

FUTURE NEWS

TO CONNECT, TO INFORM AND TO INSPIRE

IN THIS EDITION

Why shifting from prediction to foresight can help us plan for future disruption

by Roger Spitz
(page 2)

Futurists in Action Foresight at McDonalds

by Joanna Lapore
(page 6)

BOOK REVIEW

Bridge Makers

Becoming a Citizen Futurist

by April Reagan
(page 15)

Signals in the Noise Navigating the Uncharted Future Ten Predictions for 2030

by Dr Mark van Rijenam
(page 16)



WHY SHIFTING FROM PREDICTION TO FORESIGHT CAN HELP US PLAN FOR FUTURE DISRUPTION

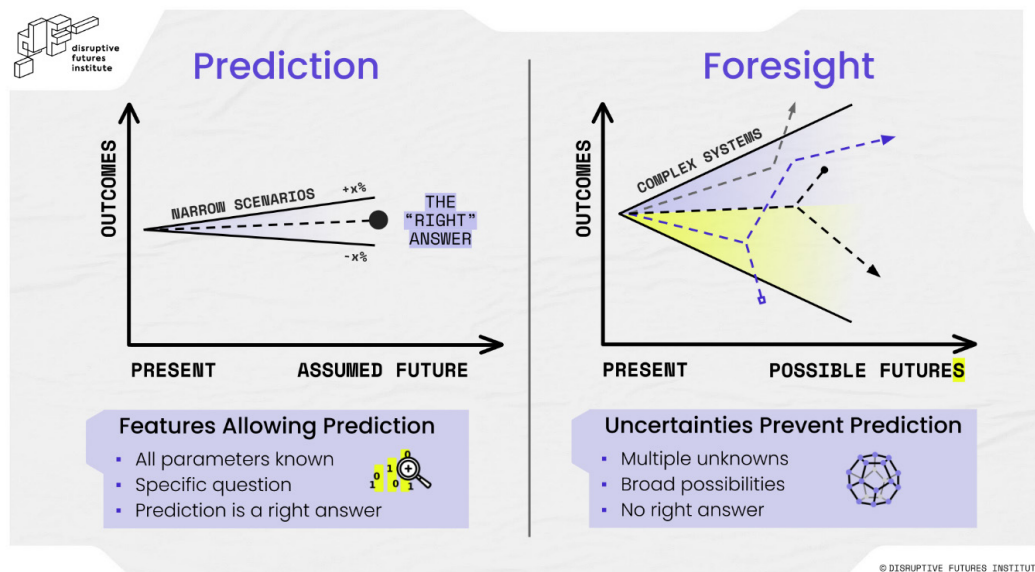
by Roger Spitz

- **As the world becomes more complex, foresight methodologies account for a greater set of possible futures.**
- **Scenario development, a foresight methodology, is an alternative to prediction which can help map new possibilities.**
- **Foresight may predict possible futures but more importantly, it allows for preparation.**

As the complexities of our world grow, the inherent uncertainty of the future intensifies.

In 1982, John Naisbitt defined megatrends as large, transformative processes with global reach and dramatic impact. While analyzing trends of any size can seem to yield insights into the future, they share a common weakness: trends are little more than rearview mirrors.

Extrapolating trends is dangerous, especially when they compound flawed assumptions. With time, assumptions magnify; wrong assumptions cascade and blow up.



