



2007 TEN-YEAR FORECAST: PERSPECTIVES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE FUTURE IS A PASSAGE THROUGH WORLDS WE'VE YET TO IMAGINE

Human transitions are accomplished through passages—whether culturally sanctioned personal rites of passage or huge migrations that, only in retrospect, can be seen as movements from one way of life to another. These passages are often stormy, frightening, chaotic. They call on previously untapped human abilities, both personal and cultural, to navigate through worlds that appear to be disintegrating, hopefully to put the pieces back together in a new configuration, a new kind of living.

We suspect that, like migrants, we humans are all beginning a long trek through strange territories we have only rumors of. The rumors come in many forms from many sources, some more reliable than others. While science-fiction images of cyborg cultures and long-standing tales of apocalypse seep into our imaginations—and even lead us down particular roads—more measured forecasts help us put together the intelligence we need to make rational, if also unexpectedly innovative, choices at each step.

This year, the *Ten-Year Forecast* presents ten new *Perspectives*. They can help us begin to imagine the worlds we will pass through in the coming decades, as well as the world we will create through that passage. But perhaps more important, we point to some fundamental shifts in the imaginative tools we will need to get there.



ECONOMICS: ECOSCIENCE IN THE MARKETPLACE

In the face of a deteriorating natural environment, how will developments in ecoscience, marketplace innovations, and the political sphere interact over the next decades to change the way we manage the environment and market products and services? **Nine experts** helped us build a map of the next 50 years—and think through the implications of carbon, water, and air quality markets.

—Alex Pang, Kathi Vian, Jamais Cascio & Matt Chwierut



DEMOGRAPHICS: EXTREME LONGEVITY

Even as the global population appears to be tilting strongly toward the aged, will life-extension technologies and new cultural patterns keep people forever young? In a conversation with **Aubrey de Grey** and **Nick Bostrom**, we explore the real potential for longer lifespans and a population that is actually getting younger, not older.

—Jamais Cascio



POLITICS: PARTICIPATORY PANOPTICON

As camera phones, webcams, and other mobile network devices become increasingly commonplace, will privacy and even secrecy become things of the past? **David Brin** adds his perspective on reciprocal accountability to our own forecast about the ways in which so-called life caching—capturing the daily details of one's life electronically—will change the way we age, the way we think, and the way we manage the people who manage us.

—Jamais Cascio



CULTURE: DIGITAL NATIVES, CIVIC SPACES

With the explosion of youth media, what can we expect from a generation of Digital Natives as they enter the civic sphere with new abilities to deconstruct media messages and offer up their own critique? **Henry Jenkins** and **Howard Rheingold** consider the potential for a new civic literacy as we share our own survey results for three new indexes on smart networking, collective behavior, and a literacy of the commons.

—Howard Rheingold



MANUFACTURING: DO-IT-YOURSELF?

As 3D printers become more capable and less expensive, will they expand beyond the realm of design prototyping to transform the practice of manufacturing and perhaps even drive some kinds of production into the home?

Bruce Sterling and **David Pescovitz** trade viewpoints on do-it-yourself futures as we share our new Do-It-Yourself Index.

—Jamais Cascio & Alex Soojung-Kim Pang

A LONGER VIEW

A longer view is clearly needed as so many slow but huge waves of fundamental change begin to present themselves for our consideration. Climate change, the decline of the carbon fuel economy, the growth of a pervasive culture of urban slums, and the prospects for bioengineering on the scale of an industrial revolution all have their roots in the present and their most disruptive consequences in the very long term. To collectively sift through those consequences and make choices today that will sustain the world through this century and beyond, we will need collaborative tools and cooperative strategies that can engage an entire planet. We will need techniques to filter the massive and growing amounts of present-day data to see the patterns of the future. We will need economies and communities with feedback mechanisms to bring us into alignment with these impending futures. We may even find ourselves bioengineering the very way we think about the future.

AN ECOLOGICAL WAY OF THINKING

If time is one dimension of our imaginative toolkit, complexity is another, and to operate in the complexity of global human society, we will slowly adopt a more ecological way of thinking. Drawing on the last 30 or so years of ecological science and complexity theory, we will begin to see the world through an increasingly multifaceted lens. Our networking intelligence will begin to reveal connections we could not have anticipated, and our growing literacy in networking tools will usher in new processes—intellectual, economic, and civic—for distributed seeing and describing, deciding, and acting. Externalities will slowly disappear from our economic models, and the language of econometrics, from price per gallon to gross domestic product, may become but an embedded function in more compelling ecological models. Those models, in turn, may prove to be emergent frameworks that can be viewed and tuned but not invented by humans.

DÉTENTE WITH DILEMMA

Finally, we will need to reach some kind of détente with dilemma. Well-schooled in solving problems, we will need to re-school ourselves in the art of acting intelligently (and perhaps also compassionately) in situations that have no solution. We will have to find tools and processes for teasing out the first-, second-, and third-order dilemmas in these situations; for reconciling multiple stakeholders; and for designing processes that generate new value out of apparent conflicts of interest. A world with no externalities is a world where dilemma is the name of the game, and how well we learn this lesson will have much to do with our individual and collective success over the next decade.

