

# Davos Executive Briefing

24<sup>th</sup> January 2018

BRUNSWICK



# A View From Davos. Reported By Jonathan Faull



Snow, traffic, glimpses of world leaders, suits and boots. Chaos in Davos? Yes, but somehow it works and politicians, business and NGO leaders, bankers, media folk and consultants all congregate in a small Alpine village to discuss world affairs. The big theme emerging this year (after day one) is how to adapt globalisation to concerns about inequality and protection of ways of life from the ways of the world

Brexit remains the principal preoccupation of the British contingent, but is seldom mentioned by others. Similarly, President Trump's expected arrival at the end of the week is much

discussed by the Americans, but far less in other gatherings.

Asian issues are more prominent, while everyone has a story, an idea or a hunch about tech issues. Privacy, new antitrust paradigms, artificial intelligence and algorithms upending society or solving its problems, subverting or sustaining democracy, all of these and more are the most feverish topics.

The search is on for the best ways to harness the benefits of technology by updating policies and structures largely developed in a world of manufacturing and trade in physical goods. The mood is better than in recent years because of encouraging growth figures, but there is a palpable sense of unease and being on the cusp of change, calling for leadership from politicians and all those involved in the development of ideas and solutions.

## Three Themes Emerge

1. Diversity, in particular gender pay disparity. There seems to be an increased understanding of the need genuinely to change corporate culture and practice rather than, as one delegate put it, carry on "papering over the cracks".
2. The challenge of educating a skilled workforce when technology evolves so quickly, and how to effectively pass down skills from experienced staff to new recruits before the former reach retirement.
3. An increasing desire for non tech companies to collaborate with the established tech giants and win the race to be seen as the "tech leader" in their own industry. Central to this is the adoption of AI by firms across all sectors, with all that entails for workforce planning and, as many session titles at Davos frame it "the future of work".





# Davos debates what technological change means for business and society



**Will I Am was a guest speaker at a WEF dinner for CEOs debating the role of technology in our changing society**

Technology is at the centre of a lot of debates this year. But the emphasis is much more on the future of work and what technological change means for society. Will I Am was a guest speaker at a dinner for CEOs last night where he answered a question about a jobless society, saying he's pretty sure that people who pray aren't praying for a job in the afterlife, the question is not about whether we have a jobless society but rather whether we have a purposeless society.

At the Infosys Global FinTech Nightcap, which Brunswick co-hosted, Infosys talked about the work they are doing in the skills area, actively training and re-training the workforce, through their 12-week programmes, to meet the changing needs of the market.

The CEOs of two emerging market financial institutions spoke, thought-provokingly,

about the fact that banking as we have known it is dying. Incumbent banks are increasingly seeking technology partnerships to help them accelerate the shift strategically and operationally. They see themselves in a race to take advantage of the change but arguably that the industry is too slow and many will see themselves as back office utilities, or worse, if they fail to adapt in time.

Many people and panels are actively avoiding the conversation on cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, but are actively discussing the underlying technology is seen as a real game changer for society. Blockchain does not just have the potential to transform the global monetary system, but can help to improve our success fighting financial crime, bringing more people and companies into the financial system. In fact, listening to several financial institutions executives last night, the change is really fundamental. When you add up the underpinning technology shifts - the increasing effort to try and regulate Blockchain technology; the proliferation of mobile payments; P2P lending; Apple Pay - there is a swift and significant shift coming to how people transact and manage finances. On the data front,

legislation such as GDPR as well as initiatives such as Open Banking have led to a shift in power - the power dynamic between consumers and financial institutions is seeing power being transferred to the consumer for the first time. The companies that recognise that and adapt will be rewarded, while those that defend their turf will be overtaken.

## How Open for Business is your city?

Today at Davos saw the launch of the Open for Business campaign's report on cities, during a high-level panel event hosted by Accenture. Open for Business is a coalition of companies promoting the economic case for LGBT inclusiveness.

The cities report ranks global cities based on their inclusiveness, and some of the results may surprise you. Find out more [here](#).



# Political leaders make the weather



More so than in previous years political leaders are the starting point of most conversations - everyone talking about Macron, who is speaking today, and of course Trump. Fascination about what the latter will say mixed with anger that he is being given a microphone at WEF.

The previous generation of political leaders are also making their presence felt. Former Secretary of State John Kerry was busily doing the rounds yesterday, surprising attendees by

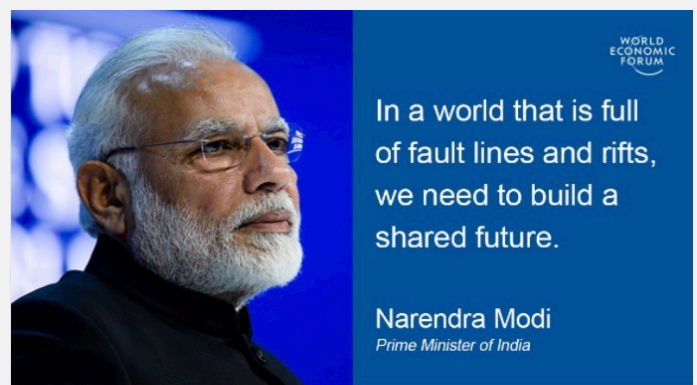
appearing to walk around without any visible security detail.

Former British PM David Cameron and his Chancellor George Osborne were also on the ground. One attendee commented that there were more former Obama staffers here than during his time in office.

## Day 1 Social media highlights


The #WEF18 Twitter conversation generally reflects what was being discussed on the ground, with AI, gender equality and climate change all featuring.

However, day one really belonged to India. With the speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday came a flurry of (mostly supportive) commentary, both from the Indian delegation on the ground and across the world. Here are a few highlights.



**World Economic Forum**  @wef 18h

Narendra Modi: These are the 3 greatest threats to civilization [wef.ch/2n5vDtt](https://wef.ch/2n5vDtt) #wef18 [pic.twitter.com/H56MMUafwY](https://pic.twitter.com/H56MMUafwY)

**Bloomberg**  @business 20h

India is setting its sights on a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, Modi says #wef18 [bloom.bg/2rxyc0](https://bloom.bg/2rxyc0) [pic.twitter.com/vmCM8RZpj7](https://pic.twitter.com/vmCM8RZpj7)