SYSTEMIC DISRUPTION MARKS THE END OF TRENDS

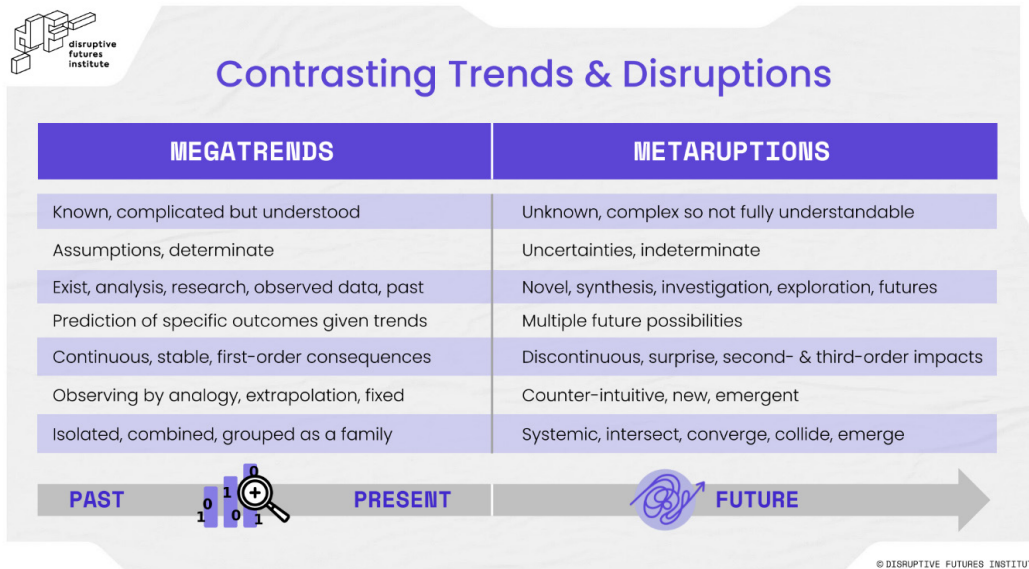
In contrast to trends, disruptions are discontinuous. Systemic disruption - the cascade of constant disruptions across our increasingly complex and hyperconnected world - forces us to confront unpredictability.

With systemic disruption, the inability to understand the implications of initial impacts is why changes become apparent only in hindsight. As there may be no measurable data to substantiate our understanding, imagination outshines analysis.

METARUPTIONS DRIVE SYSTEMIC DISRUPTION

To contrast Naisbitt’s megatrends, the Disruptive Futures Institute coined the term “metaruptions”. A metaruption is a multidimensional family of systemic disruptions.

Metaruptions cause widespread, self-perpetuating effects that extend beyond their initial disruptions. As early changes spill over, impacts combine, propagate, and modify other elements within the system. Imagining the interplay of metaruptions is a creative endeavour, not a number-crunching exercise.

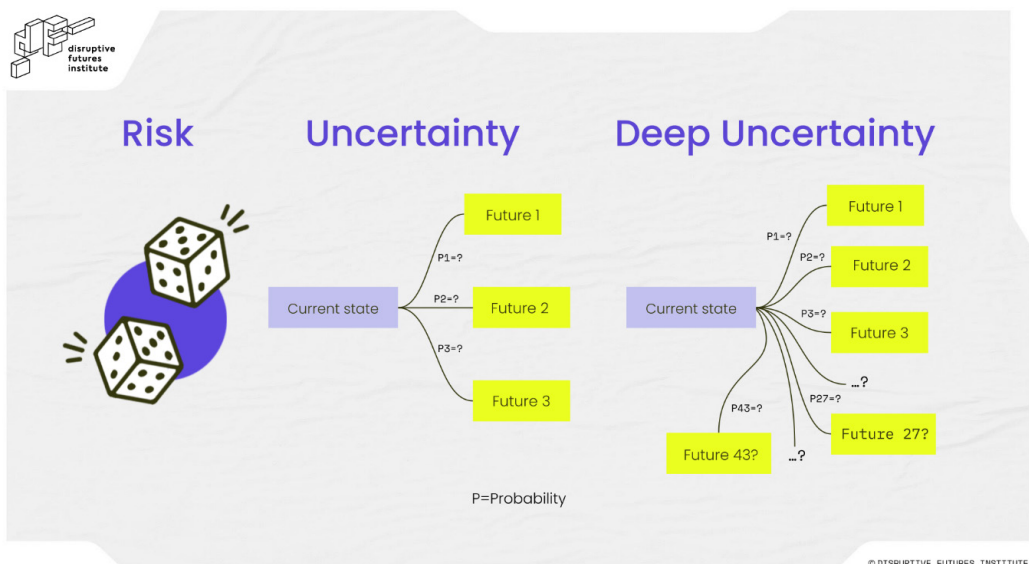


DOES GOOD JUDGMENT ENABLE PREDICTION?

