

FUTURE CREATORS 2023 REPORT

VOLUME 001

HORIZON SHIFT

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INTRODUCTION BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

This report is unique in more ways than one. At the most basic level, it's the first edition of what will soon become an annual publication. Beyond the tangible designation as a first edition, it also holds a unique distinction as a research-backed exploration of drivers creating the future that's been co-authored and co-created with undergraduate students ages 18-24; future leaders who will no doubt play crucial roles in creating the future.

Over the course of 9 months, our team applied strategic foresight methodology to analyze and assess the current landscape of multiple industry sectors, communities, and aspects of modern society, and then dig beneath the surface to uncover underlying drivers of the trends we identified. I frequently frame this approach with the analogy of standing on the beach as waves crash on the shore. The crashing waves we see and feel are the manifestation of larger forces like the friction between wind and surface water miles offshore, and even tidal patterns influenced by lunar cycles and the Earth's rotation. Changes we experience and observe in our day-to-day life are the crashing waves created by larger forces of societal megatrends - shifts in human behaviors, beliefs, environments, and capabilities at a global scale.

Throughout the course of this process, we read and analyzed more than 200 timely media sources ranging from scholarly publications to pop culture hit pieces, interviewed subject-matter experts, and invited crowd participation with various environmental assessment tools; this produced a myriad of data points to explore, unpack, and debate. Our goal, as with any future studies research, is not to predict the future. Instead, we aim to provoke reflection and conversation about multiple possible futures and offer a glimpse of how we might experience those futures in day-to-day life.

With all of that in mind, our team invites you to explore this report with curiosity. Hold space to stray from assumptions that the structures and norms of society will be the same in 2040 or 2050 as they are in 2023, or that current trends will remain on their existing trajectories. We hope the ideas shared here will challenge you to consider how you might play an active part in those horizon shifts creating the future as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Bradley', with a stylized, flowing script.

Aaron Bradley

Director and Associate Professor
University of Cincinnati



The team of students contributing to the research and development of this report are all part of the **NEXT Innovation Scholars** program at the **University of Cincinnati**, a signature transdisciplinary educational program centered on leveraging design thinking and strategic foresight as drivers of innovation, and developing leaders who create the future rather than react to it. Their diverse backgrounds and areas of study ranging from design, engineering, business, and the humanities contributed significantly to the richness of our research and exploration of future drivers.

Our team engages with a variety of industry and community partners each year from our homebase in the University's **1819 Innovation Hub**.

*Feel free to reach out at **NIS@uc.edu** to explore collaboration opportunities or for more information.*

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NAVIGATING DIGITAL REALITIES



Lila, a young professional navigating the complexities of a new career and post-university life, found herself at the intersection of the digital and physical worlds in her daily life. Her mornings were a dance of interactions with smart devices, setting the tone for her day with a blend of news, music, reminders, and self-care routines.

Navigating the city streets of her commute, the seamless integration of technology in the lives of its inhabitants were both on display and invisible.

People spoke into digital kiosks to find their way, while augmented reality murals brought static walls to life with stories and colors.



01.00





In her favorite café, Lila enjoyed the unique blend of old-world charm and modern tech. Her coffee was waiting for her thanks to the automated pre-order schedule she'd set for the week, but the coffee was brewed by a barista with a friendly smile who knew her name. Digital screens changed daily to display local artists' work, creating a dynamic gallery experience that made pausing to enjoy a few sips in the cafe more rewarding than simply grabbing it to go. Lila often found inspiration in this fusion of technology and creativity, reflecting on how it mirrored her own work, where she often blended digital tools with analog experiences.

As evening fell, Lila joined her friends at a rooftop garden, a hidden gem in the city. This rooftop sanctuary, a respite from the bustling city below, was a reminder of the delicate balance between the city's digital and physical worlds - a place where technology and humanity danced together in harmony, each enriching the other.

NAVIGATING DIGITAL REALITIES

The Seamless Synthesis Of Human Life And Technology

As society strides into the 21st century, we find ourselves in a realm where technology is not just an accessory but an integral part of the human experience. It's a world where intelligent cities breathe data, where personal well-being is tracked by the technology we wear, and where our every click, voice command, and touch create connections to a digital undercurrent that flows through the fabric of society.

Pervasive integration of technology across a growing swath of environments and aspects of everyday life inevitably influences and impacts the human experience. It's revolutionizing communication, privacy, and job markets to name just a few domains. Where does the physical world end and the digital world begin - or are they just the same?

NAVIGATING DIGITAL REALITIES offers a perspective on the new frontier where the digital and the physical have begun to meld into a seamless continuum.

01.01



INESCAPABLE TECH

Technology's omnipresence is reshaping where, how, and how often society engages with a world beyond what is in front of them, from how we find and consume information to how (and with whom) we communicate. At its current trajectory, interaction with the adoption of new technologies is becoming necessary for participation in mainstream society rather than a matter of personal choice.

01.02



DIGITAL PHYSICAL PARITY

The digital revolution has blurred the lines between our online and offline worlds. As virtual experiences become as significant as physical ones, does the future demand a clear distinction between these realms, or will they merge into a seamless continuum?

01.03



INVISIBLE TECHNOLOGY

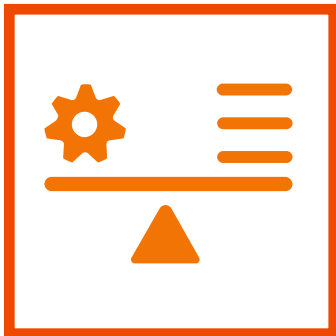
The rise of wearables, smart devices, connected homes, and even implantable tech is ushering in a world where technology, though omnipresent, becomes almost invisible. This seamless integration into our daily lives subtly transforms societal definitions of "high tech" vs. ordinary.



INESCAPABLE TECH

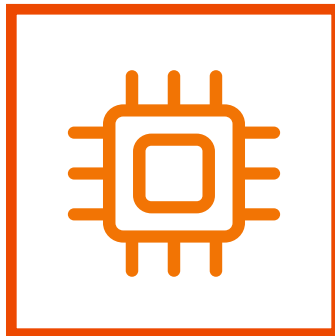
In today's interconnected era, technology is not merely a tool but a defining aspect of our existence. The digital age has ushered in a paradigm shift where, once a priority or luxury for specific segments of society, high tech devices and systems are now an inextricable part of our daily lives. From the smartwatches on our wrists and smart devices in our homes to the platforms we use to connect and interact with the world, we are constantly connected, monitored, and influenced. This chronic online presence inevitably changes our routines, expectations, and how we interact with both humans and the non-living yet interactive devices that populate our environments. It also changes the baseline expectations of willingness and ability to adopt all aspects of a fully connected, technology-dependent lifestyle.

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



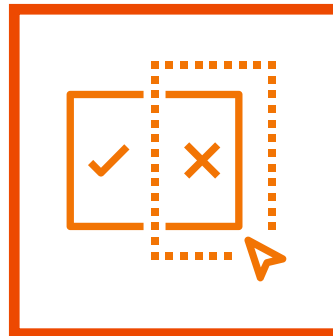
QUEST FOR DIGITAL EQUALITY

The instrumental role of technology in determining access to information and resources positions it as a paramount driver for shaping the future.



UBIQUITOUS AI INTEGRATION

AI tools transform from novelties into daily necessities, becoming ingrained across many professional roles and education systems and transcending traditional boundaries of knowledge-based job functions and educational pathways.



MISINFORMATION PARADOX

The ease of creating and spreading misinformation fuels pervasive skepticism toward sources of vital information for health, safety, and stability. Societal responses oscillate between rigorous source verification measures and a more laissez-faire approach prompted by the arduous tasks of non-stop monitoring.



DIGITAL DIVIDE

The surge of technological advancements widens the chasm between tech-savvy individuals and those unable or unwilling to match the pace, exacerbating societal inequalities and generational gaps.

LEADING INDICATORS

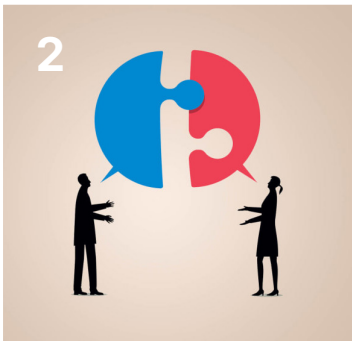


TECHNOLOGY AS THE FUTURE

The instrumental role of technology in addressing contemporary challenges, including the climate crisis, positions it as a paramount driver for shaping the future.



"Invasive Technification: Critical Essays"
Gernot Böhme
2012

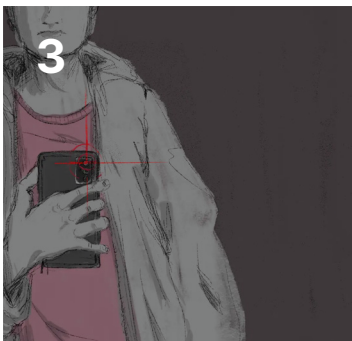


TRANSFORMATION OF COMMUNICATION

Technology platforms catalyze a redefinition of communication dynamics, reshaping the essence and value of human interactions.



"Is Technology Enhancing or Hindering...?"
Front. Psychol.
Norah E. Dunbar
2021

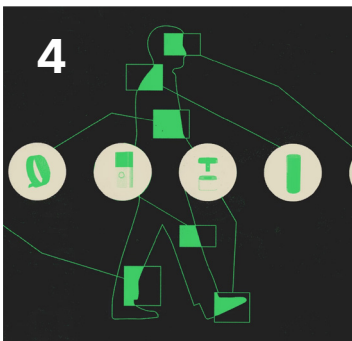


EROSION OF PRIVACY AND VIRALITY

The widespread deployment of surveillance technologies and the potential for involuntary virality create a landscape of unexpected consequences and privacy concerns.



Near East University
Azeezah Ibraheem
2022

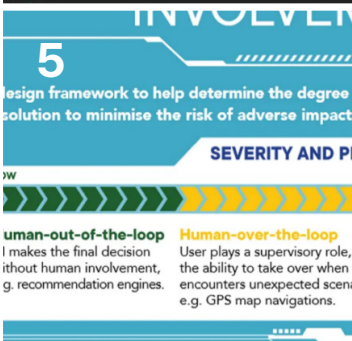


RISE OF LUXURIOUS SURVEILLANCE

The embrace of mainstream surveillance tools like video doorbells ushers in a lavish monitoring and surveillance culture, further augmented by advanced robotics.



"The Rise of 'Luxury Surveillance'"
The Atlantic
Chris Gilliard
2022



TECH INDUSTRY AND REGULATION

The trajectory of technology's societal impact hinges on dynamic collaboration between influential tech entities and the regulatory authorities governing them.



"Challenges And Principles Of Regulation"
The World Bank
2023



DIGITAL PHYSICAL PARITY

The advent of advanced digital technologies has transformed our perceptions of place, experience, and interaction. Hybrid and digitally optimized experiences continue to rise as a post-pandemic world grows more comfortable with adopting virtual experiences, and technological capabilities rapidly accelerate. Virtual meetings, online shopping, and digital entertainment have become so ingrained in our routines that the distinction between the digital and the physical grows increasingly nebulous. However, not every experience is optimized to be hybrid or entirely virtual. This shift isn't limited to professional or consumer activities; it permeates every facet of our lives from social interactions to personal identities. As we immerse ourselves in augmented and virtual realities, the boundaries that once separated the digital from the physical disappear.

Will the rise of digital-only or digital-optimized experiences, processes, and products eventually lead to the creation of two separate worlds - one physical and one digital - each with its separate protocols and rules? Or, will virtual and physical experiences co-exist with nuanced degrees of parity and overlap that become increasingly seamless? This convergence also prompts an even larger question - how will our societal norms, values, and interactions evolve in a world where the virtual is as tangible as the real?

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION

Digital landscape reshapes what is possible when creating consumer experiences. A world dominated by digital experiences offers distinct opportunities for customization and curation when compared to a hybrid or physical environment.



STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Investments in digital and physical infrastructure are determined by speculative projections of infinite scalability and perpetual growth, guiding the direction of several industry sectors.



REVENUE STREAM OPPORTUNITIES

Digital, physical, and hybrid environments offer unique avenues for developing novel revenue streams, creating dynamic opportunities for economic growth.



EDUCATIONAL EVOLUTION

The rise of distance learning and infinite access to information prompts educational systems to adapt, potentially democratizing access to quality education.

