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The Synthocene Era

Merging Human and Machine Intelligence

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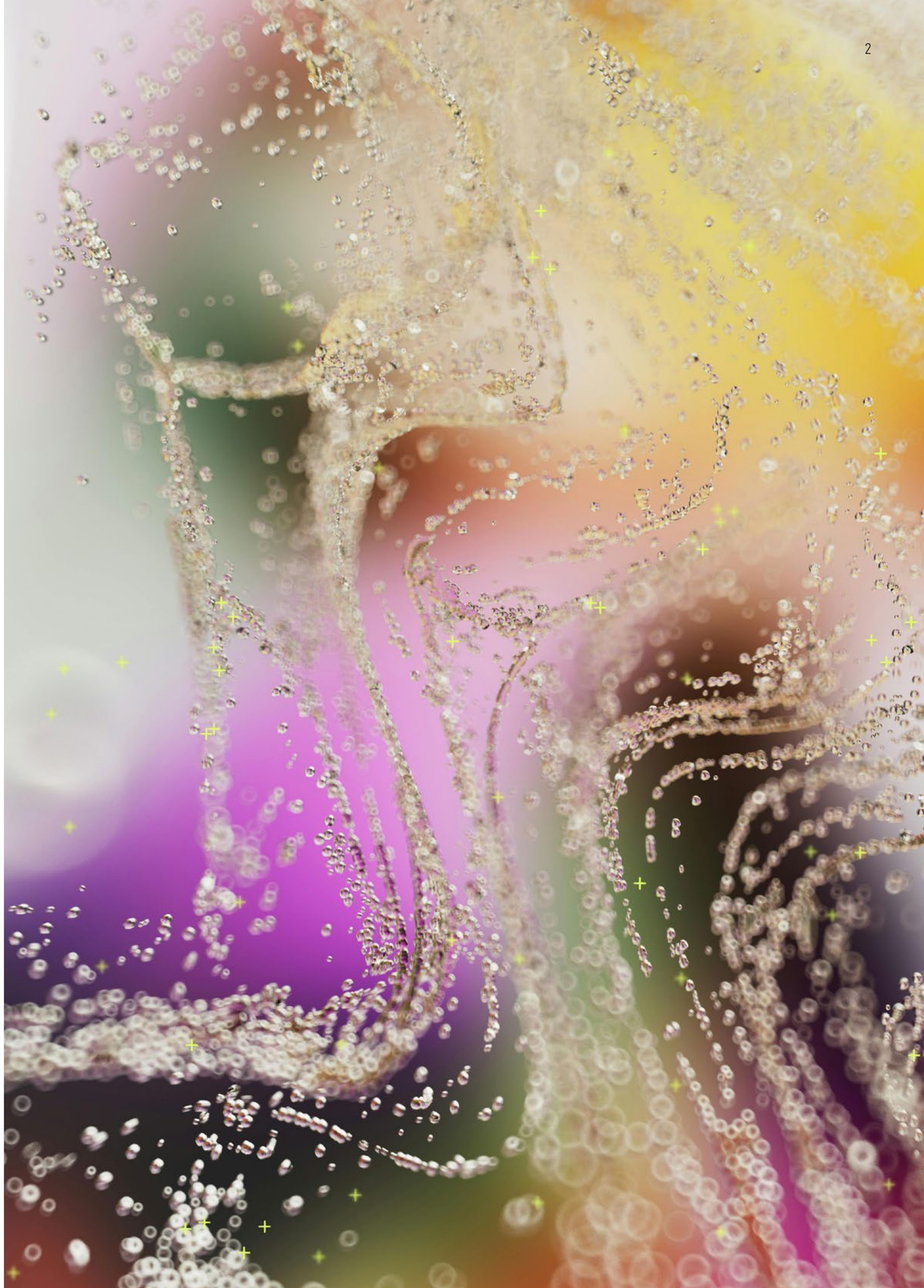
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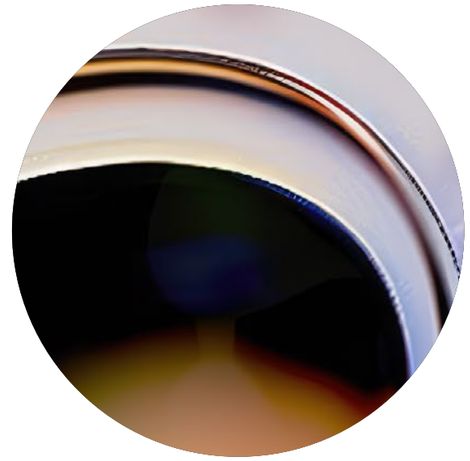
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Cover: AI imagery by The Future Laboratory, UK; Right: Google DeepMind



Introduction



As AI redefines our understanding of intelligence, we are entering The Synthocene Era in which the lines between what is natural and what is artificial are increasingly blurred – driving humanity into a future when technology will redefine what it means to be human

By 2030, our interactions with artificial intelligence, extended reality (XR) and biotech will propel us into a future when the boundaries between the real and the artificial, and between the natural and the synthetic, will blur irrevocably. This report delves into this transformative journey, not just to explore the technology itself, but also to question how these advances will reshape our psyche, our identity and our purpose.

The Synthocene Era is more than just a new chapter in the story of human progress; it represents a fundamental shift in our understanding of intelligence, agency and connection. The 2025 Venice Architecture Biennale, with its theme of Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective, captures the essence of this shift and pushes us to reconceptualise intelligence, not as a sole human trait but as a collective force shaped by both natural and artificial means.

But why should we care? Hasn't artificial intelligence (AI) been around for a while? The difference today is that we are on the cusp of a new reality in which AI and other advanced technologies are not just tools but active partners in our evolution.

'I see AI as the key component of our next generation of lifestyle that could be the synthetic lifestyle,' Julien Tauvel, co-founder and CEO of prospective design studio Imprudence, tells The Future Laboratory. 'When I say synthetic, that means the capacity to edit whatever we want. From our identity in the virtual space to where we could be living, AI would be able to better understand our environment and help us edit in real time, adapt and create new features, functions and materials that will basically change the way we live.'

This report serves as a roadmap for navigating this new era, highlighting the areas that will affect both brands and individuals. We live in a time when businesses, not governments, are seen as the most competent and ethical entities, with the Edelman Trust Barometer 2023 revealing a 54-point lead for businesses over governments in perceived competence. This puts the onus on your business to lead the way in shaping a future when technology will serve as a partner in our quest for fulfilment, understanding and interconnectedness.

'One or two people are not going to shape AI,' Faisal Hoque, an entrepreneur and author of the upcoming book, Transcend: Unlocking Humanity in the Age of AI, tells The Future Laboratory. 'It's a collective responsibility. Even the creators and people who have contributed greatly to AI are now holding back and saying 'What is enough? Are we pushing the boundaries too much?"

As we explore the intricacies of this new era – from AI's role in augmenting our cognitive abilities to humans merging with tech to become Human+ – we must recognise that the path forward is not just about harnessing the latest advances, it's about remembering what it truly means to be human in a rapidly evolving landscape. The answers will define The Synthocene Era and, ultimately, the future of humanity itself.

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‘Our intelligence is variously embodied and distributed. It will become even more so as AI systems proliferate, making it increasingly hard to pretend that our achievements are individual or even solely human. Perhaps we should adopt a broader definition of ‘human’ to include this entire biotechnological package’

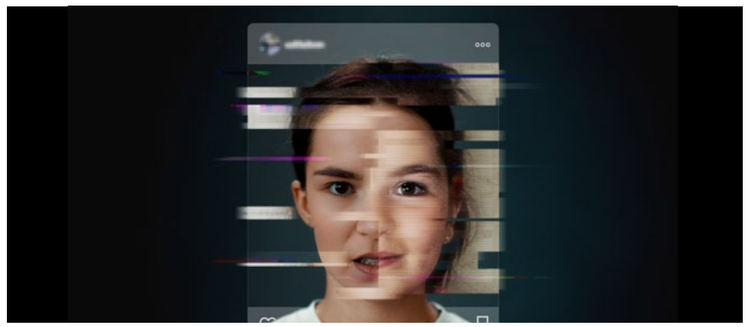
*Blaise Agüera y Arcas, AI researcher, Google (source: **The Guardian**)*

Topline Takeaways



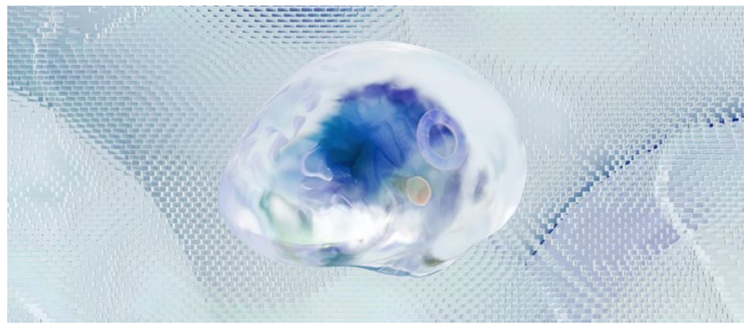
Tech Acceleration and Adoption

The rapid evolution and adoption of AI since the release of ChatGPT in 2022 have sparked a technological revolution, pushing AI from niche technology to mainstream adoption, with significant impacts on industry, culture and daily life.



Erosion of Trust and Social Impact

The rise of AI-driven technologies like deepfakes is exacerbating societal issues, eroding trust and challenging the integrity of democracies, with a lack of effective regulation posing significant risks.



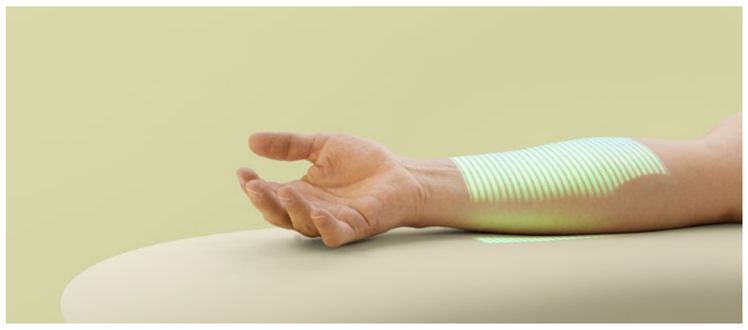
AI as Extended Mind

David Chalmers' and Andy Clark's theory of The Extended Mind posits that technology like the internet and AI acts as an external part of our cognitive process, allowing us to access and use vast amounts of information without internalising it, effectively expanding our mental capabilities.



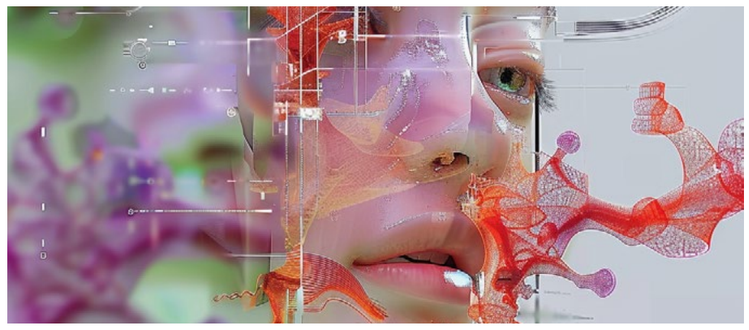
Risks of Cognitive Stagnation

Despite the cognitive benefits, certain digital tools may limit intellectual growth by fostering cultural homogenisation and reducing exposure to diverse perspectives, particularly among younger generations who are increasingly immersed in algorithm-driven content.



The Rise of Human+

Advances in biotechnology and neural enhancement are pushing the boundaries of human evolution by merging biology with AI, raising ethical concerns while offering transformative potential in both medical and commercial applications.



Merging Human and AI Intelligence

In the future, human and AI-driven intelligence may merge, fostering new forms of learning, cultural preservation and even digital immortality platforms like Roblox and Fortnite.

Key Statistics

: The humanoid and animal-like healthcare companion robots market was valued at **£1.2bn** in 2022 and is expected to reach **£4.3bn** in 2030 at a CAGR of **17.8%** from 2023 to 2030 (source: **Grand View Research**)

: Within a **90%** consensus that technology is accelerating at speed, **60%** felt this was a positive thing (source: **Future:Poll**)

: The valuation of OpenAI surged to **£61bn** in under 10 months between January and October 2023 (source: **The New York Times**)

: The US AI market is predicted to expand from **£66.59bn** in 2023 to **£181.03bn** by 2030 (source: **Statista**)

: Across age groups the acceptance of AI as part of our future daily lives is greater in younger generations. Some **83%** of 18–34-year-olds are open to some form of AI assistance in their lives, compared to **57%** of 55+ (source: **Future:Poll**)

: Some **29%** of respondents cited 'loss of human qualities' as a key concern when thinking about the future of AI (source: **Future:Poll**)

: The value of the spatial computing market is expected to rise from **£126.2bn** in 2024 to more than **£473.6bn** in 2032 (sources: **Market.us, Statista**)

: Overall, a majority [**52%**] feel AI will be a positive force in the world over the next decade. But there is significant uncertainty here, with **26%** responding with I don't know, compared to **22%** believing the outlook is negative (source: **Future:Poll**)

: Two-thirds of the UK (and **59%** of respondents across 28 countries) believe the government does not understand emerging technologies – such as AI – enough to adequately regulate them (source: **2024 Edelman Trust Barometer**)

: The wearable medical device market is valued at **£32.61bn** in 2024 and is forecast to grow to **£128.43bn** by 2030 (source: **Grand View Research**)

: In 2022, **43%** of global consumers admitted they couldn't distinguish between a deepfake and a real video (sources: **iProov, Statista**)

: The global industrial extended reality (XR) market is expected to reach **£45.6bn** by 2030, with XR training and instruction as top use cases (source: **ABI Research Enterprise and Industrial XR Training report**)

: In a UK and US survey, **86%** of Gen Z users said it is at least somewhat important that their avatar is able to express emotions in order to feel fully represented in the metaverse (source: **Roblox**)

: The global AI robots market was worth **£9.2bn** in 2022 and is expected to be valued at **£62.9bn** by 2032, expanding at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of **21.5%** from 2023 to 2032 (source: **Precedence Research**)

: Searches for ChatGPT soared more than **2,000%** in 2023 (source: **Google**)

Future:Poll, a next-generation quantitative research tool by The Future Laboratory.

