



future news

a newsletter from the *futures* foundation

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Negative happiness?

As the horrors of the modern world increase -- and as we know more about them -- so too do the stresses of people exposed to daily reporting of war and carnage. Some people, that is. According to a current report from trendwatch specialists, Williams Inference, there are signs of a massive "switching off" from the outer world. This reinforces the denial-and-distraction habit that has fuelled the astonishing growth of the entertainment industry in recent years.

They quote, for example, a report from Newsweek that shows television viewers tuning in to programs that might be titled "Watch the Paint Dry". These programs are even less challenging than the home-making hyperbole of the hugely successful Martha Stewart.

Newsweek quotes a regular viewer of HGTV, "the network that has turned remodeling into spectator sport."

"For the next two hours, she'll watch an elderly woman redesign a garden path, a couple select a rug for their stamp-size living room and a handyman patch the porch of his crumbling Victorian. Pretty darn exciting, right?"

To this viewer, the low-key, low-stakes projects are precisely the appeal -- "home design for the rest of us." "With Martha Stewart there's so much high anxiety," she says. "You end up feeling that unless you have unlimited time and money, there's just no hope. HGTV is for real people."

Viewer statistics are not the only indication that this

is part of a major trend. There's plenty of new competition in the same territory: In the USA, the Food Network, the Do It Yourself Network and Fine Living are now the channels of choice for the home obsessed, says Newsweek. And there are many examples in Australia.

The retreat to home -- flagged years ago by Faith Popcorn as "cocooning"-- is an understandable reaction to the weight of current affairs. But while some futurists would argue that the most important journey of life begins at home, it's not likely that they had Martha Stewart and her imitators in mind.

As we try to learn how best to live the values of a healthy human, family, or community life, choosing the colour of the paint is not the most urgent of our tasks. But will this new inward focus help us to recognise the value of peace at home, of the quiet richness of family and community life? Will the presence of war remind us of the importance of peace? Can we face the dreaded ironing or gutter-clearing by being grateful that we are peacefully free to do it? Can we be content simply because we don't have a broken leg?

Growing attention to what we mean by happiness -- and how we measure it -- must bring into focus a host of questions of this kind. They apply not only at a personal level, but also as we judge success for organisations, societies, and our global community.

Our page 5 story on post-material happiness engages with some of these issues.

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PLEA FOR THE FUTURE

The science and technology lobby group FASTS is working to develop what it calls "a map and compass for Australia". While there is a 10-year plan for defence, says Australian scientist Ian Lowe, no such forward planning exists for science and innovation which are arguably more important to the nation's security than purchases of military hardware.

He argues that establishing broad goals of this kind would at least increase the chances of science serving the national interest.

FASTS is also advocating a scheme to place scientists in Parliament for one-year secondments, to advise MPs on science-based issues. A similar US Congressional Science and Technology Fellows Program has been running for about 30 years. FASTS is arranging a visit to Australia by five former Fellows in June to explain the scheme to Australian politicians.

Australia's alternative futures

"Not only do we struggle to find the right answers: we [Australia] can't even agree on what are the right questions." This was the conclusion reached by members of the Futures Foundation who met in Melbourne on March 26 to explore alternative futures for Australia.

Each participant highlighted what they saw as key issues before the group set to work to identify major impediments to creating preferred futures in this country. These ranged from failing to "harvest" our potential as humans to ignorance of what it means to live purposefully.

"Leadership and governance were key issues," reported Futures Foundation chair, Charles Brass. "We decided that, in Australia, we aren't clear about what leadership type is needed in the future.

"Recent leadership behaviour models are unsustainable and we wonder how the current generation holds responsibility for the future of the planet. We need to be clearer who ought to hold power now and in the future, and in particular to be smarter about

KEY GREEN GROUPS SPURN GOVERNMENT'S CLIMATE POLICY

Last month 21 of the key environmental groups pulled out of negotiations with the Federal Government on climate change policy, accusing it of misleading the public and bringing Australia to a "crisis point" on an urgent environmental issue. They told Minister Kemp they would be betraying their membership to continue discussions on the Government's Climate Change Forward Strategy. Instead, they accuse the Government of trying to create the impression it was consulting with the environmental movement, which firmly opposes the strategy. According to ACF director Don Henry, the groups are "alarmed and dismayed" at the Federal Government's position on climate change.

... what is the question?

giving voice to minorities if we wish to avoid revolution."

