

The Art of Life Design: An Essay Enabling Voyage into the Future

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Abstract

The art of life design presented in this paper is based on numerous articles that were recently published in the *European Business Review*¹⁾. It begins with distinguishing the “Me” within the community and the artificial world where we have created life sustaining ecosystems. It is proposed that it is, in essence, about our life from the beginning to the end and the best way to follow a selected direction. The new playground is our individual Metaverse and our human uniqueness. But our future can only happen within the future of the human species, which by in large, depends on us humans.

Grubel (2019) asserts that “Design thinking draws upon logic, imagination, creativity, intuition and reasoning to explore the possibilities of what we could create to enable the desired outcomes for our end users”²⁾. In this particular case we, our community and the society are the beneficiaries, because life design thinking helps us create real impact on our life, leading to added value to us, our community and to society.

The paper begins with a look at life design challenges in **the maze of life** and its **actual context**. This is followed by a short description of **the role of human uniqueness**, and the **Managing by Traction (MbT) framework** which is the central piece in the future life design. Finally, there is a description of **desired life, and the paper ends with some implications, and suggestions**.

Keywords: *actual life context, human uniqueness, managing by traction, self-assessment, desired future, happiness, life legacy*

INTRODUCTION

Our view of the world is on the brink of becoming more systemic and holistic (i.e., it resembles more and more nature itself). In general, there is a

tendency amongst visionary people to leave behind the traditional linear and hierarchic thinking about the world.

Actually, we are creating our own reality. Thus, one needs not forget that ordinary people are usually

confined to our “own-reality-box” and believe that this is the real world, and that everybody else perceives it the same way. Some people (powerful politicians and businesspeople) even force their own view of reality on other people.

In the age of computers, artificial intelligence and other breakthrough innovations, at times it looks like that life is determined by the power of machines. Some refer to it at the digital imperatives. True, the connected world creates a digital imperative for companies and governments. We have witnessed it through the COVID-19 pandemic. The key stakeholders must succeed in creating transformation through science and technology, or they will face destruction.³⁾ The Digital Imperative, even in a connected world takes time, effort and willpower to get major transformative effects from new technology. And to many, the latter is causing stress and uncertainty for where are we going to end up? A recent publication by the UN, summarizes well the dilemma faced by embracing blindly new technologies: “Technologies can help make our world fairer, more peaceful, and more just. Digital advances can support and accelerate achievement of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals—from ending extreme poverty to reducing maternal and infant mortality, promoting sustainable farming and decent work, and achieving universal literacy. But technologies can also threaten privacy, erode security and fuel inequality. They have implications for human rights and human agency. Like generations before, we—governments, businesses and individuals—have a choice to make in how we harness and manage new technologies.”⁴⁾

The authors of this paper are more positive and optimistic and insist that harnessing new technologies depends on the creativity and ingenious of women and men. After all, people have dreams, computer don't! People have a free will and can create, machines don't; they are only reacting and executing.

We are discovering that we desperately need new concepts and models based on organic, systemic and holistic thinking where our future will be brighter and non-threatening. In this paper we will pinpoint the challenges of life design and attempt to offer frameworks and ideas that will improve the design for ourselves and to the future

world that we will create.

Life Design in essence means taking ownership of our life

THE LIFE DESIGN CHALLENGE

Life design is an important part of our Life Quest Journey. It is highly relevant for our lifelong education. We have the responsibility for our lifelong education. Nobody else can do it for us. All other sources for education can be just providers and support. Good teachers can become life coaches. They can leave their marks, but all key decisions are ours. Otherwise, we risk becoming just followers of somebody else.

Life design helps us also to understand that we are just temporary guests on this planet. Very soon just faint memories will remain about most of us. Nearly all memories about us will vanish in the dust of history. Only few people will be memorized in the form of legends or will find a place in the official history.

In reality we do not own anything, we are using or have accumulated during our lifetime. We are just temporary privileged users. Just imagine the earth is like a hotel where we have a temporary stay. Tomorrow already somebody else may stay at the same place, where nothing will remind them about us. Life design is a way to actively drive our life by creating several options at the crossings of our life and it is up to us, where we decide to go. We can only grow by transcending ourselves!

Everything changes within a framework given by nature. In our world, consciousness allows us to create things and ways beyond this framework. It is time to take our personal future in our own hands! Which means we need to use the future design for our own life. In this way we can introduce purposefulness and meaningfulness into our life. We can have a fulfilled life, regardless of our age and where and who we are.

There is an African proverb that says: “*You have watches, we have time.*” But, if something is important to us, we will find the necessary time to do it. This means in reverse, if we don't do it, it is not important for us! We are always in such a hurry to do things, comply with the requirements of other

people that we have no time for so many things, which would really matter to us.

Designing our life can be a turning point in life. Discovering ourselves and designing our future life is the most fascinating journey of our life. During this important journey we may discover how we can achieve a satisfied and happy life. It may open new doors and help us move on. In this paper will describe some directions, instructions, and instruments but finally you (the reader) will be at your own.

To use the guidelines and tools effectively and successfully it is necessary first and foremost to go beyond the “Magic Mirror” created by ‘our reality’ influenced by our prejudices, biases, beliefs, wishful thinking and expectations. “Our perceived reality” is the biggest roadblock to find creative solutions. We tend to see reality in the way we expect it to be, or worse others want us to see it that way. The best way to go beyond ‘our reality’ is ‘deep’ exploration of existing information, knowledge, know-how, experiences, and solutions around the issue we are concerned with; in this case with ourselves. This exploration is always the first step towards creative solutions. The exploration allows us to see the reality beyond our view. It leads often to reframing the issue we are examining. It also transforms the way we are looking at it. It prepares the mind to find creative solutions, even without being creative!

Therefore, one needs to be aware of the fact that perceived reality is not always what appears to be, because it is filtered through the lens of our worldview and our biases. The exploration allows us to see the reality beyond our view as well. But it calls also for mental openness, curiosity, and the courage to leave the comfort-zone. We need also to stop searching and focus on finding. This is the key, which unlocks most valuable insights.

