PUBLIC HEALTH IN POST-NORMAL TIMES: A FUTURES LENS AND A CALL TO ACTION FOR A NEW AGE

Collective Imagination, Collective Intelligence, Collective Agility

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March 2022

Objectives

- At the end of this session, participants will:

- - be familiar with the basic tenets of "foresight and futures thinking"

- - describe the scope of foresight as it is practiced globally in the year 2022

- - be able to articulate ways in which covid-19 has been a series of lessons about "post-normal futures"

- - apply a foresight tool (the futures triangle) to explore one way to think about the future of the immunization ecosystem and refresh collective imagination about possibilities, risks and challenges ahead with an eye towards equity and justice in public health practice

- - identify pathways to get more involved with foresight globally and locally
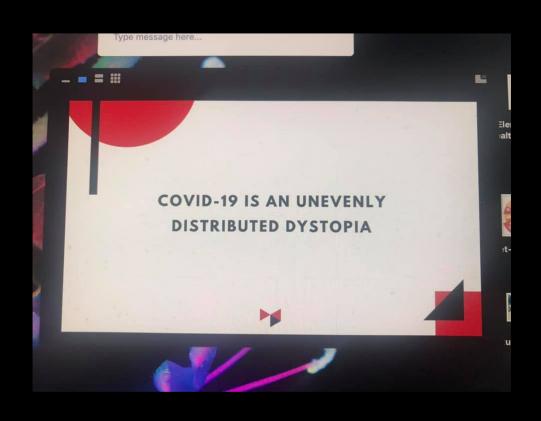
WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

- Start where we are – never has the idea of "post normal" felt more relevant.

- The definition of "post normal times" is:

"All that was normal has now evaporated: We have entered post-normal times, the in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and nothing really makes sense. To have any viable future, we must grasp the significance of this period of transition which is characterized by the three c's: complexity, chaos and contradictions." Ziaddun Sardar, 2010

- Steffen (2021) – Welcome to discontinuity, population: Everyone…

COVID 19 LESSONS SO FAR – SIMPLY

(Image from futurist Leah Zaidi, 2020)

- The future is here (a future we worried about…and many predicted)
- The future is complicated and in many ways, unpredictable.
- The future is unevenly distributed.
- In order to navigate it, we probably need new ways to operate.
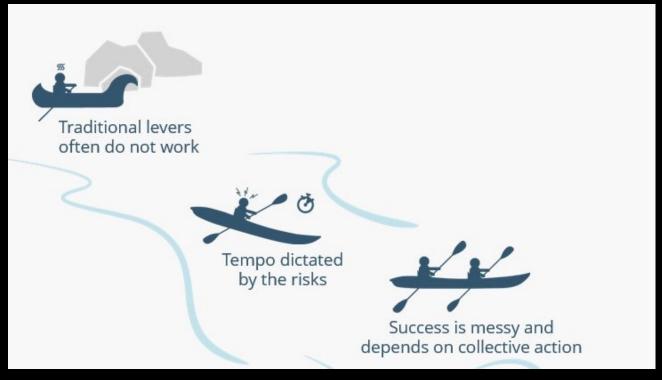- Futures thinking provides that possible framework.

LET'S GO!

A FUTURES LENS – MANY PATHWAYS/REASONS/IDEOLOGIES

- Futures as a cultural project (the future as a phenomenological, religious or spiritual focus)

- Futures as a political/military project (the future as a way to gain power via tactical advantage, defense and conquest)

- Futures as an economic project (the future as a way to bend the future for financial gain, market-centered, capitalism)

- Futures as a scientific project (the future as a space to anticipate/solve problems using the scientific method or to explore phenomena using a science lens)

- Futures as an artistic project (the future as a way to extend imagination into new worlds of all kinds and then to create them in various ways)

- Futures as a liberatory project (the future as a pluralistic, de-colonial, anti-racist, participatory and deeply democratic space focused on justice as its primary goal)

What is around the next corner and are we ready? Our narratives matter....

Traditional levers often do not work

Tempo dictated by the risks

Success is messy and depends on collective action

VUCA World – post-normal times

VUCA - Leadership

The ability to **flip from the frightening VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) to a hopeful VUCA (vision, understanding, clarity and agility) will be the ultimate dilemma for leaders in the future.**

Bob Johansen

History matters in Futures work

History is merely a list of surprises. It can only prepare us to be surprised yet again.

