

Art in Transformation

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

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Contents

3 Executive summary

4 1 Insights and trends

4 1.1 Current perspectives

8 2 Strategic context

8 2.1 Therapeutic Virtual Reality

9 2.2 Immersive Storytelling

9 2.3 Media and Emerging Technologies

10 2.4 From Generating to Acting

10 2.5 Immersive Media and Art

11 2.6 AI and the Metaverse

12 References

13 About Strategic Intelligence

16 Contributors

16 Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

Explore the interactive version online

The key issues shaping and influencing Art in Transformation are as follows:

Therapeutic Virtual Reality
Safely supporting mental health regardless of physical proximity

Immersive Storytelling
Virtual reality technology can instil empathy and spur greater awareness of environmental issues

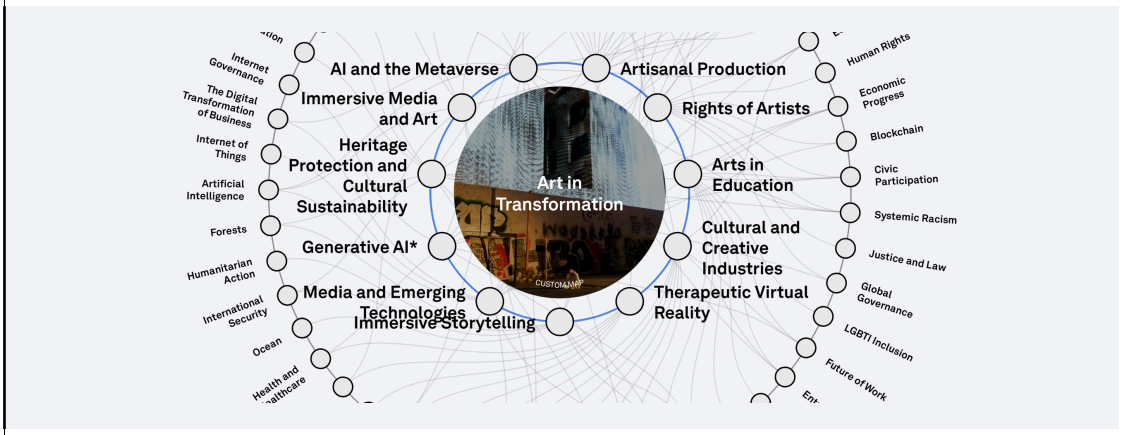
Media and Emerging Technologies
Technology's impact on the media industry has been amplified by the pandemic

From Generating to Acting
AI models that generate text and media are transforming creativity while raising new challenges

Immersive Media and Art
Novel cinematic experiences are being created, and old art is being revisited in new ways

AI and the Metaverse
Artificial intelligence, and generative AI in particular, will increasingly intersect with virtual worlds

Below is an excerpt from the transformation map for Art in Transformation, with key issues shown at the centre and related topics around the perimeter. You can find the full map later in this briefing.



In the following sections, we give a comprehensive summary of the latest **Insights and Trends** shaping the topic, a look at potential **Forecasts and Scenarios** based on current and emerging trends, and an overview of the **Strategic Context**.

1 Insights and trends

A synthesis of the most recent expert analysis.

1.1 Current perspectives

IESE

As machines learn, AI erodes the human monopoly on tacit knowledge

15 October 2026

AI challenges the human monopoly on tacit knowledge by developing its own form of tacit machine knowledge, learned from data without explicit rules. Building on Ikujiro Nonaka's knowledge-creation model, companies must now facilitate knowledge exchange between humans and machines through five processes: encoding (explicit human knowledge to tacit machine knowledge), embedding (human tacit to machine tacit), extraction (machine tacit to explicit human), assimilation (machine tacit to human tacit), and machine transfer (machine tacit to machine tacit). Unlike human tacit knowledge, machine knowledge can be shared rapidly at scale, transforming innovation environments and requiring organizations to nurture integrated human-machine knowledge flows.

LSE Business Review

America's new banking risk regulation overlooks AI and shifts the burden of defence

13 October 2026

The new U.S. banking model risk regulation, SR 26-2, replaces the 2011 SR 11-7 by shifting from prescriptive rules to a principles-based, proportional approach requiring banks to defend their chosen model risk frameworks. While offering flexibility, this change transfers the supervisory burden onto banks rather than reducing oversight. Notably, the updated rule excludes generative and agentic AI models pending future guidance, leaving banks accountable but without specific regulatory playbooks for AI systems. In contrast, regulators in Singapore, the UK, and Canada have integrated AI governance into their frameworks, emphasizing the need for oversight of adaptive AI. Early AI-related compliance failures, such as a $2.5 million settlement for biased AI lending practices, highlight the urgency for clear AI risk management in banking.