We hope that, embedded in this year's *Ten-Year Forecast*, you find some of the insights, frameworks, tools, and processes that will help you cultivate and apply these new ways of thinking about the future. At the core of each of these thinking tools is the ability to draw connections. So we not only present a summary of the *Perspectives* here; we also take the first step toward connecting the dots between them and then drawing the implications at the important intersections.



FINANCE: INTANGIBLE REFORMS

Confronted with growing environmental uncertainty and heightened social risk, will the financial community find new kinds of instruments—building on new kinds of measures—to mitigate the risks? **Jed Emerson** shares his views on blended value, as we look at the prospects for a growing sophistication in managing multiple capitals: financial, intellectual, natural, and social.

—Jessica Margolin



ASIA: CHINESE CONSUMER COLLECTIVES

Given a history of collectivism, will the emerging Chinese practice of consumer collectives transform the retail markets of China—and perhaps spread to the West as well?

Sam Flemming reflects on the use of bulletin board systems (BBS) for consumer coordination in China, as we look at how the Internet is supporting the spread of consumer collectives to all parts of China.

—Lyn Jeffery



COMMUNITIES: CITIZENS OF SUSTAINABILITY

As people increasingly draw the link between their personal health and the well-being of the community, will we move beyond so-called “green consumers” to an emerging class of “sustainability citizens” with a powerful local focus?

Wal-Mart's **Monica Mullins** helps us understand how a global company can drive sustainability values and address local needs while we report on our Citizens of Sustainability Index.

—Kathi Vian & Mani Pande



EDUCATION: OPEN ECONOMY MAKEOVER

Facing growing criticism from all sides, will public K–12 education now confront the additional disruption of open-economy practices, and will that disruption eventually pave the way for new strategies to the complex social dilemmas that plague the institution? Our **Open Economy Toolkit** provides a framework for us to think through how network structures, self-organizing groups, and cooperative practices may recast the future of public education.

—Andrea Saveri



SCIENCE: THE NEXT REVOLUTION?

As fundamental uncertainty begins to pervade the world of science, will we find that our technologies have outpaced our ability to understand the kinds of changes they are wreaking? **Jerry Ravetz** explains what he sees as an era of post-normal science as we explore the impacts of evolutionary design, complexity theory, exabytes of information, and the failure of grand theories on the future of science.

—Alex Soojung-Kim Pang

CONNECTIONS

COLLABORATIVE EVOLUTION

- Participatory Panopticon
- Extreme Longevity
- Ecoscience

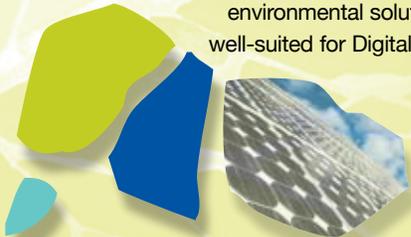
One key value of networked collaboration is the ability to work closely with people thousands of miles away. One form of this collaboration can be mutual monitoring and evaluation of health and environmental conditions, with members of a network team serving as trusted advisors, offering feedback on choices and results. Local experiences, aggregated across different locations, provide rich data sources, and as collaborators work together for extended periods (increasingly common in an era of radical longevity), mutual understanding and trust deepen. The technologies of the participatory panopticon become tools for collaborative well-being, not just collaborative politics.



THE GREEN PANOPTICON

- Citizens of Sustainability
- Ecoscience
- Participatory Panopticon

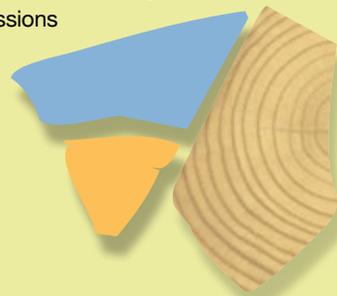
Broadband wireless networks, cheap and powerful sensors, and a growing public awareness of the need for better and timelier environmental information can combine for ecological sousveillance: an “inconvenient truth” panopticon, using an explosion of personal mobile devices for measuring, monitoring, and understanding a rapidly changing environment. Such tools could be passive, such as sensors that upload data whenever a network-connected device (such as a mobile phone) comes near, or could be active, such as tools that give citizens a means of tagging sources of environmental damage (or examples of environmental solutions). These tools are particularly well-suited for Digital Natives, putting student collaboration at the cutting edge of global ecological research.



NEW RULES FOR A NEW GENERATION

- Participatory Panopticon
- Digital Natives
- Citizens of Sustainability

Digital Natives are stepping into a world where distributed, networked tools of communication and awareness are commonplace, and where large-scale environmental challenges have the potential to become the most significant issue of the century. This cohort has a very different attitude toward both of these issues than do most members of earlier generations. As Digital Natives take on greater economic and political responsibility, rules concerning topics such as privacy, anonymity, and participation are likely to change in significant ways. A generation accustomed to casual online visibility and deeply aware of the growing climate threat is likely to embrace public accountability regarding environmental behavior: emissions quotas, carbon footprint records, and other measures that could easily seem like invasions of privacy to earlier generations.



