

The Power of Highly-Focused Social Networks: *The High Noon Idea and How Students Jumped into Action*

In my book *High Noon* (2003), I focused on the method we use for global problem-solving, given that the current international system does not seem able to solve burning global issues in time, if at all. I gave examples of how we could accelerate and deepen global problem-solving. One such example would consist in setting up some 20 Global Issues Networks (GINs) of world-class experts, whose task would be to describe in detail what solutions the world would apply to the 20 or so urgent global problems if the world were under single management.

Based on these solutions, the 20 GINs would then issue detailed norms; and, having expanded their membership, they would become global observatories that would rate all the world's nation-states every year against these norms. The idea would be that the resulting 20 league tables would exert naming and shaming effects, and perhaps even elicit spontaneous sanctions against low-rated or deteriorating states, while celebrating the high-rated states and the best improvers among them. At the same time, the league tables would equip tomorrow's voters to be able to push their politicians more towards the global and the long-term, and away from their natural territorial and short-term electoral perspectives.

As a result, nation-state governments would be under far greater pressure

by Jean-Francois Rischard

than they are today to become serious about global problem-solving, especially if the coming out of the 20 league tables were to be turned into a solemn and widely publicized annual event, as it should.

That was one of the *High Noon* ideas. But after the book was written, an important companion idea emerged, namely, that be-

Editor's Note:

This article is a companion

piece to Linda Sills'

GIN Network News

on page 44.

sides getting heads of government to innovate on the methodological front, it is also urgent to get the world's educational institutions to do far more in the same direction, through K-12 curriculum changes and new learning and teaching initiatives.

Their role in this would be to help developing generations or leaders and problem-solvers engage and diffuse much more detailed knowledge of the major global problems and their solutions than is currently the case, and to promote the

emergence of a mindset of being a global citizen first, and secondly a national citizen. This would give further wings to the *High Noon* ideas, and especially to that of the GINs, and thus improve our chances of navigating our world safely through the massive challenges ahead.

Much thinking and action has started on that second, education-related front, and my accomplice Clayton Lewis and I have been able to take the message to many of the right places. But by far the most encouraging development has been the spontaneous mushrooming, often inspired by my little book, of inter-school global issues activities and student-led GIN Conferences (Cf., <http://www.global-issues-network.org>).

Even though the students diverted the GIN label and now apply it in a different meaning than that described above, I can think of no more worthwhile high-jacking. In fact, the thousands of young global citizens that I have seen in action in those bootlegged GINs have gone a long way in motivating me to keep on going, no matter what the obstacles may be. For this, I would like to thank them. ■

Jean-Francois Rischard was for many years the Vice-President of the World Bank, and is the author of High Noon: 20 Global Problems, 20 Years to Solve Them, Basic Books, NY (2003).

Tell Us Your Story!

*Submit your stories on Leadership, Gender, and Diversity
to Jay Ketterer, jkettere@jsu.edu,
for the Spring 2011 InterED.*