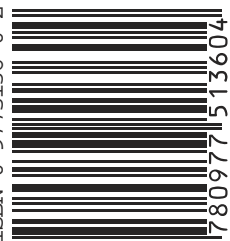


2006+

10 Trends: Predictions & Provocations

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“The future is already here

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it's just

unevenly distributed”

William Gibson, author.

Introduction

Whoever said “Don’t confuse movement with progress” could have written a fitting epitaph for 2005. Whoever it was, the sentiment is important because much of our society is predicated on the belief that change is good. Hence our interest in trends – or perhaps this has more to do with risk management than any genuine interest in originality. Either way, our interest in the future goes back a long way.

So where are we heading? It is usually easier to make predictions about the distant future than next month or next year because it takes time for patterns to emerge or for innovations to displace existing habits and ideas.

For example, hydrogen fuel cells in cars are coming but we don’t know when yet. This is one reason why futurists’ predictions are frequently wrong. It is not because they are wrong per se – they just assume that things will happen too soon.

For this reason, this publication is a look backwards at new things that are already happening (which, up to a point, one can assume will continue to happen and thus influence the future). Of course, this is dangerous because the future is never entirely a linear development of the past but it’s better than not thinking about the future at all.

Wherever it is that we are going, we are getting there increasingly fast. It also appears reasonably certain that whilst we are living in an age of unprecedented wealth and opportunity, more and more of us seem to be saying that we’re ‘unhappy’.

Reasons and definitions are, of course, elusive but it’s a relatively safe bet to say that the impacts of globalisation and technological change have made many of us uneasy about coping with

the future. This has been going on for some time but whilst in the past we had the certainty of family, church and even work to fall back on, these anchor points have started to collapse.

Add to this technology that enslaves and the perception that it’s dangerous ‘out there’ (even holiday destinations are unsafe these days) and this unease can easily be turned into anxiety. This is not to say that happiness (or anxiety) will be the dominant theme of 2006 but it should prove to be a recurring element.

For example, governments have traditionally been elected and re-elected on the promise that people will have more money in their pockets this year than last. Corporations attract and retain employees on a similar basis. But now the game seems to be changing. Many governments now attain and retain power on the basis of fear. Not only ‘better the devil you know’ but also the promise that we’ll keep you safe from ‘them’. Are people rioting on the streets in response to the removal of hard won freedoms?

No. They’re just switching off and turning their attention to issues closer to home. In the UK the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) now has more members than the three main political parties combined.

Another reason that people are unhappy is that governments used to provide basic infrastructure like hospitals and schools ‘for free’. But these services are slowly being replaced with public-private partnerships and some people think that access and quality is going down the tube as a result. This, along with declining standards in other areas, is putting the squeeze on the previously comfortable middle classes.

But it’s not all bad news.

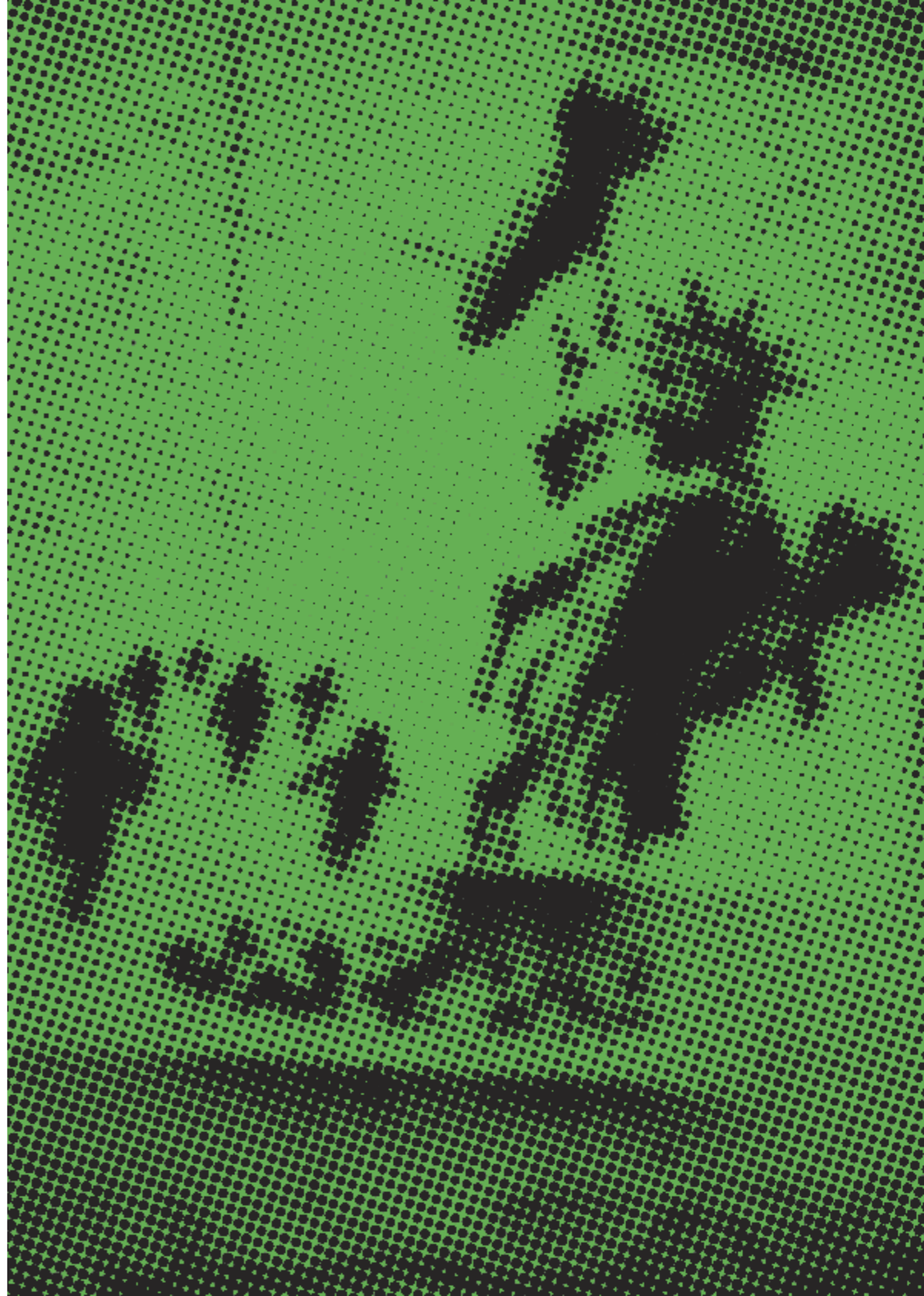
George Orwell once offered us the image of a boot stamping on a human face as a picture of the future but he failed to predict a couple of important trends. Globalisation and technology (the Internet in particular) create a free-flow of people as well as goods and services. This means that things are becoming increasingly transparent and people will find it increasingly easy to change where they work and move where they live in response to the new flow of information and ideas.

That’s undoubtedly progress.

Richard Watson, January 2006.

10 Trends for 2006+

1. Anxiety
2. Connectedness
3. Speeding-up
4. Mobility
5. Convergence
6. Privacy
7. Nostalgia
8. Localisation
9. Authenticity
10. Happiness





Anxiety

1. Anxiety

There are approximately 40 wars in 35 countries going on as you read this. Terrorism is rife and if 'they' don't get you a global pandemic will. At least that's how many people feel. Post 9/11 the feeling was fearful but this has now settled down to anxiety and, if all goes well it will level off to people being rattled. But the general feeling isn't going away. Trust has all but evaporated (people don't trust institutions like government or the police any longer) and the speed of change, together with technology that disempowers, has left people yearning for the past. This insecurity is to some extent generational, but whether you're eighteen or eighty there is a general feeling of powerlessness. This in turn is fuelling everything from an interest in nostalgia to the growth in narcissism, localisation and tribalism.

Implications

Expect a boom in escapism and fantasy.

People will also stick with whom and what they know.

Opportunities

Products/services aimed at reducing stress (e.g. identity theft solutions).