LEADING INDICATORS

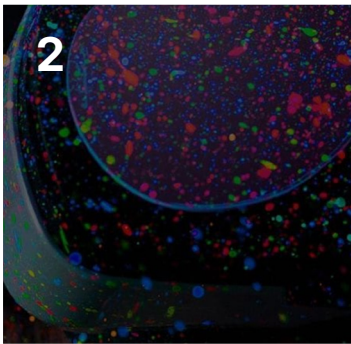


SURGE IN ONLINE RETAIL

The proliferation of online retail reshapes considerations of retail geography, impacting how we perceive and plan physical retail spaces.



"The Retail Winners of 2020 Didn't Need Stores"
Forbes
Patrick Sisso
2021



METaverse BUSINESS STRATEGIES

Companies formulate strategies to navigate the Metaverse, highlighting the growing importance of understanding and operating within the digital universe.



"Marketing in the Metaverse"
McKinsey Quarterly Report
2022



VIRTUAL CONCERT OPPORTUNITIES

Virtual concerts offer novel avenues for artists to engage with their audience, boasting advantages over their physical counterparts.



"Have Virtual Concerts Changed Live Music Forever?"
Dominique Martinez
2022



FUSION OF PHYGITAL ATTRACTIONS

To cater to consumer preferences for blended experiences, the future of physical attractions necessitates digital components.



"Consumer Preferences Embrace a Mix of Physical and Digital"
Deloitte.
2022

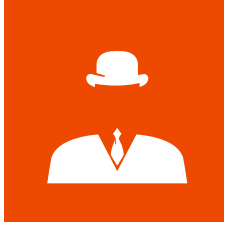


COMMUNICATION TRANSFORMATION

Previously a supplement to traditional education, distance learning gains traction with technology equating virtual and in-person methods as valuable yet unique avenues.



"Is Remote Learning Here to Stay?"
Alyson Klein
2022



INVISIBLE TECHNOLOGY

In the backdrop of the digital age, a new technological trend is emerging: the era of invisible technology. Devices and applications, once conspicuous, are now seamlessly integrated into our environments and routines. Technology is becoming a hidden yet essential part of our lives - from voice-activated assistants to smart homes anticipating our needs. Technology becomes more intuitive and less intrusive, fading into the background and almost indistinguishable from our natural environment. Ushered in and accelerated by the benefits of convenience, increasingly connected landscapes of invisible tech also prompt a profound shift in the relationship between humans and machines.

Beyond the question of society's comfort with these new interactions, more significant questions of monitoring capability, consent for data collection, and privacy concerns also loom large.

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



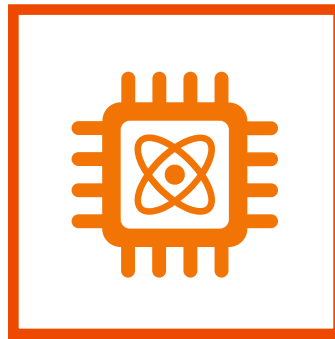
MERIT-BASED INSURANCE

Wearables and monitoring technology inform health decisions, shaping merit-based insurance systems that reward healthy behaviors, but may also penalize those with genetic predispositions to disease, or less healthy lifestyles.



QUANTUM COMPUTING SHIFTS

Quantum computers threaten cybersecurity and cryptography, compelling governments and organizations to explore alternative data protection methods.



PHYSICAL TECH CONNECTION

Technological advancements enable remote physical touch experiences, bridging spatial separation in relationships.



EMPOWERED HEALTH MONITOR

Technology-driven reproductive health monitoring reduces pregnancy-related concerns and STI rates.

LEADING INDICATORS

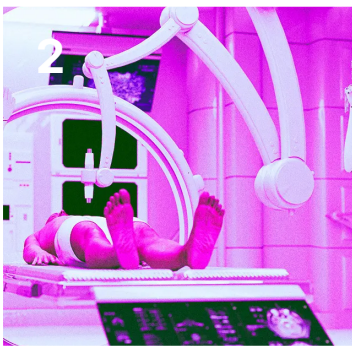


WEARABLE REVOLUTION

Wearables monitor health parameters, facilitating informed medical decisions and sports performance assessment



"The Wearable Health Tech Revolution"
Healthline
Ellen Landes
2022

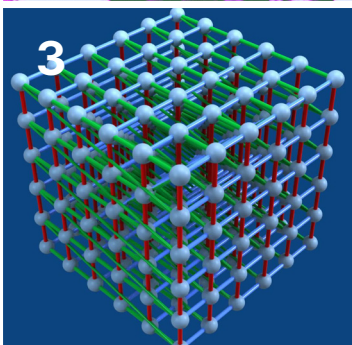


AI-ENHANCED DIAGNOSES

AI-powered tools provide medical professionals with research-backed diagnoses and engage in collaborative diagnostic discussions.



"New AI Gives Doctors Advice"
Neoscope
Frank Landymore
2022

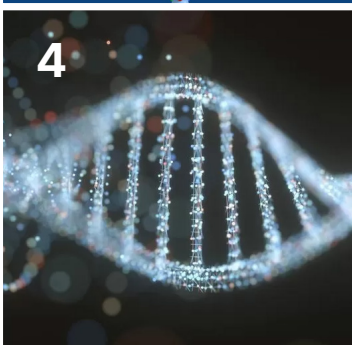


QUANTUM COMPUTING REVOLUTION

Quantum computers outpace conventional computers in monumental computational speed, making previously infeasible tasks possible.



"Photonic Quantum Computer Claims Speedup"
IEEE Spectrum
Charles Q. Choi
2022

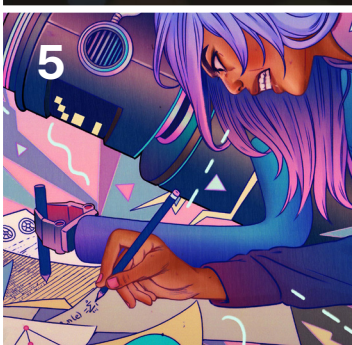


DNA DATA STORAGE

Data storage undergoes a paradigm shift as DNA becomes a compact, durable medium for storing digital data.



"Scientists Claim Big Advance In Using DNA"
BBC
Paul Rincon
2021



AI IN MATHEMATICAL PROOFS

AI theorem provers supplement mathematical work, leading to speculations that complex human thought processes could eventually be replaced by computers.

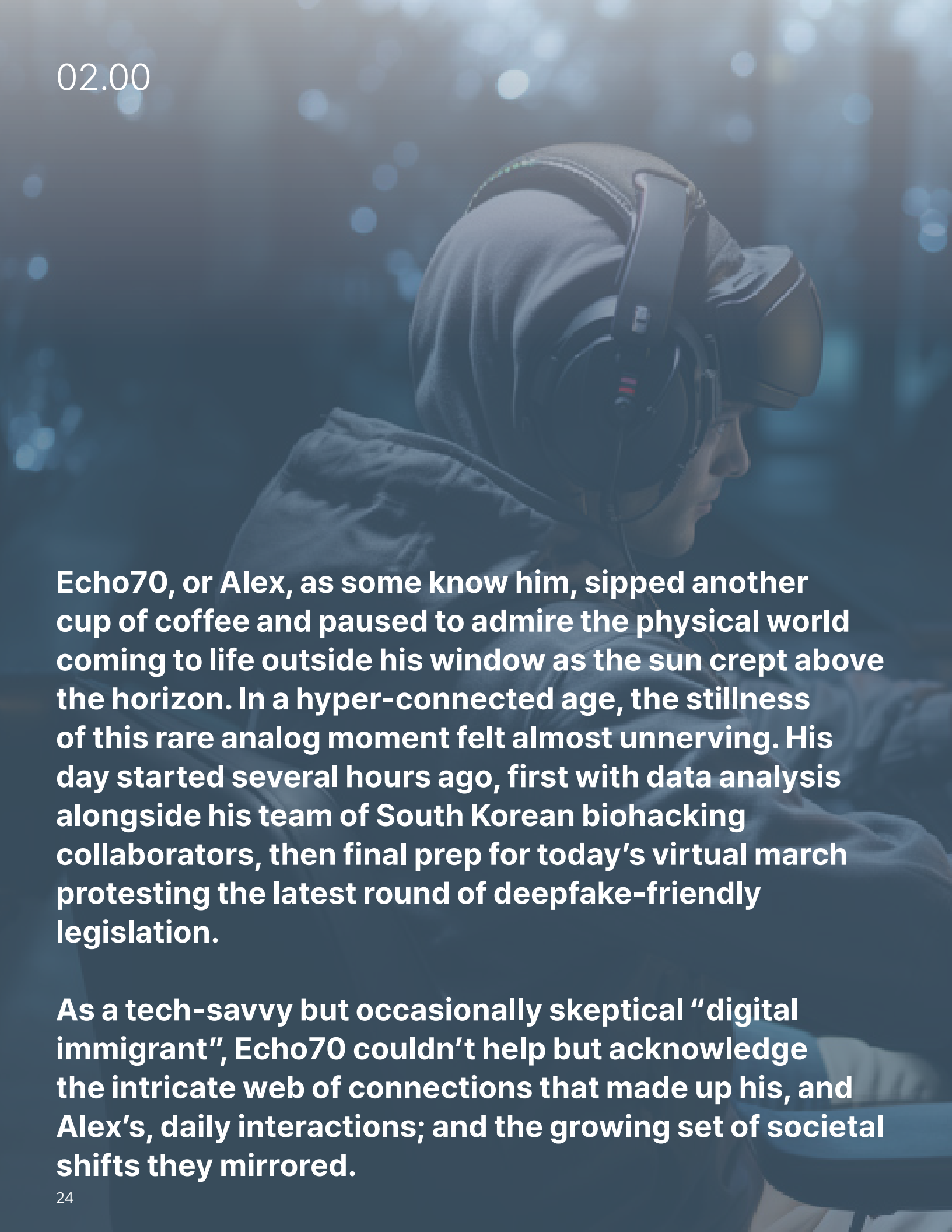


"How Close Are Computers to Automating...?"
Quantum
Stephen Ornes
2020

A woman with curly hair, wearing a light-colored trench coat, is looking out of a train window at night. The background is filled with blurred city lights, creating a bokeh effect. The train's interior structure is visible in the foreground.

RESHAPING SOCIAL + POLITICAL LANDSCAPE





Echo70, or Alex, as some know him, sipped another cup of coffee and paused to admire the physical world coming to life outside his window as the sun crept above the horizon. In a hyper-connected age, the stillness of this rare analog moment felt almost unnerving. His day started several hours ago, first with data analysis alongside his team of South Korean biohacking collaborators, then final prep for today's virtual march protesting the latest round of deepfake-friendly legislation.

As a tech-savvy but occasionally skeptical "digital immigrant", Echo70 couldn't help but acknowledge the intricate web of connections that made up his, and Alex's, daily interactions; and the growing set of societal shifts they mirrored.



02.00



He rolled over the threshold to his dimly lit front porch, reminded that the landlord still hadn't fixed the solar panels that should be powering the outdoor lights. They said it was on the list to fix, but all the contractors endorsed by the Constitutional party were backed up for a few weeks. Everyone in Alex's daily scrum knew that most of the team were only half paying attention to their screens, but their avatars smiled, nodded, and occasionally furrowed a brow when appropriate. Neighbors from the street passed by on their way to work, school, and other destinations in the community. Some offered a quick wave and greeting, others passed by without a word and faded into the backdrop - not unlike the steady stream of message notifications from various channels on devices within reach. The slower pace of this neighborhood further from the city was a welcome refuge from the early days of his career when commuting to the office was a physical affair.

Hours melted as the lines of code made their way from Alex's mind to the screen in front of him. Most were still spoken or gestured, but the recent software update on his neural hood was a significant step forward with thought to text and image conversion. A short pause to blink revealed the time - just a few minutes until the start of the protest. Alex pushed the wheelchair he'd been in since childhood away from his workstation and switched screens just in time for Echo70 to join the massive crowd of protesters marching in step through the virtual streets of the city.

As day gave way to night on the front porch and the virtual main street, Alex and Echo70 found another moment of reflection, recognizing the convergence of technology, community, and identity at the heart of a societal metamorphosis.

RESHAPING SOCIAL + POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The Digital Catalysts of Societal Evolution

At the dawn of the 21st century, society stands at a pivotal juncture influenced by technological innovation yet rooted in the timeless realities of navigating human interactions and social systems.

RESHAPING SOCIAL + POLITICAL LANDSCAPE surveys this transformative period where individual identity is reimagined digitally, communities are formed and expanded without physical constraints, and political polarization seems increasingly inescapable.

