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ONE FUTURE

This report is a preliminary exploration of how we can and should prepare for the future and XR-technology.

FUTURE GENERATIONS SHAPING FUTURE TECHNOLOGY

UNGDOMSBUREAUET

This report intends to investigate and qualify how we can approach the relationship between the future, new technologies and youth.

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#1 It is essential, that we recognize the importance of continuously developing and examining our languages for how we grasp the present and the future through and with XR technologies.

#2 It is essential, that we consider it a necessity to, through conversation and collaboration, mutually commit to strengthening our understanding of technological visions and pitfalls.

#3 It is essential, that we recognize our knowledge as dynamic rather than static. Hence, we can not necessarily perceive conclusions as categorical.

#4 It is essential, that we ask ourselves whether the challenges we see are specifically linked to technology, or whether they are a product of challenges that also exist outside the reality of technology.

#5 It is essential, that we pay attention to what norms our languages hold and continuously identify whether we end up glorifying being either a technophile or technophobe.

#6 It is essential, that we strive to make ourselves and others aware of our democratic and political power in relation to technology.

#7 It is essential, that we perceive Gen Z as "experts," when it comes to understanding, reacting to and using technology.

HOW DO YOU



PERCEIVE THE FUTURE?



The images above are brought to life through interactions between an AI tool and young people in the age group 15-18 years.

The AI tool is an open source tool (Craiyon) that allows users to generate visual representations based on words.

The images were created in groups of five young people - based on words that describe the future in ten years.

INTRODUCTION

The future is alive in all of us. It exists in between what currently is and our perception of what could be. The future is not a distant phenomenon but something that constantly emerges - that we should dare to explore and talk about.

Young people are pioneers when it comes to technology. They embrace new platforms and tools, and constantly challenge the boundaries of what purpose new technology can and should serve.

Over the next year, UNGDOMSBUREAUET will investigate and experiment with the relationship between XR technology, the future and youth - with the aim of nuancing and dissecting potentials while continuously asking new and critical questions.

XR technology is an umbrella term covering all technologies that merge physical and virtual realities (AR, VR and MR) The metaverse is built on XR-technologies.

This report highlights two aspects or paradoxes in relation to XR technology, youth and the future:

I: The report points at how, within the framework of technology, democracy and young people, there are crucial questions in relation to linguistic capacity and agency in a functional and critical sense. Functional - because we constantly have to integrate new ways of using technologies. Critical - because there is a need for reflection, collectively and individually, so we can understand the societal impact and effects of technology.

II: Furthermore, the report highlights and explores young people's mandate or lack of mandate in relation to questions about the technological development and the future. Politically, Denmark has an ongoing ambition of being pioneers when it comes to digitization and technology. In this regard, it is crucial to insist on including youth in shaping future realities. Young people should be central actors in the societal preparations for XR technologies and Web3 to a greater extent than what we saw with Web2.

Web2: refers to an era of the internet that emphasizes user-generated content, ease of use, participatory culture and enables social interactions (for example: social media).

Web3: refers to another era of the internet with an increased focus on decentralization, co-creation, and co-ownership (e.g. blockchain and Token economy) and immersive user experiences.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL WHEN IT COMES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF XR-TECHNOLOGIES?

23%

Openness and curiosity

31%

To politically regulate the tech-industry

38%

That knowledge about XR-technologies becomes accessible to the wider public
That we establish transparent and clear guidelines around data and ethics.
That we dare to experiment and unfold the possibilities existing within XR-Technologies.

46%

To avoid that any one company gets monopoly on the Metaverse and/or XR-technologies
To ensure that no citizens will be standing "outside" society due to the technological development.
That we challenge and explore how new technologies might contribute to echo chambers in society.
To reflect on and create new social norms for how we interact with one another.

This data covers responses from a questionnaire survey answered by a larger group of young people in the age group 15-30 years. The answers were pre-defined, and there was a possibility of choosing several answers.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

We lack a collective language that can enable responses to current and emerging technologies and their influence on our society, culture and political system.

