

Introduction of Amy Webb

By Ernst-Jan Pfauth



I'm mostly hearing two types of conversation about technology in our public debate.

The first one goes a bit like this: Tech is amazing. It's going to fix everything. Here's a new gadget. It's a drone that waters the plants in my living room. It's amazing. I love everything tech because, it's, well, tech.

Second: Tech is going to ruin us. Everything used to be better. My neighbor has a drone that waters the plants. Someday, these drones and robots are going to take over

his household, no, our whole world. We're doomed. When I talk with members of the first group - tech is great - I always think about science fiction writer Cory Doctorow, who once said that you should think about technology the way a chef thinks about food. A chef doesn't like ALL FOOD, he probably hates fast food, for example. When thinking about tech you can't say ALL TECH is great either. And the second group is panicking. Which is a - sometimes - understandable mindset, but not a very productive one.

So I think there's a serious lack of smart thinking about technology in the mainstream media. But I'm convinced we won't have that problem tonight, with Amy Webb being in our midst.

Because Amy Webb is a futurist. She's the founder of the Future Today Institute, an institute that helps leaders to make more informed decisions in the face of disruption.

She was a lecturer on the future of media at Columbia University, where she studied at the Graduate School of Journalism. She now teaches at NYU's Stern School of Business on forecasting the future of technology. And I haven't even mentioned Harvard yet. Where she was a fellow at its journalism institute: Nieman. The world's most exciting tech conference - South by South West in Austin, Texas, seeks her advice. And Forbes named her one of the Women Changing the World (Technology category).

She has gathered the core of all this knowledge in her new book 'The Signals are Talking'. This book. Or I could also say: this manual. A manual for thinking about the future. A manual I'm sure I'll keep returning to. Because she shares a six-step approach that helps you make an estimation of how a trend is going to affect you, your organization or society as a whole.

Her message: we ourselves are in charge of creating the future. And if we want to successfully create the future we strive for, we need to have smarter conversations about technology. We have to think MORE about technology. I'll hope that after tonight, you and I - because of Webb - have learned to do that.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's welcome her to the stage, AMY WEBB.

Ernst Jan Pfauth is co-founder and publisher of online news medium De Correspondent. He writes a weekly newsletter on media and hosts a monthly podcast.

