

FUTURE NEWS

TO CONNECT, TO INFORM AND TO INSPIRE

IN THIS EDITION

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Building a ‘Good’ Anthropocene from the Bottom Up

by Elena Bennett

Over the last few years a determined cast of characters in academia are aiming to identify paths to a good Anthropocene—Anthropocene being the closest thing there is to common shorthand for this span of human-dominated planetary history unfolding around us.

One such researcher is Elena M. Bennett, an ecosystem ecologist and geographer at McGill University. She’s the lead author of “Bright Spots: seeds of a good Anthropocene,” published in the October edition of *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. The paper describes an effort to identify and propagate social and environmental projects that could reverse a centuries-long pattern in which human prosperity has come at the cost of substantial harm to ecosystems and excluded communities.



It feels like we’re bombarded, almost daily, with negative visions of the future. That negativity about the future of the environment drags us down, makes it difficult for us to talk to our kids about the future and the environment, and generally threatens to keep us from doing the work we need to do to make the planet safer, better, healthier, and more just.

Scientists, in particular, are drawn to problems and problem solving, and

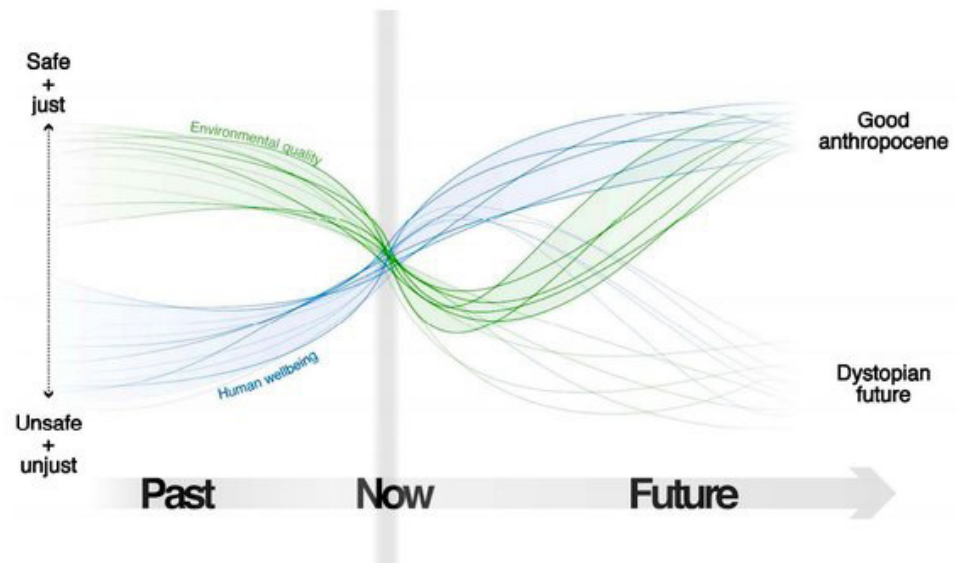
so science often focuses on describing and understanding problems. This can leave society uninspired, with little sense of potential solutions and with no blueprint for the transformations required to solve the truly big and important problems we face. A few years ago, we helped gather together a group of scientists to try a different approach.

Supported by the international Future Earth research initiative, we initiated a project designed to solicit, explore, and develop a suite of alternative, plausible visions of Good Anthropocenes, positive visions of futures that are socially and ecologically desirable, just and sustainable. Unlike previous scientific efforts to build scenarios for future change, which typically rely on structures organized from the top down, we’re building these global pathways from the bottom up, by crowdsourcing a rich data base of “bright spots,” real places that demonstrate one or more elements of a positive future that might serve as seeds of a good Anthropocene. As William Gibson has said: “The future is already here — it’s just not very evenly distributed yet.” Could we find examples of futures we wanted that were already in existence. And by studying how these examples came about, could we understand how to create further transformation?

Thus far, we’ve built a database of over 500 of these bright spots or seeds of good Anthropocenes. They include projects that link human health to healthy forests, such as the Health In Harmony project in Indonesia, or, closer to home, the Hudson River Valley’s Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture and its Young Farmers Conference.