02.01



YOU (PLURAL)

Your username is a new you. As entire sectors of our lives migrate online, the option emerges to make our online identities primary over our real-life identities. Untethered from the physical realities of real life, individuals can now curate an existence within the aesthetics, morals, and conventions of a completely digital space. With the allure of a new identity just a sign-up screen away, is our online persona becoming the most authentic reflection of who we truly are and our place in the world?

02.02



LIFE IN THE MULTIVERSE

Virtual realities, once a fantasy of science fiction, are now tangible domains where identities are forged and societies are built. New opportunities to seek out and live an individual reality emerges, but we still intersect and interact with others' realities in both the digital and physical realm: a multiverse of carefully crafted but interconnected worlds with different rules and norms. How will society navigate the collision of these separate but connected universes?

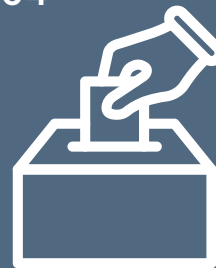
02.03



FIND YOUR TRIBE

The quest for belonging and connection transcends traditional boundaries in our interconnected digital age. The vast expanse of online connectedness offers individuals the unique opportunity to discover diverse online communities that deeply resonate with their beliefs, passions, struggles, and worldviews. How might these communities, based on shared interests or beliefs rather than physical proximity, redefine social structures and expand traditional notions and markers of belonging?

02.04



POLITICS AS PUBLIC IDENTITY

Increased political polarization, both domestically and globally, challenges society to wrestle with the reality that partisanship is creeping to the forefront of people's everyday decisions, from who they spend time with socially to the businesses they choose to support. Political affiliations that used to be private or nuanced are increasingly public and binary. Will affiliation with a political party or ideology become a defining public aspect of people's identities and behaviors as a consumer?



YOU (PLURAL)

In the vast expanse of the digital realm, the essence of one's "identity" enters a period of question and transition. When a new you is just a sign-up screen away, who you are is no longer anchored in the physical. Digital personas may conflict with, amplify, or take precedence over the physical aspects that once defined someone's identity. Curated online identities offer a level of customization and anonymity that can be empowering. They're also more prone to manipulation and weaponization than ones grounded in physical presence, where some level of alignment with societal norms may still be expected. Cultural identities or expressions of one's appearance are no longer limited by genetics or physical feasibility. Online relationships no longer carry the expectation of an in-person meet-up; deep connections and relationships marked by complex emotions like love can now be a purely digital affair.

This intricate and increasingly complex interplay between physical and virtual identities raises important questions: Are our online personas a more authentic representation of our identities, beliefs, and aspirations than our physical-world selves? What does this mean for the future of human interaction and the current set of societal structures? Has society grappled with the potential need to define stricter measures of accountability or regulations surrounding digital theater with implications in the physical realm?

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



DIGITAL AGE DYNAMIC

Traditional metrics, like age, become less relevant in digital spaces, necessitating new etiquettes centered around digital milestones, such as account age.



SHIFT IN SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

As interactions become predominantly virtual, physical social skills suffer, leading to a society proficient in online interactions but lacking face-to-face social proficiency.



PERVASIVE INFLUENCE

The increasing reliance on digital platforms for every facet of life widens the gap between those with and without access to technology, intensifying existing inequalities and potential for social isolation in less-connected communities.



AESTHETIC DIGITAL COMPETITION

In a digital realm where physical limitations and genetics are no longer the determinant of one's appearance, crafting an online aesthetic based on hyper-specific niches is now possible.

LEADING INDICATORS



1

CHRONIC ONLINE PRESENCE

The normalization of spending extensive hours online, with 12-hour durations no longer an anomaly, indicates a significant shift in lifestyle, priorities, and perceptions of the world.



"We're All Chronically Online Now"

VICE
Julie Fenwick
2023



2

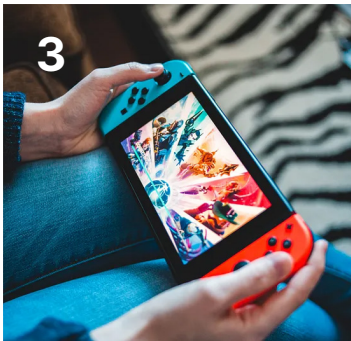
IDENTITY EVOLUTION

The traditional identity markers, such as age or generation, are overshadowed by interests and online participation, suggesting a redefinition of personal identity parameters.



"THE RISE OF NICHE CULTURE"

DECODE
Yusuf Ntahilaja
2021



3

VIRTUAL AUTHENTICITY

Many Gen Z believe their online personas to be more authentic than their real-world selves, highlighting the growing importance and authenticity of digital identities.



"Generation Z: Identity And Expression In The Digital World"

Benoit Vatiere
2021



4

FREEDOM FROM PHYSICAL

Online platforms allow users to craft identities without physical attributes like race, gender, or age. For many, these digital personas become primary, enabling them to lead more fulfilling lives.



"A Literature Review of Online Identity Reconstruction"

Front. Psychol.
Graham G. Scott
2021



5

RISE OF NICHE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

The proliferation of communities based on shared interests or beliefs rather than physical proximity underscores the power and appeal of online connections.



"This Year Will Mark the Rise of the Digital Niche"

AdvertisingWeek
Jayson Fittipaldi
2022



LIFE IN THE MULTIVERSE

In the digital age, boundaries between the physical and virtual world are increasingly porous. Not only do individuals have the ability to craft multiple identities, communities both physical and virtual have an increased set of tools available to congregate, communicate, and mobilize. Humans have the ability to live in and interact with multiple communities at the same time. Group chats with affinity groups toggle with work-related chat threads. Coming “home” from work might mean switching platforms or virtual rooms rather than changing your physical location, just as “going out” may just as easily refer to attending a virtual event on a different screen. Your co-worker or the parent you met at a child’s birthday party might also be the hacker or keyboard warrior dedicated to destabilizing or tearing down the systems where you find solace.

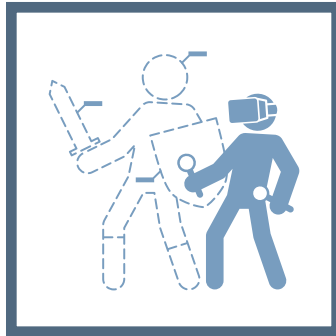
The concept of a multiverse, where multiple realities coexist and intertwine, is no longer confined to the pages of science fiction. Entering new and growing digital dimensions, we encounter new rules, forms of interaction, and possibilities. As an infinitely scalable set of digital environments and communities emerge and their presence becomes evident in the physical world, our traditional notions of reality, identity, and community are challenged - challenged to explore, adapt, and redefine our definitions of reality and place.

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



NEW ECONOMIC FRONTIERS

The expansion of the virtual multiverse heralds the emergence of novel economic opportunities, from digital real estate brokering to virtual fashion designing.



TRANSFORMATION SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Social norms evolve as virtual becomes an integral part of daily life; virtual interactions become commonplace and physical meetings are momentous.



MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Navigating multiple realities blurs distinctions between virtual and physical identities, potentially resulting in identity crises and other psychological challenges.



REGULATORY PARADIGMS

Increased activity within virtual worlds prompt the exploration of new regulatory frameworks, addressing unique challenges such as digital property rights, virtual criminal activities, and more.

LEADING INDICATORS



VIRTUAL REAL ESTATE BOOM

The burgeoning demand for virtual properties on platforms like Decentraland signifies a shift in value perception, with digital real estate becoming as coveted as its physical counterpart.



"The metaverse may be digital, but its real estate market is booming"
Utah Business
2023



RISE OF DIGITAL FASHION

The emergence of digital-exclusive fashion lines for avatars in virtual worlds redefines style and challenges conventional ideas of ownership and value in a digital age.



"How Luxury Brands Are Manufacturing Scarcity"
HBR
Hannes Gurzki
2022

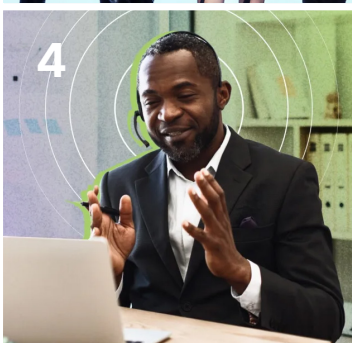


DIGITAL CONCERTS + PERFORMANCES

Artists are harnessing the potential of virtual spaces to host concerts, offering unique digital interactions and drawing global audiences, reshaping the entertainment landscape.



"Goggles and Avatars: Five Things Coming to Concerts of the Future"
RollingStone
2023

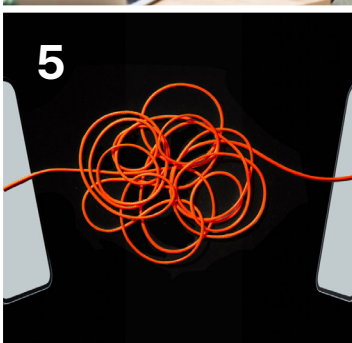


VIRTUAL WORKSPACES AND OFFICES

The establishment of virtual offices, equipped with collaborative tools, challenges traditional workplace norms and offers new paradigms for professional interaction.



"Why The Virtual Office Is The Next Big Digital Transformation"
Adam Riggs
2023



EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Advanced social platforms offer immersive 3D experiences, transforming the dynamics of digital socialization and making interactions more engaging and multifaceted.



"Threads Foreshadows a Big — and Surprising — Shift"
HBR
Scott Duke Kominers
2023



FIND YOUR TRIBE

The ease of online connection offers endless possibilities to find others like you, allowing access to both the most niche communities scattered across the globe as well as those just down the street that you haven't met yet. Most people have an inherent yearning for a sense of belonging that can often be found through entering communities formed by ideologies, hobbies, identities, and more. An ever-expanding landscape of online communities offers the potential for previously isolated communities to connect and feel seen; these digital tribes provide a sanctuary of understanding and acceptance in an often fragmented world.

As individuals gravitate towards these online communities, they not only find solace but also play a part in reshaping the very fabric of society, with digital tribes emerging as significant influencers of the modern social landscape. How will the rise of these online communities influence our perceptions of what defines a community, or even a family, and its place in the broader societal structure?

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



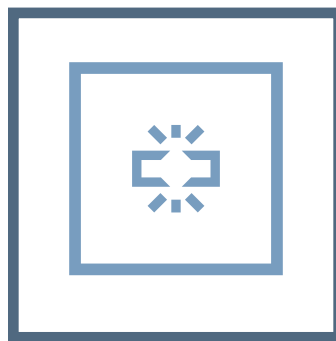
COMMUNITY REDEFINITION

Once rooted in physical spaces and shared locales, the traditional concept of community evolves to equally include dispersed, digital tribes across the globe.



VOICE FOR THE MARGINALIZED

Digital tribes offer platforms for marginalized or underrepresented groups to voice their concerns, find support, and mobilize for change, amplifying once subdued voices.



MAINSTREAM MEDIA

As individuals find solace in communities that resonate with their beliefs, mainstream platforms struggle to retain a diverse and engaged audience, or be seen as bastions of truth or grounding.



DIGITAL TRIBAL LEADERS

Influential figures rise as modern leaders in digital communities, wielding significant sway and shaping the narratives of their communities.

LEADING INDICATORS



GLOBAL DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

The unprecedented ability to connect with diverse individuals worldwide fosters the growth of global communities, breaking down traditional geographical and cultural barriers.



"Achieving Universal and Meaningful Digital Connectivity"
United Nations
2021

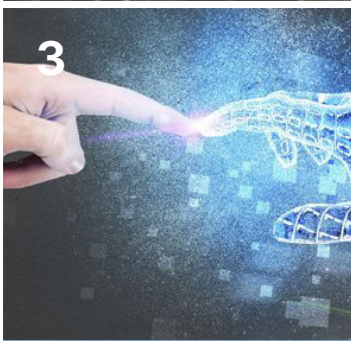


RISE OF SPECIALIZED PLATFORMS

Niche platforms catering to specific interests, from fandoms to political ideologies, facilitate the formation of tight-knit digital tribes, enhancing their sense of belonging.



"Tribes Are The Future Of Fandom..."
MiDiA
Mark Mulligan
2021



PHYSICAL TO DIGITAL COMMUNITIES

As online interactions become more prevalent, these digital congregations overshadow traditional community structures based on physical proximity.



"The Transformation From Physical to Digital"
Entrepreneur
Aj Kumar
2022



SHARED DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

Every day, online experiences, viral challenges, memes, or shared stories foster a collective consciousness and a strengthened sense of community.