Kurt Vonnegut

What futures work isn't and a critique

- Predicting (it is more like mapmaking and navigating).

- Controlling (not possible anyway) – but pushing for/towards futures we want – YES!

- (Futures folks I hang around with) not about dominating the sector with one voice or one vision. Not driven by current economic/political frameworks/goals.

- Futures work sometimes criticized for being elitist, supremacy-anchored/blinded. Can be valid but there are "schools" of futures work. Foresight practitioner rather than futurist.

- I ascribe to critical futures thought: pluralist, disruptive, network-based, equity- human- and sustainability-centered.   Constant power analysis.   Iteratively challenging power relations in answer the question: "Who gets to define the future?" Democratizing futures thought and practice.

Principles of the Future

- The future is plural (many scenarios possible)
- The future is a combination of alternative futures: possible, plausible, probable and preferable
- The future is open (not fixed)
- The future is fuzzy (of course we can't "know" exactly how the future will unfold, and our foresight is imperfect, limited).

- The future is surprising (not always smooth or continuous). Sometimes it arrives in unexpected ways.
- The future is not surprising (sometimes the future is boring).
- The future is fast (the future is always accelerating).
- The future is slow (accelerating change gets all the attention, but a balance of the future is also slow, plodding and predictable).

- Daniel Bengston (2018). Principles for thinking about the future and foresight education. World Futures Review, 10(3), 193-202.x\

What Futures work is

- New(ish) discipline – (newer than sociology but does have more than a 50 year history).

- Managing "exponential" change – it isn't linear any more.

- Philosophy, set of tools and skills.

- 1000's of people around the world operating at futurists in a variety of traditions (public sector, private sector, transdisciplinarity)
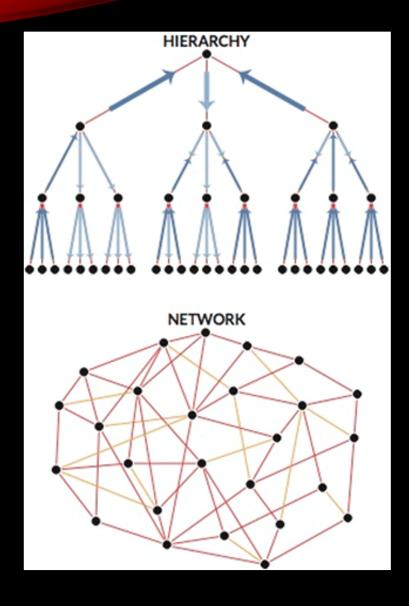
FUTURES THINKING/PRACTICE IS:

- About deepening and strengthening the ability to "anticipate" and imagine in new ways.

- Commit to reducing "short-term-ism" in our immediate and extended circles of influence.   How can futures thinking help us make better decisions? (Deeper commitment to exploring "unintended consequences" and "underdeveloped possibilities.)

- Resisting powerful actors who "dictate" what the future is going to be in favor of increasing agency and democracy in co-constructing desired futures while protecting/resisting undesired futures.

- Bigger than any one issue: climate, technology, geopolitical issues – a "way" of thinking that is a framework for how all of these (and many more) issues intersect, evolve and impact each other in predictable and unpredictable ways.

- Not neutral – it is powerful. Who gets to wield that power? Is it democratic?

THE FUTURE OF ISSUES

- Social change
- Work
- Organizational life
- Cities
- Technology
- Climate
- Food
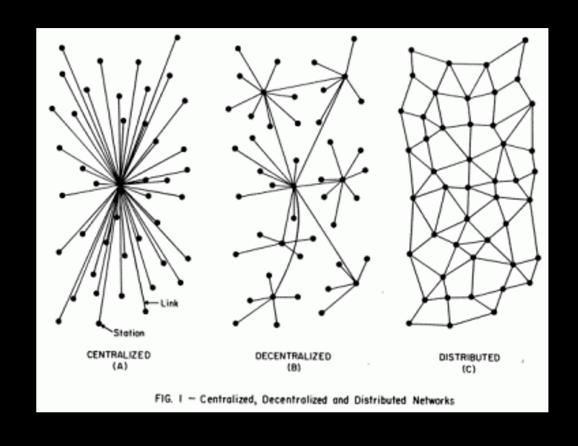- Communication
- Identity and human rights

