THE FUTURE IS A NEW VIEW OF LIFE

The view this year is distinctly biological. New insights at the cellular level lead to new views of entire ecologies. This scanning of the layers of natural landscape—sometimes metaphorically, but often quite literally—lays the foundation for future vision, future choices.

Even as fisheries collapse, for example, scientists working at the level of DNA are discovering perhaps millions of new ocean species that play an as yet unknown role in marine ecologies—and ultimately in the ecology of the planet. Sensors bond with biological organisms to track our food from its source to our tables, tabulating not only new measures of economic value but also mapping the connectedness of everything from simple acts of survival to global policy.

Even in arenas more social than biological, new biological identities—and new understandings of biological connectedness—draw people into unexpected affiliations. Meanwhile the emergent, self-replicating, and self-regulating processes of biology begin to show their many faces in our institutions, from a remaking of the marketplace to the threat of new model armies to the evolution of what we might call superhero organizations.

And our own ability to think about the future? Even that comes under the biologist's microscope as new tools for understanding our neurophysiology map the regions of the brain that engage in thinking about past and future. What secrets do these maps hold for improving our foresight—and our ability to make present-day choices based on that foresight?

We turn to face the decade with the naturalist's eye: we're looking for the intricate connections that form the webs of evolving life as if our futures depend on it. Ah, but they do. They do.

LIFE REVISTED:
A DECADE OF ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

As we look out from 2008 over the next decade, we see a planet in which the ecologies of life are dissolving before our eyes. Their constituents are disappearing, or migrating, reconstituting themselves anew. We see this process mimicked in our own social and institutional systems, as the familiar forms in our landscape also begin to dissolve—to be replaced by something that may be hard to recognize if we look for well known structures and recognizable boundaries. This year's forecasts point us beyond these shifting structures to what may be the emerging life forms.

DEMOGRAPHICS: NEW DIASPORAS

Diasporas are dispersed populations that share a common place (or experience) of origin, and this will be a decade of diasporas. We have a hypothesis: these diasporas are the real emerging economies. If you want to understand the future of value creation, don't spend your time with maps of the geopolitical world. Look at diasporas. Look especially at the new diasporas: virtual and media diasporas, activist diasporas, corporate diasporas, internal diasporas, climate change diasporas and bio metric diasporas. These are the emerging ecologies of production and economic value, of human meaning.

ECONOMICS: ISLAMIC INFLUENCE

One in five people in the world is Muslim. Following the laws of Islam, Muslims eschew interest and avoid risk. But Muslim societies are entering into the global economy through new financial products and instruments—*sukuk* and *takaful*—that are designed to provide economic opportuni ties to Muslims in keeping with their faith. For a world in which many financial instruments have recently proven excessively risky, these products may also point to reforms that reach well beyond the Muslim world—and suggest new strategies for economic development worldwide.

POLITICS: OPEN-SOURCE WARFARE

New model armies are changing the face of war—and peace. Non institutional, non state supported, these armies use network strategies to rapidly prototype their tools and tactics. They learn from one another around the globe, raise their money and sell their services in the marketplaces, and focus on system disruptions and meme warfare. They are the face of the clash between traditional hierarchical institu tions and an emerging network society, a clash that will spread across other domains. In the coming decades, they may catalyze *resilience*—or they may lead to political, social, and economic auto immune disorders worldwide.

CULTURE: NEW COMMONS

Even as our natural commons seem on the verge of collapse, a host of new commons offer an alternative look at capitalism: a new set of principles for organizing resources to meet the needs of human society in the 21st century. Geographically agnostic, digitally supported, new commons are emerging as institutional forms that may well provide the resilience necessary for adapting to our rapidly changing ecologies.

ENVIRONMENT: THE BLUE ECONOMY

Our attention turns to the oceans as they become the focal point of global climate change—and the source of solutions for everything from energy and food to new ecosystem based management strategies. Genetic identification of food will start here, with the collapsing fisheries. New com mons principles will be tested against the push to privatize more of the ocean. And along the coasts, the rising sea level will drive innovation in everything from sea facing materials to human cooperative strategies.

SUSTAINABILITY: FOOD WEBS

Our ecological view of the world refocuses on food webs—the complex interconnections among species and host environ ments that seem increasingly vulnerable in the face of climate change, population growth, and deteriorating natural environ ments. Even as we experiment with local diets, cooperative production, and food footprints, we suspect that many more sweeping changes may be in store—with unexpected blends of biotechnology fixes and an agro ecological rethinking of the boundary between wild and cultivated.