This discussion led the group to contemplate Australia's future role in its region. "We need to grow up as a nation – and one manifestation of this would be if we could increase our capacity to understand Eastern thinking and perspective."

That, in turn, triggered recognition that "not everyone has the same power to influence outcomes – which led us to contemplate what it would mean to find or create a world in which there was a place for everyone. (This caused a brief conversation about the notion of a guaranteed minimum income.)

"Another thread took us into the field of accuracy of information, including media and propaganda treatment of 'facts'. If we can't guarantee that our information is accurate how can we even contemplate making the sort of 'right' long-term decisions we were anticipating?"

Other examples of impediments to a preferred future included:

- failing to inspire youth to achieve – to strive for something
- an inability to resolve the tension between immediate priorities and getting on the 'right' long-term path (e.g. the way in which health expenditures are determined)
- we don't know what replaces democracy but we have a strong sense that the human race has not yet devised the perfect governance system
- similarly, we don't understand enough about the different ways in which people make decisions –

with analytical (head based) types at one extreme and beliefs (heart based) types at the other

- we don't create enough time for creative thinking, reflection and self discovery: learning to escape from 'busyness' would be a help
- we seem to have lost the capacity to recognize when our decisions have long term consequences: a simple but profound example is the placement of roads, which shape the built environment for miles around for decades
- we fail to engage the most creative people in creating the future

We know that we all have our own creativity, but like many qualities this is not evenly distributed throughout the community and we would do well to distribute the creative output of the most imaginative people into our powerful institutions.

What do YOU think ?

Sydney member Peter Saul suggests two key questions for Futures Foundation members to consider:

1. What institutions/trends/values/etc. do you think are ending or breaking down in the world around you? Indicate whether you are delighted with or troubled by each of these endings.
2. What new patterns/trends/values/etc. can you see unfolding or coming into being? Indicate whether you are delighted with or troubled by each of these new beginnings.

Email responses to jlmm@ppr.com.au for publication in our next issue.

THE CIA's (pre-war) SCENARIOS

As world events unfold, it is fascinating to study scenarios published by the CIA just before the war. Its Global Futures Project focused on demography, natural resources, science and technology, the global economy, governance, social/cultural identities, and conflict and identified main trends and regional variations. The alternative global futures demonstrate how the drivers may interact in different ways through 2015. Each scenario was intended to construct a plausible, policy-relevant story of how this future might evolve: highlighting key uncertainties, discontinuities, and unlikely or "wild card" events, and identifying important policy and intelligence challenges. Generalisations drawn from the four scenarios are outlined on p 4.

1 Inclusive Globalisation

A virtuous circle develops among technology, economic growth, demographic factors, and effective governance, which enables a majority of the world's people to benefit from globalisation. Technological development and diffusion - in some cases triggered by severe environmental or health crises - are utilised to deal with problems of the developing world. Robust global economic growth - spurred by a strong policy consensus on economic liberalisation - diffuses wealth widely and mitigates many demographic and resource problems. Governance is effective at national and international levels. In many countries the state's role shrinks, as its functions are privatised or performed by public-private partnerships, while global co-operation intensifies on many issues through international arrangements. Conflict is minimal within and among states benefiting from globalisation. A minority of the world's people - in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the Andean region - do not benefit from these positive changes, and internal conflicts persist in and around those countries left behind.

2 Pernicious Globalisation

Global elites thrive, but the majority of the world's population fails to benefit from globalisation. Population growth and resource scarcities place heavy burdens on many developing countries, and migration becomes a major source of interstate tension. Technologies not only fail to address the problems of developing countries but also are exploited by negative and illicit networks and incorporated into destabilising weapons. The global economy splits into three: growth continues in developed countries; many developing countries experience low or negative per capita growth, resulting in a growing gap with the developed world; and the illicit economy grows dramatically. Governance and political leadership are weak at both the national and international levels. Internal conflicts increase, fuelled by frustrated expectations, inequities, and heightened communal tensions; WMD proliferate and are used in at least one internal conflict.



GLOBAL BRANDING

"America is not a hamburger" writes Naomi Klein, who argues that President Bush's attempts to rebrand the United States are doomed. She points to the White House hiring a Madison Avenue brand manager, Charlotte Beers, to address the rising tides of anti-Americanism around the world -- instead of a career diplomat.