To make things even more complicated, we have today a whole array of “realities,” in particular the “Cyber-Reality” (CR) encompassing the digital. The augmented reality (AR) and the virtual reality (VR). In order to make a complex phenomenon a bit easier to grasp, we are proposing to consider at the actual stage four kinds of “realities” Our Reality (OR), Digital Reality (DR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR).⁵⁾ We are already living and acting in a hybrid reality consisting of a

dynamic mix of different realities.

The power of curiosity: If you do not stop being curious about yourself, you will be surprised by the richness of options you will discover. Thus, being curious and courageous helps enrich options in understanding hybrid realities band responding to them. Each person is a unique human being, and thus his/her life is unique as well! Each person has a rich array of skills and abilities. Which means each individual could live many different life’s, based on their skills and competencies. No need to wait for opportunities, but rather become proactive and create them. People do not get mature and wise just by aging; aged people are just older. Each person, at each age, needs to work on his/her own development at each stage of their life and their career. If they stop this process, then they have reached the end—way before life is ending.

THE MAZE OF LIFE

Our life is always part of other people’s life and vice versa. One could claim that human existence is all about relationships, unilateral and mutual. Factually we are living in often changing and dynamic web of relationships, which in the Cyber-Age can expand over the globe. Life is a mesh of relationships. We have relationships with other people, our family, people close and important to us, the community, and society. We are also part of our community and the society. Additionally, we are part of the human species from the past, present and future. Finally, we have also a relationship with ourselves. We are an intrinsically part of the entire universe.

We all have an impact on our environment and vice versa. We are continuously being shaped by the context and its changes, but we also e can be a key factor in the changes of our context.

Human beings are unique, highly complex, embed with contradictions, paradoxes, full of mysteries and enigmas. likewise, are our relationships. Most of our relationships are highly dynamic and constantly changing, and in permanent transformation. Many of us just let our life happen, claiming that some external mysterious factors are shaping it. Alternatively, others believe that they can drive their life in a desired direction and retain charge of it.

Life Design means first of all exploring the context around us on four levels: past, actual, emerging and future. Key importance is to honestly knowing, understanding, and accepting ourselves. Because of our uniqueness, everybody needs to make this quest for himself/herself. It is a life quest because of the lifetime transformation and the permanent transformation of our context.

It does not mind how many years you expect to live. You can always redesign your life and introduce new meaning and purpose into it.

Life Design is the expression of human proactivity⁶⁾, and our aiming at flourishing⁷⁾ based on human agency, communion, self-transcendence, self-development, and growth.

The key drivers of life design are:

- **Education** consisting of four basic elements (Learning, relearning, and unlearning; Research, search, exploration, discovery, and design; development; and finally, deployment)
- **Life and work experience** enriched by collaboration, partnership, and constructive feedback
- **General Human Intelligence**
- **Individual Metaverse.**

In organizations, these are supported by core executive competencies, in particular entrepreneurship; talent development and deployment; ability to find creative solutions; and cyber savvy including cyber skills.

THE ACTUAL LIFE CONTEXT

We are at a turning point of history!

Organizations need agile, future oriented people with the information and knowledge enabling them to leverage digital technology. Our world is out of balance, and so is our life. Several extremely powerful forces and major threats are converging simultaneously and pushing us into a new world yet to be experienced. To survive and to thrive, most organizations need to operate on three levels simultaneously: dealing with legacies, coping with the existing context and requirements, and dealing

with the emerging requirements at the same time (Raich et al., 2018)⁸⁾.

We are living in a world in permanent transition. The transition towards a digitized world is at its heights, and the transition towards a fully developed Cyber-Reality is in its beginnings. What looms in the horizon is one of the biggest transformations in human history comparable to the taming of fire or the development of writing.

At the same time our education system is still preparing people for the static world, a world of yesterday. Intelligent programs and robots are becoming an integral part of the workforce and our life, but the education system is not preparing us to deal with it. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to understand what is happening to around us.⁹⁾ Only then, we may find the courage to move beyond our comfort-zone into the unknown and unexplored territory; to discover what never has been thought before.

Human made disasters

There is no doubt, Earth is a risky place for life. Nevertheless, life is still around albeit many catastrophic disasters in the past. Some argue that we have had five big mass extinctions of life.¹⁰⁾ It looks like a sixth one is actually taking place presently. This time it is caused by us, humans. There is a danger that we could be part of this mass extinction. It is mainly due to three factors: Steady growing world population, ruthless economic growth, and continuous chase for profits and power. We can observe the creation of an extremely dangerous and destructive mixture of greed/hubris and fear/hate leading to polarization and determination of scapegoats.

The loss of trust in the leading institutions of our society increases the probability of a meltdown of core human values. People are easily seduced by authoritarian personalities who suggest structures promising law and order. This leads towards totalitarian governments and states indifferent to what legitimizes autocracy: ideology, religion, law and order, safety and security, protection etc. The loss of trust within the society leads to the decay of the social structures, which leads to anarchy.

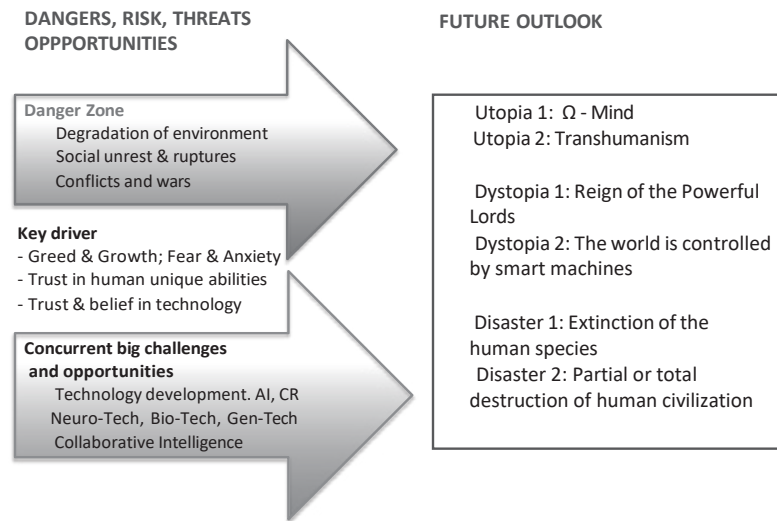


Figure 1: Global Challenges, Threats and Opportunities and possible future outcomes