- Racism and equity
- Family life
- Coupling (or beyond couples) and relationships
- Well-being (including both health and psychological)
- Religion and spirituality
- Trust
- Political life and democracy
- War (and peace)
- Not to mention "products" galore…

THE FUTURE OF POWER

Hierarchies vs Networks

Types of Networks

HIERARCHY

NETWORK

CENTRALIZED (A)

DECENTRALIZED (B)

DISTRIBUTED (C)

FIG. I — Centralized, Decentralized and Distributed Networks

FUTURES VOICES CHALLENGING DOMINANT NARRATIVES

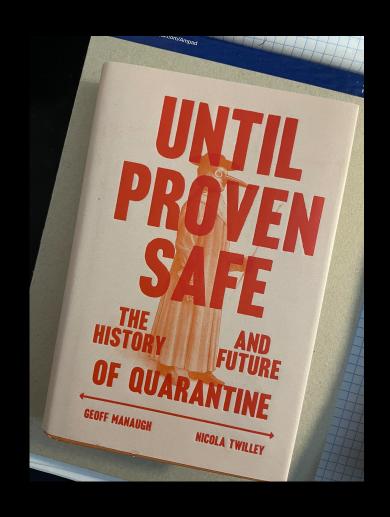# THE FUTURE OF GOVERNMENT ITSELF IS EVOLVING IN NEW WAYS

- Visit to see examples of countries all over the world (and across the United Nations) that are using foresight at:

https://socialworkfutures.com/2018/12/17/public-entities-adopting-future-models/
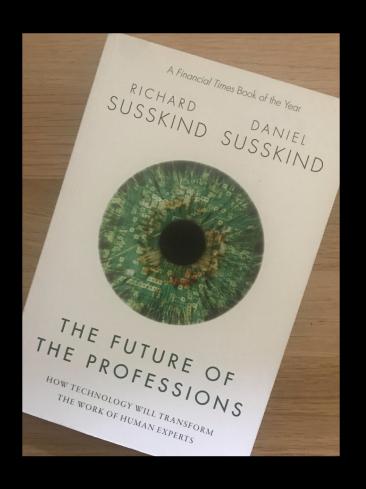
The Future of Quarantine

- What did covid-19 reveal about our ability to navigate a complex public health crisis?

- What lessons must we learn?

- What must be re-invented and/or restored?

UNTIL PROVEN SAFE

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF QUARANTINE

GEOFF MANAUGH   NICOLA TWILLEY

THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONS

- Medicine (both doctors, nurses and all health professions)

- Education (teachers - both in K-12 and higher education)

- Law

- Journalism

- Architecture

- Divinity

MY DEFINITION…

- Intentional, focused work to stretch perception, deepen capacity to anticipate in new ways to build **collective imagination, intelligence, agency and agility** with regard to the future.

- INTENTIONALLY EVOLVING FASTER TOGETHER ON PURPOSE.

- Many futurists specialize in an area, but everything impacts everything.

- Big tent concept – extremely transdisciplinary.

- "Applied science fiction."

ALGORITHMIC RACISM

- With emerging technologies, we might assume that racial bias will be more scientifically rooted out. Yet rather than challenging or overcoming the cycles of inequity, technical fixes too often reinforce or even deepen the status quo, p. 5.

- "The New Jim Code" – the employment of new technologies that reproduce existing inequities but that are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era, p. 6.

- "Coded inequity" – digital caste system that preys on our naivety, p.11

- Racism then becomes doubled – magnified and buried under layer of digital denial, p. 12.

