ANNE LISE KJAER

THE TREND MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE FUTURE

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Chapter 3

Trend mapping: past, present and future

It is evident that our society has, for far too long, banked on logical and linear thinking to the exclusion of creativity and intuition.

As mathematician Henri Poincaré once pointed out: "It is by logic that we prove, but by intuition that we discover. To know how to criticize is good, to know how to create is better."[1] Emerging micro trends barely visible today might become critically important to tomorrow's worldview and great innovations. In this context, trend management informs our thoughts and ideas about what might happen by giving us a deeper awareness of the change drivers influencing society, our specific business sector, and people's behavior and values within this ecosystem. The most crucial activity in trend management is the ability to become attuned to shifts and changes, and the way to develop a full and rounded view of our environment is by exploring a broad and layered landscape of diverse drivers.

From weak signals to macro trend

There is no magic to a trend – it is simply a steady uprising curve of an event or an influence that has the potential to become a powerful change-maker in society. Some trends reach a critical mass and become global (macro) drivers, while others remain a lesser influence operating on a smaller and more localized (micro) level.

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Mapping trends is a way of looking at the key drivers of current and potential change, to observe how they have evolved over time, but at the same time consider how they are likely to develop in the future. To understand what impact trends are likely to have over time, we explore them in a 360-degree perspective of past and present influences. In other words, we need to engage in a multidimensional process and be willing to evolve and change the way we think about the world. To me, having been raised in Denmark and influenced by a society model firmly planted in the Nordic social-democratic tradition, using brainstorming, workshops, scenario planning, voting, and polling are approaches that come naturally as methods to develop insights into the dynamics of trends and their relationships on a micro and macro level. Such approaches are not always practiced routinely within organizations, but they are among the most widely used methods for tapping into the future, as outlined in *The Handbook of Technology Foresight: Concepts and Practice*.[2] The tendency towards using qualitative methods – looking for deeper insights and taking a lateral approach – has become commonplace when organizations consider the future, according to the European Foresight Monitoring Network (Figure 3.1).

Rethinking human decision making

Human decision making is a complex cognitive process, since numerous elements drive behaviors and therefore have the potential to profoundly influence choices, on a conscious and unconscious level. In this and the next chapter, we explore various factors influencing decision-making processes among groups and individuals. But first let's consider how data, media, and visual stimulation have been used over time to influence decision-making processes by tapping into people's emotional and rational landscape.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the 20th century saw the emergence of tools invented purely to influence the minds of the crowd and sway decision processes, and during America's mass industrialization Edward Bernays masterminded strategies that achieved this goal. One of his most dramatic was an early attempt to capitalize on the growing undercurrent of female

