

THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD

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CODE

Most new technologies are based on code. There are two kinds: Digital code enables the design of computing. Genetic code enables the design of living things. The integration and speed of dissemination of these new technologies (and the products and processes resulting from this integration) especially the integration of nanotechnology, biotechnology and robotics, for example, is changing human destiny – and evolution. The new biology is already re-shaping many patterns of human activity as well as the economics of production and consumption:

- This new economy/ecology will be founded on technological ecosystems – ensuring that human systems and machines work like living things.
- Sharing knowledge is driving global change faster than at any other time in our history. The speed of change is unprecedented and exponential in some areas. Some are responding to this positively, others are falling behind as they deny or ignore the implications for industry, trade and governance.
- The increasing connectedness of people enables this dissemination.
- Real-time responses to local events (through internet, blogs and pod casts, etc) are now possible. No government or corporation is exempt from such scrutiny. Geography is unimportant in this regard – zero geography prevails. In another sense, poverty traps some people in their geography from which there is little hope of escape.
- The role of the media in shaping the news is critical. Yet the changing nature of communications technologies, self-censorship and vested interests are changing the nature of the stories we tell (and are prepared to tell) thereby creating the myths we then believe to be the truth. One of the reasons for a lack of intelligent dialogue in the community regarding issues such as climate change or petrol prices, for example, is that the agendas are being high-jacked by journalists, many with good intentions, who are nevertheless intent on selling newspapers and keeping their jobs.
- Small economies that understand technological research and investment are outperforming larger economies.
- The ability of the younger generation to multi-task is extraordinary and likely even to have evolutionary consequences as voice recognition/activation technologies decrease the need to write.
- Technology and innovation are seen as a panacea to all our ills by those who advocate a technocratic worldview. Any such generalization must be wrong.

DEMOS DENIED

Since the end of World War 2, most governments have been struggling to reinvent their role and their subsequent relationship to society. The institution of politics as practiced has become a temporary solution (at best) in today's world:

- No politician or government can hope to deliver on the promises traditionally made to the electorate concerning things like employment, safety, security, education, health, welfare, etc.
- Politicians do not have the intellectual capacity to be able to grasp the complex systems they are having to deal with and are not being given the tools to make this any easier. Meanwhile their advisers keep them locked-in

- to a state of mind that discourages dialogue and genuine debate as this is seen to be a risk to any government in the prevailing competitive paradigm
- According to Robert Cooper (adviser to Tony Blair) three types of nation state seem to be emerging:
 - i. Modern states i.e. business as usual (according to the Westminster model or its derivatives) where activities are based upon the need to compete globally for resources, preferential agreements, knowledge and talent
 - ii. Rogue states (as designated by the US or its allies because of supposed ideology or strategic intent)
 - iii. Post-modern states (where regional and global cooperation is seen to be a more critical enabler than market forces per se).
 - Reclaiming of the commons – towards a new form of capitalism
 - **ECO**nomics
 - Reframing of the commons
 - Emerging from the pressures to reinvent the role of government we see:
 - The burden of compliance activities imposed by state regulators reaching farcical levels and likely to lead to further breaches (both intended and unintended) of the law - the probity of which is now increasingly in question.
 - Increasing need for universal taxation principles, equitable laws through new transfer pricing agreements, preferential trade agreements, etc. However, these may also lead to further complications in the future.
 - Increased sharing of the economic burden for large-scale infrastructure projects and services - such as Public-Private Partnerships and similar joint ventures across all sectors.
 - The possibility for more participative forms of democracy increases with new communications technologies. This may just be a matter of time and dependent upon three key factors:
 - The ability of portable technologies to minimize or eliminate illegalities within the electoral and decision-making systems
 - Universal access to online voting technologies
 - The rate at which the community continues to become disenchanted and frustrated with the institution of politics.