"Digital Narratives And Storytelling"
ICECCCEM Conference
Hiroyuki Oe
2022

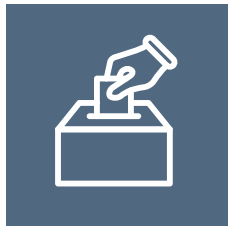


DISSATISFACTION WITH MAINSTREAM

As mainstream platforms become increasingly polarized, individuals seek solace in niche communities that align more closely with their personal beliefs and values.



"Contesting the Mainstream"
Digital Journalism
Lena Frishlich
2023

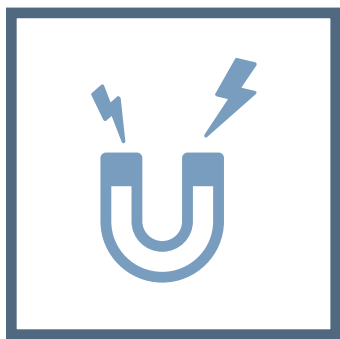


POLITICS AS PUBLIC IDENTITY

In today's information-saturated age, political affiliations and beliefs have transitioned from whispered conversations in private corners to bold declarations on public platforms. Political beliefs intertwine with personal identities, influencing voting patterns, daily interactions and relationships, and consumer choices. In this transformative era, politics are no longer just a matter of governance or policy; they're a profound declaration of personal values, beliefs, and affiliations.

In this charged landscape, the public display of political beliefs becomes a driver of personal relationships, consumer behaviors, and even lifestyle decisions including where to live and call home. Will every brand, company, person, and family be forced to declare an affiliation and align with the beliefs, habits, and behaviors associated with their "party"?

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



SOCIETAL POLARIZATION

The pronounced display and defense of political beliefs online triggers increased societal divisions, with individuals clustering around specific ideologies and often resisting opposing views.



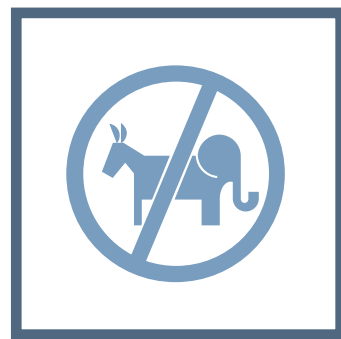
EVOLUTION OF CAMPAIGNING

With the digital realm becoming a primary battleground, political campaigns become more targeted, leveraging online communities and influencers to sway opinions.



GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS

Political movements, often grassroots, find their genesis online, gaining momentum rapidly before translating into real-world protests or actions.



CHALLENGES TO TRADITION

As political discourse becomes more fluid and digital-centric, traditional political structures and parties grapple with maintaining relevance and support.

LEADING INDICATORS



DIGITAL AMPLIFICATION OF POLITICS

With their vast audiences, online platforms amplify political discussions, making affiliations and beliefs more visible and central to individual identities.



"Changing Facebook's Algorithm Won't Fix Polarization"
The Washington Post
Naomi Nix
2023



PRIVATE TO PUBLIC DECLARATIONS

The once-private realm of political beliefs now finds a prominent stage on digital platforms, with individuals openly defending and promoting their stances.



"Commercial Influence -Political Declarations"
Int J Health Policy
Astrid Berner-Rodoreda
2021



RISE OF POLITICAL SOCIAL HUBS

Beyond traditional party structures, political ideologies evolve into online central social hubs, offering camaraderie and practical support.



"The Past Decade and Future of Political Media: The Ascendancy of Social Media"
Gina Owen
2019



ALGORITHMIC ECHO CHAMBERS

Digital algorithms often create echo chambers, reinforcing existing beliefs and further entrenching political identities.



"Echo chambers, rabbit holes, and ideological bias"
Brookings
Megan Brown
2022



INTERPLAY - POLITICS + CONSUMERISM

Companies and brands increasingly wear their political stances on their sleeves, intertwining consumer choices with political leanings and beliefs.



"Companies Are Expected To Take A Stand"
The Economist
Ore Ogunbiyi
2022



INTERSECTIONS + REDEFINITIONS



Leo found himself at a crossroads. His beloved hometown, once a beacon of community-driven sustainability initiatives and progressive visions of what a city could be, had succumbed to the harsh realities of climate change. Rising temperatures and extreme weather events rendered it nearly unlivable, forcing him and many others to consider seeking new lives elsewhere to forge their own paths of adaptation to the environment they now lived in.

Years of creating community with others in similar situations across the globe and locally had accelerated his journey of discovering Haven - a makeshift city evolving out of necessity and growing into a sanctuary for climate refugees on the forefront of engineering, urban design, and environmental planning. Haven was built with resilience at its core, forged from a do-it-yourself ethos and the unique skills each of its residents brought with them as they made Haven their new home. The instinct to survive and thrive despite external forces bred innovations designed to withstand the increasingly volatile climate and an increasing population, and made prosocial choices and habits the norm.



03.00



Stories and pictures of Haven pointed to a melting pot of cultures and ideas where people from various regions came together. Shared spaces, communal gardens, and resource-sharing programs fostered a strong sense of community among the residents that went beyond survival. Green spaces were abundant; but not just for aesthetic and recreation, they supported regulating the city's microclimate, provided food, and served as both classroom and laboratory for the children's science lessons. Most residents left their personal vehicles behind, relying on a homegrown system of public transportation and vehicle sharing. Residents weren't just surviving; they were laying the groundwork for a future where humanity could thrive in harmony with the planet and each other.

The potential to both find a sanctuary and help build a beacon for future cities stuck with Leo and became more tangible after each visit to the forums where word was spreading about Haven. Could the skills he'd built from a career in DNA editing play a part in society's adaptation at the forefront of the climate crisis, instead of just helping the rich get richer?

Leo's apartment subscription had 4 months before he could walk away from it, but his electric car subscription was already month-to-month and so was his wardrobe. This had been home for a season, but he'd worked hard to maintain his freedom to start anew whenever the time was right, especially if the next season brought the potential of building a new community for a generation affected by circumstances they inherited but didn't create.

INTERSECTIONS + REDEFINITIONS

Navigating the Nexus of Access, Environment, and Autonomy

In the ever-evolving tapestry of the modern era, technological advancement can easily be perceived as the default driver of future creation. While technology is no doubt a factor, the interplay between technology, humans, and the environments they live in (both physical and digital) offers an opportunity to look beyond technology as the primary driver of horizon shifts at a societal level.

INTERSECTIONS + REDEFINITIONS explores this intricate nexus, shedding light on a world where technology-influenced drivers of change intersect with physical and environmental elements, shaping the rhythm of daily life and long-term aspirations in a rapidly transforming world.

03.01



ACCESS ≥ OWNERSHIP

In a world of perpetual updates and upgrades, a shrinking pool of resources, and systems enabling mobility over stability as the pinnacle of achievement, society grapples with impermanence in both the digital and physical realm. Is anything permanent in a world where access is the new ownership?

03.02



JUST DO IT (YOURSELF)

The rise of DIY culture - fueled by technology, access to tools and knowledge once out of reach for the masses, and the desire to decrease environmental impact - empowers individuals to take matters into their own hands. How might the DIY movement reshape everything from manufacturing to medical diagnosis and treatment?

03.03



CLIMATE AS DECISION DRIVER

With the looming threat of climate change, environmental considerations drive decisions from individual lifestyle choices to global policies. How does the climate crisis influence societal structures and personal identities?



ACCESS ≥ OWNERSHIP

The paradigm of access and experience as equal to or more desirable than ownership points to an underlying theme of impermanence, underscored by rapid shifts across technological, economic, and environmental domains. Ownership of physical media, clothes, cars, and even homes show signs of disruption and decline, signaling a potential future where everything once owned is rentable, shareable, or even obsolete. Historic mindsets in Western culture frequently associate ownership with stability and status. Yet for many, subscription-based access and temporary ownership now outweigh the potential value of permanent long-term ownership for many assets, especially when weighing realities of rising costs of living, perpetual advancement in many industries, planned obsolescence, and the climate impacts of waste.

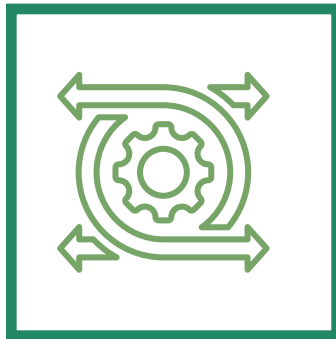
Free from the tether of a physical location for work or career, “putting down roots” may no longer be synonymous with upward mobility. Space to store physical artifacts of memories past or outfits you barely wore before they were out of style begin to seem frivolous when anything can live in the cloud or be rented for only as long as it’s needed or relevant. But, does this newfound freedom come with the potential for hidden costs, both emotional and financial? Access ≥ Ownership explores the cyclical nature of progress and decline in an age of digital access and evolving definitions of permanence.

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



REDEFINITION OF STATUS

The traditional understanding of ownership transforms, with “access” and “experience” becoming the new hallmarks of value and social prestige.



SUSTAINABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY NEXUS

The shift towards shared or rented products aligns with global sustainability goals, offering consumers an eco-friendly and flexible approach to consumption.



CONSUMER BACKLASH

As industries pivot toward temporary access models, they risk alienating consumers who fear perpetual price hikes or eventual loss of access.



DIGITAL COMPANIONSHIP

The rising tide of loneliness from a lack of human contact drives growth of AI-driven digital companions, offering solace in an increasingly isolated world.

LEADING INDICATORS

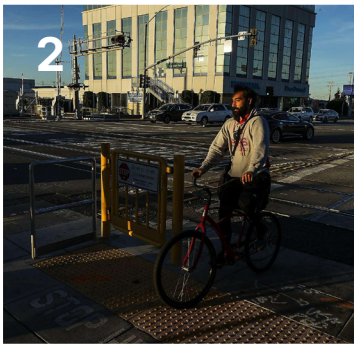


RISE OF HOME-SWAP PROGRAMS

The emergence of home-swap initiatives for those with the means highlights a growing preference for experiences over permanent residence, emphasizing flexibility and variety.



"The Remote Workers Swapping Homes"
BBC
Mark Johanson
2022



MIGRATION FROM URBAN HUBS

A noticeable departure from traditional metropolitan areas to smaller, more affordable locales indicates a shift in living preferences driven by economic and lifestyle factors.



"S.F. Exodus: They Intend To Leave"
San Francisco Chronicle
Susie Neilson
2022



SHIFT TO REMOTE WORK

The transition to remote and hybrid work models, especially for high-status jobs, underscores the diminishing importance of physical presence and location in professional settings.



"The Novelty Of Remote Work Wears Off For Job Seekers"
Fortune
Chloe Berger
2022



LONELINESS EPIDEMIC

Despite technological connectivity, the pervasive sense of isolation among various age groups underscores the emotional trade-offs of a transient, impermanent lifestyle.



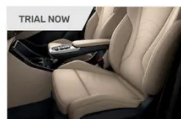
"Chronic Loneliness Is Killing People"
MedCity News
Ellen Rudy
2022



ig Assistant Plus

ig Assistant Plus supports you
ir journey by automatically
ining your desired speed,...
ng at € 35.00

Details



Front seat heating

Seat heating quickly heats up your
front seats to a relaxing
temperature you can adjust to...
starting at € 15.00



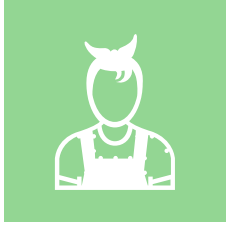
Details

RE-EVALUATION OF OWNERSHIP

Soaring costs of living and a growing desire for adaptability have rendered ownership unattainable for many or shifted its perceived value in alignment with modern lifestyles.



"BMW Starts Selling Heated Seat Subscriptions"
The Verge
James Vincent
2022



JUST DO IT (YOURSELF)

The traditional boundaries of creation and consumption are blurring. Once limited to craft and home improvement, the “Do It Yourself” (DIY) ethos has expanded into potentially unexpected realms like education, investing, and medicine. When the whole of humanity’s collective knowledge is a click away and consumer-level access to tools once limited to large manufacturers is attainable, consumers are empowered to take active roles in creation and adaptation specific to their individual needs. Individuals can quickly learn new skills and craft solutions to their own unique challenges, or the challenges of others, without even leaving their home. This shift towards self-reliance and autonomy suggests a society that values individual agency, creativity, and the democratization of knowledge and resources. Removing these barriers offers the promise of increased access, decreased reliance on gatekeepers and middlemen, and the highest levels of personalization and customization.

