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KEVIN COTTAM

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Jordan offers you a variety of international chain, local and luxury boutique hotels. More than 8.900 hotel rooms are located in the cosmopolitan capital Amman, with many of these hotels offering topnotch conference facilities and convention centers. The largest convention center in Jordan is located on the mesmerizing shores of Dead Sea; the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center can easily house congresses as large as 3000 pax with inventory of around 25 meeting rooms.

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>
> **Luma Khatib**
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Saving lives in Prague

Prague welcomed 2,500 specialists from 75+ countries around the world who gathered to listen to more than 200 expert speakers from the field of emergency medicine in the middle of October. From 12 to 16 October, the 13th Congress of the European Society for Emergency Medicine (EuSEM) took place in the Prague Congress Center.

Emergency medicine is a complex medical specialty that interacts very closely with almost all other clinical disciplines, and responds to acute conditions with which patients turn to health services. It includes both pre-hospital and in-hospital immediate care: the emergency medical service, emergency departments, and also disaster preparedness for immediate response in cases of mass casualties and disasters such as floods or terrorist attacks.

The European Emergency Medicine Society, which organizes the EuSEM congress, celebrated the 25th anniversary of its founding in Prague. Two Czech doctors were participants of establishing European society in 1994: MUDr. Pavol Getlík and MUDr. Roman Gřegoř, MBA, who is currently the President of the Czech Society for Emergency and Disaster Medicine of the Czech Medical Association of Jan Evangelista Purkyně.

Emergency medicine is a relatively young specialty in the Czech Republic: it celebrated its 20-year anniversary in 2018. At present, more than 600 doctors are dedicated to it in the country. This October, they had the opportunity to participate in lectures not only on clinical topics from all fields of contact, but also on the psychological stress arising from the critical situations and on career opportunities in emergency medicine. In addition, they were able to participate in team competitions in clinical scenarios or interactive blocks, and tested their knowledge.

Except for the traditional gala dinner, that took place at the Municipal House, the first ever Morning run was organized during the Congress itself and led through the Vyšehrad hill. In occasion of the Congress, Prague Congress Centre also hosted the travelling exhibition of photographs taken by Prof. Jindřich Štreit at EMS.

Earlier this year, the Czech Republic also joined the celebrations of International Day of Emergency Medicine on May 27th. “The aim of the international day is to popularize the field of emergency medicine and show the general public and politicians that the emergency care system has a major impact on reducing mortality and subsequent healthcare costs,” says MUDr. Jana Šeblová, Ph.D., FESEM, the local ambassador of the EuSEM Congress, adds: “Emergency medicine plays an irreplaceable role. For example, last year, over one million patients – almost one in ten citizens – were treated during emergency runs of EMS in the Czech Republic, and others were treated at the existing emergency departments.”

“The congress, held for four days in six parallel sections, included also a local one-day conference that contributed to the dissemination of knowledge and innovations in this field among Czech experts, and it will support further development of emergency medicine in our country. The fact that we have top doctors and specialists not only in emergency medicine in Prague and the Czech Republic is evidenced by our statistics: medical topics are among the most discussed in the Czech capital in the long term,” concludes Roman Muška, Managing Director of Prague Convention Bureau.

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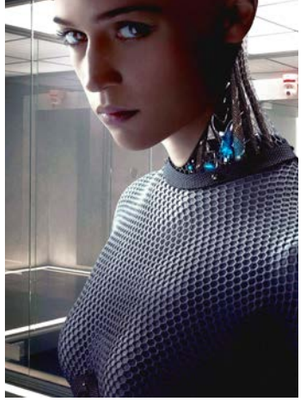

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Define **PURPOSE**

"IS THE WORLD falling apart? Do religious and authoritarian movements risk weakening democracy and global cooperation?"

The Canadian-American cognitive psychologist, linguist, and author Steven Pinker shows in his book *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, that health, prosperity, peace, knowledge and happiness is increasing throughout the world. Not as a result of any cosmic power, but thanks to the ideal of enlightenment: reason and science. Here are the arguments we need to face the world's problems and to continue humanity's development.

As a magazine, we are purpose-oriented. That is why we are working on our *Business Intelligence Reports*. We are trying to discern, understand and link the patterns of 'who' and 'what' is shaping and creating current and future business events.

The most basic definition of purpose is the question of 'why'. Why someone is working on a task, why a task matters to a job, why a job matters to an organisation. With a solid sense of 'why' people feel as though the task, the job, the organisation is meaningful. Purpose helps keep you grounded in the sense of gratitude and meaning in a way that financial metrics or quarterly targets don't.

Here at *Meetings International*, two of our keywords are *reason* and *science*. We need new knowledge about what is happening within our field, and to apply this knowledge to create new and improved conditions for a better world. And we need it soon.

Simply alleviating symptoms does not solve the underlying problems. We have to get to the bottom of issues, and under the skin. We have to find our way into that which creates the best conditions for developing the world in a continued positive spirit.

Purpose-centred people and organisations that create what they feel they were born to create is the only antidote to a world without meaning, where artificial intelligence will replace millions of jobs, biotechnology will create super-charged people, and climate change will affect billions.

We want to help foster the developing of visions, ways of thinking, business models and roadmaps leading to a sustained positive flow, and leave a lasting legacy for the future. The global meeting industry has a lot of developing to do. The old world of 'either/or' is dead. Long live the world of 'both/and' in which purpose reigns.

According to Gallup Inc.'s latest *State of The Global Workplace Survey*, only fifteen per cent of employees globally are engaged in their work. That figure drops to ten per cent in Europe and six per cent in East Asia. Employees are disengaged for many different reasons, but the underlying cause is always the same. They feel disconnected from their work because they don't feel a sense of ownership over it, and that has far-reaching knock-on effects way outside of the affected organisations. When you contribute and create value for your organisation your work is going to have more purpose.

This is our 24th global *Meetings International* and we have created six global *Business Intelligence Reports* along with additional reports focusing specifically on the Netherlands, the Faroe Islands, and Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. We have also produced no less than three reports on Dubai and are currently finalising an upcoming one on Australia.

The purpose of these reports is simple: to increase knowledge about 'who' is successfully developing 'what' kinds of business events around the world. And you will most likely find the same keywords repeated there: reason and science.

Swedish-Indonesian **ATTI SOENARSO** *has worked as a journalist for close to 40 years. She has worked for Scandinavia's largest daily newspaper, was TV4's first travel editor, has written for many Swedish travel magazines and has had several international clients. She has travelled the length and breadth of the world and written about destinations, people and meetings.*

PHOTO Magnus Malmberg

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COTTAM

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***The Nomadic Mindset**, Never Settle for Too Long* is a leadership book written by Canadian Kevin Cottam. He is a TEDx and global nomad keynote speaker, executive coach, and author. The book is based on harvesting the ancient wisdom, qualities and mindset of nomadic cultures as a way to lead successful engaged organisations.

KEVIN COTTAM has travelled the globe, particularly in Mongolia, Kenya, and Morocco, researching ancient nomadic leadership wisdom to determine what The Nomadic Mindset is. "My mission is to inspire and encourage individuals to remove borders and expand their mindset: to embrace The Nomadic Mindset," says Kevin Cottam.

Through his nomadic and executive research, he has discovered a new behavioural/personality framework and assessment, looking at an individuals and organisation dominant mindset. It is called the NBS Mindsets Assessment, or the Nomadic Builder Settler Mindsets.

Using the nomadic mindset as the base of his work, he speaks and coaches on leadership, which covers a variety of areas such as resilience, vision/purpose, team unity, engagement and the NBS Mindsets.

Among others, Kevin Cottam has worked with Club Med, UBS, Givaudan, Mediacorp, L'Oreal, Nestlé, Thales, Prulia, and spent 13 years at the European Union (Commission, Council, Parliament) as a coach and trainer.

Kevin Cottam has his base in Singapore with outposts in Canada and Lisbon.

“**Respect humanity** as a sustainable necessity”

It is a seed of a calling and time for change … change is necessary for new creation … realising this is okay, and a little uncertainty is okay … change is natural, the only constant … think of it as an opportunity.

Dr. Sheila Patel, Medical Director, Mind-Body Medical Group at the Chopra Center, Carlsbad, USA

January 2018, Tighmert, Morocco One chilly January evening at the Maison d’hôtes Nomades in Tighmert, Morocco, my photographer and I sit on the floor at a low table with a young couple from the Netherlands as we share a simple dinner of camel couscous. The room is made warm and welcoming with beautifully coloured woven carpets and pillows and yellow walls adorned with nomadic art. We talk a while, sharing stories about what we experienced in the Sahara with the nomads. The young lady says to me, “After experiencing some life with the nomads, I feel we have lost the plot on so many levels of humanity, and they seem to have it figured out.” My eyes light up and a smile covers my face. She was referring to the ancient nomadic wisdom, their qualities and mindset. Though I was fully immersed in researching *The Nomadic Mindset* then, this was an affirmation I was on the right track.

Leadership Problem: We Have Lost the Plot Usually, a book starts with a desire to solve a problem, create a hero’s journey, or offer new awareness on a subject or direction. This book is no different.

With the plethora of leadership books out there, the world doesn’t need another leadership book that shares the five or seven or ten steps to successful leadership. As Dr. Patel says, “change is necessary for new creation.”

Leadership needs a serious Rethink. I believe, as do many of my colleagues in the coaching, consulting, and speaking world, that leaders are searching for something else: a fresh leadership path or framework, a different lens to see, hear, and understand things with. Why?

PHOTO Hyacinthe Arthurs

PHOTO Hicham Zemmar

“A quest now exists for new answers to old problems”

Because something is just not working today as we enter the fast-paced, ever-changing world of Industry 4.0. What may have worked a hundred years ago, or even ten years ago, does not reflect the changing environment in organisations, politics, markets, or cultures today. A quest now exists for new answers to old problems. As Einstein so astutely said,

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Hence, we need new mindsets today that are interconnected and aligned to values, purpose, and vision, with a focus on sustainable systems for this rapidly changing and somewhat “congested-thinking” world.

You might have noticed the world, in general, has become overwhelmingly narrow in mindset, thinking patterns, and actions. There is a growing nationalist mindset around the world, and organisations are having difficulties handling the impending disruptions, changes, and technology. Some say we are migrating towards a precipice, especially when you consider climate change, individual behavioural changes, fake news, social and organisational culture shifts, and the rapid decline in biodiversity. Who knows? Perhaps we are.

In many ways, as the young lady from the Netherlands said, “we have lost the plot”! Have we?

A Leadership Answer How can “we get back on plot?” One answer is to migrate to expansion. This takes a Leadership Rethink.

In this book, I propose a new path forwards. This is not your typical leadership book, rather, more of a back-to-the-future exploration. By revealing the ancient wisdom of nomads who have sustained themselves for centuries through ongoing disruption, these disruptions can be considered as seeds of a calling to some leadership answers for Industry 4.0. This, in itself, stimulates a growing awareness within and presents you with an opportunity to rethink your leadership style, behaviours, and qualities.

The Nomadic Mindset is a fresh, expansive-looking leadership framework path for disruptive and rapidly changing times. It is about achieving a balance between inward, narrow-focused thinking and outward, expansive-thinking. Experience the fluidity of nature that dances back and forth between narrow and

“Expansion is the underlying breadth
of the nomadic mindset”

expansive states of being. This awareness and fluidity can get you back on track as you adapt and migrate towards leading a more holistic and sustainable organisational culture in the contemporary world. This starts with you, the leader.

Those seeds of a calling led me to exploring the nomadic mindset. Over the course of one year, I set off to discover, not just new territories, but different mindsets – primarily the nomadic mindset. Along the way, I discovered some extra golden nuggets, the builder and settler mindsets. They are also very important as all three mindsets exist inside us all.

My experiences with Mongolian nomads, the Maasai in Kenya, and the nomads and Berbers in Southern Morocco, plus conversations with executives from startups to multinational organisations, have shaped the theme and mapping of this book. They have helped define the nomadic qualities you will find live within you, your organisation, and the whole human race. These valuable insights will have enormous significance for your organisational culture, sustainability, and leadership.

You Will Discover … You may think, from the title of this book, I am referring to wandering the world discovering new territories, working nomadically in different global locations, or learning how to work in or discover other countries. Not quite (Well, maybe a bit …).

My focus for this book is centered on what Batgerel Bat, Head of Secretariat for Mongolian National Branding Council, in Mongolia told me. She said, “People think nomad means physical movement from place to place to find new and better pastures to graze. No, nomad means the movement of the mind.”

The nomad of the mind is a metaphor for moving from one idea to another, one conversation to another, one negotiation to another, one innovation to another. The nomad *is* the movement or migration from place to place in the mind to discover new and better, greener pastures that enrich us, which leads to new growth and prosperity.

You will discover the qualities associated with the nomadic mindset through stories and metaphors. The colourful nomadic rituals and practices, rich cultures, and vast experiences can enrich and awaken your mindset so you see, hear, and understand not only your leadership style and process, but your organisation, your employees, your organisational culture, and the external world.

Migrate to Expansion On your journey of discovery, you only need to have the capacity and desire to open your eyes, mind, and heart. This will encourage you to migrate to expansion, which is the opposite of narrowness. Awareness expands you. This, I would assume, is how you became a leader.