The Health in Harmony project provides free or low cost health care in exchange for commitments to protect local forest, with funding provided by donors who aim to improve human and forest health. The Young Farmers Conference works by connecting young farmers to each other as well as other experts to help them overcome common hurdles in farming.

These bright spots can then be used to generate creative, detailed scenarios about transformations toward a better Anthropocene.



Existing global narratives about the future tend to be either dystopian visions of collapse and hardship, poorly articulated pathways to utopian fantasies, or stories that overestimate the power of conventional strategies to create real change. The resulting scenarios are very similar to the status quo but magically end in better futures. We aim to use the bright spots in groups to help build scenarios of futures that are at once realistic and positive.

We cannot build what we cannot imagine. Creating visions of positive futures is important work. And this is only the beginning- we hope to open up to a much wider visioning process. And of course, seeds of a better future won't make a difference unless they can grow and be widely distributed. You can learn more by watching a video presentation on the project by clicking [here](#).



Started in 2013 by urban farmers from townships around Cape Town, Tyisa Nabanye (“feed the others” in Xhosa) is a garden based on the principles of permaculture. TYISA NABANYE COLLECTIVE

The original article appeared in The New York Times on 6 October 2016 and is reproduced with permission.

FUTURISTS IN ACTION

HOBSON BAY CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY VISION AUGUST 2016

by Paul Higgins, Emergent Futures



Paul Higgins

Paul was the expert futurist for a workshop process on August the 27th for the Hobson Bay City Council Community Vision.

Each outside expert was requested to prepare 5 key insights for the community participants to discuss in small groups. The five that Paul prepared (with key points) are as follows:



Driverless Cars

Driverless cars are closer than we think. Uber has announced a trial of their car service in Pittsburgh using driverless vehicles, and Ford has announced that they will be rolling out full scale production of driverless cars for a driverless fleet in 2021. Driverless cars can change the urban landscape by reducing the need for car ownership. A council owned fleet can be part of an integrated public transport solution that takes pressure off other public transport. Parking in busy areas can be eliminated freeing up space for bike lanes, pedestrians and urban parks. Reductions in road trauma have a social benefit but also free up hospital and medical services for other uses/reduce the need for future capital investment.

Localised Solar Markets

Solar costs are rapidly falling. Trials are being carried out in community solar grids using smart software systems (Blockchain grid to let neighbours trade solar power in Australia). Integrated solar community power should be part of the response to climate change and costs.





BlockChain Enabled Democracy

The BlockChain is the software that underpins Bitcoin. Trials are going on all over the world on the use of the system as a distributed public ledger that allows us to do all sorts of things such as voting and trading. Such systems can be used to continue the involvement in community visions on an ongoing basis rather than as a one off exercise.



Drone Mapping

As the costs of drones fall and their capabilities rise we can make sophisticated 3d maps of our environments. Combined with virtual reality we can use this in our local community to provide a much better interaction with the community on planning decisions.

 An infographic titled "The Future of Work" with a blue background. It contains several statistics and skill requirements:

- Two thirds** of all employment will require college education **By 2018.**
- 40%** of companies have job openings for at least **6 months** because they can't find qualified candidates.
- 21 million** jobs will need to be filled to reach full employment **in 2020.**
- The projected shortage of college graduates to fulfill these jobs: **1.5 million**
- WHY?** because only **34 percent** of the population will have earned a bachelor's degree.
- Most in demand skills:** Sense-making, Transdisciplinarity, Flexibility/adaptability, Cross-cultural literacy.

Future of Work

The history of automation of work has been the elimination of repetitive tasks. We are now moving into an era where more and more non-repetitive tasks can be performed by robots and artificial intelligence. This provides opportunities to reduce the costs of council services while providing greater value to the community. A wider question is what does that look like for society as a whole and the local region in particular. What does it do to the industries of the future, the employment of the future and levels of unemployment.

The presentation focused on the development customer value propositions and testing them for the future as well as a value mapping process for looking at all the capabilities to supply the value proposition and where change is occurring.

A copy of the slides accompanying this presentation can be found [here](#).