CONNECTEDNESS

A new global social conscience (and consciousness) – possibly first hinted at after the death of Diana Princess of Wales but then seen after 9/11 and most recently in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina – seems to be emerging. Corporate scandals, whatever their basis, now lead to enormous indignity and anger within the community. Society is also becoming more and more disenchanted with once-venerable institutions, such as the law and politics. We are all interconnected:

- This new 'conscience' is issues-based (mostly because of the media's role in maintaining it as such) and is therefore difficult to sustain over longer timeframes, whether it be bad news or good news.
- On the other hand the amount being given to causes is increasing. In Australia charitable donations have increased significantly. In 2005 it

amounted to \$11 billion - excluding tsunami relief efforts. In ten or fifteen years that is something like 58 per cent growth.

- Part of this sector's growth is in 'private prescribed funds' where individuals, families or businesses can give tax deductible gifts to a trust that can earn tax free income and then distribute it to other deductible gift recipients.
- Blogs and web casts have become the preferred media for activists, lobbyists, marketers and politicians alike – allowing companies and governments to talk 'with' (rather than 'at') their numerous stakeholders especially regarding the repair of corporate image and rebuilding of lost trust.
- The concentration span of society is becoming less. We must appeal in the first 30 seconds or risk not being heard – even with important issues.
- All corporations espouse a moral purpose and trumpet their good deeds, even when there is little to show or where actions have only come about lately through sustained pressure from activists
- Most large corporations have measures around a triple bottom line but are not yet serious about their commitment to society and the environment per se
- Within two decades this will change: governments will regulate and all companies will be required to commit to a new moral code including doing no damage to the environment
- Thanks to celebrity scientists like Tim Flannery shouting 'Fire!' there is a growing consciousness that we are producing too much stuff, wasting too much stuff and carelessly using too many of the Earth's finite natural resources.
- Big Brother and other television 'reality' shows (i.e. fantasy worlds beyond the reach of common law) have become a proxy debate about the coarsening of public life, triggering our deepest fears about a society marked by the absence of restraint.

MACWORLD

Global corporations are now more powerful and wealthy than ever before. This is unlikely to diminish in the near future. Many corporations will be forced to earn their license to operate granted by society on the basis that they contribute more to societal health and well being – the role previously played by governments. In this way risk is transferred from the public to the private sector:

- Corporate mergers mostly do not work but that doesn't seem to be stopping big corporations from getting bigger through acquisitions.
- This is leading to the rationalization of entire industries – e.g. the car industry in Australia where the population has not reached a critical mass in terms of maintaining the viability of this and other industries.
- Meanwhile new business models are pioneered by smaller companies and startups which are then gobbled up by the larger corporations who do not want to innovate because of the potential 'risk'.
- Consequently, although innovation remains a key driver in the economy, many large corporations are not culturally attuned to innovation.
- The respective roles of governments and corporations will continue to evolve with the likelihood of governments taking on smaller, more focused and globally collaborative policy roles while finding ways to nurture economic development, innovation and guarantee safety and security from private sources. This will entail winding back the currently excessive compliance

burden on corporations and reducing numbers in the bureaucracy.

ECONOMIC EDGE

The globalization of China and India is already changing the face of capitalism and will continue to do so for the next 50 years. The strategic emphasis will be to purchase and create new industrial IP from the West and capture new markets by swiftly moving from manufacturing to value-added services. China and India will do this far more rapidly than it took the West to accomplish similar growth:

- Asia is growing economically between 8.2 per cent and 8.4 per cent annually and this seems unlikely to decline much over the coming decade.
- China is the world's fourth largest economy. Its per capita income is ranked 100th in the world – the first 'poor' global economic superpower in history.
- China's economic modernization has lifted almost 400 million citizens out of poverty since 1990, but 415 million Chinese still live on less than \$2.50 a day.
- China is intent on not falling into the oil trap that is now plaguing the West and is working on a number of strategies to change the design and development of new urban areas, transportation and social infrastructure.
- Europe has been in economic decline on most indicators for the past 15 years and this seems unlikely to change because of the EU bureaucracy regarding agricultural policies and the 'old Europe' mentality.
- Meanwhile the US is overstretched both economically and militarily, is fearful of China, and is hated culturally by the majority of the world.
- Real power will continue to shift from the conventional 'centre' to the unconventional 'edge' as peer-to-peer networks become the most significant organising principle for new forms of production, consumption and communication.