Expansion is the underlying breadth of the nomadic mindset; migration is the movement towards the nomadic mindset. You can better understand expansion and migration with the poetic mantra of Binderiya, a student at the National University of Mongolia:

Think Vastly; Act Narrowly
Think = Mindset
Vastly = Expansion
Act = Migration
Narrowly = Focus

One way of looking at this is the way Karoli Hindriks of Jobbatical in Estonia, who provides jobs and visas for digital nomads, explains:

“I think what the world needs, as we are sitting with our different mindsets, is to really know how to

PHOTO Jeff Weddell

talk to each other, and I think this is the biggest problem in the world right now. So, if we can somehow bridge that gap to see each other's different viewpoints, that would be really powerful."

1. Are you ready to expand yourself and migrate to different viewpoints on leadership and mindset?
2. Are you ready to unleash the nomad in you?

"Nomad means the movement of the mind"

Migrating to Expansion
there is no beginning to this book
there is no ending to this book
you are migrating
to expansion
there is no beginning to your journey
there is no ending to your journey
you are migrating
to expansion
there is no beginning to your leadership
there is no ending to your leadership
you are migrating
to expansion
migrate to expansion
to live in the nomadic mindset, to never settle ... for too long.
in your mind, always move, always expand to discover better routes and greener pastures;
this is where great leaders thrive.
are you ready to migrate to expansion?
take a deep breath, look to your horizons
and step into to the nomadic mindset ...

How to Read This Book This book is a discovery book/journal.

This leadership path is divided into five parts: Direction, Departure, Discovery, Destination, and Distillation to aid your Rethink. You are currently in Part 1: Direction. It is not meant to be a how-to or what-to-do book, yet it gives you many 'how' gems. It is organised to give you rethink questions and along with rethink pages at the end of each part to jot down some thoughts and actions.

The principle content exists within Parts Two through Four – Departure, Discovery, Destination. A short wrap-up is in Part 5: Distillation. Whether you're embarking on a physical journey or a symbolic one (perhaps an important meeting, negotiation, or a big keynote), most of us go through these five parts.

Part 2: Departure When you first head out on a journey, you want some general information about your trip. This part is divided into three Departures: Indulge in the Tea Ceremony, Taste some Nomadic History, and Recognise the Nomadic, Builder, and Settler Mindsets. I recommend, if time permits, that you read Part 2 in one sitting; then take time to rethink/reflect and answer some of the questions on the Rethink pages provided at the end of Part 2

Part 3: Discovery This section is divided into nine independent learning days, and I encourage you to read one day: then rethink, answer the questions or capture any thoughts on the blank Rethink pages after Day 3, 6, and 9. Each day is rich in story and offers the different qualities of a nomadic mindset while integrating executive case studies and quotes from conversation with executives.

Part 4: Destination The word 'destination' can mean goal or outcome or be the term you use for reaching the end of your journey, project, negotiation, or conversation. There are three Destinations: Believe: Culture is a Pillar, Integrate: the Ability to Sustain Sustainability, and Remember: Never Settle ... for Too Long. They are broad, defining thoughts, actions, necessary to succeed in Industry 4.0. Feel free to capture your thoughts on the Rethink pages at the end of Part 4.

In the end, you alone decide what you have experienced and learned on any journey. My hope for you is that by reading this five-part mindset exploration, you will be inspired to explore, rethink your current leadership and how it can improve through discovering new pastures, and respect humanity as a sustainable necessity. I invite you to migrate to expansion. Happy Nomading.

Mindset of your Capital

Binderiya

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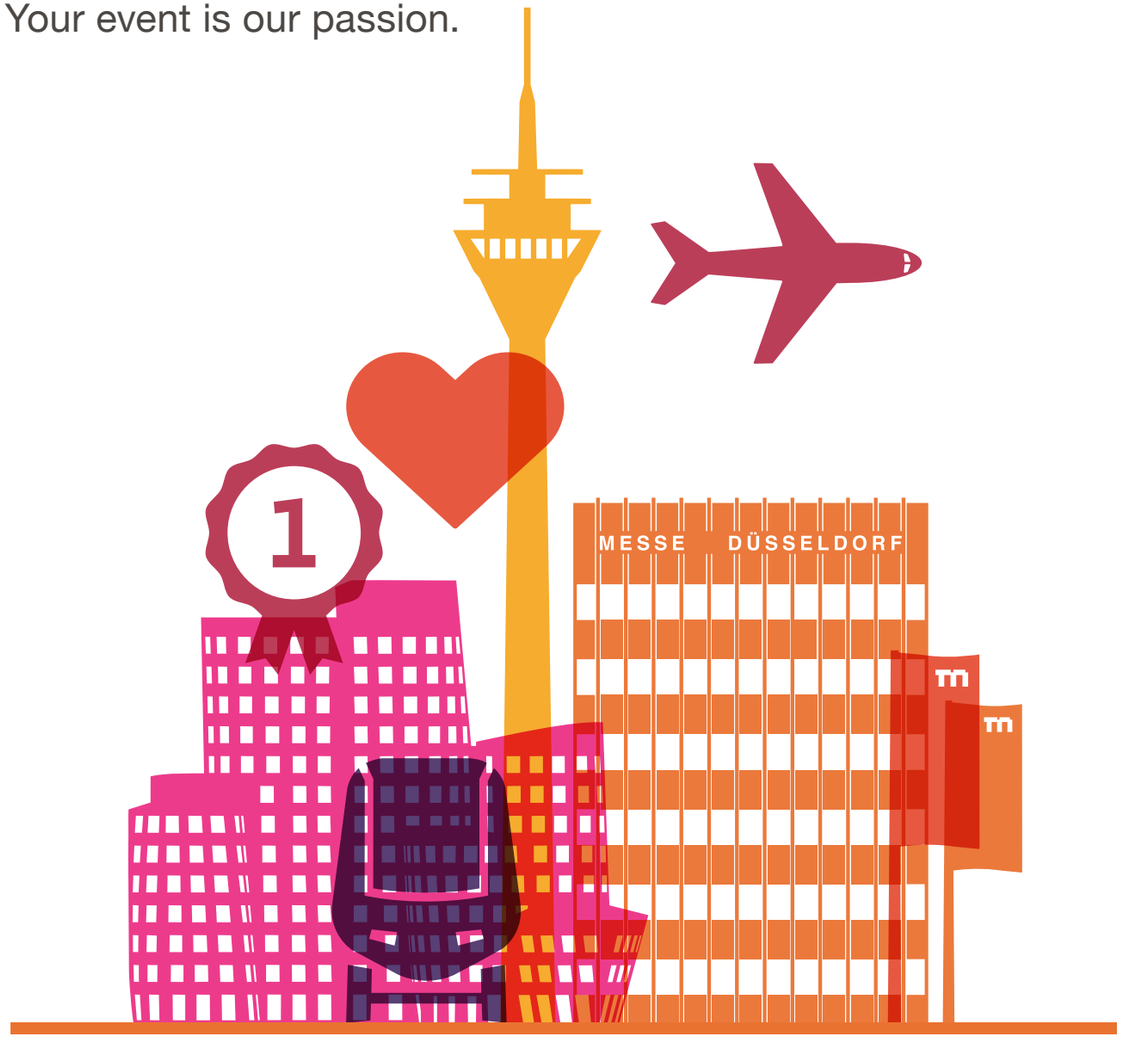

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2031 Vision to Encourage VISITORS TO STAY LONGER AND SPEND MORE IN BRISBANE

MORE THAN 500 Australian operators, investors, industry, local councils and government partners have joined forces to deliver a bold new 12-year vision to encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more in the Brisbane region.

The *Visitor Economy 2031 Vision for the Brisbane Region* targets visiting friends and relatives, holidaymakers, students, major event and business travellers.

Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner said the *Visitor Economy 2031 Vision*, developed by Brisbane's economic development board Brisbane Marketing, in collaboration between industry, regional tourism partners and all levels of government, would help unlock the potential of the Brisbane region.

"Brisbane is transforming through A$12 billion worth of new developments including Brisbane's new runway, International Cruise Ship Terminal and Queen's Wharf Brisbane," says the Mayor.

"Along with our region's beautiful climate, welcoming nature and global connectedness, there is potential to secure an additional A$6.5 billions a year in visitor expenditure and support 50,000 new jobs.

"We know there is more to see and do in our region than ever before, but now we need to work together to create a globally recognised Brisbane brand and remarkable experiences to give visitors even more reason to stay and spend in our region."

The *Visitor Economy 2031 Vision* aims to build experiences in Brisbane, encourage brand awareness and global advocacy and encourage visitors to explore the entire Brisbane region – using Brisbane as a base to explore Australia.

Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner says work had already started to build a globally recognised brand for the region and unearth new experiences and some of the initiatives underway includes:

- A$10 million cooperative marketing program in collaboration with Brisbane Marketing, Brisbane Airport Corporation and the State Government targeting North America and ASEAN markets where there are direct flights into Brisbane.
- An industry-owned and shared Brisbane narrative, that captures the elements and examples that make Brisbane the region of choice for a growing number of domestic and international visitors.
- The recently announced Lord Mayor's Experience Development Incentive Grant Program that supports local businesses to offer more exceptional experiences to enhance Brisbane's appeal as a destination of choice.
- Brisbane City Council's River Access Network that has opened up opportunities for new commissionable tourism products, similar to Sealink and the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation's (QYAC) newly launched Yalingbila whale watching tour.

"This Vision is a great example of collaboration, but our ambitions for the Brisbane region over the next 12 years will only be realised through a true partnership approach where all stakeholders continue to come to the table," says Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner.

Brisbane Airport Corporation Chief Executive Officer Gert-Jan De Graaff says Brisbane was in an excellent position to attract more visitors and entice them to stay longer.

"Brisbane is entering an era of extraordinary opportunity and Brisbane's new runway is a catalytic investment that will enable the significant growth in international visitors for decades to come."

Momentum for Brisbane is already building with the latest tourism figures showing record numbers of domestic and international visitors from places like Sydney, Melbourne, China and the USA.

Forecasts from the *Visitor Economy 2031 Vision* show the combined value of international and domestic overnight visitors will contribute nearly 90 per cent of total visitor spend and visitors will come from regional markets, interstate capital cities and international markets including China, India, North America, Korea, Japan and the UK.

Light sculpture in Brisbane Southbank Parklands PHOTO © iStock.com/chameleonseye

PHOTO © iStock.com/dszc

The Biggest Challenge IS A LACK OF AWARENESS ABOUT AZERBAIJAN

TEXT
Robert Cotter

WITH ALMOST three millennia of the Zoroastrian culture behind them, it's fair to say that the Azerbaijanis know a thing or two about the inherent properties of fire.

This might even be the source of the country's current burning desire to get itself on the international tourism map, and Azerbaijan and its capital city of Baku is certainly blazing a trail with some high-profile events in recent years.

The hosting of the Eurovision song contest in 2012 at Baku's impressive Crystal Hall on the Caspian waterfront put the country centre stage to a vast European audience, as has securing an annual slot on the Formula 1 calendar since 2016, one of only three city circuits on the entire schedule, which casts a full-beam headlight on the city.

Add to this being the host city for the UEFA Europa League final in 2019 and set to also host games for UEFA Euro 2020 and Azerbaijan has felt a further significant boost to its visitor numbers.

Not content to muscle its way into attracting its slice of the global leisure tourism market. However, Azerbaijan has set its sights firmly on elevating its allure as a global business events destination too.

Much of the responsibility for this rests with the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau and in place to oversee this is Sevda Aliyeva, who has served as its director since the Azerbaijan Tourism Board was established and the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau became a part of the entire Azerbaijan Tourism Board structure.

Before holding her current role, she has also been the Executive Director of the Baku Convention Bureau, both parts being positions that for her have cemented the importance of Baku establishing itself as a prime business event location for event organisers worldwide.

"The development of the business events industry is important, as it brings international recognition for the country," says Sevda Aliyeva. "In Azerbaijan, it provides the country representatives with additional channels of communication, allows people to be connected and it facilitates the development of the different industries in the country, as well as giving international exposure for the whole country."

Traditionally the Azerbaijani industries that would benefit from an enhanced climate of business event activity in Baku and other main cities across the country have been the mainstays of those associated with oil and gas. More than two-thirds of the country is rich in these resources, as well as agriculture, with more than half of the country's surface area given over to this.

"Oil and gas production plays a major role in the economy of Azerbaijan, but as the country is endowed with lots of mineral deposits the mining industry has also led to the growth of lots of industries and the creation of numerous employment opportunities within the country," says Sevda Aliyeva.

"Agriculture is also a core industry to Azerbaijan's economy, and of course, the development of the tourism industry has been among the top priorities for the country and its government representatives.

"Whether these industries are significant drivers also for conferences and events, then it is a 'yes'. At the initial stage as a Convention Bureau, we tried to focus and bring business events that are related to the industries as mentioned earlier. By then, we decided to start with the sectors that are already developed."

Beyond these traditional developed industries, the country is today rapidly expanding into the sectors of science, technology and aerospace. Areas for which sustained political support alongside buy-in from the country's leading institutions connected to these fields will be essential to help magnify and promote the country's future business event landscape.

