

# THE BEGINNING OF THE ~~A~~ END

SCENARIOS FOR  
THE FUTURE FROM  
NEXXWORKS & FRIENDS



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# PART 0

## AN INTRODUCTION - ON DOING BETTER

**By Laurence Van Elegem,  
Content Director @ nexxworks**



As is tradition, our nexxworks thought leaders and extended network look forward to the future at each end of the year and contribute insights that might inspire our followers in the coming months. This year, we've adapted a slightly different direction with an e-book that is centered upon three pillars:

- 1. The future of the individual**
- 2. The future of the organization**
- 3. The future of the world**

The three are obviously inextricably connected: companies, filled with individuals, sell products and services to individuals and all of them have an impact on the world. And that is exactly why organizations, as well as individuals will need to learn to Zoom In and Zoom Out more, instead of focusing on themselves alone.

## A ZOOM IN – ZOOM OUT STRATEGY

When I interviewed John Hagel for the [nexxworks Innovation talks](#) (Follow us on [Spotify](#) or on [Apple Podcasts](#)), he mentioned the Zoom Out Zoom In approach as a method to better navigate the future. As he describes it himself in his piece “Zoom In Filters for High Impact”:

*The first time horizon, the zoom out horizon, is **10-20 years**.*

*On that horizon, the two key questions are: What is my relevant market or industry going to look like 10-20 years from now? What are the implications for the kind of company I will need to become in order to be successful?*

*The second time horizon, the zoom in horizon, is very different – **it's 6-12 months**. On this horizon, the key questions are: What are the two or three initiatives I can pursue in the next 6-12 months that will have the greatest impact in enhancing my ability to reach my destination? Do I have a critical mass of resources committed to those initiatives in the next 6-12 months? How will I measure success for these initiatives?*

When he wrote this, Hagel was clearly talking about developing an efficient innovation strategy and looking forward in the short AND long term. But the concept of “Zoom In Zoom Out” really resonated with me on the level of systems thinking as well. To better understand the future of our company, we must:

- Zoom In - to the individual level of leaders, employees, customers and citizens
- Zoom Out - to the level of our market, our partner network, our country, and eventually the entire world (even beyond, if we go to Mars)

But for individual leaders and innovators, this strategy can also mean:

- What can I, as an individual company leader or innovator do... (Zoom In)
- ...to create a better company and a better world? (Zoom Out).

## IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES (YES, THAT IS A MISQUOTE)

As I pondered over what had happened this past year and I gathered and ordered all the input of our fantastic writers, it was clear that the pandemic left marks on all of their future scenarios. But what struck me most was this seemingly contradictory gap between reality and perception:

1. Objectively speaking and completely oversimplified, we could say that the COVID-19 virus was the Big Villain of 2020 – killing our loved ones, putting people out of jobs and creating very difficult social and economic situations – while technology was the Big Savior, allowing most of us to continue to work and live online as the offline world had become too dangerous.
2. But a lot of us (beyond the writers of this e-book, too) perceived this very differently: the COVID-19 virus became a true wake-up call, opening our eyes to the urgency of some very [wicked problems](#) like climate change, in-

equality, healthcare, poverty etc., while our long-lived techno-optimism turned into a much more critical state of mind. Just think of the recent lawsuit of the US government against Facebook, ordering it to divest assets, including Instagram and WhatsApp, effectively breaking up the company as we know it.

The pandemic *was* the worst of times. But it also was the “best” of times, because it has made us realize that we *have* to do better than before. Indirectly, through for instance the US elections and the BLM movement, it has also made us realize more than ever that technology can just as much be the problem, as it can be the answer. Just think of mass marketing politics (see Jerry Michalski’s piece later on) and synthetic media (see Tom Van de Weghe), and you’ll know what I mean.

COVID-19 has often been called an “**accelerant**” of trends and evolutions, but it was just as much a “**transparent**”, which is not a misspelling of the word transparent but a neologism from my side meaning “a force that makes the mental veil behind which problems were hidden transparent”.

But to borrow some of the core words of Laëtitia Vitaud's scenario, now that everything has become more transparent (she points out that we owe a lot to the BLM, feminist and other activist movements for that), we will need to strive for results.

## THE 'AND' OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT


And so the big hairy question here is “how”, of course? How can we do better?

There is obviously not one “formula for everything”. If there was, we wouldn't be in the current situation. The answer, however, might very well lie in the beautifully ambiguous word AND, which has very little meaning in itself, except as a connector. It's a bridge. It refuses to make choices and bad trade-offs. So: not global health OR global economy. But AND. Both. This dynamic is what Pascal Coppens calls China's “dual circulation trend”, as you'll see later on. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this type of AND-approach is also what Horst Rittel and Melvin M. Webber pinpoint as the way to deal with our [Wicked](#)

[Problems](#): many parallel endeavors and experiments that run simultaneously:



*If there is not one Big solution for a wicked problem, the only way to make it better (and yes, unfortunately also worse, sometimes), is by **following an iterative approach**, as many of us are already doing in software and product development: **you try many, many different simultaneous experiments**, you learn from the failures and then focus on what works, and change course with other experiments when the wicked problem morphs again.*

And it's also what you'll see running through the following future scenarios: connected thinking **in which all parties reinforce one another** instead of zero sum situations where there is one clear winner and one clear loser. Not technology or humans. Both. Not the worker or the private person. Both. Not the consumer or the company. Both. Not online or offline. Both. Not the state or the citizen. Both. Not China or the US or Europe or any other continent. All of them, and together.



In short, we are no longer content to choose between the individual, the company and the world. We have to think of all three of them, but in a balanced way. (If I didn't know any better, I'd make an incredibly bad pun like 'balANDst'. But I *do* know better. So I won't.) Because the pandemic has taught us that choosing for individualism and capitalism impacts the world in a way that will come back to us. Holistic cultures - like many ones in the East, which see systems in terms of relations and the individual as a functional part of bigger groups - have long understood this. But our Western, highly individualistic cultures, still have a long way to go.

2020 was our wake-up call, telling us to do better, together.



If nature was able to organise itself in a way that all creatures were able to survive and thrive side by side - not counting the impact of external cataclysms like meteors, massive volcano eruptions and the human race (I'm sorry, but for these past decades we really were) - then so can we, as you'll be able to read in Leen Gorissen's plea for a regenerative approach at the end of this e-book.

So let this be the beginning of the AND.

Enjoy our e-book!

Yours truly,

Laurence

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**Part I**

# **THE FUTURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL**



# WELCOME TO THE ERA OF HUMAN CAPITALISM

**By Heather E. McGowan,  
Future-of-work strategist,  
keynote speaker & author**





*“One thing we have learned acutely through this pandemic is that we exist first and foremost to connect.”*

## HOW WE GOT HERE

We have about 5,000 years of recorded human history and during most of that time our sole focus was on survival. We moved through human eras from the hunter gatherer to agricultural to industrial to information to now the augmented era. From the industrial era onward, we experienced a series of industrial revolutions (IR) driven by paradigm shifting technologies from the steam engine (1<sup>st</sup> IR) to electrification (2<sup>nd</sup> IR) to computerization (3<sup>rd</sup> IR) to the convergence of cyber, physical, and biological systems (4<sup>th</sup> IR). Work became separate from home in the first industrial revolution and structured formal learning emerged just prior that as we emerged from the agricultural era. The concept of retirement with company or government provided benefits emerged out of the second industrial revolution for most.


These innovations were the start of the Education-Career-Retire model of life as we know it. This paradigm became the march towards a fixed occupational identity. Sometime in the last few decades we began asking young people “What do you



want to be when you grow up?” and requiring university students to select a major or concentrated area of study towards a set job or industry often before they have stepped foot on campus. This march towards a single occupational identity and the false promise that learning only needs to be in the first third of one’s life is now tragically at its end.


## **WHERE WE STAND TODAY**

Today we are trapped between the third and the fourth industrial revolution and between the information and augmented human eras. The coronavirus disruption has nudged us toward the augmented era and the fourth industrial revolution. This global pandemic has accelerated our transformation to digital, which is, in reality, human transformation. The good news is that humans are superb, when pressed, at adaptation. Schools and businesses adapted to learning and working from home, while companies globally pivoted product lines, altered process, and reinvented entire businesses. We radically transformed how we work, where we work, and what we do.



