

Foresight for smart globalization

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to present the concept of smart globalization and identify links with the Rockefeller Foundation's philanthropic activities in a number of areas, including health, climate change, urbanization, economic insecurities, and basic survival needs.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The paper addresses how a new conceptualization of globalization intersects with the field of foresight by describing the Rockefeller Foundation's approach to addressing complex issues of human development.*

Findings – *A forward looking research component is a valuable organizational structure that can add value by tracking and monitoring current and emerging trends relevant to the Foundation's strategic framework, operational initiatives, and areas of work.*

Practical implications – *The paper suggests a closer interaction of foresight and development experts and practitioners by suggesting that individuals in both disciplines need to work more closely together to coherently address the multitude, interlocking global challenges of the 21st century.*

Originality/value – *The paper introduces the notion of "smart globalization" to the foresight community and details how this mindset has influenced and directed the ongoing work of the Rockefeller Foundation.*

Keywords *Globalization, Poverty, Human resource development, Complexity theory, Philanthropy*

Paper type *Viewpoint*

Introduction: past and present of the Rockefeller Foundation

John D. Rockefeller, Sr, envisioned and established the Rockefeller Foundation during the early years of the twentieth century, an era of momentous transition and consequence around the world. The forces of industrialization unleashed unanticipated challenges and opportunities, and the Foundation helped, in Rockefeller's words, to "promote the well-being" of humanity amidst the currents of historic change.

These early moments of the twenty-first century are equally transformational because of globalization. As with industrialization at the time of our founding, globalization's effects can be both beneficial and burdensome.

The work of the Rockefeller Foundation for the twenty-first century is to enable "smart globalization". It attempts to harness the creative forces of globalization to ensure that the tools and technologies that have significantly improved the human condition in many parts of the world during the past half century are accessible today to more people, more fully, in more places.

"Smart Globalization"

Around the world, people reap the positive benefits of revolutionary advances in health and medicine and profound progress in physical and social sciences. We share markets and capital, knowledge and ideas, and dramatically more diverse communities. In the last three

decades, illiteracy worldwide has dropped by half. Eighty percent of the world's population lives in countries where poverty is declining. A decade into the new century, we have much to be optimistic about (see Figure 1).

Not everyone's lives, though, are improving fast enough, nor are they improving equitably. Half of the people on earth subsist on less than two dollars a day. A billion people live in abject poverty, with neither running water nor enough to eat. Ten million children succumb to preventable or treatable diseases every year. Climate change and environmental degradation pose the greatest dangers to the communities least prepared to weather them.

Both the benefits and burdens - the opportunities and risks - of worldwide progress are propelled by globalization, the economic and social process by which economies and communities grow inextricably interdependent.

Under that broad headline - and building on our history, legacy, and insight into the evolving world in which we operate - the Rockefeller Foundation for the twenty-first century recognizes and responds to several major currents of change: shifting geopolitical relationships, widening economic inequalities, deteriorating natural ecosystems, accelerating migration to ill-prepared and poorly planned urban areas, and growing threats to social, physical, and economic security in communities around the earth.

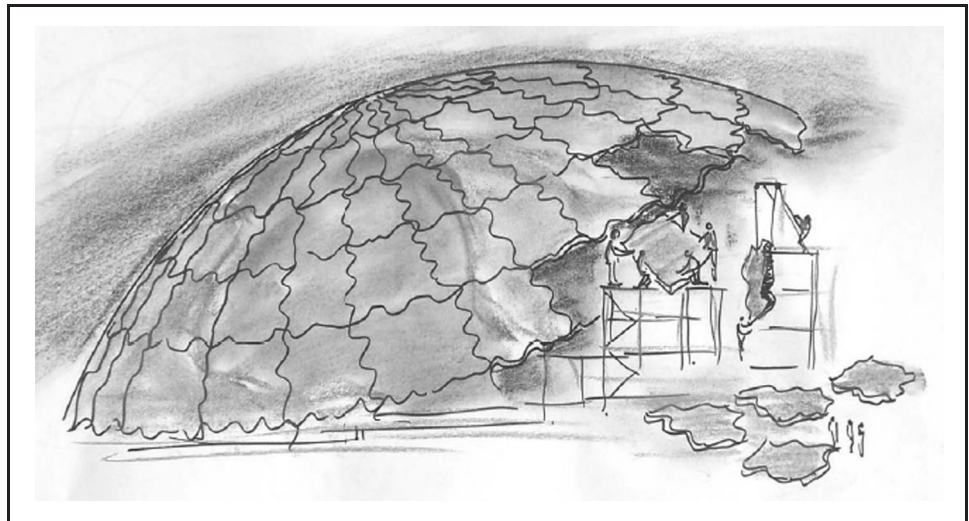
Only if we are intelligent, inventive, and socially conscious - only if we work together - can we harness globalization to develop and spread sustainable solutions to these challenges. This is "smart globalization": connecting individuals, institutions, and communities with tools and techniques, ideas and innovations to build better futures.

