Future Log File 2014

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Keynes once said: "... the idea of the future being different from the present is so repugnant to our conventional modes of thought and behaviour that we, most of us, offer a great resistance to acting on it in practice." Is he right? Why (not)?

Yes, and this is a typical "human attitude". People are generally afraid of possible changes in their lives. This is because we do not know what new things are coming and if these changes will make our life more complicated or more difficult. Similar to the well known phrase "we've always done it this way". Too bad, because this attitude blocks many new chances and opportunities to improve or to change our lives in fascinating new ways.

What do you think are the most relevant developments which will change our world in the next two, three decades?

A big challenge will be an increasingly aging society linked with the quality of life. People are physically getting older and older but our brain is not "designed" to become too old! The growing "quality of life" as a consequence of better healthcare, hygiene, nutrition and new technologies in medicine isn't matched by a growing "mental quality". Regarding the impact of new technologies on our life the "digitalization of our society" will have a durable, increasing and dramatic impact on our daily life. More concretely this will happen within different sectors. For example in the public health sector an increasing amount of data ("Big-Data") will be produced (for example resulting from genetic-testing) and will strongly influence the way illness is diagnosed, lived with and regarded by society and the kind of treatments available within the health sector. Digitalization will also have a very big influence on mobility, education as well as in political systems (for example e-voting) in most countries of the world. Today we already realize how strongly social medias (Facebook, Twitter) are changing our everyday communications.

Why exactly these?

Demographic change has and will have more and more impact on our society. Especially the aspect of how to keep all those aging people employed and occupied and how we take care of them if they are in need is problematic: this will be a big challenge for our society. And how can we "finance" the aging society? The digitalization of our society is by far one of the biggest influences on our way of life. Within the last 15 years internet-technologies underwent an incomparably fast development and their use will increase further.

Are you afraid of them or do you think positively?

Yes, in a certain way I'm afraid, but of course I'm positive that we will find new ways to new chances and solutions. It's the only, or at least the best, possibility we have! As with other new technologies, digitalization has and will have many positive applications and open many chances to our society. It may, for example, help us not to better manage the limited energy resources available to us and to reduce harmful CO_2 emission levels (smart cities, smart transportation, smart grids etc.). But there is, of course, also "the other side of the medal". A big risk of this development is that our privacy will

increasingly be jeopardized and abused at different levels and moments of our life – which poses certain risks to democracy itself.

Where will the happiest people live on the globe in the year 2040? Why there?

The people that will react positively to new difficult developments and the people who will be capable to strike a "good balance" between their work life, societal needs, economic growth and other life values. I do not know where that will be.

Which book do you think will still be worth reading then? What could future generations still learn from it?

A kind of "cookbook" giving recipes for how to best achieve what I have mentioned above.