Approaching A Decade Of Blockchain: Past, Present And Where We Might Be Heading

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Speech Abstract: Foundational technologies come in rarely, and when they do, they tend to carry with them a lot of promise, but also a lot of hype. Some do achieve their potential while others fade away. Blockchain has all the ingredients of a foundational technology. Still, its industrial applications, the technology, business and regulatory challenges to overcome are all work in progress. In this talk, we revisit the tumultuous short life of blockchain, soon approaching its 10th year anniversary, its most significant developments and its most promising applications. We draw a brief parallel with two others foundational technologies, which have had a very significant impact on our everyday lives. Namely, the Internet and Artificial Intelligence. The way they have evolved, overcome challenges and transformed the way businesses run, provides a glimpse on what the blockchain journey may end up being. Blockchain sits at the confluence of a multitude of technologies such as web scale databases, highly distributed systems, high performance computing and advanced cryptography. It spans a vast array of business verticals from logistics to finance to communications and energy, among others. Piggybacking on the cooperative nature of the Open Source development models, blockchain software and applications communities have rapidly emerged and grown. Yet, a lot is still unknown. Some see it as a threat, others as an opportunity. Some regulators are racing to be blockchain friendly, others to aggressively regulate it. The latest Initial Coin Offerings wave, as an alternative to the venture capital model for startups fund raising is probably one of the best instantiations on how impactful blockchain has become, how much confusion it has brought and how much polarization it has led to. We go on around the world tour, highlighting the most impactful blockchain initiatives, the most influential communities, the global investment landscape, the most disruptive technological developments and emerging regulatory developments. We stop short from crafting a roadmap on where things are heading, and instead, map out our own views on where leverage opportunities may reside and the overall technology leapfrog potential.

Biography: Dr. Riad Hartani has spent the last two decades contributing to the development of Internet, Mobile and Artificial Intelligence technologies, mostly out of the Silicon Valley as a hub, building multiple leading technology startups, advising on strategic investments and rolling out innovative technologies all over the world. He led many industry firsts in the areas of Internet infrastructure design, cloud architectures and Artificial Intelligence. He is well versed in the technology startups, innovation and investment eco-systems globally. He has lived, worked and travelled in very diverse regions of the world, gaining a broad understanding of cross-cultural technology management and technology ecosystems development. Most recently, he jumpstarted "Padovani Ventures", a multi-disciplinary advanced technology initiative in stealth mode. He co-founded a global technology and investments advisory firm, "Xona Partners" (Silicon Valley, Singapore, Vancouver, Tokyo), with a novel startup incubation and spin-in model as a way to foster disruptive technology innovation. He co-founded "iValley.co", a technology startup co-creation studio in the Silicon Valley with a Blockchain, Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence (AI) focus. He has been in the leadership team of various Silicon Valley technology startups, including: Wichorus, Inc. as head of Global Systems Engineering (acquired by Tellabs), Anagran, Inc. as Head of Technology (acquired by Saisei) and Caspian, Inc. as Chief Architect (acquired by Sable Networks). Focus has been on the development of Internet infrastructure, Web Scale cloud platforms and AI applications. He worked closely with lead Silicon Valley Venture Capital firms, contributing to raising significant venture capital funding, in the ventures he was involved with, leading to various successful acquisitions. He lead and contributed to advanced research teams in prestigious R&D labs in the USA (University California at Berkeley), Canada (National Research Council), France (Scientific National Research Center), Korea (Telecommunications Research Institute) and Japan (Hitachi Central Research Labs & AI Labs). He advised some of the top 10 technology companies on their business and investment strategies in the USA, Japan, Korea and China, among others. He engineered many industry firsts, including: AI based autonomous subway control systems (France), AI based facial expressions recognition (Japan), ultra-low latency stock exchange data center design (Hong Kong) and 4G mobile networks rollouts (USA). Riad's Ph. D. thesis was one of the first Machine Learning dissertation combining Neural Networks (numerical AI) and Fuzzy Systems (symbolic AI) with successful industrial applications. He has been a founding member of various technology ventures, on the advisory board of various startups in over 15 countries, been on the judging committee of global investment and technology awards events over 20 times, published/presented over 200 research, industry and Internet standards papers, lectured at over 10 lead global universities and R&D labs, advised various government and regulators on technology matters, performed investment due diligence to some of the top 10private equity firms and has been on the advisory boards of several startups accelerators around the globe. He is on the advisory board of various Smart Cities related initiatives (e.g. Omega, a NASA spin-off) and an Angel Investor (Member of the Angel Capital Association). He holds two Engineering degrees and a Master degree (applied mathematics, systems and computer engineering, from Ecole Polytechnique, Algeria and Ecole des Mines, France) with the highest distinctions. He earned a Doctorate in Computer Science (AI) with highest honors from the University of Paris, was a doctoral and post-doctoral fellow at University of California at Berkeley - all awarded by age 25. Later on, completed the Executive Education in Business at Stanford Graduate School of Business. Riad won various prestigious academic and industry awards, including the best Engineering and best Ph. D. thesis distinctions, along with various inventions/patents. Riad was born and grew up in Algiers. He lived and lead R&D teams in about 8 countries across North America, Europe, Middle East, North Africa, China, South East Asia and the Far East, conducted business and deployed technology solutions in well over 50 countries and travelled to over 100 countries/regions on 6 continents, gaining a valuable understanding of diversity across cultures and societies. Riad can be promptly reached at riad@padovaniventures.com