Ruha Benjamin, Race After Technology, 2019

DESIGN JUSTICE

- Framework for analysis of how design distributes benefits and burdens between various groups of people. *Design justice focuses on the way that design reproduces or challenges the matrix of domination (white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, settler colonialism, and other forms of structural inequality).* Design justice is also a growing community of practice that aims to ensure a more equitable distribution of design's benefits and burdens; meaningful participation in design decisions; and recognition of community-wide and Indigenous, and diasporic design traditions, knowledge and practices, p. 23.
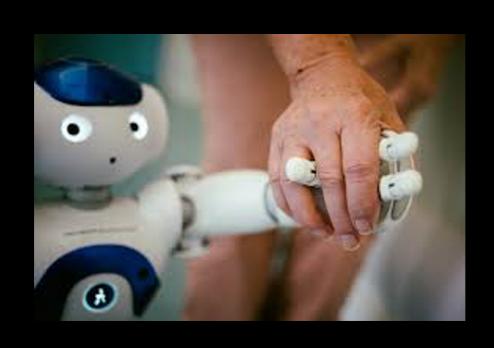
Sasha Constanza-Chock, 2020

COMPLEXITIES OF THE DIGITAL LIFEWORLD

- Monopoly platform capitalism
- Distributed AND hierarchical
- Deep power asymmetries
- "Data economies" – data more valuable than oil
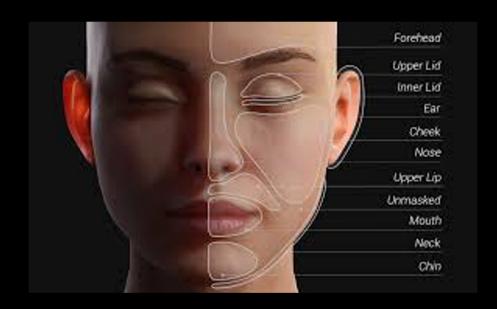- Racism increasingly exposed "coded bias…"

THE ROBOTS ARE HERE…

HOW ABOUT DIGITAL HUMANS?

Soul Machines…

ETHICS AND THE FUTURE

- Our obligation to future generations.
- To not regret the things we build – Jane McGonigal (Ethical OS).
- To be transparent about how and why we work as futurists.
- To promote human and planetary well-being.

Risk Zone 1
Truth, Disinformation, Propaganda

Risk Zone 2
Addiction & the Dopamine Economy

Risk Zone 3
Economic & Asset Inequalities

Risk Zone 4
Machine Ethics & Algorithmic Biases

Risk Zone 5
Surveillance State

Risk Zone 6
Data Control & Monetization

Risk Zone 7
Implicit Trust & User Understanding

Risk Zone 8
Hateful & Criminal Actors

8 Risk Zones

TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE

IS NOT ONE THING…IT IS A RAPIDLY SHIFTING COMPLEX ARRAY AND ECOSYSTEM THAT COMPRISES WHERE WE LIVE

- Smart cities
- Big data and analytics
- Social media
- App development
- Artificial intelligence
- Data justice
- Citizen technologists
- Data, privacy and security (surveillance)
- Virtual/augmented reality
- Children's development and tech

- Health and mental health tech (personalized medicine)
- Neurotechnologies
- Education technologies
- Social change technologies
- Access to technology as a human right
- Emerging human rights via tech
- Assistive technologies
- Tech across the lifespan
- Robotics
- Internet of things

What kind of Artificial Intelligence intersects with your social work practice?
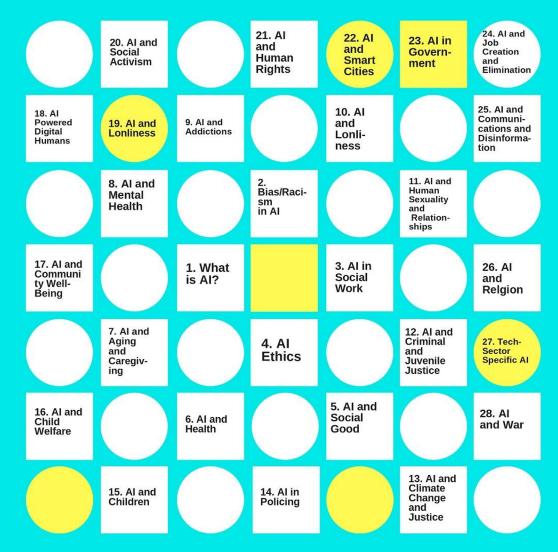
Becoming AI-Aware