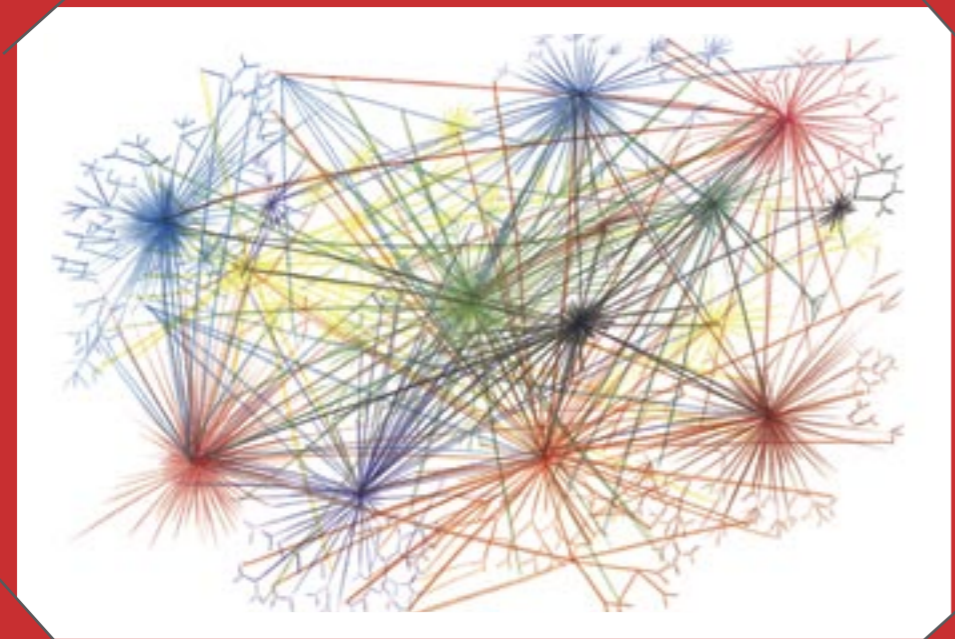
Also growth of FUD (Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt) products e.g. portable alarms and manually operated devices.

Threats

An economic collapse or major pandemic could push things over the edge.

Links

Fear, security, terrorism, pandemics, debt, identity theft, stress.



Connectedness

2. Connectedness

They used to say that when the US sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold. These days we all get to see and hear that cold in real time. Everything from countries and computers to industries and gadgets are increasingly linked together. In the future you can expect to see this trend accelerate even more thanks to everything from RFID tags to smart dust. This is both good news and bad. It's good because information (good and bad) will travel around the world instantly. This means everything becomes transparent. It's bad because in the future there will be little or no privacy and, since everything is connected, if something fails in one area the whole 'network' can be effected ('cascading failure' is the term used by some people). This explains how SARS can travel around the world at such speed and also how innovations are copied so quickly. We are assured that the Internet and devices such as mobile phones are immune from such networked failures due to their design. We disagree. Expect a catastrophic (but recoverable) failure within the next ten years.

Implications

A faster, smaller, more 'intelligent' world where 'events' will be experienced by more people.

Opportunities

Open source innovation, customer created content, back-up systems, simplicity.

Threats

Cascading failure, cyber terrorism, the removal of intermediaries.

Links

Artificial intelligence (AI), social networks, the death of distance.



SPEEDING UP

3. Speeding up

Everything is speeding up thanks to our obsession with technology and efficiency – although whether anything is actually moving in the right direction is a moot point. You can blame computers, email, the Internet, globalisation, mobile devices, low cost travel, whatever you like. The result is 24/7 access to goods and services, multi-tasking, meals in minutes, hectic households, microwave mums, meals on the run and individuals (and organisations) that want everything tomorrow. The result is stress, anxiety, a lack of sleep, work-life imbalance and, conversely, an interest in slowing things down. We could obviously write a lot more about this trend but we know you're busy and probably wouldn't read it.

Implications

Blurring of work and home leading to a continued debate about work/life balance. Also, memory loss, an increase in stress, sleep deprivation and mental illness.

Opportunities

Products and services that help us to slow things down. Also products that help us to remember things.

Threats

Major social costs associated with stress, and the break-up of relationships. Forgetfulness.

Links

The Slow Movement, sleep, well-being, work-life balance, Digital Instant Gratification (DIG).



MOBILITY

4. Mobility

We could have called this trend 'portability', 'place shifting', 'time shifting' or simply written about the ubiquity of mobile phones and the result would have been much the same. Once upon a time (about thirty years ago) people had lives that were compartmentalised. Meals were eaten (together) at a table, people watched TV in the sitting room on a television, went to bed at night and worked at the office – which was generally someplace other than your home – using a phone that was connected to a wall by a bit of wire.

Now we nibble and nap instead of eating and sleeping. We watch TV on our iPods on the train and work at home using wi-fi enabled laptops and mobile phones. We also eat breakfast in the car and eat lunch at our desk. Indeed, the only thing that prevents us from doing absolutely everything all at once anywhere we like is the fact that we still only have two hands. Not that this stops everyone. We recently spotted a woman in her late twenties who was driving in very slow traffic in her new Mazda MX-5. As well as driving she was on the phone, drinking coffee and was looking at a laptop on her knee.

Implications

People want to access anything, anytime, anywhere. Increasing importance of battery life and lightweight materials.

Opportunities

Mobile versions of products and services, 24/7 help lines, faster products.

Threats

Competitors that offer faster, more portable or more convenient options.

Links

Portability, place shifting, time shifting, speeding-up, urbanisation, Gen Y.



Convergence

5. Convergence

If the convergence of computing and communications led to the Information Age, then perhaps we are on the cusp of another dramatic shift. Engineering and computing started to converge some time ago and other disciplines are following suit. For example, natural sciences like biology are merging with physical sciences like engineering. In automobiles, what was essentially an engineering industry is merging with areas like computers, while computing itself is being greatly influenced by biology and neuroscience. Of course, historically science started off as one discipline, which only fragmented into a series of specialisations in the 19th and 20th centuries – so we've been here before. Devices such as computers, televisions, radios, phones and even fridges are also converging into single devices although much of the hype surrounding device convergence remains more fantasy than fact. For example, mobile phones were expected to converge into a single 'do it all device' but quite the opposite seems to be happening with people preferring specialist phones to meet their specific needs.

Implications

Blurring of whole industries, markets and brands.

Opportunities

Simplicity.

Threats

Complexity.

Links

Product convergence, brand stretching, connectivity.



9r1vaçy

6. Privacy

As Wired magazine once said, “privacy is history, get over it”. Another American magazine (Reason) recently ran a cover story on personal privacy. To highlight the issue the magazine printed a different copy of the magazine for each of its 40,000 subscribers. On each magazine was an aerial photograph of the subscriber’s house circled on the cover. If that wasn’t enough, the ‘personalisation’ continued inside with information about which of their neighbours went to college and how their local congressman voted on the medical use of marijuana. Personal privacy, like freedom, is a fundamental tenet of most ‘Western’ societies but it is under threat from technologies like the Internet and Global Positioning Satellites (GPS). Add to this the ‘requirements’ of government security services and you can all but kiss anonymity goodbye. Of course you can always find the funny side of everything. In Japan parents that are worried by ‘stranger danger’ can buy school blazers embedded with GPS tracking technology. When the child gets to school a message is automatically sent to the parent’s computer or mobile phone saying that their child has arrived safely – or at least the blazer has.

Implications

Potentially a more truthful and trusting society. Alternatively we may all start to adopt multiple personalities and create fake identities. Some people will pay to ‘disappear’ while others will trade privacy for economic benefit.

Opportunities

Magazines and newspapers that only print what you want to read about. Data-mining.

Threats

Intrusive micro-marketing, government sponsored tracking and tapping. Data-mining.

Links

Digital money, identity verification, tracking technologies, GPS, RFID.



Nostalgia

7. Nostalgia

As life speeds up and becomes more complicated (and in some cases more dangerous) people of a certain age are yearning for the simplicity, warmth and certainty of bygone eras. Add to this the fact that most of the media is now run by ageing baby boomers and Gen X'ers and you have the perfect recipe for a boom in nostalgia. Hence the appearance (re-appearance) of old TV shows, remakes of old movies, re-designs of old cars (e.g. the 'new' VW Beetle and Mini) and the success of sites like friendsreunited.com and skooldisco.com. Even video games are getting in on the act with products like the Atari Flashback 2 Classic game console. In food there's growth in comfort food eating and retro recipes and in technology there's even a fad for buying old bakelite-like telephone handsets to plug into your latest Nokia. Talking of Nokia, the company recently launched a 'life-caching' service for people to upload digital memories (voice, text, photos and video clips). For the less technically minded, the boom in scrap-booking does the job of preserving your memories just as well.