"When Beers went on a mission to Egypt in January to improve the image of the US among Arab 'opinion makers'", wrote Klein, "it didn't go well....an editor at the newspaper Al Ahram left his meeting with Beers frustrated that she seemed more interested in talking about vague American values than about specific US policies.

"The misunderstanding probably stemmed from the fact that Beers views America's tattered international image as little more than a communications problem. Somehow America still hasn't managed, in Beers' words, to 'get out there and tell our story'.

"In fact, the problem is just the opposite: America's marketing of itself has been too effective. Schoolchildren can recite its claims to democracy, liberty and equal opportunity as readily as they associate McDonald's with family fun and Nike with athletic prowess. And they expect the US to live up to its claims. If they are angry, as millions clearly are, it's because they have seen those promises betrayed by US policy."

Peter Hartcher, the Australian Financial Review's man in Washington, quotes the Pew Centre's enormous survey of public opinion in 44 countries. It found anti-American sentiment was generated by US policy rather than its espoused values. It also found a general deterioration of world regard for the US over the past two years - the period of the Bush administration. Meanwhile the Fin's Geoffrey Fowler and Erin White report consumers in Europe and Asia saying they avoid buying American -- "a strong signal that even the most resilient brands can't ignore the potential fallout from sustained anti-Americanism."

All this backs a song the Futures Foundation has been singing for years. Communication specialist Jan Lee Martin calls it 'deep branding'.

"Rather than sidelining branding as a communication problem," she says, "we now understand it as a manifestation of identity -- for people, for organisations, and even for nations. In today's media-savvy world, communication doesn't stop with image and perception, with carefully transmitted messages to carefully identified audiences. Increasingly, we communicate our brand through the total substance of who we are, as well as what we do and even why we do it."

THE CIA's SCENARIOS - continued

3 Regional competition

Regional identities sharpen in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, driven by growing political resistance in Europe and East Asia to US global preponderance and US-driven globalisation and each region's increasing preoccupation with its own economic and political priorities. There is an uneven diffusion of technologies, reflecting differing regional concepts of intellectual property and attitudes towards biotechnology. Regional economic integration in trade and finance increases, resulting in fairly high levels of economic growth and rising regional competition. Both the state and institutions of regional governance thrive in major developed and emerging market countries, as governments recognise the need to resolve pressing regional problems and shift responsibilities from global to regional institutions. Given the preoccupation of the three major regions with their own concerns, countries outside these regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia have few places to turn for resources or political support. Military conflict among and within the three major regions does not materialise, but internal conflicts increase in and around other countries left behind.

4 Post-Polar World

US domestic preoccupation increases as its economy slows, then stagnates. Economic and political tensions with Europe grow, the US-Europe alliance deteriorates as the US withdraws troops. Europe turns inward, relying on its own regional institutions. National governance crises create instability in Latin America, particularly in Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Panama, forcing the US to concentrate on the region. Indonesia also faces internal crisis and risks disintegration, prompting China to provide the bulk of an ad hoc peacekeeping force. Otherwise, Asia is generally prosperous and stable, permitting the US to focus elsewhere. Korea's normalisation and de facto unification proceed, China and Japan provide external financial support for Korean unification, and the United States begins withdrawing its troops from Korea and Japan. Over time, these geostrategic shifts ignite longstanding national rivalries among the Asian powers, triggering increased military preparations and hitherto dormant or covert WMD programs. Regional and global institutions prove irrelevant to the evolving conflict situation, as China issues an ultimatum to Japan to dismantle its nuclear program and Japan, invoking its bilateral treaty with the US, calls for US reengagement in Asia under adverse circumstances at the brink of a major war. Given the priorities of Asia, the Americas, and Europe, countries outside these regions are marginalised, with virtually no sources of political or financial support.

Generalisations from the four scenarios

The four scenarios can be grouped in two pairs: the first pair contrasting the "positive" and "negative" effects of globalisation; the second pair contrasting intensely competitive but not conflictual regionalism and the descent into regional military conflict. In all but the first scenario, globalisation does not create widespread global co-operation. Rather, in the second scenario, globalisation's negative effects promote extensive dislocation and conflict, while in the third and fourth, they spur regionalism. In all four scenarios, countries negatively affected by population growth, resource scarcities and bad governance, fail to benefit from globalisation, are prone to internal conflicts, and risk state failure.

In all four scenarios, the effectiveness of national, regional, and international governance and at least moderate but steady economic growth are crucial. **In all four scenarios, US global influence wanes.**

Globalisation: where it hits Oz

Respected commentators are warning that Australia may sacrifice political sovereignty in negotiations on a free trade deal with the USA.