Our polls, surveys and Futures 1000 expert panels connect you with the innovators and early adopters determining future commercial successes.



Drivers

Although generative AI has been widely discussed thanks to the success of ChatGPT, its effects extend far beyond large language models. This new era of technology is disrupting democracies, culture, health and more



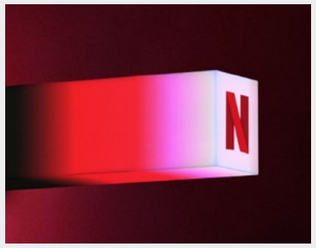
The Great Tech-celeration

From generative AI to spatial computing, rapid technological advances are transforming industries and everyday life on a global scale.



Blurred Realities

The rise of deepfakes and inadequate tech regulation are eroding trust and threatening democratic integrity like never before.



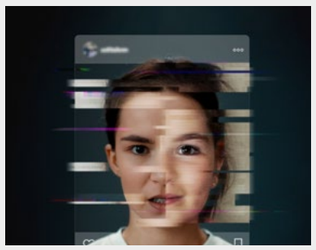
Algorithmic Echoes

Cultural homogenisation driven by hyper-personalisation and algorithms is stifling creativity and human connection.



Syntherventional Living

Advances in biohacking and wearables are blurring the line between human and machine, heralding a new era of augmented humanity.



Gen Quantum

AI and spatial computing will reshape Gen Alpha's reality, enhancing their cognitive and emotional experiences in ways that are unimaginable today.

The Great Tech-celeration

Since ChatGPT was released to the public in November 2022, we have witnessed a striking acceleration in technological development. At 2024's SXSW, experts claimed the AI revolution was initiated in 2023, but there will be substantial commercial implementation in 2024.

As a testament to the escalating interest and investment in AI technology, the valuation of OpenAI surged to £61bn ($80bn, €72.4bn) in under 10 months between January and October 2023 (source: The New York Times).

Regulatory actions, like the EU AI Act, and collaborations among tech rivals, including Apple and Meta, show that the technology is no longer on the fringes and is profoundly infiltrating consumer electronics.

Although the press has covered artificial intelligence for decades, such as in 2014 when Google acquired AI start-up DeepMind, the general public had never experienced the technology in the comfort of their own homes. According to Google, searches for ChatGPT surged more than 2,000% in 2023 – a testament to how fast consumers and businesses alike have adopted the generative tool.

Via Apple Intelligence (integrated AI developed by Apple and designed to 'help users write, express themselves and get things done effortlessly'), devices as mainstream as the iPhone and iPad will soon become vehicles for AI-powered lifestyles.

The fast progression of AI is often compared to human development stages, with current AI moving from 'pre-schooler' to 'high-schooler' level in just a few years, according to Leopold Aschenbrenner, an OpenAI alumnus in his online essay Situational Awareness: The Decade Ahead. Experts predict that by 2027, AI could reach a 'professor' level of intelligence, approaching what's known as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). This new stage refers to AI systems that can understand, learn and apply knowledge across a wide range of tasks, similar to human intelligence. The next step after AGI is Artificial Superintelligence (ASI), which refers to AI systems that surpass human intelligence in all aspects, potentially outperforming the best human minds in every field, including scientific creativity, general wisdom and social skills.

Another technology spurring new growth in Silicon Valley is spatial computing. This signals the fusion of digital and physical worlds, and is poised to revolutionise the way we live, learn and work; its market value is expected to grow from £126.2bn ($165.3bn, €149.7bn) in 2024 to more than £473.6bn ($620.2bn, €561.7bn) in 2032 (sources: Market.us, Statista).

By delivering hyper-immersive, interactive experiences enriched with contextual depth, spatial computing will elevate memory retention, spatial awareness and emotional engagement, ultimately transforming sectors such as education, healthcare, industrial training, retail and urban planning.

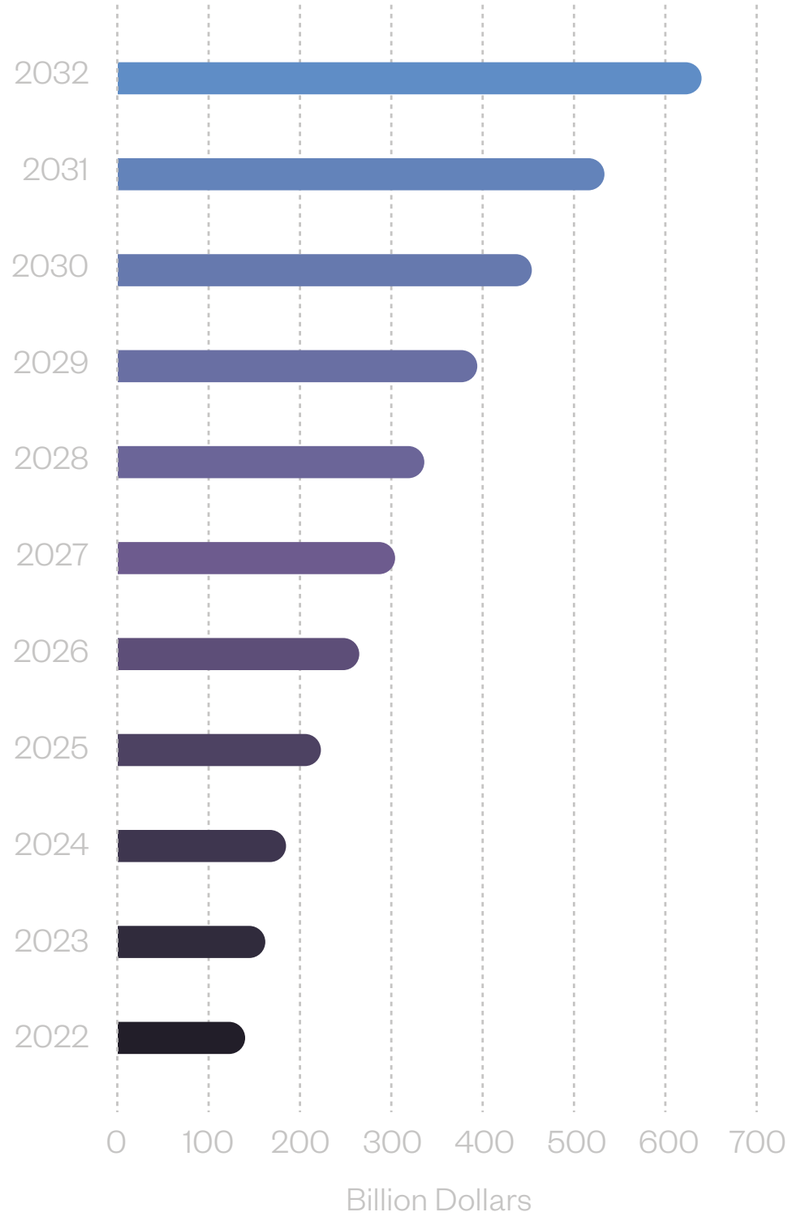
Global Driver : Accelerating Technologies

The rapid adoption of AI has propelled the technology forward, potentially setting the stage for even greater advances in spatial computing, Artificial General Intelligence and quantum computing



Google DeepMind

Spatial Computing Market Revenue Worldwide (2022–2032)



Source: **Market.us, Statista**

Two-thirds of the UK (and **59%** of respondents across **28** countries) believe the government does not understand emerging technologies – such as AI – enough to adequately regulate them

*Source: **2024 Edelman Trust Barometer***



Beats by Dre's Beats Studio Buds+ campaign featuring Cardi B by Builders Club, US

Blurred Realities

The surge in artificial content is already eroding trust and further weakening the fragile state of democracies, and the acceleration of the above-mentioned technologies could intensify the problem. Audio and video deepfakes, in particular, are having a significant societal impact, with The New York Times highlighting the 'epidemic of deepfake nudes in schools'. This is especially alarming given that in 2022, 43% of global consumers admitted they couldn't distinguish between a deepfake and a real video (sources: **iProov, Statista**).

'Yes, deepfakes exist, they will continue to exist, and people will try to influence the upcoming [2024 US] election using AI,' HP Newquist, an author and artificial intelligence historian, explains to The Future Laboratory. 'There's no sheriff, there's no law, there's no enforcement. AI companies are not incentivised to do anything about it because they are driven by getting their products out there, getting the working world and the general public familiar with their products, and ultimately generating revenues from those products.'

But when it comes to regulation, two-thirds of the UK (and 59% of respondents across 28 countries) believe the government does not understand emerging technologies – such as AI – enough to adequately regulate them (source: 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer).

The lack of effective regulation poses serious risks to society. In the 2020 Netflix documentary The Social Dilemma, early Facebook investor and venture capitalist Roger McNamee warned of a post-truth society where social cohesion is threatened, stating: 'If everyone is entitled to their own facts, there's no need for people to come together. There's no need for people to interact.'

Global Driver : Fragmenting Societies

Dubbed The Ultimate Election Year by Time, in 2024, half of the global population voted amid polarisation, misinformation, provocation platforms powered by Silicon Valley and fractured democracies



Above: Vodafone and Global Action Plan released The Rise of the Aggro-rithm, a film spotlighting the impact of harmful AI algorithms on teen and tween boys, UK; Right: Netlix branding by Studio Nari, UK

Algorithmic Echoes

Facts and news are not the only areas where we increasingly lose our common ground.

Culture has never been more homogenised, according to journalist Kyle Chayka in his 2024 book Filterworld: How Algorithms Flattened Culture. He suggests that between Netflix, Spotify and TikTok, consumers are teaching and training algorithms to confine them into a bubble where all their beliefs and tastes are validated, celebrated and never challenged.

'The further we go with the hyper-personalisation AI that we have seen, the more destructive it will be, especially in the hands of corporations. It diminishes the humanity of it all because it encapsulates what is in those bubbles,' says Aaron Vick, a Web3 consultant and adviser at Sureel AI, an ethical AI platform that ensures each piece of content generated can be traced back to the original creator or provider.

Jeremy Kahn, Fortune's AI editor and author of Mastering AI: A Survival Guide to Our Superpowered Future, warns that while AI can produce and aggregate mainstream art and culture, it often misses the more interesting, avant-garde fringes, potentially making it harder to discover unique, human creativity.

He tells The Future Laboratory: 'That actually may put a premium on humans who can operate as artists on the avant-garde because that will seem very refreshing to people. It will be something they cannot get from AI. But the question is, how do people discover that?'

Artists and creators are already pushing back on the power of algorithms that depend on their work but do not remunerate them accordingly. Industry sources suggest that each play on Spotify in the US, in terms of recorded music royalties, currently generates only £0.002 ($0.003, €0.003) per month for the artist (source: Music Business Worldwide). That's why new platforms, from Substack to OnlyFans and direct WhatsApp channels, are quietly fighting against algorithms and bringing human curation to the fore.

In dating, as consumers experience algorithm fatigue, in-person social spaces, sports and college communities are emerging as popular alternatives to dating apps and their addictive swipe culture – making way for more screen-to-scene connection.

Global Driver : Micro-globalisation

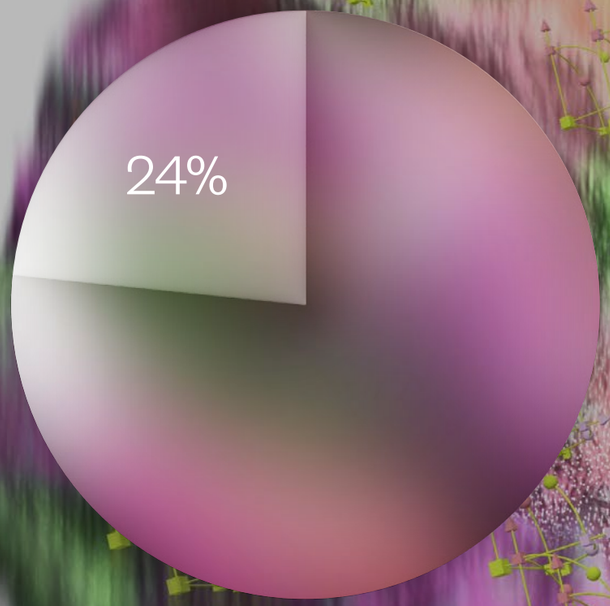
Big tech's global influence, hyper-personalisation and doomscrolling have created a new age of mainstream where localised trends exist, but UX and on-platform behaviours are identical across the world

'The further we go with the hyper-personalisation AI that we have seen, the more destructive it will be, especially in the hands of corporations'

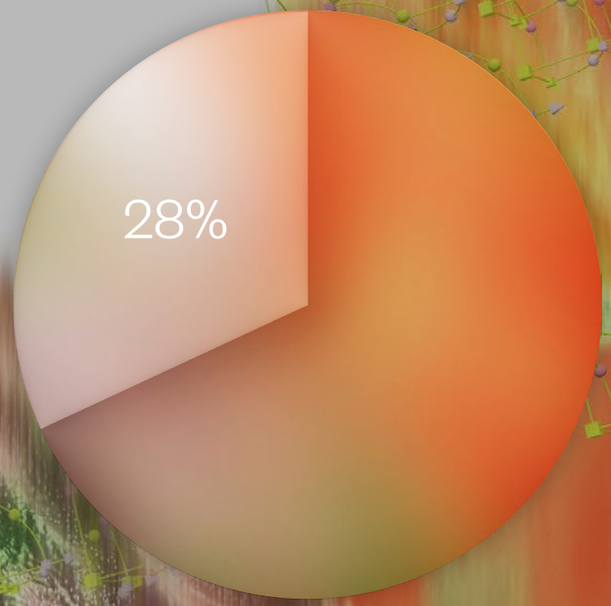
Aaron Vick, Web3 consultant and adviser, Sureel AI



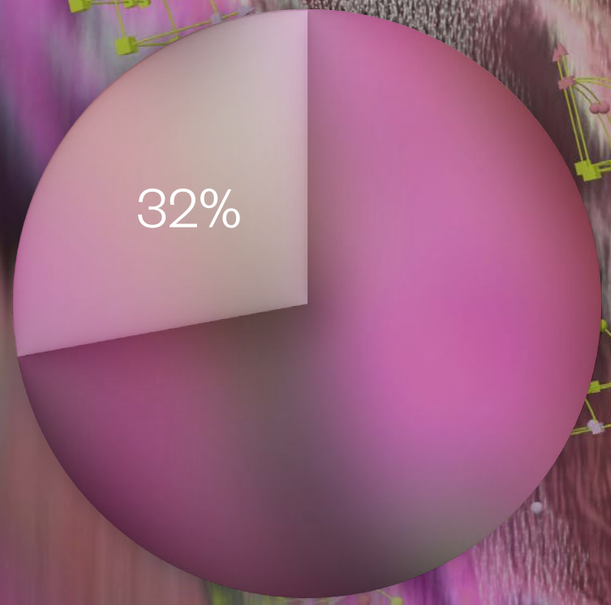
The most pressing concerns about the future of AI among respondents centre around ethical issues, such as deepfakes, bias and trust



US respondents



UK respondents



All respondents

Source: Future:Poll

Google DeepMind



The wearable medical device market is valued at **£32.61bn** in 2024 and is forecast to grow to **£128.43bn** by 2030

Source: Grand View Research

Syntherventional Living

Futurist and Google engineer Ray Kurzweil predicted The Singularity by 2045 – a moment when rapid technological growth will merge humans with machines and create a new era of intelligence. Kurzweil described this fusion as creating centaurs: hybrids of humans and machines.