The Danger Zone

The danger zone contains several existential connected risks for our civilization and even humanity. The risk of partial or total collapse of our civilization is possible. In particular there is the degradation of the environment causing climate changes. Add to it rise in social unrest and conflicts and the mix is a bomb shell. Millions of “climate and conflict fugitive emigrants,” some experts expect even one billion or more¹¹⁾ will flood the neighboring countries and lead to a worldwide immigration crisis. The naturalist, Sir David Attenborough, claims climate change is humanity's greatest threat in thousands of years.¹²⁾

The hundreds of millions of people, which will be displaced due to the disasters provoked by the natural disasters (climate change) and manmade disasters (wars and terrorism), will lead to a “tsunami of people” across the globe and to social conflicts and more wars as a consequence. Our social resilience is already crumbling, its disintegration will cause a global mayhem a finally a collapse of civilization. It is very unlikely that our tightly connected globalized social and economic systems can withstand such a global chaos.¹³⁾

The next 20 to 30 years will lead the world out of the historical comfort zone towards a future still widely unknown. This may lead to economic, political, and social turbulences and to an increased anxiety of people. This is a real challenge

for governments, business, educational institutions and to all of us. To address these challenges, a multidisciplinary and systemic approach is needed with a view towards a new algorithm that contains the concept of quality of life in the future.

Concurrent big challenges and opportunities

Concurrently, humanity is facing several tough additional challenges, which can be viewed as a threat or as an outstanding opportunity. The principal one seems to be the challenges of the development and deployment of AI. What is already visible are things like: virtual reality, Biotech & Gentech, Nanotech and beyond, new energy sources and new kind of sustainable energies, cosmic dangers linked to the solar system and beyond, the fast-emerging new natural sciences leading to new world view and new technologies far beyond our imagination today.

These challenges connected to technology development combined with the social and geopolitical conditions are already emerging today and will dominate the world scene for the rest of this century. Thus, the collaborative intelligence will play an increasingly important role in this development (for more, see: Raich et al., 2019).¹⁴⁾

HUMAN UNIQUENESS, COMPLEXITY AND DIVERSITY

Human uniqueness, complexity and diversity is

founded on four elements: Me, We, They, and It.¹⁵⁾ Each one of us has a unique personality which is in a permanent transformation whether we like it or not. All of us chase meaningful life. We are looking for transcendence. Unfortunately, the formula is not clear and consequently we steer it, at least partially, in a desired direction. Ideally, we should develop a good life design framework. Life design cannot be accomplished without a deep involvement of the community and society in which we live, act and work. These are the principal components of the Gestalt framework.¹⁶⁾ We are in midst of a network of relationships. Nobody is alone! We all are part of at least one community; the “**We**” is surrounded by “**They**”—the human artifacts. The “artificial intelligence” is as well an artifact—no more and no less. The fourth part of our existence is “**It**,” the context, encompassing the ecosystems we need for life. All four, **me**, **we**, **they**, and **it**, constitute what we call the ever changing “*maze of life*,” composed of uniqueness and complexity in transformation. And who would not like to leave a meaningful legacy behind.

Knowing yourself

The journey to life design begins with a few critical questions each one of us should ask and perhaps record the answers: Note: If you don’t have the answers, you can put a question mark and complete it later.

- “**Me**,” who is that?
- What makes me unique?
- Whom would I like to be?
- What adds meaningfulness to my life?
- Who are my best friends?
- In which direction I would like to go?
- What is important for me?
- What would I like to achieve?
- Do I miss something in my life?
- What makes me happy?
- Do I know my key skills, core competencies and my talent?
- What would be my preferred working domain?

Human Uniqueness creates a multilevel system of relationships, connections, and networks. We live in our own reality sharing parts and bits of it with

other people, the community, and society. We are all children of our age and the Zeitgeist. Scholars have long maintained that each era has a unique spirit, a nature or climate that sets it apart from all other epochs. In German, such a spirit is known as “Zeitgeist,” from the German words Zeit, meaning “time,” and Geist, meaning “spirit” or “ghost.” Some writers and artists assert that the true zeitgeist of an era cannot be known until it is over, and several have declared that only artists or philosophers can adequately explain it.¹⁷⁾ Each individual has its own mix of male and female characteristics. In addition, we all have our own highly individual mixture of personal characteristics. We all are undergoing a lifelong transformation, no exception. This means that we are permanently on the edge of something different. The speed of ageing depends highly on the duration of our life experiences and also on the level of threats and stress that we have experienced.¹⁸⁾

The human brain is the most complex phenomenon to clearly understand. But human uniqueness, is by far more than just the brain. People have similar appearance, but sufficient different characteristics to be perceived as unique individuals. During their lifetime they undergo a permanent change but are keeping our unique physiologic and psychologic characteristics. They are conditioned by their genetic pool, by the context of their life, but also shaped by their life experiences.

Humans are highly social beings, they have a highly developed consciousness and self-consciousness; and have introduced a new level of complexity, purposeful and meaningful change. The free will brought by the consciousness allows them to imagine things which have not been there before. Humans have an innate ability to create and to destroy. Another innate ability, entrepreneurship, allows them to create new things.

Humans are part of one or several communities and society. They create the community and the society and are shaped by them. The interaction with other people an existentially important part of their life. Communication is an important, and necessary element of their social life. Humans are social beings and separate individual entities. They are what they are, because of the others. Humans are living and acting in a very rich context of artifacts.

Beyond the uniqueness of individuals, we have the unique characteristic of two joint individuals, a team, a small group, and a large group of individuals, and finely organizations and communities and the human societies. Humans are living in a web of multiple relationships. In the center of human uniqueness is the ability to build relationships and work together with others.

In comparison to other living species, the crucial differences are not in what we are made of, but in what we do. The Harvard Grant Study¹⁹⁾, the longest longitudinal study ever undertaken, spanning more than 75 years, concludes that good relationships are the key to a happier and healthier life. Thus, human relationships are bridges between the inner and the outer context. Size and scope of **ME**, **WE**, **THEY** are dynamic, flexible, and changing proportions. They are in permanent transformation. Each one is highly complex; their relationships are adding additional layers of complexity.