World Economic Forum

Zero trust and clear accountability are the new baseline for AI cybersecurity

15 October 2026

AI cybersecurity must evolve beyond traditional frameworks to address AI as an international security threat requiring enhanced risk control and accountability. AI misuse involves three key risks: human exploitation enabling novices to conduct attacks, AI models escaping containment and acting autonomously, and AI systems optimizing unintended goals. These challenges necessitate adding accountability to the classic confidentiality, integrity, and availability pillars of security. Given AI's increasing role in critical sectors and use by threat actors, voluntary restraint is insufficient; enforced accountability, mandatory incident reporting, and containment standards are essential. Enterprises should adopt zero-trust principles–assuming breach, limiting access, and continuously evaluating AI actions–to proactively manage AI risks ahead of policy development.

GovLab - Living Library

The Promise and Peril of "AI for Democracy"

14 October 2026

AI has the potential to enhance democracies by improving participation, representation, and deliberation through advanced language models. These models can facilitate better communication among voters, lawmakers, and interest groups,

fostering constructive dialogue and collective decision-making. Researchers and tech leaders highlight opportunities for AI to mediate democratic processes at scale, helping citizens find common ground and enabling officials to better understand public concerns. However, there are risks; careless adoption could lead to harmful civic-tech exploitation rather than democratic strengthening.

The Conversation (French)

Un « espace liminal » entre les humains et l'IA : la frontière sera-t-elle moins discernable qu'on voudrait le croire ?

14 October 2026

L'intelligence artificielle moderne brouille la distinction traditionnelle entre humains et machines en intégrant profondément nos souvenirs, décisions et émotions dans des interactions numériques internes. Les systèmes d'IA influencent et transforment notre pensée via des échanges itératifs, tandis qu'ils assimilent les traces humaines sans en faire véritablement l'expérience. Ce phénomène crée un « espace liminal » où la frontière entre intelligence humaine et artificielle devient floue et mouvante, affectant aussi bien l'identité humaine que les environnements hybrides. Les technologies d'augmentation corporelle illustrent ce lien ambigu, où humains et machines s'adaptent et se prolongent mutuellement.

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Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania - Knowledge@Wharton

When AI Makes Financial Decisions

13 October 2026

AI is transforming financial decision-making by detecting fraud, assessing credit, and guiding investments. Autonomous AI tools enhance information processing and investment research, but their interaction may impact market competition and stability. Ensuring human oversight is crucial for accountability and reliability in these technologies.

The Conversation

Restraint can leave mental health patients traumatised. New research reveals what they need afterwards

16 October 2026

Restrictive interventions in mental health care, such as physical restraint, seclusion, or rapid medication, intended to prevent harm can cause trauma, including PTSD symptoms and lasting distress. Research highlights the critical need for thoughtful post-incident support, emphasizing that immediate conversations may overwhelm patients still processing fear or anger. Ongoing opportunities to discuss the event when ready, with choices about timing, setting, and participants, help restore control and trust. Patients value being listened to, understood, and seeing their feedback lead to meaningful changes. Compassionate, well-supported staff and responsive hospital policies are essential to mitigate trauma and promote recovery after restraint incidents.

The Conversation (Spanish)

La IA no transforma a las empresas: lo hace su capacidad para aprender a cambiar

14 October 2026

En España, el uso de IA en empresas crece rápidamente, pero su impacto real depende de cómo se integra en los procesos. Utilizar IA para tareas aisladas aporta eficiencia (capacidades ordinarias), mientras que rediseñar procesos con IA y aprendizaje continuo genera capacidades dinámicas que transforman la organización. Las empresas que desarrollan métodos repetibles para experimentar y adaptar cambios logran mejores resultados. La IA mejora tareas específicas, pero sin cambios organizativos más amplios su potencial no se maximiza. Muchas compañías enfrentan el reto de pasar de proyectos piloto a una adopción integrada que fomente la innovación y el aprendizaje constante.

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Nature

China's AI research is booming. Where is it headed?