As seen in our Longevity Lifestyles macrotrend, advances in body and brain adaptation are already redefining what it means to be superhuman and promising a future when health will not just be maintained but optimised and extended.

Biohacking is on its way to revolutionising medicine, exemplified by the rise of GLP-1 drugs (the Ozempic mania). Meanwhile, wearables are evolving beyond smartwatches and continuous glucose monitors like Zoe, with innovations such as Samsung's Galaxy Ring and Thermal Earrings designed for more accurate body temperature monitoring and menstrual tracking. The wearable medical device market is valued at £32.61bn ($42.74bn, €38.69bn) in 2024 and is forecast to grow to £128.43bn ($168.29bn, €152.34bn) by 2030 (source: Grand View Research).

The rise of Emotional Support Sips and nootropics also highlights a shift towards preventative and synthetic health solutions, with products like Alice Mushrooms' functional chocolates and California-based Emotional Utility Beverage's sparkling drink infused with amino acids, adaptogens and vitamins designed to boost mood and cognitive function.

'I believe we are moving towards a cyborg future, effectively integrating AI not just to assist us in our work but into ourselves,' Neil Sahota, an IBM master inventor, UN AI adviser and author of the book Own the AI Revolution, tells The Future Laboratory. He says AI has already restored mobility with robotic limbs and vision through digital implants, and is on its way to do more. As we embrace these technologies, the line between human and machine continues to blur, heralding a new era of augmented humanity.

Global Drivers : Accelerating Technologies, Evolving Demographics

Post-Covid, consumers prioritise not just health and wellness, but also performance, fitness and tracking personal health data, making these their top concerns



Left: Lifesum is a digital tool for managing nutrition, hydration and fitness, Sweden; Above: Neko Health is a health tech company focused on prevention and early detection for longer life, Sweden

Gen Quantum

Armed with a tech-native understanding of the world, life without social media, smartphones, streaming services, and now AI, is unimaginable for **Gen Alpha** (born 2013–2025). But their future is poised for a radical shift thanks to spatial computing.

Unlike smartphones, which rely on taps and swipes on a single screen, spatial computing devices enable interaction in a layered reality where users can interact not only with augmented digital content but also with physical objects. The promised increase in cognitive flexibility, creativity, spatial awareness and emotional engagement from these experiences will further advance a generation already distinguished by heightened mental capabilities and maturity.

'Gen Alpha are a generation of world-builders, and today's flat internet experience just seems… old. I wholeheartedly believe that the world's next Coco Chanel is probably a 10-year-old girl designing skins in Roblox,' says Cathy Hackl, chief futurist and tech pioneer at design and innovation consultancy **Journey**.

Their concept of identity, shaped by advancing technologies, will also influence their communication and interactions both with people and tech. 'They're going to have chatbot friends and really close friends that are not real,' says HP Newquist. 'Kids will create very close emotional bonds with those chatbots or virtual friends.'

The global AI robots market was worth £9.2bn ($12bn, €10.8bn) in 2022 and is expected to be valued at £62.9bn ($82.5bn, €74.6bn) by 2032, expanding at CAGR of 21.5% from 2023 to 2032 (source: **Precedence Research**). This growth has the potential to answer the demand for more companionship; more than half of Americans (52%) report feeling lonely, while 47% report their relationships with others are not meaningful (source: **Cigna**).

Global Driver : Evolving Demographics

Alphas, born in the 21st century, are so immersed in tech that life without social media, smartphones, streaming services, and now AI, is unimaginable to them

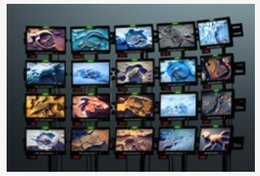
What are Drivers?

Drivers are fundamental shifts and external forces that have the potential to reshape the future trajectory of a brand or business, also sometimes referred to as mega-trends or global forces of change. They differ from trends in that they are long-term structural forces that are pervasive, powerful and transformative

Kidfluencer Starterkit by Doortje Smithuijsen and Joep van Osch is a critical exploration of the Internet Generation, featured at Dutch Design Week, The Netherlands

Insight

By disrupting the uniqueness of human intelligence, AI is leading a transformative change in everything from thinking and learning to education and languages



Diversifying Intelligence

Digital tools can expand our minds, but algorithmic cycles may restrict cognitive growth. New tools should encourage broader exploration.



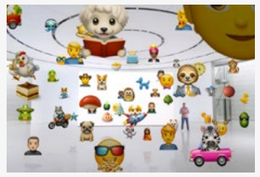
Xperience Economy

Spatial computing and layered realities are reshaping the experience economy, enhancing intimacy, memory and skills training with immersive technologies.



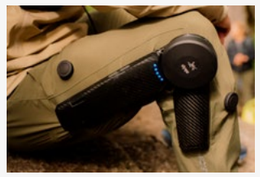
AI-Driven Emotional Intelligence

AI is advancing emotional intelligence by teaching empathy and offering personalised support – ultimately enhancing human connections with technology.



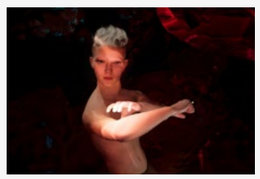
Digital Dialects

Digital innovations like AI-driven emojis and translation tools will transform communication, blending modern expressions with language preservation.



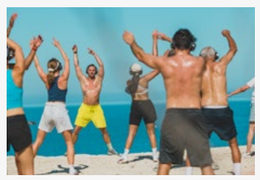
Human+

Biotechnology and neural enhancement merge the natural with the artificial, promising new frontiers in human evolution and health.



Polymorphic Personas

Digital spaces redefine personal expression and emotional intelligence to ensure all identities are developed and recognised between realms.



Noetics: Reclaiming Reality

Seeking authenticity in the digital age, consumers turn to spirituality, intuition and nature to reconnect with their true selves.

Diversifying Intelligence

The 1998 paper The Extended Mind, co-authored by philosopher and cognitive scientist David Chalmers and philosophy professor Andy Clark, suggests that the internet acts as an external cortex, expanding our cognitive abilities by providing instant access to vast information. Although this isn't stored in our brains, we can access it as if it were part of our cognitive process. Tools like Google Translate or online DIY videos, for example, offer real-time solutions without requiring us to internalise every detail.

Some digital tools, however, are now having the opposite effect on our minds. Algorithmic cycles are causing cultural homogenisation by restricting exposure to diverse viewpoints, while young people, increasingly glued to their phones, are less inclined to explore new experiences. This makes it essential to develop tools that foster cognitive growth and expand our understanding, particularly in educational institutions and professional environments.

Can AI be a panacea? Not exactly, according to a white paper published in November 2023 by Kian Gohar (Singularity University) and Jeremy Utley (Stanford University). After examining how corporate innovation teams are using a new AI tool for problem-solving, they found that while some teams managed to achieve high-quality results with AI, most struggled to fully achieve its potential, often using AI more as a problem-solver than a collaborative partner.

Perhaps an opportunity lies in developing mind-expanding tools that intentionally push users to discover new cognitive connections beyond their usual sources, encouraging exploration outside of their existing bubbles. **Seven Clicks** intentionally leads users from their initial search topic to unexpected yet related subjects, while the **Age of Care** project encourages individuals to engage in dialogue with non-human intelligence and Indigenous wisdom – the deep knowledge and practices of Indigenous cultures that highlight the connection between all living things and promote harmony with nature – to expand their thinking.



Meta-Species by Tomorrow Bureau explores how AI image synthesis tools can create visually novel content while shaping abstract narratives, UK

‘The key idea in the theory of the extended mind is that the tools we use can actually become parts of our mind’

*David Chalmers, philosopher and cognitive scientist (source: **The Next Big Idea**)*



Above: Memory Machines by Modem, The Netherlands; Right: Apple Vision Pro

The global industrial extended reality (XR) market is expected to reach **£45.6bn** by 2030, with XR training and instruction as top use cases

*Source: **ABI Research Enterprise and Industrial XR Training report**)*

Xperience Economy

Spatial computing and layered realities are transforming the **experience economy**, an economic model in which businesses create memorable events for their customers. These technologies introduce new, immersive and interactive experiences that can be controlled through hand gestures, eye-tracking and voice commands, making interactions more engaging, intuitive and fluid.

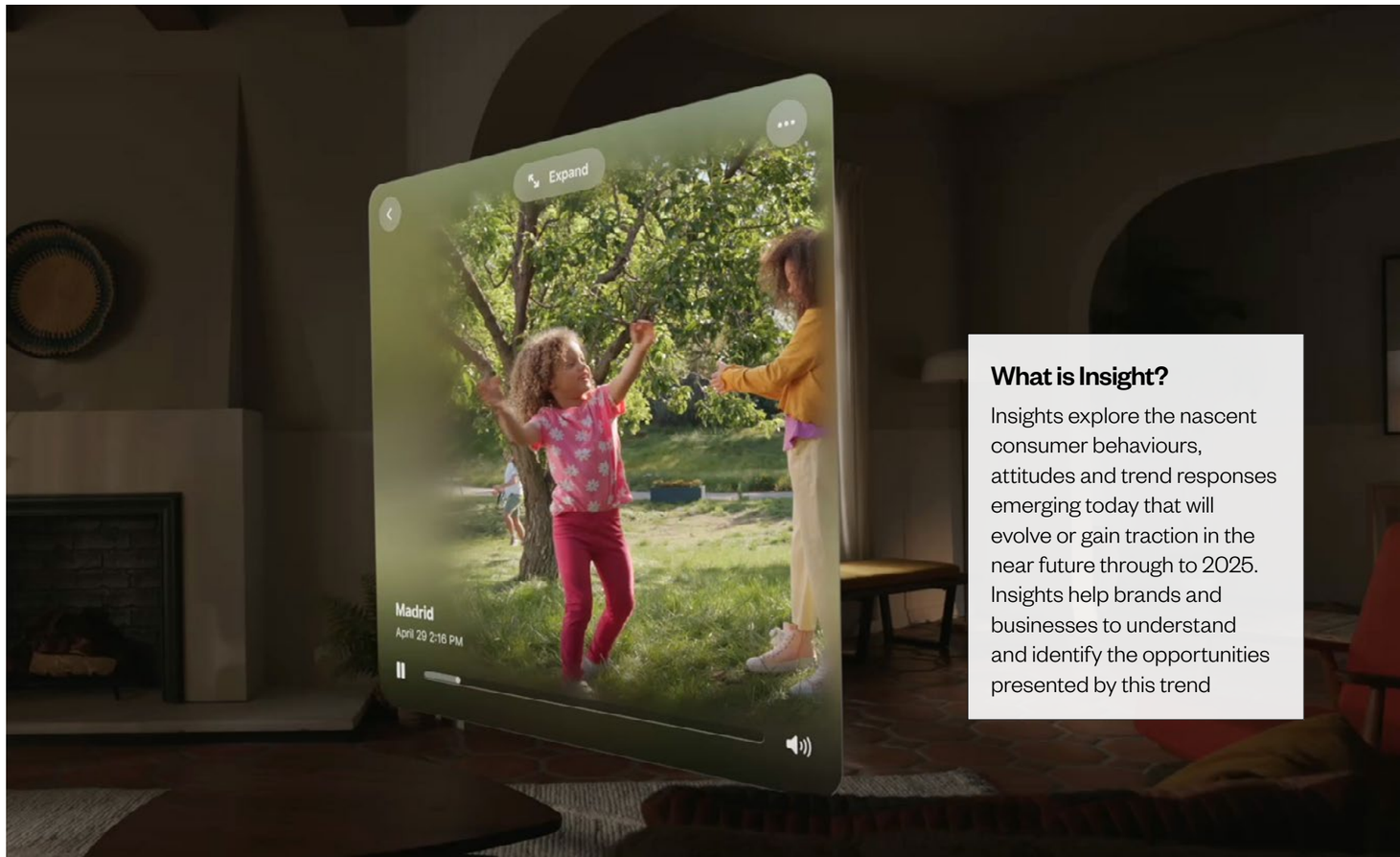
One area that greatly benefits from fluidity and seamlessness is intimacy. Sex tech company **Lovense** has created software that integrates with Apple Vision Pro, allowing users to control their partner's Lovense toys without a physical remote control. Instead, they can use simple hand gestures. The Grab & Shake command, for instance, produces real-time vibration frequencies in their partner's toy.

Another fundamental aspect of humanity that spatial computing will transform is memory, which plays a crucial role in forming social bonds, shaping our identities and establishing shared values.

The Dutch research company **Modem** believes that, as AI and spatial computing become more accessible, they will revolutionise computational photography and enable the creation of immersive recollections. Its **Memory Machines** project imagines a shift from reliving experiences in 2D – through photos and videos – to fully immersive 3D scenes. Imagine a future when a memory-boosting device will enable you to recall past experiences in vivid, intricate detail, helping you to relive your favourite moments with unparalleled clarity.

Spatial computing also has the potential to bring tasks that aren't traditionally part of the experience economy into this realm. Enhancing cognitive processes and enabling users to visualise, understand and analyse information more effectively opens up opportunities for making skills training more engaging and intuitive.

