be permitted. New financial instruments that have been made available in the developing countries have to be evaluated in the context of these countries.

***Environmental Concerns*** have been growing in the developing countries. However in these countries the societies have had to balance local issues against the global issues and balance the present demands for jobs and survival against future effects of damage to the environment. With new technologies, especially in the field of biotechnology and genetics, there is a greater need for the societies to be better informed. At present there is no single source available in many developing countries for professional and sound information on matters concerning the environment. This results in many NGOs crusading against small issues where the really dangerous issues are ignored.

Environmental issues are becoming more critical now, because of restrictive environmental laws and societal pressure in developed countries, which are driving many companies to shift their production to the developing countries. Developing countries, in their desperation for employment generation and scarce hard currency have been indiscriminate in welcoming such investments. With the new processes and technologies, the dangers to the population or the environment are not immediately and generally known.

More critical than even the issue of environmental degradation, is the management of the resources of societies. Societies need to optimize the returns from their local resources such as land, water, forests and even human resources and optimize their use for maximum long-term returns. In may instances, in their immediacy of creating employment or earning hard currency, countries have welcomed industrial development in fields, where it is endangering the availability of the resources for the survival of the local population in the not too distant future. In many poor countries, land is being rendered fallow, the water resources are being misused and polluted, forests are being cleared and the society is not even aware of the danger that lurks ahead.

*Better* ***Ethics & Governance*** in many developing countries are of critical importance. Corrupt practices and poor governance are often the single most important reason for the sorry state of many economies. New technologies should be used to make governance more transparent and minimize corruption. The issue is of such high priority that even a global watchdog may be needed.

It was reported during the discussions that in many countries in Africa, the election processes have become more transparent with the advent of new communication technologies. More recently, it was said that mobile telephone and the SMS technology helped overthrow the allegedly corrupt government of Estrada in the Philippines. Examples of the improvement in the conditions for better governance and more ethical practices brought about by improved communication technologies have been many.

However, in spite of the availability of technology most governments have been very reluctant and slow to improve the transparency in their administration. Unless persons in power adopt ethical practices and improve governance, no society can progress. The greed of a few persons in power will cause immeasurable harm to millions of poor citizens. This is, in fact, the case in many poor countries.

***Health Care*** will continue to remain a major area for concern with the new technologies. The governments will have to define their roles with greater clarity. As patented products and new products can be higher priced, the tendency of the large pharmaceutical companies will be to concentrate their energies in these products. Again, the pharmaceutical companies would like to concentrate their research funds for products where they can get the maximum profits, such as a cure for Aids, Heart Diseases etc. Many common diseases of the poor tropical countries, such as malaria, would not get any attention. Governments will have to plan their investments in medical research strategically to alleviate the common diseases in their societies.

In addition to making available medical care, governments have to ensure that it is available at an affordable price. As it is, many of the new generation of drugs, are priced so high that they are unaffordable by the poor people. On the other hand, the companies do have to recover the cost of R & D that goes into the introduction of new pharmaceutical products. If the prices are controlled, as they were in some countries, there is little incentive for the companies to introduce

new drug formulations in that country and the people lose the benefit of new innovations.

***Legal frameworks*** also need to be evolved that can take into account the criminal misuses of new technologies. Legal issues are becoming more complex as the two most important questions in jurisprudence, who committed the crime and where was it committed, are both becoming increasingly difficult to answer. Since much of the work transcends political borders, the role of the international arbitrator is increasingly becoming difficult.

New technologies should be used to hasten the dispensation of Justice in the developing countries, where the legal processes are often extremely slow. Corrupt practices breed on inefficient or slow legal systems.

# 2. Visions And New Paradigm

The foregoing text has already suggested the development of a new paradigm. Undoubtedly the new paradigm for the new society has to revolve around knowledge and the power of human resources.

In the various discussions of the Forum, whenever any discussions on the wealth or well being of a society are discussed, the basic yardstick has been money. The wealth of society has all along been measured in monetary terms and all economic discussed revolve around money – more specifically, the level of money available today. Is this enough or does the new knowledge-driven world demand better measures?

During the discussions of the Forum, "equality" has often been discussed as an aim. What does equality mean? Does it mean that we should strive to have no multi-millionaires like Bill Gates or should the whole populations have the same amount of money as Bill Gates? It is important to answer this because equality can be achieved by playing Robin Hood and taking away the wealth from the rich and distributing it among the poor. But history has not shown this to be a necessarily good strategy. Secondly the concept of a "rich man" is very relative. To a peasant in Asia or Africa who cannot get a full meal, any one who can get three meals a day is a rich man. He is not concerned about the wealth of Bill Gates, he just wants his next meal!

The more important issue is that of the satisfaction of human needs, which is often locale specific. The Human Development Index of the UN is a definite positive step in putting satisfaction of human needs as an indicator of the well being of any society.