FUTURISTS IN ACTION

FROM THE GOLD COAST TO GEELONG HOW CITIES ARE SHAPING VISIONS OF THEIR FUTURES

by Colin Russo



Colin Russo

“Our Future”, a year-long consultation process about a long-term vision for the City of Geelong, has begun. City of Greater Geelong CEO Kelvin Spiller engaged the first UNESCO chair of futures studies, Sohail Inayatullah, to kick-start the project in September.

Spiller, who has produced outcomes for city visioning initiatives on the Sunshine Coast, describes Our Future as a process of “presenting new perceptions, future directions, identifying used futures and new scenarios”. In a rapidly changing world, citizens use scenario thinking to gain insights into how cities can create alternative possibilities and solutions.

How does industry see the future?

Inayatullah helped workshops of industry professionals develop various industry scenarios:

Geelong’s emerging futures emphasise its great coastal beauty and its people’s strengths. The city remains small compared to the Gold Coast although, with 229,000 people, Greater Geelong is still among the largest of 561 local government areas in Australia. It is attractive, scenic and touristy. The city’s tranquil bay and marina, picturesque vineyards and proximity attract holidaymakers from Melbourne.

Artificial intelligence (AI) futures open up a journey on the digital highway to build crowdsourced ideas, new funding models and business start-ups. Geelong’s traditional motor vehicle manufacturing culture combines with a spirit of innovation and global enterprise. The city promotes, evolves and services the introduction of driverless cars, the gaming industry, smart technologies and robotics.

Geelong’s population density, growing diversity, economic mix and proximity to Melbourne’s demographic richness support it as a social and education city. Geelong increases its transport and connectedness to its unique destinations to attract wide interests, new worker profiles and residents seeking a “sea change” from Melbourne’s inner suburbs. Residents network with local business owners and workers to generate services and programs for regional neighbours and Melbourne’s markets.

What does the community want?

Guided by Inayatullah, a community interactive session used metaphors to bring home a message of continual transition. He describes the use of metaphors as being a decisive factor in shifting narrative strategy:

Geelong’s history of innovation includes the development of the world’s first ute and the first industrial refrigerator. This history suggests Geelong could provide services to global niche markets.

The community also suggested transitions from costly and unnatural botanic gardens to green bionic gardens – sprawling rooftop gardens, indoor gardens and rainwater systems flowing into indigenous gardens. Gardens would beautify municipal roads and infrastructure.

Another suggested transition was from being a “dormitory of Melbourne” to being a retreat for Melbourne holidaymakers and a “hive” location for its best thinkers to create their futures.



Navigating different growth scenarios

The challenge for Geelong is to navigate through growth scenarios such as:

Sustainable growth: five new high-rises emerge to support low-level tourism, conference accommodation and a burgeoning education and health precinct.

Overdevelopment: an oversupply of residential and holiday maker apartments become difficult to fill, halting investment. Population waves are required to sustain rates and market base.

Underdevelopment: Gold Coast's rapid growth raises questions about Geelong's slow growth and missed opportunities to develop high-rises alongside celebratory events packages. These packages rely on transport and tourism infrastructure and include the building of stadiums. The strength of underdevelopment, however, is that Geelong remains a clean, green and historically beautiful seaside city.

Negative growth: collapse results in generations of hardship.

An outcome of Gold Coast's 2037 vision is its Health and Knowledge Precinct. The 200-hectare site has generated more than A\$5 billion in investment and is now linked by light rail to the city's tourism centres.

Spiller noted that Geelong's Our Future is continuing a 175-year process of reinvention. He hailed transformational metaphors that saw the city as more than a technology hub, potentially providing a deep commitment to networking to create a Silicon Valley. These have led to visions of transforming from a "resort city" to a "city of health and wellness", from an "industrial, agricultural city" to a creative lifestyle, and from a "sleepy hollow" to an "emerging and sustainable city".

Time for feedback on Geelong's future

Our Future extends over five stages, with the final three to begin in 2017.