In 2015, Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner found that amateur forecasters were often more accurate than experts. Their book, Superforecasting, was based on data from the Good Judgment Project (GJP). GJP’s research found that certain people (“superforecasters”) are extremely skilled at assigning probabilities to possible outcomes, because they take different perspectives, balance conflicting arguments, and update their beliefs.

But prediction is inherently speculative. So to understand why superforecasters are so skilled, we must reframe the degrees of uncertainty - and the nature of predictability itself.

REFRAMING PREDICTABILITY



Evaluating predictability requires an understanding of the degrees of certainty:

- **Risk - most predictable:** All parameters, outcomes, and likelihoods are knowable.,
- **Uncertainty - some predictability:** The nature of future events are known, but their probabilities are incalculable. Here, superforecasters thrive.
- **Deep uncertainty - least predictable:** Stakeholders cannot agree on the nature of potential future states, let alone their probabilities. Possible outcomes are numerous and unknowable; as events occur, their interplay with other dynamic scenarios may be unimaginable.

DEEP UNCERTAINTY THWARTS PREDICTABILITY

When parameters are known, we (and the superforecasters among us) can venture into predictions. However, in deep uncertainty, countless unknown variables hinder predictability.

The most challenging aspect of prognostication is that our complex world is deeply uncertain, and becoming increasingly so. Answering narrow, probability-based questions, such as GJP’s “Will North Korea launch a new multistage missile in the next year?”, is different from answering questions about the possible future states of deeply uncertain environments.

The table below compares the features that drive predictability and unpredictability:

Prediction - Features Supporting Predictability	Foresight - Uncertainties Prevent Predictability
Parameters and variables known	Multiple unknowns
Narrow scenarios	Multidimensional, nonlinear, complex
Most probable	Probable, plausible, possible, wild cards, “What If?”
A specific answer to a precise question	No right answer
Well-defined, contained, discrete, linear situations	Signals, emergence, next-order impacts, dynamic, intersecting, spillover
Industry Experts, Economists, Consultancies, Superforecasters, Statisticians, AI	Interdisciplinary, Futures, Foresight, Science Fiction

Source: Disruptive Futures Institute

PREDICTIONS BEYOND INCENTIVES AND DATA

Predictions about the future should be scrutinized - nobody knows how the future will unfold. Anyone being paid to make predictions has a vested interest in the outcomes. Furthermore, consultants, economists, bankers, analysts, forecasters, and algorithms who claim to have data-driven predictive capabilities somehow extrapolate the past.

Despite the hype, artificial intelligence (AI) may not be much better than humans in nonlinear, dynamic, and complex systems. AI’s predictive strength lies in relatively stable situations that can be understood through pattern recognition at scale, given well-defined outcomes. In deeply uncertain environments, causality can only be assessed retrospectively, relationships are unpredictable, and moving parts interdependent.

While data is abundant, it failed to shield the world from the highest levels of inflation in half a century. The mighty US Treasury admitted its complete lack of understanding of what it labelled as “unanticipated” shocks to the economy.

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT: THE ALTERNATIVE TO PREDICTION

Traditional planning approaches assume a predictable world. Seeking to predict an answer is reasonable when addressing clearly defined questions in stable environments. However, when variables and their interactions are unknown, relying solely on predictions can be detrimental, especially when decisions hinge on their accuracy. The future is unmapped; you can't rely on modelling uncertainties to deliver certainty.

Assumptions are unavoidable, so futures mindsets do not preclude their use. However, with foresight, we are not looking for a singular outcome. Foresight is the capacity to explore the possible futures systemically, as well as drivers of change, to inform short-term decision-making. We ask "why?, why not?, what if?" For these questions focused on the futures, there is no data.



In foresight, insights from historical analysis and trends are helpful for sense-making, but only to provide a snapshot of the existing world as a base. Our imagination builds out different scenarios, outcomes, and possible futures.

Scenario planning was originally developed in the 1950s and 1970s, and it builds on linear strategic planning. The fundamental departures are that the futures are different from the past, longer timeframes matter, and next-order impacts need to be captured. Good scenarios help solve problems differently because they can illuminate new possibilities and ignite hope.