Secondly, there has to be a reward for initiative as otherwise there would be no enterprise. A lazy person cannot and should not reap the same rewards of a hard working enterprising person – the traditional and still valid argument for capitalism.

Hence it may be useful to define the concept of equality in the new context of the knowledge society.

The New World should provide equal resources and opportunity to any individual or society to acquire, preserve and benefit from individual or collective knowledge of its members.

# 3. Initiatives and Innovations

The initiatives to attain this vision has to be viewed from two perspectives – firstly from the perspective of using the available new technologies to improve the life of its constituents and secondly from the perspective of warning and possibly protecting societies from the dangers of changing technologies. The initiatives that have been discussed below have emerged from the earlier part of this paper.

Knowledge needs to be valued and its value quantified and recognized. Macro Economic Indicators may have to be developed, which take into account the value of knowledge in an economic system. New ideas have to emerge for management of the economy and how the national investments are planned.

Good knowledge infrastructure needs to be created, especially in poor countries, which will boost on-shore and offshore employment. Governments have to seriously review and make investments in the knowledge infrastructure including, primary education, secondary education and R & D Planning

The latest in technology needs to be urgently pressed into service to guarantee maximum transparency in governance, which will rid society of corrupt practices. Corruption is one of the most important reasons for the poverty of many nations.

New technologies should be used to hasten the dispensation of Justice in the developing countries. Corrupt practices breed on inefficient or slow legal systems.

Latest technologies must be deployed (even in poor countries) so that information and services are brought "closer home" to the people. This will mitigate the pressure on the urban civic infrastructure and in some cases save the monetary, societal and environmental cost of creating new infrastructure.

Citizens must be exposed to the latest technologies so that they could take advantage of the cross-border opportunities created by the global labour market

Societies have to ensure that

- Their technology choice does not render the society vulnerable to "attack"
- They are not excessively dependent on the skills of outsiders, who may turn hostile
- They have ownership (part or whole) of knowledge, especially in critical area, such as food, shelter & health
- Back up systems are created which will compensate for any changes in the social structure brought about by developments in technology or production methods.
- The resources of the society such as land, water and human resources are optimized
- The new technologies do not harm either in the short or long term any lives, property or the natural resources.

# 4. Proposals

The proposals and strategies put forth in these notes are based on the premise that ultimately it is each individual society that has to decide on the final course of action. Forums such as these can only sensitize and play the role of enablers of the process. This is also congruent with the principle that each society has the right to decide for itself what it needs.

It is proposed that the Alliance should play a proactive role in implementing the initiatives that are listed above.

Towards this end, the following actions are proposed:

An international multi-disciplinary team (A Technology Advisory Group) must be set up as an advisory body to evaluate technologies and advice governments (particularly of poor countries). The mandate of the team should be to ensure that:

1. Adequate information should be made available to governments/ civil societies about the new technologies – their advantages and dangers.

2. A regular evaluation should be undertaken at International and National levels to continually evaluate such impacts on various aspects of life. Measurement systems must be developed to evaluate these changes.

3. Multi-disciplinary professional teams should be set up in each country to work with the international team mentioned above.

4. Analyzed information dissemination should be undertaken to the public at large in different countries, through media, seminars and meetings

5. Anti-corruption groups should be created, which will advocate the use of technology to fight corrupt practices in the delivery of public services to citizens in developing countries (often a bigger problem than kick-backs from stray defense deals).

6. Regional Networks (especially among developing countries) must be created for knowledge sharing. For example, a network in the Asia-Pacific Region could be created, which will network the small-medium industries and the research institutions. This will help sharing of knowledge and research facilities.

# 5. Strategies & Actors

1. A Technology Advisory Group

Such a group has to be set up at two levels. At the international level a group of professionals must be identified. They must be drawn from different disciplines, technology specialists, Sociologists, Economists, Educationists, Lawyers etc.

This group must study evolve processes by which societies/ countries can make logical technology choices. This group only develops the methodology and monitors the trends worldwide.

In each country or region there must be a similar local group which evaluates each technology choice using the processes developed by the international group and adapting it to the local conditions and keeping in mind local priorities.

2. Anti Corruption Groups

A branch of the Technology Advisory Group could be created to focus on technology solutions for transparency in delivery of public services. In addition to an advisory function, the group could play a pro-active role in sensitizing the local NGOs to these issues

3. Regional Networks

Development of Regional Networks could be carried out by evolving operating processes among existing private or government aided development organizations. Some initiatives are already underway in the Asia Pacific region. This has to be based on profitable business cooperation among individuals or institutions.

All these actions need to be initiated by identifying and motivating a group of carefully selected committed individuals.

The role of the Alliance could be as an enabler and a catalyst in the development of these networks and their processes.

