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Future Thinking 2022-2023

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Future Thinking 2022-2023



Jean-Pierre and his laptop at a coffee table in Zimbabwe.

PRELUDE

People can make wiser decisions now because we have more knowledge than ever before, but of course, we don't always do that. We openly accept that for the last 3000 years the majority of our innovation has been driven by ego. A desire to dominate and maintain superiority of others through force, war, and economic tactics has been acceptable if it serves our tribe and nation. Conservation, sustainability, and ethical purpose have been a non-factor.

We dare call ourselves and our way of life better, when the truth is we are all equally corrupt. But we are not beyond redemption. I acknowledge how difficult a situation humanity has found itself in. We are here today because of our very nature.

Fear of not being able to survive and support those we love is as compelling a force as that of entitlement and greed. These forces maintain our economic system, which

has always sustained a wealth divide. It really is 'a dog eat dog' society, and it is a desperate battle for resources.

This 'show' we put on, of acting 'surprised' in response to increased poverty and degradation of everything around us must stop. The 'script' we have read out, and have had read to us for so long that we believe it, has to be re-written. We cannot continue to blame everyone and everything else, when it really is the individual that has to change and do the work. Yes, you and I.

With so many of us on this planet, there are only two scenarios for us. Either we all make it, or a few of us make it, and live with the knowledge and guilt (assuming you maintain a moral sense) that our survival has come at the cost of many others. Each person's priorities need to change for 'us' to have a future. The road ahead is going to be very hard for us all.

Share my hope that this generation's legacy will be that of those who do more and lead by example. Let us be remembered in the history books as those who learnt from the past, made the decision to be better, and ultimately put our future on a trajectory that recognises ethics and equality for all above our own personal gain. We need more future thinkers.

GREAT NEWS

IT STILL ONLY TAKES ONE person to change the world. Little by little, and then all at once. This book is part of my series of books called *Future Thinking*.

How rude of me, I forgot to introduce myself. For those of you who are reading something I have written for the first time, Sawubona, Hello, Mholweni, and Goeie Dag. Towards the end of this book is a profile on me which you are most welcome to take a peek at, but this book is really about you, and not me. All I'll say at this point is that I am a business and environmental technologist. That is a job title you won't find elsewhere because I created it. I feel it best describes my life's work (for now at least). I study nature, technology, people, and the link between them all. Then with the wisdoms gained, I write, consult, and have as many discussions with as many people as possible about 'future thinking', and the actions to take that will be best for us all.

IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS

107 BILLION PEOPLE have lived on this planet. I know this book does not address you by name, but I am talking to you, and also your friends, family, and colleagues. Basically any good person in your life. Scratch that, it doesn't even have to be a good person.

The fact is, good or bad, English or Zulu, man or woman (or anything in-between), cat lover or dog lover, Catholic or Muslim, lawyer or poet, we are all in the same boat, or taxi, or whatever mode of transport you wish to envision sharing with 7.8 billion other people. You are a passenger and your ride is about to become unpleasant and costly.

What ride am I referring to? If I were permitted to give it a name, I would refer to it as the 'Social and Environmental Apocalypse'. Most people believe the word 'apocalypse' to mean the end of the earth. I would entertain this understanding of the word, after all, most books

AN INTERVIEW WITH 'THE BEAST'

ANYONE WHO KNOWS me well will agree when I say sports are not my strength. I have never been able to catch a ball. However, even sports is moving into a realm where I can relate to. Enter e-sports.

I had an opportunity to discuss this exciting trend with rugby star, Tendai Mtawarira. Here are the points we covered.

- E-sports started around the year 1997, with a primary focus on competitive online gaming. Today, the e-sports industry is worth over 1 billion USD annually. The sector is not only making lots of money, but corporates are spending huge amounts on it as well, like Amazon's 970 million USD investment on the e-sports streaming network, Twitch.
- E-sports tournaments have become a cultural

HYPOCRITES TO THE LEFT OF ME AND BULLIES TO THE RIGHT

HERE I AM, stuck in the middle with *who*? In 2021, I was listening to a radio talk show where a parent was trying to explain to the presenter why his son (a student at the University of Cape Town or UCT) was not getting vaccinated. The presenter then attempted to hush them. Let me share my opinions on the matter.

During the discussion, the parent reasoned that his son had already had Covid, so he had a natural immunity defence against the virus. This is a logical point on its own. However, a second reason was also given. The parent did not trust the vaccine, nor the way it had been rolled out. There were pokes at government and the limited time the vaccine had been in circulation. Note that I said 'circulation', and not 'development'. To these two points, I concede there are many reasons not to have faith in government, and there is also a rational concern that the

WAITING FOR RACISTS TO DIE?

SOCIAL INFLUENCES NEED to be taken into consideration when planning our future, and a future thinker cannot shy away from uncomfortable subjects. Kedibone Mulaudzi, a celebrated South African comedian, and I had such a conversation. I wanted to share some of the points we discussed. This chat was recorded and can be found on my YouTube channel.

We can talk, agree, disagree, and compromise until the cows come home. At some point, we need to deal with what is and act. When we act, we must make provision for other points of view. Do not deny others their right of opinion. Do not hide your head in the sand like an ostrich to avoid points. Put all the cards on the table. Play the game with the cards dealt, stop demanding other cards. We will never win this game by moaning or bluffing our way through.

I do not believe there are as many pure-bred racists as

DIGITAL COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

SOMETIMES I GET into trouble too. This is about an unpleasant learning experience I had.

I manage a number of websites. Additionally, I am responsible in some way or another for about 600 other company websites. If a digital copyright issue left a person like me feeling naïve, I can only begin to imagine how many innocent people are out there breaking a law without knowing it.

