

Summit for the Future: Trade - Asian Leadership

The **CLUB OF AMSTERDAM** is an international think tank which reflects our future: How we want to live, communicate with each other and what tools and cities we need, how we want to commute and how culture or industries should develop. In short: **what we want our future to be.**

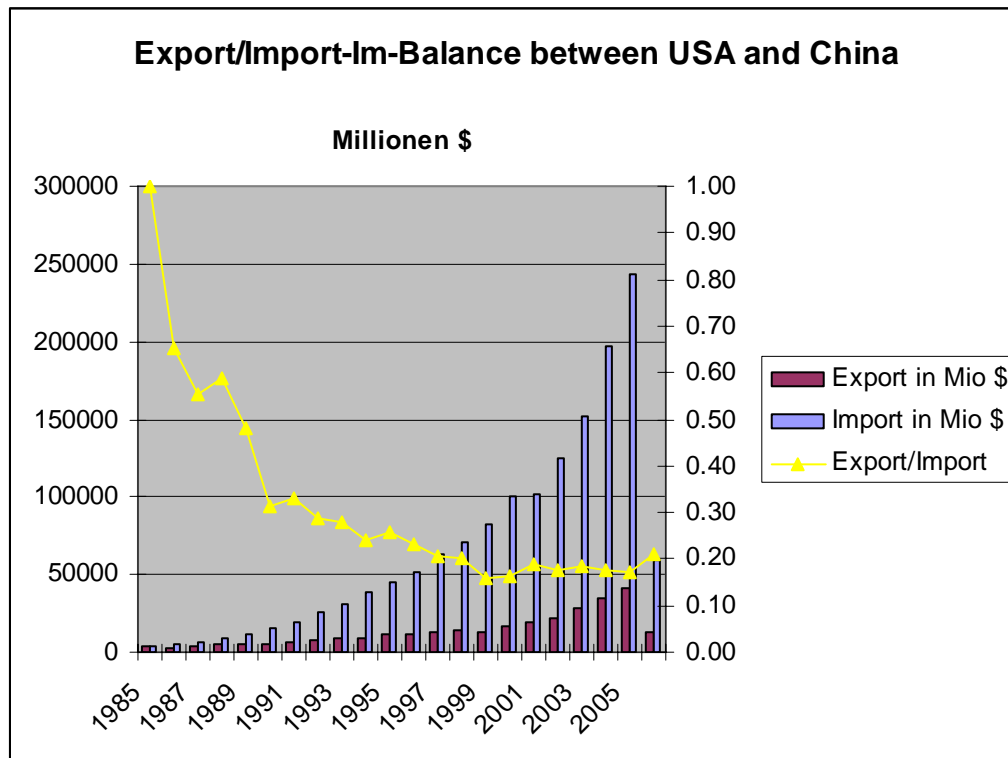
The meeting brought a lot of interesting input, many contradictions and little synthesis. So was the main insight of the group: trade - Asian leadership on Wednesday (5.3.06):

India and China are not only risks, they will not only export cheap goods and services - but they are at the same time huge new markets for our exports.

While on Thursday it got clear, that:

Ships from China to the USA are full, the opposite way empty. The costs for a container from China is between 800 and 1400 \$, to China half of that. And still there are large areas excluded from those lucrative potentials.

As example Soeren Jacobsen mentioned the apple producers of Georgia. The price they have to pay to bring their apples, or apple juice, to the port, is almost higher than the world market price for those "commodities". That means that **all land-regions are heavily discriminated in the world trade.**



Because the USA and Europe still think they are the center of the world, this is seen as a problem, while the fact, that China itself has quite a balanced import/export sheet, while Germany exports much more than it imports, while the USA imports much more than they export (Not just because of China).

Ideen zu einem Think-Club Schweiz zur Diskussion vorgelegt unter:

http://www.socialforum.ch/fss2/article.php3?id_article=129

Paper presented as well by Philosophy for Business: <http://www.isfp.co.uk/businesspathways/>

Not only here, but in the whole discussion about China's influence on the world market, the complementary and in each economy necessary second part of trade, the flow of money, has been totally neglected. It is well known, that China buys a lot of dollars and has enormous stocks of foreign currency, a) not to have to Dollar dropping too low, what would make exports more difficult, b) to secure its own rather shaky banking system. That means that Chinese workers paid so far the credits for the US-war in Iraq, as well as for over consumption in the USA. Considering the money flows we might even say: China exports goods – the USA exports wars.

For a detailed analysis see: ***From "Economy of Power" to a sustainable "Wise Economy"***.
http://www.brainworker.ch/Wirtschaft/summit_for_the_future.htm

Think-Clubs: Show, awareness raising or propaganda?