"Our politicians realise that hosting international business events are also associated with many different advantages for the country. Being such a driving force for the

development of the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau activities and showing the willingness to support all kinds of initiatives once it comes to hosting business events proves it.

"Since the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau started its activities in the field of raising awareness of the business events industry in the country, the procedures and steps that should be undertaken in bringing events to the country, the overall understanding among hospitals and universities has been raised significantly."

"A part of our daily job is to meet people and explain to them what the whole industry is about. It raises awareness and understanding in general.

"Following the political commitment and focus of the country to develop the business events industry in Azerbaijan, both the science and economic sides of Azerbaijan have started to show interest towards finding their internationally-based counterparts to build international relations, connections and as a result host the community representative in their home town."

The home town hosting of international community representatives will often mean serving up a genuine surprise to first-time visitors to Azerbaijan and in particular to Baku. As a city that is still somewhat off-radar for many people, it is an authentic smorgasbord of cultures, styles and experiences in a beautiful natural setting on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Radiating out from its UNESCO World Heritage old town, the city melds the ancient with the modern and very often with unexpected elegance and grace.

Added to this is a cuisine that, while also still off-radar to many people, is exceptionally good and reflects the country's diverse influences and agricultural produce, particularly so as it is often accompanied by one of the country's outstanding (and equally unknown) wines. Added to all this is that it can all be experienced in the company of genuinely warm and welcoming hosts who are ready for the influx of guests that will undoubtedly come Azerbaijan's way once word of what the country can offer its visitors properly gets out.

"Our politicians realise that hosting international business events are also associated with many different advantages for the country"

Complementing all of the above and specifically for the business events industry is an infrastructure that, in terms of both quality and value that it can provide, will once more be of equally overwhelming surprise to first-time visitors.

Arriving in Baku means experiencing the Skytrax five-star rated Heydar Aliyev International Airport, built-in 2014 and able to accommodate up to six million passengers annually. Staying in the city unveils an array of five-star international brand hotels to choose from, many with cutting edge meeting facilities in-house.

For larger-scale meetings, there is then the futuristic and state-of-the-art Baku Convention Centre, the largest venue the Caucasus and a building of international standing. Completed in 2015 and located near to the city centre and with seventeen conference halls accommodating up to 2,500 people as well as a large hall for up to 3,500 delegates, the centre is more than suitable for any scale of event.

This is further enhanced by the neighbouring Zaha Hadid-designed Heydar Aliyev Centre that is the most striking modern building in all of Baku and already established as a city icon. Completed in 2012, the centre houses a capacious conference hall, a gallery hall and a museum, with spacious internal communal areas and outdoor areas that can be combined and secured together with those around the Baku Convention Centre for international-scale events.

Yet with such reliable attributes in place to easily deliver high profile business events, as a nascent destination there are also a number of challenges that Azerbaijan must be ready to address, none less so than increasing the awareness of just what and where the country is and being prepared to educate the global business event fraternity on the full spectrum of what it is able to offer as a premium meetings destination.

"The biggest challenge is a lack of awareness about Azerbaijan. For some reason people still aren't aware of what the destination is about and is ready to offer," says Sevda Aliyeva. "This, unfortunately, brings us to a second challenge and the perception of Azerbaijan, which does not meet the reality.

"A third challenge is that despite having an extremely developed business events infrastructure in Azerbaijan, the skills and knowledge are still in the phase of development. We

Sevda Aliyeva, CEO, ACB PHOTO Adil Yusifov

are still in a learning curve of how to really play internationally and what it means globally for business events in the country."

While Azerbaijan has undoubtedly built up the hardware it needs to deliver well on major international events, the software of completing the learning curve and having the people skills in place is still a work in progress, but it is one that is progressing well, and that has formal links in place to ensure the curve will flatten out in the near future.

"Over the last fifteen years, as the tourism industry started to develop, the country started to give close attention to the education development in this field," says Sevda Aliyeva.

"There was, of course, a need for professionals, as we all know that the right and properly educated people are crucial for stable development. Therefore, we currently have three educational institutions where the education system is developing according to the industry needs. These are the Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University (ATMU), the Baku Tourism Vocational School (BTVS), and the Mingachevir Tourism College (MTC).

"As we are extremely interested in the development of educational institutions based on international standards, ATMU has also been cooperating with IMC Krems Applied Sciences University of Austria for a Double Degree diploma programme for more than eleven years. As a result, mostly in all tourism-related structures and institutions, a big share of human resources are people with a tourism background."

Alongside awareness and education, one further significant challenge that Azerbaijan will have to tackle in coming years is that of event sustainability, an increasingly important issue across all of the developed world and for which the business event industry is expected to take a leading role.

"When it comes to sustainability, countries such as Azerbaijan are developing countries, and due to this development phase, they are developing their future accordingly and considering their natural resources.

"I am talking about Azerbaijan as a case, but we understand the importance in terms of economic, social and of course, environmental sustainability. However, if we are talking about green meetings, for example, we still need some time to get to this point."

Getting to the point in every sense would appear to be something of a mantra for the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau. To make sure they do this, every opportunity is taken to engage in networking, information share and the dissemination of precisely what the destination has to offer for specific groups and targeted business events.

"I'm extremely active when it comes to networking, and I'm trying to use every opportunity to meet people, talking to them, sharing my knowledge and also learning from them. The stronger we are in remaining, keeping and enlarging existing networks from totally different people, industries and countries, the more successful we become.

"I use different platforms, whether it's any government, scientific, cultural or even corporate event I'm invited to. The platforms that are arranged by tourism authorities of Azerbaijan Convention Bureau are especially important, because I always use this chance to announce that the business events industry is beyond tourism."

As Azerbaijan embarks on its journey to get beyond tourism and into the business events sector, it does so at a time that the country has been getting beyond its national boundaries and into other previously untapped realms.

In 2013 Azercosmos launched its first satellite, Azerspace-1, into space and joined the family of advanced nations aiming to have their space industry. The fires that have fuelled the Zoroastrian peoples of Azerbaijan to enter the space race will undoubtedly help propel their ambitions and enthusiasm in the business event industry too.

"I'm focused on putting Azerbaijan on the global map as a premium business event destination. To achieve my goal, I will undertake to overcome all the barriers and challenges we face," says Sevda Aliyeva. "What is even more important is that we know exactly where we are currently and where we would like to be in the nearest future, so only time is needed to put everything on the proper track."

> **"We currently have three educational** institutions where the education system is developing according to the industry needs"

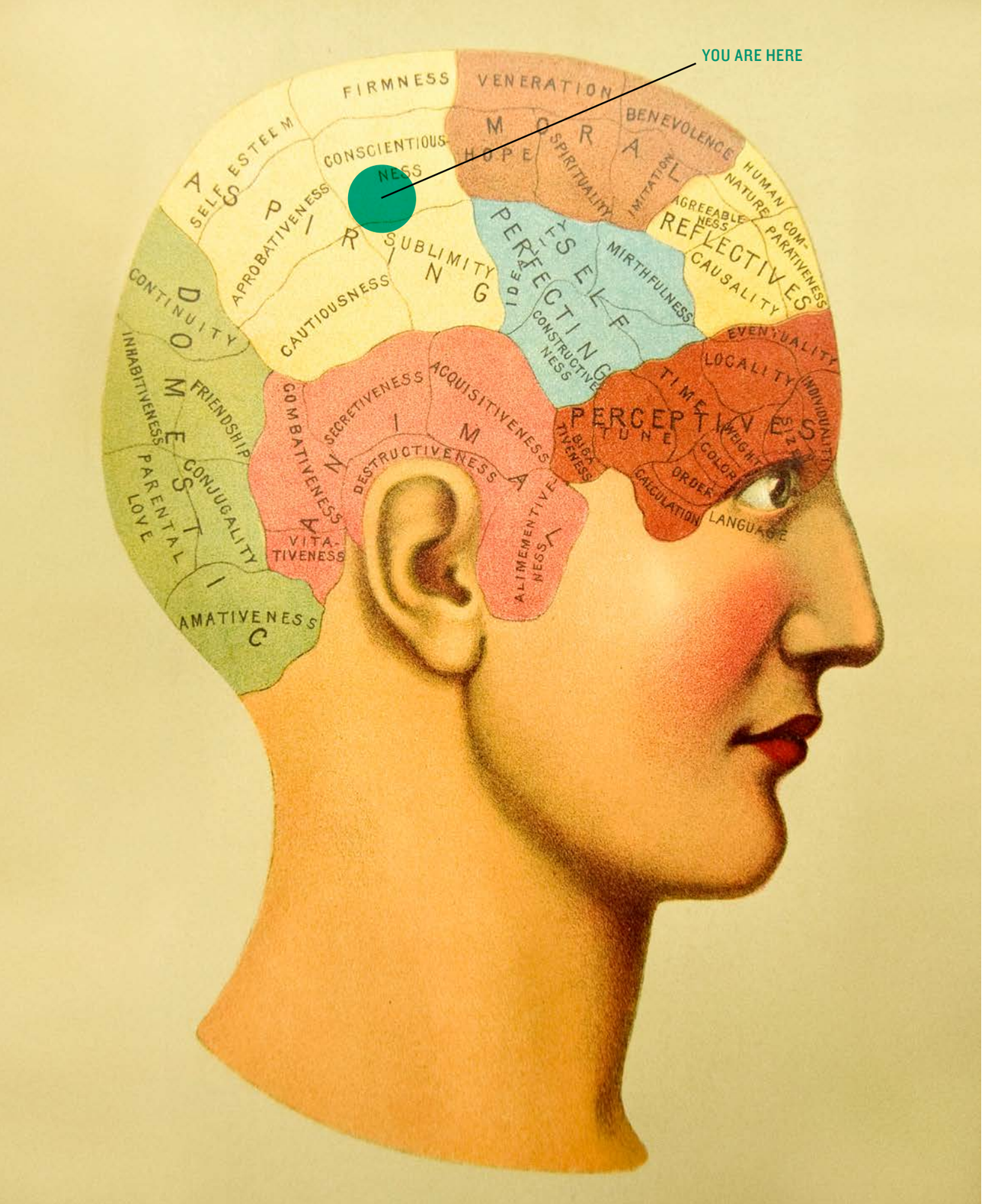

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PHOTO Sara Appelgren

HANS GORDON, *Ph.D., Associate Professor, Authorised Psychologist, specialised in Aviation Psychology. Authorised psychotherapist, since 1987 running Gordon Consulting. Has for decades been engaged by airline companies, among them SAS and Thai Airways International.*

Cognitive Dysfunction (BRAIN FOG)

When we humans allow a lot to go wrong

Almost all the professionals who were now set to join him were coming face to face with the fact that it appeared he knew nothing. There was simply no subject, other than perhaps building construction, that he had substantially mastered. Everything with him was off the cuff. Whatever he knew he seemed to have learned an hour before – and that was mostly half-baked. But each member of the new Trump team was convincing him or herself otherwise, because what did they know, the man had been elected president. He offered something, obviously. Indeed, while everybody in his rich-guy social circle knew about his wide-ranging ignorance, Trump, the businessman, could not even read a balance sheet, and Trump, who had campaigned on his deal-making skills, was, with his inattention to details, a terrible negotiator – they yet found him somehow instinctive. That was the word. He was a force of personality. He could make you believe."

From *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* by **MICHAEL WOLFF**

LONG-RUNNING TV series *The West Wing*, which aired its final episode in 2006, saw viewing figures shoot through the ceiling in just about every country in which it was screened. Allison Janney, who played the role of White House press secretary C. J. Cregg, was so convincing that when the series ended she was inundated with job offers. Similarly, actor, comedian and musician Volodymyr Zelenskyi managed to put himself across as a perfectly serious presidential candidate in Ukraine earlier this year. While Allison Janney had no inclination whatsoever to begin a new career as a press secretary, Volodymyr Zelenski jumped at the chance to play one of his acting roles in real life. Shamelessness pays. The Ukrainian surprisingly won enough votes to achieve his goal, proving in the process that you can in fact fool enough people enough of the time.

The most famous actor come president of all time was of course Ronald Reagan, a man widely regarded as a B actor who played lead roles in B movies. But Reagan was seriously into politics and was an active member of the Democratic Party before jumping ship to join the Republicans. He was also president of the Screen Actors Guild and later became governor of California, a seat he occupied for five years up until he won the 1980 presidential election with a landslide victory over incumbent president Jimmy Carter.

Talented actors can be so convincing in their portrayal of real-life characters that it is really no surprise that so many of us fall for the illusion that they are capable of flitting in and out of any profession at will. A young Clint Eastwood, Jack Nicholson or Robert de Niro would most certainly have stepped straight into a long and distinguished military career, Michael Douglas would have made a perfect smartass business executive and Meryl Streep's sharp intellect would have seen her rubbing shoulders with the upper echelons of society, royalty included. We love to indulge in this sort of fiction to keep the cold light of day at bay. But not entirely as we like to saunter between the two as though in a dream; not just in a daydream but during nocturnal dreaming as well.