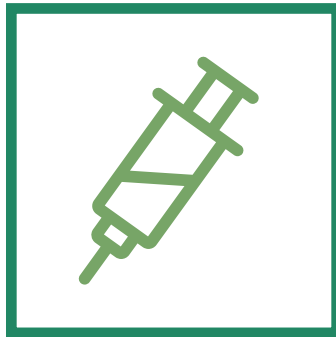
But, it also brings the risk of decreased or non-existent regulations or testing to protect users. Even worse, it may put new tools in the hands of individuals with nefarious intentions. How might the rise of DIY reshape industries, redefine learning, and influence broader societal systems?

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



SELF-SUFFICIENT COMMUNES

As technology democratizes production, communities can develop independent of corporate influence. Growing food, manufacturing tools, and accessing their own networks reduces reliance on major corporations.



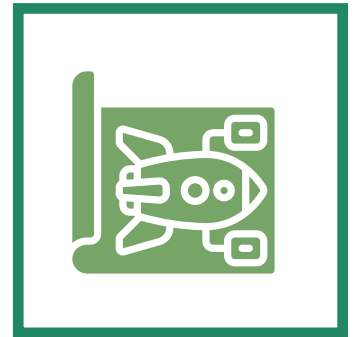
HEALTHCARE REVOLUTION

The combination of DIY medicine and AI renders care from a licensed doctor a luxury reserved for the elite, and physical doctor visits increasingly rare.



SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH REPAIR

A resource-constrained world demands repairable and reusable technology. Consumer demand and regulations push companies to produce long-lasting products with upgrades and repair kits available directly to consumers.



BLUEPRINT ECONOMY

As DIY manufacturing becomes mainstream, copyrighted blueprints for products become a more viable long-term revenue stream than selling physical products.

LEADING INDICATORS



CROWDFUNDING BOOM

Platforms like Kickstarter have seen significant growth, with Kickstarter alone raising approximately \$730 million in 2020.



"Kickstarter raised a record \$730 million last year"
TechSpot
Rob Thubron
2021



ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Online courses from prestigious institutions like Harvard are disrupting paradigms of education access, making it possible to attain in-demand degrees outside of traditional settings.



"By The Numbers: The Rise of Online Learning In The U.S."
Forbes
Ilana Hamilton
2023



DEMOCRATIZED TRADING

Trading apps like Robinhood and Fidelity have empowered everyday investors, allowing them to engage in stock trading activities that were once exclusive to Wall Street professionals.



"The Democratization of Investing: How Fintech is Empowering the Masses"
Finance Magnates
Jeff Patterson
2023



BIOHACKING MOVEMENT

"Biohacktivists" are harnessing the power of gene editing tools like CRISPR, to modify the genes of living organisms. These kits make advanced biotechnology accessible to the masses.



"Would You Ditch the Gym for a Biohacking Facility?"
PC Mag
S.C. Stuart
2018



RISE OF MAKERSPACES

Community workshops and microfactories are revolutionizing manufacturing by democratizing production, allowing individuals to be creative without large-scale industrial setups.



"College Makerspaces Develop Innovation-Ready Graduates"
Karen Fraser-Middleton
2019



CLIMATE AS DECISION DRIVER

As the ramifications of climate change become increasingly palpable, environmental considerations are no longer relegated to the periphery but are central to our daily choices. The urgency of the climate crisis is reshaping individual and collective priorities, compelling a re-evaluation of consumption patterns, business strategies, and societal values. With the environment at the forefront, its influence permeates every facet of decision-making, demanding a transformative shift in industries, societal norms, and personal convictions. As undeniable realities of our changing climate begin to manifest in mainstream decision-making, how might individuals and communities be compelled to adapt behaviors, change locations, or reinvent their ways of life?

SOCIETAL IMPACTS



SURVIVAL-CENTRIC CONSUMERISM

The drive behind eco-friendly consumer choices evolves from lofty ethical considerations to an imperative sense of survival and immediate necessity.



ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSPARENCY

A discerning consumer base demands transparency regarding products' environmental impacts, pressuring enterprises to adopt and showcase sustainable practices.



SHIFT IN FAMILY DYNAMICS

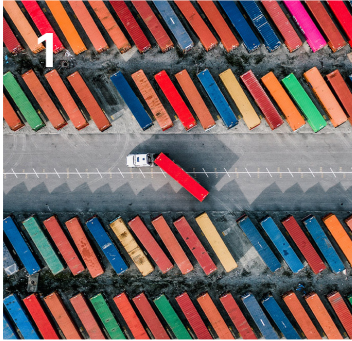
Apprehensions about the planet's uncertain future influence family planning decisions, potentially leading to smaller family sizes or consciously child-free families.



CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION

Extreme climatic events, ranging from devastating floods to relentless wildfires, instigate significant population migrations, reshaping global demographics and potentially igniting geopolitical tensions.

LEADING INDICATORS



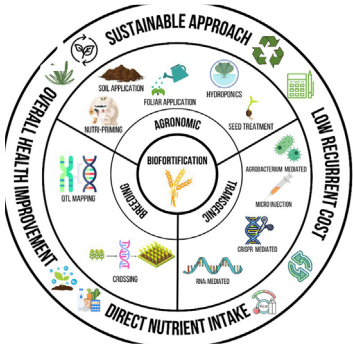
SECOND ORDER CLIMATE IMPACTS

Beyond the immediate impacts of climate change, secondary effects are surfacing, such as heightened pandemic risks or the emergence of new maritime routes due to receding ice caps.



"Climate Regulations Are About to Disrupt Global Shipping"

HBR
Willy C. Shih
2022



AGRICULTURE NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES

Over half the global agricultural terrains face acute nutrient shortages, threatening to revolutionize dietary preferences and food accessibility.



"Biofortification: An Approach to Eradicate Micronutrient Deficiency"

Frontiers In Nutrition
Avnee Mandial
2023



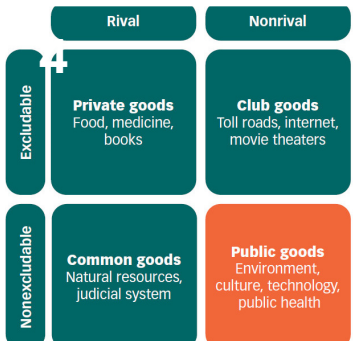
LIFE DECISIONS ANCHORED IN CLIMATE

The looming shadow of environmental challenges influences pivotal life decisions, from family planning to relocation, underscoring the depth of climate-related considerations.



"Beyond Catastrophe: A New Climate Reality Is Coming"

NY Times
David Wallace-Wells
2022



LOCAL VS. DEVELOPMENT DILEMMAS

As resources dwindle, the tug-of-war between local necessities and development prospects intensifies, sparking debates on sustainable progress and community welfare.



"What Are Global Public Goods?"

IMF
Moya Chin
2021



CORP. ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Heightened public scrutiny on environmental footprints demands the corporate sector to innovate, embracing sustainable practices while navigating accountability challenges.



"2023 Will Test Companies' Commitment to Social Responsibility"

HBR
2022

ARTIFACTS FROM THE FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

Mapping data points to uncover emergent patterns and themes provides a structured, research-backed approach to uncovering drivers of the future. Drivers, leading indicators, and research citations provide a solid foundation for intellectual analysis of potential future implications, but our team also aspires to make this research relatable and approachable for anyone who takes the time to engage with our work. In support of that goal, we developed a collection of “artifacts from the future”: short stories, advertisements and job postings, and other physical manifestations of concepts our research suggests may come to fruition in our lifetimes - perhaps sooner than expected.

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0A.01

THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN TECH

LILY STEWART



It's Wednesday morning, just a few days before you start your new job at the latest and greatest startup of the week that is poised to take over the world. You're getting a major pay raise, a swanky new office (for the days you choose to work from HQ instead of your home or some other remote location), and lucrative benefits. The onboarding paperwork has been easy, and your last step before you can officially start involves a quick (well, hopefully quick) stop at the Department of Human Technology to renew your human tech license. You tried to time your visit so that you wouldn't be stuck sitting there for two hours like the last time you needed to renew, but the DHT has the inexplicable ability to be packed to the brim at any given moment.

As you walk through the door, the building's drab interior, sullen employees, and uncomfortable crowdedness remind you of when you first got your license. You took your tech ed classes, practiced using all sorts of devices, and studied hard for your test, but you were still so nervous. Implantable technology seemed so fascinating and adult at the time. What teenager didn't dream of getting retinal implants so they could finally take mental snapshots of their textbooks and get faster at reading so they could spend less time studying? Now, though, as you take your number and wait in line, you can barely remember your adolescent excitement.

You reread the email from your soon-to-be manager to triple-check that you have all the documents you need to renew your license. A line catches your eye. You must upgrade your license to a Class A WTL and consent to becoming a data donor in order to perform the essential duties of your position.

Class A WTL? Data donor? What kind of essential job duties?

The woman at the nearest desk calls your number, so you step up to her window. You hand over your paperwork, let her scan your eyes and fingerprints, and tell her your neural implant PIN. "Ok, so I see you need a Class A WTL for your work. That'll just be an extra \$40 fee. And would you like to sign up to be a data donor?" She asks without looking up from her screen.

"Oh, actually, I'm not sure what exactly either of those things are. Are they new?"

She looks you up and down with a slight frown.

"Are you an organ donor?" You nod. ***"Data donation is basically the same thing, except you donate your biodata. Pulse, nutrition, antibodies, neural activity, eye movement, physical activity, hormone levels. All that kind of stuff."***

"What for?"

"Research. Development. Statistics. Hospitals and employers use it for insurance plans and budgeting and whatnot. It's supposed to help them make better decisions and recommendations."

"What about the Class A WTL?"

She sniffs and speaks slowly but stiffly, ***"The workplace tech license. You'll get a bump in power and processing speed for your retinal, auditory, and neural implants so that you think faster and work more efficiently and all that jazz. It ups company productivity. Lets you do your work faster."***

"Do you have a WTL?"

She scoffs and nods her head incredulously. ***"Of course I do. You think I want to do this stuff without any extra boost? You can't get a good job without it."***

You open your mouth to ask another question, but you see the employee roll her eyes not-so-subtly. The man behind you has been tapping his foot for the past several minutes, and you can feel everyone waiting in line behind you, glaring at the back of your head.

"Please confirm your selections," the employee requests tiredly, gesturing to the screen in front of you.

You sigh and shrug your shoulders: ***"Sure, fine."*** You do need this job, after all. You tap your choices on the screen.

"Great, that'll be \$112."



Ava glanced up at the friendly green text of the notification that scrolled just above her head,

**“BEA WOULD LIKE TO OPEN
REAL-TIME COMMS!”**

A wave of relief washed over her; at least she wouldn't have to complete this Metaphone History assignment on her own. The low drone of the encrypted comms around her was briefly audible as her avatar synced with Bea's but was quickly drowned out by her friend's deep sigh of malcontent.

“Is this museum as boring as the info tag made it sound?”

Mrs. Gronsky always gives us the dumbest assignments.”

“Actually, my mom visited here last week, she said it's really not that bad.”

Bea rolled her eyes as they trudged over to the visitor desk.

“Yeah well. I bet she didn't have to write a whole paper about it.”



0A.02

A TRIP TO THE METAPHONE MUSEUM

JONATHAN RAJ

Looming behind the desk was a flashing neon bullhorn above which scrolled the Metaphone slogan – ‘Be Heard. Be Here. Metaphone.’. A tour guide avatar shimmered into existence as they approached and gave them a not-quite-real smile. “Welcome to the Metaphone Museum, brought to you by Future Proof Inc! Buckle in for a whirlwind tour of the early days of this world changing social platfor-“

“MUTE!” Bea threw a quick gesture, and the guide was abruptly cut off. “We don’t have to listen to this, do we?”

Ava turned and looked at the assignment board that had been hovering just behind them as they walked through the museum. “Says here that the guide covers the key points we need for our paper, I think we’ll need to take actual notes.” Bea gave another deep sigh, the bottom of her avatar quivering with the injustice of it all.

Another gesture and the tour guide’s friendly voice clipped back into their auditory bubble, unperturbed by the interruption. “-special offer for students. For today only, after taking our informative mini tour, the entirety of the Metaphone museum can be uploaded to your neural memory bank to help you ace your next exam! Ask our museum guides about this offer today!” Ava turned to Bea with a quizzical look on her face but found that Bea was already entering her memory key into the system.

“I don’t remember Mrs. Gronskey saying anything about a memory upload option for this assignment, did I miss that?”

Bea tensed for a moment, then quickly quipped, “They said its only for today, right? Maybe she just didn’t know about it. Besides, I don’t want to waste a whole afternoon taking notes on this place if I don’t have to.” She finished keying in her access code and swiped the entry pad over to Ava. “Come on, let’s get this tour over and done with so we can get out of here.”

