



THE QIDDIYA RECREATIONAL PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO TRANSFORM THE RIYADH METROPOLIS TO INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTER

trends that create the world’s fashion (and that’s how Vision 2030 defines the role of “new cities,” on the Arabian Peninsula see references). Now imagine a world in which there are 50 more such cities and they arise not where we are accustomed to seeing them, but how they emerged in the 12-

15th centuries — from the Malabar Gulf to Somalia, from the Malacca Peninsula to Philippines, in China, in Central Asia, in South America, in the centre of Africa. What will this world be like? What could this world be like? What should be done to create this world? Will it be more comfortable,

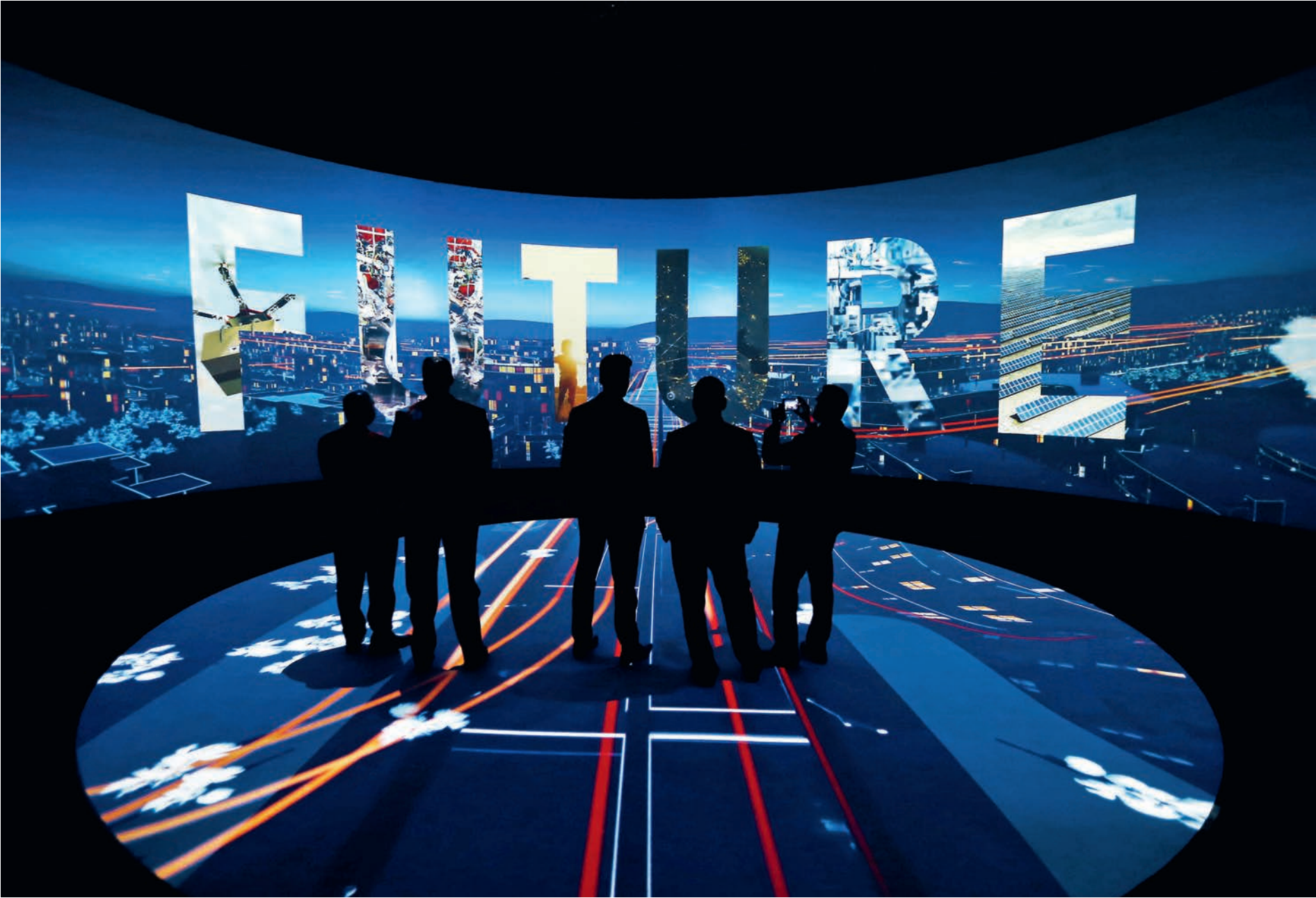
safe and more cultured than the existing one? This, in fact, is the main agenda of FII.

**HOW SOCIETY WILL CHANGE ITSELF** The further Another four major topics discussed in Riyadh were relatively well-known in the intellectual community and apparently, will soon become mainstream in global discussions of the future. Not only are these topics interesting in themselves, but their selection and coexistence as the main topics on the «Davos in the Desert» agenda is also pertinent. These issues include health care, immersive technology, the future of cities and the sustainable development of the poorest countries. Individually, these topics have been studied rather in-depth, for example, by the World Bank. However, combining them together had a rather unusual effect — in this case the focus is on the future of society and how the business of the future will play its role in it. In the field of sustainable development, a notable moment at FII was the discussion involving the CEOs of the large corporations such as Siemens, Saudi Aramco and Nestle about their vision of the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals program. It was a provocative subject to some extent, as transnational companies made a greater contribution to the development of all social aspects of life in the Third World countries than governments. This contribution is sometimes perceived as invisible and rather chaotic, although it is clear that pharmaceutical and baby food companies have done more for the demographic development of Africa and Southeast Asia than any other global state institution since the 1970s. The discussion in Riyadh was interesting primarily because it is one of the few places in the world where participants are ready to talk about interests and concerns of transnational business outside the usual framework of the «power-business» relationship.

Healthcare problems were also been discussed in depth. The main conclusion was that soon increased life expectancy and development of medical technology will come together and potentially disrupt human physiology as we know it today. This is no longer a matter of philosophy but literally practical issues — What will an ultramodern metropolis with an average life expectancy of 75 years and with a fully-functioning standard healthcare system be like? What will be in demand in this city? And in this regard, how should we build such new cities so that they will be not only a place to live but also incubators of new disruptive technologies? These questions are not easy to answer. In the modern world, innovation and high life expectancy are considered opposing concepts, the technologies of the future are created by young people (despite the fact that people must be experienced to innovate).

The closing topic of FII was immersive technologies. Due to the rapid development of immersive technologies and augmented reality, the world is changing faster than ever in the history of civilization. How can societies influence the development of such technologies in order to «squeeze out» the maximum gain for their well-being? How will immersive technologies affect ideas about social disparities, how will they interact with infrastructure inequality?

The main value of «Davos in the Desert» is that these issues were not discussed in a theoretical way, but in investment terms — Where should we invest in order to influence these processes? What can be achieved? The presence of Russia in Riyadh in this sense was a very good sign. Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, said at FII, «We believe that this conference can create many opportunities for Saudi Arabia, we are amazed at the changes that have occurred in the Kingdom in the last two years» (for cooperation between the RDIF and Saudi Arabia, see p. 10). These changes, in fact, were behind FII becoming such a phenomenon, and one that will certainly continue evolve. ■



THE SAUDI VISION 2030 REMAINS THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE FII DISCUSSION