



A Vision for a Better World in a Crossroad Century: The Dream of the Information Society for All and the Global e-Inclusion Movement

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1 Introduction

The 21st century is in its infancy and it is already apparent that it will be a ‘crossroad century’ for humanity and the planet. After Johannesburg (to pick up just the latest world summit) the questions that emerge are: Will this century witness the growth of humanity into adulthood and planetary responsibility? Or will it just grow old and bitterly disappointed by the continuous inability of its most powerful specie to face at the negative consequences of its own actions?

The balance is today tilted towards the second scenario, but it is far from given that it should be so, simply because human beings are creatures of contradiction, capable of the worst and the best at the same time. And this is precisely what muddles crystal balls, tea-leaves, or any other ancient mechanism to read the future – after all much of the future is being invented now, in a planetary/societal context in state of flux, rapid technological advances, achievements, huge contrasts, conflicts and, above all, a context demanding change for a better world at the dawn of the information society.

Fortunately, wide agreement seems to be emerging around the realisation that humanity and the planet cannot continue in the same path of today. At least it is difficult to find people who would suggest that the current levels of poverty, disease, pollution, terrorism, global warming, digital divide, etc. are acceptable.

It suffices to glance the sequel of speeches and declarations coming out from the Johannesburg’s World Summit on Sustainable Development. “Poverty and environmental degradation, if unchecked, spell catastrophe for our world, that is clear,” warns Tony Blair. And Kofi Annan: “A path to prosperity that ravages the environment and leaves a majority of humankind behind in squalor will soon prove to be a dead-end road for everyone.”

Of course, it is often easier to achieve consensus around the need to stop something that has become visibly threatening than to agree on goals, strategies, paths and responsibilities to build something new, especially as conflict of interests and power play mediates processes of human development. Yet this is precisely what we are called upon to do in order to build the new human/ecological society for the 21st century – a new society that exploits the opportunities generated by the new technology for the benefit of all peoples and the planet. This is the challenge for this “crossroad century.”

1.1 The UN Millennium Summit Goal

The UN Millennium Summit of United Nations set out the wonderful target of reducing poverty by half by the year 2015. I wish to extend this target to that of eradicating poverty by the year 2030! The reason is that the development of the information society will go well beyond 2015, and it is therefore reasonable to set for humanity the noble target of full eradication of poverty by 2030! Of course, for this to happen we must recognise several broad factors:

- ✍✍The new 2015/2030 better society can only be born from the womb of the present society with all its good and evil, contradictions, institutions, struggles, achievements, people, dreams, hopes, nightmares, etc.
- ✍✍The new 2015/2030 will not evolve automatically from the present state of affairs and forces driving global societal development into an ever-closer inter-relation and interaction.
- ✍✍The achievement of the new 2015/2030 better society will require conscious human and organizational participation, political will, in directions that are consistent with the goal of eradicating poverty. Ultimately, it will require humility and change from each and every one of us.¹

“We know the problems. We know the solutions. Let us together find the political will to deliver them”, concluded Tony Blair in Johannesburg 2002 in an implicit acknowledgement that this will has been lacking so far, and that we need to find it together. This sentiment is right, especially if “together” means all Earth’s peoples, organisations, countries, and regions, including, first, the rich and powerful that exert greater influence and therefore share the greatest responsibility. But a great responsibility also falls on individuals and civil-society organisations that with the combined force of their concerns and efforts as citizens, consumers and simply Earth’s inhabitants, can multiply their influence on government and business at all levels. In this scope, “together” is simultaneously “top-down” and “bottom-up” processes, simultaneously conflict and agreement, competition and collaboration, protest and celebration, change and conservation, learning and forgetting and, above all, building together the new knowledge society in which sharing the fruits of knowledge, technology, Earth and space, becomes the foundation of justice and peace.

2 A World of Great Contradictions

If K. Anna and T. Blair and many others are correct and the 21st century is a “crossroad century,” then humanity has the option to find the “political will” early in the century and begin to implement effective corrective measures to improve the good and tackle the evil. Or, the “political will” is lacking and humanity gets more of the same until the time the “dead-end road for everyone” becomes clearly visible and catastrophic. When will this time be? Nobody can tell for sure because it is not a matter of reaching known absolute

¹ As Mahatma Gandhi put it: “We must become the change we want to see.”

limits, it is largely a matter of perceptions, particularly although not exclusively, by the most powerful sectors of society who drive and benefit most from the present order.

Thus for some, the perception is that the world is evolving positively through “globalization” driven by free market, creating jobs and reducing poverty, while technology is making industry less polluting and the world safer and more democratic. For others, “the dead-end road” is all but here given unsustainable levels of pollution, poverty, sickness, violence, etc. Statistics are produced to support one or the other argument, and clearly the debate has been stimulated by the economic crisis, the rise of protest movements, increasing apathy and distrust in political systems, terrorism and fear, and generally the uncertainty created by the rapid changes undergone by societies.

This is compounded by the speed with which news, images and ideas travel around the world and people establish networks due to the increasing capacities of information and communications technologies. The 20th century saw the fastest scientific, technological, and societal changes lived by humanity in all its planetary existence. The unprecedented scale of the human and ecological development and impact has created both:

- ☞ The means to eradicate or reduce significantly hunger, poverty, sickness, illiteracy, homelessness and other evils that affect large parts of humanity; and
- ☞ The processes that have taken humanity through catastrophes such as two World Wars and today to the brink of, for instance, ecological catastrophe.

This contradiction is at the heart of the “crossroad century” and must be solved for the benefit of all. The solution however passes through facing several other contradictions.

2.1 “Global Village” / “Tribal Mindsets”

This contradiction emerges from, on the one hand, progress in the technology of communications making possible the infrastructure of the “global village” and, on the other hand, “tribalism” in human perceptions and communication (e.g., politics, race, religion, nationalism, institutionalism, etc.) with consequent tension, conflict, and lack of fulfilment for many in the present world order. The true “global village” would demand a global behaviour consistent with an understanding that humanity is together in the journey of our Earth-ship through the infinite universe, and that we have to care for each other and this “ship” if we are not just to survive, but to reach the plenitude of our potential in freedom and peace.²

² Let your imagination escape out of the confines of the Earth, into the darkness of space, Find the beautiful blue/white planet suspended in the solitude of the solar system, Observe carefully at the curious intelligent human specie that dominates it, Listen to what they talk, contrast it with what they do, and reflect How powerful are they within the immensity of the universe? Do they care for each other? Do they care for the tiny “house” they inhabit in their cosmic journey? Now! ... Travel in time ... stop... 100, 500, 1000 years later. What do you see?