The meeting was good. Many different and often conflicting interests, matters and people met and discussed openly. Some found e.g. the PR-show for business of Richard North disgusting – others e.g. the idea, that partnership is something that should be managed by computers and checked for profitability (David Butler) – who himself found the final comments of the psychologists (more spirituality is needed) as very much unfit to be brought up in discussions with economists.

Glen Hiemstra's teleported message showed, where the controversy seems insurmountable. His presentation summarized as the main problems we should solve in a not too far future:

1. **global warming**
2. **global poverty**
3. **religious conflicts**
4. **lack of positive ideas**

I do share that view, but would put point 4 first, because, as Alice was told in wonderland: ***If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there!*** Global warming is obviously for many business minded people, what is the red towel for a bull. Global poverty not their problem, religious conflicts neither, and they would never complain about a lack of positive ideas, as long as it is possible to make money with some ideas.

The major critique of the show would be, that it is really difficult to get an overview. For this we should not be content with the few glimpses we got here in those few days. All participants just got a partial, so lopsided insight, as there have been 5 knowledge streams and 5 interdisciplinary streams, and I did not meet one participant, who really had an overview. To really use all that knowledge presented in such a meeting efficiently, a better knowledge distribution and knowledge management would be needed:

- A) **De-personalize knowledge** into arguments, make it more objective and discussable.

The presence of well known prominent persons, the presentations by "authorities", outstanding persons, leaders, even "idols" is probably the major attraction of such a meeting, but for further discussions all those personal opinions, personal convictions and personal knowledge would have to be de-personalized, that means, to be rendered more objective, to be discussed. This is needed, as learning means to integrate new knowledge in one's old system of knowledge. To be able to learn, one has to think, not just to listen and to see. And thinking means to evaluate the new knowledge after one's own values and priorities – without "bending" it. That would be propaganda.

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B) Present knowledge in a multilevel-multicompartment - but one world - presentation model. Details s. web-philosophy [

<http://www.philosophypathways.com/newsletter/issue103.html> in engl.;

<http://www.brainworker.ch/waldphilosophie/web-philosophie.htm> german original]

Many times during the meeting I asked myself, what is the main target, what is the function of something like the Club of Amsterdam? Is it awareness raising, networking, knowledge seeding, thought processes, black box, think-show ... or just a show? The first impression one gets is: propaganda. All the time someone is promoting the idea, that *“trade is better in solving problems than the government, or development aid e.g. because each donor tries to influence the receiving nations politics. Private business is by far more efficient. ...*

Only a few days later, back in Switzerland, I understood the big advantage something like the *Club of Amsterdam* has over Universities and standard think tanks. The problem of universities, research and schools (higher and lower ones) is, that they compartmentalize knowledge. The taught and sold knowledge is so one-sided, that the holes in this knowledge cheese are much bigger than the real content. To fill those holes all kind of “lateral” thinkers, as those met the meeting, are indispensable. Totally opposing views have to bang together, and they do that only in open meetings as the discussed one, they rarely do at universities, even less at schools, and not at all at think tanks, that are mostly bound by a specific ideology, be it politically right or (no, not wrong) left.

Why do we produce cheesy knowledge (a fact that does not only hold true for Switzerland ... Well, even most of the famous Emmentaler is nowadays produced in Holland ...)? One reason is **specialization**. No specialist accepts interference by no-specialists, and few try to interfere with the specialties of the others. That means, nobody has an overview, as claimed up). Every specialist estimates his specialty to be the most important, interesting, future oriented, and each specialist wants to control discussions in his field. **Wiseacres always intend to control results and decisions**, what leads to lacking democracy, lacking information of others – so lacking knowledge on their side and lacking acceptance for the strongly needed participatory planning on all levels of society.

So far all knowledge has been considered as Goods gift and could so not be sold. In the future it has to be regarded as a source of profit and to be managed under this perspective.

[Charles Kleiber, Swiss state secretary for education and research in: *Le Temps*, 11.10.1999]

Open discussions as we had it at the *Club of Amsterdam* would be of utmost importance in Switzerland as well, but business runs here its own propaganda-shop, called *economiesuisse*, classified as think-tank by the organizers; while the counterpart, the socialist party, runs a think-grid ... that produces not much more than applications of the old ideological views from their side.

Even at Amsterdam one had to accept to be constantly bombed with balderdash against the government and rather stupid eulogies of the rich – but on the other side “very old business experts” got disturbed by the opinions of philosophers and sociologists, reminding them of the not neglectable importance of spirituality, society and natural environment.

Incredible differences in thinking bang here together – and the astonishing thing is, that still some productive discussions prove possible.

Ideological exclusion of certain ways of thinking turn each think-tank to a botch-tank – no difference if social thinking, and the inclusion of nature in the thinking system is excluded from the right side, or if economic thinking is excluded from the left side.

Martin Herzog, Dipl. Ing. ETH, philosopher by vocation, 14.05.05

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