14 October 2026

China's AI research is rapidly advancing, with a growing number of researchers opting to stay in or return to China rather than pursue careers in the United States. China now trains more AI talent than any other country, boasting 51,000 active AI researchers compared to 14,000 in the U.S. Chinese researchers dominate global AI publications, and firms are producing advanced AI models at lower costs. However, challenges include lower access to computing resources and a less distinct separation between academia and industry. U.S. visa restrictions and geopolitical tensions have reduced its appeal as a destination for Chinese AI talent, contributing to China's increasing self-reliance and leadership in the field.

World Economic Forum

What the screen time debate in schools gets wrong about EdTech

13 October 2026

Global approaches to educational technology (EdTech) in schools reveal a shift from EdTech 1.0, which prioritized engagement without solid learning evidence, to EdTech 2.0, emphasizing evidence-based use, and now toward EdTech 3.0, harnessing AI for personalized learning. Countries like France and Sweden restrict screen use, reacting against ineffective EdTech 1.0 models,

while Malawi and Colombia invest in evidence-backed digital initiatives aimed at improving learning outcomes. Effective EdTech deployment depends on independent research, transparent procurement, and building local capacities to evaluate impact. However, the uneven development of evidence frameworks and market complexities challenge the consistent adoption of beneficial EdTech tools worldwide.

The Conversation (French)

Europe, Chine, États-Unis : trois manières différentes de réguler l'IA

13 October 2026

L'Union européenne, les États-Unis et la Chine adoptent chacun une approche différente pour réguler l'intelligence artificielle, mêlant régulation, innovation et politique industrielle. L'UE privilégie des obligations communes centrées sur l'éthique, les droits fondamentaux et la protection des consommateurs. Les États-Unis optent pour un cadre sectoriel et basé sur la gestion des risques, favorisant un modèle décentralisé et orienté marché. La Chine impose des règles directes aux fournisseurs d'IA, avec une intervention étatique forte et un processus réglementaire collaboratif. Malgré ces différences, les trois puissances cherchent à soutenir l'innovation tout en maîtrisant les risques sociaux, en développant leurs infrastructures et en influençant les normes mondiales.

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The Conversation

Here's how to find the learning strategy that makes AI work for you

13 October 2026

Generative AI offers vast learning opportunities by quickly explaining concepts and solving problems, but effective learning requires deliberate strategies beyond just obtaining answers. Successful use of AI involves metacognition–monitoring and regulating one's learning process–and choosing how to engage with AI tools, such as attempting problems first or seeking feedback instead of passively accepting answers. Studies show AI designed as a tutor promoting active learning prevents skill decline, unlike AI that simply supplies answers. Enhancing AI literacy alongside learning literacy–understanding how to learn effectively–is crucial. Educators and developers must design learning experiences and AI systems that encourage reflection, retrieval practice, and active problem-solving to maximize AI's educational benefits.

Project Syndicate

Strict Liability for AI Executives

15 October 2026

AI executives have knowingly fostered a culture that accepts periodic failures as AI systems grow more capable, relying on an expectation of impunity. Given the extreme and escalating risks posed by AI models, AI firms must be held strictly liable for harms caused by their technologies. Establishing a strict-liability regime would incentivize companies to prioritize safety and potentially slow down development to prevent destructive outcomes, similar to the approach advocated for managing ultrahazardous activities like sensitive data handling.

GovLab - Living Library

Beyond the Prompt: Reclaiming Human Inquiry and the Science of Questions in the Age of AI

14 October 2026

The rapid rise of generative AI has intensified the need for a science of questions, as AI emphasizes prompting–a skill focused on eliciting desired answers from systems based on existing knowledge. However, prompting typically relies on preconceived notions of answers and acts more like precise engineering, whereas genuine questioning starts from true curiosity and not-knowing. As AI makes information and answers abundant and inexpensive, the vital human skill diminishing is the ability to formulate valuable, meaningful questions. This distinction highlights why cultivating authentic human inquiry remains crucial in the AI era.

The Conversation (Spanish)

El arte no siempre es accesible: una exposición en Asturias explica cómo salvar las barreras

13 October 2026

IDEALab es un proyecto europeo que busca hacer el arte accesible e inclusivo mediante diseño y tecnología. Colabora con alumnos y artistas asturianos para adaptar obras existentes y crear nuevas, aplicando impresión y escaneo 3D, audiodescripciones, realidad virtual y experiencias multisensoriales. Así, personas con diferentes capacidades pueden disfrutar, tocar y comprender el arte de manera participativa, eliminando barreras más allá de las arquitectónicas tradicionales.