2.2 “Sustainable Development” / “Power-maximization”

This contradiction emerges from, on the one hand, progress in the understanding, technology and capacity to reach sustainable development and, on the other hand, predominance of “power-maximization” (e.g., market *control*, profit *maximization*, political *hegemony*, military *superiority*, wealth *concentration*, etc.) driving the behaviour and development of the human society with consequent impact on the consumption of resources and human relations. Sustainable development would demand a change in global governance from the pursuit of the different expressions of power-maximization to socially responsible empowerment, equanimity and worldwide capacity development for an ecological knowledge society. Power maximization exercised in a tribalist context, can only result in a dynamics of quick, short-term, and chaotic exploitation of the planet ecology. Socially responsible empowerment would result in a long-term expansion of human capabilities for the benefit of all and in harmony with the planet.

2.3 “Empowerment (democracy)” / “Power-maximizing Politics”

This contradiction emerges from, on the one hand, progress in the technical means of communications, education, citizens’ participation, cultural empowerment and generally in the infrastructure of potential e-democracy or e-citizenship for all (i.e., “e-government for the people, by the people and for the people.”); and, on the other hand, tribal power-maximization predominantly manifested in politics and government as “the art of remaining in power” and, if possible “exercise hegemony.” This leads to exaggerated concern with image making, media manipulation, empty rhetoric and lack of political will to face the long-term problems that will not produce short-term political gains. It also tends to produce in the powerful an inclination to enforce hegemony rather than dialogue and, in its extreme expression, “solve conflicts” through ‘quick’ wars that may generate short-term feelings of “tribal empowerment” as well as conditions for greater control, instead of long-lasting trust and real empowerment. Indeed, democratic institutions are in crisis of confidence as showed by a recent survey on trust in institutions conducted by Gallup with a sample of 36,000 people.³ Among other results, it concluded that:

- Across the world, the principal democratic institution in each country (i.e., parliament, congress, etc.) is the least trusted of the 17 institutions tested, including global companies.
- Fully two-thirds of those surveyed worldwide disagree that their country is “governed by the will of the people.”

2.4 “Humanization” / “Tribal Globalization”

This contradiction emerges from, on the one hand, progress in the speed and coverage of flows of people, tangible and intangible elements and factors, impacts, relationships and interactions at a global and even spatial scale; and on the other hand, the predominance of a “power-maximizing” globalization that privileges the flourishing of certain global flows over others and in certain directions over others, crippling the full potential to reach the

³ Survey was conducted between July and September 2002. Found in www.weforum.org.

“global village” or “single human tribe” in which freedom, democracy, justice and peace would reach global plenitude in harmony with the planet.

In this respect, globalization is not negative *per se*, it is the “tribal globalization” that favours the powerful within and between continents, countries, nations, regions, organizations and communities that is problematic. Thus unbridled and directionally-biased globalization of flows of money and goods has been highly profitable for the dominant economies, while for many developing countries it has meant crises, unfair subsidies and protectionism against their main products (particularly agricultural), and huge debts that have resulted in large flows of capital travelling from the weak to the powerful economies. There is little "globalization" of labour markets and access to medicines that could alleviate poverty and crippling illnesses in the poorest developing economies, while "aid flows" are relatively pitiful and normally with strings attached when compared with investments of hundreds of billions in subsidies and war expenditure.

Social responsibility should play a major role in globalization. Thus we should also work to strengthen the "globalization of solidarity," as ex-President of Costa Rica Luis Alberto Monge put it. Indeed, the goal for this “crossroad century” should be an effective and balanced globalization of multiple interacting flows: including, financial, production, trade, profits, power but, also, flows of responsibility, solidarity, good-will, health, education, jobs, knowledge, culture, experience, etc.

The harmonious globalization of the totality of these flows would help shift the evolution of societies towards sustainable development and the knowledge society for all. This globalization is well beyond the current limited and biased process of “power-maximizing” globalization. It entails the globalization of the best of humanity for all humanity and the planet and, consequently, the globalization of efforts to combat all evils. For this reason, I prefer to call it "*humanization*."

3 Shifting towards Humanization

A shift towards “humanization” implies evolving towards governances and institutions that favour much more human and ecologically-centred processes of development. Ultimately this means de-emphasizing the dominant role of “power-maximization” while, simultaneously emphasizing “social responsibility.” In this respect, the situation is not all black and white and evidence tend to confirm the contradictory nature of the processes we are living through at the present time, that is, co-existence of the potential to eradicate or greatly reduce major evils affecting large parts of humanity, with permanence of these major evils leading down the “dead-end road” for humanity.

We also see the presence of elements and foundations of a “humanization” governance and process clearly operating today. Thus, many organizations, communities and people are working to improve the life of fellow human beings in need across the world and, increasingly, this solidarity is global in its reach, scope and results. Furthermore, the

people carrying out these activities are not exclusive to any kind of organization, although there are organizations and countless projects that are exclusively driven by solidarity. But we also find many solidarity and social responsibility initiatives, projects and actions in the realms of government, industry, academia and civil society organizations of all kinds.

The problem is that, in spite of all the advances, the existing socially responsible effort is simply not enough to counter-balance the impact of “power-maximization.” To shift the balance towards “humanization,” a much larger scale of socially responsible systematic and cooperative action is required. This would involve every type organization and community in their own spheres of activity. It would be at all possible geographical levels, joining forces, sharing, learning, innovating, and using old and new technology, to create transparent and sustainable solutions that, gradually, by the force of its benefits for all should create a more fertile ground for the flourishing of “humanization.” I believe that in this “crossroad century” the “dead-end road” to potential catastrophe will inevitably lend force to “humanization” in a context of rapid and global communications. And the worst it gets the stronger will be the whirl-wind of change that, sweeping across the minds of people, institutional structures, dominant governances, will eventually lead us to take seriously the goals of sustainable development and a knowledge society for all. The question is: how bad it must get for such a big and complex societal change? This will depend on the resilience of the planet and the capacity of power-maximizing structures and governance to adapt themselves to the problems, as well as on the growth or not of social responsibility.