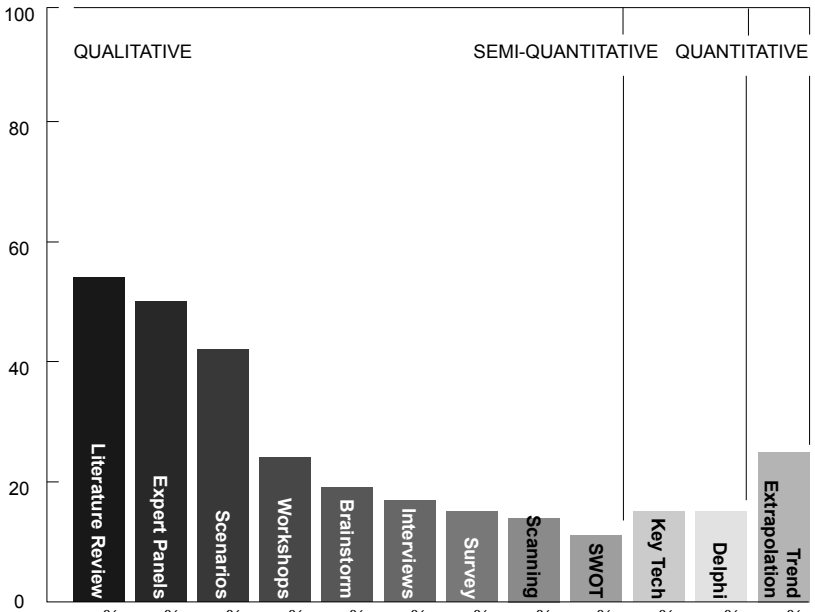

FIGURE 3.1 **Most used forecasting methods**: The most common approaches are all qualitative
Source: Kjaer Global. *Data*: European Foresight Monitoring Network

empowerment after World War I. He sought to persuade women to smoke in public, flouting social taboos of the time, by hiring a group to march during New York's 1929 Easter Parade and light their "torches of freedom" to signify equality with men.[3] While we may question the morality of this tactic on many levels from today's perspective, it was a striking early example of how existing societal undercurrents may be spotted and successfully harnessed by organizations.

Later, Bernays' techniques were applied on a grand scale in published advertising and on billboards, as well as in newspaper editorial sections, to reinforce notions of the consumer society. In an interview in 1967, German philosopher Herbert Marcuse[4] said of Bernays' ideas: "This is a childish application of psychoanalysis which does not take at all into consideration the very real political systematic waste of resources of technology and

of the productive process." Marcuse further argued that if people were reduced to expressing their feelings and identities through mass-produced objects, it would result in what he described as "one-dimensional man" – a conformist and repressed hostage to a consumer society.

Psychoanalysis was not the only force in play during the era of systemized influencing of public opinion and buying patterns. In response to the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Roosevelt launched the New Deal to promote the idea that democracy and capitalism went hand in hand. Roosevelt invited social scientist George Gallup (the inventor of opinion polls) to help him explain his policies to the public and to take their opinions into account. Gallup claimed that one could measure and predict the opinions and behavior of the public by asking strictly factual questions that avoided manipulation of their emotions. This led to weekly public opinion polling to report what the nation was thinking. Gallup rejected Bernays' view that human decision-making processes were driven by unconscious emotional forces and therefore could not be trusted if too many choices were presented. His scientific polling established the counterargument that people are rational, they do make good decisions, and democracy is furthered if people are given a voice to influence how the country is run.

Cognitive traps and the focusing illusion

A key assumption that took root throughout the 20th century – especially in economics – was that people base their decisions on rational judgment, thinking about long-term goals. However, recent research shows that emotions and intuition play a major role in our decision making, leading us to focus on short-term personal goals. This is why many organizations are now employing behavioral economics to understand how conflicts of interest may bias our decisions and perception of experiences. This discipline – which merges social, cognitive, and emotional research with traditional economic theories – considers the cognitive dissonance between what we know and what we do; in other words, it explores reasons why we may be hardwired to think in the short term rather than carefully consider the consequences of our behavior in the long term. These findings have had profound implications for government, public policy, and future economic models – and our own self-awareness.

One of the world's foremost authorities on behavioral economics is Daniel Kahneman, and in a 2010 TED lecture entitled The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory,[5] he shared his insights on cognitive traps. Using the happiness trend as an example – one that almost everyone talks about nowadays – he points out that the term "happiness" is applied to too many things, adding complexity to the meaning of the word. In addition, the dissonance between experience and memory results in two very different concepts in the notion of happiness. Kahneman suggests that being happy *in* your life and being happy *about* your life are two quite different things. Another theory related to this is what he terms the "focusing illusion." In this, our present experiences and memory present quite different pictures. In effect, we act as twins when it comes to making sense of our lives – one living and knowing life in the present and the other maintaining previous memories and our life story. Kahneman's theories would suggest that predicting people's behavior and reactions is a far less cut-and-dried business than simply deciding whether to follow the Bernays or Gallup model (unconscious or conscious). In fact, the truth is that we cannot be classified into simple behavioral patterns because humans are complex, as reflected in the diversity of our lifestyle choices and the memories and experiences we choose to collect.