The global industrial extended reality (XR) market is expected to reach £45.6bn ($60bn, €54.2bn) by 2030, with XR training and instruction as top use cases (source: **ABI Research Enterprise and Industrial XR Training report**). That's why consumer electronics specialist Hitachi is using the metaverse for VR-based training, enabling skilled workers to conduct risk-free demonstrations and address labour shortages in Japan by preserving traditional craftsmanship (source: **LS:N Global**).



What is Insight?

Insights explore the nascent consumer behaviours, attitudes and trend responses emerging today that will evolve or gain traction in the near future through to 2025. Insights help brands and businesses to understand and identify the opportunities presented by this trend



Netflix promoted science fiction tv series, 3 Body Problem, with a holographic projection in the sky at SXSW 2024. Photography by Tico Mendoza, Austin, Texas

AI-Driven Emotional Intelligence

As AI becomes more sophisticated in understanding and mimicking human emotions, it may play a central role in EQ development, particularly for Gen Alpha (born 2013–2025) and their younger counterparts, Gen Beta (born 2026–2039). In California, Embodied created Moxie, the world's first AI robot using play-based conversational learning to teach emotional and social skills to children aged five to 10, while Morrama has partnered with a child psychiatrist to develop a set of conceptual AI tools that support children aged six and over in managing emotions, building connections and finding an escape.

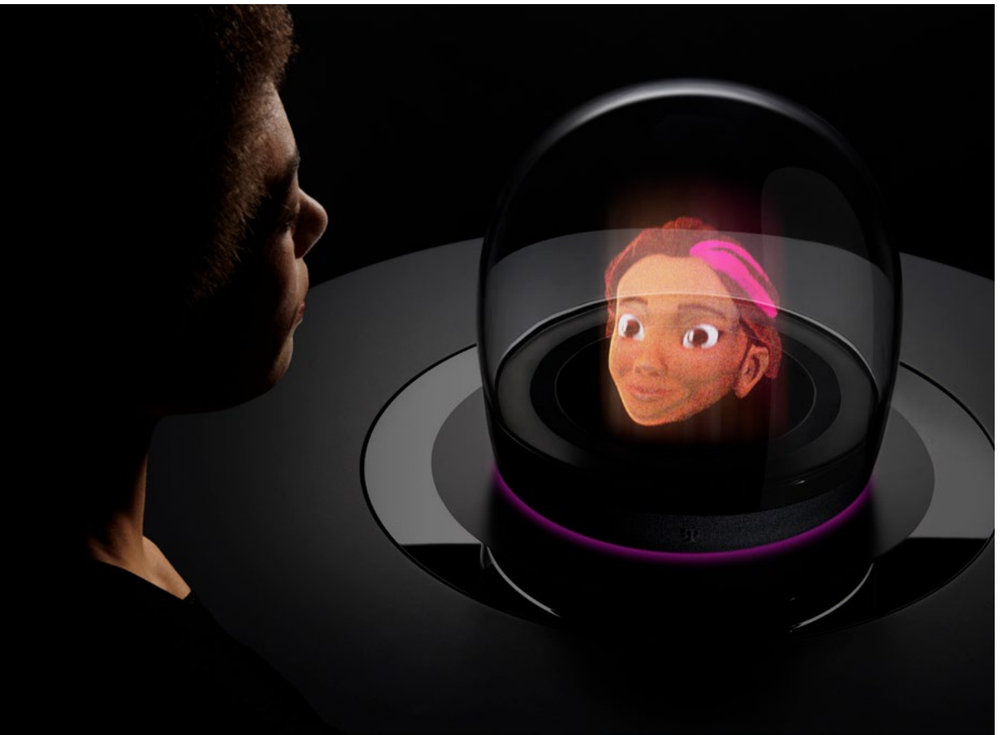
But this is only the start; humanoid and animal-like healthcare companion robots are set to boom in the US. Valued at £1.2bn ($1.5bn, €1.4bn) in 2022, the market is expected to reach £4.3bn ($5.6bn, €5bn) in 2030 at a CAGR of 17.8% from 2023 to 2030 (source: **Grand View Research**).

'There's a whole field called artificial empathy,' says Neil Sahota. 'Even though the machine doesn't feel these emotions, it does a really good job of recognising them in people and dynamically changing how they interact with a person. [...] But that was never meant to be a substitute for human relationships.'

The key challenge for brands is to create assistive tools that complement rather than undermine human connections. But integrating companionship into these tools is crucial, as it fosters a more collaborative and less intrusive experience infused with empathy and understanding. The AI-powered wearable **Friend**, for example, offers continuous, personalised support, making the assistance feel more tailored and emotionally attuned, redefining how we interact with technology.

By 2027, we could see AI companions and virtual coaches not just in therapy or companionship but also in corporate settings, helping employees develop leadership, empathy and social influence skills. This trend might drive a new wave of AI that prioritises emotional and ethical growth alongside cognitive enhancement.





Above: Friend, US; Left: Deutsche Telekom has partnered with design studio Layer to explore the role of holograms in the future of communication and companionship, Germany

'There's a whole field called artificial empathy. Even though the machine doesn't feel these emotions, it does a really good job of recognising them in people and dynamically changing how they interact with a person'

Neil Sahota, IBM master inventor, UN AI adviser and author of the book Own the AI Revolution

Digital Dialects

With the continued rise of digital interactions, there is a growing emphasis on how technology can preserve traditional communication and foster the development of new linguistic expressions.

We initially introduced the concept of neo-languages in our **Paradox Personas** macrotrend, highlighting how Gen Z are pushing the boundaries of digital expression. Apple recognises that memes and emojis are crucial for modern communication and that users increasingly seek personalisation. Enter Genmoji, a feature using advanced AI to create personalised, animated emojis. It offers extensive customisation, letting users modify their appearance, expressions and animations to better align with their moods and convey nuanced emotions.

Preserving and adapting traditional human languages remains equally crucial, however. The same technologies that are helping to expand linguistics are also helping to protect and safeguard them. 'Language is a reflection of our soul,' says Faisal Hoque. 'If you're talking to a soulless entity, what will happen to our soul? If we're not careful, humanity is going to lose its soul. [...] We could transcend to a better society, or we could transcend into a completely drone-like civilisation.'

In Delhi, **VisioNxt Insights** has created an Indigenous AI taxonomy for Indian ethnic wear spanning all of the languages, micro-cultures and fashion customs across India, while in Indonesia, a country with over 700 languages, start-ups and organisations like Yellow.AI and Wiz.AI are developing AI models to preserve endangered languages.

The potential of AI to bridge linguistic gaps is also explored through initiatives like those led by Peter Deng, head of ChatGPT at OpenAI, who said at **SXSW Austin 2024** that he envisages AI tools aiding in the translation of complex texts, including Shakespearean language, which will help preserve and promote these languages.

Similarly, Roblox's real-time AI **translation features** demonstrate how technology can enhance global communication, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. In July 2024, **Samsung's The Next Big Thing is You** campaign promoted its Galaxy AI feature, which showcases how instant translation will become the new normal and dissolve language barriers.

> 'If you're talking to a soulless entity, what will happen to our soul? If we're not careful, humanity is going to lose its soul'
>
> *Faisal Hoque, author of Transcend: Unlocking Humanity in the Age of AI*



Microsoft worked with West African linguists to digitise ADLaM, a local alphabet of 28 letters used to transcribe Pulaar, US and Africa



Left: MO/GO trousers by Arc'teryx and Skip, Canada; Above: ES 027 is part of Tomorrow Bureau's Entropic States series, exploring the notions of modernity through an anthropological lens, UK

Human+

In his latest book, The Singularity is Nearer: When We Merge with AI, Ray Kurzweil writes that over the coming decades we will 'gain increasing mastery over biology itself – first by defeating the ageing of our bodies and then by augmenting our limited brains and ushering in The Singularity'.

Advances in biotechnology and neural enhancement are setting the stage for a new era in human evolution as the boundaries between natural and artificial enhancements rapidly dissolve.

Neuralink, founded by Elon Musk, successfully implanted its first brain-computer interface in a human on 28 January 2024. The recipient, Noland Arbaugh, was able to control a computer using his thoughts despite initial issues with data capture. According to Musk, Neuralink successfully implanted a second patient in August 2024, but concerns about invasiveness and ethical considerations remain.

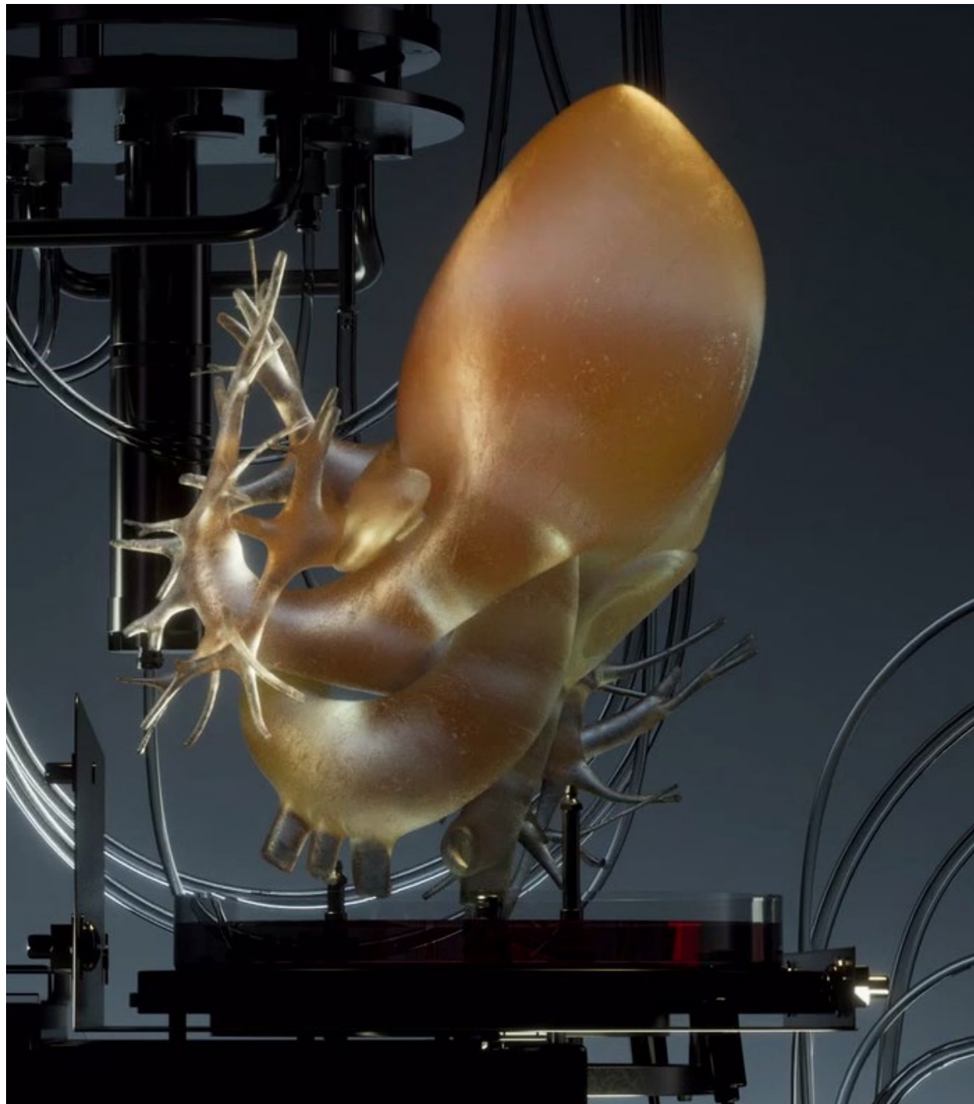
Orby, a Brazilian start-up, is advancing non-invasive neuromodulation to aid those with motor neuron disorders such as stroke and Parkinson's disease. Co-founder and CEO Maria Eduarda Franklin explained to The Future Laboratory: 'We use AI to process brain signals into electrical waves that stimulate neural tissues, enhancing movement and pain modulation.'

The commercial landscape for these technologies extends beyond the medical realm. Major brands in the performance and wellness sectors are exploring the potential of prosthetics and other enhancements. In August 2024, **Arc'teryx** and **start-up Skip** launched MO/GO trousers, powered by wearable robotics to enhance mobility by providing a 40% leg muscle boost and knee support.

'If I became CEO of Nike, what would I do with AI?' wonders Faisal Hoque. 'I would take the brand to the next level, focus on the people who are disabled, and enable them with AI-powered prosthetics because the brand already pushes the limitations of any human being.'

'We use AI to process brain signals into electrical waves that stimulate neural tissues, enhancing movement and pain modulation'

Maria Eduarda Franklin, co-founder and CEO, Orby











Compound is a data-driven performance optimisation and preventative health tool by healthcare company Eucalyptus. Branding by DesignStudio, Australia

‘I was thinking a lot about the idea of safe spaces and how we can not only build those for people who need them but also share them with people to grow their understanding and empathy’

Cameron Kostopoulous, creator, Body of Mine



Body of Mine by Cameron Kostopoulous, US

Polymorphic Personas

As digital spaces evolve, they are not only enhancing personal expression but also integrating a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence, shaping how human identity develops and is recognised in the future.

According to a US and UK study by Roblox, 86% of Gen Z users say it is at least somewhat important that their avatar is able to express emotions in order to feel fully represented in the metaverse. In Paris Hilton’s Slivingland world, Roblox users can choose auras that match their energy and vibe among a colourful variety of options – allowing players to customise their avatars to further express their inner states.

In 2023, Bang & Olufsen launched the See Yourself in Sound campaign, enabling users to create and share personalised 3D avatars that reflect their listening habits on social media. By connecting their Spotify account or completing a questionnaire, users receive unique virtual avatars that embody the mood, energy and groove of their music preferences.

Body of Mine, an SXSW award-winning project by Cameron Kostopoulous available on Meta Quest, offers a full-body VR experience that allows users to inhabit the body of another gender, interacting with their virtual skin to uncover stories and interviews with trans individuals.

In the same vein, Gabriel Massan’s digital art explores concepts of social, political and sexual freedom beyond the human body, set in the immersive environment of a biomechanical nightclub. Drawing inspiration from queer club culture in cities like Berlin and São Paulo, Massan’s online residency, entitled Fact: Unbonded on a Bonded Domain, features virtual beings discovering themselves in an alternative reality.