3.1 “Humanization” Requires a Holistic Approach to Governance

If we need to identify the depth and extent of the difficulty for humanity to change, we need to understand that, ultimately, the obstacles and challenges reside in the dialectics of “man and its circumstances,”⁴ or “agency and structure,” that is, ourselves and the structures and governances we have created and allowed to drive the world as if they were quasi-autonomous of people. Admittedly, today, the complexity of world development with its high degree of fragmentation and power-maximization does not lend itself to easy systematic management. It is thus much easier to surrender responsibilities to apparently spontaneous mechanisms that have “naturally” tended to favour the most powerful interests and, of course, benefiting many people but simultaneously excluding a huge part of humanity.

Change is therefore difficult, complex and long term because it requires a co-evolution of “man and its circumstances” ultimately expressed in a change in “holistic governance,” understood as:

The written and unwritten “legislation” that governs the behaviour, relations, interactions, calculations, transactions and conflict resolution between individual, groups, departments, companies, governments and so on from local to global levels and vice-versa. Governance shapes old and new

⁴ See Ortega y Gasset

constituency-building processes, such as the Internet or, more broadly, the information society, but it is also created and destroyed by them. It includes formal and informal organizational structures and decision-making steps, procedures, rules-of-thumb and routines for resource, rewards and punishment allocation. It includes power relations between individual and collective players at intra-organizational, inter-organizational as well as societal levels. It also includes 'mindsets' resulting from different historical conjunctions such as crises, booms, re-organizations and so on.

As such “holistic governance” is not just as legislative rules. It is rather the whole ensemble of "rules of the game" that conditions and influences the behaviour of individuals, communities, organizations and societies in their specific states of developments. In this sense, it is closer to culture - deeply ingrained and resilient to change without a strong and compelling reason: negative or positive.

This holistic understanding of governance is crucial to size up the magnitude of the challenge involved in driving the development and implementation of ICTs and the knowledge society in directions that are consistent with the UN Millennium Summit goal of reducing poverty by half by the year 2015! And eradicating it by the year 2030!

But if K. Annan's and T. Blair's warnings in Johannesburg 2002 are correct then what option do we have but to face this challenge with our full minds and hearts. Especially as the same Johannesburg Summit and many other gatherings before still tell us that the hegemonic interests believe that the problems facing humanity and the planet can be solved by more of the same, i.e., power-maximizing solutions of political and military force, economic competition and their associated drive for proprietary scientific and technological development. In contrast, the political will to advance determinedly towards sustainable development has yet to enter the content of globalization and this is one of the critical tasks for the future.

3.2 “Humanization” Requires Dreaming Big – Acting Pragmatically

The development of ICTs and the knowledge society in the 21st century is giving rise to new concepts such as e-government, e-democracy, and e-citizenship, together with new forms of ICT-based organizations, voting, campaigning, communicating, interacting, etc. A process of societal learning is at its early stages, offering plenty of room for creating and trying new ideas, actions, programmes, governance, etc. This is a great opportunity to advance from today's “tribal globalization” towards “humanization” and, particularly towards the information society for all. After all, if it is not at these times of challenges, opportunities, threats and changes, when is it going to be that we soul-search deeply and find the ways to aim, work and progress towards a better world?

The key is to *place people and the planet at the centre of the reflection and action*, sharing and joining forces to build innovatively on the opportunities opened by the new technology and the many e-inclusion initiatives already taking place at all levels of

society by all types of organizations communities and individuals. The interaction between these two major factors alone should generate a movement of global reach that would help enhance quantitatively and qualitatively the impact of current and future “humanization” ideas, initiatives, results and opinion at all levels, especially the grassroots. *This is the essence of the global e-inclusion movement I will discuss below, a “humanization” movement fundamentally focused on e-inclusion and hence, in the eradication of poverty with all its associated evils, and the flourishing of justice, peace and development of human capacities for all (i.e., the knowledge society for all).*

Of course, you may doubt, as I do myself, about whether this is really possible, or it is simply an impossible dream, an exercise in idealism or utopianism that may be nice to imagine but far-fetched from the “real reality” with its pragmatic “solutions” that, for some reason, end up rather frequently by re-producing the situation.

I happen to believe however that utopias, idealism, dreams, visions of a better world do play an important role in the development of people and humanity as a whole, provided they avoid sectarianism and extremes that tend to end up by violently discriminating and excluding other people and communities. Unfortunately, however, idealism and dreams of a better world are often reduced to rhetoric and disregarded, even “disqualified” in the face of overwhelming pragmatism, often associated with pressures to accept and play according to the “real reality” of power maximization.

Both extremes are negative and crippling of the rich multi-dimensionality of humanity and society. At the same time they are not exclusive of each other, something very much in line with the previous statement that human beings are “creatures of contradiction.” And here lies precisely the solution, in the apparently contradictory “pragmatic idealism,” that invites people to do two things simultaneously:

- ☞ To dream and aspire for a better world, for instance, in the form of “an information society for all,” that is, a society without poverty, free, just, democratic, transparent and peaceful. A society that places people at the centre of its development and pursues ‘development as freedom,’ to use the concept on Nobel Prize Amartya Sen.
- ☞ To seek to advance the realization of the dream in a form that is pragmatically well-informed, feasible, innovative, implementable and fruitful, in accordance with the magnitude of the challenge, difficulties and opportunities presented by the state of development of the circumstances in which the effort to advance the dream takes place.

In fact, this is nothing new and surely all movements that have helped change the world have had these two components; and this is valid today as it will be in the future. Thus, as we face the challenges of this “crossroad century,” of the “knowledge society,” I think that the first step is to embrace and live the apparently contradictory “pragmatic idealism” in full. Let us be “pragdealists” by blending dreams of a better world with practical actions to advance it, or even better “praxdealists” by blending dreams, science and practical actions for a better world for all.