Implications

When people are frightened by the present they escape into the past. Expect an increased demand for face-to-face contact.

Opportunities

Authentic recreations of 'old' products using new technology and materials. Also tapping into the 'back-catalogue' as a short-cut for innovation.

Threats

Increasing customer resistance to remote call answering, automated service and outsourced customer service.

Links

Authenticity, realness, life caching.



Localisation

8. Localisation

We haven't included globalisation in the Top Ten because it's been around for a long time and because localisation is in some ways more interesting. Most mega-trends create counter trends that work in an opposite direction and globalisation is no exception. You could also refer to this trend as tribalism, or even nationalism, but whatever label you attach to it its impact is being felt in everything from politics and car design to credit cards and restaurant meals. The argument, briefly, is that globalisation has spawned an homogenised society where we buy the same clothes in the same shops and eat the same meals sitting in front of the same TV programmes shown on the same TVs. This is great for mega-corporations that churn out standardised products to a single global market but most people see themselves as individuals – or part of a group – primarily defined by where they were born and where they live. Hence the resurgence in national identity, flag waving, local languages and local newspapers.

Implications

More local trade alliances. Also the re-emergence of city states and the 'Balkanisation' of Europe. Potentially the death of globalisation.

Opportunities

Local versions of global products and services. Regional and seasonal products.

Threats

Collapse of the EU back into local units or even small city-states. Rise in nationalism could drive protectionism, racism, xenophobia and violence.

Links

Tribalism, nationalism, xenophobia, racism, globalisation, Nimby's.



Authenticity

9. Authenticity

Life is complicated and getting more so. We are suffering from Too Much Information (TMI), Too Much Choice (TMC) and Too Much Technology (TMT). We are also being subjected to multiple truths (one minute coffee is going to kill you, the next it's a miracle cure) and fed a seemingly endless diet of half-truths and lies from companies and politicians who want to sell us something. The response to all this is an interest in authenticity or 'realness'. People want to know where things (or people) are from and whether they can trust them. They also want to know what the story is. Of course there are contradictions. On the one hand we expect people and products to be trustworthy, ethical, real and tell stories about their history. On the other hand we are ourselves leading increasingly fake lives – filling our lips with Botox, dying our hair blonde, enlarging our breasts and pretending we're happier than we really are.

Implications

A growing interest in how things are made and a search for real products and experiences.

Opportunities

Story-telling, history, heritage, telling it like it is.

Threats

Even more reality television!

Links

Realness, reality, spin, virtual reality, history, truth, trust, nostalgia, heritage, cosmetic surgery, fakes.



Happiness -)

10. Happiness

Materialism is still in full swing but for many people it's starting to lose its appeal. We are working harder and working longer – and earning more money as a result – but it's becoming increasingly obvious that money can't buy you happiness. People are also starting to realise that identity is not shaped by what you own or consume but by who you are and how you live. To some extent the happiness phenomenon is really a search for meaning. Hence the increase in spiritualism. But it is also down to the fact that people have too much time on their hands. A century or two ago people were focussed on survival and just didn't have time for introspection. Keep an eye on how often the topic of happiness appears in the general media and when politicians and companies pick up on the issue you'll know the trend has truly arrived.

Implications

People will increasingly value time and well-being ahead of monetary incentives. Expect sustainability and 'green' issues to feature strongly.

Opportunities

Growth of population & employment outside major cities.

Threats

A major economic meltdown - or a global event like war or a pandemic - could make this trend look like self-indulgent, introspective navel gazing.

Links

Work-life balance, downshifting, materialism, spirituality, meaning.

Sector trends

We've now looked at ten mega-trends that are likely, in some form or other, to shape our lives in 2006 and beyond. But what about something a little more specific? The next section goes into a more detail about some of the micro-trends affecting key industries and sectors. We start with societal trends (for example demographics) and then move on through political trends to specific industries such as media.

The list of trends (and sectors) is not comprehensive but it should give you a flavour of some of the things that are happening over in one area that could influence or cross-pollinate another.

Happy trend hunting.



Society & Culture

Demographic change

Demographics is the mother of all trends (or, as someone more eloquently once put it, “demographics is destiny”). The big demographic shift is ageing. In Europe 25% of the population are already aged 65+. Linked to this is the rise in single person households (46 million in Europe) caused by an increase of widows and widowers, but also caused by more people getting divorced and by people marrying later or not at all (42% of the US workforce is unmarried). Add a declining fertility rate (below the replacement rate in many developed nations) and you have a recipe for significant socio-economic change.

Other linked trends include older parents, more one-parent families, male/female imbalance (eg China) and less traditional family units. In 1950 80% of US households were the traditional 2 parents & kids nuclear family. Now the figure is 47%, while over in Europe there will be 14% less nuclear families in 2006 than in 1995. This could all change of course, but it's in the nature of demographic trends that change is usually slow in any given direction.

Sustainability

By about 2025 70% of European rubbish landfills will be full. So expect to see more earth friendly design, increased use of biodegradable materials, healthy buildings (less use of chemical additives and synthetic materials) and increased use of recycled water and locally produced energy.

Cocooning

Faith Popcorn's cocooning phenomenon is still alive and well thanks to everything from 9/11 and SARS to 'speeding up' and Too Much Technology (TMT). As a result people will spend more and more money on their homes and gardens turning houses into mini spa resorts and gardens into havens of relaxation. Also expect a boom in home security products.

Urbanisation

Twenty years ago everyone seemed to be moving out of cities, which were full of grime and crime. These days everyone seems to be moving back in because that's where everything seems to happen. However, the high cost of real estate in most cities will mean that cities become ghettos for gays, the rich, singles and childless couples. Everyone else will be in gated suburban communities or cheap housing. (The ratio of mobile homes to houses in gated communities in the US is currently 11).

Climate change

Most intelligent people would accept that something is happening to the world's weather. The only question is what. Some people say it's going to get colder and wetter while others say it's going to get hotter and drier. Let's just say things are changing. After all, what is 'normal' weather depends entirely on how far back you want to go.



Government & Politics

Global government

Will national governments survive the current century? There is already evidence emerging that power is shifting towards the local at the one end and the global at the other. We are also witnessing the decline of law and even security at the national level.

Tribalism

Historically, international relations have been based on relationships between nation states but this is changing. Many of the current conflicts are between groups inside states. Moreover, the very idea of the nation state is itself under threat from both above and below. Local issues are seen by many people as more important than national politics because at least they have a chance of influencing outcomes. This may lead to the rebirth of city-states as national politics is squeezed between powerful multi-national corporate and NGO interests on the one hand and locally politicised individuals on the other.

Voter antipathy

Do you really care who wins the next election? – aren't they all the same anyway? Perhaps this is why, in the UK, more people belong to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) than all three major political parties combined. Take another example. More young people voted on American Pop Idol than in the last US Federal election. But politicians in Lithuania have developed a novel solution – give away drinks at polling stations. At a recent election voting increased from 23% to 65% as a result.

Creeping conservatism

Are we all moving rightwards? A Harvard University poll found that 75% of students supported the armed forces compared with just 20% in 1975. Why the change of heart? First, September 11. Second, the Republican Party has spent a lot of time and money recruiting the young and third, young people just love to do the opposite of what their (liberal) parents did. The result is that all sorts of things that would have been considered unthinkable twenty years ago are now perfectly acceptable. For example, 36% of US high-school students now believe that the US government should approve news stories prior to publication or broadcast.

Power shift to the East

By 2010 the global population should have increased to 6.8 billion (it reached 6 billion in 1999 and currently stands at 6.49 billion), but 95% of this growth will come from developing countries, most of them in the East. India will become an economic superpower but most attention will continue to be focused on the potential of its rival China. China is important for a number of reasons including its sheer size (geographically and population wise), its economic growth and its territorial claims. These in turn make China a significant foreign policy player. However, the smart money is probably on (in) India.