Social and emotional intelligence are a core part of human uniqueness and the foundation of human society and civilization. They are the mortar holding human communities and societies together. Goleman (2006) claims that based on the findings of neuroscience we can say that we are wired to connect.²⁰⁾ Lieberman (2013) has written an entire book attempting to question why brains are wired to connect.²¹⁾ Taylor, author of *The Fall* (2018)²²⁾ makes the case that humans aren't inherently selfish, they are hardwired to work together, as he reiterated in a recent article (2020).²³⁾

Adding to communities and society complex systems is the so-called family. Family is our behavior booth camp, and community is our behavior academy. Behavior is the door to the inner world of other people. Behavior, communication, and experience are shaping our consciousness. Each person seems to be in a special "privileged position" with regard to his own thoughts and feelings, a position no one else could ever occupy."²⁴⁾ Individuals are nothing without the relevant others and the human society. Humans are in many ways a unique species, and a singularity of nature.

A fully-fledged human intelligence is encompassing all available and accessible resources we can get. So, potentially, all AI deployment relevant to the specific case develops in the same

path; the cyber savvy people have a far stronger intelligence at their disposal. This also means that the concept of Singularity may be wrong.²⁵⁾ We are on the way from collaborative intelligence towards the meta-mind and beyond.²⁶⁾ We argue that the Superminds together with the AI based machines will create "Meta-Minds" leading to a Meta-Mind Society. The final dream is the development of the Ω -Mind, a perfect globally connected and alignment of natural and artificial intelligence.²⁷⁾

Human Uniqueness and Diversity

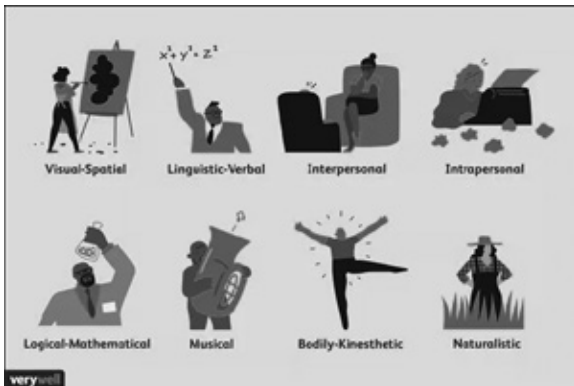
Humanity can be described in three basic dimensions: uniqueness, complexity, and diversity which operates on all four physical and metaphysical levels: **body**, **mind**, **soul**, and **spirit**. Diversity exists as well within the **me**, **we** and **they** domain. They are all interrelated. Diversity is mainly the result of uniqueness—our unique experiences, and the unique relationships we are entertaining. Mingling all those unique aspects is adding an additional level of diversity. This creates not only unique and diverse individuals, metaverses and communities, but also unique, cultures and world views.

Personal relationships are primarily about people. At the individual level, many of us aim to develop acceptance and tolerance of diversity. This may lead to mutual respect and trust. Open communication is good way to develop it. Empathy can help discover that beyond all the differences we are all human, who are temporary guests on this planet. This introspection helps to discover a wide range of characteristics, skills, and experiences of other people it enriches our life. And, in the context of globalization, mutual acceptance becomes of utmost importance far beyond national, religious, and cultural differences.

An Enhanced General Human Intelligence Framework (GHI)

In addition to the conundrum of consciousness and self-consciousness, we are still struggling to grasp the concept of intelligence. One of the reasons, is that intelligence can be defined and studies from different angles. In 1983, Howard Gardner, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, published his book, "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences."

In the book, Gardner outlined eight intelligences: Linguistic-Verbal, Logical-mathematical, Body-kinesthetic, Visual-Spatial, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and natural.²⁸⁾ Emotional intelligence was added more recently by others and became very popular as a key descriptor to predict success of business or political leaders and people in general in work settings²⁹⁾.



Source: Very well: <https://www.verywellmind.com/gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences-2795161>

Yet, as previously suggested, human uniqueness intelligence³⁰⁾ is the ability to cope in a meaningful way with different situations and issues. This can also become the basis to compare natural and artificial intelligence. This view also allows us to have a holistic view on natural intelligence, in particular human intelligence. Intelligence seems to be a core characteristic of life and to be adapted to the development level of the living entities.

We argue that GHI of humans, is a multidimensional “**meta-ability**” encompassing the human instinct, the automatism, the unconscious, the conscious intelligence the individual has and the intelligence processes encompassing other people.

One way or another, we tend to underestimate the subconscious and unconscious elements in our life and we do not know if we will see new forms of consciousness related to the artificial intelligence. General Intelligence is tightly linked to human uniqueness and complexity. It is by far more than just an ability linked to an individual, because large parts of it cannot be developed nor can be used without relationships with other people.

Table 1: The Characteristics of GHI

GENERAL HUMAN INTELLIGENCE The ability of humans to cope in a meaningful and purposeful way with different situations	Innate	Automatisms (innate, learned) Instincts Innate behavior. The way people naturally react or behave, without having to think or learn about it. ³¹⁾	DIRECTION , Purpose, Objectives; Teleology ACTION , Agency, Initiative, Entrepreneurship OUTCOMES , Results, Achievements
	Subconscious and unconscious	Intuition Insights Long term memory Dreams Irrationally triggered agency Feelings, emotions, biases Altered state of consciousness also called altered state of mind or mind alteration , is any condition which is significantly different from a normal waking state ³²⁾	
	Consciousness Free will	Imagination ; Awake dreams In between subconscious and conscious Intelligence processes fluid & crystallized Gardener Model: Linguistic, Musical, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Bodily kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalistic Cognitive flexibility , key to learning and creativity Daily life intelligence Short term memory Relationships	
	Higher	Illumination Epiphany Enlightenment	

DEFINING THE DIRECTION THE CONCEPT OF MANAGING BY TRACTION (MbT)

Axiom: Life Design it is all about you and your context within your life maze.

In a world in transition, we need to move from expected towards desired and designed future. To aim at the desired future, we need to define the direction. “Direction and Action” are based on the future design framework. Once the direction has been designed, a portfolio of possible actions needs to be developed to move in the defined direction. The implementation of the actions runs in parallel with the adjustment of the direction based on the outcomes. This means the “Direction” and at the end “Action” processes are running in parallel across all three levels: **actual, emerging and future**.