TECHNOLOGY: PERVASIVE ECO-MONITORING

As we finally reach the threshold of pervasive computing, eco monitoring emerges as a possible "killer ap" for the vast arrays of sensor networks that computer scientists have been foretell ing for the past 20 years. We see it driving everything from personally sustainable lifestyles to bottom up eco regulation to new approaches to design and production. We also see it contributing to the problem: e waste and the resource costs of producing billions of very tiny computers may just push us deeper into eco debt.

INNOVATION: ENABLED!

More people will cope with disabilities in the future—the result of aging populations, environmental illnesses, and collapsing social systems. But more of these people will be enabled by "better than normal" solutions that will set new standards of performance for both people and technologies. Abandoning old distinctions between the biologically natural and the tech nologically possible, we will pursue new development strategies for both our personal bodies and the tools we use. And all of this will make disabilities a hot zone for innovators.

WORK: SUPERHERO ORGANIZATIONS

The digital natives are growing up with superhero skills—things we've called ping quotient, mobbability, influency, and protovation. What kinds of supercharged organizations will use them to best advantage? We suspect it will be organizations that exercise open leadership, cultivate transliteracy, and excel at collective sensemaking. Perhaps most important, it will be organizations that see themselves as beta systems, constantly reinventing themselves through rapid prototyping.

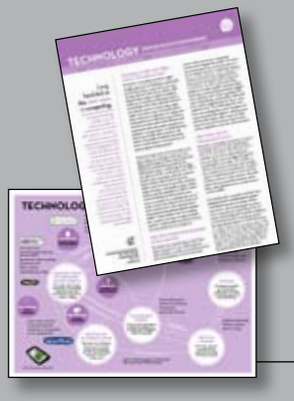
METHODOLOGY: NEURO-FUTURES

As scientists map our brains in greater and greater detail, it becomes clear that how we think about the past is intimately, physiologically linked to how we think about the future. Our processes for thinking about the future are fraught with fallacies and biases, but we're designing ways to hack those processes to build a more robust human future interaction. At a time when long term thinking is perhaps the evolutionary threshold for the species, these maps of our brains may be the maps of our future as well.

FORESIGHT TO INSIGHT TO ACTION

The *Ten Year Forecast* is part of the Foresight to Insight to Action process at IFTF. **FORESIGHT** helps you sense the context in which you must make today's important decisions—the context in which those decisions will play out. **INSIGHT** comes from making the links between that future context and the kinds of issues—especially dilemmas—that you're facing today. **ACTION** connects the insight to people and processes in your everyday world, creating opportunities for them to create the future you want.

The *Ten Year Forecast* provides foresight. This year, it's organized in multiple sets of Perspectives & Signals so you can use it flexibly to discover your own patterns in the future, build Foresight to Insight exercises, and share pieces of it with others.



THE PERSPECTIVES BRING FOCUS TO THE FUTURE.

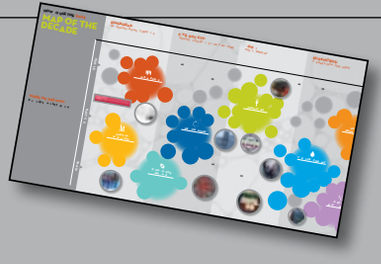
They are a set of lenses for viewing a changing world. They say, "Look here. See what happens when you think about the future this way." Use them to stretch your thinking. Use them to ask "what if?" questions.

The **front** tells the story.
The **back** gives you a visual map of the signals and drivers that lead to this perspective.

THE SIGNALS POINT TO INNOVATIONS AND DISRUPTIONS.

They show what's happening today. They are the building blocks of this year's Perspectives. But they may also be building blocks of other perspectives—some that you create yourself. Choose a handful that seem most interesting to you. What's the bigger story they tell when you put them together?

The **front** defines the signal and suggests where it's pointing.
The **back** illustrates the point.



THE MAP OF THE DECADE GIVES YOU THE BIG VIEW.

It shows how everything is connected, how all the pieces—Signals, Perspectives, and other forecasts from other IFTF work throughout the year—add up to a decade of five big shifts. Look inside the map for more about how to use it.

THE PERSPECTIVES

are a map to the signals. Read the story. See how the signals are connected by driving forces in the external environment. Then look up the related signals—they're color-coded to match the Perspectives.

THE SIGNALS

are real-world innovations—interpreted! Each set belongs to a Perspective, but individual signals may be related to other Perspectives as well.

THE MAP

This year's *Map of the Decade* is about biology—the biology of the future. The Signals and Perspectives combine to create a map focused on a future where the same patterns of social organization produce both vibrant new commons and open-source warfare. The 2008 *Map of the Decade* is a snapshot of *now* as much as it is a template for the future. It's a glimpse of our collective fate, as it appears, *in vivo*, in early 2008.

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