Science & Technology

Nanotech

Nanotechnology (i.e. the manipulation of structures at an atomic level –or the science of very small things) is the hyped technology of the new millennium. It's unlikely to disappoint either because it's a disruptive technology. Nanotech will effect every industry from toothpaste to car tyres and from to glass to clothing. Also expect a major Nanotech accident by around 2025 (see Bill Joy's article entitled 'Why the future doesn't need us').

The rise of the machines

Expect computers to become more intelligent than humans by about 2025. At this point humankind will be faced with something of a dilemma. If machines become more intelligent than their makers, what's to stop them taking over? You could of course design machines with certain in-built controls (see Isaac Assimov's Robot Rules in I Robot) but there will be a very strong temptation for mankind to see what would happen if you don't. The other intriguing (if not outright alarming) aspect of this issue is the convergence of computing, robotics and nanotechnology, which could give rise to self-replicating machines. Add to this the possibility of not only downloading intelligence into a machine but downloading consciousness too, and you are faced with the question of whether it is better to live forever in a machine or live for a limited time as a carbon based biped.

Ethics

Robotic soldiers anyone? They're coming but should such machines feel pain or regret? And if (when) there's an accident, who should be held responsible? Would you trust a robot to administer a general anaesthetic and perform general surgery on you? These are just some of the questions that are already popping up as science and technology move centre stage.

Identity solutions

Once upon a time, a signature and a photograph were all you needed to prove that you were who you said you were. But in anxious digital times, we need to be able to prove it beyond reasonable doubt in a variety of physical and virtual situations. Cue biometrics, verbal signatures, body scanning and even 'signatures' based on body smell.

Time and place shifting

Products such as TiVo allow users to time shift their TV viewing habits. Similarly, Apple's iPod, like Sony's Walkman before it, allows users to shift their music listening to any place they like. So what if, in the future, you could be in two places at the same time or physically travel backwards or forwards in time? This is pure science fiction of course, but science and technology are allowing us to literally look back and forward in time, for example to identify future genetic time-bombs inside our bodies.



Media & Communications

On demand TV

The days of 3 TV channels, all of which close down at midnight, are but a distant memory for some and an absurdity for others. These days it's multi-channel available 24/7, but we haven't seen anything yet. TiVo and DVRs are already having some effect in terms of time shifting and ad skipping but the programme makers are still very much in control. Not so in the future. At some point (10 years, maybe 20?) you will be able to access every television programme and every film ever made when you want it and how you want it. This could mean watching TV at 3am or it could be downloading content onto your video iPod. It will almost certainly also mean viewers producing their own content and directly influencing what other people watch.

Blogging

Traditional media, and 'expert sources', will increasingly lose their monopoly on content as ordinary individuals go online to express their own news and opinions via blogs. We could therefore see vast numbers of people checking sites like Google before buying anything or going anywhere. What are the consequences of this for traditional media, retailers and manufacturers?

Wireless & broadband

One of the interesting things about mobile phones is that the people who have grown up using them (in preference to fixed line phones) regard a phone number as theirs rather than something that belongs to a house or other building. (i.e. it is individual not collective). Expect to witness rapid growth in broadband penetration and speed.

Always on

The average Australian couple spends 3.5 hours watching television but only 12 minutes talking to each other every day. Will we be watching TV on our computers in the future or will someone, somewhere, invent something or do something that replaces the 'opium of the masses'?

VoIP

VoIP is much talked about but seldom seen. However, low cost (and no cost) services such as Skype and Yahoo Voice (available via Yahoo Messenger) are slowly beginning to make an impact. VoIP is currently used by less than 10% of US companies but expect this to increase to 40% or more in the very near future.



Work & Business

e-everything

Dreams of fast fortunes are not quite at dot.com boom levels but interest in, and use of, e-commerce is growing rapidly due to familiarity, cost and convenience. Many of the early reliability and security issues have been sorted out too, although there is a lingering cloud of doubt about information security and identity theft. Meanwhile, office email is reaching plague proportions with at least one company banning it on Fridays so that staff can catch up with some real work.

BRICs

There is a lot of talk about the growing power and influence of Brazil, Russia, India and China (the so-called BRIC countries) and companies are falling over themselves to invest in China in particular. However, this all has a faint smell of history about it since other countries have been hot before (remember Japan, then Germany and then the so-called Tiger economies?). To some observers, China and Russia are also built on foundations of sand. Ethnic violence, widespread corruption and speculative building all have the potential to upset this growth trend.

Work-life balance

Companies are looking to reduce fixed costs while employees want flexibility in terms of hours and location of work. Result? – an increase in part time work, working from home, virtual offices, sabbaticals and ‘downshifting’ (25% of homes now contain some kind of home office and 25% of people claim to have ‘downshifted’ to improve the quality of their life in the past 18 months). However, most companies still don’t get it. But they will. Demographic trends will mean less people available for work, which means more competition for workers, which in turn will drive a more flexible approach by employers.

Off-shoring

In a globalised world, outsourcing back office functions like IT to low cost countries like India is a no-brainer. According to Gartner, IT outsourcing grew by 21% between 1999 and 2003 and in India the industry employs 170,000 people. But is a backlash on the horizon? Customers generally dislike talking to call centres and foreign call centres in particular. Equally, the use of low cost manufacturing centres in countries like China has become a political issue, as voters fear a loss of jobs back home.

The death of manufacturing

Thirty years ago most Western countries had between 20–40% of their workforces in manufacturing. Now the figure is closer to 2–4%. Have we seen a shift like this before? Yes. During the industrial revolution and, more recently at the end of the 1800s, most people in the US were employed in just three areas agriculture, domestic service and horse transport. So what are the future implications of a shift from resource based manufacturing to service based and then idea based economies?



Money & Finance

Debt

The level of credit card debt in Britain has increased by 73% since 1997. The UK now holds 60% of all credit cards issued in Europe and has 75% of all European credit card debt. Spending on credit cards now represents 11% of GDP and 40% of people say they expect to use their cards more with the advent of new technology. Meanwhile, the amount owed to credit card companies in the UK now stands at £53 billion. Figures for other countries such as the US and Australia are following a broadly similar trend. So what happens if (when) interest rates really go up? Trouble, that's what.

Pre-pay and stored value cards

10 million households in the US don't have bank accounts and many of these use their pay cheques to buy pre-paid credit cards. Around 8.5% of households without bank accounts own pre-paid credit cards but this figure is expected to rise to 25% by the end of 2006. This is one reason why companies like Visa and MasterCard are getting into the act by signing up Rap moguls and singers like Usher to put their names on prepaid cards.

Mobile phones becoming wallets

Have you noticed how fewer people are wearing watches these days? Under the age of 21 a watch is almost a novelty as people use their mobile phones to tell the time instead. And so, the theory goes, phones will replace wallets too as people find it more convenient to carry their cash digitally inside their phones.

Everyone is a bank

If everyone from supermarkets and search engines to phone companies and airlines offer banking services where does this leave the banks? The answer could be as back office low margin sub-contractors or maybe banks will re-frame themselves as 'wealthcare' businesses.

Digital money

According to AC Nielsen, 90% of transactions in the US will be cashless by the year 2020. PayPal already has 63 million accounts, which makes it larger than most national banks, while in Korea during the month of June 2004, 300,000 people purchased cell phones into which you can insert a memory card containing all your financial data. So will physical money soon be a thing of the past? Most observers say yes, but don't underestimate the power of human nature and tradition.



Healthcare & Well-being

Sleep is the new sex

Western societies are sleep deprived and as a result people are becoming “clumsy, stupid, unhappy and dead” according to Dr Stanley Coren (author of *The Sleep Thieves*). Social observers have coined the term TATT Syndrome to describe people that are Tired All The Time. Whether you buy in to such phraseology the condition seems real enough and sleep is set to be one of the next big social and medical issues. Back in 1900 Americans slept for an average of 9.0 hours every night. The figure is now 6.9 hours. In Australia there were 4 sleep clinics in 1985. The number is now 70. In New York there is even a company called Metro Naps that ‘sells’ sleep to stressed out city types (US \$14 for 15 minutes).

Customised treatments

90% of medicines don’t work for 30% of people, so in the future we’ll see more treatment programs and drugs tailor made for specific groups and even individuals. We’ll also see genetically based treatments and diets customised to specific groups of people.