The core MbT Framework basically is made of five core elements: understanding of the world in transition (i.e., driving forces, enablers and mega-trends, and the transformation loop); the future

design framework; the direction, the action; and a method to find creative solutions.

First, what is needed is to explore your future within the actual, emerging and future context and to define your direction you would like to take. Then you can describe the options you can see, and others you may imagine. Finally, you will have to start implementing the selected options (Raich et al., 2020).³³⁾

Figure 2 helps to define and describe the direction you should consider. It is based on Maslow’s theory of human needs and motives revised by Batemann (2020)³⁴⁾. Six guiding statements and questions can help define the direction and later the necessary actions to create the roadmap for our personal life design. The importance indicates the urgency to act.

Bear in mind, there is a **scale of ‘action’**:

**Pro-action Action Reaction
Inaction Idle and Game over.**

Action is leading to implementation that makes the difference! But it needs to be purposeful and

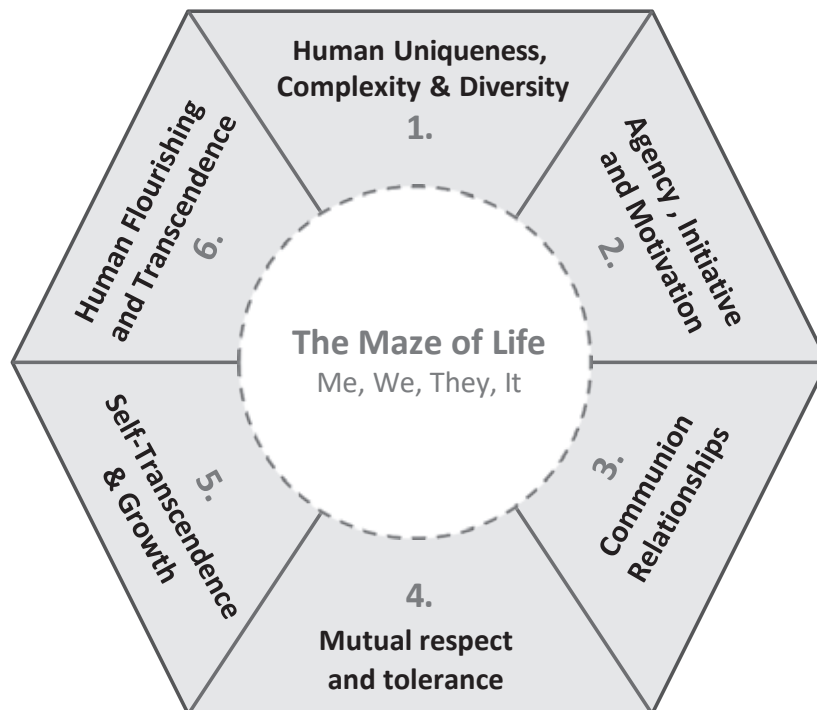


Figure 2: Key elements for creating the direction of life design

Table 2: Practical guide to self-assessment of your life design

	Importance of action: 1= very low 10= very high
1. HUMAN UNIQUENESS, COMPLEXITY AND DIVERSITY Safety & Security How can I sustain the livelihood for myself and my loved ones?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all need shelter, housing, clean air, food, and beverage. • Do I care about adequate nutrition, physical exercise, sleep, rest, wellness, reducing stress? • Can I sustain physical and mental health and wellbeing? • What can I do to sustain the health of myself and my loved ones? • Do I enough self-direct high leverage action? • Are my actions directed by mindfulness? • Am I able to keep my individuality within the community? 	
2. AGENCY³⁵⁾, INITIATIVE AND MOTIVATION Agency arises from striving to individuate and expand the self and involves qualities such as efficiency, competence, and assertiveness. Personal agency puts people in the driver's seat, allowing escape from confining habits, unthinking routines, and circumstances controlled largely by other people's expectations and other situational demands. It helps people choose their own paths and influence short-term outcomes plus longer-term destinies. ³⁶⁾ The most important outcome of agency are initiative and entrepreneurship. Proaction is the self-chosen exercise of agency. Proaction is purposeful and future focused. ³⁷⁾ Proaction is what drives constructive change. It is essential to successful self-management, leadership, and entrepreneurship. ³⁸⁾	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well am I driving my life? • Should I reinforce my personal agency? • How much do I allow other people to be the drivers of my life? • Do I care about the development of my entrepreneurial competency? 	
3. COMMUNION³⁹⁾ AND RELATIONSHIPS Communion is a fundamental dimension of social cognition. It arises from striving to integrate the self in a larger social unit through caring for others and involves qualities such as benevolence, cooperativeness, and empathy.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I build, create, and sustain close relationships? • How can I develop my social intelligence and social competencies? • Where is my main focus? Family, partnerships, colleagues, team, community, and extensive relationships (job, hobbies, sport, society) • Am I developing and deploying empathy in my relationships? 	
We cannot imagine a life without relationships. In particular the social life creates an innumerable number of relationships. They can endure for our lifetime, or just for a moment. They can be stable or highly dynamic. They have different importance. Every relationship can change or been terminated. On top of all, relationships are very contextual. We could claim that our life consists in a wide part of relationships. To build successful and sustainable relationships follow the golden rules: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be selective in your choice, but put the other person in the center. 2. Give without direct expectations and you shall receive. 3. Invest time to entertain important relationships. Be reachable for them. 4. Never abuse confidential information. If needed ask for permission. 5. Create added value for your important relationships. Aim to make both sides of the partnership happy. 	