## **WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL?**

The evolution through human eras and industrial revolutions has tended to value humans at their ability to gain rare expertise or produce value. This is the reality of a capitalist society. Much of our core/personal status is inextricably linked to our occupational identity. Is this a moment to redefine our identities beyond what we produce or acquire? Perhaps. We still live in a capitalist society and the economic drivers will continue to place value on scarce resources, rare expertise, and unique knowledge. Therein lies the opportunity. We need to shift our focus from “what” we may do with our lives occupationally or personally to why and how we do it. The “why” is our connection to our own internal drive—curiosity, passion, and purpose—this is the path to finding engagement and fulfilment in work as self-expression. The “how” is our ever-evolving efforts to expand our capacity through learning and adaptation.



One thing we have learned acutely through this pandemic is that we exist first and foremost to connect. Human connections are a motivating and self-nurturing force in our work and our personal lives. Shared purpose is a major source of connection. When we live in a world of work as self-expression connected to purpose, we reach more of our potential. As this pandemic ends and technology consumes more and more routine tasks, we have the opportunity to build a more just, equitable society where every human discovers their purpose, connects to shared values, and reaches their full potential regardless of circumstance. This could be the moment when capitalism shifts from shareholder to stakeholder to human capitalism—a world in which humans are the most valuable asset.

# WHY WE MUST DEVELOP A FLUX MINDSET

**By April Rinne,  
speaker & author focusing on  
the new economy, future of  
work & global citizenship.**



***“The future is not more stability or more certainty. The future is more uncertainty, more unpredictability, and more unknowns.”***


I believe that in 2021 and beyond, both individuals and organizations will begin to radically rethink, and ultimately reshape, their relationship to change. I call this Flux.

Prior to 2020, the world was in flux: from climate change to artificial intelligence, urbanization to demographic shifts, there was plenty of change and uncertainty. We saw problems looming, but in many cases we ignored them, or didn't fully appreciate their severity. We went about our business, trying to “keep up” and adapt to an ever-faster pace of change.

And then 2020 arrived: a massive accelerant of flux. Whether it's work in flux, education and learning in flux, politics in flux, or daily life and schedules in flux: individually, organizationally and societally, constant change is our “new-now-next-never normal.”

Think about it: When is the last time change hit your life? I'm guessing it was pretty recent. Most likely earlier today, at the latest perhaps yesterday.

Humans really struggle with change. True, we are remark-



ably adaptable when we're forced to be – as the past several months have shown -- but for the most part, we have a very hard time with change. We resist it, we fear it, and we mistakenly believe we can control it. Yet, the more you try to keep change at bay, the more it shows up and the harder it bangs on the door.

But the simple fact is: around every corner — whether that corner is this afternoon, next week, next quarter, next year, or next century — there is more change. The future is not more stability or more certainty. The future is more uncertainty, more unpredictability, and more unknowns.

In order to thrive in this world in flux, we must radically reshape our relationship to change. This is what I call developing a Flux Mindset. Many people love change, and many people fear it. Yet regardless, when real change hits, we don't know what to do. Only when you understand your relationship to change from the inside-out -- including what grounds and roots you, even when everything else changes -- will you be able to truly move forward and live fully.

The Flux Mindset consists of a combination of 8 Flux Superpowers, each of which is designed to help you understand and reshape your relationship to change. You can begin by asking: Do you approach change from a place of fear or hope? Do you struggle when things don't go as planned? Are you able to remain calm amid ongoing uncertainty? Where do you turn when things you've always relied on simply disappear?

Though there is not enough room to go into detail here, I'm happy to announce that my book 'Flux: Superpowers for Thriving in Constant Change' - which dives into them in detail, along with practical application tips - will be out in 2021.

# AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE WILL KEEP US RELEVANT

**By Joren Lemiegre,  
Innovation Program Manager  
@ nexxworks**



*“If you want to be and stay successful in the future, you’ll have to intertwine technology with your life.”*

The “uomo universale” is an individual whose knowledge spans a significant number of subjects. Leonardo Da Vinci was usually considered as being the perfect example. He was artisan, scientist, and artist, all rolled into one. Nowadays, we would call him a “polymath”.

Today, more and more companies are working with multi-disciplinary, ad-hoc teams that require a wide field of knowledge, creativity, adaptability, social skills and complex problem solving.

While not everybody has the intelligence and talent of Da Vinci, I’m convinced that most people are closer than ever to becoming the ultimate universal man, with a little help from technology. The processing power available today has enabled new applications that could change how we work and live forever.

If you want to be and stay successful in the future, you’ll have to intertwine technology with your life. Does that mean you have to pick up your phone and call Elon Musk for

that Neuralink implant? Not necessarily (yet) but teenagers today are already showing us how it's done.

Maybe we condemn their dependency on modern-day technology to perform different tasks, but it really means that once they start working, they will outperform everybody else on the job market because they're familiar with the tools that most of us don't use yet.

Here is the augmenting technology you'll need to embrace in order to stay relevant as an individual in the (near) future. As a side-note: some of the writers will also discuss some of the darker sides of these technologies, and of others. But it's not because we need to think about their possibly negative impact (which I do believe we will need to do), that we will be able to stop their evolution and growth in use:

- **Augmented reality:** Yes, it will be a thing. Why? Because it adds a layer of extra information to the real world that can make us better at what we do.
- **APIs:** They connect different cloud services to each other,

and they have the unlimited potential to automate your life. Experiment with tools like Zapier or ITTT to get started.

- **Wearable tech:** [Humm](#) is releasing a patch that improves your working memory. Does it look silly? Absolutely. Does it work? Maybe. But this is just the start of a technology-enhanced human (r)evolution.
- **Personal assistants:** Whether it's Siri or Cortana, I can only recommend you use it. Your brain has limits, and these assistants will help you to become more efficient.
- **YouTube as well as any type of podcast platform like Spotify or Apple Podcasts:** This is not a joke. You would be surprised about how much you can learn there for free.
- **Your smartphone:** Yes, we all think the inventor of Excel was a genius but the majority of new productivity apps is mobile-first. Indulge yourself in the app-store to understand what might be coming.



# INTO THE HEART OF TECHNOLOGY

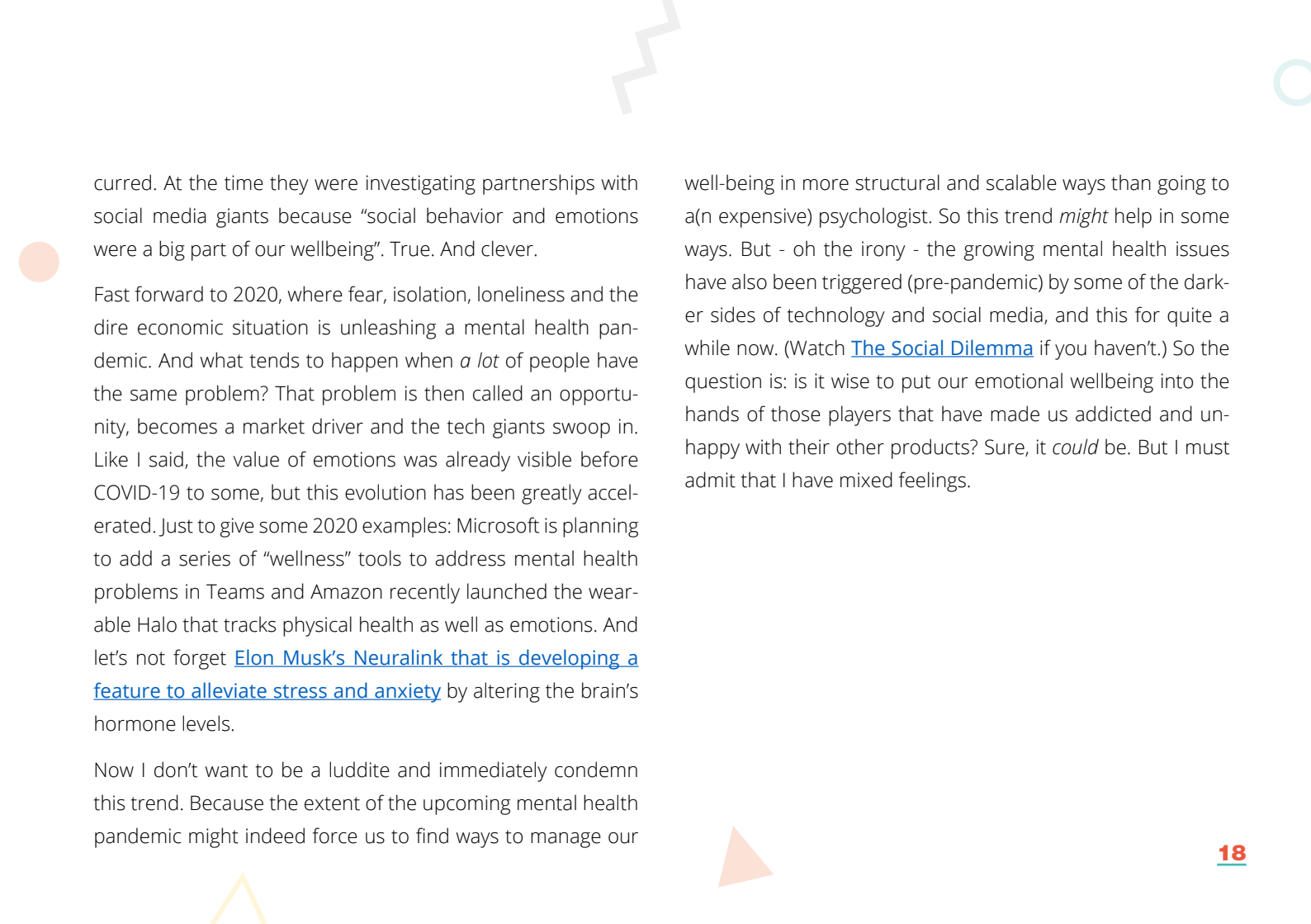
**By Laurence Van Elegem,  
Content Director @ nexxworks**