A COLLECTIVE LANGUAGE

When it comes to the transition from Web1 to Web2, the common understanding today is that we, politically and in civil society, were too slow in responding and regulating the changes that came with the development. We didn't manage to look critically at the consequences and dissect the effects before it had changed our media landscape, democratic conversation and, not least, cultural life, completely.

This dynamic can be described through the Law of Moore - which points to the exponential development of technology. Unlike technology, democracy - with its dialogues and often slow decision making processes - contains elements of inertia that stands in contrast to the uncompromising development of technology. A dynamic that often results in gaps between our collective ability to act and respond, and the tech industry.

It's pivotal to continuously aim at establishing a collective language that can support citizens in grasping and understanding what we do not yet know. Concepts such as XR technologies can appear abstract and difficult to dissect, meaning that issues of ownership, rights etc. become even more complicated to tackle.

How do we avoid repeating the mistakes we experienced with Web2? We should see it as a central and collective task to reflect, be critical and investigative in our approach to the tech industry and its new ideas and visions.

#1 It is essential, that we recognize the importance of continuously developing and examining our languages for how we grasp the present and the future through and with XR technologies.

Responding appropriately to the changes that follow the current technological development requires strengthened collaboration and exchange across the political system, civil society and the tech industry. If we strive to understand the impact of technologies on society early on, we can take an active role in defining and developing its potential. While the tech industry constantly introduce new inventions that expand our understanding of reality, we must collaborate to respond to the opportunities and challenges that arise - both on a micro and macro level.

The vision of building a bridge and limiting the gap between the political system, democracy and the technological development requires a focus on entry points and access to knowledge. We must ask ourselves: What conditions do politicians and civil society currently have to - in a qualified way - enter the conversation about XR technology?

#2 It is essential, that we consider it a necessity to, through conversation and collaboration, mutually commit to strengthening our understanding of technological visions and pitfalls.

And futhermore insist on creating a shared foundation of knowledge on the topic of XR-technology that can enable influence across society. Once again, the media, educational instituions and cultural scene play an important role. We must examine what knowledge is available, where it's coming from and what narratives we currently reproduce in society. If we construct a collective truth around digital platforms contributing to echo chambers or hatred, we must continuously reconsider whether it aligns with new studies and research in the field.

#3 It is essential, that we recognize our knowledge as dynamic rather than static. Hence, we can not necessarily perceive conclusions as categorical.

We can not consider individual conclusions as definite. There is research pointing in various directions when it, for example, comes to social media's contribution to polarization and echo chambers in society. We should continuously strive to unfold nuances, reflect on our biases, and take into consideration that people always act and express themselves based on their current worldview.

Case: Archery as a metaphor for the technological development

In connection with FGSFT's participation at Ungdoms folkemøde (A Youth Democratic Festival), we facilitated a pop-up event called 'The Polak Game' in collaboration with the Institute for Future Research. See example on the following page.

During the pop-up event, a participant described how they see responses to new technologies as a metaphor for archery.

The point was, that we have to approach and test new ideas within technology before we can understand practical consequences. In other words, the metaphor describes how we must try to anticipate the impact of technology and aim to construct our roads while driving.

In this regard and in the light of democracy, we should ask how we - both digitally and physically - ensure that we collectively challenge and nuance our understanding of the existing complexity. In other words, the question and the challenge are not necessarily linked to social media and technology, but maybe equally to society as a whole - and perhaps the discussion and rhetoric in relation to technological development is simply a sign of underlying challenges in society.

#4 It is essential, that we ask ourselves whether the challenges we see are specifically linked to technology, or whether they are a product of challenges that also exist outside the reality of technology.

How we collectively go about describing and approaching technology and the industry continuously affects our individual incentive to respond as well as our collective understandings. Therefore, it is important that we ask ourselves: What influence do our narratives and languages have on the set of norms that dominate technology as well as society?

If we make a virtue - talking about new technologies as something negative, then we risk establishing cultural and social norms that encourage fear. A point of view that more or less conflicts with the Danish government's perception of the technological development. In the Government's presentation of the digitization strategy from 2022, it is pointed out, how we "as one of the world's most digitized countries [...] have to move faster in implementing new technologies." Simultaneously is a growing focus on regulating 'Tech giants' and their power.

