FUTURE TENSE 2023 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
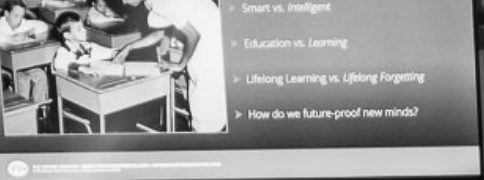
FUTURE TENSE

FUTURE TENSE

Mitigating the impact of an unpredictable future
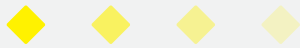
In recent years, we have weathered turbulent, unpredictable, and ambiguous times. During the Covid-caused chaos and disruption driven by emerging technologies and tech innovation, leaders have developed effective strategies, skills, and innovative techniques to cope and navigate through the challenges, not only surviving but embarking on a journey of unprecedented growth and success.

In the face of uncertainty, one might question the wisdom of attempting to predict the future. The landscape in which we live and work undergoes continuous shifts and transformations daily.

Future Tense Conference, renowned for its extensive network of regional executives, and thought leaders, has brought valuable insights for leaders of the future which are defined by visionary thinking, relentless adaptability and unwavering clarity.

Leaders should prepare to tackle the unknown instead of depending solely on predictions, echoing the consistent message from our futurists' keynotes. By adopting strategic foresight, leaders can effectively navigate ambiguity, adapt their approach, and thrive amidst ongoing chaos.

The speakers emphasized the importance of mitigating the impact of an unpredictable future through proactive strategies and preparedness. By adopting these principles, companies can enhance their resilience and position themselves for success in an ever-changing world.
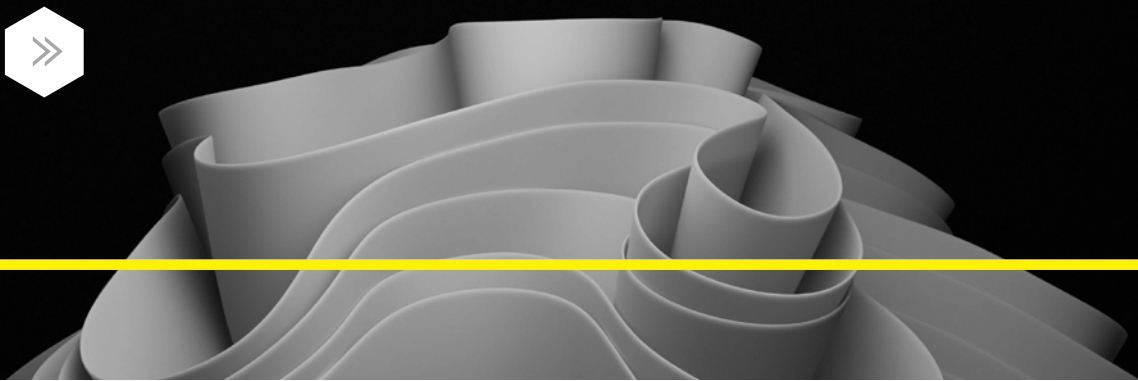
They advocated for:

• Foresight and Scenario Planning
Every organization should engage in foresight practices, such as scenario planning, to anticipate and prepare for a range of potential future scenarios. By exploring various possibilities, organizations can develop strategies to adapt and thrive in uncertain environments.

• Resilience and Adaptability
In the face of an unpredictable future organizations should build flexibility into their structures, processes, and strategies to quickly respond to unexpected changes and challenges.

• Innovation and Continuous Learning
Organizations can better navigate uncertain futures if they understand the importance of fostering a culture of innovation and continuous learning by encouraging experimentation, embracing new technologies, and staying ahead of emerging trends.

• Collaboration and Partnerships
Both within and outside of organizations, by working together, sharing knowledge and resources, and building networks, entities can pool their expertise and capabilities to tackle complex challenges and seize new opportunities.

• Embracing Technology and AI
Organizations should embrace these tools, leveraging their capabilities to automate processes, gain insights from data, and augment human decision-making.