CULTUREJAM

People are moving around the planet in increasingly large numbers. Some of this is imposed (through people trafficking, migrants, refugees and the like). But much of it is people being prepared to move around in order to exploit or develop their knowledge and skills and to seek more opportunities and better quality life styles:

- As we absorb other cultures we start to look alike and adopt each others' cultural norms and habits. This is leading to greater tolerance – although there are still major blips when it comes to some ethnic and religious beliefs.
- Ideas spread like a virus in today's world because of increased travel and enabling technologies like the Internet and the World Wide Web.
- Information asymmetry prevails: media agencies that have traditionally held the greatest power in crisis situations often now have at best equal, and often, poorer access to information than individual citizens.
- With increased transparency of information (both required and apparent) an associated movement of control from central elites towards individual citizens on the periphery is evident. The 'fringe' has become mainstream.
- As more and more citizens become 'members of the media' national broadcasters have to rethink the way that they select and present information.
- This also implies that people in positions of responsibility now need to

develop better capacity to interpret diverse information sources, make rapid judgements about their validity and act with sufficient flexibility to adapt to the information as it changes.

- Second and third generations of the Web will facilitate 'always-on' pervasive communications and computing. Within a decade Internet traffic will be at least 100 times faster than today's fastest connections, allowing the download of an entire movie in under a minute.
- Smart cities will be wired and provide free broadband services in public spaces.
- The poor people of the world are beginning to acquire a voice through new cheap and accessible technologies such as mobile telephony and clockwork computers, etc. What will they say to the rest of the world? To whom will they owe allegiance? What will they buy and from whom? How will this change our priorities?

CONFLICT

Opposing worldviews are becoming ultra transparent in today's world where, given the entrenched beliefs of particular communities and their vested interests, it is possible to accurately anticipate certain outcomes:

- This is being used by some contemporary political operators (aided perhaps unwittingly by the media) to generate irrational fears in the community (about terrorists, Islam, migrants, perceived difference of any kind, etc.) thereby guaranteeing continuation of power by the incumbent political party.
- Because of the transparency of such actions, however, the institutions of politics and journalism are increasingly held in disrepute by certain factions within the community.
- Today's dominant meta-worldviews (such as Democracy and Islam for example) are equated by extreme adherents as being the only moral way we should live. This has led to a deep intolerance of difference and subsequent conflict at a worldview level.
- These meta-worldviews also comprise ideas that were not previously an integral part of the worldview. For example, democracy is now linked to Christianity and human rights in the minds of many, while Islam is linked with conflict and terror by those same people.
- In terms of sustainable development, the clash of worldviews is particularly apparent in the tensions arising from those who believe technology will save us; those that believe it is too late to do anything at all to prevent catastrophe within the next 50 years; and those that are trapped in alternative worldviews where 'improvement' of any kind is seen as progress. [e.g. Kyoto Protocols worldview versus 'Deep Green' worldview versus Asia-Pacific Group worldview].
- One problem still seems to be that we think we are different - but then so did others before us as their civilizations collapsed around them. As Jared Diamond says: *All of our current environmental problems are unanticipated harmful consequences of our existing technologies. What makes us think that, for the first time in human history, technology will miraculously stop causing new, unanticipated problems while it solves the problems that it previously produced?*
- Increasing awareness of the inherent flaws in the industrial paradigm, even in

countries like China, may precipitate a tipping point and the transition to a new dominant worldview.

- The only way we know to resolve or accommodate opposing worldviews is through extended open dialogue based upon genuine understanding and a valuing of difference.
- Rather than a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West, as suggested by some, what we are witnessing appears to be an internal power struggle of ideologies within Islam itself:
 - This conflict is resulting in extremes of action and response rather than any measured, mindful or cooperative approach to bring resolution to the underlying causes of inequity, injustice and poverty.
 - Terrorism is only one small yet highly publicized symptom of this struggle.