If we step back for a moment and apply this complexity perspective to trends in general, it reinforces why it is so important to take a broader view and look at potential trend topics from numerous angles. When we consider current thinking about human behavior, it soon becomes clear we live in a landscape of many interesting yet contradictory theories about what motivates people and their actions. But we must also recognize that we are influenced by structural and behavioral drivers, even in talking about trends, as Adam Gopnik pointed out in a September 2013 article for *The New Yorker* entitled Mindless: The New Neuro-Skeptics: [6] "The neurological turn has become what the 'cultural' turn was a few decades ago: the all-purpose non-explanation explanation of everything." Gopnik adds that: "Psychology is an imperfect science, but it is a science." I would extend his conclusion to all scientific theorizing about predicting future behavior; this is why it is important to be aware of the scientific and social contexts in which we operate, as well as our emotional and spiritual landscape – it enables us to take the broadest possible perspective when planning ahead and imagining our collective future.

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New thinking on left versus right brain

While we do not process information using the left or right brain in isolation, this shorthand metaphor helps us to assess the kind of reference framework and style people utilize in their everyday lives. As part of our polling and information-gathering activities at conferences and workshops, we often ask participants how they process information, and their responses tend to run true to what we would have predicted. When a group of risk analysts were asked: Are you a left- or a right-brain thinker? at a recent risk conference, almost a third said that they see themselves as factual, logical, and pragmatic left-brain thinkers, while just over half described themselves as mostly using both left- and right-brain thinking. Designers tend to describe themselves as favoring the right, while 61% of internal communication officers say they balance the pragmatic left brain with the intuitive strengths of the right brain (Figure 3.2). Perhaps no surprises here, but it should be added that we are witnessing interesting trends at work. To return to risk analysts, just a decade ago a vast majority would see themselves as left-brain thinkers – suggesting that more emotional value parameters are now invited into the equation, even among traditionally rational-skewed professions. This is certainly a key personality question every reader of this book should ask themselves: Do you favor intuitive decision making by tapping into an emotional/feeling open-thinking mode (right brain), or do you prefer factual rational/logic closed-thinking (left brain), or would you describe yourself as utilizing both (whole brain), depending on situation and context?

In his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*,[7] Daniel Kahneman redefined the left-/right-brain idea as fast System 1 and slow System 2 and suggested that we use the entire brain to process information. His assertion that neurons are firing up and connecting across the whole brain is what we see in neuroimaging or fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging). This is a method used to map neural brain activity and it shows how cerebral blood flow and neuronal activation are coupled when an area of the brain is in use. This network system of processors helps us catalogue and make sense of the information we receive or experience: visual, sound, smell, taste, and so on. The truth is that, while we know a lot more about our minds than we did just a decade ago, this is still a fast-developing science with many more mysteries about brain function and power yet to be discovered.

ARE YOU A LEFT- OR RIGHT-BRAIN THINKER?

FIGURE 3.2 **Left- versus right-brain thinking**: Most communications professionals perceive themselves to be whole-brain thinkers
Source: Kjaer Global

In 2011, psychiatrist and writer Iain McGilchrist gave a lecture at the Royal Society of Arts on his book *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*.[8] He remarked that the division of the brain is something neuroscientists don't like to talk about anymore, as the first split-brain operations in the 1960s and 70s led to a sort of popularization of the left-/right-brain dichotomy, which has since proved to be entirely false. McGilchrist noted: "both are profoundly involved in everything we do."