• Long-term Thinking and Sustainable Practices
By considering the environmental, social, and economic implications of decisions, organizations can create a more sustainable future and minimize negative impacts.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Unforeseeable events and incidents can have a profound impact on businesses, organizations, and societies. While leaders cannot predict specific events, they can employ innovative strategies and an open-minded approach to restructure their organizations and practices, effectively mitigating or even capitalizing on the impact of these events.

For leaders to thrive in today's dynamic business environment, here are the emerging trends brought to you at 2023 Future Tense:

1. **Environmental consciousness has become just as important as digital innovation**

2. **A holistic approach is the imperative for tech and AI**

3. **Embrace the art of being wrong**

4. **Shaping the AI narrative: From job concerns to catalyst for change**

5. **Rethink the economy**

6. **A journey towards cultivating a productive workforce in the future**

7. **Critical thinking and other skills for the future**

8. **Don`t expect AI to ever replace human art and artists**

9. **Embrace the metaverse**

10. **The health landscape is reshaping**

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS HAS BECOME JUST AS IMPORTANT AS DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR BUSINESSES

Businesses must prioritize environmentally friendly practices, products, and services to address pressing ecological challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and resource depletion. Therefore, shifting from digital transformation towards embracing sustainability as a core aspect of business operations (the decarbonisation of our economies) to completely depart from the fossil-fuel era is in fact to be seen as the biggest business opportunity rather than a trade-off or burden on profitability.

In the past, businesses may have viewed sustainability initiatives as additional costs or obstacles to financial growth. However, the perception is evolving, and companies now understand that integrating sustainability into their strategies can lead to achieving long-term financial viability and success through enhanced brand reputation, cost savings, access to new markets, and increased customer loyalty. In essence, sustainability is transforming in terms of its relationship with profitability, as it is being recognized as a driver of profitability and a key factor in securing a competitive advantage.

Gerd Leonhard, a renowned futurist and visionary brought an evolving paradigm at the 2023 Future Tense Conference. This paradigm shift involves the ascent of the circular economy as the dominant economic model by 2030. The circular economy aims to close the resource loop and diminish dependence on finite resources.

By embracing sustainability and adopting circular economy principles, companies can position themselves for future success while contributing to a more sustainable and resource-efficient world. Smart business decisions embrace sustainability, ultimately driving innovation, growth and long-term profitability.

And on the contrary, any company that does not understand how this global move towards rapid decarbonisation will impact every segment of their business will face negative consequences, such as shrinking market share or even business obsolescence.

»

"Green is the new digital, sustainable is the new profitable"
Gerd Leonhard

A HOLISTIC APPROACH:
THE IMPERATIVE FOR TECH AND AI

In the rapidly evolving landscape of technology and artificial intelligence (AI), we find ourselves at the precipice of unprecedented advancements. These ground-breaking technologies hold immense power and potential, promising to revolutionize industries, reshape societies, and propel us into an era of unparalleled possibilities. However, it is crucial to recognize that the path we tread is not without its perils.

Leonhard voiced a crucial concern in his keynote. Despite the undeniable marvels of technological progress, there exists an underlying apprehension about the way we harness and wield these tools. Technology is not an end, but a means to an end-a means that must be guided by purpose and wisdom.

The swift pace at which technology and AI advance calls for a profound understanding of our objectives and values, which should be grounded in the pursuit of the greater good. Without this clarity and ethical compass, technology has the potential to hinder prosperity rather than foster it. The consequences of misusing or misdirecting this immense power can be catastrophic, even threatening the very essence of our humanity.

To navigate this intricate terrain, it is imperative that we collectively foster a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of the potential outcomes and ethical implications of the technology we possess. It is not enough to marvel at its capabilities; we must also critically assess its impact and wield it responsibly. In essence, Leonhard calls for a holistic approach-one where the values that define us as humans and the spirit of collaboration take precedence over the relentless pursuit of technological progress.

Such an approach demands that we integrate our technological advancements with a deep understanding of our human values, societal needs, and environmental concerns. It requires us to prioritize the long-term well-being of individuals, communities, and the planet over short-sighted gains. By adopting this holistic perspective, we can ensure that technology remains a force for positive transformation, benefiting not just a select few but society.