4 The Nature of a Global e-Inclusion Movement

I often quote a thought adapted from a letter attributed to Gabriel Garcia Marquez. This says:

*People do not stop dreaming because they grow old,
They grow old because they stop dreaming!*

I wish to invite you to remain young, by dreaming that it is possible to build a *Global e-Inclusion Movement that is, in essence, a "humanization" movement focused on the human- and ecologically-centred development and implementation of ICTs. The ultimate goal is to contribute decisively to the reduction of poverty by half by year 2015! And to eradicate it by year 2030! while advancing towards the "knowledge society for all," a society in which democracy, cultural diversity and achievement, transparency, inclusiveness, justice, peace constitute the driving force of human development.*

In this context, a global movement should be seen as “a boundless, free flowing association of people sharing and pursuing in myriad ways the realisation of a common dream. It is an action-space for leadership, creativity, innovation, emulation, cooperation, competition, fulfilment and disappointments in pursuit of change. It may be partly coordinated or simply loosely associated through mechanisms for sharing and learning about different experiences. The bond –whatever its manifestation- is simply the shared dream and the desire to do something about it.” A movement may be more publicly associated with some individuals over others (very much depending on media image making). It can even develop formal coordination structures but, critically, its real leadership is distributed among the people who are truly dreaming, energizing and leading, socially-responsible innovation and change for the benefit of all people and the planet. Thus, the key is for this distributed leadership to join forces to enhance the fertility of the global environment in which each and everybody are already planting the seeds of thousands of “humanization” flowers, so that in years to come we may see and share the Earth as a garden for all.

There is no hiding that the task is highly complex as can be seen from Table 1 that provides an idea of the enormous variety of possible e-inclusion initiatives and actions by geographical source and reach, by donor or implementor, by purpose and by final aim. The table is constructed in four layers, with multiple columns and rows to stress the huge combinatorial possibilities of initiatives and actions.

The *first* broad layer (green column-row) shows the geographical possibilities at many levels, illustrating the point that there might be multiple forms of interactions (e.g., bilateral, multi-lateral).

The *second* broad layer (light blue column-row) shows that inside the geographical possibilities, there are many organisational possibilities both as donors and/or implementers, including the private sector, public sector, non-profit sector, civil society/communities, individuals and the many hybrids forms combining them.

Geographical Source and Reach	Global	Mul ti-lateral	Int.Region	National	Nat. Region	Cities / Ru ral Areas, Towns & Vill ages	Civil Society / Communities / Individual	Hybrids
Global	Organisational Donor and Implementor		Private	Public	No n-p rofit (e.g., NGO, Foun da tion)		Civil Society/ Communities/ Individual	Hybrids
Mul ti-lateral	Private	Purpose		Governance	Pro ject Fun ding/ Support	Gr assroot Project	Hybrids	Other
Int Regional	Public	Governance		Final Aim Business Service Hu manitarian Hybrids Other				
National	No n-P rofit (e.g., NG O Foun da tion)	Pro ject Fun ding Support						
Nat Regional		Gr assroot Project						
Citie s / Ru ral Areas, Towns & Vill ages	Civil Society/ Communities / Individual	Hybrids						
Civil Socie ty/ Communities / Individuals	Hybrids	Other						

Table 1. Variety of Initiatives, Actions by Source-Reach (Geography), Donor-Implementer, Purpose and Final Aim

The *third* broad layer (light red column-row) illustrates that inside the other combinatorial potential of the previous two layers, there are various possibilities for the broad purpose pursued by the different initiatives and actions. This includes governance purpose with all those initiatives aiming at changing or creating legal frameworks and more broadly changes in cultural practices and attitudes in government, business and other stakeholders. It also includes funding/support purpose for other initiatives, grassroots projects and all the hybrid possibilities.

The *final* box inside all the other layers (deeper blue) shows the various possibilities for final aim, including business or profits, public services such as improvements in education, humanitarian such as non-profit projects aimed at improving the livelihood and/or working conditions of fellow human beings, and all the possible hybrids forms.

Clearly the huge challenge of e-inclusion demands initiatives and actions at all these layers, and particularly, it demands that the many different players join forces and establish all sorts of programmatic alignments to enhance the impact of the currently fragmented actions.

The quantity, form, content, governance or size of these arrangements would be for the players to discover and decide. They should be flexible and above all add value to the efforts already existing. The practical purpose should be "unity, focus and motivation to serve better the cause of e-inclusion." In this respect, the network technology itself facilitates new relationships, wide awareness and innovative activities on a global scale. Thus, ideas and solutions emerging from grassroots experiences can lead to combinations of top-down, bottom-up, middle-down-and-up ways of working, thinking, relating, acting, etc. The systematic search, encouragement, setting up and growth of these combinations on a global scale are the process of construction of the global e-inclusion movement.

In this movement, it is worth stressing that the frontline of change is occupied by the myriad projects and experiences that are in direct contact with the poor and excluded in countries, regions, cities, rural areas and communities. Ultimately, it is at this grassroots level that the realisation of the dream of an inclusive digital society has to become a reality. For this reason, to a large extent, the entire ensemble of governance, policy, support/funding, thinking and action at all geographical levels will be tested in their effectiveness in the degree to which they help create the fertile terrain and environment for the "e-inclusion" projects to flourish. Conversely, grassroots e-inclusion projects will also be tested in their effectiveness in the degree to which they are able to effect change in the living and working conditions of the poor and excluded; and, simultaneously, in the degree to which they are able to generate the resources necessary to sustain their existence.

One problem and opportunity at this early stage of development of the global information society is that its governance is still in process of formation. Thus the issue of the "information society for all," although today largely absent from the spontaneous

workings of its predominant “power-maximizing” drive, may yet find a salient place in the consciousness, attitudes and actions of all players – public, private and non-profit sectors, civil society/communities and individuals. This “humanization” is simultaneously cause and effect of the e-inclusion movement, that is, the conviction of the importance of “humanization” in this “crossroad century” leads to the emergence of a movement as described above. And conversely, the growth of the movement leads to the flourishing of “humanization” in the planet.

Last but not least, I think the present time is ripe to start a systematic and programmatic e-inclusion movement that brings together all those countless individuals, communities and organizations that -at all levels of society and from any part of the world- share and contribute to the e-inclusive society. And here clear pragmatism is required to define ambitious but realizable targets, governance, mechanisms, roadmaps, and all other matters relating to the practical development and implementation of the dream.