Thinking about long-term futures should never be to the detriment of the present. Only the present exists, so all our decisions towards long-term futures need to be translated to the now.

FORESIGHT IS PREPARATION, NOT PREDICTION

The purpose of scenario development is preparation, not prediction. This reading benefits any eventualities, beyond the handful of future scenarios imagined.

As we evaluate the opportunities and risks from our scenarios, we scrutinize their potential consequences. We can then build resilience to sustain even the most serious outcomes.

Foresight does not hold a crystal ball. It prepares you for the swerves. The future of prediction is imagination.

FUTURISTS IN ACTION

PROFILE: JOANNA LEPORE ON FORESIGHT AT MCDONALD'S

By Stephen Dupont



Each day, more than 69 million people head to one of 40,275 McDonald's restaurants located in more than 100 countries across the globe for a Sausage Egg McMuffin, a Big Mac, or those incredibly delicious McDonald's French Fries. That's more than 25 billion customer visits per year.

With that type of reach and influence, it's no wonder that McDonald's decided to create a dedicated team of foresight professionals to help its business leaders and franchise owners anticipate potential opportunities ahead, reduce risks to potential disruptions, and build a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive business model that better meets the needs of its customers.

To lead its foresight team, the company recruited Joanna "Jo" Lepore, a professional futurist who previously helped build a foresight practice at Mars Wrigley, a division of Mars, Inc., an American multinational manufacturer of confectionery, pet food, and other food products and a provider of animal care services – with household brands such as M&Ms, Snickers, Twix, Dove, and Wrigley's.

Born in Poland, Lepore's parents moved their young family to Australia to begin a new life in the early 1990s. It's there that Lepore had her first McDonald's cheeseburger as a young girl, inspiring a fond memory of her father, who passed a few years later.

After college, Lepore entered the world of marketing. "I absolutely loved it. I did every type of marketing under the sun – communications, advertising, product development, white space innovation,

media planning." After 10 years, she was ready for a change and moved into consumer insights to "get closer to the unmet opportunities that we could be tapping from a business perspective."

"I've always been really passionate about business transformation," Lepore said, "and I just naturally started to do foresight work."



Her work in foresight and consumer insights in Australia, caught the eye of her leaders in the U.S., and Lepore was offered the opportunity to expand the scope of the foresight practice globally for Mars Wrigley, while working from the company's New Jersey headquarters. After working for Mars for 4.5 years, Lepore moved to McDonald's in Chicago, to accelerate the implementation of the foresight practice, which had just been formed.

FORESIGHT AT MCDONALD'S

Lepore explains that the McDonald's foresight team, which includes four professionals at this time, is focused on helping the company's businesses think beyond its current planning cycle, envisioning the next 10 years, and even further, based on the issue. The team looks two to three decades out to evaluate the macro forces of change that will affect the entire McDonald's global system. The team also takes deep dives into specific topics.

"We use foundational foresight work to help align our systems on the big things that we should be focusing on," Lepore said.

To Lepore, it's not a surprise that McDonald's would be open to a dedicated foresight function. Many consumer-packaged goods and fast-moving consumer goods companies are creating dedicated foresight teams as they've watched changes in the marketplace, as well as significant disruptions, affect consumer behavior.

"Multinational companies that have been around for a long time are seeing

disruption from smaller start-ups. They're recognizing that foresight can give clarity around consumer behaviors," said Lepore. "I think many of these companies had bits and pieces of foresight and futures thinking already in place, they just didn't know it. For example, when I was doing marketing, I was already pulling in futures thinking and developing different scenarios."

As a dedicated function, the foresight team at McDonald's leverages professional foresight methods and tools to go directly to the company's leaderships teams and provide guidance on preparing for the future.

"McDonald's has been around for 68 years," said Lepore. "It's a very sophisticated business. When people think of our company, they think of it as a very systematically structured organization. It's automatically geared towards growth and success and being able to live through many hurdles and disruptions in the external environment - much better than a lot of other organizations. The company has a culture of experimentation where it has tried to expand into new areas (breakfast menu, all-day breakfast) or explore different consumer products (McNuggets, McRib, Oreo Affogato, Shaka Chiki, Chicken Maharaja Burger, and Coconut Sticky Rice Pie)."

