



The essays published in this newsletter have been provided by Prof. Khan, Mark Cantley, Jan Kaczmarek and Frank Waller as their contribution to the preparation of the parallel discussion sessions to be held during the forthcoming EU Hitachi Science & Technology Forum on the theme "Ageing Society and Technology". The authors have kindly authorized their publication.

Essays from Forum participants

Importance of technology in an ageing society: Some unavoidable global aspects

Globally the ageing of population occurs primarily as a result of falling fertility and mortality. Socioeconomic development is deemed to be primarily responsible for this demographic transition. However, the direct role of technology in changing society and the effect of its demographic transition is still unexplored. Experts argue that population ageing has created many challenges and opportunities for many societies around the world depending on their overall socio-economic situations. Moreover, the ageing of the population in each country has created a new cause for concern as to how to manage such a situation - although appropriate policy measures are being taken by their governments. Nevertheless debate often arises as to whether or not migration can solve such an emerging issue, particularly where there is a projected labour market shortage and increased demand for long term care. What will happen to those countries who do not welcome immigrants? Answers to these questions are not easy and require much debate. Encouraging migration may slow down the process of ageing although there are both short and long term risks and benefits which ultimately depend on how the policy-makers view them. It is, however, evident that societies which have no immigration programme will face serious consequences in dealing with ageing issues because of the rapid growth of its older population. They will have to look for an alternative source of support to maintain both social and economic engines.

To a certain extent, technology can help an ageing society solve such a situation and it is anticipated that sooner or later some countries (for example, Japan) may follow a technological path. It is true that older people may be less interested in technology but those who use it enjoy its numerous benefits and we need to understand the attitudes of older people towards technology. Older adults are passing through a time in which a radical transformation is occurring in the incorporation of technological into people's lives. Technology has both become an integral part of and changed society. There has been a huge attitudinal shift as older generations rely less on traditional family support system and technology plays a greater role. For example, information and communication technology (ICT) play an important part in our daily activities including information on proper food and easy access to



Editorial

Welcome to this new edition of European Connexion. As you will notice, we have made significant changes to this newsletter as well as the Forum website and the Forum itself.

Following the survey done in conjunction with the previous issue of Connexion, it has been decided to move from a paper version of this publication to an electronic version only. The benefits are clear and will not only lead to a more efficient and speedier delivery through e-mail but will also reduce the use of paper. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those of you who took the time to participate in the survey, we really appreciated your feedback and advice. Rest assured we will take your answers into account as much as possible.

In this Connexion, we are pleased to share short essays on the upcoming Forum theme "Ageing Society & Technology" provided by some Forum Participants. We would like to express our appreciation to Prof. Khan, Mark Cantley, Jan Kaczmarek and Frank Waller who have kindly agreed to share their thoughts with us in this newsletter.

In addition in the future, should you wish to have a short article published in Connexion, whether it be on some technology you are working on, or some comments you may have on the Forum theme or on the Forum itself, please do not hesitate to send us your contributions. >>>

Essays from Forum participants

Upon the suggestion by some Forum Members, we have been considering to have a 'private' part reserved for Forum Members on the Forum website, where members could exchange ideas and where the Forum Members' directory could be listed and stored. Unfortunately, for data security and privacy protection reasons, we cannot launch this initiative at this time but we will continue to look for effective solutions regarding how we could setup such a section in the future. In the meantime, we will continue to communicate via email.

As some of you have already been informed, the usual Forum materials (presentations, speakers' biography, etc.) will be provided on a USB memory stick and not on paper this year. With this change, the Forum truly enters the digital age and in so doing we also reduce to a small extent the environmental impact of our Forum.

I wish you happy reading and urge you to have a look at the Forum website which has been updated with the latest ideas and questions raised by the Group Session moderators.

I am looking forward to meeting you again in Munich.