5 The Foundations of a Global e-Inclusion Movement Standing for a Systematic, Focused and Synergistic Programme of Change

To a large extent the movement already exist in the many e-inclusion initiatives and projects one can find across the world. Many of these initiatives are also collaborating on specific actions to enhance the impact of their work and results. The next step is to take this partial convergence to its maximum expression of a global e-inclusion movement standing for a positive, systematic and focused programme that builds on the strengths and synergies of existing actions, and stimulate the growth of new actions where they are missing. Such multi-action programme may also serve to channel positively those energies of youth who today protest and dream for a better world

The purpose of this section is limited to illustrate some of the areas in which synergistic actions among existing initiatives would generate added benefits to the cause of e-inclusion.⁵

5.1 Education and Training

Education and training is plainly fundamental to the entire process of societal learning for the knowledge society, and a massive and long-term process is under way to generate the new learning environments that exploit the new possibilities opened up by ICTs. In this context, the number of innovative e-inclusion activities already taking place is large, and includes:

- ✍️✍️ Twinning of schools from richer and poorer area of the world with focus on ICTs
- ✍️✍️ ICT training for jobs and empowerment of needy people (youth, women, old people, minorities, HIV, etc.)

⁵ A detailed examination of the processes, results and lessons of each of these actions is beyond the scope of this study, and indeed it is an important action to carry out as part of a real-time learning factor for the development of the entire movement.

- ✍️ ICT-enabled exchange of educational/training knowledge and experiences between teachers/students from richer and poorer countries
- ✍️ Small and large networks of educational collaboration at all geographical levels
- ✍️ ICT for education/training of handicapped people

Education/Training on Entrepreneurship and Innovation with Emphasis on Social Responsibility

A special area of education and learning is that of entrepreneurship and innovation with emphasis on social responsibility. In this category many initiatives are producing, collecting and disseminating studies, stories, policy documents, news, and all sorts of useful information for people engaged in e-inclusion initiatives and processes. Physical and virtual courses, conferences, workshops, seminars, summits, etc. provide some of the mechanisms for learning, along with fellowships, internships, study visits, e-volunteering for technology transfer, etc.

A particularly fruitful line of action on social entrepreneurship is implemented by e-inclusion initiatives devoted to support the development of the business strategy and implementation of existing and new social-responsibility projects. These initiatives provide online and/or off-line support for step-by-step development of proper business plan and they broker contacts with potential investors or provide funding directly.⁶

5.2 Youth Initiatives

Many organizations implement e-inclusion initiatives with specific focus on youth. These initiatives aim at improving the job prospects, education, health, and ultimately give a better life chance to poor, sick, handicapped and generally excluded children and youth. They include training in ICTs with potential migration to small businesses and jobs; fostering of youth leadership, school twinning, computer clubs and networks, awards, fellowships, etc.

5.3 Ecological Solidarity

Some e-inclusion initiatives solve ecological problems at the same time that help provide access to the information society to people in poor areas of the world. They intermediate between organizations that wish to dispose of computers and other equipment that has become obsolete within their environments and organizations and people from poor areas of the world for whom this equipment represents their chance of joining the information society.

⁶ Two initiatives implementing this line of action are Digital Partners and Development Space. Digital Partners runs a competition and select a number of projects which compete for available funding on the basis of their business plans. The emerging Global Youth Incubator formed by the Glocal Forum and the Digital Youth Consortium (DYC) in Rome is pursuing a similar line in association with the global ICTs and education award - the Global Junior Challenge.

5.4 Challenge Awards

The Challenge Awards play the important part of recognising and energising e-inclusion processes, particularly grassroots and support projects that are in the frontline. The awards give these pioneering projects voice and visibility, as well as a platform for sharing and learning from each other. Ultimately, they celebrate and bring to the world's attention those often "invisible," unsung people, pioneers, who with their dreams, efforts and profound humanity are growing the e-inclusion flowers that will make true the dream of the information society for all.⁷

5.5 Business, Jobs and Income

Business, jobs and income certainly go hand-in-hand with education/training in the societal learning process of the information society, and it is an area where social responsibility can be exercised by all organizations of any size and of any kind (companies, government, the media, NGOs, civil society, etc.). The reason is that they produce tangible and intangible products and services, they have processes that employ people (including volunteers), they consume resources of multiple types, and they interact, transact with many other organizations, for instance, in value chains or networks, governance-generation processes, solidarity, etc.

Although social responsibility by all organizations is critical for an e-inclusive knowledge society, the role of corporate and government social responsibility is paramount for the power they hold over resources, wealth, governance, etc. In the case of government this might be taken for granted given that they are supposed to be the holders of the public good. In the case of the corporate world, a prevalent idea is that allowing the market to operate freely will generate the wealth and technological innovations that will lead to a better world - as it has done so for many people already. As discussed earlier above, the development of society shows major contradictions and there are many instances of social responsibility in the midst of the dominating dynamics of "power-maximization."

In the corporate sector, for instance, the role of the market and industrial competition and collaboration is fundamental and can provide the framework for socially responsible development, as long as "power-maximization" is not allowed to take "tribal-globalization" to its ultimate conclusion. Fortunately, there are instances of "humanization" that signal the way to the huge potential contribution to the e-inclusive society that could come from the corporate world for the sake of its own enlightened self-interests in, for instance, world stability, market expansion, availability of skills, new products and services, etc. Among the existing corporate initiatives are:

✍ Foundations and other organizations that help channel funding to socially-responsible initiatives, as well as generating studies and lobbying for changes in governance. A

⁷ The Stockholm Challenge Award pioneered global awards on the information society for all, and today several awards exist, including the Global Junior Challenge, The Technology for the Benefit of Humanity, the United Arab Emirates Challenge, and other Challenges are emerging with MitraMandal Challenge in India, and possible challenges in Wales and Latin America.

particularly interesting case is that of organizations created by philanthropic entrepreneurs who are systematically providing business-knowledge support and funding to grassroots projects.⁸