"Michael Douglas would have made a perfect smartass business executive"

This applies to all things, large and small. In general, it also applies to politics and the people upon we so willingly pin our hopes. The business world and religion also deserve a mention here. They have after all produced plenty of leaders with a capital L to perform on the world's soapboxes. They may go under the guise of director, entrepreneur, prophet, ayatollah, pope, rabbi, etcetera, but to get their message across they also have to create illusions for their followers. We want to believe when we have a strong need to believe, mostly when the world turns its back on us with a dose of reality. It should also be noted that leaders with a capital L will soon fall or be pushed off their soapbox if they fail to deliver that which they so vehemently promised. Up like a sun, down like a pancake is a saying that rings true in many contexts.

Most of us probably see ourselves as reasonably rational people. Reasonably rational in the sense of observing, assessing and evaluating the circles we move in without needing to produce scientific proof of doing the right thing. We thus act more intuitively, following an internal flow of data and information points that we quickly compare with our life experiences to arrive at conclusions we can feel satisfied with: "Yes, that must be it, and that is what I will act upon." This type of process moves quickly without us being fully aware of all the parts involved. And, like the social beings that we are, we will jump hoops and cross hurdles not to deviate from the crowd because that always means taking the unnecessary risk of being frozen out. So, if you believe in it, I can also give it a try. Likewise, any leader you might recommend. This guarantees many hands to the fore to build for us our valuable community, our congregation, our safe haven resting securely on stable structures that we can also perceive to be expert, broad-shouldered human beings.

Of course, not everybody buys into something that is widely regarded as a culture of addiction. There will always be cross-border deviants driven by the need to find a new identity. They often take on the establishment. A risky venture, especially if law and order is under threat. It could be subject to severe punishment. Everything from alienation to crucifixion. Pluralism and equal rights for all are splendid ideals, but history, not least in our own time, points to walls, fences, gated communities, etcetera, in both political-ideological and concrete forms. Most everything circles around the complexities of building a society. Countries are governed

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by rule of law, which means that the doors to a hierarchal order are always left open in order to formalise and normalise. The struggle for positions of power has invariably led to conflict and aggression. Attempts to deal with social instability have ended in people forming groups or tribes or nations, with the largest leading the way and simply helping themselves to privileges as large landowners, or more symbolically in the shape of empires or kingdoms ruled by blue-blooded nobility answering only to some transcendental god on high. Once higher up on the hierarchal ladder, all focus was on retaining their position of power. For millennia this has been upheld by the claim that it is hereditary and handed down to the oldest child. Ordinary people need not bother applying.

That is the way it was in ancient Greece a few centuries BC. By then, the traditions of power were already embedded in the city-state foundation. Male nobility was top of the pile as the largest landowners, followed by other men then craftsmen and merchants. Women had no place in political life and thus no influence. At the bottom were the slaves, the manual workers. Something fundamentally enlightening took place in ancient Greece during the third and fourth centuries BC. Philosophers, teachers and intellectuals were allowed to take the stage and had their names immortalised in our history books: Socrates, Plato, Aristoteles, among others.

"Meryl Streep's sharp intellect would have seen her rubbing shoulders with the upper echelons of society, royalty included"

One could describe it as a major and revolutionary cultural change. What actually happened that led up to it? Certainly a variety of events, including the great battle known as the Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens in the early fourth century BC, but also the strong influence asserted by the merchants over the aristocracy and the group of officials called the strategists; they were no more than ten in number, seated in heavy political posts in the people's and council assemblies, but primarily they were military commanders, the Commanders-in-Chief of the time.

The rather chaotic situation that Athens found itself in provided the perfect setting for the philosophers and teachers to step into the limelight. Plato, a student of Socrates, turned to the people with his criticism of Athenian politics through his great work *The Republic* in which he puts forward his ideal political order. In broad terms, he argues that a nation must be governed by enlightened and naturally gifted people, who possess the right conditions for philosophical paths to gain insight into the virtues, norms and principles of how a state must be constructed. Naturally, Plato most certainly saw himself as a pioneer in this respect. Aristoteles, one of Plato's students, took up the baton and continued down the Platonic track. In his work *Politics* he strongly argued that those who wish to rule over others must also outmatch them in personal wealth. Only then can sufficient authority be won and established. But to avoid anyone being overcome by personal greed, you must conduct a well-planned educational campaign. It is not wealth itself that has to be tamed but the craving for wealth.

And the people listened. The majority followed the advice. They most certainly saw it as rational. And even if the future is littered with calls for rebellion, and even if revolutions have come and gone, and even if intellectual after intellectual has argued their proposals for political governance of nations, where -isms are replaced by other -isms, most of it is like tiny pieces of the earth's crust floating around on relatively loose political visions. It is there under us, constantly floating, arrows pointing first this way and then the other. As we move around on the surface of all this, many of us still feel uncertain, despite being surrounded by endless new gurus and policymakers. Some of us are plagued by insecurity and claim to be mentally ill.

And in the big country across the pond sits a president who showed his hand, just like the ancient Greek philosophers advised, and won 61.2 million votes in the 2016 presidential election. Hillary Clinton may have received a few million more individual votes, but a majority of the electorate determined that Trump was the best candidate. One could say that the support for Trump was based on what a sufficient number of individuals and the majority of the electorate saw as the most rational. Maybe, just maybe, some of these today, three years later, have pointed their rational assumptions in another direction.

A SPACE TO SHAPE IDEAS

Sandton Convention Centre's innovative menus focus on health

The global eventing food & beverage trend towards healthier and more varied menu options is being embraced by South Africa's leading multi-purpose venue, Sandton Convention Centre, which is catering for all dietary requirements for events of all sizes, with a wide range of fresh, flavourful and innovative culinary offerings.

Sandton Convention Centre (SCC), which is ideally located in the heart of Johannesburg's vibrant business and commercial hub with direct access via skywalks to upmarket malls, restaurants, bars and hotels, has 22 000m² of flexible event space comprising two exhibition halls and 15 venues of varying sizes.

SCC is renowned for its world-class food & beverage services, which is headed by Executive Chef James Khoza, who is also President of the South African Chefs Association. "We recently introduced new menu options to cater for any occasion, event and dietary preferences, and to ensure that modern and healthier food options are available," he explains.

Khoza, who has overseen food & beverage at SCC for eight years, has created the menu selection of in line with global consumer food trends. He says, "Food & beverage is one of SCC's winning differentiators and we maintain high standards to suit the venue's international and highly discerning guests and clients.

The new menus comprise many options that can also be customised if preferred, for all types of meal requirements throughout the day, and cocktail receptions can be enhanced by adding any of SCC's various 'live action stations' to the menu selection.

The options ensure that dietary requirements such as vegetarian, low fat, low carb, gluten-free, Halaal, and other healthy options are met. "We ensure that we constantly stay ahead of the game to ensure we are offering new trending ingredients in our menus," he says. Breakfast is bigger than ever too and is taking its place at SCC as a key opportunity for innovative corporate events, from casual get-togethers too elegant, celebratory functions with a fresh new breakfast menu.

The new menus are in response to a trend for business breakfast events in the interests of time and cost saving, and the range of events taking place over breakfast is increasing. Khoza says, "Our new breakfast menus are customer-driven, delivering fresh dishes to accommodate the personality of the events and to meet clients' needs. We are giving them the freedom to put together their own menus without being constrained by the traditional approach to breakfast."

Khoza adds, "Our new approach and wide-ranging menus embrace the climate change challenges that we face, and we consistently seek solutions to ensure we deliver favourite dishes, while finding new ways to prepare and cook our food. We implement sustainability initiatives in the kitchens, ensuring that our collective mindset is always aware of the need to reduce our footprint. We're committed to it – and to ensuring that every delegate, exhibitor and visitor's culinary experience here is world-class."

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IBTM World 2019
THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING IN THE EVENTS INDUSTRY

MENTORING is not a new concept. The word 'mentor' comes from the ancient Greek tale of Odysseus who entrusted his son's education to his friend, Mentor. However, the value of mentoring is becoming increasingly recognised across the meetings and events industry. Not only in terms of job satisfaction and career progression but also because of the impact it has on industry advancement and keeping on top of technological developments.

With applications for IBTM World's first-ever investment and mentoring programme, Event Business Accelerator now open, we caught up with four of the mentors to find out what has inspired them to guide industry peers through their careers and help them grow, both professionally and personally.

Why is mentorship important in the meetings and events industry?

Viona Terleth, managing director of Terleth Consultancy and co-founder of DSCVRME: "We all know that being an event professional means we're operating in the top ten most stressful jobs in the world. As we are results-driven, and always under pressure, we tend to forget to take care of ourselves. We don't ask for help, but instead, take the bull by its horns and try to solve all issues on our own. I believe that any meetings and events professional should actively have a coach or mentor as a sparring partner to mirror you on blind spots, help you develop, and most importantly support you in keeping your balance. In my view, this is essential to stay ahead of your game."

Majbritt Sandberg, founder of RED LAB Experience & Bullseye Branding: "Mentorship in any business is vital. Having a someone you can bounce ideas off and share your dreams and fears with is extremely important. In the meetings and events industry, which is constantly faced with new trends and challenges, it can be difficult to keep up and stay focused. I think mentoring is a way to enhance the success of others, and ultimately create a further educated and innovative industry. Also, it is an opportunity to create shared learning to benefit both the mentor and the mentee."

Ingrid Rip, owner of RREM: "I think mentorship is important in any industry, providing support for personal and professional growth. Learning from the experiences and challenges of peers who have a longer history in the industry than you will help close the gap between theory and day-to-day activities."

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received from a mentor? How has it helped you?

Viona Terleth: "One of my mentors taught me that a big mistake, conflict or complaint with a person or organisation could be the basis of steady growth. As long as you are honest, transparent and have sincere intentions, it can significantly strengthen your relationship and partnership for the future."

“Reverse mentoring is a brilliant concept”

Majbritt Sandberg: “‘Always be generous with your knowledge and give the client a little more than they expect.’ This advice was given to me by a mentor during the financial crisis in 2007–2009. I had always been all about sharing my knowledge and learning new skills to improve my business. However, during those challenging times, I was distracted by cutting costs and growing my business. Momentarily I forgot the core value of my business and the key components that had made it successful in the first place. The advice helped me retain my existing clients and even transformed some of them into brand ambassadors who helped get my business back on track.”

Richard John, COO of Realise Me, and managing director of Ideas Nest: “I once created an event that was struggling, which I was holding on to, thinking that the next one could be the turning point, and it would perform better. My mentor told me to 'take the emotion out of the decision', which made me realise that selling the event was a much wiser course of action. It was an emotionally painful decision, but without the mentor, I would have carried on the decline.”

Ingrid Rip: “The best piece of advice received during my education to become a trainer and coach was to ‘focus on your talents’. I can be easily distracted as I find almost all aspects of the events industry exciting and fun. Since I am now focusing on my talents, I can provide a much clearer proposition to the market.”

While older workers have plenty of highly valuable insights, what are your thoughts on reverse mentoring – younger peers coaching senior executives?

Viona Terleth: “What I love about reverse mentoring is the energy and passion my younger peers have for wellness and a work-life balance. I believe their increased levels of enthusiasm and self-awareness inspire the wider industry to infuse more passion and wellness into events and their day-to-day activities.”

Majbritt Sandberg: “Getting a fresh perspective through reverse mentoring is so valuable. We are all creatures of habit and learning something new means that you will get things wrong in the beginning. Reverse mentoring is not only a way to stay ahead of technology trends but also a unique way to look through the lens of a different person.”

Richard John: “Reverse mentoring is a brilliant concept. I deliver Event Assistant apprenticeships in the UK, so I work with many people aged between 18 and 25, from whom I've learnt so much over time. What I love the most is that I can hand them over any social media-related tasks, knowing they'll always deliver.”

IBTM World's Event Business Accelerator will see the selected finalists participate in an intensive mentoring programme of workshops, webinars and one-to-one sessions with a team of industry experts. The mentors will support them as they develop and scale their ideas and businesses ahead of pitching for funding to help bring their idea to fruition or to grow their existing business. A panel of industry judges will score the entries.

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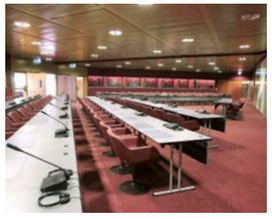

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Why We Refuse to See the Bright Side, EVEN THOUGH WE SHOULD

TEXT
Steven Pinker

ACCORDING TO the latest data, people are living longer and becoming healthier, better fed, richer, smarter, safer, more connected – and, at the same time, ever gloomier about the state of the world. As the political scientist John Mueller once summed up the history of the West, "People seem simply to have taken the remarkable economic improvement in stride and have deftly found new concerns to get upset about." How can we explain pessimism in a world of progress?

It's not that people are naturally glum. On the contrary, they tend to see their lives through rosetinted glasses: they say they are happy, their schools are good, their neighborhoods are safe and that they are less likely than the average person to become the victim of an accident, a disease, a layoff or crime.

But when people are asked about their countries, they switch from Pollyanna to Eeyore: everyone else is miserable, they insist, and the world is going to hell in a handcart.

