

## World Knowledge Forum 2013

### Building Creative Nations

On October 16th, 2013, the World Knowledge Forum in Seoul hosted its own idea incubator as five prominent global figures offered insights to nurturing the growth of global creativity. Start-up Nation author, Saul Singer, moderated a panel representing five nations: former Irish Prime Minister, John Bruton, Chairman of Simon-Kucher & Partners, Hermann Simon, and President of the French Institute of International Relations, Thierry de Montbrial, synthesized their ideas with Qualcomm Executive VP, Peggy Johnson, and former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, in their quest for the creative nation.

In order to prepare any nation for its creative outlets, Mr. Bruton implored starting with the youth. One educational innovation of Ireland allows for young people to explore subjects they may normally have not considered under a traditional framework. "For one year, more than half of young people are taken off the exam-directed treadmill," he said, in order to broaden their imagination. Such time allows for them "to daydream, time to be creative," which would normally be overlooked when focusing on exams.

Such circumstances would fall under what Mr. Olmert deemed to be another necessary element for macro-level creativity. "The circumstances of one's life, of a country's life, are very significant in creating a necessary environment to be forced to think outside of the box," he said. The government needs to empower "thousands of companies in a nation to become innovative and different to impact the entire society."

Mr. Olmert did warn, however, that such an innovative nation would not be able to address other valuable facets of its society. "A creative economy does not mean society will be honest," he said, citing his own country "didn't create a better furnace for the lower echelons of our society."

From macro to micro, Mr. de Montbrial emphasized the power of the individual towards creative solutions, or what he termed more as adaptations. Nations typically built over millennia must be able to differentiate themselves while faced with similar global challenges. To do this, taking on a rebel mindset could allow for faster adaptations in such a fast-changing global environment.

Ms. Johnson provided a dynamic example of how Qualcomm Labs and Eco-Center are implanting tools, such as wireless networks, kiosks providing internet access, and water filtering capabilities, in remote villages. With billions of lives left to change, the need for creative growth became ever more apparent through such implementations.

The idea of "hidden champions" was brought forth by Mr. Simon, who revealed the power of what he called "mid-sized market leaders bursting with innovation that no one has ever heard of." Armed with patents and utilizing practical frameworks combining practical and theoretical training, such companies could serve as valuable stores of a nation's creativity.

One rule that his own company lived by was mental internationalization. "We don't hire anybody without experience abroad," he said. In order to become a valuable citizen of the global world, one would ideally have been exposed to life outside one's borders.

After addressing elements that most nations would naturally be able to cultivate, Mr. Bruton added a final ingredient that could help push nations further in their creative endeavors. "Immigration is important to innovation as it creates an international frame of mind," he explained. Armed with determination and a willingness to take risks, such inflows into a country could add a needed injection of courage to those countries currently in short supply of it.