- ✂✂ Direct donations of tangible and intangible resources, products, services, funding, expert-time, reputational support, credibility, etc.
- ✂✂ Internships, trainings, apprenticeships.
- ✂✂ Technology transfer that improves quality of life, work and income opportunities in deprived areas of the world.
- ✂✂ Socially responsible grassroots investment, projects and initiatives conducted by, or with the participation of, companies for regeneration of poor areas, employment, schools, hospitals, etc.
- ✂✂ Creation of ‘*low-cost e-inclusive products and services*’ at the reach of the poor to expand markets and open opportunities for huge amounts of people to participate meaningfully in the information society, breaking through the trap of poverty and reaping the benefits of better education, health, jobs, better income, integration in the global markets, etc.⁹
- ✂✂ Generation of “*competitive solidarity value chains*” that favour acquiring products and services from socially responsible operations in poor areas of the world, or, from disabled people organizations. Companies would benefit tangibly from lowering costs, a credible reputation for social responsibility, and an increased workforce motivation from the added dimension of contributing tangibly to improve the life of other people. The products to choose would of course not be those that the operations from poor or excluded areas of the world cannot deliver competitively in terms of price and quality, but those that they can.¹⁰
- ✂✂ Direct provision of “*competitive solidarity jobs*” by local companies to poor or excluded people who have done training or courses that have given them market competitive ICT skills but who may still lack the social skills and confidence to break through into the open market.¹¹
- ✂✂ Implementation of “*competitive solidarity e-marketing and e-advertising*” that favours marketing and advertising appropriate products, services and activities of socially-responsible companies through the websites of organizations working for a better world. Companies can “buy” straight “advertising” space in these sites through various financial arrangements, including sponsorships, or even further, companies can buy e-commerce space by selling the product through these websites for a commission or other financial arrangements. The websites and grassroots people benefit from the socially-responsible income, while the company benefit tangibly

⁸ See for instance Digital Partners at www.digitalpartners.org

⁹ Prahalad and Hammond have been developing the intellectual argument for this line of thought and some companies have been working on it.

¹⁰ For instance, in the Digital Youth Consortium, we have decided to buy stationery made up from recycled paper and cotton from an operation in India that tries to empower women by creating jobs with the condition that they send their children to school. The process is not easy but with a little bit of perseverance everybody benefits: the consortium, the poor women and children in India, and the planet.

¹¹ See www.thehungersite.com for e-advertising and e-commerce and www.e-inclusionsite.org for e-advertising, both with social responsibility

from the increased number of customers and intangibly, by a credible reputation for social responsibility.¹²

It seems clear that several of the lines of action that can be implemented by the corporate sector can also be implemented by any organization that has the capacity to share resources, funding, knowledge, expertise, including academia, international organizations, and governments. For instance, international organizations, apart from helping provide funds, expertise, create projects etc., can also implement “*competitive solidarity value-chains*” and “*competitive solidarity jobs*.” They can acquire products and services from socially-responsible operations in poor or excluded areas of the world,¹³ they can sponsor or buy e-marketing and e-advertising from websites working on social responsibility areas, and they can providing temporary or permanent jobs to excluded people who have develop competitive ICT skills but still lack the confidence to succeed in the open market.

Governments can go even further. That is, they can have a positive impact in all the areas and specific activities identified above by implementing those that fall within their sphere of activity and influence and, simultaneously, they can help improve formal governance through legislation that helps generate a fertile “humanization” environment for the e-inclusion flowers to grow.

6 Learning, Working and Changing Together for A Global e-Inclusion Movement

At the risk of stating a truism, I think that we can do much more and much better than we have done so far in each of the areas discussed above, as well as in others not discussed such as health for instance. And this would be especially the case if we succeed in working together and learning from each other in order to tackle problems with systematic, transparent, forceful and effective approaches. *A long-term critical mass is needed that takes the fragmentary useful results of the many initiatives today into a much higher level of quantitative and qualitative impact and change on the ground.*

This would be facilitated enormously if all of us look at how we can improve our contributions to an e-inclusive world (governments, private sector, academia, the media, NGOs, civil society, communities, and ultimately all of us individuals). Maybe a decisive point to start is by all of us doing several things simultaneously:

¹³ For instance, in India, the UN organization Asia-Pacific Centre for Technology Transfer (APCTT) gave jobs to needy unemployed women who have completed an ICT course imparted by Project SITA (funded by InfoDev) after it became clear that the ICT skills although high quality were no enough to break the social skills needed to participate confidently in the market, including good English. APCTT agreed first to a pilot trial with some of the women to have a clear idea of their real cost/quality competitiveness. They found that the quality was excellent and the price was lower, no charity, just market rationality that matched well their own governance. After the pilot they continued to sub-contract or provide temporary jobs to the women. APCTT gains, the women gain employment, income and social confidence to break through poverty and exclusion.

- ✂✂Examining and challenging the consequences of local and global governance dominated by “power maximization.”
- ✂✂Opening minds and hearts to a much greater influence by social responsibility in all areas,
- ✂✂Seeing how this can translate into practical actions in correspondence with degrees of influence and material possibilities, and
- ✂✂Pursuing socially responsible actions forcefully promoting them to others in order to generate critical mass.

Here are some brief broad proposals for different stake holders.

6.1 *Governments and Politicians*

Regain trust of people by fostering empowerment, participation and capacity development of all people through education, health, business, appropriate legislation, etc. Power-maximization in its dominant political expression as “the art of remaining in power” and “exercising hegemony” should be displaced by ‘politics as the art of serving all people.’ In other words, for an e-inclusive society, government should work with “pragdealism” helping to maintain peace and economic and political stability while advancing towards e-citizenship for all, understood as “e-government for the people, by the people and for the people.”

This means less concern with image making and spinning, more transparency, less red tape and agile processes using ICTs as well as learning and implementing good business-practices. It also means help creating the conditions for fair trade, salaries and debt in national and international contexts. Ultimately it means the political will to face courageously the challenges facing the world by working together to generate the governances that will stimulate everybody to embrace the cause of the “knowledge society for all.”

6.2 *Enterprise and Entrepreneurs*

Increase substantially the activities of corporate social responsibility as listed above (including fair trade, salaries and investment), simultaneously reducing those with negative impact on people and the planet ecology (e.g., pollution, debt). “Power maximization” in its dominant economic expression as the unbridled pursuit of “profit maximization/accumulation” should be displaced by “profit-with-social-responsibility” or “profit-humanization,” and governments should help with governance incentives to avoid that greedy behaviour is rewarded. Indeed, ultimately this means tackling “greed-satisfaction” at any cost, as well as thinking imaginatively on the competitive opportunities hidden in “e-inclusive products,” “competitive solidarity value-chains or networks,” “competitive solidarity jobs,” as well as higher-skills and social capital in location places, expanded and stable markets, soundly-based social responsibility e-marketing and e-advertising in a world that is moving in this direction.