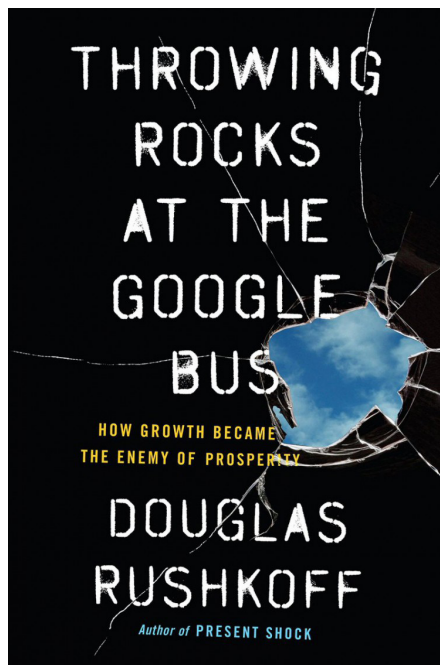
From January to March, the community can comment on ideas presented to date. Stages four and five will provide vision documents and conclude with an exhibition of the foresight journey the city has created.

Book Review

by Charles Brass – Chair, futures foundation

THROWING ROCKS AT THE GOOGLE BUS: How Growth Became the Enemy of Prosperity

by Douglas Rushkoff



“The digital economy is a house of cards built on a fiction that many continue to believe in.”

The title of this book reflects a protest by some citizens of San Francisco who felt they were being unfairly crowded out when the Google Corporation began using publicly funded bus shelters to collect its workers on its private bus line to take them from the city to Silicon Valley. Rushkoff considers this emblematic of a number of similar protests by people who feel that the so-called digital economy is leaving them behind.

His main argument is that the digital economy is a house of cards built on a fiction that many continue to believe in. Although it is creating many new millionaires and billionaires (whom Rushkoff is quite happy for us to admire) the digital economy is also displacing millions of others who are increasingly complaining about their inability to even eke out a living.

He points out that the insane pursuit of so-called unicorns

(start-ups that are valued at more than one billion dollars when they first go public) is both distorting venture capital funding and distracting from the huge social value that can be created by new digital technologies.

For example, he compares Uber (the ride sharing service) with Meetup (the network through which local groups organise and meet each other). Both are global digital platforms and both are making money. Uber, however, is doing so by displacing many existing systems and extracting monopoly profits for a small coterie of investors. Meetup on the other hand is facilitating local connections and its revenue is dependent on more people believing that it is creating value for them.

Rushkoff begins by looking at the many ways in which non-human technology is displacing people at work and concludes (contrary to the apparent views of most politicians) that this trend will only continue. Rather than bemoan this job destruction he notes that: “We employ people because otherwise we have no way to justify letting them share in a bounty created by their labor” (p57) and “...if we can separate the notion of employment from that of making a valuable contribution to society, a whole lot of new possibilities open up for us” (p57). Much of the rest of the book is devoted to exploring just what these new possibilities might mean for our future.

Rushkoff points out that the corporations that are so admired by politicians for their

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“The current system is skewed in favour of people who can make money out of money.”

wealth and job creation ability were created as part of “... an economic system designed by thirteenth-century Moorish accountants looking for a way to preserve the aristocracy of Europe has worked as promised. It turned the marketplace into one giant debtors’ prison” (p133). And he notes that if they don’t seem to be doing what we want then: *“The fact that corporations were invented should alone empower us to reinvent them to our liking”* (p70 - emphasis in original).

Like other modern authors¹ Rushkoff focuses an entire chapter (Ch3) of his book on money and the financial system. He points out that the current system is skewed in favour of people who can make money out of money and away from the majority of us who simply want to use money to transact our business. He points out that there are many potential ways to redress this balance; from creating community currencies to removing centralised control over the money system (as Bitcoin and blockchain technologies do). He points out that local banks (of which Australia has a growing network thanks to the Bendigo Bank Community Bank initiative) have a significant role to play in facilitating these changes.

Rushkoff’s fourth chapter is called “Investing without Exiting” and explores ways in which money can be invested to create both financial and social capital. He discusses crowd funding ventures such as KickStarter, IndieGogo and Quirky which seek to democratise fundraising and instead of making huge profits (or huge losses if they

fail) for their initial investors instead seek to help people gain funds from their future customers. He also explains how microfinancing ventures that were once restricted to developing countries are now spreading into the lower socioeconomic levels of the developed world.

