

11 May 2009

The British Scholarships Award Ceremony

Your Excellency; Ministers, distinguished Guests;

1.

I received the Sampo Scholarship in 2006, which made possible my PhD studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Management. I am happy to tell you that I am on track to complete my thesis next year.

2.

Apart from enjoying London so much that I recently moved my permanent address there, one of the great things in living in another country is, of course, that you learn so much about your own society. It is deeply concerning that the number of young Finns taking this opportunity is declining. In the long run this can be a problem both for the private and the public sector.

3.

The Government should be worried as thinking and decisions that affect the lives of the citizens take place increasingly outside our small borders. We need people who move smoothly between Helsinki and the capitals of Europe. Powerful ideas such as social entrepreneurship and peer-to-peer banking are much easier to harness for the renewal of the Finnish society if we have people who understand them at their origins.

4.

World-class innovations should not, however, be understood merely as import products. On my own field of Information Systems and Innovation studies, we too often think that the wisdom lies far away on the West coast of the United States. This is only a half-truth. There is a lot of potential in European societies as a platform for innovation. Just to give you one example, popular business traveler service DOPPLR is a Finnish service innovation that is now conquering the world from London. Tiny companies can tap into global markets if their people have the right interpersonal ties in place.

5.

Ambassador, Sponsors; the British Scholarships program is an example of an efficient system that enables people to kick-off their overseas studies without being drawn into the vicious circle of academic funding processes. This makes it particularly suitable for a person like me who wishes to operate across academic and business domains.

Aleksi Aaltonen

PhD Candidate at the London School of Economics and Political Science

www.aleksiaaltonen.info