6.3 *Academia, Education/Public Research System, International Organizations*

Increase activities aimed at social responsibility and participate actively in all those areas of change already mentioned that fall within the realm and practice of the organization. The academic and research system should do more on areas of e-inclusive technologies working in collaboration with enterprises and potentially international organizations. Research and teaching should contain greater systematic integration of social responsibility in fields such as management, entrepreneurship, innovation, science and technology, etc. Specific multimedia, multi-audience courses and research should be encouraged with critical thinking and debates on the future of society. Academia should collaborate in the generation of physical/virtual learning environments to support the scientific formation of socially responsible entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership in traditional and new programmes all over the world. Grants, fellowships, and other means should be made available to youth, women and leaders of frontline projects and actions in poor areas of the world. In this endeavour academia should have the support of government, enterprise, international organizations, etc.

There is a tendency in the West of pushing academia to be “relevant” by cutting public funding. The result within the “power-maximizing” governance of today is that many scientist and technologists tend to follow the sources of funding and end up by serving profit maximization and economic, military and political hegemony. I think the definition of “to be relevant” should also and, prominently, include leading-edge research, teaching and preparation to face the problems of this “crossroad century.” In this context, a specific responsibility of government and international organizations is to support a critical agenda, increasing resources and streamlining procedures, encouraging collaborations for critical mass, and help changing governance to stimulate the flourishing of public good.

6.4 *The Media*

The media has a special responsibility to play both as enterprise, information and knowledge providers, opinion makers, advertisers and image/makers, cultural outlets and educators. The media has also a major role to play in the exercise of the democratic process through balanced, fair and critical thinking and debates.

In this respect, the media share many of the areas of potential contribution to social responsibility just identified for the previous sectors and organizations. In particular, the media can definitely contribute with content to physical/virtual learning environments that support socially responsible entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership. This would include more reporting of interesting e-inclusion experiences, views, news, policies and initiatives at all levels through TV and radio programmes, press, internet, etc. The media can also help with promotion and fund-raising campaigns that may have major effects in awareness creation and grassroots projects.

6.5 NGOs, Civil Society, Community Organizations Engaged in “Humanization” Processes

A great responsibility falls on those organizations that work on “humanization” processes, especially on the ground in programmes and projects aiming to improve the life of poor, disabled and excluded people. The problems faced are often quite complex and deep and the initial hope may end up in disappointment and, ultimately, a set back for the people in need. This means that the social entrepreneurs and organizations involved in the projects and programmes should do as much as possible to blend the energies, motivation and “humanization” drive with knowledge, experience, and lessons of social innovation and entrepreneurship. They should also seek to join forces with others to exchange problems and help when the going get tough. In fact all those involved should look at the “holistic governance” of the initial situation, make an assessment and develop the necessary transparent mechanism and practices to avoid crisis of mis-interpretation, trust, leadership, management, financial flows, etc., that may easily lead a project to failure and discredit social projects as inefficient and wasted funding. In this respect, it is important to implement utmost transparency and learn and adapt best-practices processes and ICTs from competitive and socially responsible industry. Here industry, government, academia, etc. can help with technology transfer and widespread diffusion of knowledge, experience, resources on social innovation and entrepreneurship.

The global e-inclusion movement I envisage would be precisely this “humanization” space for learning, sharing, innovating, creating critical mass, empowering, producing tangible/intangible results, dreaming of a better world and generally live the rich multi-dimensionality of humanity. The e-inclusion movement is not the only possible “humanization” movement because others are working on environment, water, hunger, etc. It is however the movement that aims at making a reality of the long-term dream of the “knowledge society for all.” Of course, in this endeavour the global e-inclusion movement has a lot in common with other movements including today’s protest movements that also aiming to develop positive, systematic and programmatic initiatives to advance “humanization.”

7 Practical Steps to Advance the e-Inclusion Movement - The e-Inclusion Site and e-Inclusion Workshop

Third Global Forum, Naples, May 2000, inside the imposing Palazzo XXXXX, the deliberations and speeches on e-government, e-democracy and the need to tackle poverty and the digital divide proceed undisturbed. In the clear day, at the distance from the Palazzo, flags and banners wave in protest for poverty, war and generally a desire for a better world. Between the two places stood the symbolic gulf of a de-populated city centre or “security zone” enforced by the police. The smoke of street confrontations spoke silently of violence. I thought that the two groups, the protestors (with the exception of violent elements and the TGF participants, if not sharing the language, methods, degree of power and perceptions of each other, seemed to share the sentiment of the need for a better world.

As a member of the scientific committee of the Forum, I had helped organize the session on the digital divide that attracted international organizations, NGOs, government, enterprise and grassroots projects. During my speech I called for the formation of a digital divide movement and, by the end, proposed a declaration as a possible legacy of the Italian Presidency of the Forum. I left Naples back to Rome thinking: if it was true that the two groups shared the sentiment of a better world and the era of the great ideological blocks that divided the world is finished, a movement offering an innovative environment for learning and acting positively and programmatically for a better world, even in competition, seems possible. The many e-inclusion initiatives at all levels were re-assuring. So what next?

7.1 *The www.e-inclusionsite.org*

An movement focused on e-inclusion must itself be all inclusive, although the irony is that initially the people who are the very reason for the movement, namely, the poor and excluded will be the most difficult to reach with small resources and largely voluntary effort.

