



Letters & Opinion

## The Mayans Already Knew About 2020

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Archeologist Professore Anzio de Castamilliana y Fonsata, when excavating in the Central American region of San Ramador, recently found a Mayan tablet with inscriptions. He was able to decipher them with Google Translator. The translated text contained predictions of the future; one of them suggesting that 2020 would be the year of a tectonic shift.

I knew that I could only get your attention with this headline and introduction. Currently, there is so much reported on 'THE' virus that there is hardly space left for anything else. If you didn't already figure it out, you should be aware that this article opening is fake news. If I would have continued with a complete fictitious story on the Mayan discovery, some people would have seen a relation to the virus outbreak and put it on their Facebook page to characterize themselves as finders of a source of baffling information, or to make themselves look like inventors of a unique bewilderment in the social media.



### Mayan calendars predict that life goes on.

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If the soup is salty, the last thing needed is an extra spoon of salt. So, let's look at things from a different perspective. How often have we heard individuals say: "If I could start all over again in my life with all that I know now, I would do things different." The time for making that change is coming.

What can be done in the Caribbean? That the region should explore diversifying its economies is long overdue. The time has come now. The most common suggestion that one hears is furthering agriculture. Isn't it crazy to see that cans of coconut water that are sold here in the supermarket are a "Product of Thailand", from the other side of the world? As if there are no coconut trees in the Caribbean. The problem is not about having coconuts or not, it is about having a canning or bottling facility. Agricultural development is one thing, processing and exporting another. Agriculture is thing to think of. Another is developing a unique Caribbean fashion industry. Fashion items that can be exported. How about encouraging home industry activities to produce simple products like souvenirs that don't need to be imported anymore?

The Caribbean may run the risk of missing out on future opportunities. We do not exist in a vacuum and none of us has a monopoly on wisdom when it comes to assessing what a modern economy needs in order to thrive. Just as Task Forces are created to handle the current problematic health situation, already Task Forces should be assembled to deal with the economic situation in the aftermath, which will likely be a recession.

The activities of such a Task Force should be establishing of a roadmap for future sustainable economic success in all parts of the business environment and at all levels of human activity. Every economy is significantly driven by the dynamics of small businesses and the middle-class entrepreneurs. Startups and new products are crucial elements of growth. There may be a potential for young talent and professionals who are looking for new opportunities. All economy segments should be considered. The objective must be to send out impulses, to suggest tools for improvements and better alignment, fostering the expansion of capacities for innovation and driving strategies for the challenges of the future in a changed world.

Innovation is about adding value by enhancing innovation and innovativeness. Looking for innovation does not mean that we would just be looking for a new product or just be helping one particular type of operation within an economy. It should also be leveraged to add value to the creation, development, and implementation of new ideas for processing. It may be about carefully combining existing activities which enable and encourage ideas to be generated and grow, support their diffusion, and harvest a value for the whole economy.

One has to come up with solutions and new ideas that will help consumers. It is anyone's choice to remain part of a problem or to become part of a solution. If one doesn't, someone else will. Are you the type of person who opposes new ideas until they are established? Do you believe that you know it all already? If so, there may be serious trouble ahead of you. Are you skeptical? Typically, the path to change is paved with skeptics. No more of the same are needed. What may be needed now is to exercise some transverse thinking.

What are transverse or diagonal thinkers? They may not be liked, but they may be needed. They are considered obstructionist and sometimes seen as neurotic or egocentric eccentrics. In their way of thinking, they disturb any traditional process, provoke the established, and drive someone crazy when they question dogmas, accumulated and proven ideas, and call for alternatives. They express concerns and question matters beyond the traditional ways of thinking, patterns of actions, and existing templates. They can be rigorous, but... they are also innovators. They are not fixed on standard thinking. The fact is that behind every innovation are unconventional ideas. One should not cling tenaciously to outdated services, processes and attitudes, but instead, one should question the status quo and have the courage to think eccentrically and bring forth new benefits to businesses and communities. Service providers in tomorrow's business environment need to be innovative in order to survive and flourish.

As an example, let's look at an industry with a high rate of innovation. The positive impact of pharmaceutical innovation has been far-reaching, affecting the very core of economies, and quality of life. New medicines are protective and helping people to lead healthier more productive lives. Many of the pharmaceutical accomplishments would have been impossible without product innovation.

However, in the context of their traditional culture, for Native American Indians the words 'Good Medicine' have a much broader and richer meaning. And it is not about innovation. In order to have good health one must first learn to live life in complete balance with the natural laws, to have respect

for nature, to possess a kind heart, and to have high moral standards. That is what they consider “Good Medicine.”

Which brings me back at how I started this article about a piece of Pre-Columbian culture. Archeologist Professore Anzio de Castamilliana y Fonsata whom I mentioned in the top of this article. He has sent me a message informing me that the recently found Mayan tablet also explicitly indicated that the world would not go under, regardless of the predicted 2020 tectonic shift, but on the contrary, it would flourish thereafter.

**Editor's note: Cdr. Bud Slabbaert is the Chairman and Coordinator of the Caribbean Aviation Meetup, an annual result and solution oriented conference for stakeholders of 'airlift' in the Caribbean which will be June 16-18 on St Maarten. Mr Slabbaert's background is accentuated by aviation business development, strategic communication, and journalism.**

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