Finally in Chapter 5 Rushkoff looks at what he calls “Digital Distribution” by which he means “the widest possible distribution of the means of production as preconditions for a healthy marketplace” (p231 – emphasis in original). “Workers” he says “should own the tools they use, and their contribution to an enterprise should earn them an ownership stake in the business itself (p231).

He finishes in the last few pages by identifying the evidence that exists (albeit nascently) that this renaissance (as he calls it) is taking place. He does this by drawing parallels with the changes that took place in the Medieval Renaissance (including artists discovering how to include perspective in their paintings and hence providing multiple points of view) and suggests that while what he is calling for is “a big ask” it must be achieved if we are all to continue flourishing on our spaceship earth.

¹ see for example:

“The Future of Money - Creating new wealth, work and a wiser world”, by Bernard Lietaer - Random House, 2001

“Postcapitalism – A guide to our future”; by Paul Mason – Allen Lane, 2015

Signals in the Noise

15 OF THE 50 BIG IDEAS FOR 2017: WHAT TO WATCH IN THE YEAR AHEAD

by Laura Lorenzetti Soper



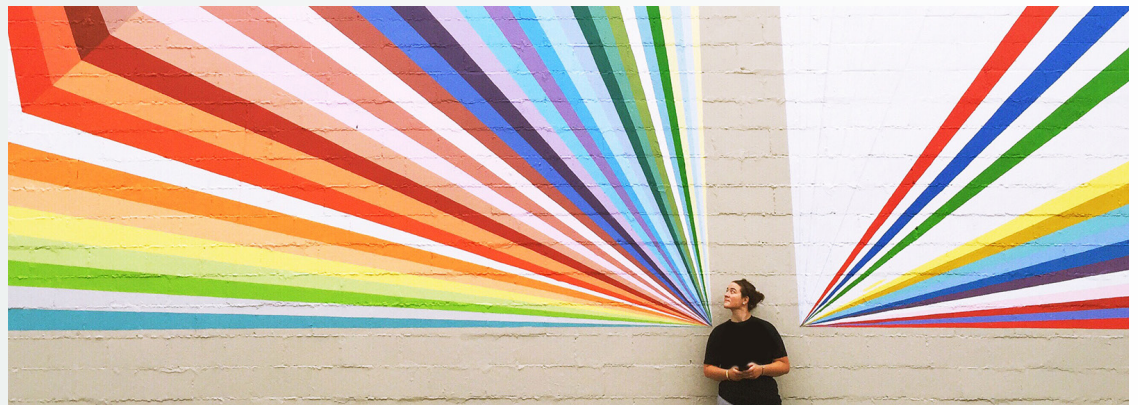
Let's be honest: We're ready for 2016 to end. After a year of polarizing politics, devastating natural disasters and a growing number of global refugees as wars wage on, we want to hope that bigger—and possibly better—things lay ahead in the new year.

To get a sense of what's next, LinkedIn editors reached out to some of our most prescient writers—our Top Voices, Influencers and members of our Next Wave list—as well as other people who inspire us to find out what they're predicting in the coming year.

Their responses are encouraging, humorous and sobering. Some are ambitious, possibly overly so: We'll finally fix the internet, ridding it of trolls and anonymity. Others are specific and practical: Instagram will debut

clickable links. Surely, not all of these ideas will materialize, but the vision and sentiment behind them is worth reading—and working towards. If it takes five years instead of one, for example, to transplant the first pig kidney into a human, we'll take it.

So, without further ado, here are the 50 big ideas for 2017:



1. THE IPO MARKET SNAPS BACK.

This year saw the fewest number of companies make their debut on stock exchanges since 2009, according to Jay R. Ritter, a professor at University of Florida's Warrington College of Business. The broad post-election rally — the S&P 500 is up 5 percent — should make companies a lot more willing to sell their shares. The big test: Snap Inc., the parent of Snapchat, said to have confidentially filed its papers for a \$25 billion IPO as early as March. If it's successful, it could clear the way for other high-profile unicorns, like Airbnb, to follow. Ritter's also watching the energy industry, rebounding from the glut in oil prices. Where he's less optimistic: biotech. While those companies drove IPOs in the past couple of years, the Valeant-induced scrutiny on drug prices "kind of choked off the enthusiasm," he says.