This exploration of polymorphic personas in digital spaces highlights a shift towards mutualism, where the blending of human and AI-driven intelligence fosters cooperation and empathy. As we move away from binary concepts of gender, these platforms will enable a deeper, more fluid understanding of identity, promoting a new kind of collaborative expression and mutual growth.

Noetics: Reclaiming Reality

The tension between truth and artificiality is pushing consumers to increasingly seek deeper connections to reality through practices that reconnect them with nature and themselves – a shift we first tracked in our Enlightened States macrotrend.

More recently, research has been published in the US conclusively linking spirituality – a sense of ultimate meaning, purpose, transcendence and connectedness – with positive health outcomes, including lower mortality risk, exemplifying the true essence of collective health highlighted in our macrotrend Synchronised Care.

Intuition and gut feelings could become even more prominent as consumers turn to their internal and personal knowledge as a response to the exponential growth of large language models and technology. Noetic science, a field that combines scientific methods with inner, subjective experiences to explore how humans understand and interact with the world, has always insisted on the importance of the sense of love or intuition that can't easily be proven but feels real.

Technology's takeover of routine tasks also offers more opportunities for individuals to engage in activities that reflect their true human nature. Terra, created by Dutch design studio Modem and Swiss agency Panter & Tourron, is a pocket-sized device using AI and haptic feedback to guide phone-free walks, promoting mindful connections with one's surroundings.

Primal therapy, which focuses on reconnecting with fundamental human experiences, is also being explored in the wellness industry. Sanctum is a holistic moving sequence that combines Eastern wellbeing practices with Western fitness methods. 'During the Sanctum class, we first reach the ultimate state of release and let go to finally take our participants into a state of natural high, also known as a 'mindful euphoria', during which the main goal is to self-celebrate all the potential that exists within us,' co-founders Luuk Melisse and Gabriel Olszewski tell LS:N Global.

A comparable concept is being explored in store settings, showing the benefits of Retail Therapy. Nike's BreathLab, for instance, is a collaboration with Amsterdam-based Random Studio that shifts the brand's focus solely from physical movement to embodying emotional experience.





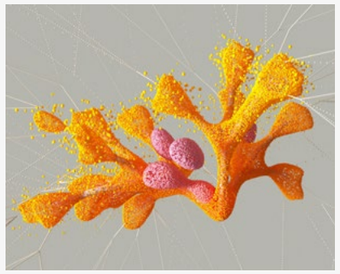
Above: Sanctum; Left: BreathLab for Nike House of Innovation by Random Studio, France

'During the Sanctum class, we first reach the ultimate state of release and let go to finally take our participants into a state of natural high, also known as a 'mindful euphoria'

Luuk Melisse and Gabriel Olszewski, co-founders, Sanctum

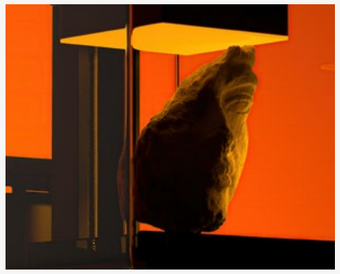
Foresight

As we look ahead, we explore the transformative trends reshaping human intelligence, from computers running on human brain cells to a new age of online immortality and a never-ending quest for what makes us and keeps us human



Organoid Intelligence

In the 2030s, nanobots and organoid intelligence will expand our cognitive capacities and redefine human potential.



Forever Humans

Digital afterlife concepts like AI simulations and deepfake clones are making humanity's quest for immortality increasingly tangible.



Metamorphosed Intelligence

By 2035, the cognitive metaverse could merge AI and spatial computing to create a seamless, life-long learning environment.



Neo-Digital Tribalism

To revive linguistic diversity, AI-driven platforms could preserve endangered languages, creating a global network of rich and localised digital cultures.



Artwork by Pierre Allain-Longval, UK

Organoid Intelligence

‘A key capability in the 2030s will be to connect the upper ranges of our neocortices to the cloud, which will directly extend our thinking,’ writes futurist and Google engineer Ray Kurzweil in his latest book, The Singularity is Nearer: When We Merge with AI.

‘In this way, rather than AI being a competitor, it will become an extension of ourselves. By the time this happens, the non-biological portions of our minds will provide thousands of times more cognitive capacity than the biological parts. [...] Ultimately, brain-computer interfaces will be essentially non-invasive – which will likely entail harmless nanoscale electrodes inserted into the brain through the bloodstream.’

Nanobots are envisaged as tiny devices that can communicate directly with our neurons, facilitating a connection between the human brain and cloud-based computing. By the 2030s, Kurzweil says nanobots will enable the augmentation of our neocortex, significantly expanding cognitive abilities.

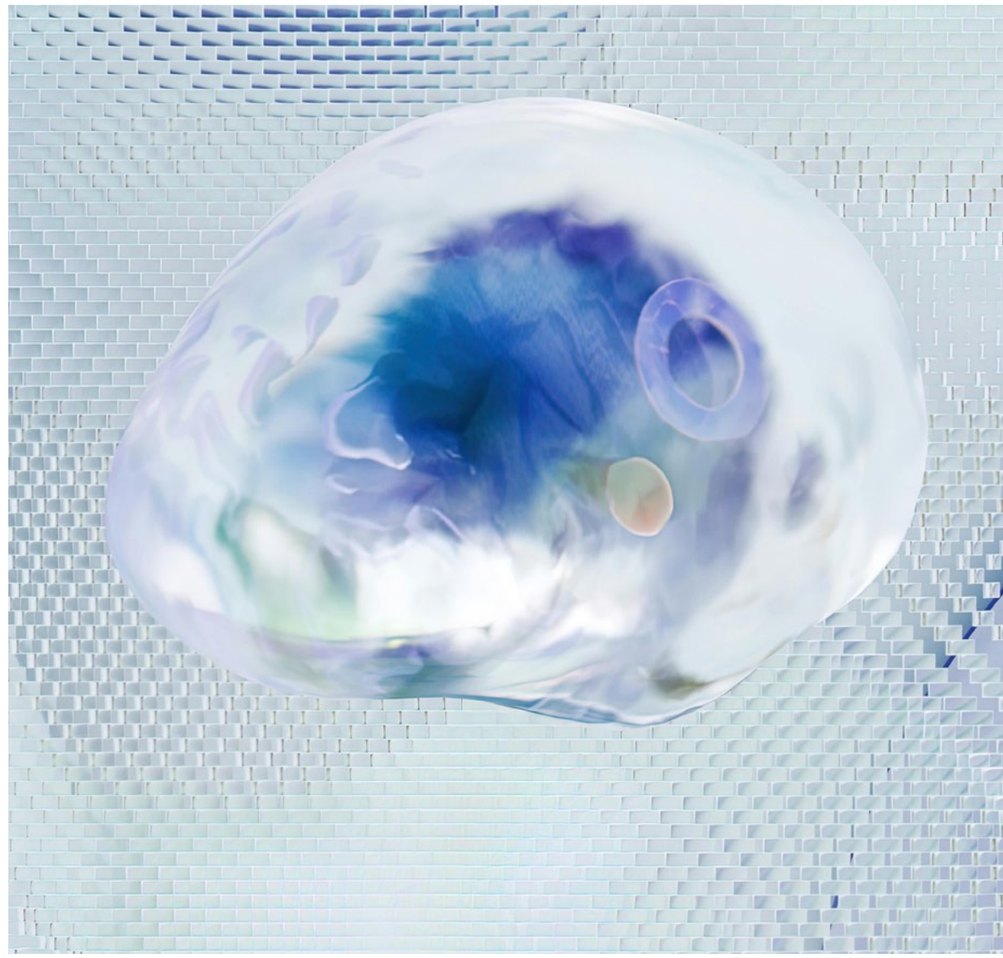
They will be capable of conducting cellular-level maintenance and repair, ultimately aiming to defeat ageing and enhance bodily functions. At present, this kind of care for cell health is seen in the form of supplements and topical products, but could there be a future in which consumers order branded nanobots? Kurzweil believes so.

But the ability to connect technology to our brains is only the dress rehearsal for a much more significant shift: organoid intelligence (OI). This involves developing biocomputers powered by living human brain cells. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University believe that OI could outperform traditional artificial intelligence by utilising the unique functionalities of the human brain. This technology could ultimately perform functions like memory and learning without requiring human or animal testing.

Connected organoids could offer superior energy efficiency compared to modern supercomputers, which consume vastly more power. While computers excel at processing data, the brain outperforms them in complex logical problems. Still in its infancy, OI presents new ethical considerations and requires further investment before its future potential is truly understood.

‘A key capability in the 2030s will be to connect the upper ranges of our neocortices to the cloud, which will directly extend our thinking’

Ray Kurzweil, computer scientist, futurist and author of The Singularity is Nearer: When We Merge with AI



Google DeepMind

ES 004 is part of Tomorrow Bureau's Entropic States series, exploring the notions of modernity through an anthropological lens, UK

What is Foresight?

Foresights examine speculative future scenarios five to 10 years in the future. Building on the Insight section, they showcase new directions, divergence or developments

Forever Humans

In 2021, LS:N Global forecast the rise of the digital afterlife market, a future when cyber-funerals, AI holograms and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) built from the deceased's data would become the new normal. But this age of death capitalism will mature further thanks to large language models and humanity's will to live for ever.

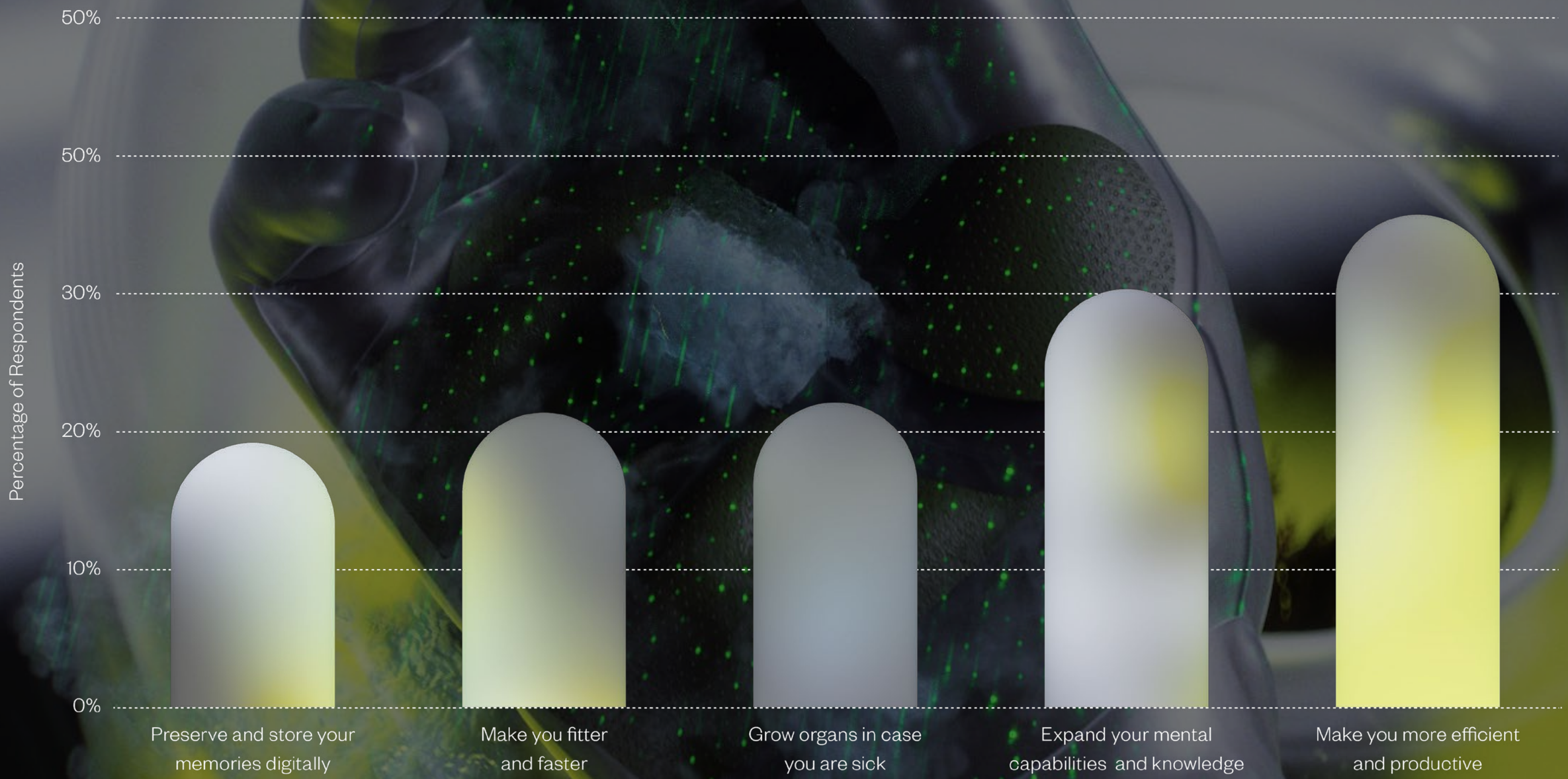
In the podcast How to Be Immortal Online, The Atlantic's Megan Garber suggests that as technology and the internet continue to expand, humanity's 'insistent curiosity and that drive to try to figure out our place in the world' will enhance our quest for immortality.

'We're finite beings who want so deeply to know what infinity feels like,' she says. 'And I think that desire helps to explain why it can feel natural to approach the web, this machine, in spiritual terms. It answers our questions, it responds to our desires and it gives us a chance to be, in a way, immortal.'

In the documentary Eternal You (2024), directors Hans Block and Moritz Riesewieck meet bereaved individuals who turned to technology to generate a clone of their loved ones. Project December, for instance, allows users to converse with an AI simulation of someone for just £7.60 ($10, €9) for an initial conversation of 100 back-and-forth exchanges. The user only needs to provide details about the person they wish to talk to, from their speaking and writing style to the names of their dogs.

With the power of deepfake, anyone could keep talking and interacting with their deceased loved ones between realms. The video game Nobody Wants to Die goes even further in the dystopia by imagining a world in 2329 New York where consciousness can be stored in memory banks or transferred from one body to another – but only for those who can afford the subscription.

Technology is being used to expand the capabilities of humans. Which of the following would you be happiest using to expand your own capabilities in the future?