# The Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

## Working together towards the challenges of the 21th century

Ever since the late eighties of the 20th century, numerous initiatives have been but forward from different regions of the world and extremely diverse contexts. Different social actors were thus put in motion with the aim of organising a vast worldwide process seeking to explore values, proposals and regulations capable of overcoming the modern challenges humanity is faced with.

A large number of thematic, collegial and continental meetings were organised in the early nineties, a process which led, in 1993, to the drafting of the *Platform for a Responsible and United World*.

Regional groups were set up, international professional networks and thematic networks on the fundamental issues of our era were developed: the Alliance was created. It is financially and technically supported by the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the progress of Humankind (FPH), among others.

The Alliance is focussed on inventing new forms of collective action on both a local and global scale, with the aim of shaping together the future of an increasingly complex and interdependent world.

The challenge of the Alliance is to actively support unity in diversity by asserting our societies' capability to understand and appreciate the complexity of situations, the interdependence of problems and the diversity and legitimacy of geo-cultural, social and professional perspectives.

**The Alliance, as a space of discussion, reflection and proposals, is built around three main orientations:**

Local groups aiming to bring people of a community, a region, a country or a continent together by looking at the realities and issues of their own societies. This is the **geo-cultural approach**. It reflects the diversity of places and cultures.

Groups of socio-professional actors wishing to provoke dialogue and mobilisation within a given social sector or profession (youth, peasants, scientists, local representatives, etc.). This is the **collegial approach**. It reflects the diversity of social and professional milieus, their concerns and responsibilities towards society and the challenges of today's world.

Thematic workshops seeking to create reflection groups centred around the major issues of our common future (sustainable water management, regional integration and globalisation, financial markets, art and society, etc.). This is the **thematic approach**. It reflects the diverse challenges humanity is faced with in the 21st

century. Thematic workshops are organised into four areas: Values and Culture, Economy and Society, Governance and Citizenship, Humanity and the Biosphere.

Seeking both to draw on the richness of materials and experiences gathered by these reflection groups whilst networking with other citizen dynamics with a similar focus, the Alliance fixed itself the objective of obtaining collectively developed, concrete proposals. The following meetings were thus organised:
- **international meetings**, for each thematic workshop and each college,
- **synchronized continental assemblies** (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe) and a regional meeting in the Arab world (Lebanon) in June 2001.
- a **Citizen World Assembly**, held in December 2001 in Lille, France, bringing 400 participants together from around the world.

These meetings together contributed to the drafting of some sixty *Proposal Papers for the 20th century* and a *Charter of Human Responsibilities*, published in several languages in different countries.

The Alliance has been involved in a process of disseminating and developing these outcomes since the beginning of 2002. Networks are expanding, branching out and their work themes are becoming increasingly transversal. They also strengthen links with other approaches aiming to create an alternative globalisation.

For further information, please visit the **alliance website** at www.alliance21.org, where the history of the Alliance, the challenges it is engaged in and the workshops and discussion forums being held can be viewed in three languages (French, English and Spanish).

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# The proposal papers on the internet

Whether in their provisional or definitive form, all the proposal papers and their corresponding translations can be accessed on the website of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, at:

http://www.alliance21.org/fr/proposals

**Themes available:**

## Values, education, cultures, art and the sciences

Teachers and education – Education to an active and responsible citizenship – The alliance and the media – Art and cultural identity in building a united world – Women – Youth action and proposals for social change – An intercultural cultural diversity in the era of globalisation – Proposals of the inter-religious college – War, genocide, ...restoring humanity in human beings faced by extreme situations – Thinking through university reform – Social control of the scientific production system – Information society, knowledge society: benefiting from change – time and sustainable development

## Economy and society

Transformations in the field of work – The trade-union movement at the dawn of the 21st century – Exclusion and Precariousness – Companies and solidarity – How can enterprises exercise their responsibility – Corporate responsibility – Production, technology and investment – Ethical consumption – Fiscal policy, tax, distribution of national income and social welfare – Social finance – Escaping the financial maze: Finance for the common good – Social money as a lever for the new economic paradigm – Debt and adjustment – Fair trade – From the WTO's setback at Seattle ... to the conditions for global governance – Food security and international trade negotiations – Completely sustainable development: an alternative to neo-liberal globalisation – Economic policies, ideologies and geo-cultural dimension – Women and economy– Economy of solidarity – Health and its challenges in the 21st century – The challenges of Artisan fishery in the 21st century – agriculture and sustainable development – People's right to feed themselves and achieve food sovereignty – Food security

## Governance and citizenship

Principles of governance in the 21st century – Territories, places for creating relationships: for communities of shared relations – Thinking the city of tomorrow: the words of their inhabitants – Urban violence – Peasant farmers confronting the challenges of the 21st century – Social leaders in the 21st century: challenges and proposals – Local authorities or local co-ordination – State and development – Food, nutrition and public policies – From the conversion of arm

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## Relations between humanity and the biosphere

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