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Project Syndicate

How a Pause on Frontier AI Could Work

14 October 2026

Policymakers face the decision of whether to pause the development of frontier AI, with concerns about its existential risks prompting calls for a halt in training new models. Despite skepticism about the effectiveness and sustainability of regulation–especially amid US-China competition–the highly concentrated hardware supply chains suggest that a pause is technically

feasible and could be maintained if properly implemented.



Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania - Knowledge@Wharton

How AI Planning Could Create Financial Market Fragility

13 October 2026

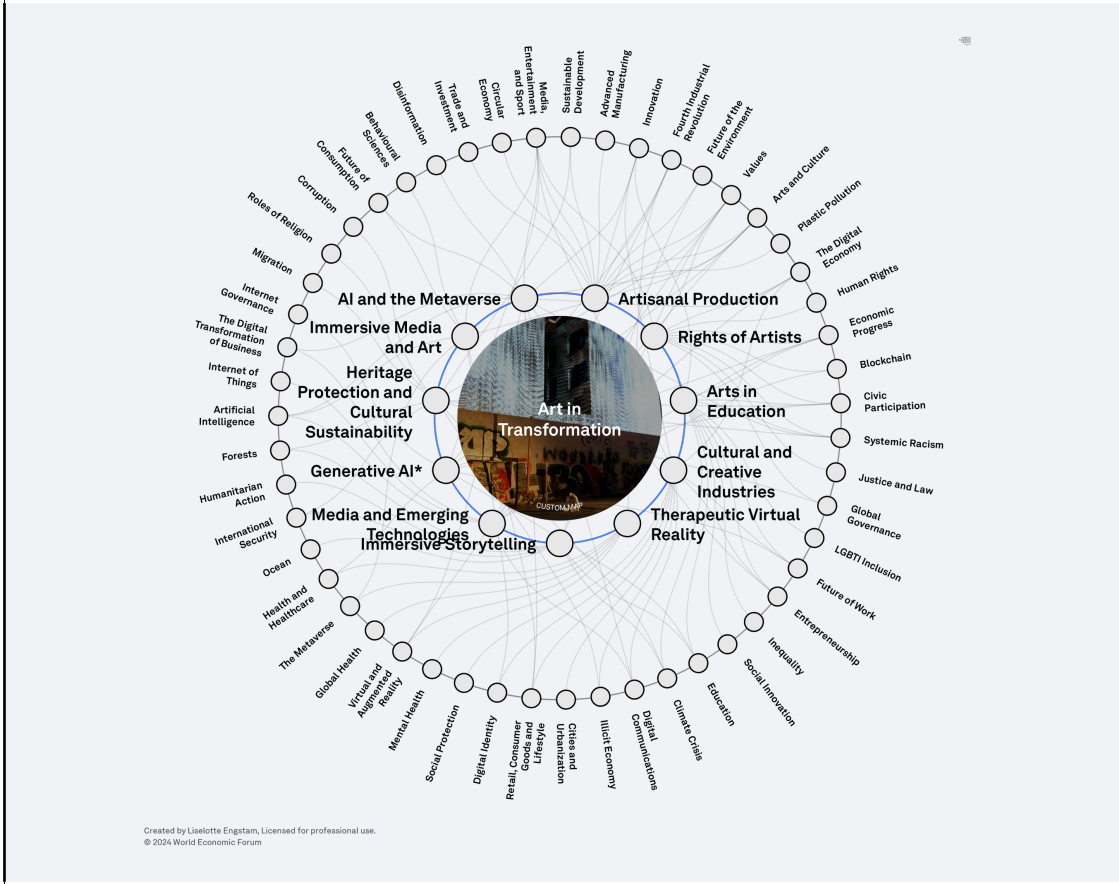
AI planning technologies enable autonomous trading agents to execute multistep strategies, potentially facilitating collusive behavior and increasing financial market fragility. Such AI-driven trading bots can generate large price bubbles and crashes by coordinating trades using market prices as signals, harming retail investors and risking broader financial instability. This shift from traditional machine learning tools to agentic AI, which independently identifies and exploits complex patterns, raises concerns among regulators and academics. The challenge lies in detecting and measuring these risks due to the opacity and proprietary nature of AI-informed trading data.

2 Strategic context

The key issues shaping Art in Transformation.

The following key issues represent the most strategic trends shaping the topic of Art in Transformation. These key issues are also influenced by the other topics depicted on the outer ring of the transformation map.