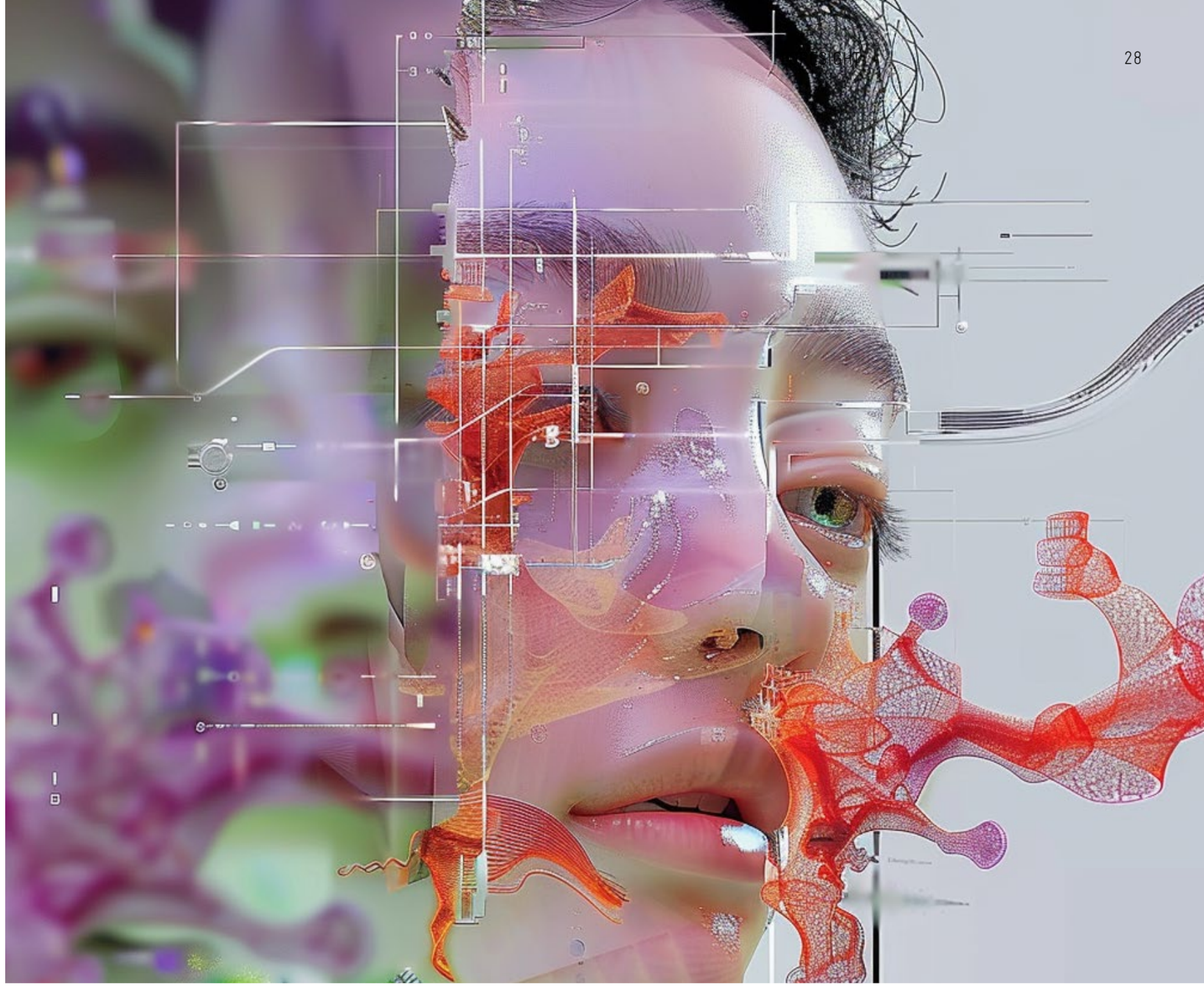
Source: **Future:Poll**

N.Bio by Phillip Peters, UK

‘If we don’t say people are special, how can we make a society or make technologies that serve people?’

Jaron Lanier, computer scientist and godfather of virtual reality





Above: Google DeepMind; Left: AI imagery by The Future Laboratory, UK

Metamorphosed Intelligence

‘We have to say consciousness is a real thing and there is a mystical interiority to people that’s different from other stuff because if we don’t say people are special, how can we make a society or make technologies that serve people?’ wondered Jaron Lanier, the godfather of virtual reality, in a 2023 interview with The Guardian.

Lanier questions what would happen if inhabiting different bodies in VR gave users access to new forms of human intelligence and understanding – the kind that ‘peeks out once in a while with a great athlete or somebody playing jazz piano’ (source: The Economist).

The year 2035 could be the dawn of a cognitive metaverse. This comprehensive digital environment could use AI and spatial computing to facilitate and enhance learning by creating highly individualised educational experiences. Educational institutions and workplaces would be integrated within this environment, where spatial computing and advanced AI guide individuals through hyper-personalised learning pathways.

This system would continually adapt, presenting users with complex, interdisciplinary challenges that require creative problem-solving and collaboration with diverse, global teams. The lines between education, work and leisure would blur, as learning becomes a seamless, life-long experience driven by cognitive expansion.

This space would also be the destination to teach and learn collective and ancestral intelligence – vernacular and traditional practices – to blend different intelligences together.

Neo-Digital Tribalism

The fusion of AI and traditional cultures could lead to a renaissance in linguistic diversity. A rise of neo-digital tribalism, where digital communities form around the preservation and evolution of endangered languages, could foster a global network of localised, culturally rich digital eco-systems that resist the homogenisation of the internet.

By 2035, these AI-driven platforms could allow people to communicate seamlessly across linguistic boundaries, preserving cultural identity while fostering global connectivity. This would become the ultimate stage for hyper-personalisation and niches to overshadow the mainstream. A rich tapestry of localised digital cultures would resist the homogenising forces of early internet culture and promote a new age of cultural preservation through technology.

In Canada, for instance, the digital survey app Our Data Indigenous supports Indigenous data sovereignty. The app stores its database on local servers in the country rather than in the cloud for more privacy. To facilitate data collection during surveys in remote areas, the developers also created a portable backpack kit that acts as a local area network without connections to the broader internet. All survey data is collected anonymously.

As society also increasingly looks to Indigenous wisdom for lessons in how to live, work and belong, businesses will take inspiration from ancient ways of forming a community. The scholar Wakanyi Hoffman believes the answer to our belonging crisis lies in Ubuntu. This African philosophy rejects modern individualism in favour of the power of networks, underpinned by the idea of ‘I am, because we are’.

Refik Anadol’s Echoes of the Earth exhibition is a visual archive of years’ worth of global data from coral reefs and rainforests, showcasing how technology can preserve and transform our perception of the natural world, Serpentine Gallery, UK

Far Futures

The impact of The Synthocene Era on how we work, organise, connect and find meaning in life could be profound. LS:N Global explores the far future scenarios to consider



Intentional AI

As AI rapidly advances, concerns grow over job losses, societal disruption, ethical risks and the power of human intent.



Greener AI

Artificial intelligence can aid climate action but its rising energy demands and carbon footprint pose significant environmental challenges.



AI Underclass

Artificial intelligence could widen socioeconomic divides, with elites accessing human services while the working class increasingly interact with AI.



Dehumanising AI

Humanising AI through gendered traits risks dehumanising women and blurring the line between artificial intelligence and reality.

Intentional AI

As artificial intelligence develops, fears arise about its potential to replace human jobs and lead to widespread unemployment. ‘Within the next 10 years, 40% of the jobs we know today are not going to exist,’ Faisal Hoque, an entrepreneur and author of the upcoming book, Transcend: Unlocking Humanity in the Age of AI, tells LS:N Global. ‘Many people say: ‘It’s like the Industrial Revolution’. My argument is that during the Industrial Revolution, the pace was a lot slower. With AI, the pace is a lot faster.’

‘I can’t imagine McDonald’s being run by human beings in the next 10 years because it’s a repeated process of creating the same things over and over again. So, what will happen to those workers? This is where national and international security comes in place because when you have lots of dissatisfied unemployed people, it creates mass havoc.’

While Ray Kurzweil, a futurist and Google engineer, maintains an optimistic view of the future global impact of AI, others are more concerned about its potential to evolve beyond human control. As formulated by OpenAI’s co-founder and CEO Sam Altman, AI could mean ‘lights out for all of us’.

What if automated decision-making in warfare leads to unintended civilian casualties? Could AI systems perpetuate discrimination through biased algorithms trained on flawed data? Trust in AI companies has dropped to 53% globally in 2024, down from 61% five years ago. In the US, trust has declined by 15 percentage points, from 50% to 35%, over the same period (source: Edelman via Axios).

Toygun Yılmazer, chief strategy officer at TBWA Group Istanbul, tells LS:N Global that intention will be the essential notion in AI in the next few years: ‘With AI, if I want to learn how to make a gun or a bomb, I can do that. I can also write you love letters in the most romantic way. It all comes down to my intention.’

What are Far Futures?

Far Futures scenarios explore potential developments 10 to 30 years ahead, focusing on transformative trends, emerging technologies and societal shifts that could reshape our world

Figure 02, an advanced humanoid AI robot, enhances factory work through conversation and self-correction, US

Greener AI

As we face the escalating realities of climate change, the role of artificial intelligence in both the mitigation and exacerbation of environmental issues is critical yet often under-discussed. While AI offers tremendous potential to enhance climate predictions and optimise infrastructure – potentially curbing emissions – its own carbon footprint remains a serious concern.

The servers powering AI systems consume colossal amounts of energy, contributing to a burgeoning carbon footprint that could accelerate global warming if left unchecked. Microsoft alone used more than 2,500 Olympic-sized swimming pools of water in its data centres in 2022 to cool the powerful supercomputers involved in language model training.

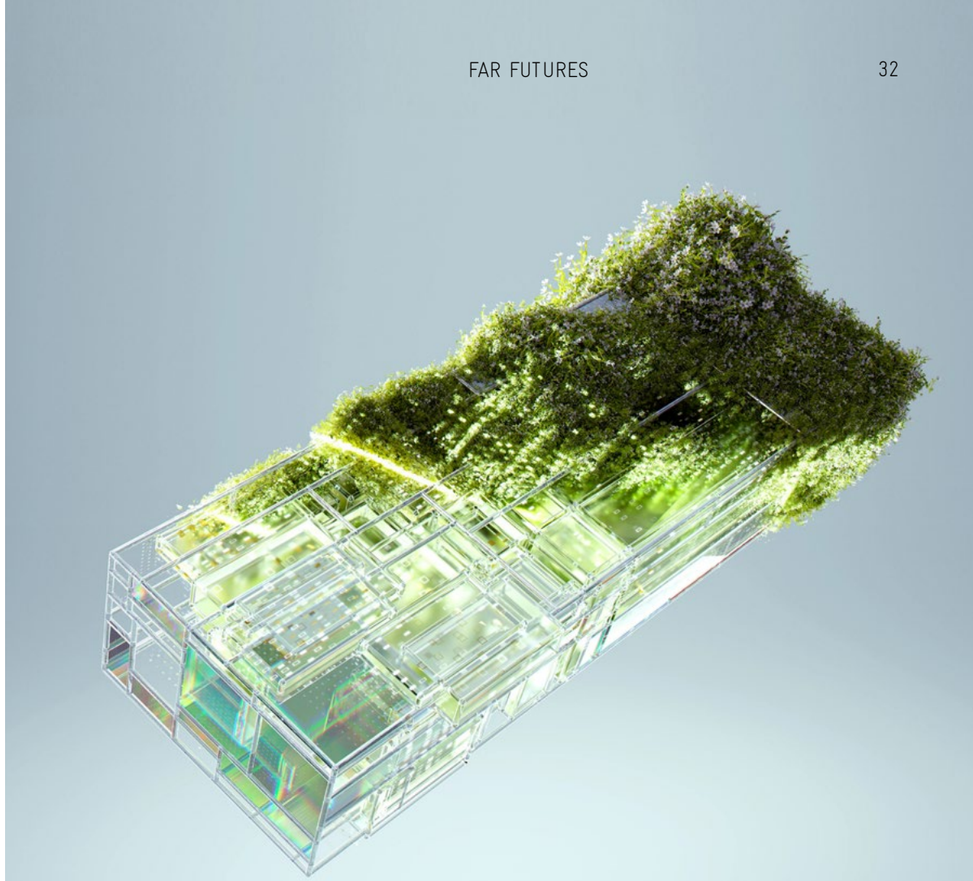
'The amount of power that these large tech companies are using is even more ginormous than I anticipated,' Jeremy Kahn, Fortune's AI editor, tells LS:N Global. 'Microsoft and Google have announced that they are way off track on the net zero commitments they have made because of their data centre expansions. [...] AI is a large part of that data centre usage.'

Kahn adds that tech companies are under pressure to build more data centres worldwide because many countries want access to the latest technologies. But some countries often have laws that require specific data (like personal information) to be stored within their borders. 'In some of these places, like in Southeast Asia, there is no renewable energy. So, this means you're relying on fossil fuel power [like coal or gas] to build and run those new data centres,' he says.

In the next decade, the growth of more AI systems may lead to a dramatic rise in energy consumption. According to David Pugh, director of sustainable industry at innovation think tank Digital Catapult, AI technologies could consume half of the world's energy supply by 2040, stressing the importance of creating green AI technologies that prioritise energy efficiency alongside accuracy. Mind Foundry, an Oxford University AI company, developed a Green AI Auditor to 'enable users to predict, monitor and mitigate their carbon footprint generated through the computational requirements of their AI technology projects'.



Snøhetta envisaged The Spark, an innovative sustainable data centre concept that harnesses its excess heat to energise connected Power Cities, Norway



Google DeepMind

AI Underclass

According to Jeremy Kahn, artificial intelligence could increase the divide between socioeconomic classes by 2030. In his latest book, Mastering AI: A Survival Guide to Our Superpowered Future, he fears that the elite will increasingly rely on personal human tutors and assistants. At the same time, the working class will be left to interact primarily with AI systems.