ADVOCATE FOR FORESIGHT

In many large corporations that have or are in the process of establishing an internal foresight team, an advocate or champion is needed to make the case to upper management that investing in foresight will have a positive impact on the business.





In the case of Lepore and her team, [Michelle Gansle, Vice President of Global Insights & Analytics McDonald's](#), is that person. Prior to joining McDonald's, Gansle led the consumer insights function at Mars, Inc., where she encouraged Lepore to expand her foresight practice.

"Michelle tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Come and set this up for Mars,'" said Lepore. "She saw the value and the impact that it could have on the organization. So, she made a case to the leadership team, for McDonald's globally, to create a foresight team and pushed for a three-year commitment."

"Michelle knew, like I've learned myself," continued Lepore, "you can't launch it and off you go. It's a process that requires a lot

of patience, and a lot of hard work. She set the right expectations. And now we're building the credibility in what foresight can do."

ORGANIZATION EMBRACES FORESIGHT

While Lepore has only been at McDonald's a relatively short time, she feels that the organization is embracing foresight and its value to the organization.

This sort of surprised Lepore, who felt that McDonald's "is a bit more traditional and systematic." But right from the start, her team has been feeding the company's strategic planning, innovation territory setting and product development efforts.

To gain further acceptance, Lepore speaks to the importance of "building a culture of

curiosity,” which means doing a lot of workshops and back casting with various teams throughout the company to help them build their imagination muscles, essential for futures thinking.

“It’s not just helping our people imagine what the future could be, but also to help them really think tangibly about how they can create the future,” said Lepore. “Our scope is not limited. That means we work with our global teams, our leadership teams, and with our marketing teams. We’ve done more than 20 sessions with teams and functions around the world. We’ve done workshops in Canada and Germany, for example, where some of our most advanced future forward franchisees were involved, which was an amazing experience for me to see firsthand.”

As Lepore connects with foresight professionals who work with other large corporations, she’s learned that the issues facing McDonald’s are not dissimilar to those facing other companies, whether it’s another company in the packaged consumer food space or a telecom equipment provider. The big difference, however, is how foresight is embraced within an organization and the skill level of employees in using foresight in their day-to-day work.

“So, to compare my roles at McDonald’s and Mars, for example, both foresight teams work similarly, sitting within the consumer insights function,” said Lepore, “Our foresight work is anchored in understanding human beings and the anthropological, sociological, cultural implications of the things we’re seeing in the world. But at McDonald’s, we’re just starting out, and the demand is there for

us to reach all parts of the business. So, we’ve done foresight sessions with our supply chain team, our global impact team, the team handling sustainability and nutrition for our global menu, our restaurant operations and design teams, to name just a few.”

“The impact that we have is defined by us. We have a lot of agency to say, ‘the business is looking like this right now, but foresight can give you a greater advantage of how to approach this topic and how to think about the future of this topic,’” Lepore added. “I’m a firm believer that you need to constantly prove your value – not just in foresight – but in any part of the business that you’re in.”



MEASURING THE ROI OF FORESIGHT

Organizational foresight professionals are often asked how they measure their efforts and justify a corporation's investment in foresight. Unfortunately, compared to other functions within an organization, such as strategic planning, culture building, marketing, etc., foresight seems to get this question more than most. Perhaps, that's because the foresight function is still relatively new to many companies.

For Lepore, the key to measuring the value of foresight is not linked to one simple measure of ROI as some other teams are, such as sales, and that's because there's not one measure that foresight impacts. Can foresight be linked to growth? Yes. Can it be linked to risk reduction? Yes. Can it enhance customer satisfaction? Yes.

Instead, Lepore focuses on what her team is actually delivering, which involves four key initiatives, of which, each has its own metrics of success that the foresight team tracks. These initiatives include:

- Building the company's horizon scanning capabilities.
- Deep dives on specific topics or opportunity or risk.
- Strategic direction through the annual planning process.
- Building a culture of curiosity throughout the organization.