This disconnect originates in the nature of news. News is about what happens, not what doesn't happen, so it features sudden and upsetting events like fires, plant closings, rampage shootings and shark attacks. Most positive developments are not camera-friendly, and they aren't built in a day. You never see a headline about a country that is not at war, or a city that has not been attacked by terrorists – or the fact that since yesterday, 180,000 people have escaped extreme poverty.

The bad habits of media in turn bring out the worst in human cognition. Our intuitions about risk are driven not by statistics but by images and stories. People rank tornadoes (which kill dozens of

PHOTO Rose Lincoln/Harvard University

“A quantitative mind-set is not just a smarter way to understand the world but the morally enlightened one”

Americans a year) as more dangerous than asthma (which kills thousands), presumably because tornadoes make for better television. It’s easy to see how this cognitive bias – stoked by the news policy “If it bleeds, it leads” – could make people conclude the worst about where the world is heading.

Irrational pessimism is also driven by a morbid interest in what can go wrong – and there are always more ways for things to go wrong than to go right. This creates a market for experts to remind us of things that can go wrong that we may have overlooked. Biblical prophets, oped pundits, social critics, dystopian filmmakers and tabloid psychics know they can achieve instant gravitas by warning of an imminent doomsday. Those who point out that the world is getting better – even hardheaded analysts who are just reading out the data – may be dismissed as starry-eyed naïfs.

Psychologists have identified other reasons we are nostalgic about the past and jaundiced about the present. Time heals most wounds: the negative coloring of bad experiences fades with the passing of years. Also, we are liable to confuse the heavier burdens of maturity with a world that has lost its innocence, and the inevitable decline in our faculties with a decline in the times. As the columnist Franklin Pierce Adams pointed out, “Nothing is more responsible for the good old days than a bad memory.”

The cure for these biases is numeracy: basing our sense of the world not on bleeding headlines or gory images but on measures of human flourishing such as longevity, literacy, prosperity and peace. Numbers, after all, aggregate the good and the bad, the things that happen and the things that don’t. A quantitative mind-set, despite its nerdy aura, is not just a smarter way to understand the world but the morally enlightened one. It treats every human life as equal, rather than privileging the people who are closest to us or most photogenic. And it holds out the hope that we might identify the causes of our problems and thereby implement the measures that are most likely to solve them.

Steven Pinker is a Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. He conducts research on language and cognition, writes for publications such as the New York Times, Time and The Atlantic, and is the author of ten books. The excerpt is from his book *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress.*

stevenpinker.com/publications/enlightenment-now-case-reason-science-humanism-and-progress

PHOTO Rose Lincoln/Harvard University

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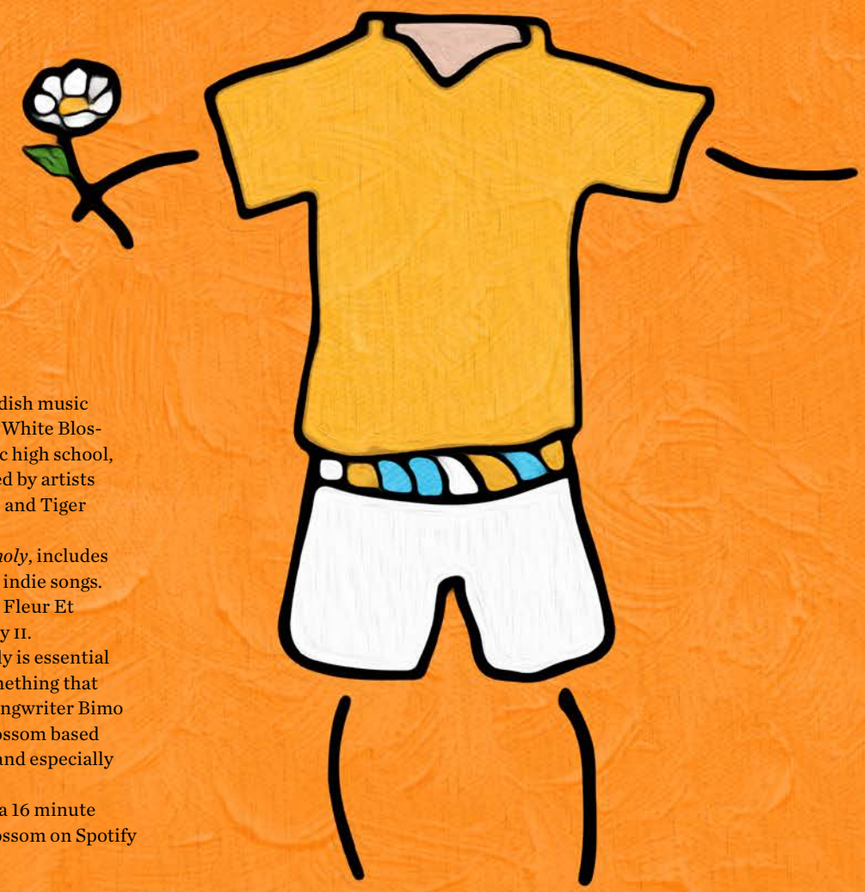
White Blossom
ON REPEAT



BIMO AND SOFIA are a Swedish music duo from Malmö known as White Blossom. While attending music high school, they produce music inspired by artists such as Boy Pablo, Wallows and Tiger Lou.

Their debut EP, *Melancholy*, includes six laid-back, lofty and airy indie songs. Our current favourites are: Fleur Et Champagne and Flower Boy II.

The power of melancholy is essential for White Blossom and something that they strive for, and main songwriter Bimo choose the name White Blossom based on his passion for flowers, and especially Zinnias.

When your mind needs a 16 minute break, you'll find White Blossom on Spotify or Apple Music and more.

IMAGE White Blossom

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Network to Share Its Expertise:

LEARN HOW YOUR CITY CAN BECOME FUTURE-PROOF

THE EUROPEAN Green Capital Network has launched its Future-proof Toolkit. The kit includes case studies, guidance and insider tips on how cities can become more resilient towards climate change. It is the first in a series of five toolkits on different themes that guide cities to become more sustainable.

The European Green Capital Network is a network of all the former European Green Capital Award winners and finalists. It's an initiative of the European Commission to promote and reward the efforts of cities that have shown commitment to improving the urban environment.

Through the Network, the members continue to serve as role model cities, encouraging other European cities also to go green. Last November, experts from member cities of Barcelona, Bristol, Essen, Hamburg, Lahti, Lisbon, Nijmegen, Oslo, Reykjavik, Stockholm, Umeå, Vitoria-Gasteiz and 's-Hertogenbosch gathered in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, to provide content for this Future-proof Toolkit.

The case studies covered in the Toolkit showcase Oslo's storm-water management strategy, Nijmegen's citizen-led approach to reducing flood risk, Hamburg's plans to build 100 hectares of green roofs, and Lisbon's green infrastructure programme.

Not only do the case studies highlight the ideas, approaches taken and achievements, but they also present the challenges faced. They are also open about the fact that even the green capitals of Europe face obstacles and are still learning, and that by working together and sharing insights, cities can move forward.

In addition to the case studies, the Toolkit provides links to useful tools, videos, information sources and also advice on broader topics such as inequality and uncertainty. Key themes throughout include the potential of nature-based solutions, embracing the expertise of local citizens, and recognising that green transformation is not only about making cities resilient towards climate change, but it is also about the social and about working together with locals to provide access to nature that all communities can enjoy.

As noted in the Toolkit, "acting as a community to build a resilient city makes the community more resilient in turn." As an example, the aim of Lisbon's green corridors and planting its 80,000 new trees was not only to reduce air pollution and vulnerability towards heat waves. It was also about becoming more socially inclusive by improving public access to nature, enabling more people to cycle to work and involving citizens via initiatives such as Lisbon's tree-planting Saturdays.

"With green infrastructure, there is a wide range of challenges you can address through the same solution," says Duarte Mata of the City of Lisbon.

The Network's message for other cities is clear; through green and inclusive infrastructure, all European cities have the potential to become future-proof.

The Goal Is
300 DESTINATIONS BY 2022

TEXT
Melissa Baird and Roger Kellerman

AS SOUTH AFRICA is one of the world's most favoured destinations for leisure and business events and exploring the wonders of natural biodiversity, how does it match up to European cities of choice in terms of sustainability?

What could be done to improve its cities ratings as sustainable destinations? How can sustainability be used to boost the tourism sector, drive job creation and the development of more circular and thriving economies?

We spoke to Guy Bigwood, the Managing Director of the Global Destinations Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) and pioneer of sustainability in the business events world, about the global trend driving the development of sustainable event destinations, and the initiatives being used by cities to catalyse a transformation in their tourism sector.

What is the GDS-Index? How does it work?

"It is a global benchmarking and performance improvement programme for destinations. It was created to harness the power of the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions industry, to accelerate sustainable development in cities and surrounding communities," says Guy Bigwood.

"It was founded in 2016 by visionary Scandinavian Cities and leading event industry organisations MCI, ICCA, IMEX and European Cities Marketing. We have evolved beyond our Scandinavian origins to become the largest global community of tourism and event destinations working on sustainability. At present we have 58 cities, including Barcelona, Copenhagen, Washington, Denver, Bangkok, Brussels, Kyoto, Geneva, Oslo, and Sydney."

How are the index destinations developing? Will Reykjavik take over the lead in some years?

"The GDS-Index has developed significantly in 2019. Be prepared for a few surprises when we launch the 2019 results at ICCA in Houston. What started as a benchmarking program for Nordic events destinations is now becoming a global movement of sustainable tourism and events destinations. Our work with these destinations is getting much deeper also. From mapping and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of a destinations sustainability program, we are now working in close partnership with the Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to help them better engage and inspire their stakeholders to do more, and then helping them to involve these stakeholders in the creation of a new regenerative vision and strategy for the destination that is based on social, environmental and economic progress and impact."

How many new destinations have you got since the latest statistics?

"We now have 58 destinations in the program. In 2018, we had 46. We are excited to have new mega destinations such as Vienna, and also whole regions such as Flanders who now participate with six cities."

How many new destinations are in the pipeline?

"We have another 30 at the moment. Our goal is to have 300 destinations by 2022. This is a big hairy and audacious goal, which requires some big thinking and new partnerships. Expect to hear more about that in the new year."

What is the single most crucial question to develop for the destinations?

"In general, most destinations do not have a proper sustainability or stewardship strategy. They have not included sustainability into their core vision, and have not set clear SMART goals, and KPIs to track performance. Their strategy is then very tactical and short-sighted, and not a 5 to 10-year programme. DMOs need to change from marketing to management organisations. While we see some great examples, most are just not there yet."

Tell us more about the objectives and how you see it making improvements to a city's rating and appeal?

"The GDS-Index was designed to use competition, collaboration and

Cape Town, South Africa PHOTO © iStock.com/Barichivich

consultation, to drive performance and innovation. It has four main objectives:

1. Rapidly accelerate the number of destinations with robust and holistic sustainability strategies and practices. When we started, there were less than a handful.
2. Raise industry awareness and inspire action in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. When we started, most destinations didn't even know what 'SDG' stood for.
3. Build, educate and empower a dynamic community of destination sustainability professionals.
4. Recognise, reward and share the innovations, performance and improvements of our member's destinations.

"It evaluates sustainability performance in four main areas: The City's Environmental Performance, the Social Performance, the Supplier Performance and the Destination Management Organisation's (DMO) Performance. We use the word DMO to include Convention Bureaus also.

"By gaining an overview of how sustainable a city is, our assessment provides a to-do list of sustainable actions that a destination can implement. Our team then coaches and guides destinations on how to improve their sustainability strategies and practices."

"In this fashion, we are encouraging more sustainable development across the globe, and facilitating the growth of an international community, where DMOs can share successes and challenges, and learn together.

"Offering a sustainable tourism and events programme will not only be an advantage for cities. It will be a requirement by clients, visitors, and perhaps most importantly, their citizens"

What sustainability challenges does the GDS-Index address? How can you see it benefiting tourism in South Africa?

"In this context, sustainability means that the events and tourism industry has adopted practices that allow us to meet the needs of current generations while ensuring the same for future generations. Achieving this generational equity, alongside equity between nature and ourselves, is the challenge we are trying to address. The GDS-Index is using destinations and their DMOs as the catalysts for creating a more regenerative future. A future where we don't just do less bad, but where we live, meet, work and play in a way that regenerates nature and society.

"South Africa comes with its own set of challenges, be it income inequality and associated crime, or the lack of water in some regions of the country have experienced in recent years. Truly integrating sustainability as a fundamental pillar in South Africa's destinations strategies could very well help to alleviate many of these issues: Be it through the creation of a strategy that allows for a smart long-term destination roadmap for social and environmental action, or ensuring that hotels have eco-certification or developing today's and tomorrow's talent with the skills to better manage tourism businesses in a regenerative fashion.

"Last I heard, around one in 20 people working in the South African tourism industry, and if we consider its entire value chain, it contributes almost 10 per cent of the nation's total GDP. I believe the impact of the changes as mentioned above, would permeate throughout the nation. Our industry could and should contribute to creating a more equal, environmentally conscious, and safer country."

What value does the programme offer the tourism and events industry?