According to McGilchrist, we have one operating system, but the nature of left- and right-brain mechanisms is that they offer two versions of reality. One is knowledge mediated by the left hemisphere, functioning within a closed system and driven by perfection and detail. The other, facilitated by the right hemisphere, delivers broader understanding and sense making. Hence, we need to rely on certain brain skills to navigate the world and others to make sense of it. As McGilchrist puts it: "There is a paradoxical relationship between knowledge of the parts and wisdom about the whole." He further suggests that we have turned into a left-brain society that honors the artificial over the "real thing" and uses Einstein's quote to sum up his own vision that: "The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant." McGilchrist goes on to describe the

21st century thus: "We have created a society that honors the servant but has forgotten the gift."

The interconnected brain

While countless personality tests, team-building exercises, and self-motivation books have been built around the popular belief that people are either left-brain or right-brain dominant, myth-busting scientific studies are revealing a far more intriguing mystery at work in our cognitive makeup. Indeed, in 2013, neuroscientists from the University of Utah analyzed more than 1,000 brains and found no evidence to suggest that people favor either side of their brain – instead, their analysis suggested a "whole brain network." In the article Researchers Debunk Myth of "Right-brain" and "Left-brain" Personality Traits,[9] Jared Nielson commented:

> Everyone should understand the personality types associated with the terminology "left-brained" and "right-brained" and how they relate to him or her personally; however, we just don't see patterns where the whole left-brain network is more connected or the whole right-brain network is more connected in some people. It may be that personality types have nothing to do with one hemisphere being more active, stronger, or more connected.

If, as this study suggests, our style is based on our personality type, not our wiring, then this gives us far more control over the way we approach decision making and planning for the future. As argued in Chapter 1, critical thinking about the future is a skill that can be developed when we choose to engage whole-brain approaches. Ongoing work looks set to revolutionize how we understand our cognitive skills. Already, scientists are moving traditional 20th-century notions forward. In The New Science of Mind,[10] an article for *The New York Times*, Eric Kandel described the developing field of the science of mind. This combines cognitive psychology and neuroscience to solve one of the last great mysteries – how we think, feel, and experience the world. Kandel argued that: "This new science of mind is based on the principle that our mind and our brain are inseparable." The data below is selected from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in *Understanding the Brain: Towards a New Learning Science*[11] from 2002 about popular "neuromyths." Each statement confirms some essential insights about learning and, if we

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have to summarize the findings in one line, the clear message is: we never stop learning.

NEUROMYTHS

Learning has a limited time frame: Brain plasticity is not limited to early years and learning therefore happens continuously and causes the brain to form new connections at any time in life.

Enriched environments in early age enhance learning capacity: More research is needed, but since our brain is plastic throughout life, it seems logical to deduce that neural connections can be established at any time.

There are visual, auditory, and haptic styles of learning: While these learning styles (eyes, ears, touch) may be important for initial perception, we use all our brain for processing information and then moving to intellectual understanding.

We only use 10% of our brains: Activity and mapping techniques have shown that all brain regions are active, even when we are asleep.

Multilinguals "lose" capacity in one language and can't transfer knowledge: Many people operate in multiple languages, and there is no scientific basis for the idea that our brains can't accommodate or switch between languages.

We favor the left or right brain: Scientific evidence shows that, while there are functional asymmetries, our brain hemispheres do not work in isolation but operate together in every cognitive task.

Popular brain myths debunked

Before we explore the multidimensional thinking style to future forecasting in more depth, it is worth considering a few common misconceptions about our brain function. Many myths imply that our brains are static and can only support a certain amount of information. But evidence points to a counter reality – neuroplasticity – meaning that our brains adjust to accommodate new information, whatever age we are. A University College London study undertook MRI scans on London black cab drivers before, during and after they had undertaken "The Knowledge" (the mentally demanding two- to four-year process of memorizing routes around London). This showed that the posterior hippocampus – connected to memory – had grown during the process of memorizing 25,000 streets and 20,000 landmarks.[12] This is just one finding, but it's an area where many beliefs are being overturned.