"It's unfortunate that there isn't a simple ROI when it comes to measuring foresight," said Lepore, "But I think more than any other team that I've seen, we task ourselves with being more stringent about tracking the impact we're having."

"I think what's really needed in our foresight profession is a flexibility and adaptability in your mindset," Lepore said. "Whatever the project, whatever team you're working with, whatever market you're working in, you're constantly adapting and trying to meet people where they are, and figure out what tool I'm using, what method I'm using and what kind of relationship do I need to build with that team."



FUTURE OF MCDONALD'S BURGER

Q. So, what's going to be the McDonald's burger of the future? And will the McRib still be around in 2050? Because McRib fans need to know.

Lepore: "Ha! McRib fans! As you can imagine, I get this question a lot. What is the burger of the future? Well, I have to tell you, my favorite is the Big Mac. I guess I'm kind of a classic girl, apparently. Add in some fries, and some Chicken McNuggets – that's my go to. I would go to the mantra of Ray Kroc, who was obviously one tremendously smart businessperson. It's that whatever we're going to be making in the future, we're going to be making more of it than anybody else. We'll continue to listen and pay attention to how the world is changing and what people want and make more of that."



PASSION FOR FORESIGHT

For many professional futurists, the journey to embracing foresight as a career is not always straight forward. And while that's true for Lepore, also, that journey has led her to what she describes as "her dream job," and it's expressing itself in a speculative fiction book that she's writing and the creation of her popular podcast, [Looking Outside](#).

Asked to reflect on what she would tell her 18-year-old self, Lepore said, "I never would have imagined working at McDonald's or living in the U.S. I've tried to remain very open throughout my career to opportunities and moving where the energy is. I feel very fortuitous that I've landed where I am. This is my dream job. And while it is a massive organization and I'm a small part of it, I can make a big impact. That makes me feel incredibly lucky and humbled."

While Lepore studied philosophy and writing in college, she thinks that her passion for foresight began with her strong interest in strategy, which is how she connected with foresight.

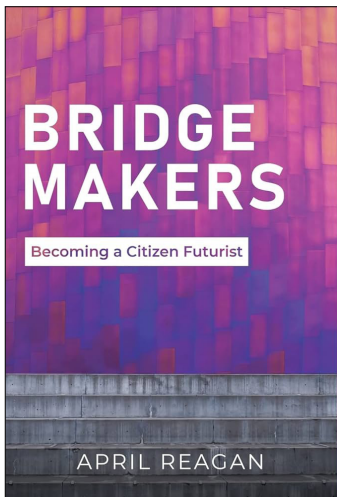
"When I was 18 finishing high school in Australia, I thought I wanted to be a novelist. I was very creative and I wanted to change the world. I was very altruistic," said Lepore. "As I reflect on my journey as a person and as a foresight professional, I realize that I still do get to be creative. I get to have a positive impact on the world, and I've figured out how to do it from the inside. I feel incredibly lucky to do it through foresight because I don't think that many people get to do what we do. And when it's done well, it can have such a huge impact."

"I have no idea what the future has in store for me, but I'm going to stay open to opportunities as they present themselves, and not feel like I have to do things in a certain way. I hope my career with McDonald's continues to be in areas such as foresight, which allow me to be credible, impactful, strategic and creative."



Stephen Dupont

Stephen Dupont serves as the editor of Compass magazine. To reach him with a comment about this article or Compass magazine, visit his LinkedIn page at <https://www.linkedin/in/stephendupont>



April Reagan encourages readers to think and act like a futurist in her new book, *Bridge Makers: Becoming a Citizen Futurist*. It serves as a guide for the average person to get involved in planning for the future.

Written for the average citizen, Reagan defines a citizen futurist as *one who is committed to looking – staying informed about scientific, technological, sociological and economic trends, thinking about the potential impacts and consequences of the trends, and acting – claiming agency and advocating for the potential of such advancements to improve the communities of which they are a member.*

In formulating her book, it's safe to say that Reagan drew upon her experience with the high-tech world. She previously has worked for Intel, Microsoft, Samsung, and Fjord Design and Innovation (part of Accenture Interactive), among others. She has worked with clients across retail, financial services, consumer products, wireless communications, and digital media, as well as collaborating with non-profits.