Bringing the future into the present

Globalization has also caused the long-term and the short-term to become inextricably bonded. Recent events have highlighted this ever tightening link of the past, present, and future. A financial crisis rooted in decades-old economic policies quickly spreads globally and hinders the ability of nations in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia to emerge from poverty. A global food crisis with the potential to undo years of development work leads to a doubling or tripling of the price of agricultural inputs in a few short weeks and portends higher food costs for years to come. Climate change threatens the livelihoods of the poor, raises the risk of increased environmental migration, and poses additional health threats to populations living in vulnerable areas of urban slums and coastal cities.

The Rockefeller Foundation has taken a number of steps to address the complex impacts of these and other global challenges by way of funding a portfolio of linked initiatives.

Figure 1 Smart globalization: putting together the pieces as a joint effort on a global scale



Individually, and together, they draw on the Foundation's deep-seated commitments to nurture innovation, build individual and institutional capital, pioneer new fields, expand access to and distribution of resources, and, ultimately, generate sustainable impact.

Each initiative is designed to achieve specific, measurable goals within a projected time frame, and we reassess its effectiveness within three to five years. These requirements enable the Foundation to evaluate our work frequently, seize unanticipated opportunities, maintain flexibility, shift tactics when necessary, and recalibrate our approach when a problem demands shorter- or longer-term investment.

These initiatives focus their resources and energies on five interconnected and overlapping issue areas, selected both because they are critical global challenges and because the Foundation is distinctively positioned to address them effectively and with measurable results:

- *Repairing weak, outmoded health systems.* Making modern health systems stronger, more affordable, and more accessible in poor and vulnerable communities.
- *Building resilience to environmental degradation and climate change.* Developing plans and products to protect those with the fewest means from an imperiled environment and warming global climate.
- *Addressing the risks of accelerating urbanization.* Shaping efforts in planning, finance, infrastructure, and governance to manage a world in which, for the first time in history, more people live in urban communities than rural ones.
- *Reweaving frayed social contracts.* Reinforcing American workers' social and economic security, reimagining the regulatory framework that governs our economy, and reinvigorating the notion of citizenship.
- *Easing basic survival insecurities.* Supporting sustainable efforts to provide the basic building blocks of increased labor and land productivity and economic growth: nutrition, water, health care, and shelter.

Conclusion: putting foresight into practice

The Foundation has also established a research component to track and monitor current and emerging trends, and then to convey forward-looking research results relevant to the Foundation's strategic framework, issues, and areas of work. The purpose of this effort is to serve as a searchlight function for the Foundation by combining broad-band scanning - in terms of anticipatory intelligence and focused monitoring of relevant developments - and transferring this information to the broader Foundation staff in a targeted and useful manner.

The process of trend scanning and communicating research results is aimed at identifying topics of high relevance to the Foundation's initiative work, understanding the implications of external developments for the Foundation, and translating these findings into actionable recommendations for future action.

About the authors

David Jhirad is Special Advisor, Energy and Climate Change at the Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY, where he was previously Vice President for Research and Evaluation. Previous to joining the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Jhirad was the Vice President for Science and Research at the World Resources Institute (WRI) from 2003 to 2007, where he took the lead on the planning, quality control and evaluation of WRI's research work. Dr Jhirad served in the Clinton-Gore Administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for International Energy Policy, Trade, and Investment, and as Senior International Advisor to the Secretary of Energy. In this position, he led US bilateral relationships with all major energy producing and consuming nations. As Senior Energy and Science Advisor to the US Agency for International Development (USAID), he collaborated with countries in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America on energy policies to ensure equity and environmental sustainability, as well as on energy technology and infrastructure investment. Dr Jhirad has authored or co-authored more than 100 publications on energy policy, technology, security, climate and development issues. He was a senior scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory and a director of the Union of Concerned Scientists. He is a

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