

Five Top Venture Capitalists Name The Top 10 Tech Trends Of The Next 5 Years



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May 22, 2015

Get ready for the Skynet economy, the death of the car, and the re-emergence of women in tech.

Those are three of the top 10 trends coming in technology in the next few years, according to several top venture capitalists. They made their predictions Thursday night at a local Silicon Valley institution, the 17th annual [top 10 tech trends dinner](#) held in San Jose by the Churchill Club, which hosts forums with tech's top executives, financiers, entrepreneurs, and thinkers. The criteria for the trends are that they must not be obvious (a rule frequently broken) and will be big in five years (also often broken).

Offering their prognostications at the were Bill Gurley of Benchmark Partners (recently [described](#) by rival VC Marc Andreessen as “my Newman” after Jerry Seinfeld’s enemy), fast-talking science geek Steve Jurvetson of Draper Fisher Jurvetson, China-focused Jenny Lee of GGV Capital, early-stage investor Rebecca Lynn of Canvas Venture Fund, and former serial entrepreneur Shervin Pishevar of Sherpa Ventures. Moderating were Forbes’ own Publisher Rich Karlgaard and Managing Editor Bruce Upbin.

Although the polling of the audience of several hundred execs and managers went digital years ago, this year via the polling service PollEv.com, the panelists were still analog. They held up green or red paddles to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each other’s predictions. Here’s what the VCs expect to see and what the audience thought of their crystal-balling:



1) On-demand ambient computing: Pishevar calls this “invisible computing,” driven by artificial intelligence. Example: You can move a car in China right now via Uber. But he thinks this kind of activity will be automated by AI-powered machines, not proactively done by people. All his fellow

panelists wave green paddles, as well as most of the audience, so he must be wrong. Seriously, though, this one seems to break rule No. 1.

2) Traditional banks will continue losing share to startups even as bitcoin fades: Lynn doesn't think banks will go away, but startups will build lots of services on top of their infrastructure (the financial version of telecom's dumb pipes). Lending Club is one example, the largest tech IPO of 2014. It allied with Citi. As for bitcoin, she sees it as attractive for the "free real-time rails" it can provide for financial and other contracts, but she doesn't think it will be the winner as a currency. Three green paddles and a red one by Gurley, who is skeptical that what he calls a very corrupt system, politically speaking, will lose any support by the government.

3) The virtual me: Lee thinks advances in hardware and sensors will create an explosion of data that will be aggregated into personal profiles that will know more about you than you do. Lots of detractors on the panel (and the audience is split). Gurley says humans don't want to be tracked that much, especially if the devices keep telling you what to do. Likewise, Jurvetson thinks these data-driven systems will be assistants more than taskmasters. And Pischevar suggests this data will work best if it's made entertaining or gamified. Lee politely implies they're all old.

4) The Skynet economy: Jurvetson sees universal broadband, via very low satellites, bringing untold amounts of talent into the global economy. Every part of the Earth would be equally covered with 16 GB a second Internet access by these now affordable satellites. This will profoundly change the lives of these people. Gurley is the main doubter, partly because he thinks it's too big to invest in. Lynn waffles too, mostly because these people have bigger fish to fry, like, oh, keeping their babies alive. But Lee says wishing it comes true is part of making it come true. Most of the audience seems to agree with her.

5) The end of the auto nation: Individual ownership of cars is nearing the end of its usefulness, says Gurley, who's an investor in Uber. Parking lots, idling or parked cars, pollution, 1.25 million auto-related deaths annually worldwide—all big negatives that are becoming more obvious and untenable. Millennials increasingly don't want to own a car. Mostly doubters on the panel, as well as in the audience. Jurvetson has one word for his skepticism: LA. Maybe China, though. But even there, says Lee, the first thing people with a good job want is a car. It's a form of freedom, Pischevar adds. Gurley responds that smartphones are now more of a social status signal than a car.

6) Fifth mode of transportation: Technologies like the Hyperloop or even fleets of massive drones will skip over current transportation methods in developing countries especially, according to Pischevar, not coincidentally a Hyperloop investor. Mixed reaction: Jurvetson likes the idea but doesn't think it will get through the regulatory minefield in the next five years, and even if it did, it's mainly for medium-length travel, between relatively nearby cities. Some 80% of the audience doesn't think this will happen in five years either.

7) The reemergence of women in tech: Half of computer science students will be women in five years, up from 10% now and a peak of 36% in 1984, argues Lynn. She blames the personal computer, which was targeted at males. Lots of pressure to change the situation. And more positive stories are being told, says Gurley (by the way, the second season of *Halt and Catch Fire*, which has not one but

two strong female characters, premieres May 31 on AMC). All greens on the panel (no one's stupid enough to vote against this hot-button issue) and two-thirds of the audience votes thumbs up.

8) The economy of me: Mobile devices and services will bring the next 2 billion people online and make the online economy more powerful than the offline economy, Lee contends, and will result in a “personal economy” of global products delivered to you from your smartphone. Middlemen and brick and mortar commerce will die. Only Jurvetson raises a red paddle. The trend has been true for a couple decades, but it will be steady, not sudden. Physical commerce will continue to dominate in five years. Gurley, though, completely agrees with Lee. Audience: Maybe, maybe not.

9) Rise of the robocars: By 2020 we will no longer debate the inevitability of autonomous cars, Jurvetson predicts. They're already safer than my parents and I trust them for my kids, he adds. There could be a 10 times reduction of vehicles, parking, etc. as well as a 10X reduction in traffic deaths. Mostly sideways paddles as the panelists waffle, mostly because they think the trend will take longer. Some 75% of the audience, however, think Jurvetson is right. After all, the trend is not that robocars will be here in five years but that they will be widely seen by then as the way to go.

10) The native mobile application will continue to dominate the mobile Web: Gurley says consumers have voted and that's not going to change anytime soon. You can't deliver one-click services on the desktop. Also, the phone is the only computer platform in most of the developing world. The browser and search platform is finally maturing, and Google knows it, so they're moving up the stack. As a result, the whole area of apps will become more dangerous for startups. The panel largely agrees with him, though Lee isn't completely sure. She's tending more in the last couple of years to pull up the mobile Web because she has too damn many apps. Still, most of the audience agrees.



Steve Jurvetson, VC wizard

Overall winner with the highest percentage of audience votes: Rise of the robocars! So Jurvetson gets to wear the ceremonial wizard's cape. Really, there's a ceremonial red and blue wizard's cape. “Do I have to wear it?” he asked. Yes, he did.

And then everyone drove off alone in their Teslas to buy stuff on their smartphone, sell their bitcoins, and pore over their binders full of women.