A website was the easiest and cheapest option to try to reach the world. So the www.e-inclusionsite.org was born with two concepts represented by flowers and aiming at offering (1) everybody the possibility to be a donor and (2) everybody can be a visible member of the global movement. The donation flower offer a variety of donation possibilities including “school twinning” but it is the clicking mechanism that opens the possibility for everybody to participate daily in fund-raising for projects from poor areas of the world. It is an example of applying market principles to solidarity fund-raising for poor areas of the world. The concept was inspired by The Hunger Site (www.thehungersite.com) and the Give Water site (www.givewater.org), both of them using clicking for raising support for excellent causes. The Hunger Site gives cups of rice for a click, and the Give Water site had been given a lump sum of money to provide water kits in poor areas in exchange for the completion of a large amount of clicks. The e-inclusion site generalized the equivalent of a click to money to allow for the funding of resources for any developmental plan, be it training, equipment, etc. Specifically the site fixed a rate of exchange of Euro 5 cents per click and the actual money comes from sponsors. In practice, the money donated by the sponsor buys 'social responsibility e-advertising' and they are given prime space in the home page of the site for the time of the duration of their amount of equivalent clicks. In the future, if the site attracts a lot of traffic, then the price of the click could fall to give a better price to sponsors in accordance with market principles. However, this will only happen if people and organizations who care for e-inclusion truly understand that their daily clicks are a true donation to projects from poor areas of the world, and that the faster the site reaches the clicks the faster we can obtain further funding for projects. The clicking mechanism is also one of the minimalist action a member of the movement can perform, while contributing and keeping in touch with the thought and feeling that one can do something for a better world, especially if millions do the same, and all the drops together become an ocean of change. To facilitate clicking the site offers visitors the possibility of making

the e-inclusionsite.org home page their home page or alternatively to receive a daily reminder (www.e-inclusionsite.org/eng/reminder.asp).

This gives its name to the second flower-concept in the e-inclusion site the people's declaration "Transforming Drops of Concern into an Ocean of Change." This electronic declaration evolved from the Third Global Forum into the concept that everybody can be a visible member of the e-inclusion movement by signing the declaration on the web (form accessed by clicking button at the bottom of text) or by signing it on paper and see names and other information included later in the website. The declaration is at the moment in five languages but we aim for all languages. The concept also includes a simple statistical engine to make visible the patterns of growth of the movement non-intrusive categories such age, type of organization, type of job, type of education, country, and region of the world.

Our dream for the e-inclusion website is to expand it from the first two flowers into a garden of innovative concepts for e-inclusion action and alliances with other organisations committed to the battle for e-inclusion. Indeed, we are preparing a third flower devoted to Youth and we have already established a number of initial alliances to stimulate the synergies and growth of the movement. We want the e-inclusion site to be a force for unity and, ultimately, for advancing concretely the dream of an information society for all.

7.2 *The e-Inclusion Workshop: "Searching and Encouraging Synergies and Commitment for a Global e-Inclusion Movement"*

Along with the virtual mechanism of the e-inclusion site, it was necessary to start the process of identifying and encouraging synergies among key organizations working in the digital divide. Indeed, it is necessary to test whether the idea of a Global e-Inclusion Movement in which organizations seek to join forces in a systematic and programmatic effort to create critical mass and enhance the impact of the fragmented initiatives.

This led to the workshop *Searching and Encouraging Synergies and Commitment for a Global e-Inclusion Movement, Rome, December 2002*, taking advantage of the opportunity of the Award Ceremony of the Global Junior Challenge and the support of the Municipality of Rome and the Digital Youth Consortium. As the title indicates, the workshop is fully focused on the idea of testing and advancing the movement through the explicit aim of searching, encouraging and helping exploit the synergies potentially existing between the aims, activities and targets of diverse e-inclusion organizations. The strategy has been to invite multiplier organizations i.e., organizations that work to support or implement projects on the ground, but also may influence policy and government initiatives. These organizations are also close to the ultimate reason for the movement: the poor and excluded peoples of the world. For this reason, they are likely to play more effectively the role of catalyzers of bottom-up, middle-bottom-top and top-down initiatives on e-inclusion.

The workshop is actually made up of two interacting sub-workshops of about 30 organizations each: one for multiplier organizations working on the digital divide; the other for international youth organizations. The two workshops will work in parallel, interacting socially during the first day and, in the second day they will blend into one single group. The intended result is to find practical areas and ways of collaborating between youth associations and multiplier organizations in order to enhance the impact of activities, collaborations and begin to lay down the programmatic foundations of a stronger and more visible force: the global e-inclusion movement.

The workshop has no formal presentations with the exception of welcome and introduction. Instead each of the sub-workshops will divide into five “working tables” which will discuss in-depth four questions as follows:

E-Inclusion Multipliers Workshop:

1. Is it important to search and exploit the synergies existing between digital-divide multiplier organizations in order to enhance collective impact and give stronger force and visibility to the global digital-divide social movement? What would be the gains?
2. If the answer to question (1) is yes, what are the concrete areas (at least five) and targets where it would be possible to join forces and work together to enhance impact? Who else we should invite to join in?
3. What are the most effective practices and mechanisms to realize the collaboration and achieve the concrete targets identified in question (2)?
4. What are the key tasks and timeline to be fulfilled following the meeting? Who are the organizations responsible for their success?

Youth Workshop:

1. How can the Youth movement contribute to bridging the Digital Divide?
2. What is a Global e-Inclusion Movement? How can Youth contribute to building it up?
3. How can youth organizations and ideas influence multiplier “senior” organizations in order to achieve collective and efficient results in creating the Global e-inclusion Movement?
4. What actions can we implement as youth leaders? How can we collaborate with the “seniors”?

During the conference, the “e-inclusion multipliers” and “youth” workshops will have chairpersons assigned, who will act as moderators. The discussion of each one of the four questions in the “working tables” will be followed by sub-workshops plenaries in which the important points made by each group will be reported and discussed in the spirit of fostering initial consensus.

Prior to the gathering in Rome, participants and those who could not come but would have liked to come are able to upload material and commenting on the questions or other

relevant issues. For these purposes, the e-inclusion site has created a virtual forum, chat room and area for uploading and downloading document. Physical and virtual participants are invited to upload a one-pager introducing themselves to the others.

Simultaneously, the organizers are conducting a mapping of the various projects and areas of activities pursued by each organization. The intention is to identify areas of synergies with the purpose of clustering them into potential areas for collaborative, systematic and programmatic work. In a few days the workshop will take place and we will test the vision and will see the results. In the meantime this thought has come to my mind.

Let your dreams shine like a star in space
Let you dreams fly like a bird in the sky
Let your dreams fall like a flake in the snow
Let your dreams sink like a seed in the ground
Let your dream flourish like a rose in the forest
Let your dream travel like pollen in the wind
Let your dream multiply like smiles of human beings
Let your dream rise like a prayer to heaven
Let your dream erase borders and live forever
Let your dream be you and you your dream
Let it be! Let it be!