



The future is now ours to see

Pavilion demonstrates that tomorrow's technologies are closer than we think, **Wu Yiyao** reports.

Today is what was imagined yesterday, and tomorrow is what is dreamed of today — the Urban Future Pavilion presents this continuity of imagination to visitors.

Visitors read open “books” projected onto the wall in the pavilion and marvel at human imagination. Things we take for granted and probably ignore today, such as the sewage system, were once part of people's dreams before being invented.

“I am very impressed with the chapter telling how roads were invented,” said Xu Meng, a six-year-old girl. “It has never come to me before that roads and streets were created in cities — I thought they have always been there.”

What is the future of tomorrow's urban life? The Urban Future Pavilion reveals.

Connectivity is a trend for a future Utopia and the focus of the exhibitions in the pavilion. While telephones and webcams have already connected people via sound and images, future technologies will make people far away “touch” one another.

A video clip at the Infinite Possibility section in the pavilion demonstrates how it works. By logging on to a system that connects people's senses (which are not limited to visual and acoustic), residents in future cities can virtually hug, touch, kiss and shake hands with one another. And if you are not confident about your appearance, you can even “wear” a virtual figure.

Want to become a superstar in your own bedroom? Just sing and dance, and a virtual audience will give you a big hand. Dispatched to another country before the wedding but don't want to miss the big day? Get married online with your bride by your side. All you have to do is to invite guests online, who you can talk to and shake hands as is done in reality.

This is, obviously, good news for those who are separated from their beloved by the tyranny of distance. Those watching this performance, however, have their doubts.



A visitor experiences a diagnosis machine in the Urban Future Pavilion.

PHOTOS BY YONG KAI / CHINA DAILY

“What if I want to kiss my girlfriend and the system switches me to another girl by error? And what if I am just dating a girl but my account expires at the very moment?” Yi Yang, a seven-year-old boy from Beijing asked. His mother laughed and told him not to worry about something “not coming true in the near future”.

Indeed, the pace of technological development may surpass people's expectation and the possibilities are infinite.

The sections, Dreams of Yesterday, Reality of Today, Infinite Possibility and Dreams that come True, illustrate people's eternal striving for a better life.

If virtual reality is a double-edged sword for interpersonal

relationships, it does have great benefits when applied to medical science. In the Dreams that come True section, diagnosis machines enable patients have their health checked at home. The machines will send digital indicators and records of a person's health, such as pulse, heart rate and body temperature, to doctors to analyze.

An intelligent refrigerator informs the user about nutrients of the food stored in containers inside the fridge, and can track the source of food for future reference. It links with retailers, enabling people to shop for food online.

These are not dreams; they are products that will be widely applied in the near future.

“I love the pavilion,” said Liu



Visitors learn about an “intelligent” refrigerator on display in the Urban Future Pavilion.

Hao, father of a seven-year-old boy. “The exhibitions make me expect a better life, which will be more convenient, healthy, and

more human.”

“I hope my son will contribute to our future reality, too,” he added.