

The Future Is Now

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- We need to reinvent the interface between human beings and computing.
- Economies will be classified by their competitiveness in different sectors, rather than by “ first world ” or “ third world ” designations.
- For more information about the Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2012, please visit: <http://www.weforum.org/newchampions>

Tianjin, People ' s Republic of China, 13 September 2012 The future, whether defined by the next 10 years, 10 months or 10 minutes, will be driven by technology, and culture will be struggling to catch up, said Cesar A. Hidalgo, ABC Career Development Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA, in the closing plenary of the Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2012 in Tianjin.

Religious institutions, governments and universities will have the toughest time keeping up with the revolution that new technology will bring, said Lee Kai-Fu, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Innovation Works Management, People ' s Republic of China. Why spend US\$ 40,000-50,000 a year to listen to lectures when online education is cheap, excellent, and easily available? As for governments, the world is changing so fast that they will not be as effective as rule-makers or policy-makers; rather as enablers and facilitators, said Omobola Johnson, Minister of Communication Technology of Nigeria.

Hopefully, the technology of the future will close the gap between the haves and the have-nots, said Lee. He defines this not in terms of wealth, but in terms of those who have access to digital connectivity. “ For the first time in human history, there will be more people in the haves than have-nots, ” he said, predicting that over the next decade the cost of a smartphone would drop to US\$ 20-30. “ That ' s an exhilarating thing to think about. ” In the next five to 10 years, he predicts revolutions in areas like search engines, social networking and gaming technology. Search engines should be able to respond to one question with one right answer. Social networks in the future will be “ super-communicators, ” Lee said. “ The friends you make in high school will be determined by how you use the social network in middle school. ”

Lee cautioned that these are “ augmentation tools, not replacement for our social skills. ” Super-communication brings the risk of “ eliminating the quiet time needed to be creative and innovate, ” said David Icke, Chief Executive Officer, MC10, USA. Hidalgo cited a quote by physicist Richard Feynman about how the keys that open the gates of Heaven are also the keys that open the gates of Hell. “ If you have access to the buffet of the world, sometimes it ' s hard to control yourself, ” he said.

Instead of focusing on growth, Hidalgo suggests development as a method of measuring progress. “ Tumours grow. Organisms develop, ” he said. “ The economy we have now is not the same as cavemen but with way more cavemen, buffaloes and spears. ” Regardless of how it arrives, a technology-driven future is inevitable. “ A lot of us are paranoid about the future of tech, but don ' t be scared, ” said Lee. “ Books and writing and paper were technology at one point. Technology became immersed in culture. Social networking will as well. ”

This year ' s select group of business leaders from the Forum ' s Member companies who will act as Mentors at the Meeting includes:

- Gao Jifan, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Trina Solar (TSL), People's Republic of China
- Susan Hockfield, President Emerita and Professor of Neuroscience, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA; World Economic Forum Foundation Board Member
- Jeffrey Joerres, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, ManpowerGroup, USA
- Paul Polman, Chief Executive Officer, Unilever, United Kingdom
- Feike Sijbesma, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Managing Board, Royal DSM, Netherlands Global Agenda Council on the Role of Business
- Christopher A. Viehbacher, Chief Executive Officer, Sanofi, France
- Xiong Weiping, President, Aluminium Corporation of China (CHINALCO), People's Republic of China
- Xu Heyi, Chairman, Beijing Automotive Group, People's Republic of China

Notes to Editors

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