Hospitals at home

Increasing hospitalisation and treatment costs, together with developments in remote monitoring and wireless communications, will create a boom in home based monitoring, diagnosis and treatment. This trend will also be driven by the rise in the number of people aged 65+ that are quite literally clogging up hospitals (there has been a 155% increase in the number of Americans being treated for heart failure in the US, not because of an increased disease rate but simply because people are living for longer).

Ageing

The ageing trend will have enormous influence on healthcare in the future as people not only live longer (life expectancy is expected to be 100+ by 2020 for many countries) but expect to be well for longer too. Obvious impacts include higher expenditure on pharmaceuticals and care for the elderly which are already at record levels in the US, but the type of diseases we’ll see will also change. We’ve already seen voice lifts and other forms of anti-ageing surgery. Expect to see more R&D dollars put behind things like memory recovery and enhancement and the replacement of body parts.

Depression

A study by Brown Medical School (US) found that men who suffer from depression increase their risk of heart disease by 12% (and if they’re pessimists, the risk increases by 18%). Is this a real trend caused by the likes of individualism, living alone, and social exclusion or is it just that people have got time to think about themselves too much these days? Once upon a time depression was just part of the human condition. In the future it will, increasingly, be treated as an illness.



Transport & Automotive

Embedded intelligence

Audi is experimenting with fingerprint technology to adjust seat settings, temperature control and radio settings. It doesn't open the doors or start the engine, but it could. Other 'intelligent' features already include tyres that tell the driver when they're getting flat or engines that tell you when they need a service. We can also expect to see the widespread adoption of technologies like lane warning and guidance devices, blind spot alarms, radar-assisted cruise control, remote speed control, sleep alarms and night vision.

Remote monitoring

Electronic Data Recorders (EDR's) are little black boxes that covertly sit inside some cars (eg all new GM, Mercedes and Audi) and monitor your speed, acceleration and braking amongst other things. When you have an accident the data contained in these boxes can be used by police or your insurance company to see who did what. If that's not bad enough how about what networkcar.com is doing? This company allows people to remotely track their car when they're not in it. So, for example, you can tell (via your computer) where your husband is or what speed your daughter is driving – without alerting him or her to the fact you're watching them.

Driver-less cars

Back in the 1960s GM experimented with cars that followed a magnetic strip in the highway. More recently, Toyota has been testing the PM concept car, which travels around in 'social groups' with other cars. We're not suggesting that 'drive by wire' will take over completely, but you can expect the driver to be almost redundant by 2030.

Pay as you go

If 'economy' and 'business' works for airlines, why not apply the same principle to roads? This is what's happening all over the world with congestion charges to enter city centres and now it's happening with roads, which are being divided into free and paid sections. The idea is a mixture of social engineering and civil engineering. Fast lanes are being converted into paid lanes, which motorists can move into if they're in a hurry or they're just plain rich ('Lexus lanes' as some people describe them). The clever bit is that the paid lanes are not compulsory and pricing can be adjusted according to traffic flow or time of day. Payment is made instantly via electronic tags inside your car.

Car politics

According to the New Economics Forum (a UK think tank), owners of 4x4 (SUV) vehicles should be forced to display health warnings on the side of their cars similar to the health warnings seen on cigarette packs. We've already seen tax rates, licence charges and even interest rates on car loans linked to vehicle type so expect to see anti-car sentiment linked to specific government policies in the future. For example, large 4x4 vehicles could be banned from certain areas at certain times of day or local councils could offer free inner city parking for owners of hybrid, electric or small commuter cars.



Travel & Tourism

The death of distance

How about lunch in Paris or dinner in New York? This isn't as crazy as you might think (even if you live in London) because people are getting used to going further. What was once exotic is now considered ordinary, which means that travellers are constantly seeking out new and further flung destinations like Latin America and Asia. Part of the reason for this is the growth of low cost carriers pushing routes further out. US carriers like Jet Blue, Spirit and AirTran are all adding destinations like Jamaica, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic to their schedules. It's also got something to do with people having more money to spend and airlines making the experience more comfortable. One could even argue that it's to do with security post 9/11. If you've got to get to an airport 2 or 3 hours before your flight you might as well make the journey worthwhile by going somewhere far away. You could even argue that it's down to the Internet, which has given ordinary travellers access to new information and low prices.

Luxury travel

As low cost services spread across the world, so too does the appeal of the opposite high-cost, high touch exclusivity and personal pampering. For some, low cost fares leave extra cash to splash out on expensive hotels, while for others business and first class cabins are the new hotels. And, of course, the more travellers get used to luxury, the more of it they want, which leaves them with something of a dilemma. How to set yourself apart from everyone else when almost everyone else seems to have exactly the same idea?

Spontaneity

Travellers are taking advantage of the plethora of no-frills airlines, affordable hotels (also booked at the last moment) and last-minute/find-and-see websites to increasingly act on a whim. Thus making spontaneous decisions to go somewhere is becoming the norm, especially for the Internet generation who do everything at Internet speed.

Experiential travel

According to the World Tourism Organisation, cultural holidays are the fastest growing sector of the tourism market. This segment includes everything from backpackers looking for 'real' experiences half way up the Amazon, to flocks of retirees booking cultural tours through SAGA or the British Museum. As a result towns and cities are increasingly marketing themselves using whatever nature and history have given them. This dovetails with an increased interest in unusual but 'safe' destinations. Examples would include former Soviet bloc countries such as Bulgaria and even Balkan countries, especially Croatia. Another emerging segment that is part of this cultural voyeurism is what's been called religious tourism.

China

Look out, the Chinese are coming. Whereas it took 30 years for Japan to reach 17 million outbound trips, China has reached this figure in just five years. According to the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), the Chinese took roughly 800 million internal trips during 2003. That's about the same number taken by the rest of the planet in 2003. So imagine what would happen if even a small proportion of this number decided to travel abroad? – you'd have to ration access to tourist sites and even whole countries. Similarly, India is another country with a rapidly emerging middle class with money to spend on travel. In 2003 four and a half million Indians travelled abroad which caused the country to lose millions in foreign currency due to the imbalance between inbound and outbound tourists.



Retail & Leisure

Self-serve

Customer service costs money and is notoriously difficult to do well, so why not get customers to do it themselves? Everyone saves money and your customers think they're in charge. Current examples include self check-in kiosks in airports, self-scanning machines in supermarkets and DIY check out services in hotels. Similarly, expect to see a boom in very intelligent vending machines very soon. If you prefer your service delivered by someone else, there's even a car dealership in Japan that 'employs' robots as salesmen.

Cost polarisation

By 2015 the middle market will have disappeared in most developed countries taking mid-price retailers with them. Hence most consumer markets are already polarising between economy and premium sectors (low price versus luxury). However, customers can happily live in both segments buying \$15 T-shirts one minute and \$500 jeans the next.

Blurring of sectors

Bookshops selling coffee, coffee shops selling music, supermarkets selling loans, Ralph Lauren selling white paint and water companies selling gas. Just how far can you stretch a brand these days before it snaps?

High speed retail

"24-hour banking, who's got time for that?" Like most good jokes this one, from US comedian Steve Wright, is close to the truth. People are leading increasingly hectic lives. This is driving trends like drive-by dining, mobile banking and it's also killing giant malls, which take too much time to shop. Equally, people are getting increasingly bored with the same brands in the same places, which in turn is driving 'pop-up' retail and "limited time only" products and offers.

RFID

Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFIDs) are essentially glorified barcodes – tiny microchips with an antenna attached which retailers can use remotely to manage inventory and stop theft. They can also be used to trigger promotional messages when you pick up a product in store (like in the Prada store in New York). In the future RFID readers could scan your bags as you leave a store and automatically take the money from a suitably enabled mobile phone (or a tiny chip located in your forearm or teeth) which is linked to your bank or credit card. RFIDs have a myriad of other uses too, such as remote monitoring (healthcare) and baggage tracking (transport).



Food & Drink

Nostalgic nosh

As life speeds up and becomes more complex (and in some cases more dangerous) people of a certain age are yearning for the simplicity, warmth and certainty of bygone eras. Hence the growth in comfort food eating and retro recipes. A good example is the food hall in Marks & Spencer (UK) where you can re-live the nineteen seventies with dishes like prawn cocktail, moussaka, chicken Kiev and Black Forest Gateau. Over in the US meat loaf sales are booming and Black Jack gum has been re-introduced.