"What do we need to define the good future? Technology will not save the day. Because we already have great technology, and we as well use it wrong. We need telos, we need wisdom in order to collaborate and know how to deal with the enormous power of today`s technology. It is my wish to get all the tech companies to have to sign the Technocratic Oath, like doctors do, saying "I hereby pledge to place humanity over technology in every decision" Gerd Leonhard

EMBRACING THE ART OF BEING WRONG

Leaders need to embrace the art of being wrong. It is through acknowledging our mistakes and failures that we can truly grow and develop. The leaders must as well create an environment that encourages our teams to take risks, challenge the status quo, and question conventional wisdom. As Anders Indset, the business philosopher said at his keynote, at the heart of every successful organization lies trust in the future. A future in which collaboration and co-creation, and carrying an open mind, builds the foundation of strong company culture. The goal is a corporate environment aiming for positive progress and prosperity for posterity.

By analysing our missteps, we gain insights that can lead to better decision-making and more effective strategies. This willingness to learn from failure not only benefits us as individuals but also fosters a culture of innovation and creativity within our organizations.

Humility is a crucial trait for leaders in the modern era. Recognizing our fallibility and embracing the art of being wrong allows us to remain open-minded and receptive to alternative viewpoints. Despite the "digital tsunami", ecological collapse and corona pandemic, we can influence and shape our reality.

By being willing to change course and when necessary, adapt our strategies, we can navigate uncertainty with confidence. The art of being wrong empowers leaders to make necessary adjustments and encourages a mindset of continuous learning and improvement.

In conclusion, today's leaders must wholeheartedly adopt the art of being wrong. By doing so, we can lead with humility, inspire a culture of learning, and navigate the complexities of our ever-changing world with resilience and adaptability.

> „Leaders, don´t be afraid to say „I don`t know ". Vulnerability is an intuitive decision that we make, that weird awkward feeling of the sensation of being caught off guard. At the same time, vulnerability is the birthplace of creation, innovation, and human relationships." Anders Indset

Shaping the AI narrative: From job concerns to catalyst for change

In his keynote Nikolas Badminton brought a captivating exploration of how professionals and businesses can develop foresight and strategic thinking to navigate an unpredictable future successfully. He provided valuable insights and a skillset to equip organizations, teams, and individuals with the necessary outlook to overcome future challenges.

As we embrace the rise of artificial intelligence and the impending era of artificial general intelligence, a shift in perspective is needed. Rather than fixating on fears of job replacement, let's channel our excitement towards its transformative potential within app ecosystems, language refinement, and the automation of mundane tasks that once hindered our productivity and creativity.

In our eagerness to harness AI's capabilities, we often overlook its role as a cognitive proxy, exemplified in navigation apps and transport systems. However, we must acknowledge their limitations and prioritize human logic as the ultimate authority. Amidst our reliance, it's crucial to remember that superior decision-making remains a human forte.

"We`ve been used to abundance and waste since the industrial revolution. Now we have to rethink that entirely. Our information systems are being used as misinformation systems and now we have to empower individuals to be able to recognize misinformation. The biggest challenge to humanity is the multigenerational trauma of the memories we carry epigenetically. In order to heal the world, fix problems, build resilience and work through all of this together we must go back to empathy." Nikolas Badminton

RETHINKING THE ECONOMY

In our quest to build prosperous and harmonious societies, it is crucial that we heed the words of Anders Indset: "If we want to understand society, we must rethink the economy." As the leaders navigate the complexities of governance and decision-making, adopting a new approach to economics that transcends conventional boundaries is a must.

Our understanding of economics must evolve beyond a narrow focus on financial systems and markets. Instead, as many of our keynote speakers pointed out, we should embrace a holistic perspective that considers the broader impact of economic activities on society. By doing so, we can address the pressing challenges we face and foster inclusive and sustainable development.

It is time to shift away from solely profit-driven models and embrace frameworks that prioritize humanistic values, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Humanistic capitalism, as advocated by Indset in his keynote, offers an inspiring path forward.