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SUMMARY: Rethinking human decision making

- Trend management helps us understand the influences on people's behavior, values, and decisions. It is important to consider global (macro) and local (micro) trends, since both influence business and society.
- The most crucial factor in trend management is to become attuned to shifts by exploring a broad landscape of cultural and societal influences, considering past and present influences in a multidimensional perspective.
- We now know that emotions and intuition play a major role in decision making, leading to a focus on short-term goals, and this suggests far more complexity in human behavior and choices than previously thought.
- While rational (left-brain) thinking helps us understand the details about a challenge, we need intuitive and visionary (right-brain) approaches to consider the bigger picture in a whole-brain manner.
- Recent theories suggest we have more control over decision making and future planning than previously thought. In addition, proof of the neuroplasticity of our brains suggests that learning is a flexible and lifelong process.

21st-century sense making

While we may once have imagined that more data would make it easier to understand behavior and reach informed decisions, precisely the reverse is true. Indeed, the present data deluge has also become an Achilles heel – where the vast quantity of facts and figures from multiple reliable sources that should be our strength is making it harder to sift and process information and narrow it down to a meaningful choice. To understand today's multilayered world, we need to move trend mapping forward so that it complements the surge of available source data while also taking into account our changing environment and the lifestyle patterns influencing people in the 21st century.

So how do we become smart decision makers in a landscape of unprecedented change and complexity? Our memory and logical reasoning can serve as indicators of how we arrived at our current point, but relying on only one kind of thinking for important decisions will not give us a visionary outlook for the future. As already discussed, rigid and evidence-

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based left-brain methods provide us with a specific view of past patterns, but to go deeper about why these patterns happened in the first place, we must include right-brain visionary synthesis to make robust narratives about the future.

Navigating these opposite forces means we need a simplified abstract version of reality, one practiced within multidimensional forecasting. Although we know that the brain is not divided but indeed interconnected to form a complex intricate network, the left-/right-brain dichotomy serves as a useful metaphor in a world in which overreliance on facts and rationality is still the norm to the exclusion of intuitive and creative thinking. To contemplate trends in a fully rounded way, we need both spheres working in tandem as this forms the foundation for a whole-brain approach.

In Chapter 1, we classified the different forecasting methodologies as scientific, social, emotional, and wild card, but it is useful to consider them within the multidimensional thinking model (Figure 3.3).

Left-brain personalities: scientific and social

Analytical left-brain methods are essential for breaking the whole into components in order to closely examine the details. These may be expressed in terms of pure benefits, numbers, and bottom lines. In this realm, scientific forecasters use logic and factual data that is largely evidence based; while social forecasters employ similar factual approaches, their data is mainly drawn from interactive evidence gathering.

Right-brain personalities: emotional and wild card

Intuitive right-brain methods synthesize fragments by weaving them into a whole in order to assess the bigger picture. This approach looks beyond data to consider quality of life in a broader sense. Emotional forecasters use creative, imaginary, and intuitive-based approaches; wild card forecasters (the spiritual dimension) focus on using imaginary scenarios to deliver expertise-based high impact but low probability predictions.

Returning to McGilchrist's theories on how our brain processes information, it is helpful to use the analogy between the brain and a computer. Like a computer, our brain has one operating system but we employ

different "software" for different work tasks. Brain processing (Table 3.1) provides an illustration of the key differences between left-/right-brain processing styles.

TABLE 3.1 **Brain processing**: Illustration of left- versus right-brain processing styles

Left brain	Right brain
General	Individual
Fixed	Changing
Static	Evolving
Isolated	Interconnected
Denotative	Implicit
Lifeless	Incarnate
Decontextualized	Living being in the living world
Analyzes	Synthesizes
Breaking the whole into components	Weaving components into a whole
Focusing on details	Seeing the bigger picture
Benefits and bottom lines	Quality of life in a broader sense

Source: Kjaer Global

Multidimensional thinking explained

In essence, multidimensional thinking is a timesaving method that draws on components of all the main forecasting styles in order to access a whole array of information in our society. Hard values presented by scientific facts and current social forces are tempered with a more instinctive understanding of the inspirations that drive us to a particular worldview or consumer behavior. The multidimensional method operates as a platform for trend management and a trend-filtering system to facilitate building a Trend Atlas. In this process, we also utilize psychographics to delve into people's emotional landscape and explore behaviors. It is an approach where we study and measure the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and opinions of our audience for the purpose of creating personas or social typologies.

