Foreseeing a future

Scenario for a plausible future

The year is 2022. The Council of Global Action Networks (GAN) has just completed its week-long Global Biennial. Juanita Tariq, Chair of the Network of Global Health GANs, is pleased. “The governments finally understand that they are only one of the stakeholder groups, and don’t have the final say on everything. And we’re finally addressing the good of the global commons, rather than dealing with nation-state blocs. They are finally organizing in response to the transnational perspectives of business and civil society.”

The week-long event was not called a “meeting,” but simply “The Global Biennial.” It was not like meetings of United Nations representatives – there were no grand-standing speeches, no need to carefully mete out formal time by nation state and ego, and few back-room discussions of “the real decision-makers.” Nor was it like the annual World Economic Forum, with its many panels of experts, keynotes, and the all important hallway discussions. Nor was it like the World Social Forum, with its focus upon defining what to tell others to do, and its chaotic scheduling.

This Biennial was part of a two-year cycle of processes, crafted to bring in diverse perspectives in a sophisticated rhythm of various face-to-face and virtual platforms. “There’s still a lot to learn,” Juanita reflected, “but this last couple of years was a big improvement over the previous cycle. We’ve now got a really great group of global facilitators…no, they’re really process masters, the way they create impressively in-depth dialogue and action with such a variety of interests.”

“I think for this next cycle, we’ve really got to improve the integration across issues. Getting the local, national, regional and global meetings is pretty easy…although we’ve really got to do better with the translation options. But the connections across issues are much more complicated.”

In particular, Juanita reflected with disappointment on the connections between the Coalition of Finance GANs and her own Network of Global Health GANs. “Well, it’s true that the health GANs had a lot more
experience working across diseases and types of care. And we’ve done pretty well partnering with some other obviously pertinent groupings of GANs like the water ones. The connection between safe and secure drinking water and health \textit{is} more obvious,” she thought. “But I think the real problem is that there are so many prima donnas in the finance domain. Big egos and testosterone,” she grimaced to herself. “But in health care the common good \textit{is} much more obvious.”

People arrived at the week-long discussions not so much in anticipation that this is where “decisions were going to be made,” but rather that this is where they would clarify how what they were going to do to address the critical themes. It was framed as a global community planning event, and it was dominated by small group dialogues. Participants were already steeped in local, regional, and issue dialogues and joint Highly Strategic Projects. These were designed as learning projects that also created both social connections across divides and joint experiences to develop collective direction much more easily.

“Energy wasn’t such an issue at this biennial,” Juanita thought to herself. “It was overshadowed by all the climate change disasters that really pushed up the issue of disaster management and climate change adaptation.

“If only there had been real action on climate change before that final break-through in 2020. By then it was simply too late and now it’s all costing us trillions of global credits. But at least it’s invigorated the drive to take real action on carbon emissions. The health care GANs are leaving this meeting with real clarity about how to cut their own emissions a further 20\% over the next five years. And support for the carbon tax is now strong.”

“And the global taxation issue had made significant progress, despite the ongoing bickering between China and the United States. Most of the OECD countries have converted their development aid to global public goods production, and that’s really helped. And now we have some decent revenue coming from the global tax on international finance flows. It’s really such a tiny amount we’re talking about, in comparison to what the financial crises of 2008–2009 and 2015–2016 cost us, but at least we have some real revenue. And the Global Finance GAN council finally has developed a real global strategy and power.”

The 2015–2016 crisis was the last nail in the coffin of the financial insiders power elite – the government–finance industry alliance. Unlike 2008–2009 when there was neither a vision of an alternative option nor real political will for change, by 2015 the situation was different. Tax-payers, consumers, asset owners, non-finance industry business, critical academics, and other stakeholder groups were ready and