

Tackling Social Fragmentation

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The problem of social fragmentation is growing today worldwide. It is spreading within communities, within countries, between countries, and between cultural, or better ideological, regions. The social divide on multiple levels is a highly undesirable development that has already led to instability. It will become undoubtedly the source of further violent unrest.

The social divide is an age old problem that persisted for an uncountable number of centuries. At many instances in history, it was accepted as an integral part of functional social structures. The well established hacking order led to a kind of dynamic stability from which all societal levels could take their own advantages. The social balance was normally established within limited, largely autonomous regions. The lack of possibilities for comparison helped to maintain persisting inequalities and social injustice. The often appalling divide has been eased by local humanitarian efforts based on religion and charity where, occasionally, those in power distributed some of their wealth in order to ease their bad conscience and bad reputation to improve the relations towards the dependents.

Today's situation is radically different for two reasons that both impede the achievement of a local dynamic equilibrium. - At first, globalization enables long-distance commercial contacts that became, in fact, indispensable for a functional world economy. The problem is aggravated by the ease of information transfer through the easily accessible means of communication, making direct comparisons feasible. They put into plain evidence the state of fragmentation and the appallingly unequal distribution of wealth and even of food and shelter, worldwide. - The second reason is the development of a utilitarian "philosophy" within the past twenty or thirty years with a profound lack of humanness, tolerance, and social responsibility. Our current drives are rather dominated by financial markets and egoistic craving for personal success. The only, and really the only, measure that we have left today for judging the desirability of actions is in terms of monetary units. Ethics, moral, and compassion do not count any longer, unless they "pay-out". In the course of this development, much of the cultural achievements of mankind made during the past two thousand or more years are going slowly but surely down the drain. We have little "values" left, except for monetary wealth!

The measures proposed in the "*GES – Summaries & Solutions*" for easing the current strain are laudable and valuable; but I judge them as being rather short-sighted. Measures are proposed that are supposed to be implemented by National Governments who have, so far, proven to be driven by self-centred motives, not willing to accept compromises that would disfavour even in a

moderate manner their own Nations and their commercial success. The very recent WTO disaster represents only one of many disappointments. In the *Summaries & Solutions*, it is proposed to recommend a further disintegration of States allowing for “increasing autonomy” “collecting and administrating own taxes”. “Federalism” and “decentralization” with “adequate political representation” are proposed as solutions. “Globalization profits have to be partially redistributed to finance a social security net”. But how this should be implemented remains mysterious.

I am convinced that on this level of arguments no sustainable solution of the grave global problem of social fragmentation is in sight. We should refrain from applying cosmetic plasters that might disguise the real long-term problems. I am convinced that the quest of social fragmentation is primarily a problem of a proper mind set that leads to all-inclusive wisdom, foresight, generosity, and, possibly, to sacrifices in favour of the weakest members of the global society. Thoughts of this kind are the basis a proposed five-step “Program Responsibility” that can be summarized as follows:

My recommendations, the “Program Responsibility”

Step 1. We are asked to **openly acknowledge** that today’s global society is faced with **a fundamental problem of values and ethics**. Minor adjustments of the present system en vogue and of our current actions are insufficient; we are in need of major changes in our ethical motivation of personal, political, and commercial endeavours.

Honesty compels us to acknowledge that we are **living on the account** of future generations and their indispensable resources, as well as on the account of today’s deprived social groupings. Our economies are operating far from being sustainable, pre-empting the resources needed for a fair distribution of means today and for a prolonged survival of mankind in the future.

Step 2. We are asked to **redefine a globally oriented ethical system of values** that is compatible with a sustainable global development. In this context, the most fundamental ethical demand is for comprehensive **Responsibility** for all our deeds and their consequences in a global and a long-term view. This responsibility shall apply to all individuals, to all States, as well as to all organizations and commercial companies.

Terms, such as “profit”, “growth”, and “market expansion”, shall disappear from our vocabulary and be replaced by **“care for the global population and the environment today and tomorrow”**, and by “tolerance” and “compassion”.

We may base conceptually our “Program Responsibility” on the fundamental work *“The Imperative Responsibility”* by Hans Jonas, where he defines the basic imperative: *“Act so that the consequences of your action are compatible with the*

permanence of genuine life on Earth". This imperative is a consequence of the following observation: *"The crucial point here is that the penetration of distant, future and global dimensions into our everyday, worldly-practical decisions is an ethical novum which technology has foisted upon us; and the ethical category that above all is called into play, is responsibility."*

Step 3. We have to be aware that the **implementation** of such a "Program Responsibility" is enormously demanding, difficult, and time-consuming. It contradicts all present self-centred motivations of personal profits. We need a lot of patience and foresight in order to convince people that acting for the sake of society, rather than for personal enrichment, has become an urgent necessity. We can not change our egoistic habits immediately; it will be a continuous task for many generations to come to eradicate the misleading quotes by Adam Smith from our minds. But we have to start now immediately!