As we have already explored, most forecasting methodologies overlap and draw from each other, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, Key forecasting methodologies. Rational analysis of a trend development provides a sound basis for speculation and prediction, but in today's unpredictable climate, multiple ingredients are needed to define the crucial building blocks for

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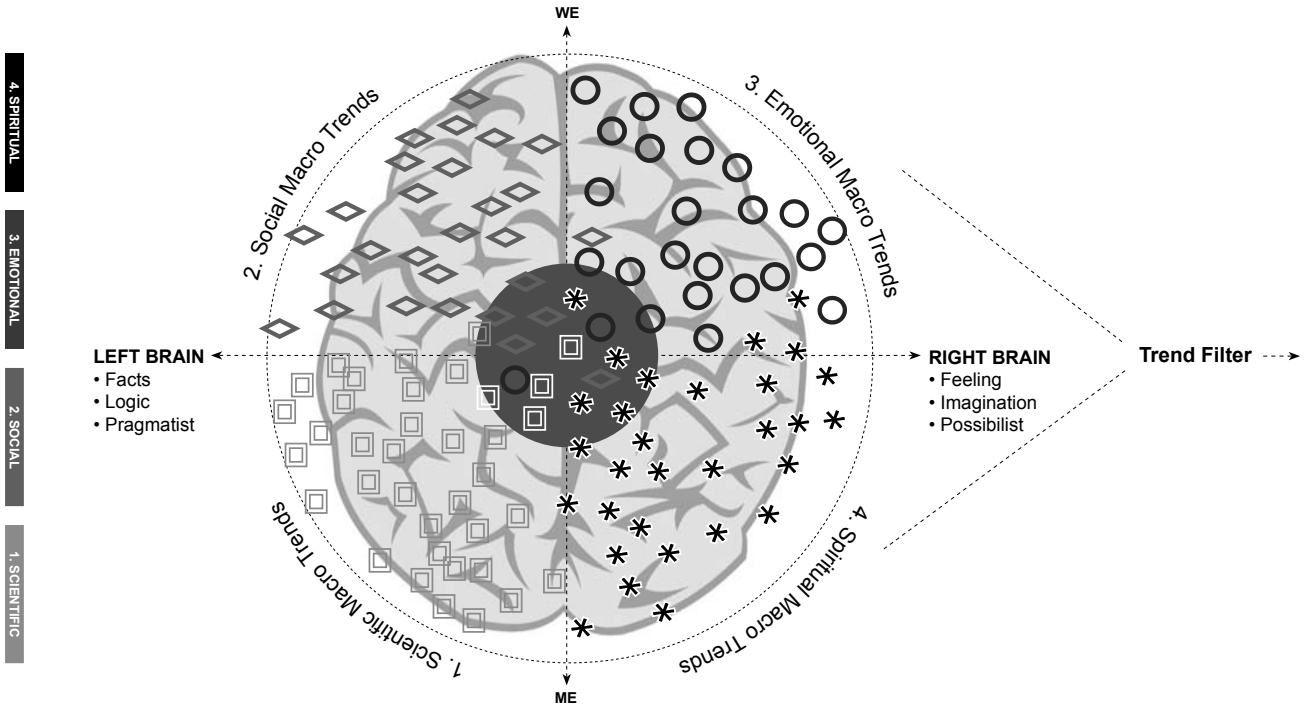

FIGURE 3.3 **Multidimensional thinking model**: To understand how society, businesses and people are interconnected, our model considers multiple dimensions
Source: Kjaer Global

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creating meaningful future scenarios and road maps. Reasoning methods must therefore be robust enough to observe trends from a multilayered standpoint, balancing facts with informed intuition.