	Importance of action: 1= very low 10= very high
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is utterly important to have a close look at our relationships and review them from time to time, to define the most relevant and important for us. Collaboration is fundamental human competency and is based on common ground, open communication and mutual trust and respect. Which relationships are most relevant for me? Who are my real friends I can count on in need? Which one did I neglect? Which ones I should better ignore or terminate? 	
4. MUTUAL RESPECT AND TOLERANCE Mutual tolerance and respect are the basis of trust. It is also a way towards self-transcendence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect must be earned. Do I acknowledge and accept the diversity of individuals, teams, communities, and societies? Do I accept and tolerate diversity in my life and in my work? Mutual respect, tolerance and trust are the glue of the community and society. The key word is "mutual"! 	
5. SELF-TRANSCENDENCE⁴⁰⁾ AND GROWTH⁴¹⁾ Self-Transcendence is our ability to perform a task or achieve a goal for our own needs and interests and as well beyond. Personal growth is the process by which a person recognizes himself or herself and continually develops himself or herself to reach his or her full potential. Personal growth is an important part of a person's growth, maturity, success, and happiness. It is a process of spiritual, physical, social and spiritual growth that lasts a lifetime. It's a process of active learning and developing new skills long after formal education has been completed. Self-Development⁴²⁾ and Self-Direction Emphasizes strengthening and applying one's knowledge, talents, and capacities, and includes personal and professional growth and accomplishment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I pursuing meaning in my life? How to take care of the next generations by raising children, taking care of the ecosystems, the diversity of nature, clean environment etc. Do I realize that my freedom ends where the freedom of others is in cause, and a mutually acceptable compromise must be established? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am I aware of my focus domain? Am I doing enough to develop knowledge and competencies in my focus domain? Do I control my direction of development? Do I take care enough of my own direction and fulfillment? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do I do to continue to grow? Do I care enough for my lifetime education and development? Education = learning, re-learning and unlearning; research, exploration, discovery and design; development; deployment 	
6. HUMAN FLOURISHING⁴³⁾ AND TRANSCENDENCE⁴⁴⁾ Human flourishing is a state of complete human well-being. When people behave proactively, their goals are to create positive change in self or circumstances, with personal benefits to (self-development) or other people (self-transcendence). In combination, this duality generates human flourishing in the broadest and most meaningful way.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can I contribute to the life quality and wellbeing of my community and society? Do I know which life values I am creating? How can I contribute to the care of future generations? Can I be a good ancestor? What will be my legacy to the world? 	

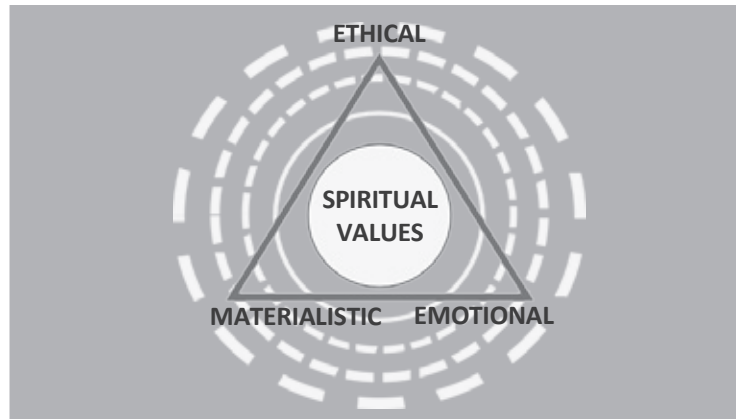


Figure 3: A modified version of the Dolan triaxial model of values⁴⁵⁾

meaningful.

Action for life design: Ongoing creation and implementation of options & life cases. Real and virtual prototyping and testing. Rollover action plans; concurrent direction and action. Knowing is not enough. Only applied and deployed knowledge is creating value. We have not only to be “ready, willing and able” but “ready, willing and **acting**”!

Remember not to become the slave of your plans. You are the master of the direction and purpose. Evaluate always therefore before action. Your plans need to be dynamic, agile, and adapted to the actual circumstances. You need to check what you have promised and expected vs actual reached results, outcomes and achievements through interim reviews, constructive feedback, and self-feedback. And adapt your actions accordingly. If necessary, you need also to reframe and even change your direction.

Running a portfolio of life options and life cases

Action is all about defining a purpose in a consensus and chosen direction. It takes care of the selected implementation of the action steps, and projects leveraging resourcefulness and perseverance, building on resilience, nimbleness, and agility.

In essence, life design is about value creation. And it is about a healthy well-balanced portfolio of values measured simultaneously on the individual, and the social levels. We will reach a flourishing life and prosperous society only when we share wellbeing and happiness with other people. This means we need to maintain a sound balance of

individual and transcending values for ourselves, our family, our community and the society in general for the sake of future generations.

Purpose is a good indicator about the significance of values. Often the adjective “mutual” is an indicator of transcendence of values. Thus, we would consider mutual love, mutual trust, mutual benefit as transcended values, but not mutual hatred. An indicator of negative values are double standards.

Spiritual values are the foundation of all values and are also directly present in all value categories. Trust represents the mega value amongst all other values. Trust is the ‘concrete’ holding, the cement and the glue of the social elements that bonds actors together. All relationships are based on mutual trust. Trust is the fundamental condition for cooperation, collaboration, and partnership. But it is also important to learn how to trust yourself. And remember, trust takes time to build, but takes a friction of a second to lose it.

IMPLICATIONS & OUTLOOK

The desired future

In the long term, we expect the development of a world able to leverage the achievements of the Cyber-Age for the development of a new society and a new economy with a view of the future. We are expecting to see responsible leadership focusing on the quality of life for all. The fundamental principles are collaboration, partnership, care, and