Artificial Intelligence: The theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.
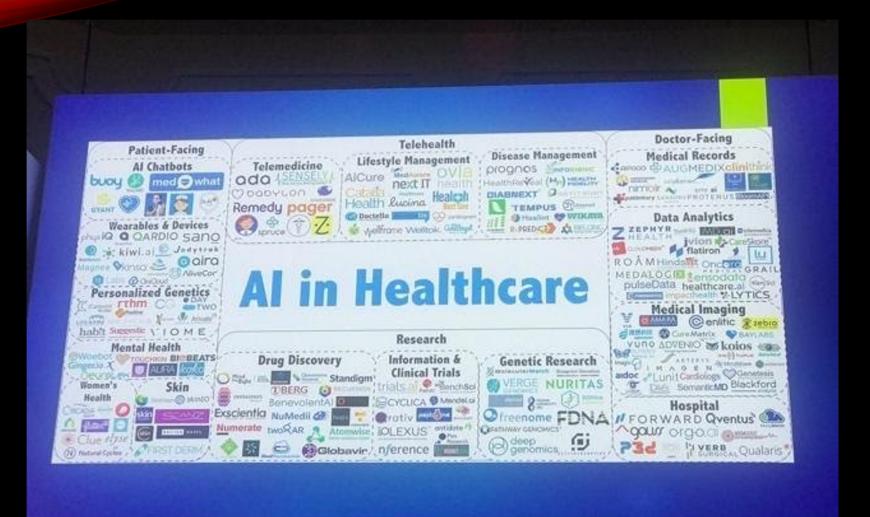
While we don't learn or talk a lot about AI in social work education and practice, this technology is increasingly becoming a factor in the context of "human behavior in the social environment." There are both incredible opportunities and substantial risks with use of these tools and technologies.

Let's build AI literacy! Social work belongs in spaces where big decisions about structures of opportunity, justice and well-being are in play.

Visit to learn more:
 http://bit.ly/3kPXgUS

○	20. AI and Social Activism	○	21. AI and Human Rights	22. AI and Smart Cities	23. AI in Government	24. AI and Job Creation and Elimination
18. AI Powered Digital Humans	19. AI and Lonliness	9. AI and Addictions	○	10. AI and Lonliness	○	25. AI and Communications and Disinformation
○	8. AI and Mental Health	○	2. Bias/Racism in AI	○	11. AI and Human Sexuality and Relationships	○
17. AI and Community Well-Being	○	1. What is AI?		3. AI in Social Work	○	26. AI and Relgion
○	7. AI and Aging and Caregiving	○	4. AI Ethics	○	12. AI and Criminal and Juvenile Justice	27. Tech-Sector Specific AI
16. AI and Child Welfare	○	6. AI and Health	○	5. AI and Social Good	○	28. AI and War
○	15. AI and Children	○	14. AI in Policing	○	13. AI and Climate Change and Justice	○

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN LIFE

AND OF COURSE…NOW EVERYTHING INTERSECTS WITH COVID 19

1. WASH YOUR HANDS
2. PHYSICAL DISTANCING
3. WEAR A FACE COVERING
4. GET TESTED IF NEEDED

No we are
not all
in the
same boat.
We are in the
same storm.
There is a huge
difference.

SHIT'S ON FIRE, YO
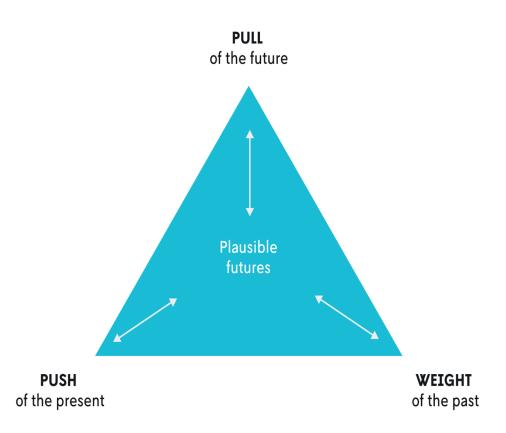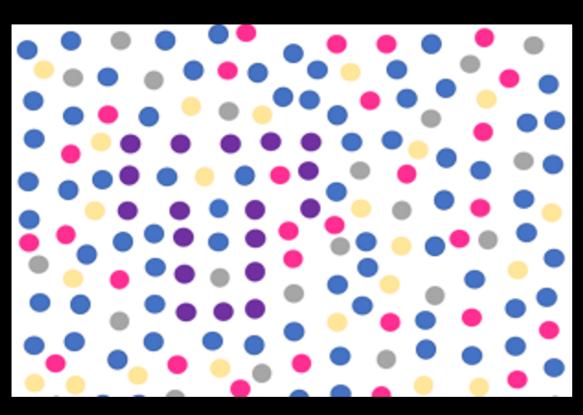
When you try to keep your optimism after everything goes wrong

Deep breath…

Let's look at some tools!