"We are showing the industry that organising great events, and travelling the world, can be done without destroying the earth in the process. We are doing this by building a body of knowledge from the experiences of the GDS-Index team and its community of destinations. Using this wealth of resources, we then seek to engage, inspire and empower other DMOs to start up, speed up and scale up their sustainability initiatives. We want to raise awareness that our industry's unique position, which spans across all industries in one way or another, can be used to create a better world. Through us, cities can significantly increase the impact of their sustainability initiatives while dramatically reducing the implementation time and cost.

"Becoming more sustainable and regenerative is also very relevant to organisations who require sponsorship for their events. Sponsors are very aware of risks when choosing

to invest their money, and an event without a sustainability commitment poses a tangible environmental risk. As many sponsors already look for events with a strong sustainability commitment, it is not just DMOs but also event organisers that need to start taking action."

What great examples of change have you seen?
"There are quite a few. For now, let me share some of the results of the top 10 performing destinations from the 2018 results of the GDS-Index, 2019 data gets released in October. This highlights how we see the industry changing in the future."

- 100 per cent of leading destinations now have a dedicated sustainability team
- 100 per cent now measure and report on sustainable destination progress
- 92 per cent include sustainability features on their website, featuring guides and manuals, supplier lists and best practice examples
- 92 per cent now have programmes with restaurants and catering companies to reduce non-recyclable/biodegradable material waste and food waste
- 92 per cent provide free or subsidised public transport for major conventions
- 85 per cent have a sustainability committee with industry stakeholders
- 85 per cent of top 10 destinations now have, or are in the process of obtaining, third party eco-certification
- 70 per cent are actively engaging their stakeholders to support local community development initiatives and prove the information to their clients on donation programs for food and leftover event materials

Results of all destinations since 2016
- 68 per cent of all destinations have a sustainability strategy. 97 per cent increase
- 39 per cent improvement in destination performance
- 32 per cent growth in destinations with eco-certifications
- 74 per cent increase in destinations integrating sustainability into core business strategy

Offering a sustainable tourism and events programme will not only be an advantage for cities. It will be a requirement by clients, visitors, and perhaps most importantly, their citizens.

As part of their licence to operate, DMOs will have to integrate and weave environmental and social criteria holistically into their strategies, business models, and operations.

What have you learned in your journey developing the GDS-Index?
"Ah, so much! I'll try and distil it down into my top 5 insights."

1. Collaboration as an enabler: Cities want and need to share best practices and experiences.
2. Competition is an accelerator: Collaboration is good, but the competitive nature of our industry responds well to a challenge such as the GDS-Index. Cities are 'battling' to improve their ranking.
3. Competition is a barrier: While ranking works well for the top performers, it can be frustrating for developing cities. Consequently, we have had to pay attention to work with the 'starters, laggards and improvers' to ensure that they're developing their performance consistently, even if their overall position isn't improving.
4. Technology as a multiplier: With the vision for massive growth in the number of destinations involved, we need to develop a more powerful IT platform to support the benchmarking process, share information, enable collaboration and permit self-service data analysis. This is taking full-speed as we speak, and we look forward to continually refining the process of data collection and analysis.
5. Cities as multipliers: DMOs and the events industry have a significant opportunity to support their city's sustainable goals and accelerate achievement. We are catalysts, and the impact model for the GDS-Index can be adapted and used in other industry sectors of a city.

What do you see emerging in the next five years?
"The importance of a destination's sustainability in the business tourism and events industry will grow significantly. We see the GDS-Index becoming an increasingly dynamic community and partnership of purpose between cities. I foresee that we develop solutions to help cities better manage the nexus of leisure and business tourism sustainably. In a nearer-term, we will provide advanced cities with a clearer path to certify their destination with internationally recognised third party sustainability standards.

"With a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent by 2030. We will need to help cities implement science-based approaches, measure their footprint, develop their professionals and accelerate their sustainability

"The economic, social and environmental significance of the events industry is massive. We could influence safe and fair working conditions for 26 million jobs, direct $1.5 trillion towards more responsible supply chains, and inspire 1.5 billion participants to action. Our industry has a decisive role in the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 SDGs"

CARINA BAUER, CEO, IMEX Group

programmes. Our goal is to grow the partnership to include over 300 destinations by 2022. Alongside this shift in how destinations are managed, we must accelerate the growing focus on organising events more sustainably. So, we will be working to catalyse global collaboration between DMOs, event organisers, and suppliers."

Last question. What about the elephant in the room?
"Oh, we have a huge elephant in the room. The IPCC tells us that to reduce the increase of global temperatures to an average of 1.5 degrees, we need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030, and to net-zero by 2050.

"Similarly, the European Travel Commission says we need to reduce GHG by 50 per cent by 2035. And it's a moving target. It is now estimated that by 2036, 7.8 billion passengers will travel via plane, nearly double the number who flew in 2017. (IATA 2017.) Air travel generates about around 52 per cent of the tourism carbon footprint, and probably a large amount more for the meetings industry. On most international events flying is 80–90 per cent of the impact.

"Flying underpins our business model and without it our current industry would collapse. So, on one side, we must reduce our flying, yet we are flying more. A worrying dilemma?

"So, to achieve this moon-shot goal of a 50 per cent reduction in ten years and to be carbon neutral by 2050, our industry needs to rethink, redesign and regenerate its roadmap to the future. We require massive innovation from the airlines and plane manufacturers. Like low-carbon fuels and more efficient planes, innovation in the design and optimisation of hotels/venues infrastructures, zero waste management, a new policy from government, mass offsetting, probably carbon taxes and most importantly to change our habits of flying."

The GDS Index Whitepaper defines five converging megatrends that present destinations and the event industry with opportunities to improve their performance and adapt to the risks presented by Climate Breakdown, Ecocide, demographic shifts, social change and digitalisation.

It highlights four fundamental building blocks for DMOs to become sustainable destination stewards and defines eight tactics on how destinations can integrate sustainability into their core strategy and become leaders in future-oriented collaboration.

Download the whitepaper on gds-index.com/reports

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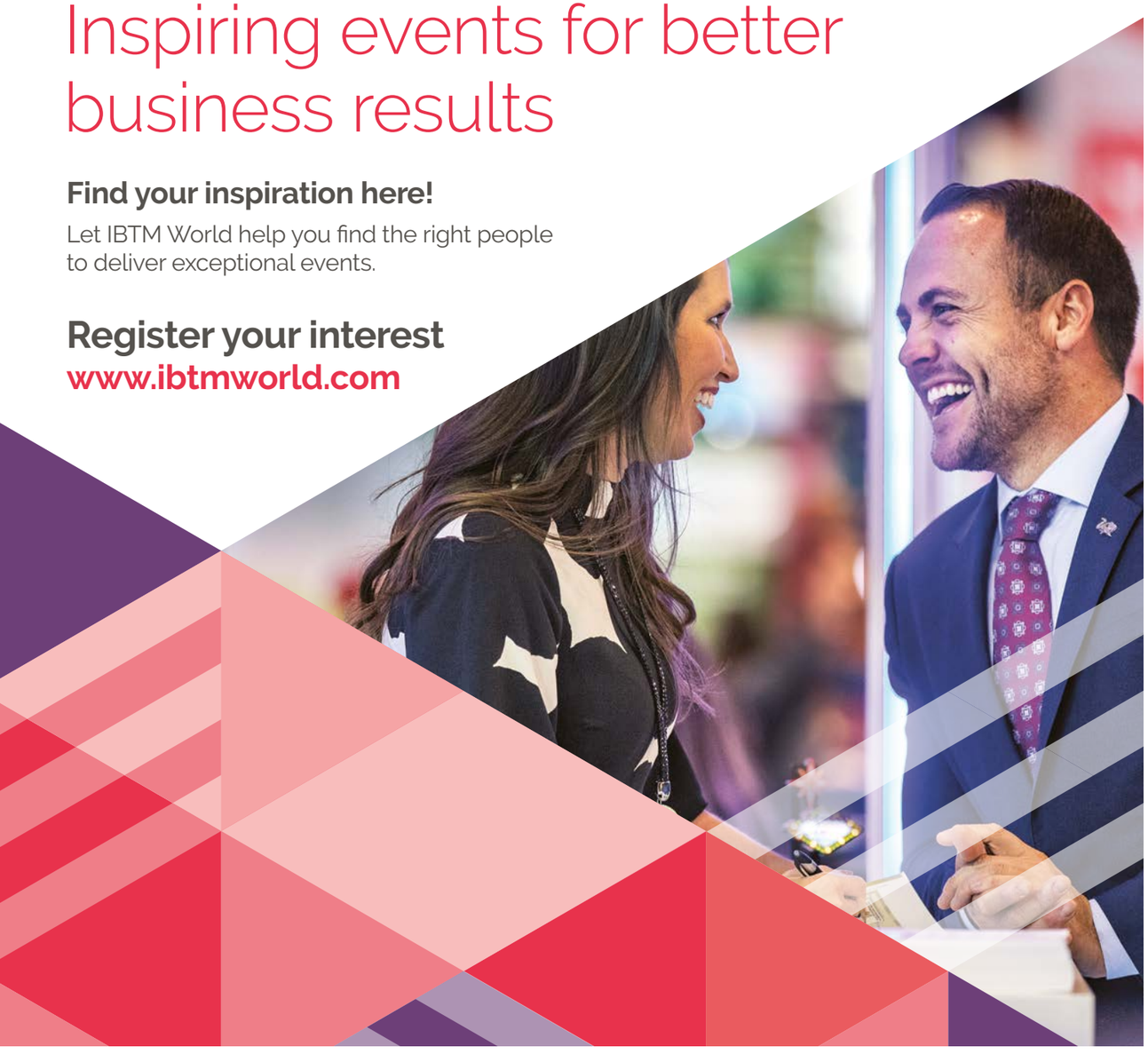

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PHOTO Sara Appelgren

In a survey of 22,000 business people ranking top leadership gurus, **ROBIN SHARMA** *was #2, with Jack Welch. Sharma's books have sold millions of copies in over 60 countries. His new book is "The Leader Who Had No Title: A Modern Fable on Real Success in Business and in Life" (Simon & Schuster). Robin Sharma founded the Titan Academy and his blog is at robinsharma.com.*

Fear IS A LIAR

WE ALL NEED to fortify our hope, right? Please think about that asset: hope.

... We share a dream and others laugh.
... We start a project and others resist.
... We advance an ambition and others misunderstand.

It's so easy to lose your hope. And then, over time, accept that average is your destiny.

I'm here to remind you, with love and respect, that fortune favors the contrarians. And that your future holds *vast* promise.

Let's also (please) remember the backstory behind dreams coming true. I'm far from perfect and my life isn't flawless. Yet, I count many blessings when I rise each morning – from family I adore to a craft I honour.

Yes, my books are worldwide bestsellers and my events always sell out. And yet, behind this reality is a massive amount of commitment, sacrifice, hard work, setbacks, disappointments and discipline.

In this selfie culture that can seduce us into thinking others have ideal lives, may each of us remember that no one gets through life unscarred. Some of us are just better at concealing the pain.

Am I special? No. (Far from it.) I know, and accept, this. I've just installed the psychologies of the best, hardwired in the routines of the warriors and ran the plays of my heroes (that range from Nelson Mandela to Nikola Tesla). The wonderful thing about today is that *you can too*.

Each day brings you a platform for possibility. All it takes is one choice that, when practiced daily over time, will restructure *everything* for you.

Cynics will tell you that people can't change. Because they don't want you to change. And because they were once proud dreamers and then something happened that closed their hearts. And they lost the heroism required to get back into the game.

Please. Today, be brave. Radiate *hope*. Do amazing work. Be kind. And honour your glory.

If you'd like my help in working and living like this, I really encourage you to read my book *The 5 AM Club*. Your life won't be the same after you finish the last page.

I've put my best information, learned over 20 years of mentoring billionaires and superstars, into the pages. I've worked with such respect and devotion for the genius within you, as I wrote the book over four *intense* years. My prayer is that as you read each page, you reclaim your greatness.

PHOTO The Convention Centre Dublin

Dublin
HAS THE WORLD'S FIRST CARBON-NEUTRAL CONVENTION CENTRE

THE CONVENTION Centre Dublin (The CCD) has been selected to host the Eurelectric Power Summit 2020, taking place from 25 to 26 May.

With a focus on reducing energy consumption and a commitment to long term sustainability, the convention centre proved a great fit for the Summit. As one of Europe's most environmentally friendly venues, The CCD received the ISO 14001 accreditation just one year after opening.

The bid to host the Summit was initiated through Fáilte Ireland's Meet in Ireland team, before being developed and confirmed by their Dublin Convention Bureau (DCB) unit.

The Eurelectric Power Summit is an essential arena where thought leaders, policymakers, customers and industry captains meet and learn from each other about key trends in clean electricity.

Speaking about the event, Eurelectric Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs, Koen Noyens, says:

"Eurelectric Power Summit is the place for the clean power ecosystem to meet, share, explore, learn and exchange. Our Summit has become the hub for electrifying your business models, digitalising your ideas and rooting them in the norm.

"Dublin was an obvious place to be. Ireland has played a key role in the history of computing and, in recent years, it is a hub for tech leaders to mature and upskill their technologies. The CCD was selected because of its great facilities and central location."