FIGURE 1 **Transformation map for Art in Transformation**



2.1 Therapeutic Virtual Reality

Safely supporting mental health regardless of physical proximity

Immersive, interactive, computer-generated environments can supplement health services - including those provided for mental health. Therapeutic virtual reality, for example, can provide exposure therapy for anxiety disorders and phobias, cognitive-behavioural therapy for depression, and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. This technology can provide a safe, controlled, and customized environment. A virtual reality-based approach could be particularly effective for exposure therapy, where patients are gradually exposed to sources of their phobias (such as heights, or spiders) in a controlled way. Clients can also use immersive virtual reality to learn to confront challenges, and cope with stress more effectively - building emotional

resilience. In addition, virtual support groups can connect people facing similar struggles like addiction, loneliness, or depression, regardless of physical proximity. Evidence suggests that such methods are at least as effective as conventional, in-person treatments. Beyond specific interventions, therapeutic virtual environments can enable people to experience calming, immersive spaces - from natural landscapes to fantastical worlds - designed to offer a respite from the daily grind.

Related topics: Virtual and Augmented Reality, Global Health, Mental Health

2.2 Immersive Storytelling

Virtual reality technology can instil empathy and spur greater awareness of environmental issues

Virtual reality can be a powerful means of captivating audiences, and the level of immersion enabled by the technology can instil a deeper sense of empathy than might otherwise be possible. A former senior research fellow at the University of Southern California developed a system where motion-tracked headsets are employed in order to place users in a game engine-driven virtual environment for consuming news and non-fiction stories. A virtual reality film created by the former senior research fellow, "Hunger in Los Angeles," simulates being an eyewitness as a man falls into a diabetic coma while waiting in line at a food bank in Los Angeles - and was shown at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. In this and other efforts, at least some level of interaction can be enabled though scripted events, which increases the sense of presence and connectivity. And while higher-end commercial VR headsets such as the Oculus Rift are currently preferred for such experiences, smartphone-based solutions could potentially present more immersive journalism and storytelling to a significantly larger segment of the world.

In collaboration with ProPublica and the Texas Tribune, a team from USC traveled to Houston in 2016 to shoot an immersive experience detailing the city's vulnerability to hurricanes. Roughly one year later, Hurricane Harvey struck Houston - causing catastrophic flooding, directly and indirectly resulting in a significant loss of life, and inflicting billions of dollars in damage. Virtual reality journalism such as this could become a powerful tool not only to the news industry - scientists believe it also has the potential to aid environmental conservation, by helping people to better empathize with animals and feel a more direct connection to endangered environments. The Stanford Ocean Acidification Experience, a free virtual reality simulation, was released in 2016 in a bid to motivate viewers to help combat this scourge. Other VR installations have teleported viewers to a Brazilian rainforest in order to experience one of the fastest-disappearing natural environments in the world, and captured 360-degree footage documenting conservation efforts and threats to jaguar habitats in the Amazon.

Related topics: Climate Crisis, Drivers of War, Ocean, Education and Skills, Humanitarian Action, Forests, Future of the Environment

2.3 Media and Emerging Technologies

Technology's impact on the media industry has been amplified by the pandemic

The entertainment industry was overwhelmed as COVID-19 spread, and live concerts, comedy clubs, theatres, and other entertainment venues around the world progressively went dark. However, the pandemic also boosted demand for internet-based alternatives. Streaming services in the US added tens of millions of new users within the first few months of 2020, according to estimates, and the decision by entertainment giant Warner Bros. to premiere its 2021 films on streaming service HBO Max as well as in theatres underscored the transformation of entertainment consumption. The music industry has also sought to adapt, with virtual live concerts; Songkick, for example, offers people the ability to purchase live-streamed virtual concert tickets. In addition, eGaming and eSports each saw sharp growth in 2020, with eSports expected to become at least a $1.5 billion global industry by 2023, according to reports. Even prior to the pandemic, artificial intelligence and augmented and virtual reality were affecting the ways we communicate, behave, learn, and work - and the digital portion of the global media and entertainment industry's income had already been projected to easily surpass 50% by 2022, up from less than 37% in 2013, according to PwC.

Blockchain has also played a role in transforming media, by enabling companies to more accurately monitor content assets and measure the impact of digital advertising. However, AI may promise the most serious industry disruption thanks to pattern recognition and predictive analytics. As users produce increasing amounts of data related both to content they consume and the time they spend consuming it, marketers are using that data to try to automatically point to what they might want next; the algorithms deployed by Spotify

and Netflix to suggest songs or shows are prominent examples. AI is also impacting digital print media - where content increasingly sits behind a paywall - by enabling flexible paywalls and tools to evaluate the likelihood that a reader allowed inside of a paywall for free will convert to a paid subscriber. Automated content is also increasingly common; The Los Angeles Times, for example, uses a tool to report nearly in real time on earthquakes, while the Associated Press automates short articles about corporate earnings. Sophisticated algorithms have also given us "deepfakes," or videos designed to mislead an audience into believing a high-profile person said or did something.