Ko Takahashi
General Manager
Hitachi Corporate Office, Europe

purchase using the internet and giving access to home delivery. Computers have become like a personal friend with whom valuable time can be spent confidentially and rewardingly. Robotic technology could perhaps make later life easier as older people can communicate with each other informally, play computer games and get a degree of personal help if necessary. Wheel-chairs with a robotic movement and sensing technology can successfully provide services to frail older people. Additionally, technology smart housing and transport can improve access and allow people to have longer independent lives. Technology can also be used for infertility treatment and even as a tool for childcare and family life. It has been successfully used for early detection of diseases and discovering proper medication. Genetic engineering (including stem cell technology - although research is not allowed in many places on ethical ground) may be used for treating for major illness such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and strokes, enhancing quality of life and increasing longevity. Technology can assist life-long learning, increase employability and enable people to stay employed and/or productive for longer. New technologies can therefore have a positive impact on social capital and quality of life with the ability to cross geographical boundaries. It could be of great benefit to older people where no alternative source of support is available, whether this can be to assist in daily activities or to provide long term care.

People, society and technology are interrelated and by working together there can be global improvements in the wellbeing of older people.

Dr. Hafiz T.A. Khan, Oxford Institute of Ageing, University of Oxford

Ageing Society and Technology

Technology improves the quality of life, especially for the aged: these words are being typed on a computer monitor, by a 66-year-old wearing Vari-focus spectacles. Clothes, furniture, housing, pharmaceuticals, dental care – we are surrounded, even invaded, by technology, and generally welcome it as an improvement on the alternatives. We can seek to "get away from it all" by a walking tour in the Scottish Highlands – with light-weight boots, comfortable clothing, accurate maps and compass (or satellite navigation?), a mobile 'phone, and a fast train awaiting to return us to "civilisation".

Technology is intrusive, desirable, and all but inescapable.

Ageing is an ambiguous word. Liberation from the office grind? Freedom to pursue the hobbies, the travelling, the long conversations with friends, that there was never previously time for? Or as one modest politician put it on being elected leader of his party, "From here on, it can only be downhill ...". The promise of liberation may be snatched away, by progressive debilitation – hips, heart, teeth, sight, wits – the catalogue of ills grows ever longer, the commercial opportunities for technology expand, as the quality of life contracts. There are more funerals to be attended ...

Parkinson advocated what he termed the Chinese system, in which one pays the physician so long as one remains in good health – an attractive structuring of the incentives, though not the picture currently presented by health care in China. And it rather depends on the physician's assessment of whether greater efforts on his



Essays from Forum participants



that are supposed to take care of the disadvantaged, which is something completely different.

This implies a situation where different levels of integrity or inclusion enforcing strategies need to be defined, with full integration on one extreme and eExclusion at the other. In between several levels of integrity could be proposed, which would help to plan, evaluate and benchmark different inclusion policies.

The above brings about an important aspect of inclusion which is personalisation. Personalisation, often neglected in this context, can have several dimensions including: customisation of activities to make these correspond better the needs of particular individuals or groups, relevant age group segmentation and targeting, as well as setting the relevant integrity level objectives depending on the context.

Consequently a "peer technology" paradigm should be considered. This involves devising inclusion policies and strategies that would be culturally and functionally compatible with the targeted group of beneficiaries and their cognitive capacities and skills, based on the personalisation principle. In other words the lifecycles of given technologies should better match the life curve of the groups of peers using the particular technology. The technology should age along with its users. Incremental improvements instead of disruptive change push strategies should more widely adopted by the industry. It must be recognised that while early and late adopters want to profit from disruptive changes and improvements in technologies other prefer to stay with the proven, simple and familiar solutions and standards. Another answer to the above challenges that organisations should take into account is a change in focus of their promotion strategies by placing more emphasis on customer education. To be successful in this some well structured customer education schemes should be planned under the framework of a comprehensive corporate social responsibility policy.

Jan Kaczmarek

part can restore health – or not. But the idea is good – technological innovation, the research efforts of companies, can in some degree be steered. What should be the objectives? To prolong and facilitate the liberation, no doubt, and to slow the debilitation – but to prolong the debilitation indefinitely brings one into rising costs and declining benefits, and poses ethical questions which challenge societies and governments.