The 4D quadrant and multidimensional Trend Index (Figure 3.4) acts as a lens and a filter for plotting and synthesizing data captured during the research phase. The quadrant has left and right hemispheres, divided into four dimensions, classified as scientific, social, emotional, and spiritual (explained in depth in Chapter 4). When framing trends for future scenarios, we usually choose between 8 and 12 key macro trends from our generic Trend Atlas (see Figure 3.5 below) – typically 2–3 for each dimension – to ensure a balanced representation of the trends. The supporting micro trend drivers are then selected – 2 for each macro trend – typically they are informed by local insights, topics or specific influences to provide a wider and more meaningful context. For more comprehensive future scenarios or deeper exploration of a particular topic, it is possible to extend the number of micro trends. This is dependent on the number of macro trends being explored and the research parameters of the organization. When the number of micro trends increases, it will invariably present a deeper and more detailed insight into the specific topic; however, it will also add complexity.

Rethink and reframe basic questions

Emphasis on productivity, performance, efficiency, and speed is no longer helping us move towards a future that makes sense. Always striving for more and better – and without actually mapping the value and purpose of our endeavors – means that we tend to lack clearly outlined goals. Consequently, there is an urgent need for businesses to rethink and redefine the map of success by addressing profound questions about growth, prosperity, sense making, and quality of life now and in the future. As we explored in Chapter 2, accountability is the norm and a 4P approach – with "purpose" defined clearly in strategy – is the starting point for this re-evaluation process. To actively influence the future, it is essential to allocate time for quiet reflection, especially in a world where value is more commonly placed on everything tangible and quantifiable, to the exclusion of more visionary approaches. Not only does time to think help us move away from a culture focused purely on output and reward, but it

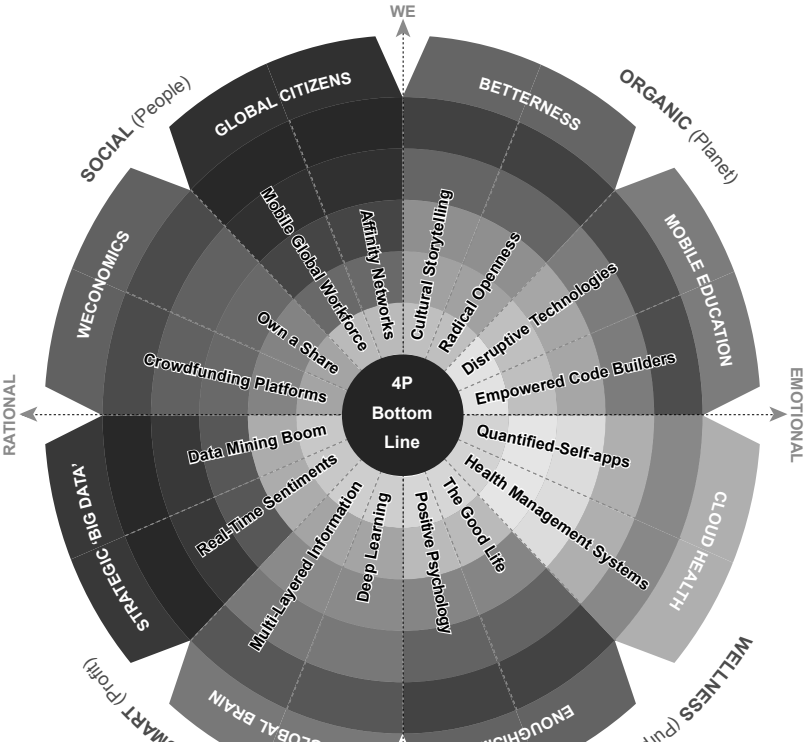

FIGURE 3.4 **The 4D quadrant and multidimensional Trend Index**: This chart, populated with macro and micro trends, illustrates how to connect core drivers selected from the Trend Atlas
Source: Kjaer Global

also enables us to find alternative – and possibly better – answers to the pressing challenges we face, as businesses and as a society.