Healthy

In the US two-thirds of adults are overweight, which is driving everything from health club membership (up 8.5% between 2002 and 2003) to growth in kids 'plus-sized' clothing. Over in Europe a recent survey said that nearly 75% of Europeans are more concerned about their health than 12 months ago – which is not surprising when you consider the fact that women's alcohol consumption has jumped by almost a third between 1998 and 2003 in the UK. McDonald's are getting into the act selling salads and high fibre snacks whilst beans, grains and white tea sales are booming. Future winners will include products that successfully merge the health trend with other trends like portability e.g. healthy food on the go (it's called fruit!).

Premiumisation

In the UK consumer expenditure on premium foods is predicted to increase by 27% between 2003 and 2008. A good example is the gourmet chocolate trend, but you can find premium expressions of even the most mundane everyday food items.

Time starved

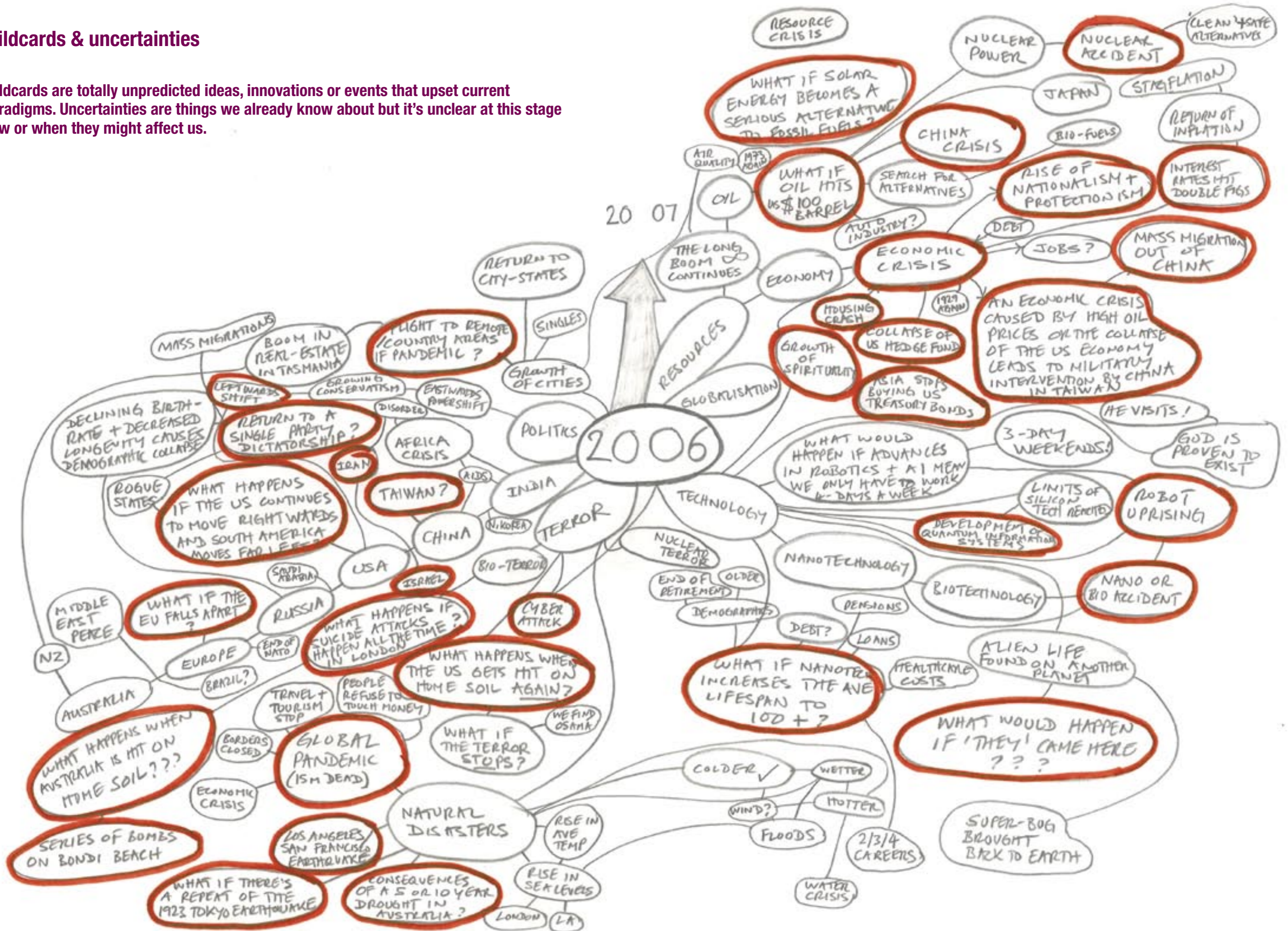
Slow food might be flavour of the month for the fortunate few, but for the rest of us it's business as usual – only faster. Think of micro-waves mums, hectic households, fast casual, portability and drive-by dining (eg McDonald's "McGriddle" sandwiches). Indeed, if they can't eat it fast, consumers won't swallow it.

Regional and seasonal

For some people organic just isn't good enough. Food has to be locally grown and sold too. In the UK, the so-called 'food miles' debate has become a political hot potato (in Islington at least). So expect more micro-breweries and even micro-cheeseries. The perfect example of this trend is a restaurant in the Netherlands that has its own vegetable garden right next to the restaurant so you can see your next meal growing while you eat.

Wildcards & uncertainties

Wildcards are totally unpredicted ideas, innovations or events that upset current paradigms. Uncertainties are things we already know about but it's unclear at this stage how or when they might affect us.



Predictions for 2006 & beyond

2006

Widespread use of biosensors in major cities to detect terrorists
Terrorists explode a series of bombs on Bondi beach
Second face transplant takes place
One use, self-destructing DVDs available from video hire firms
Apple introduce the iPhone
People start to read e-books on phones whilst commuting
'Made in China' a major liability as customers boycott Chinese goods
Driverless taxis launched in Cardiff (UK)
Garden watering systems banned in Australia
Israel attacks Iranian nuclear facilities

2007

One-to-one marketing morphs into one-to-one products (multinational companies offer individuals individually designed products)
US, UK and Australia all invest in major nuclear power projects
RFID widely adopted on supermarket packaging
Online voting in UK
Sleep deprivation a major social issue
Wi-Max replaces Wi-Fi in US
Hilary Clinton becomes first female president
Major terrorist attack on a company
Movies no longer available in VHS format

2008

Flat tax system adopted in UK
Pay per bin system (domestic rubbish) adopted in UK
Cars with mood or condition sensitive lighting
Memory chips replace cassettes for most video cameras
Terrorists attack US cruise ship
Passpictures are introduced as alternative to passwords for ID verification
Over 30% of the German population is aged 60+
6 million domestic robots 'in service' worldwide
A major scientific breakthrough is proven to be false
Apple introduce iWallet

2009

90% of advertising is personalised
Retirement age increased to 70 in Australia
Chinese widely taught in UK schools
Home and office based power generation takes off
Wide use of face transplants by criminals
Major civil liberties revolt in US
Fast charge batteries introduced (fuel cell batteries follow in 2018)
In the UK Tesco is forced to split up because it is too powerful
95% of people in the UK now live in towns or cities

2010

Lie detection call screening for all insurance claims
Armed services fully privatised in US
Partial privatisation of police in UK
33% of UK homes are lived in by only one person
Ecotourism becomes major environmental problem
90% of calls are made on mobile phones
All new cars sold with automated speed control and lane warning systems
Most phone calls are now free
Following the success of Google Earth, Google launches Google Space

2011

India replaces China as key economic powerhouse
Flat tax system adopted in US
Landfills in Europe are almost full creating rubbish exports to China, Russia and Australia
US army uses plastic tanks
Entry charge to enter most major cities
Ugly is the new black as people seek out imperfection
Australians spend more on beauty products than on education
All major roads now split into free and paid lanes
Most newspapers are now free
A magnetically levitated (Maglev) train operates between Shanghai and Beijing
A highly leveraged US hedge fund collapses

2012

US companies move Chinese based call centres back home following shareholder revolt
Paper currencies and cheques all but disappear (most transactions are now electronic)
Marriages replaced with renewable 5-year plans
US military personnel given stock options
33% of women in Australia will never have children
10,000 people worldwide now have ID chips implanted
Wal-Mart launches in-store GPS system to help shoppers locate products in a hurry
Robotic soldiers used in global conflicts
Apple launches iCar