It doesn't have to be an either-or. Still, it is crucial that we consider whether we end up creating barriers to future technology in society by constantly articulating technology as something evil, uncontrolled and potentially more dangerous than beneficial for our society. We must pay attention to nuances and not make it shameful to be either technophile or technophobe.

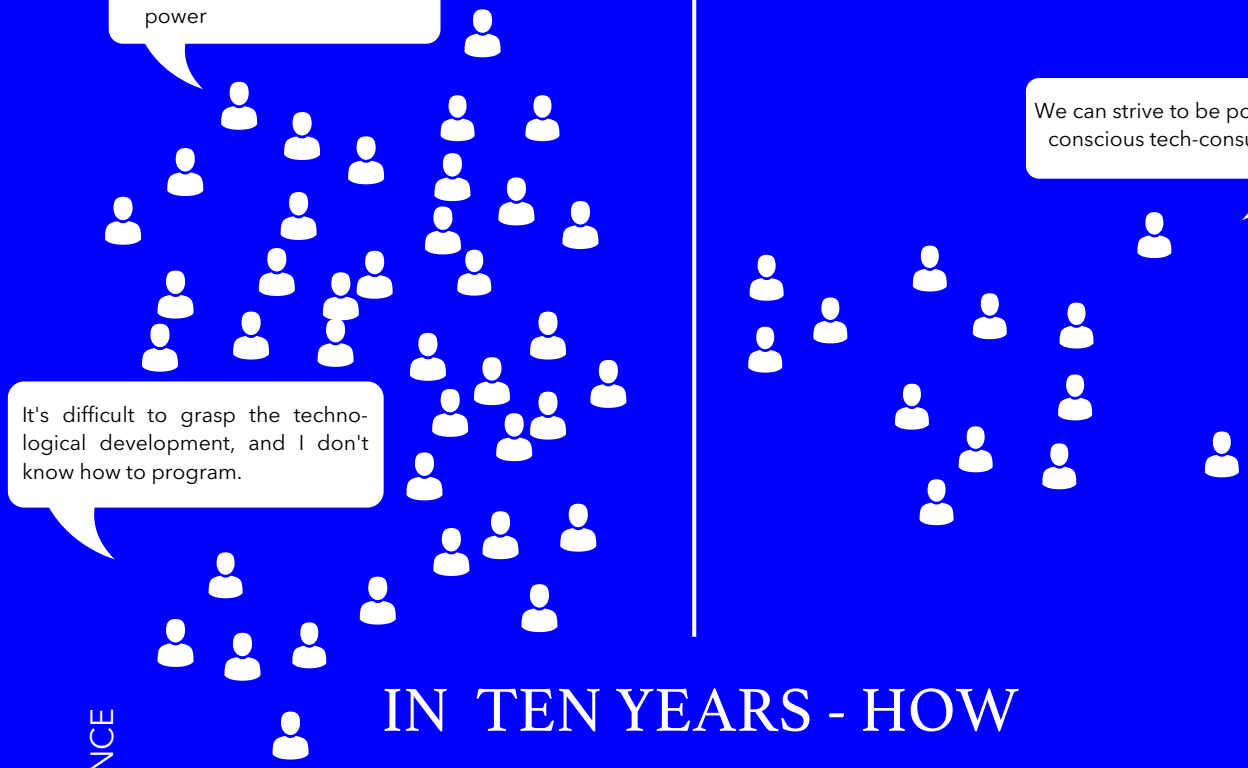
teknofob: Når den teknologiske udvikling forbindes med en følelse af frygt og/eller fobi. Teknofil: Beskriver en overbevisning om, at den teknologiske udvikling er fuldkommen positiv.

#5 It is essential, that we pay attention to what norms our languages hold and continuously identify whether we end up glorifying being either technophile or technophobe.

BETTER

Companies and the tech industry hold too much power

We can strive to be politically conscious tech-consumers



It's difficult to grasp the techno-logical development, and I don't know how to program.

IN TEN YEARS - HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY?

