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The Eleven Conversations

It is said that there are only seven plots in drama. We think there are 11 big conversations about the challenges facing the world today – and that corporates need to join these conversations

BY LUCY PARKER
AND JON MILLER,
BRUNSWICK, LONDON

The Age of Conversation

It is often said we live in the Information Age – although it might more properly be called the Age of Conversation. Take an average day in 2012. More than 2m blog posts are written – which would be enough to fill *Time* magazine for 770 years. Meanwhile, 526m people check Facebook every day and upload 300m photos. On top of this, each day there are 3.2bn comments and “likes” on Facebook. That’s a whole lot of liking going on. And on YouTube, 86,400 hours of video are uploaded, and 14m people like, share, and comment on these videos. It is a continuous cycle: post, comment, upload, view, like, respond, share.

Our modern world is an ever-expanding mass of burgeoning conversations: TED Talks, Do Lectures, RSA Animate, MIT World, SXSW, PopTech, the Skoll World Forum, the World Economic Forum, Google Zeitgeist, Clinton Global Initiative, *Fortune*’s Most Powerful Women Summit, *The Times* CEO Summit, *The Wall Street Journal* CEO Council ... hardly a week goes by without a high-level global summit, platform, conference or forum. What on earth is everyone talking about?

Where’s the heat?

In spite of the noise, it is possible to pick out some big themes. We have looked at the agendas taken on by the global NGOs, and by global institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. We analyzed the talking points of government departments and leading multinational companies. It struck us that there is a finite number of themes. Just as journalist and author Christopher Booker once said that there are only seven basic dramatic plots, so we think that there are 11 big conversations – ranging from Population to Education & Skills.

In this issue of the *Brunswick Review*, we look at each of these conversations. We begin by asking: what are people actually talking about when they discuss Health, or Security, or Human Rights? Where are the points of contention in the big debates about, say, Population or Communities?

In other words, where’s the heat in these conversations today? At any one time, there are areas of real friction. Where the heat is may change over time, but the big conversations stay the same.



Joining the conversations

By the very nature of what they do, the activities of every big corporate inevitably make them relevant to one or more of the world's big conversations. The most forward-looking of today's business leaders get that. They are proactive in joining the conversations – because they know that the knowledge and expertise embedded within their business puts them in a position to make a contribution.

In this issue, we look at some of the leading companies that are joining the conversations. For example, in Environment & Resources, Keith Weed, Unilever's Chief Marketing and Communication Officer, tells us about the company's ambitious plans to grow its business while halving its environmental impact.

In the Energy & Climate Change conversation, Warren East, CEO of ARM, talks about how the company came to dominate the design of smartphone chips through a relentless pursuit of energy efficiency. In Communications, author Don Tapscott talks about how companies are responding to the

new age of transparency. Time and again we see that when companies engage, it isn't just good for society, it's good for business.

When it comes to tackling the world's big challenges, business has a unique contribution to make. That is the view of Bob Zoellick, who gives us his reflections as the outgoing President of the World Bank. Economist Dambisa Moyo, author of *How The West Was Lost*, tells us why she thinks that corporates are a positive force in the global economy.

We live in a world that has become hostile to corporates. Levels of trust in business continue to fall. However, we think a change is coming. In this issue, we look at how some leading companies are engaging with society in a constructive new way.


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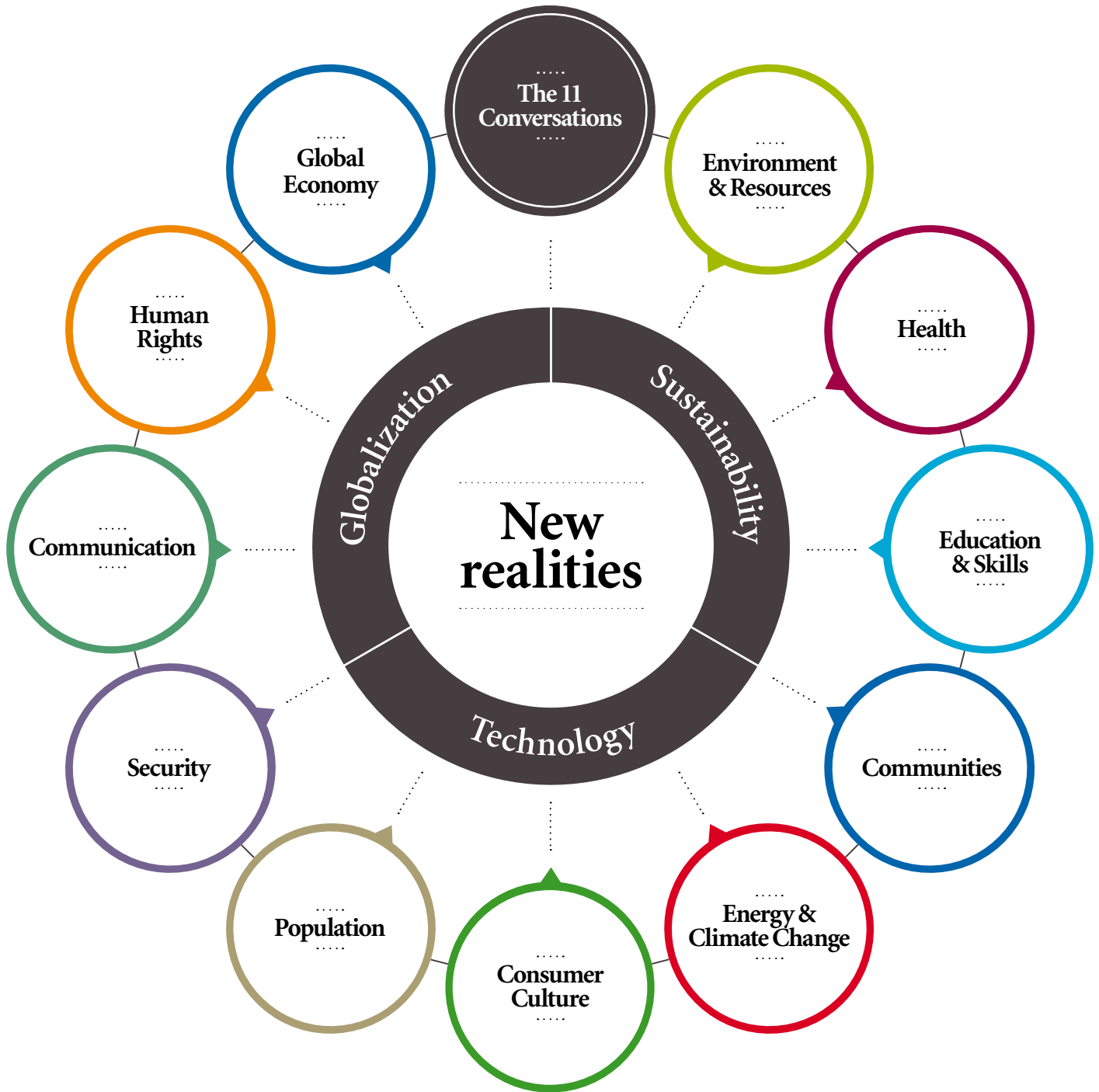
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Lucy Parker and Jon Miller are Brunswick Partners, helping businesses to promote the positive contribution they can make to society.

Over the following pages, we meet some of the more forward-looking businesses, and look at the contribution they are making to the big debates taking place within The 11 Conversations 



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