Leaders have the power to shape economic policies and structures. Therefore, they should take a stand for a more inclusive and ethical economic system — one that goes beyond wealth accumulation and actively promotes the well-being of individuals, communities, and our planet.

By rethinking the economy, we can ensure that economic growth and prosperity are inextricably linked to the betterment of society. This entails incorporating social, cultural, environmental, and ethical considerations into your decision-making processes. Only then can we foster a future that upholds the principles of justice, equality, and sustainability. Indset calls for leaders to champion humanistic capitalism and its profound potential to transform our economic systems for the betterment of all.
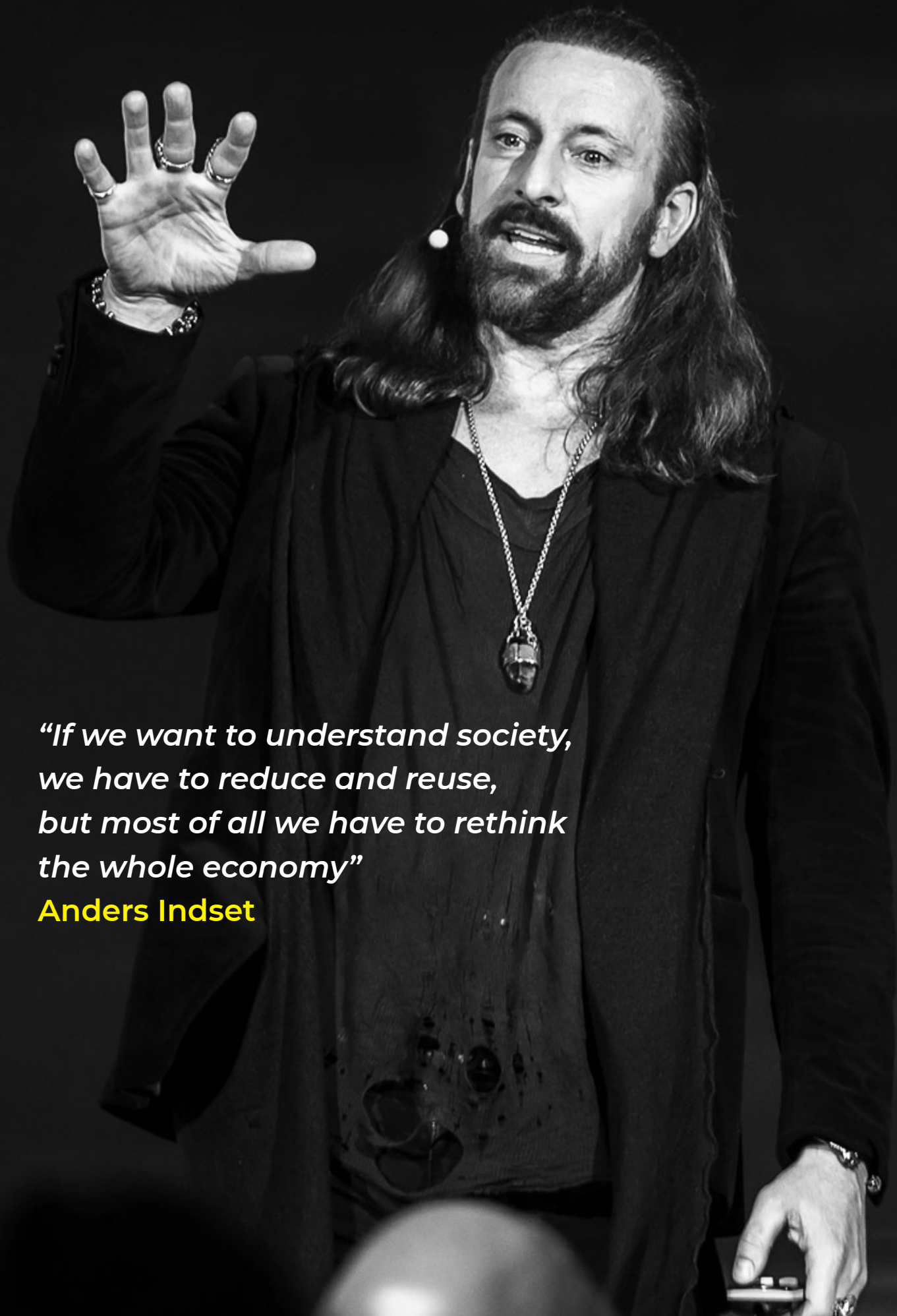
"If we want to understand society, we have to reduce and reuse, but most of all we have to rethink the whole economy"
Anders Indset