POWERDOWN

Oil is the universal elixir. It is used for petrol, pesticides, fertilizers, factory farmed food, transportation, refrigeration, heating, lighting, medicines, cement, much of the stuff in shops, in the office, in the factory, in the sky, in the home, in the hospitals, in computers, in our every day life. But oil is in crisis. The West's reliance on oil must change as the cost of extraction forces prices at the petrol bowser inexorably higher. These costs are associated with the physical difficulties encountered during exploration, geopolitical uncertainties, and the actual quality of remaining oil resources:

- Our addiction to oil is absolute. It fuels 90 per cent of all transportation. It is involved in the production of 95 per cent of all the goods in shops, including 95 per cent of all food - produced as it is, mainly by industrialized means and carted across the world, sometimes in refrigerated planes.
- Current global consumption of oil is 85 million barrels a day, rapidly rising, as China, India, and the rest of Asia gets hooked.
- Although an accurate average decline rate of oil production is hard to estimate, an overall figure of 8 per cent is not an unreasonable assumption. An 8 per cent yearly decline would cut global oil production by 50 per cent in under nine years.
- Renewable energies (including biomass, solar, wind, for example) will look increasingly attractive (commercially and politically) as (i) they achieve grid parity pricing with carbon fuels and (ii) the problems arising from massive over-use of carbon stares ordinary people in the face.
- This will lead to a mixed energy economy based on renewable and cleaner forms of energy rather than on fossil fuels.
- This is sure to be accompanied by social tensions in developed nations as regulators apply pressure to try to change the habits of its citizens who will resist to what they perceive to be their god-given rights.
- In June 2006 President Vladimir Putin's top political adviser stated: *the US seeks international energy domination under the guise of promoting democracy.*
- New products will be designed to take new policies into account. This will lead to smaller, more energy efficient automobiles and airplanes, for example, as well as an increase in 'exotic' systems such as magnetic levitation.
- Solar energy is probably the ideal energy and will eventually achieve grid parity in pricing. Wind energy is currently growing faster than anything else.

Nuclear (some 16 per cent of the world's energy today) will be a part of the mix.

- The Powerdown scenario is a wildcard – it is the path of cooperation, conservation, and sharing. Small, self-sustaining communities that are touted as cultural lifeboats in times to come. The Powerdown strategy shrinks per-capita resource usage in wealthy countries, develops renewable power, and “humanely but systematically reduces the size of the human population over time. Powerdown would mean a species-wide effort toward self-limitation.
- At odds with the Powerdown scenario is the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate proposal, which includes countries such as China, to back low emission technologies. Australia is also supporting research into the geo-sequestration of carbon dioxide. Recent ABARE research suggests these policies will not stop global warming. By 2050, greenhouse gases are likely to be 142 per cent above levels measured in 2001 if current policies are not changed. Under the most widespread adoption of the Australian Government's preferred policies, for example, greenhouse gases would increase by more than 100 per cent.

URBANISATION

Increasing scarcity of potable water combined with an expanding population (especially in the third world), plunging fertility rates (in the first world) and increasing urbanisation may become the cause of conflicts across the planet but especially in under-developed nations and along their borders:

- Declining populations in Europe and Japan is unprecedented. While the US population is still growing at a little less than 1 per cent each year, Europe will have shrunk by 75 million people. This will cause labour shortages, strain welfare, health and retirement systems, and threaten economic competitiveness.
- India is projected to add 473 million people by 2050 for a new total of 1.6 billion, sending it past China as the world's most populous country.
- Japan is now the world's most elderly nation with more than a fifth of its people aged over 65.
- As cities get bigger they become more attractive targets for terrorism and organized crime, demanding entirely new solutions from planners.
- Most urban design is still undertaken as though the city were a machine rather than an ecology. Over a century or more this has led to a form of technological ‘lock-in’ that de-humanizes society and pollutes the environment. This causes immense problems in health and well-being.
- Technological ‘lock-in’ is the main reason physical infrastructure, such as highways, dominates the landscape rather than human-scale pathways and bicycle tracks.
- Best practice in urban renewal means copying nature in terms of design and materials while balancing the real needs of people (e.g. access to amenities) commerce (e.g. industrial ecology) and nature (e.g. conservation practices).
- The world's population is moving from the country to cities at the rate of around 70 million people each year – or 130 people every minute. This is unlikely to change much in the near future.
- By 2010, 50 per cent of all children in the world under the age of 12 will be Muslim.

