

The next decade of disruption

 By Louise Marsland

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As a teenager in the 1980s, I had high expectations of the future, like, in the Year 2000. Growing up on a TV diet of sci-fi series like *Battlestar Galactica*, *Buck Rogers*, *Star Trek* and the *Star Wars* movies - space travel, teleporting, watches as communication devices, aliens and shiny satin jump suits were anticipated.

Most of our expectations were met, although thankfully not the satin jump suits of *Buck Rogers* and his crew, more akin to our cycling fashion gear these days. I believe time travel is now mathematically possible, but still has to be tested properly! And there haven't been many alien sightings since the psychedelic '60s. (Pity, always makes for good copy.)

As for the rest, wow, could we ever have imagined what is to come, outside of the pages of popular science fiction novels? It is even more fantastical than the success of some celebrities (sic) on Twitter and Instagram.

As someone who grew up in an analogue world, I've often wondered what technological development had the most impact on my life. I vividly remember the neighbour with the first television set in our street: we watched the test pattern every afternoon for three weeks after school. I started my career on typewriters at *The Citizen* newspaper - and they weren't electric either! When Perskor finally sprung for computers, they put them in another room and we still had to print out our stories for the subs... And the hell we went through the day a 12-hour magtape shredded at *The Star* and we lost a whole edition of the *Saturday Star*. I still remember crying over a 2000w oped on the then 'education crisis' at Wits University, that I had to try rewrite.

So, no doubt, the internet has changed our lives and social media and the integration of digital media channels changed many careers, including my own.

Global strategic brand consultancy Added Value ([@AddedValueGroup](#)) tweeted an amazing link this week from [@Shareable](#), a non-profit news and connection hub for the sharing of transformation, about the next set of disruptive and transformative technologies that will change our lives immeasurably and actually lead to a decentralisation of the world, putting power in the hands of communities and individuals. It's hard to imagine some of them and comprehend how they will change our world further.

Many of them are driven by our experiences with the internet over the past two decades and the more transparent society that it has crafted - the reverberations of which are still being felt around the world as societies change along with inclusion into the global village that Marshall McLuhan so elegantly wrote about before the internet was even a reality.

New world order

There have been many individual posts on some of these predicted disruptive trends and some of [Shareable's](#) 21 innovations in new technology and business models have been shared in the usual round of annual trends lists, but this is one of the best collections I've seen to date that talks about the actual impact across business and society.

Here's a selection from the article '[21 technologies that will decentralize the world](#)' by Nina Misuraca Ignaczak:

1. **OpenGarden:** An initiative to share internet connections between devices in a less expensive and innovative way to get around poor bandwidth and other restrictions.
2. **The Edison:** The latest writing on wearable tech is that it will be wearable and small. Micro in fact. Intel has announced the launch of an SD card-sized computer which could "make dumb gadgets smart" - basically making the 'Internet of things'

work for real. Readwrite.com writer, [Alex Salkever](#) of Telefonica, believes this teeny tiny computer could replace the smartphone as the device of the next decade.

3. **Explosion of Internet of Things:** Referring to a *Business Insider* report, Shareable predicts that the number of things connected to the internet will explode. "The smartification of formerly "dumb" objects like parking meters, home thermostats, appliances, and automobiles is set to rival the number of computers and mobile devices currently connected to the internet, creating trillions in economic value."



Urbanites will increasingly be able to feed themselves. (Image: Shareable)

4. **Smart Contracts / Smart Property:** Recent advancements in cryptography may enable contracts to "enforce themselves". Ditto property contracts, where a property, the subject of lease contracts, ceased to function or be accessible in a breach of contract.

5. **Undercutting the banks:** Peer-to-peer payment services like Square Cash, VenMo, Dwolla and peer-to-peer loan services like Lending Club, Zopa and Prosper, are cutting institutional lenders and big banks right out of the picture by enabling people to deal directly with each other - a bit like online stokvels, it seems. As Shareable reports, over \$2.4bn in peer-to-peer loans were issued in 2003 alone.

6. **People Power:** Civic crowdfunding is taking over as public budgets are cut and planners and community groups use crowdfunded sites to upgrade infrastructure and pay for civic projects. Brilliant, but necessary. But will the next move be a refusal to pay taxes?

7. **Urban farming:** It is time for an alternative agriculture system to feed the increasingly urbanised global population and technology is making it happen, connecting urban landowners with urban farmers.

8. **FarmHack:** Still on the food production track, FarmHack is an open-source, online platform to develop processes for sustainable agriculture.

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