A FUTURES TRIANGLE

Signals (and Trends…but really signals…)

- Little bits of the future scattered throughout the present
- Available to be seen, but most people don't
- Trends matter – but foresight involves thinking beyond the trend, what comes after that?
- Look at the edges
- Things that make you go "hmm"
- Imagine a world where this signal grew and flourished – might be good, might be bad
- Think about the way signals might intersect
- Easily trackable in hindsight…but cultivating the capacity to see and track is what foresight is all about
- Disciplined approach
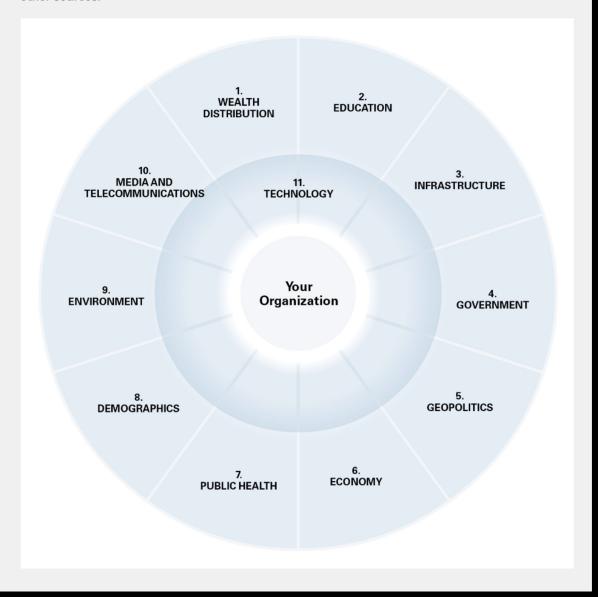
COUNT ON DISRUPTION FROM HERE FORWARD – AMY WEBB

TECH TRENDS REPORT
2020
HTTPS://FUTURETODAYINSTITUTE.COM/2020-TECH-TRENDS/

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK IS NOT JUST ABOUT SOCIAL WORK

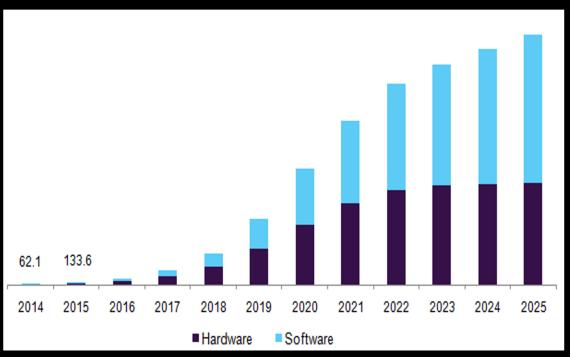*NOTE: TRENDS VS. SIGNALS*

The 11 Macro Sources of Disruption

This simple tool shows the 11 sources of macro change that are typically outside a leader's control. Because technology is so intertwined with everyday life, it is shown as intersecting with all the other sources.

1. WEALTH DISTRIBUTION
2. EDUCATION
3. INFRASTRUCTURE
4. GOVERNMENT
5. GEOPOLITICS
6. ECONOMY
7. PUBLIC HEALTH
8. DEMOGRAPHICS
9. ENVIRONMENT
10. MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
11. TECHNOLOGY

Your Organization

Artifacts from the Future

- What if we could "pre-experience" a future (either a desirable or an undesirable future?)

- What would/should we learn?

- What would we do if got this "peek" at something that might happen later?

- Would it change the way we conduct ourselves now?

62.1   133.6

| 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |

■ Hardware   ■ Software

WHO WILL BE DISRUPTED BY VR?