2013

Tourists book a year in advance to see popular tourist attractions such as the Eiffel tower
The average age of video game players is 34
51% of children in the UK are born outside marriage
Children play outside for less than 30 min per week
60% of people in the UK wish to leave the country
Hearing aids become fashion items
First publically admitted human clone
Australia pays people to emigrate to WA, SA and the Northern Territory
Boom in celebrities buying islands and remote real estate

2014

Colour changing paints and wallpapers
Plastic bones for humans
Smart make-up banned following health scare
50% of people experience 'desk rage' at work
Loneliness is identified as the major social issue facing Western countries
80% of bank customers use Internet banking but branches still survive
US offers citizenship in return for 5-years military service
London tax riots
Dell introduces disposable computers

2015

Space tourism finally takes off
25-hour week political party launched in France
Manned mission to Mars by Chinese
Most adults are seriously overweight
Pilot-less planes abandoned following passenger revolt
Space exploration brings super-bug back to earth
Children are regularly implanted with GPS and ID chips
18% of mammal species are now extinct
The Rolling Stones finally give up touring

2016

Massive earthquakes in Tokyo and Los Angeles
Private guards now outnumber the police 1001
Painkillers available in male and female versions
Compulsory community service introduced
Robotic surgery now commonplace
Hotels offer every film ever made on pay-per-view
Medical treatments based on genetics
Malaria outbreak in Northern Europe
Laser powered toothbrushes go on sale
Malcolm Turnbull forced to resign as Australian PM
Full immersion in virtual reality possible

2017

An atomic device explodes in a major city
Stem cell research provides a cure for Parkinson's disease
Major oil spill in Antarctic drilling fields
Cars fix themselves after minor accidents
Artificial intelligence approaches human levels
Windows 2017 allows users to email physical objects
Online auctions replace salary negotiations
Personal truth and reliability ratings for individuals widely used by companies
Door bells no longer exist
Most children are looked after by grandparents
The Rolling Stones release an album called 'From beyond the grave' created by a voice approximator



What's Next? - a road map for the future

OK so now what?

You've forked out some hard earned cash on this and you want some payback. Patience (for anyone under the age of twenty one, look it up). Forget everything you've just read and let your subconscious take over. In time new thinking and ideas will emerge. You may also find you're more interesting at dinner parties. But be careful. Nothing dates as fast as information about the future.

If you're hungry for more stimulation, visit www.nowandnext.com This is a website that documents new ideas, innovations and trends.

The site is home to a subscription report called What's Next and there's some free stuff too. Used as part of an environmental scanning or scenario planning process, this information can be used to identify strategic threats and opportunities.

Alternatively, if you'd like to explore in detail what your particular organisation or industry might look like in the future - or you'd like to book Richard Watson for a talk about future trends - get in touch.

Contact details

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References & sources

One frequently asked question is where do you come up with this stuff? The answer is we read a lot of newspapers and magazines and talk to a lot of people. We also spend time in the sea of information known as the Internet and use a handful of tricks to find out what's being talked about on blogs. One clever site you should definitely check out is www.blogpulse.com In terms of mainstream media the following have been especially useful

The Age
www.theage.com.au

The Australian
www.theaustralian.com.au

Australian Financial Review
www.afr.com

Atlantic Monthly
www.theatlantic.com

Asian Wall Street Journal
www.onlinenewsj.com

Automotive News
www.autonews.com

Boss Magazine
www.bossafr.com

British Medical Journal
www.bmjournals.com

BRW
www.brw.com.au

Business Week
www.businessweekasia.com

China Daily
www.chinadaily.com.cn

Daily Telegraph
www.telegraph.co.uk

Economist
www.economist.com

Fast Company
www.fastcompany.com

Financial Times
www.financialtimes.com

Forbes
www.forbes.com

Foreign Policy
www.foreignpolicy.com

Fortune
www.fortune.com

Guardian
www.guardian.co.uk

Harpers
www.harpers.org

Harvard Business Review
www.hbr.org

Japan Today
www.japantoday.com

MIT Technology Review
www.techreview.com

Nature
www.nature.com

New Scientist
www.newscientist.com

New Yorker
www.newyorker.com

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www.nytimes.com

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www.newsweek.com

Nikkei Weekly
www.nni.nikkei.co.jp

Online Banking Review
www.onlinebankingreview.com.au

Observer
www.observer.co.uk

Patent News
www.puig.org/patnews.html

Prospect
www.prospectmagazine.co.uk

Psychology Today
www.psychologytoday.com

Reason
www.reason.com

Red Herring
www.redherring.com

Retail Week
www.retail-week.com

Salon
www.salon.com

Scientific American
www.sciam.com

South China Morning Post
www.scmp.com

Straits Times
www.straitstimes.com

Strategy + Business
www.strategy-business.com

Sunday Times
www.Sunday-times.co.uk

Sydney Morning Herald
www.smh.com.au

The Times
www.timesonline.co.uk

Time
www.time.com

Wallpaper
www.wallpaper.com

Washington Monthly
www.washingtonmonthly.com

Washington Post
www.washingtonpost.com

The Walrus
www.walrusmagazine.com

Wired
www.wired.com



New ideas for 2006+ (These have already happened - seriously!)

An American inventor has created a gravestone that talks. The 'stone' incorporates a touch screen display and can deliver messages from **beyond the grave**.

Design your own **ice cream**? Ecreamery.com is a website that lets you do precisely that. You can choose a style, fat content, flavour and toppings.

Coca-Cola and McDonald's have both launched their own clothing lines. Meanwhile London Underground has launched its own range of **clothing** aimed at hip 16-24 year olds.

Wide-awake researchers at Carnegie Mellon University (US) have developed a **smart chair** that monitors the health of elderly people. Vital signs and sleep patterns are monitored via sensors and the chair adjusts itself if the user has stayed in the same position for too long.

A brewer in Germany has launched a **healthy beer** containing vitamins. The beer, named Karla, is expected to gain distribution through some of Germany's 21,000 pharmacies.

Substituting the word 'banana' for the word '**bomb**' is one way to stop intelligence agencies intercepting email or mobile phone conversations. But not any longer. Hewlett-Packard has created code-breaking software that looks for nouns, verbs and adjectives that are used out of context.

A **robotic** 'nurse' in San Francisco has been banned from a hospital after the 'intelligent' device forced its way into a clinic and refused to leave.

Recently spotted at Atlanta airport - an **iPod vending** machine (selling Minis and Shuffles). Meanwhile, a restaurant in Tokyo has installed SoundDock speakers on each table to allow customers to listen to their i-Pods whilst eating.

A company in Japan has created an exterior house paint that, once applied, reduces the interior temperature of your home or office by 2-3 degrees centigrade, thus reducing the need for **air conditioning**. Meanwhile, the same Japanese company (Toto Ltd) has also created wallpaper that absorbs noxious substances from the air.

Legoland in Denmark has introduced a service called **Kidspotter**. For US \$5.00 parents can rent a bracelet that's worn by the child and tells the parents exactly where their beloved child is.

Last year an Italian wine maker put microchips on bottles in order to guarantee the **authenticity** of the wine. This year another winemaker is adding a code to labels so that customers can 'interrogate' the wine to find out where it's from and how it was made.

A car company in the US has produced an advergame (advertising video game) in which the virtual billboards surrounding the racetrack are for real **car dealerships**. Not only that, the dealership ads change according to where you're playing the game.

Microsoft has designed a prototype teddy bear with built-in camera and **face recognition** software. The bear will allow anxious parents to keep watch on children whose faces have been programmed into the bear's 'brain' and the facility to speak to the child via microphones and a remote video link.

A company in Norway has launched what it claims is the first **gay soft drink** in the world. 'Homo Light' is a pink fizzy drink that's more fun to drink than straight drinks (apparently).

1, 899 bottles of the iconic HP (BBQ) Sauce have gone on sale in Britain with limited edition labels created by the eponymous fashion designer **Paul Smith**. The price of the limited edition bottle is £2.95 compared to the standard price of £0.69

A company in the US has launched the world's first one use only **disposable digital video camera**. The camera will record 20 minutes of 'film' and costs US \$30

A company in China has invented a **digital printer** that can print 4,800 dpi images straight onto press-on finger nails. The machines come pre-loaded with 3,000 images or you can download your own from your mobile phone.