Stephen Meehan, CEO of the convention centre:

"Sustainability is at the top of our minds here. From the smart design of the building, making use of natural light to our comprehensive waste management policy, we all recognise that we have a part to play. We look forward to providing a green venue to host this clean energy event."

AI INTELLIGENCE

TEXT
Stuart Russel

PHOTO
iStock.com/gremlin

Human Compatible AI
AND THE PROBLEM OF CONTROL

IF WE SUCCEED A long time ago, my parents lived in Birmingham, England, in a house near the university. They decided to move out of the city and sold the house to David Lodge, a professor of English literature. Lodge was by that time already a well-known novelist. I never met him, but I decided to read some of his books: *Changing Places* and *Small World*. Among the principal characters were fictional academics moving from a fictional version of Birmingham to a fictional version of Berkley, California. As I was an actual academic from the actual Birmingham who had just moved to the actual Berkely, it seemed that someone in the Department of Coincidences was telling me to pay attention.

One particular scene from *Small World* struck me: The protagonist, an aspiring literary theorist, attends a major international conference and asks a panel of leading figures, "What follows if everyone agrees with you?" The question causes consternation, because the panelists had been more concerned with intellectual combat than ascertaining truth or attaining understanding. It occured to me then that an analogous question could be asked of the leading figures in AI: 'What if you succeed?' The field's goal had always been to create human-level or superhuman AI, but there was little or no consideration of what would happen if we did.

A few years later, Peter Norvig and I began work on a new AI textbook, whose first edition appeared in 1995. The book's final section is titled "What If We Do Succeed?" The section points to the possibility of good and bad outcomes but reaches no firm conclusions. By the time of the third edition in 2010, many people had finally begun to consider the possibility that superhuman AI might not be a good thing, but these people was mostly outsiders rather than mainstream AI researchers. By 2013, I became convinced that the issue not only belonged in the mainstream but was possibly the most important question facing humanity.

In November 2013, I gave a talk at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, a venerable art museum in south London. The audience consisted mostly of retired people – nonscientists with a general interest in intellectual matters – so I had to give a completely nontechnical talk. It seemed an appropriate venue to try out my ideas in public for the first time. After explaining what AI was about, I nominated five candidates for 'biggest event in the future of humanity':

1. We all die (asteroid impact, climate catastrophe, pandemic, etc.).
2. We all live forever (medical solution to aging).
3. We invent faster-than-light travel and conquer the universe.
4. We are visited by a superior alien civilization.
5. We invent superintelligent AI.

I suggested that the fifth candidate, superintelligent AI, would be the winner, because it would help us avoid physical catastrophes and achieve eternal life and faster-than-light travel, if those were indeed possible. It would represent a huge leap – a discontinuity – in our civilization. The arrival of superintelligent AI is in many ways analogous to the arrival of a superior alien civilization but much more likely to occur. Perhaps most important, AI, unlike aliens, is something over which we have some say.

Then I asked the audience to imagine what would happen if we received notice from a superior alien civilization that they would arrive on Earth in thirty to fifty years. The word *pandemonium* doesn't begin to describe it. Yet our response to the anticipated arrival of superintelligent AI has been ... well, underwhelming begins to describe it. (In a later talk,

IMAGE AI on the big screen: Ex Machina © 2014 Universal City Studios Productions, promotional art by Empire Design

I illustrated this in the form of the email exchange shown in figure 1.) Finally, I explained the significance of superintelligent AI as follows: "Success would be the biggest event in human history ... and perhaps the last event in human history."

A few months later, in April 2014, I was at a conference in Iceland and got a call from National Public Radio asking if they could interview me about the movie *Transcendence*, which had just been released in the United States. Although I had read the plot summaries and reviews, I hadn't seen it because I was living in Paris at the time, and it would not be released there until June. It so happened, however, that I had just added a detour to Boston on the way home from Iceland, so that I could participate in a Defense Department meeting. So, after arriving at Boston's Logan Airport, I took a taxi to the nearest theater showing the movie. I sat in the second row and watched as a Berkeley AI professor, played by Johnny Depp, was gunned down by anti-AI activists worried about, yes, superintelligent AI. Involuntarily, I shrank down in my seat. (Another call from the Department of Coincidences?) Before Johnny Depp's character dies, his mind is uploaded to a quantum supercomputer and quickly outruns human capabilities, threatening to take over the world.

On April 19, 2014, a review of *Transcendence*, co-authored with physicists Max Tegmark, Frank Wilczek, and Stephen Hawking, appeared in the *Huffington Post*. It included my sentence from my Dulwich talk about the biggest event in human history. From then on, I would be publicly committed to the view that my own field of research posed a potential risk to my own species.

From: Superior Alien Civilization <sac12@sirius.canismajor.u>
To: humanity@UN.org
Subject: **Contact**

Be warned: We chall arrive in 30–50 years

From: humanity@UN.org
To: Superior Alien Civilization <sac12@sirius.canismajor.u>
Subject: **Out of office: Re: Contact**

Humanity is currently out of the office. We will respond to your message when we return. 😊

Figure 1: Probably not the email exchange that would follow the first contact by a superior alien civilization.

How Did We Get Here? The roots of AI stretch far back into antiquity, but its "official" beginning was in 1956. Two young mathematicians, John McCarthy and Marvin Minsky, had persuaded Claude Shannon, already famous as the inventor of information theory, and Nathaniel Rochester, the designer of IBM's first commercial computer, to join them organizing a summer program at Dartmouth College. The goal was stated as follows:

The study is to proceed on the basis of the conjecture that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it. An attempt will be made to find how to make machines use language, form abstractions and concepts, solve kinds of problems now reserved for humans, and improve themselves. We think that a significant advance can be made in one or more of these problems if a carefully selected group of scientists work on it together for a summer.

Needless to say, it took much longer than a summer: we are still working on all these problems.

In the first decade or so after the Dartmouth meeting, AI had several major successes, including Alan Robinson's algorithm for general-purpose logical reasoning and Arthur Samuel's checker-playing program, which taught itself to beat its creator. The first AI bubble burst in the late 1960s, when early efforts at machine learning and machine translation failed to live up to expectations. A report commissioned by the UK government in 1973 concluded, "In no part of the field have the discoveries made so far produced the major impact that was then promised." In other words, the machines just weren't smart enough.

My eleven-year-old self was, fortunately, unaware of this report. Two years later, when I was given a Sinclair Cambridge Programmable calculator, I just wanted to make it intelligent. With a maximum program size of thirty-six keystrokes,

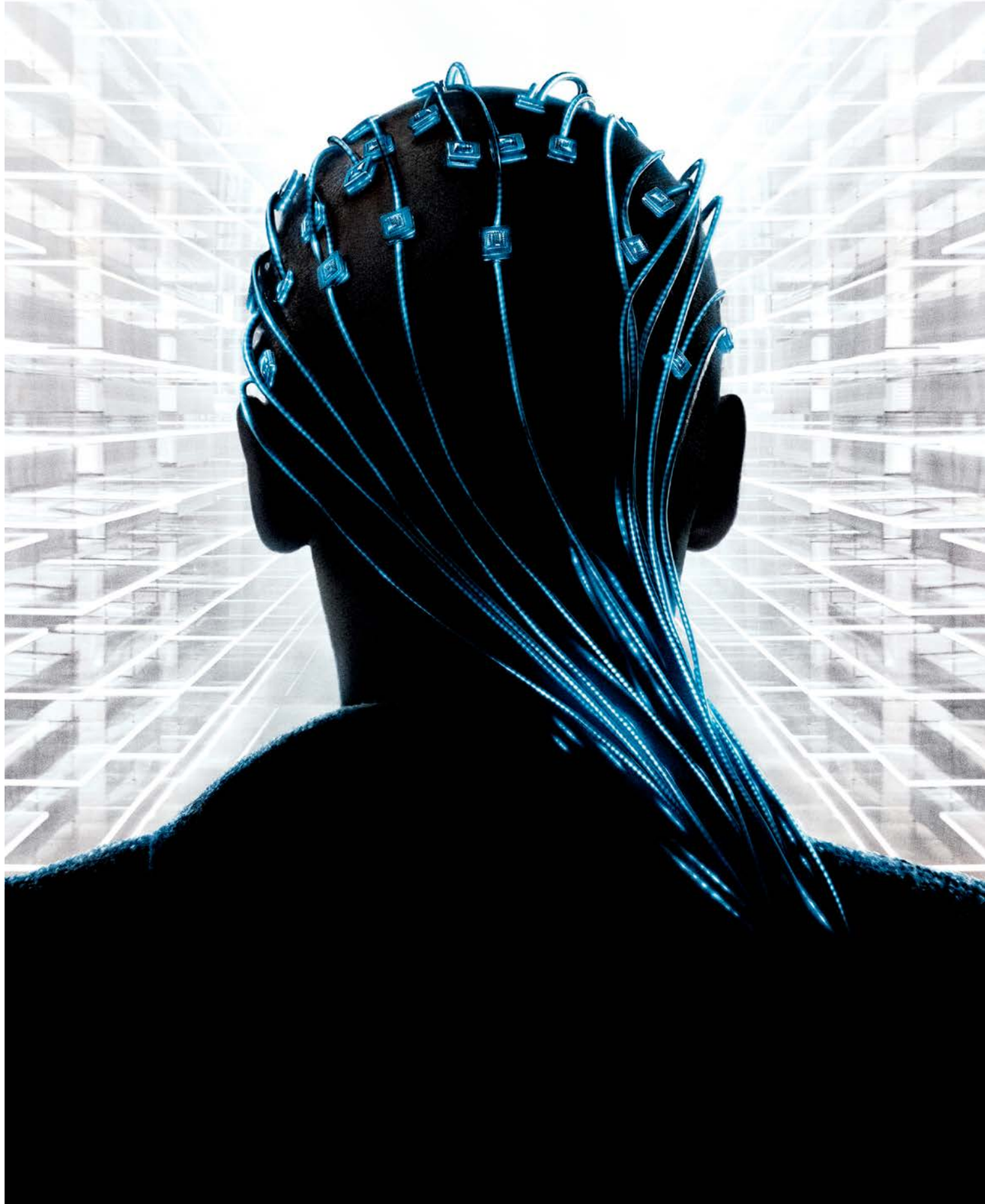

IMAGE AI on the big screen: Transcendence © 2014 Alcon Entertainment, promotional art by Concept Arts

IMAGE AI on the big screen: WALL·E © 2008 Walt Disney Pictures/Pixar Animation Studios, promotional art by BLT Communications

"We have to face the fact that we are planning to make entities that are far more powerful than humans"

however, the Sinclair was not quite big enough for human-level AI. Undeterred, I gained access to the giant CDC 6600 supercomputer at Imperial College London and wrote a chess program – a stack of punched cards two feet high. It wasn't very good, but it didn't matter. I knew what I wanted to do.

By the mid-1980s, I had become a professor at Berkeley, and AI was experiencing a huge revival thanks to the commercial potential of so-called expert systems. The second AI bubble burst when these systems proved to be inadequate for many of the tasks to which they were applied. Again, the machines weren't smart enough. An AI winter ensued. My own AI course at Berkeley, currently bursting with over nine hundred students, had just twenty-five students in 1990.

The AI community learned its lesson: smarter, obviously, was better, but we would have to do our homework to make that happen. The field became far more mathematical. Connections were made to the long-established disciplines of probability, statistics, and control theory. The seeds of today's progress were sown during the AI winter, including early work on large-scales probabilistic reasoning systems and what later became known as *deep learning*.

Beginning around 2011, deep learning techniques began to produce dramatic advances in speech recognition, visual object recognition, and machine translation – three of the most important open problems in the field. By some measures, machines now match or exceed human capabilities in these areas. In 2016 and 2017, DeepMind's AlphaGo defeated Lee Sedol, former world Go champion, and Ke Jie, the current champion – events that some experts predicted wouldn't happen until 2097, if ever.

Now AI generates front-page media coverage almost every day. Thousands of start-up companies have been created, fueled by a flood of venture funding. Millions of students have taken online AI and machine learning courses, and experts in the area command salaries in the millions of dollars. Investments flowing from venture funds, national governments, and major corporations are in the tens of billions of dollars annually – more money in the last five years than in the entire previous history of the field. Advances that are already in the pipeline, such as self-driving cars and intelligent personal assistants, are likely to have vast economic and social benefits,and are creating enormous momentum in the AI research enterprise.

What Happens Next? Does this rapid rate of progress mean that we are about to be overtaken by machines? No. There are several breakthroughs that have to happen before we have anything resembling machines with superhuman intelligence.

Scientific breakthroughs are notoriously hard to predict. To get a sense of just how hard, we can look back at the history of another field with civilization-ending potential: nuclear physics.

In the early years of the twentieth century, perhaps no nuclear physicist was more distinguished than Ernest Rutuherford, the discoverer of the proton and the "man who split the atom". Like his collegues, Rutherford had long been aware that atomic nuclei stored immence amounts of energy; yet the prevailing view was that tapping this source of energy was impossible.

On September 11, 1933, the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its annual meeting in

Leicester. Lord Rutherford addressed the evening session. As he had done several times before, he poured cold water on the prospects for atomic energy: "Anyone who looks for a source of power in the transformation of the atoms is talking moonshine." Rutherford's speech was reported in the *Times* of London the next morning.