A PATH TO A PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE IN THE FUTURE

We should be truly concerned about the future of education if not for anything else then due to its impact on the job market. Erica Orange believes that the education system faces a significant challenge in adapting to the rapidly changing world. According to her, the greatest obstacle lies in the way of thinking, as our school systems are still rooted in the methods and approaches of previous generations. Erica advocates for aligning education with the generational shifts that occur in line with the accelerated pace of change, which she refers to as "templosion" - the sense of time passing faster.

Generation Z, also known as Cybrids or cyber hybrids is characterized by their strong values of inclusivity, collaboration, and sustainability. Generation Z is also the first generation to be born in a symbiotic relationship with technology, which has profound implications for education. Orange highlights the need for the education system to keep up with these changes to bridge the gap between traditional methods and the evolving needs of the future workforce.

We need to acknowledge the challenges faced by the education system and the job market. To ensure that the upbringing and education of today's children lead to a productive workforce in the future, she compares the process to a reverse diamond transformation. By recognizing that a diamond is essentially a lump of coal that excels under pressure, Orange highlights the importance of providing the appropriate conditions and opportunities for growth and resilience.

Additionally, finding a balance between technology and reconnecting with nature is a must, especially for Generation Z as a means of achieving a natural reset and promoting mental well-being.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

"In order for the educational systems to adapt to the fast-happening changes (templosion) happening in all aspects of life, they need to rethink who will learn, what will learn, how will learn and where will learn." Erica Orange

»
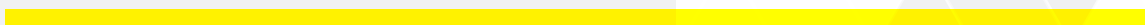
CRITICAL THINKING AND OTHER SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Skills for the future encompass a range of abilities that are increasingly valuable in the evolving job market and the fast-paced, technology-driven world:

» **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** The ability to analyze information, evaluate situations, and develop innovative solutions to complex problems.

» **Creativity and Innovation:** Thinking outside the box, generating new ideas, and approaching challenges with fresh perspectives.

» **Emotional Intelligence:** Understanding and managing one's own emotions, as well as effectively relating to and empathizing with others.

» **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Being open to change, quickly adjusting to new situations, and embracing continuous learning and growth.

» **Digital Literacy:** Proficiency in using digital tools and technology, as well as the ability to navigate and critically evaluate digital information.

» **Collaboration and Communication:** Working effectively in teams, actively listening, expressing ideas clearly, and adapting communication styles to different audiences.

» **Leadership and Influence:** Inspiring and motivating others, guiding teams, and effectively influencing stakeholders to achieve shared goals.

» **Resilience and Stress Management:** The ability to bounce back from setbacks, manage stress, and maintain a positive mindset in challenging situations.

» **Cultural Competence:** Appreciating and respecting diverse cultures, perspectives, and backgrounds, and effectively collaborating in multicultural environments.

» **Lifelong Learning:** Embracing a mindset of continuous learning and self-improvement, staying updated on industry trends, and being adaptable to new knowledge and technologies.

While technical skills remain important, there is a growing emphasis on developing these foundational skills to thrive in the future workforce.

In terms of the future of humans and AI, Orange emphasizes the importance of critical thinking skills as collaboration between humans and smart systems becomes increasingly prevalent, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of an evolving world. She believes that the education system should foster the ability to function in both physical and digital environments to prepare individuals for the collaborative nature of future work.

"Music gives comfort in times of crisis. AI has many benefits, but what it does not have is emotions, feelings. It can never replace human art and artists."
Alfons Karabuda

AI IS INCAPABLE OF REPLACING HUMAN ART AND ARTISTS

The true value of art lies in its ability to connect with and evoke emotions within the listener. In his keynote, Alfons Karabuda, a distinguished composer and advocate for artists' rights, articulated that the inherent quality defies replication or counterfeiting, as it is profoundly entwined with an individual's perception and personal experiences. Especially in times of crisis, music plays a profound role in providing solace and comfort. It has a remarkable capacity to heal, uplift spirits, and bring people together.