An inventor has created an electronically conductive (smart) **concrete** that can send warning messages to engineers or building owners if the material is under extreme stress.

MTV Starzine, produced in Europe by **Nokia** and **MTV**, is a magazine written entirely by its readers who send in text messages and photos.

Scientists are working hard developing a nasal spray containing a substance called oxytocin that makes people **trust** complete strangers

Blast-wrap is a new material developed to protect people from bombs in rubbish bins. The wrap contains pockets (bubbles) stuffed with perlite. If an explosion occurs, the pockets collapse individually, thus reducing damage to the surrounding area. The material also contains fire-extinguishing chemicals to reduce the size of any fireball.

Mattel, maker of **Barbie dolls**, is launching Barbie clothing for grown up Barbie girls aged 20-30. Is this further evidence of the Kidult trend or an example of post-modern irony?

Scientists at the University of Utah (US) say that it is possible to 'print' human organs using cells as **bio-ink**. The resultant 'paper' can then be used to repair damaged organs or build new ones.

Gum-O-Flage is a scented chewing gum for hunters (so the deer can't smell you coming).

Schools in the UK are starting to ban mobile phones after it emerged that they were being used in a new form of **bullying**. The idea is that one child humiliates another while other children capture the event with camera or videophones. The images are then sent to other schools in the area or uploaded onto the Internet.

If you've ever dreamed of putting a pub in your back garden this could be just the ticket. An **inflatable pub** has been spotted in the UK that can hold 30 people. The pub features a fireplace and a fully functioning bar. Playing darts is not recommended.

NASAs Institute for Advanced Concepts is funding research into **mini-machines** that can reconfigure themselves into an almost infinite variety of other machines. Useful if you don't want to send endless different types of machine into space.

The US Department of Justice has shelved an idea to set up a competition to predict the next big **terrorist attack**. The terrorist 'futures market' would have sought scenarios from experts and members of the public but was cancelled due to the rather unpleasant thought of paying the winners.

Eggalert is a new service aimed at women that are too busy to monitor their own **fertility cycles**. Subscribers are notified via text messages about the best time to try for a baby.

Newsagents in Australia are now offering **home loans** while Post Offices may soon be selling airline tickets. Meanwhile, over in the UK, Tesco is selling index-linked saving certificates alongside the washing powder.

Here is an interesting story about **human behaviour**. A childcare centre in Israel was having problems with parents that were picking their children up late. As a result they introduced a fine for lateness. The result was that lateness increased. Why? Because the fine normalised the behaviour. Meanwhile, parents that take their children on holiday during term time without permission in the UK are being fined upto GB £200.

A German brewer has invented a beer that contains 6.3% alcohol plus 3 milligrams of **nicotine**. Apparently the idea is a way around smoking bans in pubs. Meanwhile, several American brewers are experimenting with so-called 'extreme beers' containing up to 25% alcohol and another has launched a beer infused with caffeine.

A man called Colin Dowse is selling bottles of **spray-on mud** to owners of SUV (4X4) vehicles. The mud costs US \$18.80 per bottle and is presumably selling because owners of clean looking SUVs are under attack from environmentalists who argue that most SUVs never go off-road.

Podcasting, grassroots broadcasting using an iPod, is becoming so popular in some parts of the US that some local **radio stations** may be forced to close down. Meanwhile, a vicar in the small Suffolk village of Wrentham (UK) has started using an iPod to deliver parish sermons to his global flock via their MP3 players. Godcasting perhaps?

For more ideas like these subscribe to our **free** monthly newsletter about New ideas, innovations and Trends at <http://brainmail.nowandnext.com>

Statshots

In 2004 there were 30,000 music albums and 175,000 books published in the US. In contrast, 14,000,000 weblogs were published worldwide. ⁽¹⁾

10% of the world's population (627 million people) has now shopped at least once on-line. ⁽²⁾

40% of teenage girls and 17% of teenage boys in the UK have considered having plastic surgery. ⁽³⁾

17% of Sony PlayStation owners in America are aged 50+ ⁽⁴⁾

In 2004 there were only 610,000 robots in domestic service worldwide. This figure is predicted to rise by 1000% to 6.1 million by the year 2007. ⁽⁵⁾

The volume of e-mail received by companies globally has increased from 1.8 billion per day in 1998 to 17 billion per day in 2004. ⁽⁶⁾

In China there are fifty new chemical plants currently under construction. In the US there is one. ⁽⁷⁾

Around 30% of adults in Britain feel that Tesco is becoming too powerful. Eight months ago the figure was about 20%. ⁽⁸⁾

People who retire aged 55 are more than twice as likely to drop dead within ten years as those that retire aged 60 or 65. ⁽⁹⁾

40% of children in the UK have no contact whatsoever with their father. ⁽¹⁰⁾

In 2002 the average American spent more on lottery tickets than books. ⁽¹¹⁾

In 2004, stress cost the UK economy GB £13.5 billion according to government figures. ⁽¹²⁾

A survey of 1,500 three to five -year olds in the UK says that the favourite meal of pre-school children is curry. ⁽¹³⁾

20% of all shopping in the UK now takes place online. ⁽¹⁴⁾

In 1992, 31% of people living in the UK described themselves as 'English'. By 2000 the percentage had increased to 41% ⁽¹⁵⁾

In Germany, 1/3 of all computers are sold by supermarkets. ⁽¹⁶⁾

IBM recently cut 13,000 staff in Europe and the US whilst almost simultaneously hiring 14,000 new staff in India. ⁽¹⁷⁾

In the UK, 71% of seven-year-old girls, and 28% of five-year-old girls, would like to be thinner. ⁽¹⁸⁾

50 years ago 50% of people in Sydney travelled to work by train. The figure is now 10% ⁽¹⁹⁾

In 1911 the median number of people living in a house in Australia was 4.5. The figure is now 2.6 ⁽²⁰⁾

45% of American's say they believe little or nothing that they read in newspapers. ⁽²¹⁾

In 1950 46% of men in the US workforce were aged over 65. In 2004 the figure was 19% ⁽²²⁾

There are almost as many Chinese learning English in China as there are people who can speak English living in the US, UK and Canada combined. ⁽²³⁾

17% of people aged 65+ in the UK are what experts call "socially isolated" – that is they have no daily contact with another human being. ⁽²⁴⁾

The number of people aged 65+ in Australia will grow from 12% of the population in 1999 to 26% in the year 2050. ⁽²⁵⁾

In 1970 45% of the Australian workforce were members of a trade union. The figure is now 25% ⁽²⁶⁾

In 1982 less than 5% of Fortune 500 companies had a policy to conduct drug tests on employees. In 1995 the figure had risen to 95% ⁽²⁷⁾

General Motors has 2.4 retirees for every working employee. ⁽³²⁾

A report by Age Concern says that almost 90% of people think that companies should not be allowed to get rid of workers simply because they are 65 years old. ⁽²⁸⁾

45% of people say they are seduced into buying things they don't need versus 30% a decade ago. ⁽²⁹⁾

Almost 33% of US children aged 4-19 years old eat at least one fast food meal every day according to a national household survey. ⁽³⁰⁾

In a recent survey, 56.9% of American workers who had been laid-off and then re-employed said that their new job paid less then their old one. ⁽³¹⁾

In 1950 singles represented 10% of American households. The figure is now 25% and is predicted to rise to 30% by 2010. ⁽³³⁾

12% of factory jobs in the US have vanished over the past 6 years. In Britain the figure is 14% while in China it's 15% ⁽³⁴⁾

There are now 4.2 million CCTV cameras in the UK – a 400% increase over the last 3 years ⁽³⁵⁾

By the year 2026 the traditional nuclear family of two adults plus children will be the exception rather than the rule in Australia. The level of singles is projected to increase from 9 to 13%. There is also expected to be a general decline in fertility and marriage but an increase in longevity. ⁽³⁶⁾

In China 10% of the population was obese back in 1982. The (rather larger) figure is now 25%. ⁽³⁷⁾

The average American soldier now carries around 22 batteries on his (or her) person. ⁽³⁸⁾

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**“The more
unpredictable
the world is the
more we rely
on predictions”**

Steve Rivkin

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