One clear avenue for discussion and ideation is in the meeting ground between science and arts/humanities; and it is interesting to note that many leading scholarly organizations, including the Wellcome Trust and Dana Foundation (UK), Max Planck Institute (Germany), and Smithsonian and MIT (US), have stepped tentatively into this open space by holding multidisciplinary public debates and events where academics from differ-

ent specialist areas exchange ideas and theories. This runs counter to the approach that has, over the course of the past two centuries, increasingly separated the research/academic world into tangible (science) and less tangible (arts/humanities) silos. Such forums are profoundly stimulating and may be the missing link in our society that will help to foster the intuition and creativity excluded from conventional and more insular research centers, which – by the nature of the process and standards of academic rigor – have a tendency to create independent avenues of theory/knowledge. In the process, such meeting grounds may also take on the issue of deeper purpose that must be considered in any global debates about people's future lifestyle, health, wealth, and aspirations – and the role that business plays in satisfying these needs.

SUMMARY: 21st-century sense making

- The quantity of data we are exposed to makes it harder to sift information and narrow it down, meaning we must adapt trend mapping to take into account not only source material, but also changes in environment and lifestyles.
- While rational (left-brain) thinking helps us understand details about a challenge, we need intuitive and visionary (right-brain) approaches to consider the future of society and people.
- The multidimensional method – considering scientific, social, emotional, and spiritual influences – enables us to build a platform for trend management and filtering, using a multilayered approach to build a robust set of scenarios and a "road map" to guide future strategy.
- It is vital to rethink our future, reframing basic questions about our end goals, considering quality of life and the 4Ps of people, planet, purpose, and profit.
- The meeting ground between science and arts/humanities, currently being explored, is opening up global debate on the issues surrounding people's future lifestyles and the role of business in meeting those needs.

From 2D to 4D thinking explained

To make the quantum leap from a two-dimensional (2D) to a four-dimensional (4D) vision, we must step outside our organizational box and

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consider a much broader perspective of elements at play in society and culture. The problem with viewing the world in just 2D is that we fail to look at the bigger picture – hence our organizational reference frame becomes a relatively narrow window of knowledge.

First let's consider why 2D thinking is not enough. A 2D view focuses on the road ahead and considers current and future influences through the prism of the specialism – usually a specific industry or sector. It's effective at providing a multitude of information about market conditions, known competitors, and so on. However – and here's the problem – it is perfectly possible to scan your market scrupulously with scientific exactitude, adding in a few traditional demographic insights, but chances are you still miss crucial emergent or disruptive elements coming from the area of the horizon outside your frame of reference. Alternatively, you may spot a subtle new pattern in the data but dismiss it as a "weak signal" because your tools and research parameters don't enable you to understand it in any greater depth.

Most notably, this approach fails because it does not include people in real-life situations or factor in their individual needs and desires. However, this is not a new discourse, but an ongoing one, because ultimately it is not just about new technology and available data, it is about corporate culture and purpose. Engaging with people and acquiring the kind of data that is useful in a 21st-century context requires a different approach, as we will discover in Chapter 6. The multidimensional thinking model was developed in order to address this shortfall in traditional forward planning, also matching clients' need for "living and breathing" future narratives that can be used as a tool in the innovation and change management processes. On a practical level, it operates by tapping into the collective memory and individual perspectives of an interdisciplinary team. By bridging the disparities between internal departments, it encourages dialogue and empowers people with different areas of expertise to speak and understand the same language and then move forward together in order to formulate a purposeful and informed strategy.

The Global Brain and our collective memory

In *Smarter Than You Think: How Technology is Changing Our Minds for the Better*, Clive Thompson sets out reflections and observations on

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