“INSTRUCTABLE” HEALTH

- Extreme Longevity
- Open Economy Education
- Manufacturing

The DIY (do it yourself) philosophy—a cornerstone of the emerging manufacturing and design world—is also starting to take root in the arena of health. Today, collaborative Web sites provide real-time dietary advice, the history of individual food items (via barcodes scanned by camera phone), and even information on local biohazards. As these pervasive just-in-time learning systems proliferate, interested individuals will have access to myriad details regarding what’s affecting their health, and how to change it. Combine this with open-source DIY biotech, and we have the makings of a revolution in personal health care. Big question: will this be in cooperation with established health institutions, or in opposition?



VERY LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS

- Extreme Longevity
- Intangible Reforms
- Citizens of Sustainability

How much of our view of time horizons is based on how long we have to live? One of the more important initial changes arising out of revolution in biogerontology may be a fundamental shift in how we understand risk. Unlike most of the social and political effects of extreme longevity, which wouldn't see full expression for decades, our appreciation of risk and opportunity could easily start changing almost immediately. We would be more likely to see decisions with costs incurred decades later in more personal terms—and choices with short near-term costs as taking a less significant part of our lives. While in principle this could lead to a greater sense of responsibility, it could also lead to a "I have plenty of time" culture of reduced motivation for action.



VALUES-BASED COLLECTIVE BUYING

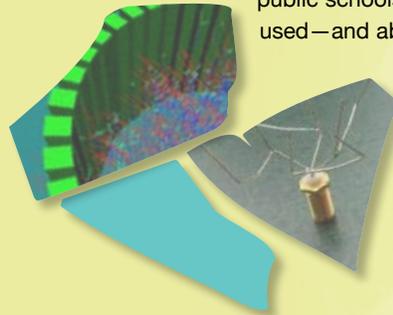
- Chinese Consumer Collectives
- Intangible Reforms
- Citizens of Sustainability

The economies of coordination that we noted in last year's *Ten-Year Forecast* will show up in the Internet-enabled consumer collectives of China in all kinds of settings, from rural villages to human resources in big companies. At the same time, U.S. citizens of sustainability are finding their own basis for contributing to their local communities and building new kinds of commons. As consumer collectives spread globally—they almost certainly will—and as people everywhere turn their attention to the escalating risks in the environment and society at large, it is likely that they will begin to form buying coalitions around shared values. Not only could these new coalitions change the face of retail, but they will also almost certainly change the way companies manage their multiple capitals, including natural resources, social networks, and intellectual property. This new literacy of multiple capitals will, in turn, filter down to individuals, reinforcing the values-based buying patterns in a possibly virtuous cycle of wealth generation from new social, environmental, and intellectual practices.

SIMULATION LITERACY

- Ecoscience
- Open Economy Education
- Science Revolution

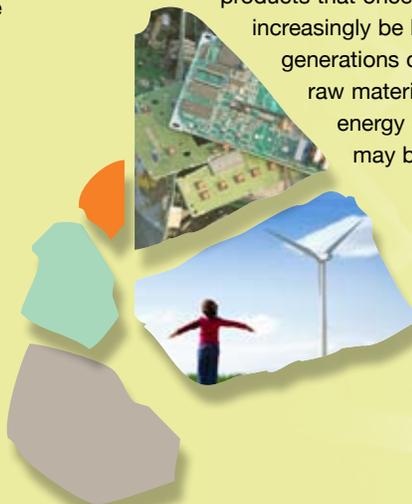
More powerful computers and emerging scientific models have pushed simulation to the forefront of tools for understanding the world. While this is most visible with climate science, simulations have taken on real importance in subjects from epidemiology to industrial design; much of the planning for pandemic outbreaks, for example, now relies on simulations. These tools are increasingly able to deal with complex environments and provide insights into the more subtle workings of emergent systems, including collaborative economies. As powerful simulations move from supercomputers to laptops and from government labs to public schools, awareness of how simulations can be used—and abused—is becoming a critical skill.



WASTE AS AN ASSET

- Manufacturing
- Ecoscience
- Citizens of Sustainability

One of the key insights of modern environmentalism is that waste—whether we mean waste material or waste energy—is a sign of inefficiency. One way to reduce that inefficiency is to reduce the amount of waste generated by a process; another way is to use that waste as a component in another process. As we move into a world that embraces both sustainability and new technologies of manufacturing, waste products that once would be shipped off to a landfill will increasingly be looked at as base material for new generations of production. Further, as the cost of raw materials for production rises to account for energy and greenhouse gas footprints, landfills may be re-imagined as a resource commons.



2007 TEN-YEAR FORECAST TOOLKIT

In addition to the ten *Perspectives* in this year's *Ten-Year Forecast*, the following tools are designed to help you leverage the forecasts in your own organizational planning and strategic forecasting efforts.

2007 Map of the Decade

Methodology: The Open Economy Toolkit

Data: 2006 Ten-Year Forecast Signals Survey

Practice: Get There Early

Human-Future Interaction: The 2007 Videos

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