*“Is it wise to put our emotional wellbeing into the hands of those players that have made us addicted and unhappy with their other products?”*

Despite the fact that they are in the driver's seat of our behavior about 90% of the time, emotions have always suffered from a bad reputation. We've mostly been told to strive for rationality because emotions made us unreliable and weak, even when people like Kahneman have made us understand the true power of feelings. We have the ancient Greeks to thank for that, who launched the idea of the sacredness and perfection of 'the soul' and rationality. On top of that, emotions were regarded as inefficient in highly hierarchical work environments. But the 'why' is not what I want to talk about here.

Today, emotions are on the verge of becoming a huge industry and the impact upon the individual will be immense. And as with many other trends in this e-book, the pandemic is not the trigger, but it certainly will be an accelerant. The first time I started to think about the financial value of feelings was in June 2018, when nexxworks visited iCarbonx in China. Theirs was a holistic view, measuring everything physical, contextual and social to remediate health issues before they even oc-



curred. At the time they were investigating partnerships with social media giants because “social behavior and emotions were a big part of our wellbeing”. True. And clever.

Fast forward to 2020, where fear, isolation, loneliness and the dire economic situation is unleashing a mental health pandemic. And what tends to happen when *a lot* of people have the same problem? That problem is then called an opportunity, becomes a market driver and the tech giants swoop in. Like I said, the value of emotions was already visible before COVID-19 to some, but this evolution has been greatly accelerated. Just to give some 2020 examples: Microsoft is planning to add a series of “wellness” tools to address mental health problems in Teams and Amazon recently launched the wearable Halo that tracks physical health as well as emotions. And let’s not forget [Elon Musk’s Neuralink that is developing a feature to alleviate stress and anxiety](#) by altering the brain’s hormone levels.

Now I don’t want to be a luddite and immediately condemn this trend. Because the extent of the upcoming mental health pandemic might indeed force us to find ways to manage our

well-being in more structural and scalable ways than going to a(n expensive) psychologist. So this trend *might* help in some ways. But - oh the irony - the growing mental health issues have also been triggered (pre-pandemic) by some of the darker sides of technology and social media, and this for quite a while now. (Watch [The Social Dilemma](#) if you haven’t.) So the question is: is it wise to put our emotional wellbeing into the hands of those players that have made us addicted and unhappy with their other products? Sure, it *could* be. But I must admit that I have mixed feelings.


# THE FUTURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IS MORE... INCLUSIVE. ACTIVISM IS LIKELY TO CHANGE THE WORLD OF WORK.

**By Laëtitia Vitaud,  
writer and speaker about the  
future of work and consumption**



*“If exclusion, pollution and corruption are now more visible, then future activism will be in a position to demand progress. After demanding transparency, activism will be about results.”*

In times of crisis, inclusion and well-being always tend to deteriorate. The 2020 crisis was no exception. The crisis hit minorities and immigrants disproportionately. It was also referred to as a *Shecession* because so many women bore the brunt of it, in terms of lost jobs and stalled careers. Simone de Beauvoir once wrote, *“Never forget that a political, economic or religious crisis will be enough to curtail women’s rights. These rights can never be taken for granted. You’ll have to stay vigilant your whole life.”* True, some crises may at first have seemed beneficial for women’s rights, but they were more often than not followed by violent backlashes. The French revolution, for instance, had many emancipated women participate but it was followed by intense misogyny. Likewise WWII was followed by the 1950s, where women were pretty much expected to act as docile housewives.



But 2020 was also the year of activism. As it was made so visible that power, privilege and wealth remains concentrated in the hands of the few, many groups felt a pressing need to openly challenge the status quo. The death of George Floyd in the USA raised global awareness of the social and economic mechanisms that perpetuate oppression decade after decade.

For a few years now, new metrics have forced organizations to measure their gender gap (in terms of revenue and power) and to disclose their environmental impact. Because of increased transparency, today and tomorrow's activism will hold them accountable like never before. If exclusion, pollution and corruption are now more visible, then future activism will be in a position to demand progress. After demanding transparency, activism will be about results.

In many ways, the future of the individual is a collective thing!