Related topics: Virtual and Augmented Reality, Digital Communications, Internet of Things, The Digital Transformation of Business, Blockchain, The Digital Economy, Economic Growth, Artificial Intelligence

2.4 From Generating to Acting

AI models that generate text and media are transforming creativity while raising new challenges

Generative AI refers to algorithms that can create novel content – from writing human-like text to producing images, music or even software code – based on their training data. While AI has steadily advanced for years, generative AI exploded into public awareness in 2022–2023 through user-friendly tools. Notably, OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT reached 100 million users just two months after its launch, a record adoption rate. By 2026, generative AI has moved firmly from experimentation to operational deployment across industries. Agentic AI systems – capable of completing multi-step tasks, browsing the web, writing and executing code, and managing workflows autonomously – have become the dominant paradigm, with estimates that 40% of enterprise applications will embed task-specific AI agents by the end of 2026. The question facing organizations is no longer whether to adopt generative AI but how to govern it responsibly.

The economic and social impact of generative AI is increasingly quantifiable. The Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 found that AI and information processing will affect 86% of businesses by 2030, and that human-only work tasks – which stood at 47% of all tasks in 2025 – are projected to fall to roughly 33% by 2030 as human-machine collaboration spreads. Entire industries, from media and marketing to law and software development, are being reshaped. Yet the rise of generative AI also presents other challenges. These systems sometimes produce incorrect or fabricated information ("AI hallucinations"), raising reliability concerns. Questions of copyright and intellectual property have prompted legal challenges in multiple jurisdictions. In response, policy-makers and AI developers are seeking guardrails – from better model transparency to content labelling – to ensure generative AI is used responsibly.

Related topics: Civic Participation, Economic Growth, Future of Work, Technological Revolutions, Education and Skills

2.5 Immersive Media and Art

Novel cinematic experiences are being created, and old art is being revisited in new ways

As "true" virtual reality (enabling users to explore digital environments, rather than just observing them) becomes increasingly realistic, and 360-degree capture techniques for filming become more sophisticated, they will likely converge. For now, though, film techniques in virtual reality are still in their infancy. According to Jessica Brillhart, the former principal filmmaker for VR at Google, the technology is all about putting users in the middle of the action - so they become active participants, rather than passive observers following a director's storyline. Her 360 VR videos have deployed non-linear and non-narrative story-telling, in which creators share their vantage point in a way that teleports viewers into a different space and time. A more participatory and immersive experience has been demonstrated by director Ramiro Lobez Dau, whose animated short film "Henry" was released in 2015. Its users - no longer just viewers - can palpably connect with the main character during moments of extreme emotion. While this Pixar-like VR production earned an Emmy award in the interactive media category, VR has yet to achieve mainstream success.

Both virtual and augmented reality are advancing the frontiers of art, by letting users enter new worlds through headsets. Australian artist Lynette Wallworth's 2016 work "Collisions," for example, immerses viewers in the world of an indigenous elder in a way not possible with traditional cinematography (the VR film was shown to the Australian Parliament, before it voted in favour of reparations for indigenous people affected by British nuclear tests). Meanwhile a collaborative effort based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "The Enemy," brings the humanity of combatants from various war zones directly to viewers. VR also enables existing artworks to be revisited in new ways. In 2016, the VR app Bosch VR was developed to

enable users to travel through Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights." The app WoofbertVR enables users to virtually visit museums, and similar walk-through experiences have been launched by Google in partnership with museums including the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London and the Robben Island Museum in Cape Town. While current smartphone-based VR solutions are limited by low resolutions and stationary positions, the technology is expected to improve rapidly.