Step 4. By far the most important contribution that we can make ourselves is to **serve personally as a positive role model**. We have to remember the immortal saying by Mahatma Gandhi: **"We must be the change we want to see!"**

Serving as an inspiring role model is more effective than preaching and asking the others for change in their behaviour! Serving as positive role models is most relevant on all levels of the societal ladder. One should keep in mind that those members of society with the greatest power or wealth are burdened also with the heaviest load of responsibility. There is not only a need for income tax progression but also for sharing progressively responsibility in other more subtle ways. **Building trust and confidence** is more important than exerting brute force by monetary or even military means.

Step 5. For **implementing the "Program Responsibility"** the educational institutions, in particular **Universities**, have to assume a major function. At universities the **future generations of actors** are given chances to develop their personal values, their foresight, and their tolerance, founded on knowledge and experience. Most of the future societal leaders in politics and economy are passing through university courses. At this critical moment in their development, they can be impressed indelibly by proper role models that provide example, wisdom, and advice. This gives university teachers a very high degree of responsibility for **steering the long-term development**.

I am convinced that the "Program Responsibility" is one of the best means for "tackling social fragmentation". Irrespective of how we chose to structure our future global society, we have to answer positively the request for assuming responsibility in a much wider sense than ever before. Beyond any doubt, there are **limits to growth!**

Consequences of the "Program Responsibility"

Here, a few immediate measures are proposed that emerge from the above principles:

(i) **Globalization requests global actors to assume global responsibility.** To pocket global profits without assuming global responsibility borders on criminality. Well functioning globalization requires also the **installation of powerful Global Institutions** that define the rules, control the functioning, and are entitled to punish violators. - Today, unfortunately, the most powerful Nation States are also the most severe violators of international agreements and rules. The proposed Global Institutions must be empowered to such an extent that even the most powerful Nation States can be “tamed”.

(ii) It is plainly evident that the uneven distribution of natural resources has led to gross injustice on a global level. The occurrence of natural resources is purely accidental. In a fair global governmental system, this injustice has to be removed or eased by a **centralized, global resource management.** Natural resources should become a global public good. A resource management agency has to take into account present and future needs and bring them into agreement with the available resources.

(iii) Going even further, **globalization requires necessarily a Global Government.** Nation States can not be made responsible for global affairs. The global society requires a strong proconsul who has the means to implement the necessary global measures. This includes the collection and distribution of global taxes. “Tackling social fragmentation” will certainly become a major obligation of a Global Government.

(iv) **Global subsidiarity is a necessity in a well functioning global society.** In this context it is advisable to establish autonomous segments of Nation States that can rule themselves their internal matters, but only in full awareness of being part of a multi-stage global edifice that imposes binding obligations upon its autonomous segments. Subsidiarity contradicts unlimited independence and freedom!

(v) Before such changes can be implemented, it is necessary to enhance the **public awareness** with regard to global interdependence and our resulting global responsibility. It is recommended to start an **extended and long lasting information campaign** regarding our long-term and far reaching global responsibility. It should be emphasized that our present style of living is very far from being sustainable and that future disastrous events are foreseeable unless we change drastically our affluent convenience.

Concluding Remarks:

Without public trust in the responsible behaviour of institutions and leaders, a well functioning global society is inconceivable. **Establishing mutual trust**

based on active responsibility as a fundamental principle of coexistence and for preparation of a sustainable future worth living in, is a major precondition for “tackling social fragmentation”.

Numerous important aspects of “tackling social fragmentation” have not been mentioned in the proposed “Program Responsibility”. In particular, the **schooling systems** in developing and developed countries need to be reconsidered. Offering fair chances to everybody, irrespective of their origin, is crucial. A change of our valuation of different kinds of professions is also important in this respect. Our distorted view, favouring those in commerce and in academic professions, and disfavouring manual labour has led to an **unjust hierarchical edifice** that is also reflected in appallingly low payments for the hardest work, and admiring the easy making (and losing) of money at the stock market. Please remember that it does not pay off so much for a manual worker to cheat, as it does for those in the money trade! But to discuss thoroughly these kinds of aspects of **working moral, hacking order, and honesty**, relevant for “tackling social fragmentation”, would require much more space and time.