Leo Szilard a Hungarian physicist who had recently fled from Nazi Germany, was staying at the Imperial Hotel on Russell Square in London. He read the *Times'* report at breakfast. Mulling over what he had read, he went for a walk and invented the neutron-induced nuclear chain reaction. The problem of liberating nuclear energy went from impossible to essentially solved in less than twenty-four hours. Szilard filed a secret patent for a nuclear reactor the following year. The first patent for a nuclear weapon was issued in France 1939.

The moral of this story is that betting against human ingenuity is foolhardy, particularly when our future is at stake. Within the AI community, a kind of denialism is emerging, even going as far as denying the possibility of success in achieving the long-term goals of AI. It is as if a bus driver, with all of humanity as passengers said: "Yes, I am driving as hard as I can towards a cliff, but trust me, we'll run out of gas before we get there!"

"The arrival of superintelligent AI is in many ways analogous to the arrival of a superior alien civilization"

I am not saying that success in AI will *necessarily* happen, and I think it's quite unlikely that it will happen in the next few years. It seems prudent, nonetheless, to prepare for the eventuality. If all goes well, it would herald a golden age for humanity, but we have to face the fact that we are planning to make entities that are far more powerful than humans. How do we ensure that they never, ever have power over us?

To get just an inkling of the fire we're playing with, consider how content-selection algorithms function on social media. They aren't particularly intelligent, but they are in a position to affect the entire world because they directly influence billions of peole. Typically, such algorithms are designed to maximise *click-through*, that is, the probability that the user clicks on presented items. The solution is simply to present items that they like to click on, right? Wrong. The solution is to change the user's preferences so that they become more predictable. A more predictable user can be fed items that they are likely to click on, thereby generating more revenue. People with more extreme political views tend to be more predictable in which items they will click on. (Possibly there is a category of articles that die-hard centrists are likely to click on, but it's not easy to imagine what this category consists of.) Like any rational entity, the algorithm learns how to modify the state of its environment – in this case, the user's mind – in order to maximise its own reward. The consequences include the resurgence of fascism, the dissolution of the social contract that underpins democracies around the world, and potentially the end of the European Union and NATO. Not bad for a few lines of code, even if it had a helping hand from some humans. Now imagine what a really intelligent algorithm would be able to do.

What Went Wrong? The history of AI has been driven by a single mantra: "The more intelligent, the better." I am convinced that this is a mistake – not because of some vague fear of being superseded but because of the way we have understood intelligence itself.

The concept of intelligence is central to who we are – that's why we call ourselves *Homo sapiens*, or 'wise man.' After more than two thousand years of self-examination, we have arrived at a characterization of intelligence that can be boiled down to this:

Humans are intelligent to the extent that our actions can be expected to achieve our objects.

All those other characteristics of intelligence – perceiving, thinking, learning, inventing, and so on – can be understood through their contributions to our ability to act successfully. From the very beginnings of AI, intelligence in machines has been defined in the same way:

Machines are intelligent to the extent that their actions can be expected to achieve their objectives.

Because machines, unlike humans, have no objectives of their own, we give them objectives to achieve. In

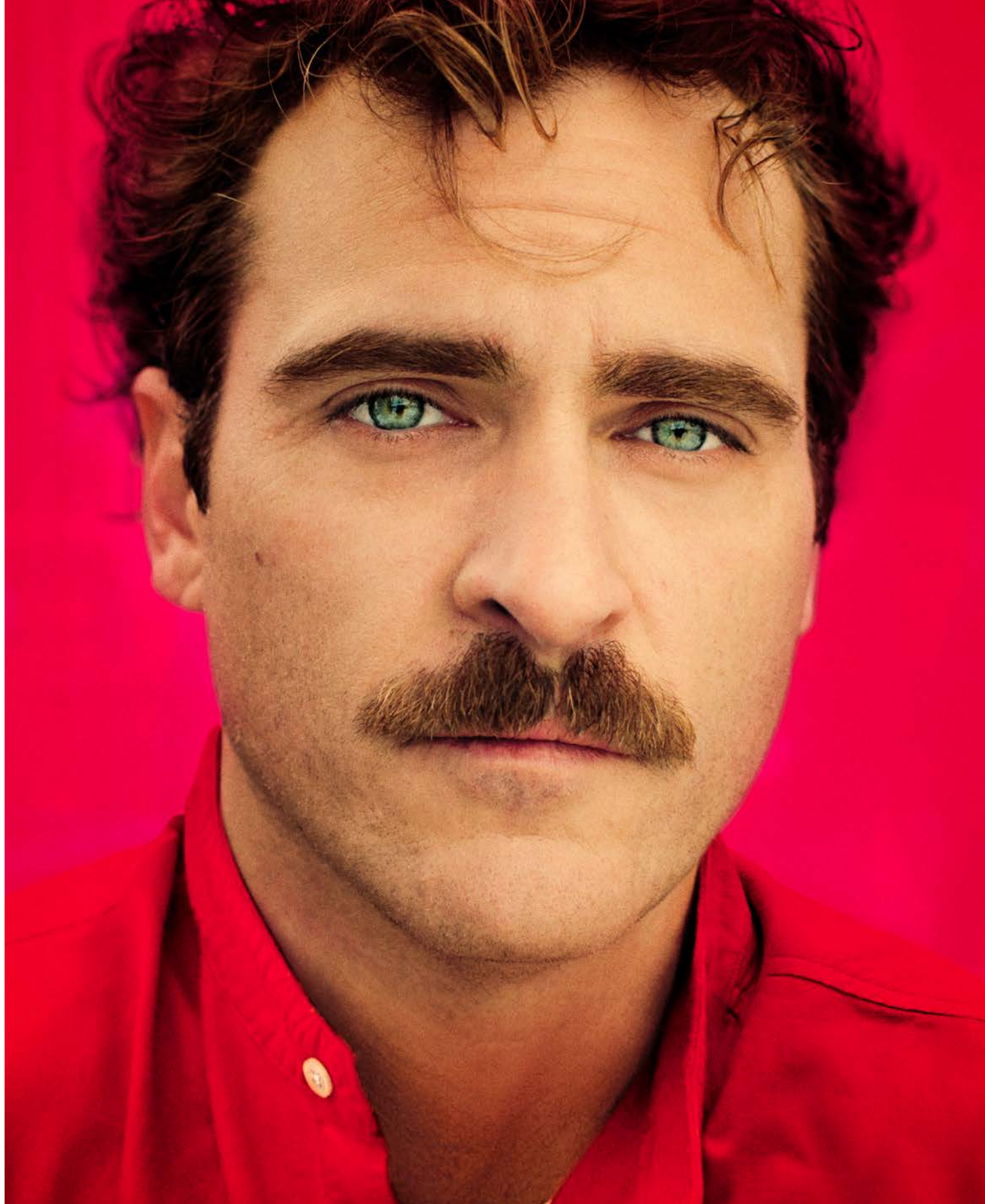

IMAGE AI on the big screen: Her © 2013 Warner Bros., promotional art by aSquared Design Group

other words, we build optimizing machines, we feed objectives into them, and off they go.

This general approach is not unique to AI. It recurs throughout the technological and mathematical underpinnings of our society. In the field of control theory, which designs control systems for everything from jumbo jets to insulin pumps, the job of the system is to minimise a cost function that typically measures some deviation from a desired behaviour. In the field of economics, mechanisms and policies are designed to maximise the utility of individuals, the *welfare* of groups, and the *profit* of corporations. In operations research, which solves complex logistical and manufacturing problems, a solution maximises an expected *sum of rewards* over time. Finally, in statistics, learning algorithms are designed to minimise an expected *loss function* that defines the cost of making prediction errors.

Evidently, this general scheme – which I will call the standard model – is widespread and extremely powerful. Unfortunately, *we don't want machines that are intelligent in this sense*.

The drawback of the standard model was pointed out in 1960 by Norbert Wiener, a legendary professor at MIT and one of the leading mathematicians of the mid-twentieth century. Wiener had just seen Arthur Samuel's checker-playing program learn to play checkers far better than its creator. That experience led him to write a prescient but little-known paper, *Some Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation*. Here's how he states the main point:

If we use, to achieve our purposes, a mechanical agency with whose operation we cannot interfere effectively ... we had better be quite sure that the purpose put into the machine is the purpose which we really desire.

"The purpose put into the machine" is exactly the objective that machines are optimizing in the standard model. If we put the wrong objective into a machine that is more intelligent than us, it will achieve the objective, and we lose. The social-media meltdown I described earlier is just a foretaste of this, resulting from optimizing the wrong objective on a global scale with fairly unintelligent algorithms. In Chapter 5, I spell out some far worse outcomes.

All this should come as no great surprise. For thousands of years, we have known the perils of getting exactly what you wish for. In every story where someone is granted three wishes, the third wish is always to undo the first two wishes.

In summary, it seems that the march towards superhuman intelligence is unstoppable, but success might be the undoing of the human race. Not all is lost, however. We have to understand where we went wrong and then fix it.

Can We Fix It? The problem is right there in the basic definition of AI. We say that machines are intelligent to the extent that their actions can be expected to achieve *their* objectives, but we have no reliable way to make sure that *their* objectives are the same as *our* objectives.

What if, instead of allowing machines to pursue *their* objectives, we insist that they pursue *our* objectives? Such a machine, if it could be designed, would be not just *intelligent* but also *beneficial* to humans. So let's try this:

*Machines are **beneficial** to the extent that **their** actions can be expected to achieve **our** objectives.*

This is probably what we should have done all along.

The difficult part, of course, is that our objectives are in us (all eight billion of us, in all our glorious variety) and not in the machines. It is, nonetheless, possible to build machines that are beneficial in exactly this sense. Inevitably, these machines will be uncertain about our objectives – after all, we are uncertain about them ourselves – but it turns out that this is a feature, not a bug (that is, a good thing and not a bad thing). Uncertainty about objectives implies that machines will necessarily defer to humans: they will ask permission, they will accept correction, and they will allow themselves to be switched off.

Removing the assumption that machines should have a definite objective means that we will need to tear out and replace part of the foundations of artificial intelligence – the basic definitions of what we are trying to do. That also means rebuilding a great deal of the superstructure – the accumulation of ideas and methods for actually doing AI. The result will be a new relationship between humans and machines, one that I hope will enable us to navigate the next few decades successfully.

Stuart Russell is a professor of Computer Science and holder of the Smith-Zadeh Chair in Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, and an Honorary Fellow of Wadham College, University of Oxford. He is also the author (with Peter Norvig) of *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*. It is the number one bestselling textbook on AI which is used in over 1,400 universities in 128 countries.

PHOTO Sara Appelgren

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IBTM World Should Include NOT EXCLUDE

THIS YEAR IBTM World have a very good new idea as they announced the introduction of its Elite Corporate Programme, which takes place on 20 November, the second day of IBTM World, in Barcelona.

Created in association with American Express Meeting & Events, a division of American Express Global Business Travel, supported by Event Marketing Association and sponsored by London & Partners, the Elite Corporate Programme includes four sessions addressing some of the key challenges facing senior corporate event organisers.

The programme is an opportunity to learn, network and share best practices in an intimate environment and finishes with an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Barcelona and exciting social dining experience.

Sessions include an 'In-Depth Look at the Event Experience: What Marketing Owners Want' presented by Tracey Boreham, Account Management Lead, Global Client Group, EMEA, American Express Meetings & Events; 'Focus on the Why: How Branding Principles Can Guide Your Event Design' presented by Mikael Ek, Commercial Lead, Global Client Group, EMEA, American Express Meetings & Events; and a thought-provoking case study on engagement and experience led by Laura Garcia, Senior Manager of Marketing at Adobe and Brooke Davis, Global Travel and Events Manager at Lululemon. There will also be a peer-to-peer roundtable discussion on overcoming event challenges, with Event Marketing Association.

David Thompson, IBTM World Event Director, says: "We know from speaking to our senior buyers that tailored experiences are extremely important for them. Our new Elite Corporate Programme is all about providing these event planners with a unique environment in which to learn and share ideas and challenges with like-minded peers so that their time at the event is maximised."

Senior event planners from a FTSE 500 or equivalent company can apply to be on the programme by registering their interest to be a Hosted Buyer. As well as having the opportunity to meet, connect and do business with potential suppliers and network with peers, corporate meetings planners can benefit from IBTM's engaging networking events and full Knowledge Programme, which will leave attendees inspired and motivated to apply their learnings and enhance their events.

So far, so good. In November we are bringing some very experienced Hosted Buyers to IBTM World. One of them is an Event Organiser or more like a Communication Bureau and not the real buyer even if the bureau does all the work for the corporate company.

Furthermore, this person very much wants to come and participate in the Elite Corporate Programme but is not allowed to do so.

Frankly, I do not understand this. This particular Hosted Buyer is one of the most experienced event organisers in Scandinavia and IBTM World says: "We're sorry, he can't come."

I say: Don't be sorry. Change the rules! Include people, don't exclude them. The world and the business events industry is depending on including each other. If you do not understand this today, you will have to understand it tomorrow.

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