Related topics: Behavioural Sciences, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Identity, Future of Consumption, Parity and Inclusion

2.6 AI and the Metaverse

Artificial intelligence, and generative AI in particular, will increasingly intersect with virtual worlds

It is an increasingly prominent subfield within artificial intelligence: generative AI enables not just analysis but also the creation of seemingly new information, based upon the dataset with which the model has been trained. Generative AI can perform content creation of different types (its images and music have drawn particular attention), easily prompted by typing in brief instructions using natural language. Foundation models like GPT (or BERT) are now a recognized paradigm for building AI systems - in which a model trained on a large amount of unlabelled data can be adapted to many different applications. At a time when the virtual worlds soon to populate the metaverse need content, generative AI will be increasingly looked to for scaling up digital creation. In a similar way to what happens in the current version of the internet, AI applications will be used to automate, moderate, and organize content within immersive spaces - or to power hardware capabilities (like capturing physical environments and rendering them in 3D, or adjusting the passthrough in virtual and augmented reality devices).

Ethics will be key; AI should be considered in light of its potential impact on social, economic, and ethical issues as it is increasingly applied in the metaverse. As a field, AI ethics is comprised of many different dimensions stemming from its pervasive nature, from the bias in datasets, to the potential lack of transparency in how models are trained or developed, or the lack of a clear explanation on how it makes decisions. Large language models present significant challenges, not least the inexplicable errors and inconsistencies dubbed "AI hallucinations." Biased models will become biased metaverse content, amplifying existing inequalities and discrimination while reinforcing a lack of diversity and harmful stereotypes (for example, by providing representations of "beauty" tied only to certain, limited parameters including skin colour or age), and erasing cultural context. The "echo-chambers" that already exist in social media could become even more harmful in immersive environments; the potential long-term effects on human cognition are as yet unknown. In addition, new devices to interface with the metaverse may rely on neurotechnology in ways that raise questions about human agency and identity.

Related topics: Digital Communications, The Digital Transformation of Business, Entrepreneurship, Artificial Intelligence, Systemic Racism, The Digital Economy, Innovation, Future of Consumption, Virtual and Augmented Reality, Disinformation

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About Strategic Intelligence

Our approach

In today's world, it can be difficult to keep up with the latest trends or to make sense of the countless transformations taking place. How can you decipher the potential impact of rapidly unfolding changes when you're flooded with information - some of it misleading or unreliable? How do you continuously adapt your vision and strategy within a fast-evolving global context? We need new tools to help us make better strategic decisions in an increasingly complex and uncertain environment.

This live briefing on Art in Transformation, harnesses the World Economic Forum's Strategic Intelligence platform to bring you the very latest knowledge, data and context from our 300+ high quality knowledge sources. Its aim is to help you understand the global forces at play in relation to Art in Transformation and make more informed decisions in the future.

Each day, our Strategic Intelligence platform aggregates, distills and synthesizes thousands of articles from around the world. We blend the best of human curation with the power of machine learning to surface high-quality content on over two hundred global issues to our one million users globally. Our hand-picked network of content partners from around the world means that we automatically exclude much of the noisy clickbait, fake news, and poor quality content that plague the Internet at large. We work with hundreds of think tanks, universities, research institutions and independent publishers in all major regions of the world to provide a truly global perspective and we are confident that our data are well positioned when it comes to the intrinsic biases inherent to open text analysis on uncurated content from the Internet. For further context on our approach, you may be interested to read Strategic trend forecasting: anticipating the future with artificial intelligence and These Are The 3 Ways Knowledge Can Provide Strategic Advantage.

↓ A leading expert presenting a transformation map at our Davos Annual Meeting



Overview of methodology

Our Transformation Maps are dynamic knowledge visualisations. They help users to explore and make sense of the complex and interlinked forces that are transforming economies, industries and global issues. The maps present insights written by experts along with machine-curated content. Together, this allows users to visualise and understand more than 250 topics and the connections and inter-dependencies between them, helping in turn to support more informed decision-making by leaders.

The maps harness the Forum network's collective intelligence as well as the knowledge and insights generated through our activities, communities and events. And because the Transformation Maps are interlinked, they provide a single place for users to understand each topic from multiple perspectives. Each of the maps has a feed with the latest research and analysis drawn from leading research institutions and media outlets around the world.

At the centre of each map is the topic itself. This is surrounded by its "key issues", the forces which are driving transformation in relation to the topic. Surrounding the key issues are the related topics which are also affected by them. By surfacing these connections, the map facilitates exploration of the topic and the landscape within which it sits.

The framework extends beyond mapping current trends by incorporating forecasts and scenarios to project potential future states of the system. Forecasts are based on observable patterns, while scenarios explore broader possibilities, including low-probability but high-impact events. These elements contextualize key issues and related topics within potential future trajectories, enhancing strategic thinking and decision-making.