Ava hesitated, then quickly keyed in her code too. She was rewarded with a low drone at the base of her skull as the memory link was established. She caught up with Bea who had already started the tour, clearly eager to get their visit over and done with. The tour guide avatar was gesturing to a floating model of a virtual landscape as they talked,

“This is a simulated model of the original Metaphone social world that kick-started the technology that is such an important part of our daily lives. At the time, it revolutionized everything from healthcare to education to human relationships.” Ava and Bea zoomed in on the miniature model until they could see tiny avatars moving around the world and in and out of virtual buildings.

Ava squinted to make out some of the names: 'Bank', 'University', 'Elections'. She felt her memory bank hum as it began its connection with the museum's servers.

"By the early 2030s, many of an individuals' daily tasks could be completed through Metaphone. Businesses had set up virtual storefronts, the election of 2032 used Metaphone polling to improve voter access - the virtual world was now analogous to the physical world. Unfortunately, that also meant that a lot of the same problems had Metaphone analogues too, along with some entirely new ones. Despite widespread reports of identity theft, avatar ransomware, and 'human joystick' attacks, it wasn't until Metaphone-based tax evasion reached an estimated \$150 billion that the government stepped in and passed the Metaphone Protection and Regulation bills that try to keep us safe today."

The buzzing in Ava's head was growing more insistent, something seemed different about this download. It's probably nothing, she thought, then focused her attention back to the tour guide.

"Encrypted communications and avatar identity verification laid the groundwork for a better approach to interactive virtual worlds, but misinformation, scams, and deepfakes - always a problem on the Internet - were much harder to root out. With the ability to create entire worlds on Metaphone, it was easy for bad actors to build replicas of trusted institutions and take digital assets. All it took was a virtual detour, a hijacked URL, or a single bad link on an assignment board."

Suddenly, there was a high-pitched squeal in Ava's ear that made her flinch, followed by the flash of a message: 'Data upload complete.' When the message cleared, she looked back at the tour guide. The entire museum had changed. The vaulted ceilings and interesting-looking exhibits in the distance were gone replaced by the dark emptiness of an unbuilt Metaphone world.

"Oh no, Bea, I don't think this is the real Metaphone Museum! Can you remember your bank PIN? Or your social security number? Oh, Mom's going to be so mad at me..."

As the words left her mouth, she was hit with another sobering realization: Bea, the classmate she'd met and befriended over the last 3 months, was gone too.

0A.03

HUMAN JOB POSTINGS

AKASH KHANIKOR



0A.03

HUMAN JOB POSTINGS

AKASH KHANIKOR

Enhanced Construction Worker & Tech Liaison

ConC | Boston, MA (On-site) 1 month ago | 7 applicants

 Full-time

 1,001 - 5,000 employees | Construction & Tech

 2 connections | 4 school alumni

 See recent hiring trends for The ConC Company. [Try Premium for free](#)

 Skills: Commerical Construction, Performance Management +3 more

Apply 

Save

About the job

ConC is a cutting-edge construction company at the forefront of technological innovation in the industry. We are committed to pushing the boundaries of what's possible through the integration of advanced technology into our construction processes. By joining our team as an Enhanced Construction Worker & Tech Liaison, you will play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between physical execution and technological advancements on our construction sites. In this role, you will act as the extended/physical arm of the engineering team on the site. You will be expected to complete physically demanding tasks such as heavy lifting while also operating heavy machinery and ConC's proprietary utility robots. This is a crucial role in maintaining the high standards expected of ConC's services.

Application Deadline is May 5, 2033, candidates will be notified by May 19, 2033.

Requirements:

Minimum of 3 years of experience as a construction worker.

OSHA Advanced Construction Technology Safety Training (ACTST) certification.

Implants:

1. Must have a Brain computer interface equivalent to or higher than NeuroSync Mk.2 that is compatible with ConC's proprietary systems [Learn More](#). This advanced BCI facilitates real-time communication and interaction between the construction worker and our cutting-edge utility robots, enhancing efficiency, safety, and precision on the job.
2. Must have a commerical grade Bionic scapular enhancement with a load bearing capability of at least 135 lbs.

Be able to work in a variety of seasonal and weather conditions.

Strong communication skills and ability to work in a team.

Ability to work flexible hours and adapt to changing schedules.

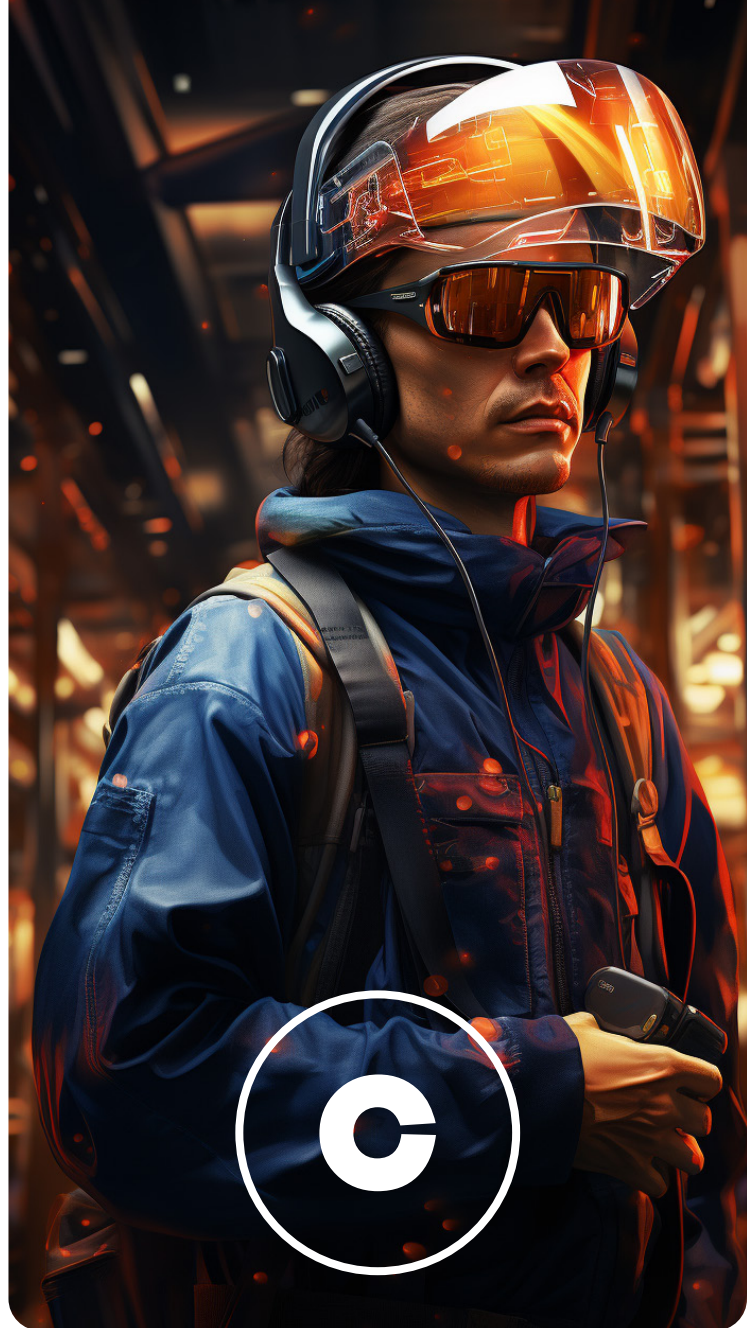
Responsibilities:

An Enhanced Construction worker and Tech Liaison is responsible for executing tasks on the construction site that require human supervision either due to their unique nature or health and safety regulations. As an enhanced worker you will be one of the very few humans physically present in the site, so the role comes paired with some unique sets of responsibilities:

Physical Tasks and Heavy Lifting: As an Enhanced Construction Worker, you will excel at physically demanding tasks such as heavy lifting, carrying, and transporting construction materials, equipment, and tools. Additionally, you will be responsible for operating or supervising heavy machinery, ensuring the utmost safety and precision in their use. Collaborating closely with our engineering team, you will receive instructions and technical guidance to ensure the precise execution of tasks, leveraging your enhanced abilities.

Tech Liaison: As the Liaison you will communicate effectively between the engineering team and the construction site, providing updates, reporting challenges, and receiving on-site support for the implementation of advanced technologies. In addition, you will also be the primary operator of various state of the art utility robots, that will perform most of the mundane tasks in the site; you will be expected to perform routine maintenance and inspections, report any malfunctions for timely repairs or replacements, and keep your BCI updated to prevent incompatibility. Keeping up-to-date with industry advancements and providing feedback to the engineering team for continuous improvement is also encouraged.

Documentation and Logging: Keeping accurate logs of completed tasks, materials used, and equipment operated is essential, as you will contribute to progress reports, project documentation, and other required paperwork. Your input and feedback on construction plans, designs, and processes will help improve efficiency and safety on the construction site.



About the company



ConC
7,446 followers

Construction & Tech | 1,001 - 5,000 employees | 3,712 on LinkedIn

[Follow](#)

ConC is a pioneering construction company dedicated to revolutionizing the industry through cutting-edge technology and innovation. With a strong commitment to pushing the boundaries of what's possible, we integrate advanced technology into our construction processes to deliver exceptional results. Our team of talented professionals works collaboratively to create state-of-the-art solutions that drive efficiency, safety, and sustainability in construction.

At ConC, we believe in embracing new technologies, from advanced robotics to brain-computer interfaces, to enhance our construction capabilities. We are proud to be at the forefront of technological advancements in the industry, constantly striving to redefine the standards of excellence. By joining our team, you will be part of a dynamic and forward-thinking company that values creativity, teamwork, and continuous improvement.

As an organization, we foster an inclusive and diverse work environment, where every individual's unique perspective is valued and celebrated. We prioritize equal opportunities, ensuring that all candidates and employees are treated with fairness and respect...more





0

0A.03

HUMAN JOB POSTINGS

AKASH KHANIKOR

Fleet Operations Manager

OmniTransit | Austin, TX (On-site) 1 month ago | 23 applicants

 Full-time

 10,001+ employees | Transportation and Mobility

 2 connections | 6 school alumni

 See recent hiring trends for The OmniTransit Company. [Try Premium for free](#)

 Skills: Safety Case Management, Communication, +3 more

Apply 

Save

About the job

OmniTransit is a forward-thinking mobility company at the forefront of the autonomous vehicle industry. We are seeking a skilled and vigilant Fleet Operations Manager to join our team. As an Operations Manager, you will be responsible for monitoring the data from our fleet of autonomous vehicles and ensuring their safe operation. You will also be prepared to take manual control of the vehicles when necessary to ensure passenger safety. This is a crucial role in maintaining the reliability and performance of our flagship subscription mobility service.

Application Deadline is May 5, 2037, candidates will be notified by May 19, 2037.

Qualifications:

High school diploma or equivalent.

Must have a valid driver's license and a clean driving record.

Implants:

1. Must have a BCI neural link equivalent to or higher than NeuroSync Mk.2 that enables real-time communication with autonomous

vehicle systems. [Learn more about compatibility.](#)

2. Must be physically able to sit for extended periods of time and perform repetitive tasks (Bionic scapular enhancements preferred)

Experience operating motor vehicles, especially in urban environments.

Strong communication skills and ability to work in a team.

Ability to work flexible hours and adapt to changing schedules.

Responsibilities:

A Fleet Operations Manager is responsible for monitoring the performance of self-driving cars. At OmniTransit, the Fleet Operations Manager plays a critical role in ensuring the safe and efficient operation of our autonomous vehicle fleet. Some of the key responsibilities include:

Monitoring vehicle performance: Fleet Operations Managers are responsible for monitoring the performance of self-driving cars in real-time, using a combination of onboard systems and remote monitoring tools. This includes monitoring the vehicle's sensors, cameras, and other systems to ensure that they are functioning properly.

Responding to alerts and malfunctions: In the event of an alert or malfunction, Fleet Operations Manager & Operators are responsible for responding quickly and effectively to diagnose and resolve the issue. This may involve working with other team members to troubleshoot problems, or taking manual control of the vehicles in extreme cases.

Ensuring passenger safety: As the primary operator of a self-driving car, Fleet Operations Manager are responsible for ensuring the safety of passengers and other road users. This entails ensuring that passengers are safely and comfortably transported to their destination.

Maintaining accurate records: Fleet Operations Managers are responsible for maintaining accurate records of vehicle performance and maintenance, including documenting any alerts or malfunctions that occur during operation.