CAN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE

CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

WORSE

With The Polak Game, we have tried to visualize perceptions of technology and the future.

HYPOTHESIS

Gen Z do not perceive themselves as potentials that can influence the technological development.

TECHNOLOGICAL FORMATION AND SOCIALIZATION

In the process of investigating, actualizing and understanding the relationship between youth and technology, it is essential to consider the conditions and premises youth operate from. How are youth faced by society? And what expectations are they met by when it comes to technology?

Lately, there has been a strong focus on ensuring an adequate digital education programme for young people in highschools etc. It's being developed across sectors with the intent of strengthening young people's awareness of various technological platforms - as well as what challenges and opportunities they hold.

Case: 'It's not me'

During our initial work with FGSFT, we facilitated workshops on the topic of xr-technology and shared insights from relevant reports and surveys with large groups of young participants.
Among other insights, we shared an analysis from Razorfish pointing at how young people today feel that their digital selves (also in the form of Avatars) reflect their authentic selves to a greater extent than their 'physical identity.'

Various young people said: "I don't feel like that's true," "That can't be," and so on.

Although the insight remains questionable - the responses are worth reflecting on. It leads to questions such as: Why do young people experience an urge to dissociate?
Whether it specifically says something about the insight from Razorfish or whether it says something about the social dynamics remains unknown though worth exploring.

In our research it showed that a large number of young people perceive the tech industry as those who ultimately hold power - and simultaneously youth experience a lack of mandate to influence, access or challenge new technologies' influence on society. An understanding that stems from a belief that it requires significant knowledge and experience with technologies to participate in conversations and/or decision-making processes related to the topic. The above is directly related to an ongoing conversation around youth's democratic confidence more generally. How do youth perceive themselves and their possibility of addressing or contributing to change in society?

#6 It is essential, that we strive to make ourselves and others aware of our democratic and political power in relation to technology.

When youth are approached as if they don't already live a large portion of their lives virtually, they inevitable make the conclusion that

they can't or shouldn't take part in the dialogue, and on a more general note - they don't experience the power to affect change in society.
Youth already navigate various technological platforms. We should strive to approach youth on the premise that they hold relevant knowledge and have experiences and understandings that can benefit society and the conversations on technology and democracy at large.

#7 It is essential, that we perceive Gen Z as "experts," when it comes to understanding, reacting to and using technology.

POTENTIAL

"New technologies will make us much more efficient."

"XR technology can provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to, for example, experience the life they can't have IRL, virtually."

Everything will become much easier"

"Can improve scientific research, especially on the topic of medicine"

XR-TECHNOLGY AND THE METAVERSE

Can result in isolation and the physical world will increasingly become a second priority"

"I fear that we get completely absorbed and forget our old world."

"I fear that it develops to the extent where we lose human touch and experience a world where everything happens online,"

"I'm not worried about technology - I'm concerned about people and how they might end up using tech."

FEAR

The answers above are from a questionnaire survey and covers a large group of young people of the age group 15-30 years.

THE FUTURE OF: FGSFT

it is widely recognized today, that we during the development of Web2, did not reflect on or anticipate the extensive consequences the technological development had and continues to have on society, the individual and democracy.

Collectively, we have to dare to approach technology and continuously develop a language that enables us to grasp what we do not yet know. Furthermore, we should strive to reject myths and assumptions that no longer apply to the reality, we are facing. We have to work with complexity - and continuously strive to collaborate across sectors and generations. A focus on accessibility to knowledge and collaboration across diverse actors is crucial if we are to collectively nuance our understanding, act appropriately and avoid contributing to polarization.

How can we collectively dissect and understand the challenges associated with XR technology and the future while making room for the potential technology holds? What role can youth play in anticipating positive and negative aspects? And where do we see coherence in future dreams? These are some of the questions that will guide us in our further investigation and exploration of Future Generations Shaping Future Technology.

THANK YOU FOR READING

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STORIES
FOR
THE FUTURE

We value your time and will only share key insights.

We publish a maximum of one newsletter each month - covering insight and stories on youth, XR-technology and the future.

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