While some may attempt to measure the impact of music through quantifiable metrics such as clicks on streaming services, the true essence of its impact is not easily captured by numbers alone. Music extends beyond its own realm and becomes an integral part and added value in various other arts and industries. It weaves itself into the fabric of film, gaming, tourism, theatre, gastronomy, and design, enriching these creative domains with its power to elicit emotions and enhance experiences.

While artificial intelligence (AI) has made significant advancements and offers numerous benefits in various fields, one aspect it cannot replicate is the depth of human emotions and feelings. AI may be capable of analyzing patterns, generating melodies, or imitating artistic styles, but it lacks the inherent emotional depth that human art and artists bring to their creations. Their work cannot be replicated by AI. It is through their art that artists channel their emotions, tell stories, and create connections that resonate deeply with others.

"The growth of AI means we must accept the symbiotic/collaborative nature of us and the smart systems around us. The most valued asset of the future will be critical thinking."
Erica Orange

EMBRACING THE METAVERSE

During her keynote, futurist Sofie Hvitved delved into the topic of communication and interaction in the (near) future, focusing on the Metaverse. Hvitved highlighted the importance of considering not whether the Metaverse will happen, but who will govern and moderate it.

Leaders in the tech and gaming industry described it as the successor to the mobile internet and a convergence of the digital and physical worlds. As discussions around the Metaverse continue, opinions range from hype and diversionary tactics to a significant shift in communication.

Comprehending the Metaverse is becoming essential. Hvitved provided us with an understanding of the Metaverse`s persistent nature, where participants engage synchronously and in real-time, highlighting its functioning economy, and the integration of digital and physical worlds. The Metaverse offers unprecedented interoperability and a wide range of contributors, including AI algorithms. While it has connections to gaming, the Metaverse goes beyond mere entertainment.

The concept of the Metaverse originated from sci-fi novels like 'Snow Crash,' envisioning a dystopian virtual world owned by corporations as an escape from a miserable reality. However, the crucial aspect lies in shaping the Metaverse in a way that avoids a consumer-oriented virtual world at the expense of real-life experiences. Metaverse seen as utopian or dystopian is just one of the five myths about Metaverse.

There are concerns about the power wielded by creators of the Metaverse, the fragility of virtual economies, and the pervasive surveillance that influences user experiences. Decisions about governance and algorithmic control are crucial considerations to avoid concentration of power. The goal should be to foster a cohesive society with shared values rather than fragmented bubbles.

Embracing the Metaverse requires long-term thinking to create a responsible and brighter future. The focus should be on conscious development and ensuring that the Metaverse serves the collective interest rather than leading to further societal challenges.

"It is not our goal to predict the future, but rather to be prepared for the possible futures. Whether we agree that the metaverse is already here or not, we agree it is the seamless convergence of our physical and digital lives that will bring people, spaces and things together in virtual or augmented digital spaces. This includes augmented visual layers added on top of our physical reality as well as virtual worlds." Sofie Hvitved

RESHAPING THE HEALTH LANDSCAPE

The future of health and medicine holds great promise as advancements in technology continue to reshape the healthcare landscape. As Joe-Max Wakim from Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies said in his keynote, healthcare is a very slow adapter of technology, but it is finally starting to happen. The convergence of various health technologies with digital innovations is transforming the way we access, deliver, and experience healthcare. From telemedicine to mobile health devices and artificial intelligence, these innovations have the potential to revolutionize healthcare and create a more equitable and efficient system.

One of the most significant impacts of these health technologies is the potential to reduce health inequities. Currently, underserved populations and remote communities face significant barriers in accessing healthcare services. However, with the widespread adoption of telemedicine, individuals in rural or underserved areas can now connect with healthcare professionals, receive remote consultations, and access specialist care without the need for extensive travel.