Leading experts on trade have also warned that the US free trade agreement will fail to deliver the \$4bn in benefits claimed by the Minister for Trade, Mark Vaile. They argue that the gains from any trade deal will be undermined by powerful protected industries in the US, and argue for a fundamental change in Australia's trade negotiating strategy towards persuading the US to strengthen its domestic political decision-making on protection.

Former editor of the Australian Financial Review, Peter Robinson, says "it seems obvious that Australia should never agree to the US argument that its own protectionism (massive subsidies and other invisible forms of protection) must have a place in anything purporting to be a free trade agreement."

Meanwhile other commentators have drawn attention to specific US pressure on our strict quarantine rules; on the way we make decisions about pharmaceutical listings and reimbursements; and on what it sees as our "costly and burdensome" copyright laws.

The US also complains about majority government ownership of Telstra and its "effective monopoly" over the copper wire network.

"Such conduct limits US carriers' ability to compete effectively in this market."

A happier, post-material future?

When the Downing Street Strategy Unit of the British government starts holding seminars on life satisfaction, the subject of happiness has moved into the political mainstream, reports Ben Hunt of the UK Futurists Network. Regular readers of *Future News* will know also that it has been a feature of the futures discourse for many years, often as part of our consideration of what we consider to be success in life, and how we measure it.

Ben Hunt reports research that says we are no happier than previous generations, and at worst, we are actually becoming more miserable. He says commentators are urging governments to formulate new policies to increase citizens' happiness and argues that this new concern has put 19th century utilitarianism - with happiness used as a measure of progress - back on the political agenda.

"Despite our increased average material wealth and consumption, we are not feeling better. This is the 'Easterlin Paradox', the idea that as we get richer, we get no happier - named after US economist Richard Easterlin following a study in the early 1970s.

"For many - including psychologists, economists, environmentalists and policy makers - happiness and economic growth are incompatible. The more we grow our economies, have more money and consume more things, the less happy we are likely to be. As a result, governments should deprioritise economic growth, they say, and focus more on trying to improve how we feel about life - our levels of satisfaction and subjective well-being."

This is a new, 'post-material' social agenda. It dovetails with the focus on sustainable development, which embodies the idea that economic growth is having a destructive impact on the environment, and that society should cut back its levels of consumption.

University of Warwick professor of economics, Andrew Oswald, a leading figure in this debate, says "before I retire, I expect happiness surveys and job satisfaction surveys to have become a central part of British life. The News at Seven in the year 2020 will

perhaps feature the country's monthly wellbeing score. The acronym GDP may have gone. Perhaps it will have become GHL (Gross Happiness Level)."

A related topic, tagged "resilience", is also entering the discourse as employers, among others, recognise the importance of an individual's ability to respond positively to life and work events.

Many writers and thinkers are now working in this general territory. We have reported over several years the Australia Institute's Genuine Progress Indicator, and new measures being adopted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. International authors specialising in subjects like the study of "flow" and the psychology of leisure. University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin E.P. Seligman joins the discussion with his new book, *Authentic Happiness*. The time has arrived, he says, for "a science that seeks to understand positive emotion, build strength and virtue, and provide guideposts for finding what Aristotle called the 'good life'".

Research to date indicates that mood and temperament have a large genetic component. People in extreme poverty are usually less happy than others, but once basic needs are met greater wealth does not necessarily mean greater happiness. Psychologist David Myers says that in the US, real income has doubled since 1960 but so has the

divorce rate. Teen suicide has tripled and depression has increased tenfold.

Seligman outlines some ways to help develop happiness, including pointing out that restraint may yield higher returns than indulgence.

He argues that beyond pleasure lies what he terms "gratification", the enduring fulfilment that comes from developing one's strengths and putting them to positive use.

So how does this new interest in happiness play out in politics?

Once, says Ben Hunt, we assumed that governments and corporations would look after such things as the management of the economy. Individuals would take responsibility when it came to their personal well-being.

"Today, this division is crumbling. Governments, with psychologists in the background, are now interested in individuals' emotional states, and argue that the economy is not as important as we once thought it was. Business managers, for their part, are taking far more interest in the personal lives of employees - a development reflected in the new discussion around the 'work-life balance'.

"The new political discussion of happiness is therefore one where a number of new sociological trends are developing: new social attitudes to materialism and consumption; changing attitudes to individual responsibility; and the blurring of the public and private realms."