Published in 2021, Reagan breaks her 282-page book into four

Book Review

by Jim Murray

Bridge Makers

Becoming a Citizen Futurist

by April Reagan

sections. After an introduction to futurism/foresight, she touches on scanning for signals and following trends, imagining different scenarios for the future, and building and executing a plan to start influencing and shaping a preferred future. She suggests that the reader can pick and choose the sections they are interested in rather than read the entire book.

I recommend taking the time to read the entire book. In addition to explaining what it takes to be a citizen futurist, Reagan exposes the reader to some of today's well-known futurists such as Stuart Candy and Amy Webb and offers the reader a number of resources to learn more about futures and foresight. She emphasizes the need for collaboration within our respective communities, bringing ideas and issues to the forefront for meaningful discussion, and hopefully, developing a mutually agreeable resolution and plan for action.

While at the University of Houston, I remember Program Director Andy Hines often reminding the class that an important part of practicing foresight is to “rally the masses.” *Bridge Makers: Becoming a Citizen Futurist* feels like Reagan's attempt to do just that.

It aims to encourage the general public – the average citizen – to

get ahead of problems today and work toward a better tomorrow. As Reagan warns in the book, if we don't get involved in planning our future, we will be left having to live someone else's future – a future that we may not want.

There appears to be a shift in people's perspective on the responsibilities of being a citizen, and I believe Reagan sees that and is concerned. She understands the potential danger if our current social atmosphere continues to trend in its current direction. Over the past decade, political polarization and the increasing intolerance for diversity has been eroding communities and hinders us from making progress on the smallest of projects, let alone effectively plan for the future.

As a metaphor for the citizen futurist, Mrs. Reagan uses the term “Bridge Maker,” which she defines as *“making connections to bridge communities in a purposeful way and changing the tone of the conversation, shifting the tension, and making room for something new to emerge.”*

So many of the issues and problems we are aware of today, especially those we have deemed as wicked problems, such as climate change, need to be addressed sooner than later, and will require collaboration and a



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Signals in the Noise

NAVIGATING THE UNCHARTED FUTURE TEN PREDICTIONS FOR 2030

by Dr Mark van Rijenam



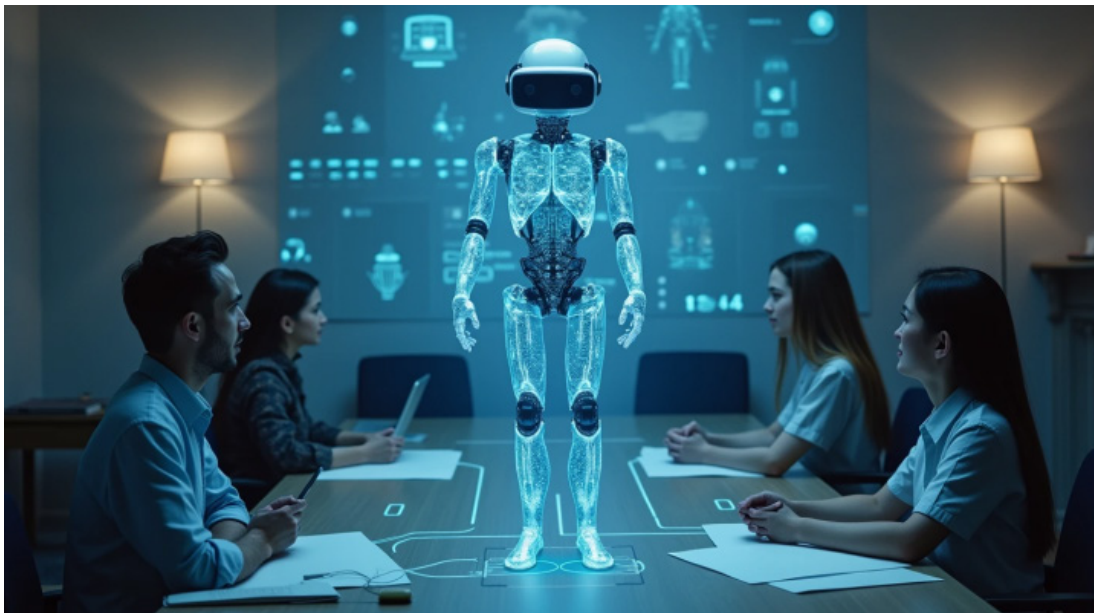
In a world pulsating with exponential technological advancement, the famous saying rings true: “Predicting is always difficult, especially when it is about the future.” But aren’t we all captivated by what the horizon holds? Buckle up, as I guide you through a bold and thrilling journey into the next seven years. Expect disruption, then triple it! Here’s what awaits us:

- 1 The Billion-Dollar Digital Blockbuster:** Small movie startups, harnessing generative AI and powerful game engines, will turn a \$1 million investment into \$1 billion profits with entirely digital blockbusters - no real actors or movie sets required.
- 2 The Double-Edged Sword of Technology:** Tragically, the same breakthroughs will be harnessed to unleash hyper-realistic misinformation campaigns, causing a financial crisis, swaying multiple elections, and victimizing millions through digital scams such as voice-cloning fraud.
- 3 Quantum Computing’s Big Crunch:** Brace for quantum computing to shatter standard encryption. While quantum-resistant encryption will be widely available towards the end of this decade, many companies will have failed to implement it and be in danger of advanced hackers.
- 4 Smart AR Glasses Take Over:** In 1995, people mocked the idea of using a phone in public; towards the end of this decade, we will see the first people replacing their smartphones with advanced smart AR glasses. Doom-scrolling will take on an entirely new meaning when people seem to be staring into nothingness while flicking through their social media feeds.

Signals in the Noise

NAVIGATING THE UNCHARTED FUTURE: TEN PREDICTIONS FOR 2030

- 5 **Personalized Healthcare:** Personalised healthcare will start to become a reality. Full-body scans using advanced tools in combination with machine learning will become affordable to more people allowing us to make the transition from treating sick people to preventing healthy people from becoming sick.
- 6 **A Tectonic Shift in Jobs:** Disruption will reshape the job landscape, with hundreds of millions of new roles created and lost. Unfortunately, in many societies, there will be a mismatch between those who lose their jobs and the new jobs available. The human touch in the metaverse will become a luxury: people will start to pay extra for being serviced by real people in the metaverse instead of by AI, though who knows if those real people are actually real people?
- 7 **ClimateTech Innovation:** Advanced AI and quantum computing will drive innovative solutions to combat climate change, from CO2 recycling to ubiquitous solar panels, thanks to nanotechnology.
- 8 **Hyper-Personalization:** Personalisation will achieve a new meaning as every message you receive, whether via text, audio or video, will be personalised based on your preferences, browsing history and even persona. While this hyper-personalisation will create more engagement, it will also drive filter bubbles, causing more polarisation in society.
- 9 **Unleashing the AGI Genie:** The fear of missing out will have driven AI research to the extreme. As a result, the first AGI will have been released too soon, predominantly benefiting those who created it and those who understand how to deal with it. The race to unleash the first AGI will accentuate inequality, placing even more power in the hands of a select few.



- 10 **AI-Led Education:** Forward-thinking schools will usher in an AI-first, teacher-second model, democratizing high-quality education. Teachers will take on the role of coach or mentor, guiding students in their exploration of the world, while a hyper-personalised teaching AI will create the best learning program for each child. The price of education will drop, making high-quality education affordable to all. This will drive innovation in the long run.

Signals in the Noise

NAVIGATING THE UNCHARTED FUTURE: TEN PREDICTIONS FOR 2030

What lies ahead is a delicate dance between opportunity and peril. Technology remains neutral, but its applications will disrupt, redefine, and reshape our world. The ability to navigate this change will become a defining factor in the new world order. From AI to quantum computing to the metaverse, the possibilities are endless, the stakes high, and the landscape thrillingly uncertain.



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