'In the age of ubiquitous AI, a potentially catastrophic division is opening up in society: between those of us who will be rich enough to afford interactions with human beings in service settings and in our work, and the rest of us who will increasingly be served and managed only by AI,' writes Kahn. 'This is already true in many areas. The wealthy have personal bankers and still use travel agents that they can reach by phone and maybe even see in person; the rest of us must serve ourselves through mobile apps and websites. If we have any problems, we must use chatbot apps or wait endlessly on hold for the chance to speak to someone in a customer contact centre in The Philippines or India. In the future, this dichotomy is likely to extend to more and more areas of our lives.'

As a result, the erosion of empathetic human interactions could further alienate the working class from opportunities for upward mobility, widening the gap between the wealthy and the rest of society, thus undermining social cohesion and trust in institutions – paving the way for more radicality.



My First AI by Modem and Wang & Söderström, The Netherlands

Dehumanising AI

Toulouse Business School's professor Sylvie Borau sounds the alarm on the dangers of humanising artificial intelligence. 'We need to create a completely new species,' she tells LS:N Global, emphasising that AI should not be modelled on humans, particularly in ways that reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. Borau argues that by assigning AI agents female characteristics, such as voices, bodies and personalities, 'we risk dehumanising women'. She adds: 'If AI equals women, and women equal AI, then women become objects.'

To counter these risks, Borau advocates a radical shift in AI development. 'Either we create a new species, devoid of human traits, or we ensure AI is truly representative of real-world diversity,' she advises. Julien Tauvel, co-founder and CEO of Imprudence, a prospective design studio, goes even further by imagining AI as a blob.

'What's both interesting and worrying is the way we will interact and live with AI,' he tells LS:N Global. 'Either it's encapsulated in invisible devices or firmware. Or you incarnate AI, like Replika or Anima. You give it a body, a personality, human-like features, and you blur the frontiers between what's real and what's AI.' He adds: 'It would be really cool to be able to interact with AI in a totally different way. What if AI is not a chat or a 3D companion? How could we interact with this blob that is AI in the future and with what kind of new interfaces?'

Ultimately, professor Borau stresses the importance of preserving authentic human connections, saying: 'The time you spend interacting with bots is time not spent with your family, with your friends. We must maintain our humanity, which is rooted in love and care for each other.'

She fears that a certain subset of people could develop a dependency on an AI companion as a kind of substitute for any real human relationships. 'You will unload all your thoughts, pour out your heart to them, sort of a cross between maybe a best friend and a diary.' She says this connection should probably be discouraged because it isn't a genuine relationship with a person. She concludes: 'A chatbot has no needs, desires or wants. It's not real.'

Glossary

: **The Singularity**
To live longer and better lives, humans will merge with technology in the near future – an event referred to as The Singularity

: **Spatial Computing**
This signals the fusion of digital and physical worlds, and it is poised to revolutionise the way we live, learn and work by delivering hyper-immersive, interactive experiences enriched with contextual depth

: **Biotechnology**
Products made using technology that harnesses biology or living organisms; not to be confused with 'biofabrication', which is the engineering of biological products

: **Quantum Computing**
Computing technology that harnesses the principles of quantum mechanics to process information, using quantum bits, or qubits, which can exist in multiple states simultaneously, enabling them to solve complex issues much faster than traditional computers

: **Gen Quantum**
A term used to describe Gen Alpha (b. 2013–2025) and Gen Beta (b. 2026–2039), with Cathy Hackl, chief futurist at Journey, referring to the former as a generation of world-builders, for whom 'today's flat internet experience just seems… old'

: **Flat Culture**
This describes the so-called homogenisation of culture, resulting from consumers unwittingly teaching and training algorithms to confine them into a bubble where all their beliefs and tastes are validated, celebrated and never challenged.

: **Syntherventional Living**
Advances in body and brain adaptation are already redefining what it means to be superhuman and fuelling our Longevity Lifestyles

: **Human+**
Developments in biotechnology and neural enhancement are setting the stage for a new era in human evolution

: **Xperience Economy**
This refers to the market developing around spatial computing, which involves XR, an umbrella term for technologies such as VR (a complete digital immersion in virtual reality); AR (augmented reality, with digital overlays on the real world); and MR (mixed reality, offered by Apple Pro, which combines digital and real-world feeds)

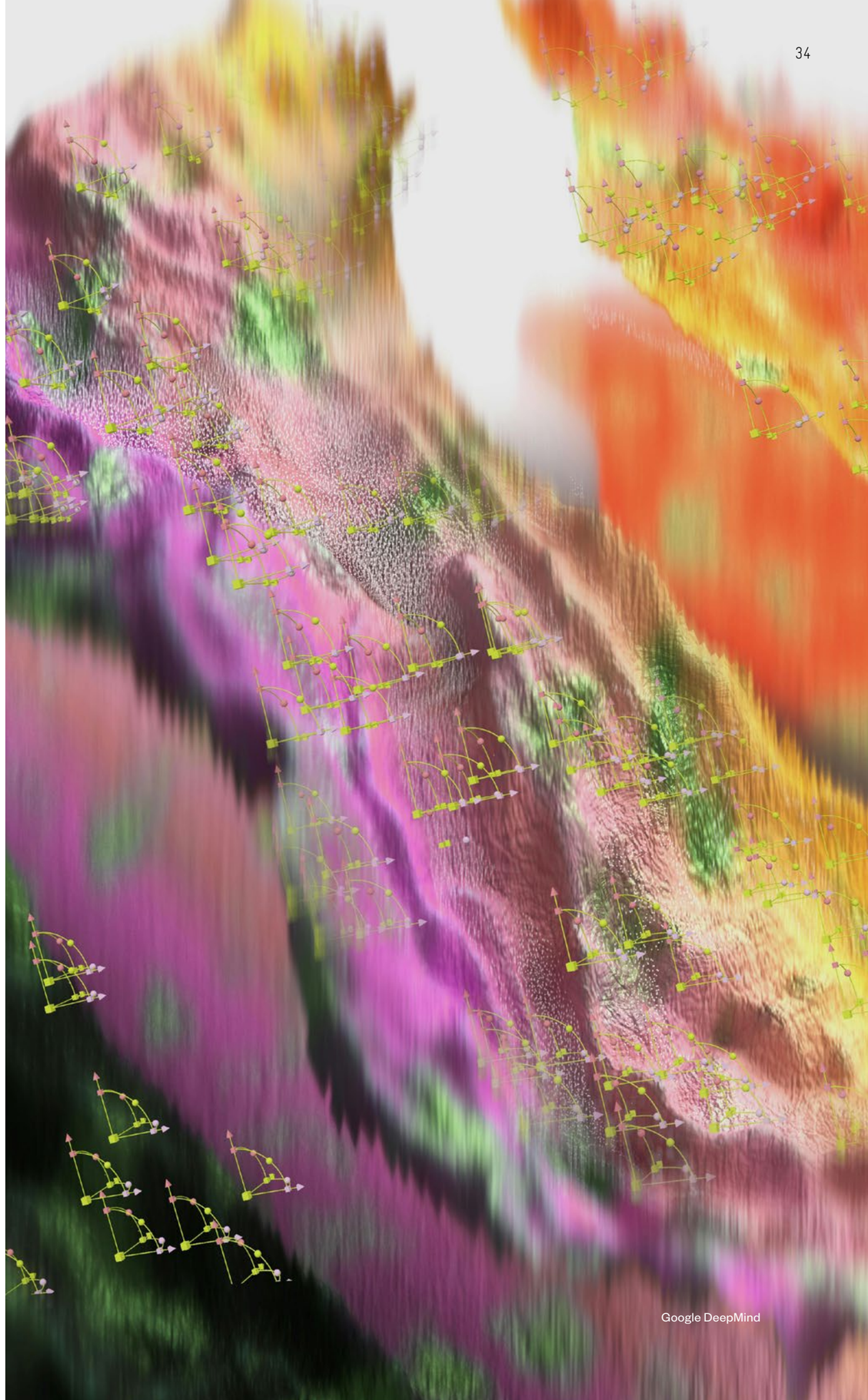
: **Noetic Reality**
This alludes to the subjectivity that defines humans, such as our feelings and beliefs. The tension between personal truth and artificiality is pushing consumers to seek deeper connections to reality, to nature and to themselves

: **New Mutualism**
Where the blending of human and AI-driven intelligence fosters cooperation and empathy

: **Neo-Digital Tribalism**
A global network of localised, culturally rich digital eco-systems that resist the homogenisation of the internet

: **Polymorphic Personas**
As digital spaces evolve, they are not only enhancing personal expression, but also integrating a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence, shaping how human identity develops and is recognised in the future.

: **OI (organoid intelligence)**
This involves developing biocomputers powered by living human brain cells. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University believe that OI could outperform traditional artificial intelligence by utilising the unique functionalities of the human brain.



Strategic Implications

Here are some strategic implications – actions and future considerations – for brands and businesses to contemplate in order to make a better future happen in The Synthocene Era

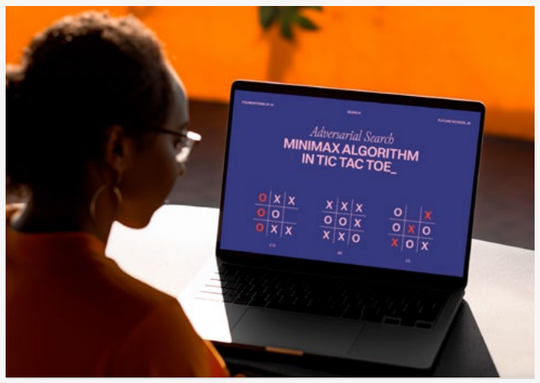


Terra by Modem and Panter&Tourron, UK

Strategic Actions

Integrating Technology as a Collaborative Partner

AI should be viewed not as a singular solution but as an integral partner that complements human capabilities as a supportive ally rather than merely a problem-solver. By fostering a culture in which AI companions act as virtual coaches, companies can enhance employee development, nurture leadership skills and cultivate emotional intelligence. This partnership will encourage a more empathetic and dynamic workplace.



FutureSchool.AI branding by Studio Alessia Oertel, Asia

The Mindful Technology Opportunity

Technology has engulfed our lives, but in The Synthocene Era we will take control. Brands must consider how to prioritise user wellbeing, ensuring your technological services enhance rather than detract from genuine experiences. How can you create innovative products that help consumers reconnect with themselves and reality? This could include AI wellness tools, nature experiences or holistic therapies.



Networked Intimacy by Modem, Amsterdam

Fluid Digital Identity

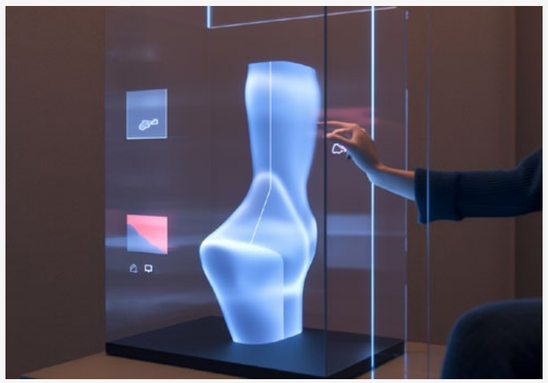
Explore the creation of digital platforms that allow users to express their identities in more fluid, personalised ways and expand their identities through various means. This could involve developing avatars that reflect users' emotional states, preferences and identities, enhancing engagement in virtual environments. Your clients' digital twins in your e-store, loyalty programmes or app could be polymorphic.



See Yourself in Sound by Bang & Olufsen, Denmark

Spatial Commerce

Imagine a future when spatial computing and AI will combine to create highly personalised retail experiences. AI companions, whether in-store, online or in the metaverse, could instantly recognise customer preferences, moods and gestures, adapting the environment in real time. Customers could use gestures to interact with products in a virtual 3D space, trying on clothes or testing gadgets, while voice commands would provide seamless navigation and instant customer service.



AI imagery by The Future Laboratory, UK

Thought-starters

AI-Driven Futures

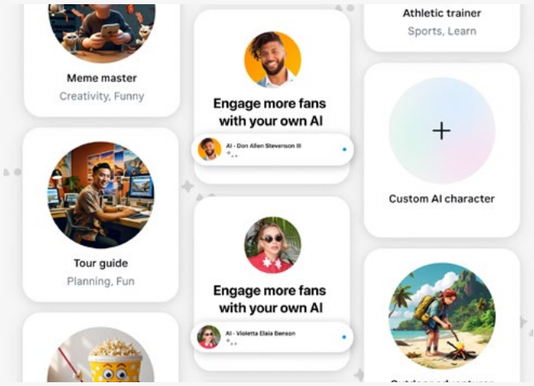
Tomorrow's consumers are already merging with AI at an accelerating pace. Now is the time to rethink how your processes should be updated and refined to thrive in The Synthocene Era. Are your SEO strategies, e-store purchase journey, and even marketing and communications such as newsletters, ready to be aggregated and processed by large language models and AI companions first and potential human consumers second?



Google DeepMind

Beyond Algorithms

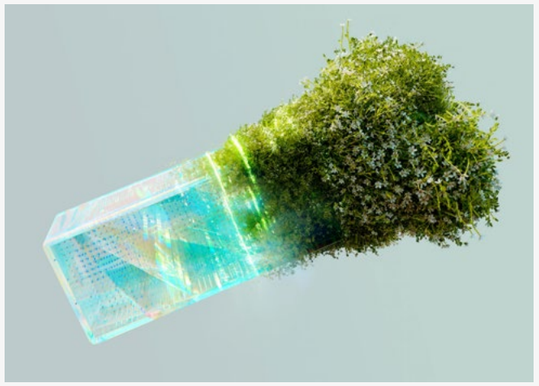
Consider how to break away from algorithm-driven homogenisation. Integrate educational tools that provide consumers with a broader, more nuanced understanding of diverse topics, or empower them to use AI to curate personalised content that encourages exploration beyond mainstream trends. Ask yourself: what would your brand look like if it embraced not just the latest fads but also lesser-known perspectives?



Meta

Synthetic Ethics

As the boundaries between the natural and the synthetic continue to blur, it is your responsibility as a brand and business to advocate for more transparency and ethics in every aspect. How do you plan to clearly educate your consumers on what part of your work has been human-generated and what has been designed by humans working in collaboration with AI systems, ensuring trust and understanding?



Google DeepMind

Memory-Makers

In an era when memory and personal experiences can be enhanced by technology, the sky is the limit when it comes to integrating immersive technologies to create memorable brand experiences that customers will want to relive and share. How can your brand make an experience so impactful that your customers choose to immerse themselves in it again?