CUSTOMER-MADE

The so-called 'knowledge' economy, otherwise known as the 'attention' or 'experience' economy is changing what we say, who we say it too, and how we say it. Peer-to-peer networks have become the new organising principle for business and learning. This principle is also changing how we govern, spend our money and enjoy our leisure time:

- Corporations and governments can now talk 'with' their customers and citizens rather than 'at' them. Within a decade this will be the norm.
- The 'customer-made' concept is increasingly applied to the co-design of manufactured goods and will rapidly extend to services.
- Within a decade most goods and services will be tailored to individual needs.
- Corporations, communities and individuals that get noticed (for the right reasons) benefit from increased value - irrespective of size, age, profitability or even market share.
- It pays to know who you are and what you stand for and to get that message out into the marketplace – consistently and persistently.
- Word of mouth marketing has become the most powerful means of creating and sustaining brand image and positioning.
- Small really is beautiful now. Success today does not depend upon success yesterday: startups can overwhelm established industry players within weeks.
- Small economies that invest in scientific research and technological innovation will outperform the largest of economies that do not.
- People are increasingly spending on aspects of their identity that matter to them. They want to project a consistent personal image that fits with their aspirations and values and will align themselves with anything that conveys this for them. This is called brand resonance.
- Viral communications coupled with new tools such as blogs and pod casts out-muscle conventional media in terms of both speed and effectiveness.

MANCHURIAN CONSUMERS

Free-market fundamentalism is now the driver of politics, economics and life in most of the world. Our faith in it is now so entrenched that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism. In just a few decades, Western society has become addicted to rampant over consumption; hooked on 'added newness'. We gorge on supersized meals, upgrade to plasma TVs and shop ourselves stupid. And damn the cost to the environment. As J.K.Galbraith observed, the individual serves the industrial state not by supplying it with savings or capital but by consuming its products:

- We pay to carry corporate advertising on our backs, our heads and our feet, we usher it into our schools and our transport and paint it on the grass at sports events
- We have become brainwashed "Manchurian" consumers. Our most innate drives and emotions trigger immediate connections with consumer goods
- Goods have become so abundant that manufacturers are 'giving' them away: but two for the price of one, supersize me, but now pay later!
- In the first quarter of 2005 the US produced four times as many goods as it sold
- Australians throw away 3.3 million tonnes of food each year. In 2004

Australian spent \$5.3 billion on food that was just thrown away. That represents 13 times the amount donated by Australian households to overseas aid agencies in 2003

- Recycling is not taken seriously. Less than 4% of mobile phones are recycled. There is no general recycling scheme for computers. Moves to introduce extended producer responsibility [EPR] schemes have stalled
- If Chinese people were able to start living at a First World standard it would double the human impact on the world. Yet who is going to say they can't?

DEEP DESIGN

Progress is typically equated with financial gain and economic prosperity. It has been traditionally measured by things like GDP. These measures do not necessarily take into account other forms of wealth, such as those arising from the utilization of social, natural and human capital:

- New sets of standards and measures are required to know if we are making progress equitably in terms of the environment, applied knowledge, justice, eradication of disease and poverty, etc.
- Change to the status quo was based upon an incremental improvement mindset for the past century. There is evidence to suggest this will not be sufficient to deal with the problems humanity is now facing.
- Water is becoming scarce. The world grows twice as much food as it did a generation ago but uses three times as much water to irrigate crops. Because rainwater is insufficient, farmers are tapping into underground reserves. Fifty years ago in the Gujarat region of India farmers lift water from open wells dug to about 10 metres. Now tube wells are sunk to 400 metres and still run dry.
- It takes between 2000 and 5000 litres of water to produce a kilogram of rice. It takes 11,000 litres to grow the feed for enough beef to make a single quarter-pounder hamburger. A teaspoon of sugar requires 50 cups of water to grow it. You could fill 25 bathtubs with the water that grows the 250 grams of cotton needed to make a single tee-shirt.
- A new order, based upon fundamental transformation and requiring a total re-design of human purpose and its institutions, may be required. The inadequacy of some current arguments for sustainable development (based upon improving rather than redesigning society and its needs) must be addressed.
- The idea of restraint, of consuming less, has become so heretical it is not fit to broadcast. When Adbusters approached TV networks in the US to screen ads for *Buy Nothing Day* the networks refused them airspace.
- In 1991, Lawrence Summers, former Chief Economist of the World Bank, scorned the so-called environmental doomsayers insisting that the Earth had an infinite carrying capacity thanks to smart humans, new technologies and the rejuvenating effects of market forces. Today most impartial scientists acknowledge that we're racing to the brink of environmental catastrophe.
- Consequently, the importance of (currently underplayed) systemic elements within the sustainability debate become critical – as do the challenging of certain myths. For example:
 - The nitrogen cycle is as important as the carbon cycle, yet seems to have disappeared from public awareness
 - Abnormal solar activity is warming the planet - possibly more than that