## Part II

# THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION



# THE FUTURE OF WORK IS OMO (ONLINE-MERGED-WITH-OFFLINE).

By **Julie Vens - De Vos,**  
CEO @ nexxworks

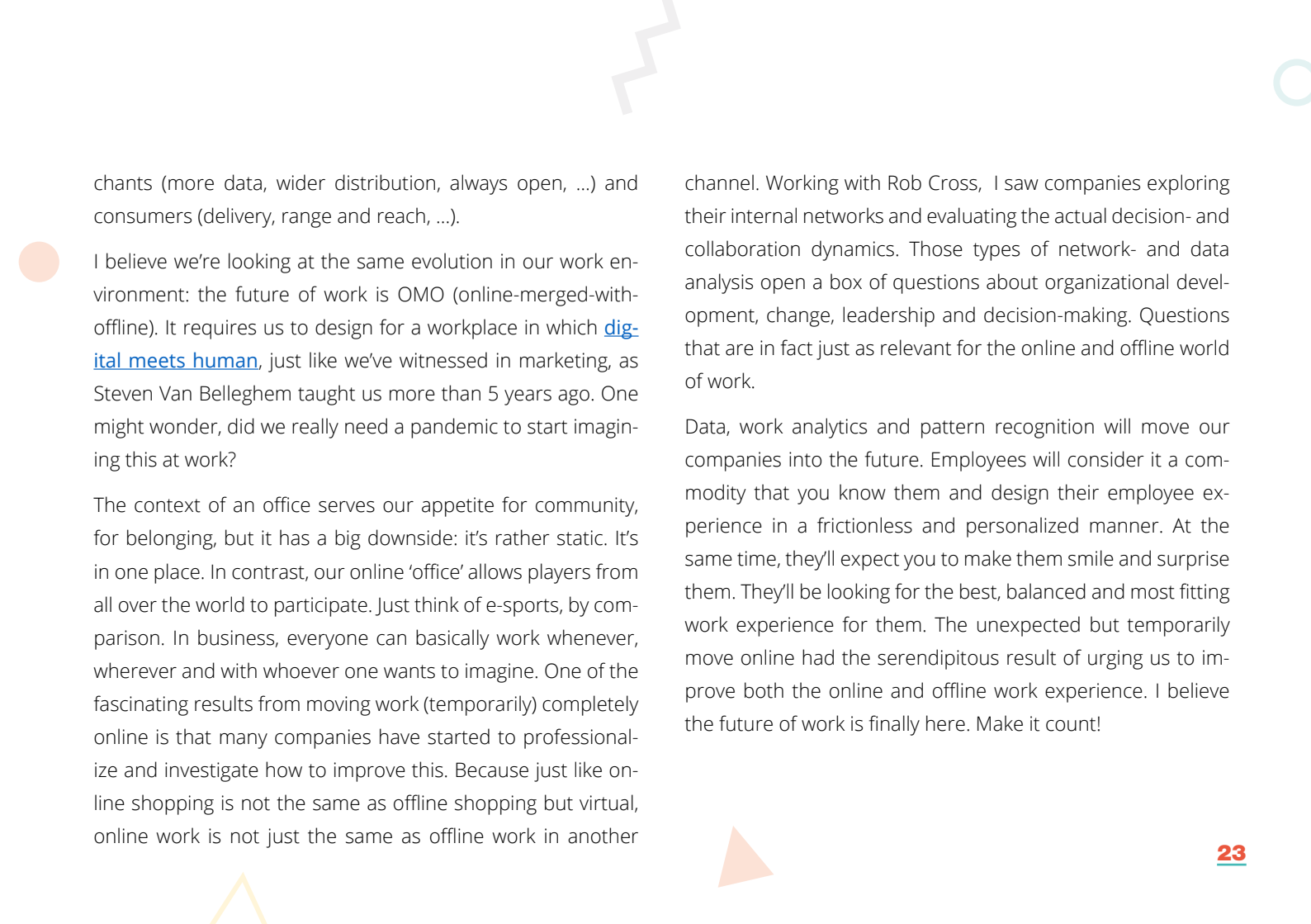


*“The sudden and unexpected temporarily move online had the serendipitous result of urging us to improve both the online and offline work experience.”*

One day, we'll wake up in a world where we can be together again. In a room, figuring out a vision forward or simply fetching each other a coffee. But as [Elke Van Hoof](#), expert in resilience, put it: we might be heading for quite a disillusion at first. Just be ready for an expectation check: which scenario – pre-covid or now - is really the 'better' one? For instance, the hours lost in traffic may have been an absolute drag but we also miss the focused time or the inspiration on the fly. As always, too much of the same rarely wins, so that implies we should become more demanding.

## WHICH WORLD DO WE WANT TO LIVE AND WORK IN?

Just as a comparison with the world of commerce: if China were to go back to offline shopping only, well... not sure a single Chinese would consider that 'better'. New retail, as we also learned in the [Future of Retail webinar](#), stands for blending online and offline commerce, creating benefits for both mer-



chants (more data, wider distribution, always open, ...) and consumers (delivery, range and reach, ...).

I believe we're looking at the same evolution in our work environment: the future of work is OMO (online-merged-with-offline). It requires us to design for a workplace in which [digital meets human](#), just like we've witnessed in marketing, as Steven Van Belleghem taught us more than 5 years ago. One might wonder, did we really need a pandemic to start imagining this at work?

The context of an office serves our appetite for community, for belonging, but it has a big downside: it's rather static. It's in one place. In contrast, our online 'office' allows players from all over the world to participate. Just think of e-sports, by comparison. In business, everyone can basically work whenever, wherever and with whoever one wants to imagine. One of the fascinating results from moving work (temporarily) completely online is that many companies have started to professionalize and investigate how to improve this. Because just like online shopping is not the same as offline shopping but virtual, online work is not just the same as offline work in another

channel. Working with Rob Cross, I saw companies exploring their internal networks and evaluating the actual decision- and collaboration dynamics. Those types of network- and data analysis open a box of questions about organizational development, change, leadership and decision-making. Questions that are in fact just as relevant for the online and offline world of work.

Data, work analytics and pattern recognition will move our companies into the future. Employees will consider it a commodity that you know them and design their employee experience in a frictionless and personalized manner. At the same time, they'll expect you to make them smile and surprise them. They'll be looking for the best, balanced and most fitting work experience for them. The unexpected but temporarily move online had the serendipitous result of urging us to improve both the online and offline work experience. I believe the future of work is finally here. Make it count!

# THE ERA OF THE SMART ECOSYSTEM ECONOMY

By Rik Vera, nexworks Partner,  
author & keynote speaker




*“Companies will have to survive a boiling red ocean by tackling one unknown problem after another in ways that were not known until now.”*

Covid-19 did not break the system, the system was already broken. The HBO series ‘Chernobyl’ is a perfect illustration of our current business environment. A collision of events has caused the impossible: the core has exploded. This event was completely unscripted and so the management of the nuclear plant kept on acting as if it didn’t happen. The procedures they followed to manage the fire, were even leading to a much bigger disaster. Finally, an outsider convinced the leadership to be creative and solve one unknown problem after another using until (then) unknown solutions, instead of the useless scripts.

A series of happenings -the internet, social media, the smart-phone, IoT, big data, AI, robotization, pandemic threats, climate change, the implosion of an economy that was based on constant growth but was eating people and planet,... - turned our business world upside down. And so the old linear models -supply chains, value chains, balanced scorecards and 5 year plans - are no longer of any use. The core has exploded and as a result, **all industries are melting down into one gigantic boiling red ocean.**





Covid-19 was a wake-up call. The business environment may still look like the old one, but it is an illusion that we will keep alive by being stuck in old and useless scripts. Companies now simply have to survive that boiling red ocean and they will not be able to rely on whatever management tool from the past. They will have to tackle one unknown problem after another in ways that were not known before. They can only do that by **transforming into an Extremely Customer Centric Smart Ecosystem.**

**Extremely Customer Centric**, because in the red ocean, all will be fighting for the attention of the customers and the one that catches them, may survive. **Smart**, as in run by data and AI, being **Augmented Intelligence**, which is a mix of artificial computing power and human intelligence. **Ecosystems** as in being **antifragile**. Companies need to learn to crawl, walk and run all over again. Just like a curious child and by using all senses to feed the brain that connects the existing dots into the new patterns by experimenting, trying, failing and training

the muscles. **Ecosystems** as in: connecting the dots between what used to be separate companies and industries to create the economy of the future: **the Smart Ecosystem Economy** that is in balance with people and planet.

# THE ZERO CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE


**By Steven Van Belleghem,  
nexworks Partner, author &  
keynote speaker**



*“If open, smart and transparent algorithms are performing choices that sometimes give us stress, I see this as a good thing.”*

In the next few years we will see the rise of the zero thinking experience, where customer outsource certain decisions to machines. A lot of people tell me that they are no fan of this evolution because it affects our choice, and our freedom. But if open, smart and transparent algorithms are performing choices that sometimes give us stress, I see this as a good thing. Many players – like Panera with their [MyPanera+ Coffee subscription](#) and Citizen M with its [subscriptions for remote workers and companies with distributed workforce](#) – are jumping on this type of subscription economy business model.

We will see this amount only increasing, especially when combined with what marketing strategy expert Scott Galloway calls signal liquidity. “Signal liquidity” is the sheer volume of information that the social media platform TikTok is able to gather on each user. If you watch an hour of Netflix, for instance it gets about 3 signals from you: what did you pick, how long did you watch it and did you continue watching. The signal liquidity of TikTok is so that the algorithm receives several hundred signals an hour.



So why is that important here? Well, as Galloway explains: “Walmart’s investment in TikTok is an attempt to move to algorithmic content and zero-click ordering where you don’t pick stuff, they just use inputs to figure out what you want and then ship three boxes to your door twice a week with things they think you want and one that’s empty. You put stuff back in the empty box you don’t want and they pick it up and that’s more signals.” So it’s not just about zero-thinking or zero-decision subscription models, once combined with signal liquidity, this has the potential to become huge.

# ACTING UPON RESILIENCE INSTEAD OF TALKING ABOUT IT

By **Matthias De Clercq**,  
COO @ nexxworks



*“Success in creating a resilient enterprise boils down to 2 things: integrating customers in the process of building a better company and inspiring co-workers to futureproof your company.”*

If there is one thing that 2020 has taught us, it is the value of resilience in the face of uncertainty and adversity. And since I'm a practical kind of guy, I wanted to share my personal strategy in the matter. For me, success in creating a resilient enterprise boils down to two things:

- 1. Are you willing to integrate your customer in the process of building a better company?**
- 2. Are you able to inspire (all of) your co-workers to futureproof your company?**

As an illustration, I'll be using the example of Coolbluebezorgt, the sister company that my former company Coolblue (r-e-tailer) founded to fulfill its deliveries of large appliances (e.g. washing machines etc.).