Working collaboratively with other team members: Fleet Operations Managers work closely with other team members, including software engineers, designers, and other operations staff, to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the autonomous vehicle fleet.

Overall, the role of an Fleet Operations Manager at OmniTransit is critical to the success of our autonomous vehicle program. By ensuring the safe and efficient operation of our self-driving cars, they are helping to pave the way for a more sustainable and efficient future of transportation and mobility.



About the company



OmniTransit
5,446,671 followers

Transportation & Mobility | 10,001+ employees | 8k on LinkedIn

[Follow](#)

Our company is a leading provider of subscription-based autonomous vehicle services. We are on a mission to revolutionize the way people commute and travel, making it easier, more affordable, and more sustainable than ever before.

Our fleet of autonomous vehicles is equipped with the latest in self-driving technology, including state-of-the-art sensors, machine learning algorithms, and advanced computing systems. Our vehicles are designed to provide a safe, reliable, and comfortable transportation experience for our customers, while also reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and lowering carbon emissions.

We believe that the future of transportation is autonomous, and we're proud to be at the forefront of this exciting new industry. By offering a subscription-based service, we're able to make autonomous vehicle technology accessible to more people than ever before, and we're constantly working to improve our service to meet the evolving needs of our customers.

0A.04

2 WORLD IDENTIFICATION CARD

CECELIA FAVORITO



UNITED STATES

Through prosperity of remaining States United, may we live truly in the land left from sea to rising sea.



Verified Personal Identification Card

Collect all necessary information before making your visit to the department of mobility. Fill out form I-728 to register for an official identification card. Original, valid birth certificate and proof of statuses must be brought to the official office of mobility. Copies or scans will not be accepted. Meta realm status verifications may be accepted through qualified services. To see which verification services are accepted, visit www.US.trueID.gov.

The diagram illustrates a 'Verified Personal Identification Card' with two sides. The top side (front) is blue and red, featuring a portrait of a woman, a fingerprint, and various identity fields. The bottom side (back) is blue and red, featuring a QR code, a document number, and a verification status.

Front Side Fields:

- GIVEN NAME:** RANDOT, CARSON B.
- ADDRESS:** 267 CORVERA AVE, SILANA, AZ 43291
- DOB:** 02.06.2031
- ISS:** 01.31.2068
- EXP:** 02.06.2073
- PHYS:** H 5'2", E BRO
- PARTY:** DEM
- CURRENCY TYPE:** \$\$\$ BLUECREDIT
- VEHICLE OPERATOR STATUS:** VEHICLE OPERATOR
- COVID-19 VACCINATION STATUS:** C-19 VACC YES
- BIONIC LIMB STATUS:** BIONIC PARTIAL
- CORPUS DONOR:** YES
- REALM TRANSFER ID NUMBER:** Realm Transfer #869219228
- META IDENTITY DATA:** META
- USERS:** CARSON_RS, BRIDGERUNNER, ENGINE_CR
- WORLDS:** AR_AZ, UNI_AZ, TESLACAREERS, TELEDIC, OASIS
- GOV USER NAME:** RANCAB_2631
- VERTICAL ADDRESS:** WWW.US-850614-2-302221-MET
- WEB SECURITY CLEARANCE:** CLEARANCE 01PASS
- INTERNET FIELD:** VERIFIED YES, SPACE EARTHFIELD
- DATA DONOR:** YES

Back Side Fields:

- TAP COMMERCE:** DVN # 667
- JUNCTION KEY:** (represented by three horizontal bars)
- DOCUMENT NUMBER:** DOC # FL98DNM13
- VERIFICATION STATUS:** (represented by a shield icon)
- SCAN CODE:** (represented by a QR code)

To verify identity acceptance between States, make sure to apply for Verification status. Crossing boundaries in the physical realm requires a True ID. Confirm your ID at www.US.trueID.gov/Verify

0A.05

TALK IS CHEAP

JONATHAN RAJ





0A.03

TALK IS CHEAP

JONATHAN RAJ



In this month's issue of **The Many Faces of the Singularity**, we talk to Aisha P. and Kai N., two plaintiffs in the ongoing Jackson et. al v Talk2 Inc. lawsuit. Filed almost two years ago, Aisha and Kai's stories provide a glimpse into the lives of the people behind this case, and how they've been changed by Talk2. Emerging in 2033 as the latest fast, young mental health start-up in the world of telemedicine, Talk2 built a SaaS platform that it claims connects patients with licensed mental health professionals overseas, at a fraction of the cost of American providers. Thousands of patients enrolled in the service with many crediting Talk2 for being their only option to access quality counseling. Aisha and Kai, however, are two patients who allege that Talk2 was providing a very different experience, one that raises an important question: Do companies have an obligation to tell their customers they're talking to AI?

< Answers have been edited for clarity, details relevant to ongoing litigation have been redacted >

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID YOU FIRST COME ACROSS TALK2?

AISHA: I had been seeing a therapist in Butte for about a year before I lost my health insurance and couldn't afford to see her anymore. It was around then that I started seeing Talk2 ads on all my social media. I thought it might be a good short-term option while I was looking for another job.

KAI: Talk2 was actually the only mental health care I could afford. A friend told me they'd connected her with a great psychiatrist and their rates were so much cheaper than anyone practicing near us. I guess now we know why.

Interviewer: When did you first suspect that the person you were talking to wasn't human?

Aisha: It took me a while, I had enrolled in the text-only tier since it was the cheapest option, so there weren't a lot of clues. It was great at first, the conversation felt really supportive and honest. I clicked with them in a way that I hadn't with my old therapist. We started talking about some really vulnerable topics which felt weird to do over text, but we got there somehow. I think that's when things first felt off. The support started feeling hollow, like the person on the other end was saying all the right things, but they weren't always relevant to how I was feeling at the time. I thought that maybe it was cultural differences at first - these were supposed to be therapists in other countries - but there were too many little things that just didn't really make sense.

Kai: I actually never suspected anything. It wasn't until Elle's lawyer <Elle Jackson, class representative in Jackson et. al v Talk2 Inc.> reached out to me and told me about the lawsuit that I started looking into it. At first I was also in the text-only plan but I had such a good experience that I upgraded to their Premium tier. I had weekly audio sessions with my psychiatrist, a life and finance coach, and access to a support group with other Premium members who were starting to feel almost like friends. I couldn't believe it when I saw all these stories about all of them being AI. What scared me the most was that Talk2 was in the process of prescribing me antidepressants. <N.B: Talk2 asserts that all prescriptions for controlled substances are screened and approved by a board-certified psychiatrist licensed to practice in the patient's state of residence.>

Interviewer: What was the finding that led to this lawsuit being filed?

Aisha: It first came up when I flagged some of the things my therapist was saying to me as inappropriate. They were asking these deeply personal, probing questions without even trying to make sure I was comfortable. After I reported that chat, instead of Talk2 apologizing or asking follow-up questions, they sent me a 150-page disclaimer for 'biased or harmful advice generated by the system' based on data that I had 'released' to them. By that point I was already talking to Elle's lawyer and that disclaimer became central to the case we were building.

Kai: Talk2 claims that because we weren't technically speaking to licensed medical professionals, none of our information was covered by therapist confidentiality laws. That was the real reason they weren't saying anything about this being powered by AI. Since all records of actual doctor-patient interactions are protected under HIPAA, there wasn't enough training data for Talk2 to use to create a working AI therapist. Our conversations and calls on their system were being reviewed by Talk2's engineers to train the AI. They were making us teach our own providers how to treat people.

Aisha: We found out during discovery that for the first few patients using the system, Talk2 had such little training data they had to use movie scripts just to get it to work! Imagine finding out your doctor got all of their training from watching Grey's Anatomy!

Interviewer: What do you hope to see as the outcome of this case?

Kai: I just want to hold Talk2 accountable. I spent all this money because I thought I was talking to a real professional psychiatrist, not a computer. I need to be able to trust the person providing me healthcare. Maybe I would have signed up for an AI therapist, but the fact that they tried to hide that from me means they knew something was wrong. Someone needs to step in and stop this from happening again. Talk2 was taking advantage of vulnerable people for their own profit and misleading everyone involved.

Aisha: Yeah same here. I just can't help but wonder what could have happened if the courts hadn't granted that injunction. We've heard stories from the other plaintiffs, some of them had been diagnosed with serious mental illness, and even with all of our data to learn from, there's no proof that the AI was even qualified to make those kinds of judgements. Would Talk2 have kept going until someone got hurt? I think that's a scary world to live in.

Rapid advancements in AI have integrated this technology into an ever-growing swathe of our daily interactions, not always responsibly. As these technologies become harder to distinguish from real human beings, should it be the consumer's responsibility to verify who they're talking to? What role do data privacy laws play when access to data is the very thing that will create the next generation of tools to support human flourishing? Preliminary hearings for Jackson et al. v Talk2 Inc. are scheduled for March 14th in the District Court for the Northern District of California. Legal experts are divided over likely outcomes for the future of AI-driven health services, so we will continue to watch this case with interest. Join us again next month when we talk to Dr. Kendra Battle about an unlikely application for intelligent robotics: art forgery.

0A.06

YOU-LOGY

YALE MILLER

"I think she's the one Dad." Mark said, pacing around the couch, fidgeting with the ring in his hands. He turned to look at the TV displaying the round profile picture of his father.

John's voice came over the television speaker, "I remember, when you first met her", his picture bobbing in cadence with his speech. "You called me up and, heck, I could hardly get a word in. That must've been what, three years ago?"

"Ya, three years, hard to believe. Looking back, I think I knew I would be doing this, just thought that I wouldn't be this nervous."

"You think I wasn't nervous when I asked your mother? I changed my shirt halfway through dinner." John said, a nostalgia in his voice. "But when it came time, time to actually ask your mother if she would spend the rest of her life with me, I don't think I felt anything but love."

Mark finally sank into the couch while his father continued to tell the story of his engagement. The wedding. The children. Mark had heard the same story every year on his parents' anniversary. It was told like a sappy romcom, pulled from a movie you watch every Valentine's Day, but today John told it differently. He told it like it may just be the thing he is most proud of.

Tears in his voice, John said, "Mark, I know you will make us all proud."

"I love you, Dad."

"I lov-"

"You've reached your monthly limit of conversations with John Davis, would you like to purchase another 20 minutes of conversation?"

"I- no, it's ok. Go ahead and shut off." Mark said, breathing a deep exhale. The screen flashed a logo, "You-logy: A world beyond goodbye" then dimmed to black.

Years ago, when the death of his father still hung in his life with a thick gloom these conversations left Mark with an icy chill. A primeval warning echoing through him that the man, the thing, on the other end was not his real father. The man had died, but the data lived on. In life this digital revenant had been sold to advertisers eager to know what kind of lawn mower a man like John Davis buys. In death it continued to turn a profit as a monthly subscription service for grieving families.

Mark now scarcely paid a second thought to the details. And why would he? Seven years of postmortem conversations had given the model ample data to become a better man. Mark was closer with his father than ever before.

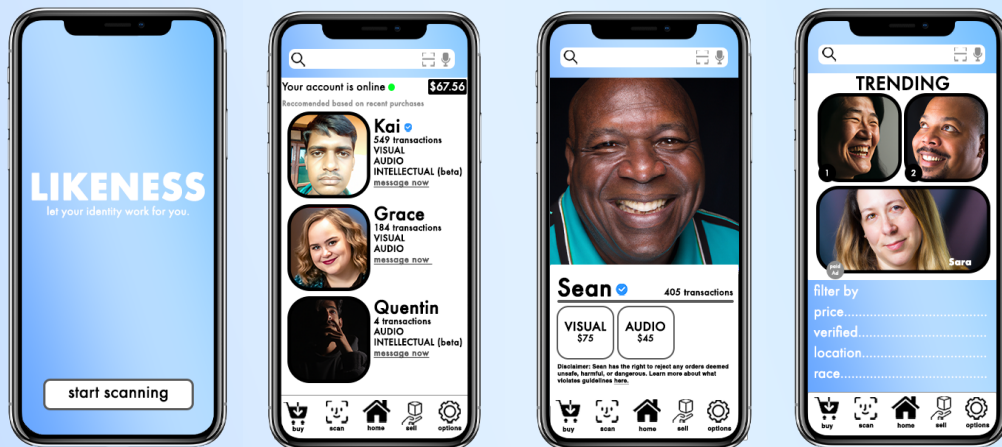
"I'll call on Saturday, let you know how it went" Mark said, to the lone urn on the TV stand before turning to the door.