COOPERATION MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

Although conflict may grab the headlines, when you look more closely it's cooperation that makes the world go round, says James Randerson in a *New Scientist* special feature that examines how team spirit evolved. But he says biologists are finding that among non-human creatures, at least, being nice is rooted in selfishness. Starting with Darwin's "survival of the fittest" - the competition for resources that makes sure only those best suited to their environment survive to spawn the next generation - he moves on to examine symbiotic relationships, mutualism, reciprocal relationships, and the habits of social insects. "Cooperation brings rich pickings by allowing division of labour and mutual benefits. but cheating must somehow be kept to a minimum or the venture fails." Randerson notes that ours is the only social system on the planet in the same league as social insects. Many of the same factors helped: kin selection, mutual benefit and division of labour. But we have one advantage in particular: culture. That is not unique but the use of language to share a cultural memory is unmatched by any other species.

Signals in the noise

"Time traveller" arrested in US

When a Wall St trader made 126 high-risk trades and came out the winner every time, he raised the eyebrows of the watchdogs. Arrested for insider trading, he said he was a time-traveller from the year 2256. "With an initial investment of only \$800, in two weeks he had a portfolio valued at over \$350 million. Every trade he made capitalized on unexpected business developments, which simply can't be pure luck," said the SEC.

Weekly World News 19 03 03 1001

The world's first brain prosthesis

An artificial hippocampus, the world's first brain prosthesis, is about to be tested in California. Unlike devices like cochlear implants, which merely stimulate brain activity, this silicon chip implant will perform the same processes as the damaged part of the brain it is replacing. (For ideas on what this could mean, read Neal Stephenson's *Interface - Ed.*)

New Scientist 15 03 03 1002

Incomes double in China

"The phenomenal factor in China at the moment is the rise in per capita income [to \$US1,000]," says Alan Wilkinson of HSBC, "especially when compared with India's per capita of US\$300-400." This together with China's demographics (average age is half that of the West) is fuelling a rush of foreign investment, says the World Bank.

Asia Today International February/March 2003 1003

Corruption, ethics and the discourse of war

"I cannot help feeling that something gravely unethical is unfolding," writes Desmond Manderson. "How is it that responsible journalists, doing what they honestly see as their jobs, can nevertheless be said to be acting unethically?" Yet, he argues, "journalists in this war have struck a deal: perspective has been sacrificed for information, quality traded for quantity."

Australian Financial Review 04 04 03 1004

Is Bush clinically crazy?

Carol Wolman, MD, a US board-certified psychiatrist in practice for 30 years, wonders if GW is suffering from Antisocial Personality Disorder. Questions are also raised about possible brain damage from the twin alcohol and cocaine addictions of his youth and his current use of Diet Coke, containing aspartame. William Thomas lists the evidence and asks the question.

www.commondreams.org 02 10 02 1005

How we all helped

The killing of some 80 villagers near Baghdad last Thursday, of children in markets, of "chicks who get in the way" would be in industrial quantities now were it not for the voices of the millions who filled London and other capitals, and the young people who walked out of their schools; they have saved countless lives, says Australian journalist John Pilger. He quotes Time magazine's Europe poll showing 83% of respondents see the US posing more danger to world peace in 2003 than Iraq (8%) or North Korea (9%).

Independent UK 06 04 03 1006

An unrivalled act of cowardice

"Operation Iraqi Freedom? I don't think so. It's more like Operation Let's Run a Race, but First Let Me Break Your Knees," writes Arundhati Roy. "After using... economic sanctions and weapons inspections to ensure that Iraq was brought to its knees..., after making sure that most of its weapons have been destroyed, in an act of cowardice that must surely be unrivalled in history, the 'Allies'/'Coalition of the Willing'... sent in an invading army!"

The Guardian 02 04 03 1007

Father tells Bush, don't go it alone

The first President Bush told his son last month that hopes of peace in the Middle East would be ruined if a war with Iraq were not backed by international unity. The message, in a speech in Massachusetts, was not in person but it was unmistakable. And it was apparently not reported in the USA.

The Times, London 10 03 03 1008

No embedded media for Congo massacre

At least 1000 people have been killed in post-colonial ethnic violence in Congo. The local UN mission says 966 were "summarily executed" in three hours, one day after the signing of an accord to end more than four years of war in the vast Central African country.

Sydney Morning Herald 08 04 03 1009