In the present, there are, as always, practical problems and ad hoc solutions. In the future, both will evolve, with technology generally playing an increasing role – but we should assert our freedom as individuals to modify our life-styles (as one of my daughters put it, "Live fast, die young, leave a beautiful corpse!"), and accept that there will be budgetary constraints. We cannot escape the technology, but we should seek to retain the means to choose it, use it, and finally switch it off. I like the pragmatic hedonism of a friend, who states his exit ambition as being to be shot by a jealous husband, at the age of 92, while playing squash, ...

Mark F Cantley

Dignity in first place

A lion part of so called inclusion (leveraging ICTs for building inclusive society) efforts aimed at the elderly seems to be based on a wrong presumption that aging is a PROBLEM that should be dealt with, meanwhile it is a NATURAL process bringing consequences to which companies and societies must adapt to. The predominant perspective should be the one that considers the elderly people the subject not the object of these endeavours which makes substantial difference. They should not be treated in any special way but duly as any other human being, with respect of THEIR needs. Identification of relevant needs requires adequate participation of the interested in the identification process for validation and recognition. Full participation and comprehension is a sine qua non for acceptance. Under this setup the 'hidden complexity' paradigm for instance is a provisional solution. For psychologically-determined reasons, such as need for high self-esteem and dignity people would reject the incomprehensible, as well as the uncontrollable, driven by uncertainty avoidance. Therefore, the solutions that fall under inclusion that are targeted at the elderly should reflect duly identified needs, should fit into cultural context and match cultural and linguistic code of the involved, be comprehensible.

The above approach assumes that the objective of activities undertaken within different inclusion frameworks is to ensure full integration of "the excluded", in our case the elderly, not solving the problems of "the included"



Ageing society: Thinking about myself getting old

I'm not afraid of ageing: I am old already - being a researcher and teacher at a university, I am surrounded by students half my age. I am old already - for many research grants there is an age limit of 35 years which seems to be an international accepted border after which you are 'old'.

I am old already - you are old when you start thinking about retirement. After my last high school class reunion (photo albums: my wife, my kids, my house, my retirement plan) I started to think about my retirement.

Retirement - which retirement?

I'm staying young - my mindset did not change - I still feel like a student. I'm staying young - creative in my research - much like a Ph.D. student. I'm staying young - I have no sophisticated retirement plan - just like a student.

I'm staying young - I use my bicycle to commute whenever possible - much like students (used to be).

I'm staying young - Thanks to more and more of my life becoming 'digital', total availability of information, contact with friends enables me to overcome myself bound to the body and to work and work and work (?).

I'm staying young - Finally, retirement in a not so distant future will be a 25 year (renewable) contract for my brain being kept alive outside of the useless rest of the body, equipped with direct computer-aided links of all six senses, with access to worldwide online interactive gaming, direct and incredible data ('travel'-3D-video streaming, etc.) streaming, letting me live a fulfilled 100% digital life until the end of the contract.

Frank Waller



As you may have already noticed, the Group Session discussion topics and summary of each Session has been kindly provided by the moderators and has been updated on the Forum website;

<http://www.hitachiforum.eu/Annual%20Forums/Forum08/GroupSessionDescription.html>

We recommend that you have a look at this information prior to your arrival at the Forum in order to ensure that you are well prepared and able to participate actively in the discussions.

This year the Forum materials (presentations, speakers' biographies, etc.) will be provided on a USB memory stick and not in paper format.



We hope that with this measure we can make a small contribution to limiting the environmental impact of our Forum and we very much appreciate your understanding in this matter.

Should you wish to bring your PC to the Forum, please feel free to do so but please note that all the speakers presentations will be projected on screen during the event.

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The Hitachi Corporate Office, Europe welcomes and encourages your comments and ideas.

Hitachi, Ltd.
Hitachi Corporate Office, Europe
Avenue Louise 326, Bte 11
1050 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (2) 643 48 88
Fax: +32 (2) 640 08 98

Email: stephane.dupuis.he@hitachi.com

Visit the Forum homepage:
www.hitachiforum.eu