Signals in the Noise

15 OF THE 50 BIG IDEAS FOR 2017: WHAT TO WATCH IN THE YEAR AHEAD

2. SOCIAL MEDIA GETS HELD ACCOUNTABLE...

“It’s unclear just how much the outcome of this presidential election was impacted by the fake news controversy surrounding Facebook and Twitter. What is clear, however, is that social media companies will be held more accountable for the content posted to their sites, and in 2017 they will have to find the sweet spot between free speech and censorship,” predicts Mahesh Vellanki, an investor at Redpoint Ventures.

3. ...AND MEDIA ISN’T LET OFF THE HOOK, EITHER.

2016 featured the rise and ravages of fake news, and the coming new year will bring a radical rethinking of where we get our information and how, predicts Top Voice and best-selling author Ryan Holiday. “The sudden awareness of fake news, the endless political scandals and conflict, fatigue with polarization will mean that people are going to ask themselves: Why am I consuming all this?” says Holiday.

4. THE MIDDLE OF THE U.S. WILL BECOME THE “SAUDI ARABIA OF WIND.”



“States like Iowa have embraced wind energy and off-shore wind turbines are fast becoming commercially viable,” says T. Boone Pickens, chairman and CEO of BP Capital. Wind and solar prices are going to continue to drop in 2017, making it even easier to switch to these more renewable sources of power, he predicts. That’s already under way: Iowa approved the largest wind farm in U.S. history in September. It will include 1,000 turbines and be able to produce 2,000 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 800,000 homes in the state. *Read his full 2017 energy predictions here.*

5. GET READY TO SEE TRUMP IN LOTS OF FINE PRINT.

In M&A paperwork, lawyers are slipping a new word into those pages and pages of documents surrounding deals: Trump. The president elect is seen as unpredictable in corporate America, so legal teams are already adding him as a “risk factor” in documents outlining potential acquisitions, a new twist in corporate boilerplate.

6. WATCH OUT, MUSIC LABELS: STREAMING SERVICES WILL BECOME STAR-MAKERS.

“We’d like to be a home where artists can do their thing,” Apple Music head Jimmy Iovine told *Rolling Stone* in June. And with Chance the Rapper’s streaming-only album *Coloring Book* up for several Grammys, Iovine’s comment isn’t just a warm-and-fuzzy sentiment—it’s a roadmap. 2017 will be the year streaming services start to seriously embrace the other half of the music equation: not just distribution, but cultivation of talent. They may not replace labels anytime soon (especially as labels are finally “getting it” with streaming), but Chance’s success, and the numerous exclusives we’ve seen in 2016, are just the first, tiniest steps into this world. Tech giants with deep

“Social media companies will have to find the sweet spot between free speech and censorship.”

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pockets like Apple obviously have the power to support artist development, but Spotify (even without buying SoundCloud) has also expressed interest in owning more of the artist-fan connection and amping up its own discovery engines. This time next year, expect to see Spotify and Apple Music do to the Grammys what Amazon and Netflix have done to the Emmys.

7. THE YEAR OF THE VR PLATFORM WARS.

“2016 was the year VR reached the ‘rest of us.’ 2017 will be the year of the platform wars in VR, when we’ll begin to see a winner emerge,” predicts Lightspeed Venture partner Alex Taussig. “Today it’s not clear who that will be, but Sony is ahead by some measures.

8. “WORRY-ITIS” WILL BECOME A MEDICAL CONDITION.

“Worry-itis, like its close cousin anxiety, is what you “catch” when you feel out of control about your future and there are no answers in sight,” says Top Voice Julie Kliger. That feeling has been heightened since the U.S. election. (The American Psychological Association says more than half of all Americans are under significant stress since then.) That is likely going to continue into the new year, predicts Kliger as “uncertainty about people’s health care coverage, costs of care and access to health care, will lead to an epidemic of stress and anxiety. Also on the rise will be innovative ways to get health coverage outside traditional means, providing a ray of hope as we move into and through 2017.