As you can imagine, the evolution from loading boxes into a truck to performing the entire delivery process yourself, is a huge one. And yet, they ended up becoming one of the best delivery services out there, and that in just 12 months' time.

**So what can we learn from Coolbluebezorgt when it comes to following the customer and inspiring employees in order to become more resilient?**

1. They contacted **every customer** after each delivery, noted things that needed improvement and ensured the insight was redirected to the right department where it was given the highest priority. So basic, so simple, but yet so valuable. Ask yourself, are you doing this?
2. **Share your vision. Keep showing what you are doing to achieve this.** Every day, every meeting, every event is an opportunity to do so. In a quarterly meeting, START with the vision. As a leader, CMO, CEO, ... if you want your co-workers to support your mission – show them you mean business. At Coolblue, Pieter Zwart (CEO) started **every** presentation with the Net Promoter Score.
3. **Integrate your mission in the average working day.** Every morning of every day, the delivery (wo)men at Coolblue were shown their NPS-scores of yesterday. And each day, incentives were given: never cash, but fun things like wearing a crown to work. It's all about stimulating and

integrating the permanent improvement of your daily business.

4. **Empower the voices of your colleagues.** If you show your colleagues their NPS-scores every day, they really start to care. It is vital to empower them. Give them a voice. Do not only collect feedback from you customers, but from them as well. Let them know you will look into it, do so and let them know if/when/how you will be able to implement their feedback.

We've talked so much about resilience these past few years, but this year has left us no choice but to act upon it. I hope these tips will help you somehow.

# EMPLOYEE SUSTAINABILITY WILL MORE THAN EVER BE THE DRIVING FORCE FOR SUCCESS


By **Nancy Rademaker**,  
**nexxworks Partner**  
& **keynote speaker**



*“It is not just about making your social capital feel happy, it’s also about helping them become more effective.”*

Customer Centricity has been and still is a major focus area for most companies. The past decade, most of the efforts were concentrated around Customer Experience, but more recently Employee Experience has become top of mind. Since 2018, every single year consulting companies have been claiming that it was ‘the year of Employee Experience’, maybe 2021 will actually fulfil this promise. Especially in these times of accelerated change, it will become crucial for organizations to address the human side – aka the Employee - more than ever before. In this era of constant improvement, of “doing more with less” all the time, some employees cannot cope. Add to that the effect of the Covid-crisis and it will be clear that pushing even further could lead to absenteeism or even employee turnover or churn.

But I much prefer the term **Employee Sustainability** to Employee Experience, because the latter creates the illusion that a company needs to do everything in its power to make the employee feel happy and fulfilled. But, as with all things in life, it has to work both ways: it is not just about making your



social capital feel happy, it's also about helping them become more effective. The only way to do this is through an extreme, ongoing focus on ALL employee experiences contributing to it. And as Mark Levy - who 'designed' Airbnb's culture - said, "it is essential to design the Employee Experience every single step of the way". That means taking all of the touchpoints into account.

Employee experiences roughly fall into two categories. Firstly, there are those related to the CONTENT of work: the Job Demands, which typically refer to workload, performance, rewards & benefits, and (career) development. They are viewed as the most important contributors to a perfect JOB FIT. Secondly, there are those experiences that make up the CONTEXT of work: the Job Conditions and Facilitators. Aspects like purposefulness, psychological safety, team collaboration, communication, autonomy, physical workplace, support for remote work and available tools and technologies determine the CULTURE FIT.

To create optimal effectiveness, job fit and culture fit need to be met in a balanced way. That is the optimum of Employee Sustainability. Together with performance, both on an individual and an organizational level, this is what ultimately drives the ENGAGEMENT of employees.

# CATALYSTS HELP YOU THRIVE WHEN VUCA HITS MAIN STREET

**By Shannon Lucas & Tracey Lovejoy, authors & Co-CEOs of Catalyst Constellations**



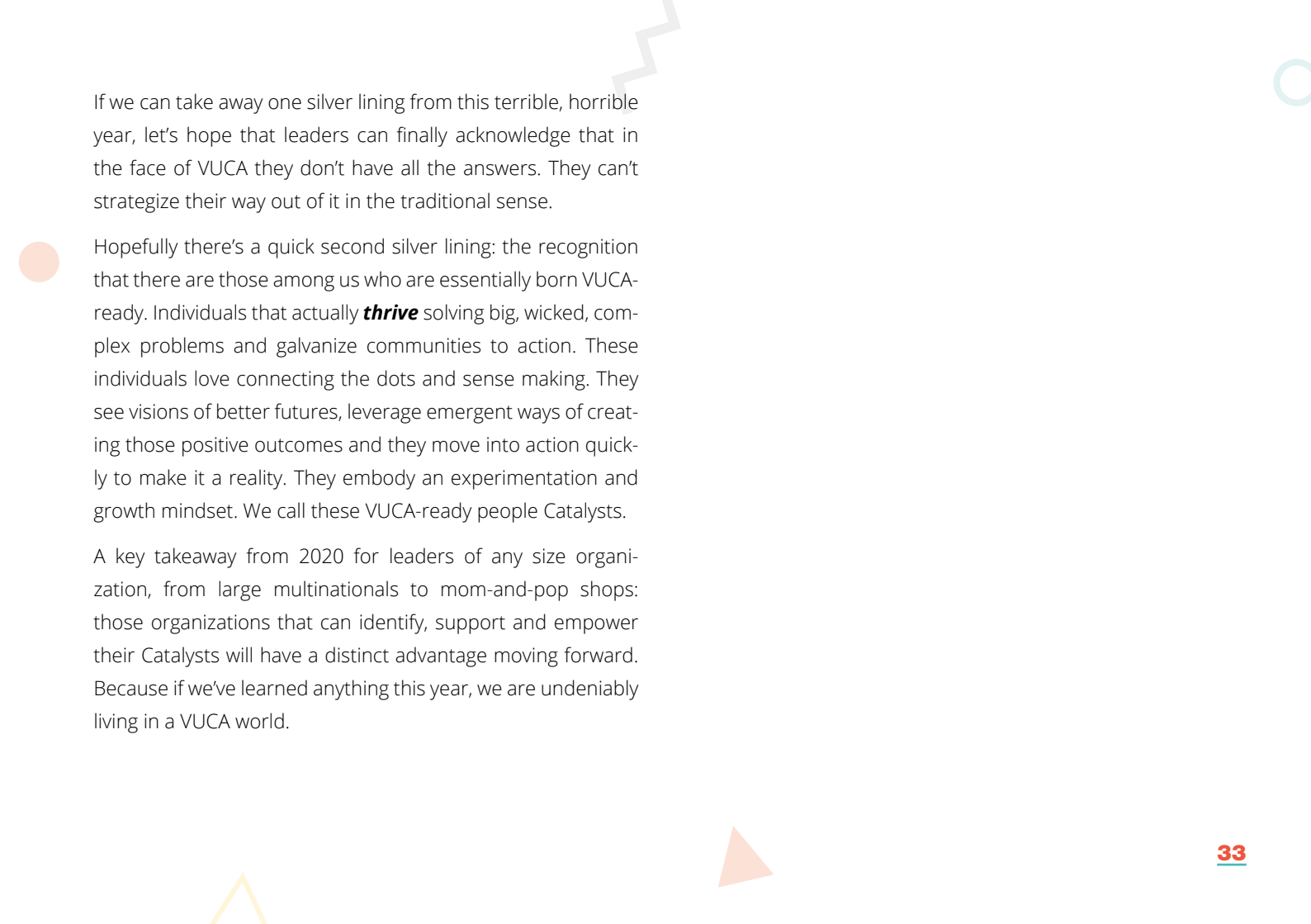
*“If we can take away one silver lining from this terrible, horrible year, let’s hope that leaders can finally acknowledge that in the face of VUCA they don’t have all the answers.”*

You may not have heard of VUCA, but you have now lived it. 2020 was the year we could no longer deny our VUCA reality.