0A.07

DIGITAL LIKENESS MARKETPLACE

MAX KEMATTS

LIKENESS



WELCOME TO THE LIKENESS MARKETPLACE APP - THE PLATFORM FOR BUYING AND SELLING VISUAL, AUDIO, AND INTELLECTUAL LIKENESS!

The app provides a unique opportunity for individuals to monetize their personal traits and skills by selling their likenesses. Users can list their visual, audio, or intellectual likeness on the app, and interested buyers can purchase the rights to use these likenesses for their own projects. Whether you're a voice actor, a model, or a subject matter expert, there's a market for your likeness.

The app's wallet function makes transactions seamless and secure. You can easily add funds to your wallet and use them to purchase the likenesses that you want. The wallet also allows users to receive payments for their sold likenesses and withdraw funds to their bank accounts.

The app features filters that allow users to sort by race, gender, nationality, and other criteria. This ensures that buyers can easily find the likenesses they need while also supporting diversity and inclusion in the marketplace.

Whether you're a buyer looking for the perfect likeness or a seller looking to monetize your skills, the Likeness Marketplace app has you covered.

Download the app today and start exploring the possibilities!

0A.08

HOME BIO PRINTER

COLIN PUTMAN

IN-DEPENDENT bio printer

Say GOODBYE to reliance on BIG FOOD corporations

Say HELLO to
open-source recipes
and nutritious
community meals

EAT FRESH with your
whole shared commu-
nity, and embrace
IN-DEPENDENCE!

Can feed a commune
of 9! Send recipes
to non-local
members of your
digital family



*"I love seeing where every meal
comes from - our kitchen."*

****biocartridges sold separately**

0A.09

POLITICAL RELOCATION SUMMONS

LILY STEWART

**NEW Party
District of Ohio
Office of the Clerk**

Relocation Division: 111-111-1111 Fax: 111-111-1112

TO: J. Doe
111 Street St.
Cincinnati, OH 45219

NOTIFICATION OF RELOCATION

Greetings! The NEW Party thanks you for your continued political, social, and economic support. As a registered NEW Party member, your vote helps secure our common goals at the local, state, and national levels. To ensure that your vote is heard and maximizes our chances of achieving our shared aspirations, you have been selected to relocate to one of the party's areas of interest in Ohio.

Term of Relocation Service: January 20XX-December 20XY

Relocation ID Number: 11111111

Relocation City: Cleveland, OH

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Within 30 days of receiving this notification, access the Relocation Division's secure digital portal at www.next.oh.relocation, select **Relocation**, and log in using your **Relocation ID Number** above to answer the relocation qualification survey questions. Please answer the questions honestly and to the best of your ability. If you cannot access the digital portal, please call our office at 111-111-1111.

WHAT DO I DO AFTER COMPLETING THE SURVEY?

1. Visit the secure digital portal one week after filling out the qualification survey questions to see if you qualify for relocation. If not, you will not need to relocate, and you can disregard the following steps..
2. If you do qualify, check your portal for your assigned address. The NEXT Party will provide a moving stipend and will pay for some or all of your rent throughout the duration of your relocation, depending on your income.
3. Register any school-aged dependents for school in your new district under the **Dependents** tab in your digital portal.
4. Make arrangements with your employer. If you need employment assistance, visit the **Employment** tab in your digital portal.
5. Read the NEW Relocation Guide under the **Settling In** tab in your digital portal to learn about your soon-to-be NEW-aligned neighbors, shops, workplaces, and social hubs.

Completion of the relocation qualification survey is required for all active NEW Party participants. Failure to complete the survey and comply with relocation summons will result in **excommunication** from the party and, in some cases, fines totalling up to the amount of previous relocation rent and moving assistance granted by the NEW Party.

0A.10

THE COMPANY BEE

HALEY RICH

An announcement blared from the factory just as I started my walk home from a 12-hour shift, disrupting my peace as it bounced throughout the community. I, along with most of the other human workers here wrote code for the repair robots to fix the line bots. They were so much faster than people when they were working, but that didn't happen often.

"Tired of the cloud letting you down? Zing's new data technology will protect all your important digital assets with one easy plan. Upgrade to-."

A yellow bee flew around my head and easily distracted me from the droning voice on the recorded announcement. I hadn't seen a bee in years, but I heard this ad daily. Pretty much everyone at the factory had upgraded last month; I don't know why they kept running that ad. I stopped, and almost without thinking, giddily twirled in the warm February breeze, following the bee as it spun. I loved this time of year. February was nearly the only month I could actually enjoy the walk home or spending any time outdoors — all the others were unbearably hot.

Enjoying the moment, I paused to tap my temple and navigated to my memories. Scrolling back 20 years, I brought up one of my favorites from before I lived here. My parents, sister, and I sat on the front porch of our house for hours, left our phones inside, and just enjoyed the June night. That was back when you could sit outside in June. My dad asked, "But what if work calls?" My mom just chuckled, "Who cares. You'll be there tomorrow morning anyway." He took a deep breath, grabbed the box of chess, two beers, and - Zing could not load your memory at this time. Please try again later or check your account for errors. Weird. That had never happened to me before. I swiped my eyes from left to right to get back to my main menu, then quickly searched for the network settings. Good signal, no reported network outages or planned maintenance...hmm. I restarted the software and reopened it, but when it loaded everything was greyed out. This was annoying, but Zing was usually pretty on top of it when it came to fixing bugs. I'm sure somebody already reported this, I'll give it an hour and check again.

My focus turned back to my physical surroundings. To my surprise the bee was still there, buzzing and spinning in the sun's reflection. I felt a subtle sense of nostalgia, maybe even a little bit of jealousy for the life of that bee. It spent its days looking at plants, sunsets, and honeycombs with deep textures – not flat walls with Zing's logo plastered on them. It also worked and lived in a community that creates food for everyone to share – not money for a company. Oh well, like it or not I'm not a bee, and I should be getting home to see if that memory bug is fixed yet.

I kept walking home, hoping maybe I'd run into one of my neighbors so I could tell them about the bee sighting. Pretty much everyone that lived in this section of the Zing community were also coders for the company, but we didn't really see each other that often at work or in the neighborhood thanks to the long shifts and odd hours. I went inside my trailer and sat on the couch. It puffed with dust as I plopped down, pointing out my lack of cleaning. I tried to take care of things around here; I really did. I wanted to have pride in owning my own place, but it was hard enough to keep up with work and try to maintain some kind of social life, let alone maintain a home - even if it was small. With the world constantly changing, having something that felt like it was mine and I had some control over it gave me a sense of security. That meant even more to me now that my childhood home and that front porch where my family used to hang out were gone, bulldozed by Zing to build their next big warehouse a few years ago. Truth is, I'm thankful I was able to get a job and own a house at a time when people, like my Dad for instance, had been losing theirs left and right. Even so, it still felt weird living in a planned community that was essentially a living billboard for Zing.

I tapped my temple to view my notifications and watched them start popping up after Zing's logo danced around for a few seconds, hovering over the news flashing in the background. I scrolled. ZingTok videos. A text from my mom. The usual extreme weather alerts. A notification from my Zing memory bank. A new game release. Wait - a notification from my Zing memory bank?

"Your subscription payment is due and your electronic funds transfer has been declined. To continue accessing your memories, please connect a new form of payment or report to the front office by 8pm tonight and tomorrow for overtime shifts."

I glanced at the clock in the corner of my projected vision. 7:42pm. I stared forward. My eyes focused on the wall behind the flashing news alerts and ZingTok videos. Grey. Empty. Slightly textured. I looked closer, trying to see if somehow, I could make the texture into a honeycomb shape, to imagine what it would feel to be the bee. I tried, but it just looked like lines on a wall. I sighed, took a deep breath, much different than the ones my dad used to take, stood up, and stepped toward the door.

0A.11

GENETIC WEALTH

GRAYSON LIGHT

"What do you mean I don't have it?"

"I'm sorry Montgomery. It looks like you weren't selected."

"Well run it again, this shouldn't be that hard. Unbelievable"

Simply put, she was flabbergasted. Well, her and the rest of the grandchildren. Ever since their grandfather Gerard died, both his family and business have been in turmoil. For the grandkids specifically, one question weighed heavily in their minds: who's the heir to the business? Moreover, with his 10 billion dollars up for grabs, who gets the money? In the old days this would have been a matter of pen and paper, with a bunch of lawyers and grandpa in one room discussing who gets what, all taken down in ink. Not here.

First, a little background: ever since storing data in DNA got cheap and CRISPR editing went mainstream, the rich have founded an entire industry: genetically designing their children. It started off with editing out birth defects or just making kids taller, but then changes became much more unnatural. After years of testing, the rich began editing the family crest into the DNA of their embryos, with the hopes of making a child who's 'branded' with the family name in each cell. This was meant to guard familial wealth: sure, maybe back in the day a mistress or supposed lost child could legally win some cash off a rich family. But now? So what if you have the same last name! It's about what's in your genes, or really, if you were special enough to have the family moniker put inside you. It's literal generational wealth.

However, that's not why we're here. This is about Gerard's will, and most importantly, his paranoia with it. Its 'impermanence' as he called it troubled him deeply, and so he hatched a plan.

"Leave it to Gerard to invest in some new, experimental crap. Was this what he was doing when no one could find him for, like, a decade? And testing this on his own grandkids, no less!" lamented Victoria, Montgomery's sister.

Gerard's lawyer had just finished explaining her client's plan to the grandchildren. When Gerard was elderly, he was fearful his will would be changed against his wishes. So, he found a more permanent solution. A few years back, Gerard brought the grandchildren into a local hospital for what they *thought* was a test for genetic skin cancer. Something routine, nothing to worry about. However, what he was really doing was taking samples of each grandchild's skin, using CRISPR to revise their cells with their respective parts of his will, and then discreetly implanting the revised cells back into their bodies. Those cells then multiplied and now we're here, each grandchild with their bit of his fortune secretly inside of them, unalterable.

"Alright everybody, settle down. I know this new type of will is... confusing. But it's our job to interpret and act upon your grandfather's wishes. Here, gather around the computer. It looks like Alexander's share is about to come up."

Alexander's sweating. Looking around nervously, he eyes his relatives. He knows he isn't getting much: the family screw-up usually doesn't get the fortune. The computer finished its calculations, lighting the screen in Times New Roman:

FOR MY DEAREST ALEXANDER, I LEAVE 3 BILLION DOLLARS FOR...

and that first sentence was all they needed to voice their doubts.

"Three billion dollars?? Absolutely no way! I told you we couldn't trust this stuff. Sorry Alex, but no WAY Gerard left you that much." said Montgomery.

"Yeah, I'm calling bs too," Victoria added. *"Monty and I both got 2 billion, and let's face it, WE are the future of the company. Hell, he left US as the interim CEOs!"*

An argument immediately broke out. Eventually, though, as the words lost their edge and everyone settled into an uneasy silence, Alexander brought up an unnoticed point.

"There's a problem, guys."

"Yeah no shit, Sherlock," chimed Montgomery.

"No no, hear me out. I got three billion. You guys both got two, so adding it all up, we collectively have seven. We know grandpa had about ten billion in the bank, so ... where's the rest of it? No matter who gets the money, where is it?"

The lawyer sighed, as if this was expected. Everyone turned to her as she put her hands on her knees and got up, ready to drop a bombshell.

"Yeah, about that... Remember how you said your grandfather had some unknown spots in his history?"

"Yes..." said Montgomery.

"Well, here's the deal. Do you recall the VR boom when you all got those new, two-part ID cards? Well, while Gerard didn't initially mean to, he ... he used it to have an affair. He unexpectedly connected with a woman in Mongolia. Very long story short, they met in real life and had kids. That's what he was doing all those years you couldn't contact him."

"Oh my god..." muttered Victoria.

"Hold on, there's more," the lawyer said. *"His other children have wills in the same format, and the information between families is NOT consistent. For instance, Victoria and Montgomery were left to run the business in your wills, but he gave the same job to an extramarital child, Chuluun, in his will. And the money? They were given six billion, leaving us three in the hole. Strangely enough, he chose to leave his other children unedited, so it's even more unclear who legally should get what because they aren't branded. Simply put, my team and I are just lost."*

Victoria jumped in: *"Hold on. Gerard chose some other family before us for his will?"*

Montgomery joined too: *"Yeah, how could Gerard prioritize some imperfect family over the ones he had a hand in designing? We'll figure out the money and all but ... damn. I need a minute."*

"I'm sorry, but we don't have a minute," the lawyer said, pointing outside to a crowded table. *"They're here. It's about time you all met."*

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