Roy, an attorney from www.tabererattorneys.co.za, has kindly co-written this chapter with me. He responded on a public holiday, which also happened to be his birthday. If that is not great service, I don't know what is. If you have any need for his legal services, please make contact via his website.

I will start with my side of the story, and then hand the chapter over for a professional opinion.

I have a variety of websites for business, education,

IS CHINA HELPING AFRICA ADVANCE TECHNOLOGICALLY, OR ARE THEY HURTING US?

MOST DAYS, well, at least *many* of the days that I am at the gym, I run next to a Chinese man. After our run, he takes a shower, has coffee, and then opens his shop down the road from my home. His adaptation to a South African way of life inspired me to pay a visit to his home.

A few years back, not too long before lockdown, I was fortunate enough to visit several major cities in China. I did this in an effort to answer the question of this chapter's title.

China knows the majority of its potential customers in Africa really don't want or need fancy products or services. They want things that work, and that they can afford. This is the opportunity China identified. China has taken our market from under our own feet. We can moan about it all we want, it won't change a thing. Their actions have not been unethical in the context of business practices. They first established a supply base, and then

SUSTAINABLE AND ETHICAL FUTURE BUSINESS

WHILE YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD the phrase in the title before, you may not have understood them in the context of the future world which is fast approaching. Businesses, communities, and our families have less than five years or so to prioritise what is important. This time period is not an exaggeration. In South Africa, where we have so many other challenges and inequalities, it is extremely hard to focus on tomorrow when most people are barely coping with today. We have to burn both ends of the candle to succeed.

Let me start this very important chapter by explaining why sustainable and ethical business is the only type of business we can have in the new world.

In the future, clients will be smarter than ever before. This does not mean their IQ will increase, but rather that the consumer of the future will be vastly more informed, educated, socially aware, and environmentally caring. If a

AUTOMATION & I4.0: THE JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

FUTURE THINKERS, have you been concerned about your career? Job insecurity is something we all suffer from. In 2020, it became an extreme source of crippling anxiety for hundreds of thousands of people. Covid rattled the job market and many people lost their work. Others who tried to return to work found that their job had been replaced by some sort of gadget. For example: Larry Collins, a 23 year old, was told his job at the Carquinez Bridge toll gates in the San Francisco Bay Area would use technology instead of people after lockdown.

Automation is an unstoppable force, and it is inevitable. It is cleaner, safer, works 24 hours, takes no smoke breaks, has less risk, reduces losses and damages, is more accurate, and at the end of the day, delivers a service or product at a reduced price for the consumer.

Our South African job market is at a greater risk of negative ramifications related to automation and the ripple

COLONISATION: WE ARE AT IT AGAIN!

HOW ARE you finding this book so far? I hope I am covering some interesting subjects for you.

Let's go off-path and talk about something old, which is coming back into fashion. As a business and environmental technologist, I need to know a little about a lot of things, so colonisation is something I researched.

Let's set aside the fact that we are all African. Yes Juju, we are. My point is, every person's ancestors came from the continent of Africa. Some left, and then returned on ships to do appalling things. History repeats itself and we are at it again.

Colonisation was inevitable, and undertaken by many nations, but the British were hands down the very best at it. They did this by investing in ships and weapons, using science, implementing manipulative trade practices, and exploiting many things and people. Even drugs were part of their success! Perhaps in another life, or on another

LESSONS FROM THE CORONAVIRUS

IN COMPARISON WITH OUR TECHNOLOGY, nature has always had a superior production system, able to ensure a circular and self-sustaining structure. Conversely, whatever we do has been linear, self-serving and independent of any greater scheme or eco system.

Our leaders were warned about a virus like Covid-19. Disease experts have highlighted the possibility of accelerated outbreaks for decades. Since 1980, there have been more than 12 000 that have infected and killed millions of people, including MERS, H1N1, Dengue, Ebola and Zika. Mother Nature has given us plenty of warning shots.

SARS was a bad pandemic, but when compared to the coronavirus, it seemed to disappear overnight with little to no economic ramifications.

Added to other obvious factors like increased international travel, over-populated cities, and more interaction with animals, preparations for a pandemic were

PREDICTING THE FUTURE

FUTURE SCENARIO PLANNING is a concept I was first introduced to through my own company, and one of our suppliers, Clem Sunter, whom I have mentioned before. Some of my readers might already know that Clem is a scenario planner and future thinker.

I have worked with Clem for many years, and one of my businesses manages a great deal of his work generated from the internet. Did you know Clem use to be in a band? Regardless of my exposure to many 'greats' like Clem and his colleague, Chantell Ilbury, I do think that the exercise of planning possible scenarios for the future was a skill I was born with.

I encourage you to try and plot some scenarios for your family and business's future. When you start plotting, there are so many influences and trends to take into consideration. If you would like some ideas, here are a few to get you started:

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO MEET SOMEONE

I WOULD LIKE my final chapter to reintroduce you to someone. Someone very important, and too often ignored. Dear Reader, please meet Nature.

There is an undeniable link between people, nature, and our technology. The Gaia hypothesis is a theory that the planet is a super organism, and humans (and our technology) could be seen as a type of cancer by the body (Earth). This supports the idea that global warming (or even a virus) is the Earth's way of running a fever to get rid of us, basically an autoimmune response. I do not subscribe to the idea that the planet has a higher single consciousness and has made a decision to get rid of us.

We do need to accept that at some point, we decided we are a supreme species, separate from the environment on this planet. Our self-created elevation or separation from the ecosystem has made us over-confident in our habits. I don't deny the wonders of man, but there are

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