- Retail
- Military/Defense
- Marketing and advertising
- Law enforcement
- Recruiting
- Agriculture
- Sports
- Education

- Energy
- Manufacturing
- Health care
- Journalism
- Film and entertainment
- Construction
- Real estate
- Automotive
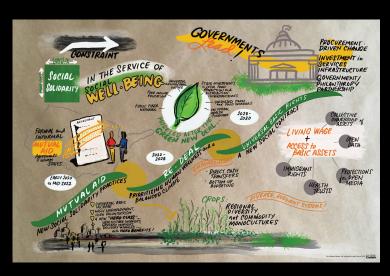- Space exploration
- Engineering

NURTURE POD

- What led up to this being a practice?
- Who decided this was a good idea?
- Who is at risk and what kind of risk from this future?
- Who benefits from this practice?
- What would the social work code of ethics say about the nurture pod?
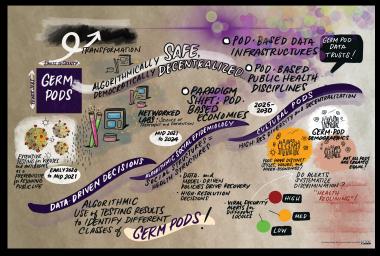- Is this a future you want to live in?

(Nurture Pod Artifact from the Future by Stuart Candy)

SOCIAL WORK JOBS OF THE FUTURE

- Community peace coach (alternative to policing)
- Algorithm race and justice community review organizer (preventing and interrupting race and justice bias in commonly used algorithms)
- Digital access navigator (ensuring equitable access to technology and internet)
- Decarceration deconstruction specialist (deconstructing prisons)
- Reparations program coordinator (distributing reparations)
- Well aging specialist – (linking tech and community to enhance equitable longevity)
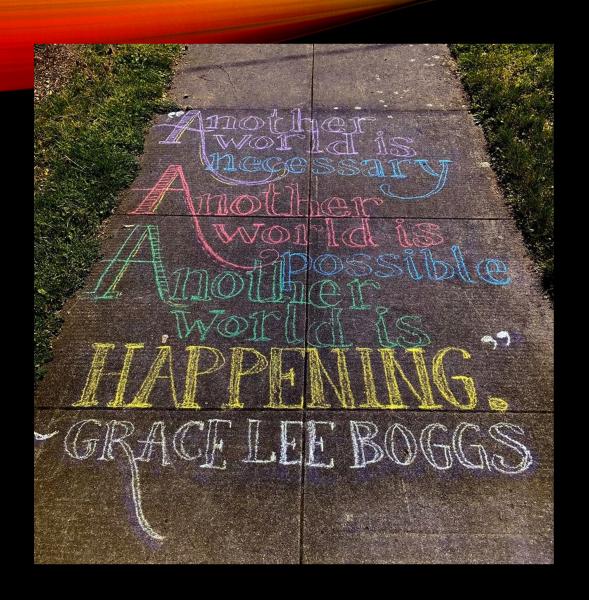- Emerging ethics and equity analyst

Please come play the Social Work Jobs of the Future game at my website: www.socialworkfutures.com

FUTURES PRACTICE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

- What is the future of how inequity will emerge in new spaces in new ways?

- What core knowledge do public health workers need to better anticipate what might be coming next in the "social/political environment" and be effective in creating more equity? How is this like/unlike our current knowledge?

- What "official futures" might we wish to reject? What "emergent futures" might we wish to cultivate?

- Whose voices are privileged/centered and whose voices are excluded/marginalized?

- How can the "moral imagination" that public health brings to the world – be especially valuable in navigating change?

- We don't want to live in a future that someone else created…how do we expand the voices and democratic processes that guide our future-building efforts?

It's up to us. The future is plural.

"Another world is necessary Another world is possible Another world is HAPPENING." ~GRACE LEE BOGGS

What kind of story will we write about what happens next?

Social workers and the people we work with, belong in futures spaces – contributing, learning and co-creating.

Foresight: Possibility multiplier, threat analyzer, pathway illuminator, unintended consequence radar, community voice amplifier, energy enhancer,vision generator, and hope tank engineer/refueler.

Stay connected!

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