9. THE RETURN OF THE EXPERTS: ECONOMISTS STRIKE BACK.

“Economists have found themselves out of favor with populist politicians over the last year, classed as out of touch with reality and having their forecasts constantly criticized. However, 2017 promises to be a year of disruption with the world in the midst of an economic transformation and the need for high quality economic advice is greater than ever,” predicts Mark Gregory, a UK Top Voice and chief economist for the UK and Ireland at EY.

10. DRONES GET JOBS FOR REAL THIS TIME.

“Commercial drones will show explosive growth as an emerging sector as insurers, farmers, construction companies, resorts, energy and telco providers embrace the use of autonomous flying vehicles and replace human inspection,” predicts Lightspeed Venture partner John Vrionis.

11. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS GAIN THE UPPER HAND.

For all the talk about America’s need to roll up its sleeves and start building again, far less is said about this: We’re running out of people to do the building. Take residential real estate. New home construction is now at a nine-year high, yet 76 percent of builders reported concerns about finding help, according to a survey released earlier this year. “Construction costs have skyrocketed due to lack of labor,” says John Burns, the CEO at John Burns Real Estate Consulting and a LinkedIn Influencer. “Surging retirement by those born in the 1950s will make this worse, and any tightening of immigration policy or spending on infrastructure will make the shortage even more acute.” What it means: It’ll cost more to build a home. It may take longer. But for in-demand contractors benefitting from higher wages and more work? Next year looks pretty sweet.

12. A FORTUNE 100 COMPANY DECIDES TO BECOME A DO-GOODER.

“Large companies are increasingly under pressure from employees, customers, and society to create value for more than just their shareholders. For decades, business was allowed to tax environmental, social, and societal resources in pursuit of profit.

*“2017
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A new generation of consumers and employees are demanding that business ladder to more than simple profit, but rather, have a core purpose—one that makes the world a little (or a lot) better place,” says Top Voice and Influencer John Battelle. “It’s this pressure that led Unilever to redefine its brand as ‘the trustmark of sustainability,’ and it’s this pressure that led Aetna to commit to a \$16 minimum wage. Turns out, there’s already a corporate governance structure that encourages this approach to running a company—the Public Benefit Corporation, or B Corp. Still a relatively new construct, the B Corp. movement will gain a significant boost in 2017 when a Fortune 100 company announces it is formally exploring a move to B Corp. status.”

13. SMALL FINANCE WILL GIVE BIG BANKS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY

“Financial institutions will increasingly lose market share to online lenders and non-banks (i.e. non-banks already do over 50% of all home loans in the US). As a result, the large incumbent financial institutions will get more aggressive with their expansion into online lending,” predicts Louis Beryl, the founder and CEO at Earnest, an online lender itself. Watch for this to play out in three ways: Banks could launch their own services, like Goldman Sachs did with its Marcus online bank, aimed at consumers. They could strike partnerships, as JPMorgan Chase did with lender OnDeck. Or they could simply pull out their wallets, buying some of the up-and-coming names in finance.

14. 80 PERCENT OF SINGLES WON'T GO ON ONE DATE.



“Why date when I can remain single and get sex whenever I want it?”

Paul Carrick Brunson, one of LinkedIn’s Top Voices who also works as a matchmaker, says the sheer number of dating apps is creating chaos. “Users have what they believe are so many options that they rarely connect with the options they do have.” His prediction: The majority of singles will spend 2017 swiping — and hooking up. But dates? “As so many people have told me: ‘Why date when I can remain single and get sex whenever I want it?’”

15. THE ODDS ARE HIGH THAT A RECESSION IS ON ITS WAY.

“The current economic expansion will start 2017 at the ripe old age of 90 months old, longer than the post World War II average of nearly 60 months, but still not in the top three longest on record – that honor goes to 1991-2001 (120 months), 1961-1969 (103 months) and 1982-1990 (92 months),” says Top Voice and Influencer Jill Schlesinger. “The sheer length of the period may be why before the election, a Wall Street Journal survey of economists found that the odds of a recession occurring within the next four years at nearly 60 percent.”

This article was originally published on LinkedIn and is reproduced with permission. The full article, including the remaining 35 predictions can be found [here](#).