I loved meeting Peter Hinssen around 2015 because we were both trying to get large organizations to understand and respond to VUCA - though few were paying attention back then. VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) originated in the 1980s from the United States Military as a way to describe what they saw as the defining characteristics of the post-Cold War reality. And that was before the digital revolution!

While macro trends may have been hitting the military and large multinationals first, it was only a matter of time before the shockwave of VUCA hit Main Street. Companies have been able to largely ignore VUCA trends like the accelerating impacts of climate change, massive global migration patterns, political extremism, dual-operating economic systems leading to wealth inequality, cyber security threats. The list goes on and on. But in 2020, no company or person has been untouched by COVID.





If we can take away one silver lining from this terrible, horrible year, let's hope that leaders can finally acknowledge that in the face of VUCA they don't have all the answers. They can't strategize their way out of it in the traditional sense.

Hopefully there's a quick second silver lining: the recognition that there are those among us who are essentially born VUCA-ready. Individuals that actually **thrive** solving big, wicked, complex problems and galvanize communities to action. These individuals love connecting the dots and sense making. They see visions of better futures, leverage emergent ways of creating those positive outcomes and they move into action quickly to make it a reality. They embody an experimentation and growth mindset. We call these VUCA-ready people Catalysts.

A key takeaway from 2020 for leaders of any size organization, from large multinationals to mom-and-pop shops: those organizations that can identify, support and empower their Catalysts will have a distinct advantage moving forward. Because if we've learned anything this year, we are undeniably living in a VUCA world.

# CONVERGING CRISES FORCE COMPANIES TO RE-EXAMINE THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

**By Jessica Groopman,  
Industry Analyst & Founding  
Partner at Kaleido Insights**



*“Global crises call for global solutions. What these efforts have in common is not merely about crisis response; it is about prioritizing “good” for stakeholders, while exploring alternative (often digital), more collaborative and inclusive economic models.”*

Digital and societal disruptions of the last decade, accentuated by the events of 2020, are forcing organizations to reckon with the fact that **normal wasn't working**. The confluence of crises– pandemic, climate, economic, racial, technological, and trust– is forcing businesses to recalibrate their operating models while confronting rising tensions. This is not merely an exercise in “purpose-building,” as has been en vogue in recent years, this requires a fundamental rethinking of their “social contract,” the relationship and responsibilities organizations have with all stakeholders (customers, employees, their communities)– not just shareholders.

**2020 was the inflection point.** According to [Edelman](#), half of people globally believe business is doing poorly or completely failing at putting people before profits during the pandemic. But the unravelling of the implicit value exchange started long before the pandemic upended the economy, shifting millions into remote working environments, and laying bare society's ugliest and most deadly inequities.

## **AS TENSIONS COMPOUND, DIGITAL UNDERLIES EMERGENT RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES.**


In recent years, questions of digital investment and transformation have been increasingly saddled with questions of power vs. stewardship, speed vs. ethics, and profits vs. environmental and societal impact. Emerging technologies are only accelerating these questions, not only in cases of AI displacing jobs, widening the digital divide, or environmental degradation, but with the digitization of “identity” and “wellness” via biometrics, sensors, wearables, voice and facial recognition (and beyond). Questions of data ownership, business models, consent, safeguards, and value(s) smolder as organizations amass, analyze, and monetize ever more behavioral, biometric, and other data.

Simultaneously, digital tools underlie several emergent, more equitable and participatory structures, such as distributed governance platforms, crowd equity models, and community-driven solutions.

## **TODAY'S TENSIONS WILL BE THE DIFFERENTIATION FOR TOMORROW'S LEADERS.**

While 2020 upended our lives and assumptions and accelerated several digital trends, it prompted countless organizations to step up, fill the void, and take responsibility:

- Supporting their employees with expanded mental health and benefits offerings
- Investing in security, safety, inclusion programs
- Offering free or discounted services to communities in need
- Pivoting business, production, distribution models in support of societal needs
- Enacting new or relaxing existing policies in support of safety and health
- Participating in open data models to accelerate research and innovation
- Accelerating community equity models, mutual aid, and digital peer-to-peer networks



Global crises call for global solutions. What these efforts have in common is not merely about crisis response; it is about prioritizing “good” for stakeholders, while exploring alternative (often digital), more collaborative and inclusive economic models. And it may well be laying the foundation for how today’s innovators will steward value at much greater scale tomorrow.

**Part III**

# **THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD**



# WE'LL NEED TO TURN THE PANDEMIC INTO AN OPPORTUNITY

**By Philipp Kristian Diekhöner,  
trust futurist & innovation  
strategist**

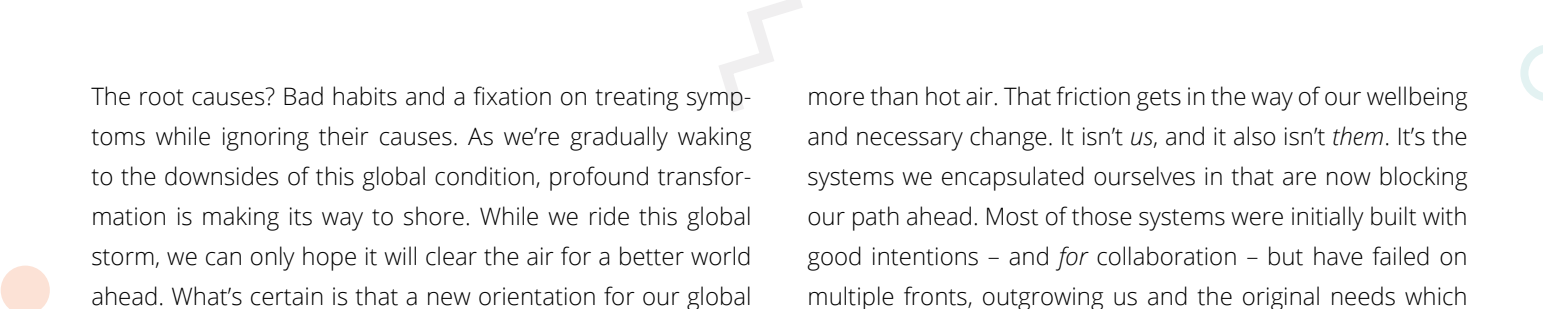


*"It's the systems we encapsulated ourselves in that are now blocking our path ahead. Most of them were initially built with good intentions – and for collaboration – but have failed on multiple fronts, outgrowing us and the original needs which were their raison d'être."*

COVID turned the world upside down quite a bit. The hardships many people suffered during this unprecedented time are worthy of the utmost recognition and empathy. But as the eternal optimist that I am, despite feeling the impact, I've gained perspective (and, probably weight...)

Yes, I *do* choose to see a silver lining in the food for thought it gives us, and I'm the first to say yes to a degustation of something new and strange. However tragic the global unfolding of this pandemic, it offers unique insight into the downsides of our hyper-globalized world and the often-calcified systems upholding it. These issues are more urgent and obvious than ever, which gives us a pristine opportunity to address them – for *our* future.

It's an optimistic rallying call for all of us to respond to the neon writing on the wall that is COVID-19. To say it esoterically, Mother Earth may have acutely fallen ill with COVID, but she'd already been chronically disposed to ill-health, plagued by the problems that we as humans have created – for example, climate change and geopolitical mayhem.




The root causes? Bad habits and a fixation on treating symptoms while ignoring their causes. As we're gradually waking to the downsides of this global condition, profound transformation is making its way to shore. While we ride this global storm, we can only hope it will clear the air for a better world ahead. What's certain is that a new orientation for our global humanity is increasingly inevitable. We like to overestimate the pace of mega-change arising but underestimate its magnitude. Doing so reflects our human nature to stick to old habits, even when something promising is on the horizon. But humankind frequently surprises itself. My hunch is that much of the change awaiting us is actually a return to things that are inherently human.


Human nature is a potent foundation from which all sorts of things can manifest. Unfortunately, the more we put systems in place that detach us from the people we share our lives with and lead us to distrust our fellow folks, the less likely it is that we will lean toward the good. Once we take a closer look at how we interact and transact with each other globally, we discover a consequential amount of friction getting in the way. To this effect, it shouldn't be a surprise when many of our attempts at solving problems on a global scale yield little

more than hot air. That friction gets in the way of our wellbeing and necessary change. It isn't *us*, and it also isn't *them*. It's the systems we encapsulated ourselves in that are now blocking our path ahead. Most of those systems were initially built with good intentions – and *for* collaboration – but have failed on multiple fronts, outgrowing us and the original needs which were their *raison d'être*. Many have unfortunately triggered antagonism within us, both against said systems and our fellow people.

