

The future, today (Column by Juan Pablo Murra)



Juan Pablo Murra Lascurain | Opinion | Rector of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies at Tec de Monterrey

The beginning of the year represents a new cycle inviting us to imagine potential scenarios, risks, and opportunities. Lately, I've been pondering the importance of the way we think about the future, as individuals and as a society. Our vision of the future and the role we play in its construction guide our decisions and actions in the present. Thus, we create a positive or negative cycle that determines the future itself.

The first aspect that shapes our expectation of the future is whether we see it with fear or with hope. On the one hand, we're living in a golden age for humanity as evaluated by multiple indicators. For centuries, every generation has had a better standard of living than the previous one. On the other hand, we are at the same time in the midst of the worst pandemic in at least a century, faced with titanic challenges and disruptive technologies that are sure to significantly alter our lives.

These macro conditions are merely the backdrop against which individuals and communities are imagining and building their futures. And here is a first opportunity to decide on our perspective, to adopt an attitude which views the future optimistically.

Thinking that the future can be better invites us to imagine and create it so. A few weeks ago, Martha Nussbaum said in a talk she gave for the Alfonso Reyes Chair, "we cannot justify hope, but it motivates us to do good". I also believe that a vision of hope invites us not only to take care of

ourselves but also to work on our own development.

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The second aspect is the way in which we think about our capacity to influence our individual and collective futures. Do we think of ourselves, explicitly or implicitly, as passive spectators or agents of change? From the very outset, this vision of our current and potential capacities determines the possible scenarios we can aspire towards and which we will strive to achieve throughout our lives.

As in many other contexts, the aspect of future possibilities and our own sense of agency in potential scenarios reveals a growing inequality between different sectors of society. You cannot take the first steps on a journey that you cannot imagine. It's a tragedy that there is so much untapped potential and talent.

At Tec de Monterrey's 2018 International Conference on Educational Innovation, Marina Gorbis, Executive Director of the Institute for the Future, closed her talk with the following phrase: "We are all migrating towards the future". Our destination and the way we travel will depend, to a large extent, on what each of us does.

Therefore, I will share some recommendations about how to think about the future from a positive perspective. Firstly, we must be mindful and aware that our actions in the present are largely determined by our expectations for the future and our role in its construction.

This may seem obvious but, from my own experience and the observations of others, it is something we forget. So, we become fatalistic or think of ourselves as victims, which is of little use. Secondly, we should seek to join groups, organizations, or movements that create the possibility of a better world and work towards it. Thirdly, in the face of challenges, we must remember the Serenity Prayer: "Serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference." Fourthly, we should develop personal and collective capacities that are conducive to forging our desired future and, knowing that not everything will happen as we wish, the skills of adaptation and resilience so as to be able to live a good life.

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The writer is the Rector for Undergraduate and Graduate studies at Tecnológico de Monterrey.

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