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HIGHLIGHTS FROM SESSIONS

Session

The Future We Want: Voices of the Cloud Generation

Eight young men and women deliver one-minute perspectives on how technology can reshape regional future.

Date

Sunday | May 13, 2018

Duration

10 minutes

Session Video

Panelist Profiles

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Ahmed el-Gaili, Managing Partner, Vinson & Elkins LLP, Advisory Board Member, Beirut Institute, UAE

I'm very flattered to be included among the cloud generation. Yet irrespective of our age, our interaction and practice of law is being fundamentally changed by technology.

First, technology is democratizing our access to constitutions, laws, regulation, and contracts such that they are now literally in the palm of our hands. The implications are profound. Citizens who know their rights will demand their enforcement, whether it is against government institutions, officials, other corporations and individuals. In the long run, such enhanced legal literacy for the average Arab citizen will be an asset in the fight against corruption and economic exploitation.

Second, speaking of exploitation, we as lawyers will be challenged- not only by more knowledgeable clients, but by computing legal AI machines, and it is already happening for routine legal tasks. And the juries still out how big a disruptor this is to the legal industry from lawyers to judges. But for consumers of legal services, these advancements mean faster and cheaper access to justice, and far more expeditious resolution of legal disputes without exorbitant legal costs, and more importantly without the need for 'wasta' واسطة.

Chama Mechtaly, Visual Artist, Social Entrepreneur, Founder of Moors & Saints, Morocco

Since I'm an artist, focusing on minorities, and a recent social entrepreneur, I would like to address the future through an intersectional lens, looking at the role of social initiatives in visual arts and women's rights.

Societies cannot advance without exposure to their own creativity, potential, and a decolonized understanding of their history. However, African and Middle Eastern art mostly resides in countries of the North, leaving the post-colonized uninspired and confused about their identity.

One way to address this challenge and bring artistic reparation to countries in the South is through technology, which can provide the visual platforms that transcend borders and guarantee egalitarian and public access to museum collections through virtual galleries and interactive VR simulations. And we hope that a newer museums and institutions emerging right here can lead these revolution.

Of course, we also need to empower disadvantaged communities with the right technological tools that would enable this type of access in the future. Also, we cannot expect holistic progress if we're holding half of society back. We must keep in mind that women are facing incredibly complex systems of oppression, which are further enhanced if they happen to belong to an ethnic or religious minority in the Arabic speaking world and elsewhere.

Social entrepreneurs can leverage technology to ensure that women from all backgrounds rise beyond issues that restrict them, and contribute equally to economic and social welfare. The successful social enterprises of the future will be highly integrated with technology to multiply impact, and easily adapt to the next challenges.

Shady M. Qubaty, President, Yale Arab Students Association, Yemen

Technology is a means to generate sustainable income for the region through tax collection. A critical issue many countries in our region face is that the proper system of taxation is not implemented, which detrimentally affects the levels of collected individual payroll and corporate income taxes. The salary workers receive in their bank accounts and the profits-businesses generate should already be tax-deductible, to avoid loopholes associated with self-reporting.

A program of such, supported by robust electronic systems and databases, will provide the vital source of income for a country's annual budget which can then be used to develop its infrastructure, health-care, education, and social welfare.

Moving towards this system will encourage all individuals and businesses to open bank accounts in order to receive their vague wages and revenue which promotes a culture of financial responsibility and accountability. There are also many positive social, economic and political externalities associated with this scheme including more transparency, reduced levels of rampant corruption, and a true move towards meritocracy.

In addition, this will serve as a final nail in the coffin for the creation of imaginary jobs, and will be a source for sustainable income for the region. Even though relatively less export-oriented economies will benefit the most from the implementation of this scheme, it serves as a model that's applicable to all the countries in our beloved region.

Zak Dychtwald, Author, Founder and CEO, Young China Group, USA

We've entered the age of awareness. When I was a child, I was visited by the outside world one time a day, the morning news while I ate my breakfast. And then I went about my day in a suburban town in California, without any interactions with the outside world, only seeing and interacting with the people around me.

The information age has fundamentally altered childhood. In a week, our young people grow up with an awareness of the world from a multitude of sources that far surpasses anything any of us experienced in a year during our childhood. With that comes the opportunity for unprecedented awareness. Good relationships are based on understanding; understanding of the people can only come from interactions, digital or otherwise, with people, not just the news, but actual people.

So, welcome to the age of awareness, may it lead to the age of understanding.

Ediola Pashollari, Secretary General, World Assembly of Youth, Malaysia

In order for us to have the future we want, we should acknowledge that the young people are the present leaders, and the most tech savvy generation. That's why, they should be part of the decision-making process on technology related policies. They should be part of the monitoring evaluation and data collection. They should be supported at all levels, or start-up seminars activities. But most importantly, resources should be allocated for them in order to advance the technology for the better man of all, because remember, young people have the potential to shape the infrastructure and of course, reshape the future of the society.

Thalia Dergham, Senior Insight Specialist, Net A Porter, CoFounder, Beirut Institute, UK

I'm currently based in London, working with the luxury fashion retailer Net A Porter, and so I want to speak from my perspective in that role. We were asked to speak on how technology would shape the global future and I want to speak by my experience globalizing our digital platform in the Arab region, and more specifically, how technology will shape and strengthen the identity between women in East and West.

In my conversations with women globally, I have learned about the power of technology and E-commerce to equip women with two important things, unity and independence. There's a new connectivity amongst the global constituency of women who are educated, who are integral to the work force, and who are further exposed to their international contemporaries through forms of social media and e-commerce.

Technology in the fashion market allows us to see that women in all parts of the world, both share ideologies and are distinctive from one another. That a woman shopping in Brooklyn has different needs than her counterpart in the UAE, and that with a common ground on a digital platform, they will find a way to self-express and share views. These women are all establishing their independence and their ability to choose their own identity, and establish their values from a global technology-enabled network of inspiring international women.

Shahad Abdulaziz Turkistani, Assistant Researcher, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Saudi Arabia

توجد مقولة تقول بأن الشباب ثروة و ثورة. نسعى كجيل عربي شاب أن نعيش في مستقبل مليء بالثورات والثروات العلمية التقنية الشابة. كباحثة في مجال السياسة والاقتصاد ستساعد تكنولوجيا المعلومات الكثير من الباحثين في الوصول الى قاعدة بيانات غير محدودة تطلق بإمكانيات البحث العلمي في العالم العربي. ولن تكتفي التكنولوجيا بخلق الكثير من الفرص للشباب، بل ستكون عامل تمكين للمهارات والطاقات في المنطقة. وقيادتنا الشابة في المملكة العربية السعودية تعكس هذا الطموح. وأخيراً، الشباب لا يصعب عليهم شيء على الإطلاق.

Rayya Salem, Managing Director, Advisory Group, Layalina Productions, USA

The wave of our intelligence can be seen forming in the distance and foaming at the edge, building into a huge tidal wave that has the potential to ultimate up to 45% of all jobs in the Middle East, according to Mackenzie. The UAE is already in surf mode, and was one of the first to appoint to ministerial position for AI late last year, and has acted with financial muscle and educational programs to take advantage of the millions of new jobs that could create in the future.

In the global picture, tech experts are predicting a renewed data raise putting the US against China, in a sector that TESLA founder, Elon Musk, calls more dangerous than nuclear weapons, given its potential for exponential overnight outpacing of human capabilities and oversight.

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