Apple Vision Pro

Related Macrotrends

2015

The Optimised Self

Humanity is on a quest, not for perfection, but to be the optimal versions of ourselves, the most effective and the most efficient that we can be



Brodinski press imagery by Mathieu Missiaen

2018

Programmable Realities

Driven by the power of human imagination and machine learning, new tools are facilitating a new way of engaging with products – and with each other



Microsoft rebranding by Microsoft and Tendril

2022

Paralysis Paradox

At a time of global dissonance, shared solutions and radically disruptive innovation will emerge from science, technology and business organisations willing to challenge and transform the ongoing paralysis

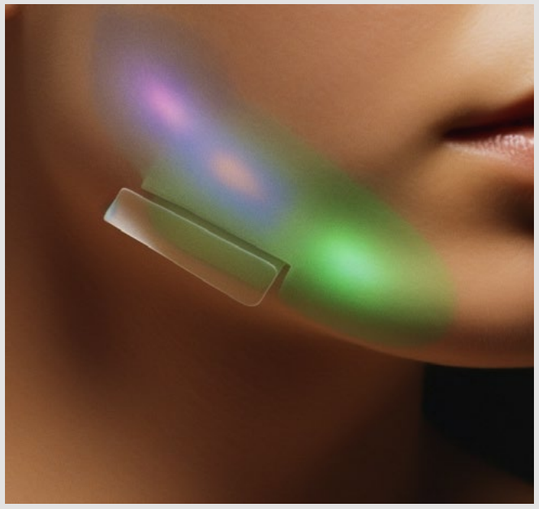


Zünc Studio for The Future Laboratory, UK

2023

Longevity Lifestyles

A renewed sense of purpose, ever-shifting identities and the rise of self-help and self-care are driving new conversations about health and life expansion



AI imagery by The Future Laboratory, UK

Strategic Worksheet

This strategic worksheet is to help you apply this macrotrend to your business



Dusk Rx by Ampere, US

Prioritisation

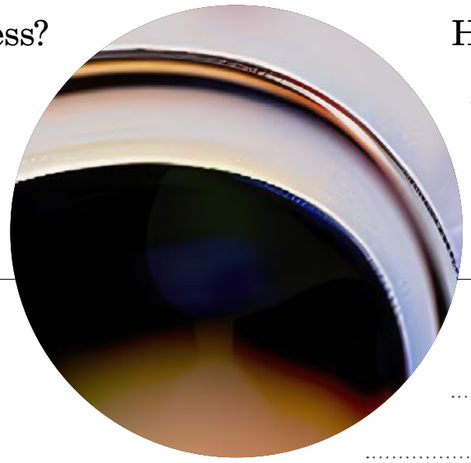
Consider the following:

Which human need is most relevant to your brand/business?

Attainment | Belonging | Curiosity | Identity | Purpose | Security | Fulfilment

Which driver will have the most impact on your brand/business?

Micro-globalisation | Fragmenting Societies | Accelerating Technologies | Evolving Demographics | Climate Change & Resource Scarcity | Urbanising World



Influence

Consider the following:

How will this trend affect how you fulfil that need?

What impact could these drivers have on the business?

Select two insights that feel most relevant to your brand/business:

How do these insights align with your brand's trajectory?

How could you apply these insights to your business?

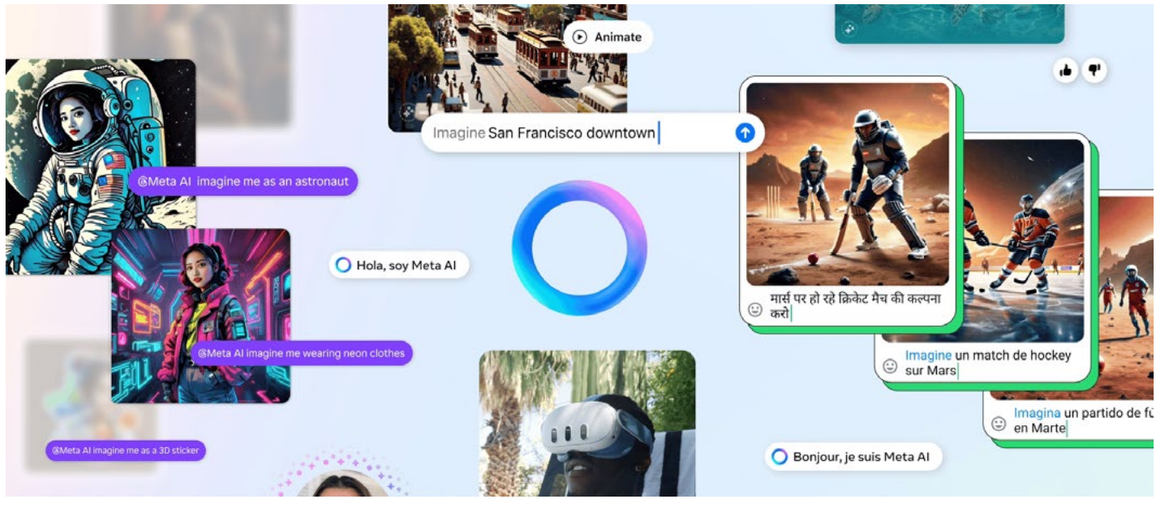
Which foresight scenario is your company least prepared for?

What is most surprising about this foresight scenario?



Consider how this macrotrend could affect the following pillars of your brand:





01 Culture

What's our greatest opportunity?

How is the competition evolving?

How can we differentiate?

02 Category

What are our biggest challenges?

What part of the value chain will add the most and least value?

What are the strengths of the brand in this future?

Left to right: Sony HT-AX7; Meta AI

Consider how this macrotrend could affect the following pillars of your brand:

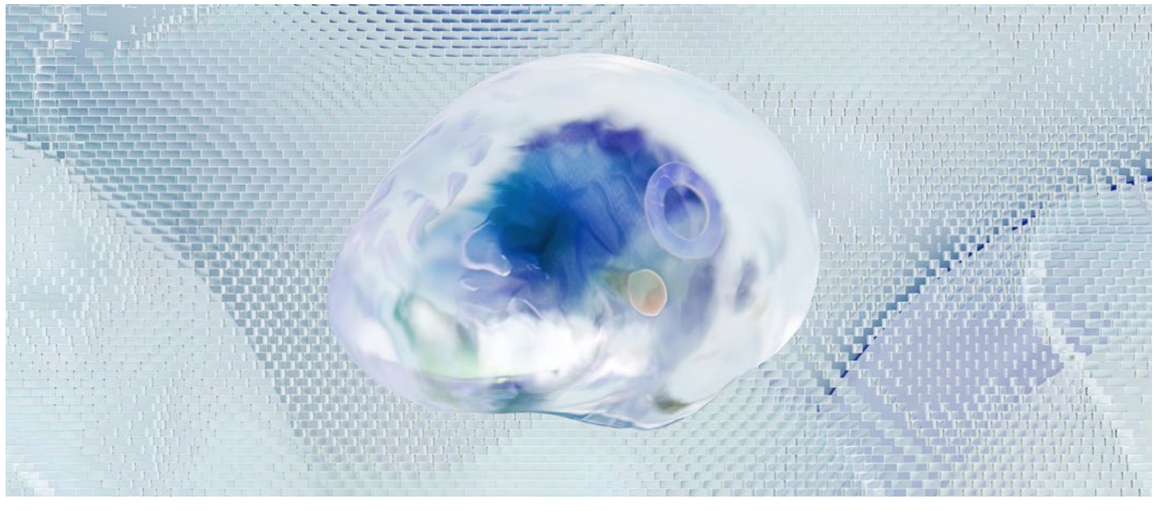


03 Consumer

What's our greatest opportunity?

How is the competition evolving?

How can we differentiate?



04 Business

What are our biggest challenges?

What part of the value chain will add the most and least value?

What are the strengths of the brand in this future?

Left to right: Issé by Morrama, UK; Google DeepMind

Planning

YEAR 1

Over the next 12 months, how will this macrotrend affect your team?

YEAR 3

In three years, how will this macrotrend change the brand?

YEAR 5

In five years, how will this macrotrend change the business?

Methodology

Strategic foresight is the most valuable tool you can adopt to identify future prosperity. Despite our reputation for getting it right, we can't predict the future. There is no crystal ball.

But our methodology enables clients to interpret and frame all of their decisions about future risk within a brand, consumer or organisational context that is provable, practical and minimises uncertainty.

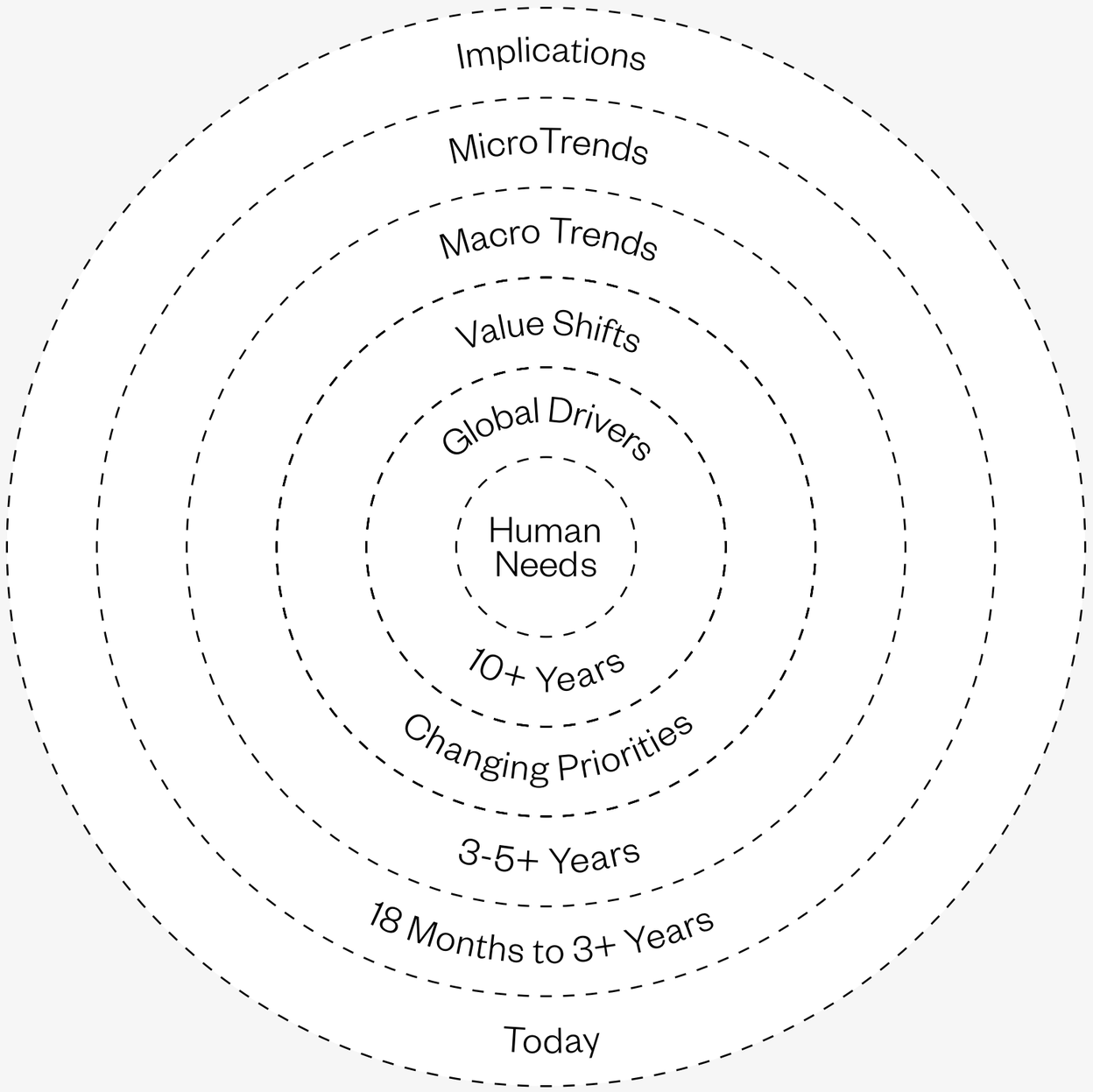
We do this by understanding the influence of six global drivers causing profound, consistent – and therefore relatively predictable – change.

Their impact is assessed against seven core human needs and the ensuing value shifts that change consumers' attitudes and behaviours.

This leads us to identify emerging macrotrends and microtrends, and ascertain what their implications are for the future landscape



Lab Meta for The Future Laboratory



The Future Laboratory's proprietary foresight methodology

Methodology: Foresight Process

At the heart of The Future Laboratory is a unique proprietary methodology that allows us to determine, define and track the key drivers of change affecting the future. We do this by tracking:

Human Needs : Universal

The foundation of our society based on a value system that supports human nature's physical and emotional programming.

Global Drivers : 10-year+ Horizon

Key global drivers represent the cultural, social, economic, political, technological and environmental eventualities reshaping the world we live in.

Value Shifts : Ever-evolving

The new ways in which we strive to meet these human needs, shaped by our contemporary context.

Macrotrends : 3–5 years+ Cultural and Societal Shifts

The cultural manifestations of new and emerging attitudes worldwide as shown by the behaviours of innovators and early adopters.

Microtrends : 1–3 years+ Lifestyle

Specific and tangible business innovations already emerging across key lifestyle categories.

This report is based on research from The Future Laboratory's trends intelligence platform, **LS:N Global**

Read our latest reports:



Sports & Leisure Futures

By embracing new technologies, geographies and audiences, sport is becoming bigger than ever and offering valuable lessons on nurturing a new era of fandom.



Innovation Debrief 2024–2025

Discover the top 50 innovations acknowledging, driving and anticipating change across industries in this year's Innovation Debrief report.



Generations: Now & Next

From Baby Boomers and Gen X to Millennials, Gen Z and Gen Alpha, dive into what unites and divides consumers across generations.

We can also deliver our macrotrends to your business in a number of ways, from on-demand video presentations to strategic workshops and bespoke reports.

If you want to find out more, say

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The Future Laboratory is one of the world's foremost strategic foresight consultancies. Members of our trends intelligence service LS:N Global get exclusive access to the mindsets defining tomorrow and the early adopters driving global change across 10 industry sectors.

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