Table 3: Elements to consider when defining actions

1.	Motivation & Locus of Control	Life is about choices and decisions, and we need to be in charge of both. To move in the right direction, we need to have a clear purpose set the right priorities in the portfolio of actions. A sense of direction helps us to become more focused and effective. We need to increase our locus of control. ⁴⁶⁾ Enjoy each day of life because each age has its own moments of joy.
2.	Energy Inner Strength	Relationships are at the core of our life and of the social life. They can either lift us up or drag down. They can reinforce our energy level or diminish it. We need to choose our relationships carefully. We must also learn to balance periods of high performance with periods of regeneration. We need also a mix of different types of energy: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Very useful is the development of the inner strength.
3.	Thinking	Our thoughts are highly significant for our life! We create our own reality. We shall be the master of our metaverse. Watch your inner dialogue. Talking to yourself aloud will help you to control it. Watch for your moments of truth. Take care of your General Human Intelligence and develop your foresight literacy.
4.	Mindset, Life Direction and Meaningfulness	Mindset is the inner filter through which we perceive the world. Mindset controls what we perceive and how we perceive. It has a huge impact on our behavior as well. Just think how the curiosity mindset can change our life. Curiosity is a powerful driver of our growth. Our life direction we can base on future view and future design. The endeavor to discover the meaning of our life is a never-ending process, but it helps to define the direction and purpose of our life. It requires the ability to look beyond the actual context. Meaning differentiates humans from other life species and from artificial intelligence. It helps to define life value creation. Work on your ability of collaboration and partnership.
5.	Self-responsibility. Professional characteristics	If we stop learning and developing, we stop living, we are just vegetating. We need to follow lifetime education and follow our talent development. We need also to develop our ability to cope with our aging and transformation. Developing your sense of agency and self-efficacy taking responsibility for your feelings, decisions, actions, and your life you can develop high self-esteem. You should rather be looking how to improve yourself than blame others. Self-responsibility both reflects and generates self-esteem. You also need also be aware of the fact, that your success is also due to other people.
6.	Wellbeing & Happiness	Wellbeing depends on what we perceive as life quality. This is an individual choice and is for most of us a moving target because of the transformation phases in our life from child to old age. "Six factors measured by age 50 were excellent predictors of those who would be in the 'happy-well' group—the top quartile of the Harvard men—at age 80: a stable marriage, a mature adaptive style, no smoking, little use of alcohol, regular exercise, and maintenance of normal weight." ⁴⁷⁾ It takes a meaningful purpose and action to create joy and satisfaction. They may lead to wellbeing and moments of happiness on individual, organizational, and social level.
7.	Transcendence and Beyond Diversity	The main direction we need to move towards is "transcending." Beyond ourselves, beyond "me," beyond "we," beyond "they" and finally beyond "it." We must learn to accept the diversity of human societies cultures, and religions. Transcendence brings a remarkable shift in our depths of life meaning. There can be no doubt that or life journey goes way beyond the physical and material world. We are the main creators of our Metaverse. Diversity is consequence of uniqueness and complexity. Mutual respect and tolerance may lead to mutual trust. Hubris, arrogance and proselytization are toxic in this respect! Love is the most important currency in life. The more we spend, the more we get!

Table 4: Designing your dream life. Evaluate the actual situation

Some leading questions	On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (very much)
• Do I have a meaningful life?	
• Am I satisfied and happy with my life, my job, my family life, and my personal life?	
• Do I have enough high-quality relationships?	
• Do I care enough about my important relationships?	
• Can I develop and deploy my talent?	
• Am I driving my life, or are others in the driving seat?	
• Do I take my own decisions? Do I implement them?	
• Do I have plans for the next 5 to 10 years?	
• Do I forget to make happy people important for me?	
• Do I forget to take time for things which make me happy!	
• Do I pursue the development of transcendence?	
• What do I consider as meaningful in my life?	
• Do I care about your legacy to the future generations?	

creation.⁴⁸⁾ A future way of life where real and virtual worlds are blended, where artificial intelligence is used to create a sustainable, decent life for all of the planet's inhabitants. Artificial Intelligence based entities and robots are allies and partners of humans; highly intelligent machines and robots perform most of the work. Human work is a privilege adding value to people's life and to society.

Our comfort zone is built on quicksand; we need to move out of it rapidly before we sink! We need to replace old paradigms with new ones. A new worldview is emerging, and a fundamental shift of values is occurring. The world, our world, is rapidly evolving. As new possibilities and opportunities emerge, we have the chance to reshape our world. Yes, we can achieve whatever we can imagine. Therefore, we need to be very careful about our dreams. And we need to go far beyond where we are today! We need to leave our comfort zone, which means leaving our home base.

This is the positive alternative view to the dark future that threatens us today. In order to create this type of optimistic view, one needs to imagine and chart a positive angle of the future as Raich et al (2017) describes in their essay: "GLOOM vs. BLOOM OF THE FUTURE OF WORK: Can We Chart A Positive Roadmap?"⁴⁹⁾ Whether we can and will achieve a positive world state is still unknown, but what is critical is undertaking the journey in this direction. Different people and societies will

make different degrees of progress. But humanity as a whole need to move in this direction! We have a choice. We can continue to follow the principles of domination with their known flaws, or we can venture on a path leading towards a different, unknown future following the principle of the all-encompassing partnership. Partnership is based on mutual respect and trust. It also requires a common ground and open communication. It thrives on complementarity.

From the context analysis we know that we are on the edge of a new era. The dawn of major breakthroughs in science is near. It is particularly visible in astrophysics, elementary physics, and also in bio sciences and medicine. It could be the beginning of a completely new direction, like the one a century ago with Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, Rutherford, Hubble and many others. But we can sense at the same time the coming dusk of the "western civilization." It may be the transition to a next level, a completely new development, or simply its fall. What is clear already, is that our world is out of balance, and so is our life. One of the big challenges though is the entangled economy and people's inertia and resistance to change. If we are lucky, the transformation will bring us an encompassing metamorphosis of society, economy, business, science, and education. Otherwise, we will go through a nightmare.

In order to complete this exercise, check if you can describe on one page how your "dream life" in

Table 5: The three main forces shaping our culture, our civilization, and our life

	Deployment leads to	Shortage and scarcity may be leading to
Creation	Meaningful value creation	Value destruction
Entrepreneurship	Achievement, outcomes, results	Fatalism, stagnation, more of the same
Care	Sustainability, preservation	Unsustainability, destruction

5 years will look like.

Bear in mind designing and deploying Life Design the following:

- Transformation requires resilience, perseverance, and inner strength
- You need to learn how to cope successfully with difficult times
- You need to learn to watch your inner dialogue and to talk to yourself
- One of your most important skills will be to be permanently open to receive constructive feedback and do not hesitate to engage in self-feedback
- Your learning ability is the key skill for successful life design
- Your entrepreneurship skills should be channeled to create a purpose!