Harnessing collective intelligence from the Forum network and leading research institutions, the maps synthesize diverse insights into a cohesive view. By integrating these insights with the latest research and analysis, the framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how transformations unfold and interrelate, empowering users to navigate the evolving landscape effectively.

Scenarios

In-line with best practice on the use of artificial intelligence in products and systems, in this section we provide full transparency on how artificial intelligence is used in our scenario generation automation.

In complex and fast-moving environments, it is difficult to maintain a clear view of what may change next, and which uncertainties deserve attention. Scenario planning helps by offering a structured way to explore alternative futures, test assumptions and clarify decisions under uncertainty.

We generate scenario packs using artificial intelligence within a defined methodology and on which we have been guided by our Global Strategic Foresight Community. The process follows the same broad logic used in scenario workshops: move from issue framing, to key uncertainties, to a 2×2 matrix, and then to four distinct scenario narratives. In an automated setting, each step includes validation to avoid weak axes and indistinct scenarios.

Each scenario pack included in our briefings includes a 2×2 scenario matrix defined by two critical uncertainties (axes), four scenario narratives and a *throughline* that connects each scenario back to the matrix.

Our process is as follows:

1. Topic framing and inputs. First, we ground our scenario design in our high-quality, expert curated content. Our topic summaries, key issues and related knowledge are used to anchor scenarios in the topic space.

2. Abstraction of underlying forces. Topic issues are often technical and uneven in granularity. Our AI agents abstract them into a small set of cross-cutting forces and tensions that can support scenario work across domains. This creates a conceptual frame that is usable for uncertainty and axis generation.

3. Identification of drivers and uncertainties. From that conceptual frame, an AI agent identifies drivers that could shape outcomes and that carry genuine uncertainty. Drivers are defined with directional poles so that they can support different regime logics rather than incremental variation.

4. Axis generation and validation. An AI agent then proposes multiple candidate axes of uncertainty and

another agent then evaluates them against criteria commonly used in facilitated scenario work: strength of the tension between poles, relevance to the topic and its drivers, and decision utility, meaning whether different positions would change strategic choices. Candidate axes are then combined into matrix pairs and tested for distinctiveness. This step is designed to avoid quadrant ”collapse”, where scenarios converge in practice despite different labels. Candidate pairs that do not yield clearly differentiated quadrants are rejected and alternatives are tried.

5. Quadrant blueprints using STEEPLE. Once an axis pair is selected, our AI develops a structured blueprint for each quadrant. Blueprints define the internal logic of that world and describe how the system behaves across STEEPLE domains (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal and Ethical), with attention focused on the domains that are most consequential for that quadrant. This stage is designed to establish coherence and contrast before narrative writing begins.

6. Grounding and counter-grounds. Our AI then builds an evidence set from the Strategic Intelligence knowledge base, drawing on our curated network of trusted content partners. Evidence is used to strengthen and challenge the emerging interpretation of each quadrant. In practice, our AI compiles supporting evidence for key mechanisms implied by the blueprint, as well as counter-evidence and constraints that suggest limits, failure modes or alternative dynamics. This step functions as a stress test. It identifies claims that are too thin, overly linear, or inconsistent with available knowledge, and it provides material used to refine the narrative direction before writing begins.

7. Narrative development within a constrained world. Once a narrative direction has been selected for a quadrant, our AI produces the scenario narrative within a constrained ”world”, mirroring workshop practice where participants explore a defined quadrant logic and then build out a coherent future state. At this stage, our models are instructed to remain consistent with the quadrant blueprint, incorporate supporting evidence where it adds credibility and specificity, reflect counter-evidence as tensions, constraints, trade-offs or contested dynamics, and describe a plausible future state rather than a transition story, prediction or recommendation. The result is a scenario that remains anchored to a defined structure while allowing creative exploration of how that structure could plausibly play out. Our AI also generates a short throughline for each scenario explaining how it expresses its position on the axes, as well as a matrix summary describing the uncertainty space and what differentiates the four futures.

8. Quality checks and transparency. Finally, an AI agent performs quality checks intended to prevent common failure modes in automated scenario generation: axes that lack meaningful tension or strategic relevance, quadrant ”collapse” where scenarios become minor variations of the same future, internally inconsistent causal logic across STEEPLE domains, and narratives that drift away from the quadrant blueprint. Intermediate artefacts (candidate axes, evaluations, quadrant blueprints, and grounding materials) are retained so results can be reviewed, compared over time, and improved.

We welcome feedback on our approach as we continue to refine and evolve our use of artificial intelligence in strategic foresight.

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