- caused by human activity
- Carbon taxes are inevitable once they become politically acceptable.
- Accounting for the full cost of products is critical for change because knowing the consequences of our actions gives citizens a different set of choices they can enact personally
- The links between poverty and environmental damage are clear
- By 2050 the burden of human existence will be such that we will be using nearly two planet's worth of resources – assuming these can be found.
- Identifying and preserving 'hub' species and the role these play in sustaining human life must become the most critical aspects of conservation.

SPEED!

Because markets and electorates can move instantly, and often unpredictably, the need for adaptiveness (responding in real-time to issues by changing the direction of the business, instituting an improved value proposition, upgrading products & services, skills acquisition, etc) becomes paramount. Previously organizations were designed for efficiency. Today they need to be designed for speed:

- The greatest opportunity for corporations and governments to remain aligned with their stakeholders is through (i) anticipating shifting dynamics (and subsequent needs) and (ii) responding intelligently to these through strategic leverage.
- In this environment the organization needs to be as flexible and adaptive as change itself - able to respond and adapt to changing conditions instantly. The best means to do this is if the organization is structured as an organic network of preferential relationships.
- Social networks remain viable because of five literacies (or knowledge domains) practiced by a majority of the community:
 - Business ecosystem intelligence – comprehending all the changes that are going on around you and their likely impact on the business
 - Futuring – anticipating what else might occur that could impact the business in the future, and rehearsing what to do if the unexpected should happen
 - Deep design – using principles from nature and the new biology to re-design whole systems of human activity in ways that are eco-efficient, that benefit all stakeholders and that do no damage to people or to the environment
 - Strategic navigation – (strategy as process) using intelligence from the entire business ecosystem to work out what could/should be done from one moment to the next
 - Brand resonance – creating attention by charting and pursuing a moral purpose that aligns the business with the ever-changing needs of customers and other stakeholders.
- Four enablers can be used to enhance strategic leverage:
 - Receptiveness and openness to new ideas and new realities
 - Vigilant responsiveness to any issues regarded as important by groups of concerned stakeholders
 - Cooperation across the business ecosystem, including the sharing

- and application of knowledge with 'competitors'
- Reciprocity in relationships (the Chinese concept of guanxi)

CREATIVE CHINA

It is an oft-reported fact that China is beginning to exert its influence once again on the world stage. As free market economics are accepted by the majority of the population and a middle class is created, Maoism morphs into a new form of social capitalism, and the Beijing Olympics opens up even more trade with the rest of the world, this meta economy of 1.2 billion people is starting to rely less on copying the West and focus on creating its own image and style for export. These cultural exports are happening in fashion, film, architecture, advertising and design in a space where Chairman Mao meets Andy Warhol.

- A new class of street-smart entrepreneurs is driving a burgeoning creative culture in China that may soon challenge and offer a credible alternative to US dominance in pop culture and street credibility
- Young Chinese are embracing street culture as they forge a new identity that separates them from their parents and from the collectivist view of their history and this street culture is rapidly being globalised
- We are witnessing the return of the ethos of the individual to China – Chinese production is shifting from making for everyone else to creating an individual style for the domestic and world markets
- Many members of the Chinese diaspora are returning to live and work in China – from Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the US – where they are now forging a genuinely universal culture
- The factory of the world is becoming a major powerhouse of innovation
- The impact of China will eventually be felt in other fields because of sheer numbers
- The dominant influence in China today is not politics, or even a focus on differentiating between the East and the West, but understanding the global condition and global issues. This is transforming and changing the identity of the Chinese, their values and for what they stand.