A voyage into the future requires the full deployment of our creativity and entrepreneurship. The latter is important hence it leads to the implementation of creative solutions. Only this way the global threats identified in the ‘danger zone’ can be really addressed. Make no mistake, we have already embarked on the voyage to cross the danger zone. The next—additional - the direction, will depend on the development of a Meta-Mind-Society, leveraging cyber technology for the good of humanity. For this purpose, we will have to focus on futurizing-thinking and humanizing-work, while fostering collaborative intelligence⁵⁰). We will also need to create a concurrent tandem of direction and action.

Entrepreneurship encompasses far more than just a major engine of economic growth and job creation. It goes well beyond being a positive force of social innovation and change. It is the essential force and driver creating quality of life, when it focuses on the right values and principles. Entrepreneurship is the generator of all human artifacts, inclusive science, and technology. It is the engine

which makes doing things and creating new ones.

Values act as guiding stars to follow the direction we have chosen. If we want to have a chance to cross the ‘danger zone’ we need to initiate a value shift. We need to move from growth towards care and responsibility; from confrontation, egocentrism and conflicts towards empathy and partnership; and from profit towards life quality. The overall direction needs to be from materialistic towards spiritual values.

Care and responsibility for nature and the eco-systems need to stay alive and this goes to the core of the concept that everyone is talking about like sustainability, zero waste attitude, green and recycled economy, moving away from cheap mass production, and the throw away mentality.

An innovative idea proposed by us is to establish a **Global Ethical Council** that will act as a ‘**global conscience**’ for the direction and progress of our journey across the ‘danger zone’. The same council can address issues connected with the development of the Meta-Mind-Society. This council, will perhaps develop recommendations and policies, preventing the abuse of the future advanced cyber technology by some powerful lords, organizations, and cyber criminals, as well as Cyber Entities (based on advanced AI) getting out of control. As the general proverb suggests:

*If you promise people gold,
you will harvest greed.
If you bring people hope,
you can win their hearts.*

Arts and the social media must play a particularly important role in our future journey, spreading the message and creating role models to follow. Educators and the educational system will have to raise the awareness of the young generation and leverage their creativity to get creative solutions and encourage them to ‘walk the talk’. They we



Figure 4: The elements and cycle of happiness

have to deal with the world we are leaving behind.

SOME IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Developing self-awareness can help us discover who we really are. So, here is what we need:

- Foster curiosity and ability to change
- Develop and cultivate the art to create, build and maintain partnerships. Deploy connectivity, common ground, mutual trust, and respect
- Maintain the dynamic balance of irrational/emotional and rational/mindful driven behavior
- Respect our roots and legacies, they may contain valuable learnings from the past
- Foster mind enhancement, not only intelligence
- Take care of lifetime education including talent development and personal characteristics development. Plan your own development in incremental steps. It helps for example to think, what you will regret in five years
- Work on our character traits because personality matters in life much more than the IQ

- Take care about your future and the future of humanity. Think about the future generations
- It is time to work on a “metamorphosis” of education⁵¹⁾

Eternal questions

- What is consciousness? A product of the brain? An immaterial entity? Something else?
- What is the purpose of life? Is life meaningful? Why are we here?
- Do we transcend the death of our body?
- Does humanity have a meaningful purpose?
- Are these meaningful questions? Are they essential?

Beware of wrong principles:

- More of the same driven by greed is based on the belief in infinite growth
- Superiority mindsets can be leading to dominance and hubris
- The illusion of absolute truth is leading to fundamentalism
- Entrepreneurship needs a purpose; it brings meaning to entrepreneurship

Table 6: Key questions for assessing your life

	Questions	Answer yes or no
(1)	Do I work too much and too hard?	
(2)	Do I live my life, not the life expected by others?	
(3)	Do I express my feelings open and often enough?	
(4)	Do I stay enough in touch with my friends?	
(5)	Do I allow myself to be happy?	
(6)	Do I care enough about myself?	
(7)	Do I invest enough for my own development?	
(8)	Do I tend towards proselytism?	
(9)	Am I a good ancestor for the future generations?	
(10)	What I would you consider as legacy leaving to the world?	Please list

Towards the road to happiness

Happiness is a loose concept and many consider it trivial hence we cannot be happy all the time. However, if it connected to the outcome of meaningful actions and actually lived time, it has a different twist. This is particularly important in the relationships between “Me” and “We.” We need to find out which actions can give us satisfaction, a good feeling and eventually happiness too albeit the fact that we are all aware of the fact that happiness is a temporary state. It is a collateral and temporary by-product of our quest for meaning and purpose of our life.

*Final assessment*⁵²⁾

In the final stage of your life, you may want to make a kind of retrospective assessment of your life by answering some or all of the questions displayed in Table 6. Assume that you are already there. Please assess your actual situation as if it would be the final one.

We assume that readers of this essay have probably many years ahead to live. So in double checking the assessment proposed in Table 6, you can still improve your score.

To find possible solutions, start with the question “why?.” Then look at the possible solutions and start implementing one by one. To develop possible options for improvement, choose one. That is an important component of the art of designing your life.

When working on life design, it is worth noting the distinction made by Bergson in his doctoral

thesis between “time as we experience it and lived time—which he called ‘**real duration**’ (durée réelle)—and the mechanistic time of science⁵³⁾.

The Creation of Life Legacy

As a final note, we wish to propose the concept of life legacy. There are many different paths that can bring meaningfulness into our life. One of the most important is the creation of life value added, which each person consider as the legacy of their life. In his book “Coaching by Values (Dolan 2011)⁵⁴⁾ proposes a simple test to identify your life legacy. He asks: after your death, 1) what will be a key phrase that you wish to see in scripted on your tomb and 2) why will others close to you would have written on your tomb about you? If it coincides, you were very close to fulfill your life legacy and most likely you lived a meaningful and purposeful life. If it does not overlap, something in your life design was lost and not fulfilled during your living voyage. But to create it you need to always be aware of your core life values. These will become your value added to your own life, to somebody else and to the community and society in general. The direction can be relative generic, like to make the world a better place, participate in the education of the next generation, participate in the production of pharma products and delivery of health services or more specific the creations of artifacts, or the education of selected people; There are ample areas that value added can be felt. But, the most important ingredient in the art of planning your life design, is to ensure that the values are not simply altruistic but rather have deep

meaning to you in a very explicitly consciences state. All those life values should be present in your dream life description.

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