Humans know to use their social intelligence to make sure one and one equals three. When we speak about change these days, sentiments tend to focus on what we lose instead of what we stand to gain. Only those looking past legacy see light on the horizon. This, in itself, could be a problem as it elucidates how we've gridlocked ourselves into a situation too large to manage for the tools we have in our arsenal today. It might mean we are confined to seeing change as a trade-off and this discernment needs to evolve. COVID-19 has turned the world upside down. But what lies beyond the ruins of the unprecedented disaster we've all just faced is an opportunity to ask the questions we really need answered. Those questions should make us wonder why a pandemic like this can



bring large parts of our human civilization to a halt. What did, and didn't we do, that led us here?



I wish more than ever that this new normal we are amidst will bear as a reminder for humanity of our very own nature and the beauty that surrounds us. Even in our fragmented understanding of the whole, we can mobilize and make changes that will transform our world for the better. I really hope and wish the future of humanity sounds like a mixtape of its greatest hits, rather than a cheap cover album of past masters.

I know we will take the hint, and make the change. It's time to reset towards a new and improved *us*. I look forward to enacting this exponentially greater future with you, all my clientele, and the many wonderful people I encounter in my path on this beautiful planet. Together, we'll emerge stronger from this. For our future generations, and the wonderful world we could give them.



# GEOPOLITICS IN THE NEVER NORMAL

**By Peter Hinssen,  
Partner @ nexxworks,  
author & keynote speaker**




*“There is no more world order, and the geopolitical landscape is more unstable than at the peak of the Cold War during the Cuban Missile Crisis.”*

In his Magnum Opus “World Order”, Henry Kissinger described the recipe for strategic disaster: “You cannot remain relevant by simply projecting the familiar forward”. As we’re drawn further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by the dawn of a new decade, the very concept of ‘world order’ seems more elusive than ever before.

I’m a prodigious fan of Ian Bremmer, the NYU professor and political scientist who coined the ‘G-ZERO’ concept. In the realms of the G-20 summits, the G-8 gatherings and the G-7 world leaders, we’re now down to G-zero. There is no more world order, and the geopolitical landscape is more unstable than at the peak of the Cold War during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The pandemic of 2020 only accelerated the propensity towards a more unstable global order. Not only did we see an intensity of the tensions between the US and China, where a trade war escalated into a full blown technological cold-war deadlock. On top of that we have seen the rise of the technological digital giants, who grew even mightier as a result of



COVID-19. This evolution clearly illustrated the further transition of power from nation states towards corporations, towards the global technological platforms.

One thing is clear: Geopolitics is back on the agenda. The post pandemic world will see a completely different future for the further globalization of the world economy. Geopolitical tensions and biological or ecological seismic shocks could considerably force companies to rethink global supply chains.

In all this global instability, I remain the perennial technological optimist. In the decade to come, we will witness the true nature of disruption, when its 'virus' spreads to exciting fields as healthcare, food, agriculture and energy. These will probably create even more systemic shifts in society and economy than the 'digital' revolution of the last decade. With that background of impending disruptions, in the light of this global instability, companies, countries and regions will have to dramatically accelerate their Day After Tomorrow vision.

In a region like Europe, wedged between the US and Asia, the very nature of its relevance on the global scene is at stake.

The agonizing Brexit debacle has shown the cracks in the system, and although recently Europe has shown extremely high levels of ambition (the Green Deal for example), it will require more than narrative and rhetoric to reclaim the relevance of the Grand Old Lady.

One thing is clear: Kissinger was right. In this exciting future ahead of us, the most foolish thing to do is to 'project the familiar forward.' A recipe for disaster, indeed. Instead, we need fresh thinking, novel ideas and skillful creativity to master the transition to this Never Normal.

# ON THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

**by Jerry Michalski,  
technology consultant  
& keynote speaker**



*“Somewhere along the line, we lost faith in humans, and started designing institutions that tried to compensate for our failings. That was a mistake.”*



Democracy.

Such an attractive word! Half the world has been convinced that democracy is the apex of human civilization. This force is so strong that the other half -- often run by autocrats -- tries hard to pretend they too have democracy.

But I'm not sure many of us are practicing democracy in a useful way, even those of us in the first half of the population.

Part of our problem is that we've outsourced democracy. We engage in it when big elections come up, but otherwise we leave governing to the professional class of politicians. Instead of being citizens governing together, we are now mere consumers of democracy.

Actual democratic engagement turned into Politics, which in turn was eaten by consumer mass-market capitalism. Politics is mass marketing. Politicians advertise their stances to us, using ever-better data about what words we respond to well and what issues we hold dear -- all of which is a marketing veneer,



ever more distant from actually shaping our society together, quaint or difficult as that may seem.

The problems run deeper than voting. In a working democracy, you would expect that the major institutions like businesses and schools would be eminently democratic, but ours are not: they are highly autocratic. Within their realms, bosses and teachers are minor deities. It is the rare-exception enterprise that practices workplace democracy; democratic free schools are oddities, not the norm.

A major source of our dysfunctions is that we don't trust ourselves in any of these roles: not as citizens, employees or students. Somewhere along the line, we lost faith in humans, and started designing institutions that tried to compensate for our failings. That was a mistake.

There is good news. Organizations everywhere are experimenting with trust, creating systems that assume that most participants have good intent. We are so accustomed to the old, no-trust systems that the trust-based ones seem like they'll never work. Take for example, the Wikipedia. When you first learned how it works, didn't it sound impossible? Yet it works, and it works because the invitation to any person -- any citizen -- to make Wikipedia better is a gesture of trust.

We should build more such gestures.

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SYNTHETIC FUTURE


**By Tom Van de Weghe,  
Foreign Correspondent VRT NWS  
& AI & Geopolitics strategist**



*“As the impact of images, video and audio is more immediate than text, they undermine a most basic principle of humanity: can we still believe our eyes?”*

We’re entering a new world where synthetic media technologies are being commercialized and made widely available to all of us, just one swipe away on our smartphones. This will spark tremendous new business opportunities. But we must also be aware of the risks and threats that will come along.

Synthetic media are being created with the help of generative artificial intelligence. By applying algorithms to existing data like voices, pictures or videos we can produce newly synthesized or artificial digital content. The technology for synthesizing media has been improving quickly. It’s already fueling a completely new ecosystem. From reviving a historical figure for educational purposes to digitally cloning a popular news anchor who is forced into retirement. In the near future your favorite weather forecaster delivers you a personalized weather forecast for your city, maybe even in your favorite dialect. Advertisers could generate synthetic characters to appeal to specific demographic groups. A famous actor can choose to have his face, body and voice professionally synthesized and make this available on a “synthetic media marketplace”.



But generative AI is a double-edged sword. The technology can be also be used by malicious actors to mislead people, to trick authentication systems and to create forged audio recordings. These so-called deepfakes (synthesized media “for bad”) could be weaponized by governments, activist groups or individuals. They are rapidly becoming one of the most feared cybersecurity threats for the coming years. Fraudulent clips of business leaders could tank companies or swing markets. Politicians could face crippling reputational damage on the eve of elections. Or anyone with a profile picture on social media platforms could suddenly turn up as a leading star in a deepfaked revenge porn video.

Deepfakes are raising the stakes in our struggle to know the truth. As the impact of images, video and audio is more immediate than text, they undermine a most basic principle of humanity: can we still believe our eyes? This is the next chapter in the fake news era. Luckily, we already see tech giants, cyber security groups and governments stepping up their battle against deepfakes. Digital tools are being developed to spot them. But much more is needed than a technological solution.

We should also invest in developing digital literacy and behavioral practices. Deepfakes should be understood as reflecting a societal problem, especially in communities where polarization and hyper-partisanship are already high. Just like with any other viral pandemic, we should strive to ‘inoculate’ people against any form of disinformation in order to strengthen our mental antibodies. Only this will help us to build up a “herd immunity” against it.

# ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

**By Raya Bidshahri,  
CEO of Awecademy, futurist &  
educator**




*“The Future of Education is interdisciplinary. This is because reality is interdisciplinary. Subjects and disciplines only exist in our minds as part of our collective imagination.”*

What most of us agree upon is that the current education model needs to be revisited for the future. But the path to move forward is not always presented as clearly. I believe that these will be the most essential pillars to redesign education in a way that it will adapt to the current fast moving and highly uncertain times:

**The Future of Education is modularized.** Instead of being driven by 4-year degrees and longitudinal courses, the trend is increasingly focused on micro-learning and on-demand content. In a world of accelerating change and constant disruption due to exponential technologies, education can no longer be limited to formal institutions, but instead needs to be a life-long journey of adaptivity. This leads to the rise of micro-credentials, micro-courses, and nano-degrees, driven by the evolving needs of the workforce.

**The Future of Education is interdisciplinary.** This is because reality is interdisciplinary. Subjects and disciplines only exist in our minds as part of our collective imagination. If you look at any local or global challenge - whether it be the climate



emergency or a pandemic - no single discipline can explain and solve that challenge. Rather, a collection of them can. Consequently, we need to focus the curriculum on interdisciplinary themes, transferrable skills, and global challenges.

**The Future of Education is personalized.** Adaptive learning technologies, such as A.I and Machine Learning are allowing learning pathways and courses to be customized to each learner, based on their individual strengths, weaknesses, and learning progress. This allows personalized education to scale, and automate processes that enable educators to focus on social and emotional support. Big data analytics can allow for deeper insights into student learning and the automatic creation of personalized learning playlists.

**The Future of Education is mission-driven and meaningful.** Instead of assessing learners through meaningless standardized and summative exams, they will be assessed through a variety of meaningful micro-assessments throughout the learning journey. Meaningful assessments mean allowing learners to demonstrate their mastery of skills in a way that suits them best, whether it be through presentations,

case studies, or projects. Above all, learners are assessed through their positive impact on the world.

This vision for the future of education is not guaranteed. Instead, it is something we will have to execute and co-create together. On top of execution, it requires a radical openness and an exciting vision.



# THE DUAL CIRCULATION TREND


**By Pascal Coppens,  
China Keynote Speaker  
& Author**



*“China’s model for an uncertain future is less about making choices or strategies; and more about thinking ‘AND’ instead of ‘OR’.”*

Most of us want to forget 2020 as quickly as possible. Looking at how well China handled the crisis has fallen on deaf ears. As long as the pandemic keeps affecting our life, career, business and society, most of us have other priorities than to learn from China. But since we now regained a fresh perspective on our future; why not finally look back at the first country that managed to get back to normal?

In 2020, every government made hard choices, but none of the Western countries won the virus war like China did. The choices that we made didn't deliver the expected outcome. We were compelled to choose between public health or economy; between privacy or tracing; between mental or physical health. Our leaders were forced to defend a position supported by data, experts and opinion leaders. They also had to reach broad social consensus as well as internal political support, to mostly make delayed, unpopular and painful decisions.



In China, I witnessed very a different dynamic during the outbreak. China made less choices as they combined all options instead of selecting them. They combined wearing masks, banning travel, isolation, testing, tracing, control, community support, Western healthcare, traditional Chinese medicine, factories producing health essentials instead of their regular products (textile players making masks, distillers of liquor producing disinfectants...), staff from retail stores were hired out to deliver groceries, ... Simply put, China's governmental and business leaders made choices that reinforced each other.

This 'reinforcing' model for 2021 is what China now calls the 'dual circulation' strategy, where one choice is preferred, but the alternative is activated to reinforce the prime choice.

In a geopolitical context, the 'Dual Circulation Strategy' is a response to counter the rift with the United States – another major crisis China needs to deal with. It relies on an "internal circulation" - a prime focus on an internal economic growth model – but supported by an "external circulation" to attract foreign investment by opening up further their domestic market. China hereby wants to reduce the role of international

trade in its economy, and strengthen its domestic economy. Politics aside, we can draw a lesson in how to become more self-reliant and resilient whilst creating more leverage over external factors. A lesson that could help us all rebound faster from this crisis.

China's model for an uncertain future is therefore less about making choices or strategies; and more about thinking 'AND' instead of 'OR'. In 2021, China will try to connect tighter with those that create internal benefits for China; whilst minimizing external linkages that create a risks or bad image. China will seek a path of more inclusion, more fairness, more sustainability and much more openness – foremost internally, but also externally - or more harmony as Beijing likes to call it. The question for the West is whether we are willing to start learning again from China to deploy a 'dual circulation model' that could help any government or company to recover faster in 2021? Why not think 'AND' from now on?

# IT IS NOT TECHNOLOGY BUT BIOLOGY THAT WILL SAVE US<sup>1</sup>

**By Leen Gorissen, Innovation  
Biologist & Sustainability  
Transitions Expert**



***“Innovation very often leads to degradation. It is a terminal system. Regeneration, on the other hand, allows a system to become more and do more.”***

As humans, we created and achieved incredible things. We conquered every piece of land and mobilized every bit of resource for human expansion. But our progress comes with serious side effects. Climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, declining health and quality of life,... Innovation very often leads to degradation. It is a terminal system. But there is another way. Some organisms have managed to stay alive for millions of years despite endless disruption and major upheaval. That is because they achieved something that has eluded us till now: to create a healthier, wealthier and more viable planet, not just for the next generation but for countless generations after that. Mushrooms make rain, whales cool the climate, termites green the desert and plankton create clouds. The strategies of these survival champions are simple:


1. Leave the wider ecosystem better than you found it
2. Invest in the health of others to ensure your own
3. Improve agility, resilience and robustness through collaboration and self-organization

<sup>1</sup>Resources for Leen Gorissen's article :

Leen Gorissen. 2020. Building the Future of Innovation on Millions of years of Natural Intelligence. Wordzworth. <https://www.naturalintelligence.info>

PROJECT DRAWDOWN. A Drawdown primer. 2020. Farming Our Way Out of the Climate Crisis. [https://drawdown.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/DrawdownPrimer\\_FoodAgLandUse\\_Dec2020\\_01a.pdf](https://drawdown.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/DrawdownPrimer_FoodAgLandUse_Dec2020_01a.pdf)

Chami R et al. 2019. International Monetary Fund. "Nature's Solution to Climate Change." Finance & Development 56, no. 4. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2019/12/natures-solution-to-climate-change-chami.htm>



This process of renewal is called regeneration. It allows a system to become more and do more. The solution to the tsunami of problems that the Industrial Age left in its wake therefore, comes from biology, not technology. An International Monetary Fund (IMF) report of 2019 demonstrates that restoring whale populations could lead to a breakthrough in the fight against climate change. This approach is not only cheaper, but more effective and less risky than many proposed man-made, high-tech alternatives like geo-engineering. The study shows that if whales were allowed to return to their pre-whaling number of 4 to 5 million (it is estimated that there are about 1 million left today), it could significantly add to the amount of phytoplankton in the oceans and consequently to the carbon that is drawn down into the oceans each year. Researchers calculated that even a 1% increase in phytoplankton productivity—thanks to whale activity—would sequester hundreds of millions of tons of additional carbon a year. And it would boost the economy too. What works in the ocean, also works on land. If we shift from degenerative to regenerative agriculture, scientists estimate that global soil carbon resto-

ration could sequester up to more than 400 gigaton of carbon in total. If done right, we can farm our way out of the climate crisis over the next 30 years. So, the question is not can it be done but will we be able to muster the will, the guts and the courage to elevate our thinking from a for-profit to a for-life value logic. By enabling the NI, or Natural Intelligence, that is as old as life, we can flip tragedy into prosperity. What are we waiting for?

# ABOUT NEXXWORKS

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Nexxworks inspires and connects innovators all over the world. We help organizations kickstart their innovation – through our many open and tailor-made programs – by confronting them with the latest evolutions in business and technology and by encouraging them to combine a long-term vision with short-term initiatives. Our thought-leading community of innovation keynote speakers - Raya Bidshahri, Pascal Coppens, Philipp Kristian Diekhöner, Peter Hinssen, Heather E. McGowan, Jerry Michalski, Nancy Rademaker, April Rinne, Steven Van Belleghem and Rik Vera - is the beating heart of our network.

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