AI and data analytics play a crucial role in identifying patterns and trends within health data, enabling more targeted and effective interventions. By analysing large datasets, healthcare providers can gain valuable insights into population health trends, disease patterns, and risk factors, leading to more personalized and preventive care strategies.

The shift towards more home-based healthcare is another transformative aspect of the future of health and medicine. The traditional model of healthcare, revolving around large hospitals and medical facilities, is gradually giving way to home-based care and decentralized health services. Advancements in portable medical devices and remote monitoring technologies empower patients to manage chronic conditions from the comfort of their homes, reducing hospital admissions and overall healthcare costs.

Additionally, home-based healthcare is proving particularly beneficial for the elderly and those with mobility challenges. By providing quality care at home, patients can maintain their independence and improve their overall well-being.

Furthermore, privacy and data security concerns must be carefully addressed as health technologies often involve the collection and storage of sensitive patient information. Robust safeguards should be in place to protect patient privacy and maintain the trust between healthcare providers and patients.

As healthcare providers and institutions recognize the value and potential of these innovations, there is a growing willingness to invest in and implement cutting-edge health technologies.

As technology continues to evolve, the future of health and medicine holds endless possibilities for improving health outcomes and creating a healthier society.

"We all agree that a healthier population and workforce is more productive and brings value. It is also true that tech is used in many fields. Even though healthcare is a very slow adapter of tech, that is slowly changing. Many tech tools can now be used at home. Why should we not be able to start treating people at home more? Rather than building bigger healthcare facilities? You won`t have to be living next to the city to be next to the best hospital anymore. That way healthcare would be available to all."
Joe-Max Wakim

About Future Tense Conference

Future Tense Conference is an internationally awarded B2B conference focusing on the future of business.

Encyclopedia Brittanica defines futurology as „the study of current trends in order to forecast future developments". With Future Tense, we want to build a community of experts and leaders that are oriented towards creating a better future, researching new, exciting trends in business, exchanging knowledge and developing new skills.

With keynote speakers from around the world and audience members of local, regional and European business communities, Future Tense is a place to be if you want to know what our lives and businesses will look like tomorrow.

We want to bring together companies that are market leaders, their CEOs and C-level management, start-ups, public administration representatives, PR, HR and communications experts, the academic community, NGO representatives, and every one that feels invited to talk about future trends.

Every year, world-renowned futurists come to Zagreb to discuss trends that will soon become a norm in our everyday lives and businesses.

FUTURE TENSE CONFERENCE 2024

MAY, 2024
ZAGREB,
CROATIA

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
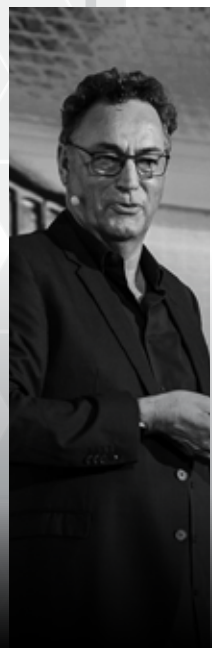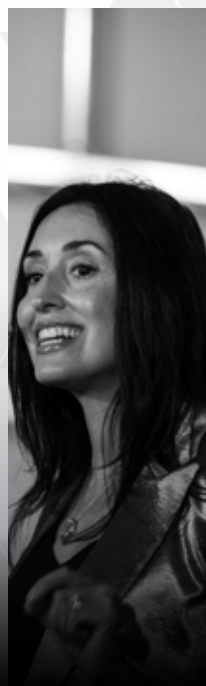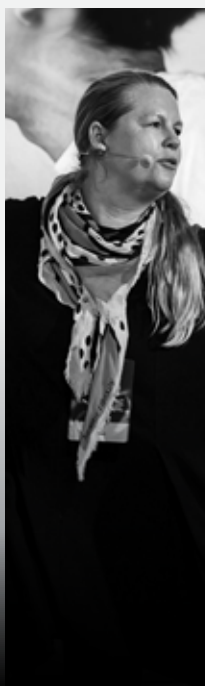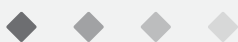
More information and tickets soon available HERE