

Decades of disruption - technologies set to change our future

By [Howard Platjes](#)

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It's safe to say that the past 10 years of technology have been stratospheric in the disruption they've brought and the changes they've wrought. Mobile networks have upgraded from 3G to 4G and now 5G, bringing with them faster internet and transformative changes to industry and interaction. Social media took a firm grip of the world and changed the goalposts for corporate communication, and healthcare pivoted into the extraordinary spaces of genomics and precision medicine.



Howard Platjes, CEO of technology investment group AYO

Transport also met with new ways of moving people, starting with subtle augmentations to the driving experience (think parking assist and GPS navigation) and evolving into electric vehicles growing in both popularity and potential and self-driving vehicles on the horizon, whilst data became the new black gold, the new oil and the new window into the information soul.

From artificial intelligence to big data to analytics to cloud innovation and more, technology has disrupted the traditional so significantly, that business today can barely recognise the business of 2010. But what lies ahead?

Do the next ten years promise as much change as those that are past?

Certainly.

While 2020 may have provided the next decade with a rocky foundation, technology developers and providers have quickly found their stride, as technology becomes the ubiquitous backbone for life, business and economics.



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Necessity breeds innovation, re-invention

The crisis and chaos that was 2020 (and 2021 so far), also has a silver lining though in that, out of necessity, the speed of innovation and re-invention ramped up several notches and early adopters were on a scale not hitherto experienced – across the technology spectrum. Whereas there will always be some resistance to change, this rapid shove into the technological era has made it easier for advancements that were always coming to be easily and quickly assimilated into everyday lives.

On the other hand, and it would be remiss of me to ignore the double-edged sword that is pervasive always-on and ready technology, it's the fact that 'big brother' is well and truly here.

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Internet of behaviour

One of the most consequential developments we will see, is the uptake of the internet of behaviour (IoB) where data is harvested, computed and analysed to not only track how we behave, but can also guide us into acting and performing in a prescribed manner.

Fed by an ever growing spread of infrastructure that is enabling millions, if not billions, of people to connect for the very first time to the internet as a growing economic democracy tempered by a corresponding big data explosion that will feed IoB, IoT and everything else.

Sadly, this expanded connectivity will also open the door for opportunists, so another vital growth area will be the ongoing evolution and necessary sophistication of privacy needs and cybersecurity.



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AI and robotics

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning will go from a supporting role to playing lead, as vast sets of data are generated and the need for rapid interpretation accelerates. Of course, where to store all this data and information, who has access to it – whether people or specific geographic locations, etc. also continues to inform the future of cloud and, according to Gartner's 2021 top technology insights, 'distributed cloud' is where it's headed, growing more powerful and pervasive over the next few years.

Increased connectivity is already impacting how education is delivered, but it will also herald a wholesale shift in the content of what future legions of tech-savvy economic contributors will be taught. Likewise, we expect the remote working trend to prevail and the solutions and services that will support this as businesses continue to pivot and fully embrace digital transformation.

That said, advancements in robotics will also come to the fore as organisations look to streamline operational costs and efficiencies which for Africa, a continent endowed with labour and developing economies, could spell disaster. Consequently, this places an even greater emphasis and need on ensuring that the skills required to meaningfully participate in the digital economy are developed at a young age across the continent, which also holds the most promising opportunity for tech-savvy investors.

We already know that technology influences every aspect of how we function, but other key areas that are of specific interest to me are renewable energy, agritech and, naturally, healthcare.



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Alternative energy sources

As humanity begins to truly realise that Earth's resources are essentially finite, the requirement for alternative sources of good, clean energy, will become ever more pressing. The conversation will also grow louder to ensure that the energy sources that we use to fuel our progress do not themselves become an issue – what do we do with all those obsolete batteries that drive electric cars for example?

With more and more people on the planet, food security becomes an ever-pressing issue. Decreasing available agricultural pastures, climate change, and an increasing poverty gap have necessitated the intervention of technology. Here we will see developments in the maximising and optimising of crop yields, better animal husbandry, as well as a long-overdue overhaul of just how our foods are manufactured. Plus, let's not forget the creation of alternative food sources.

Protecting the human race

As to healthcare, well, it goes without saying that we have been caught napping and unprepared for a global pandemic. As a result, we will see major shifts in how technology will be applied to protect the human race – from advanced data record-keeping systems, to prevention being better than cure, including next generation genomics.

The next decade promises to be an exciting era for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) with, perhaps, the fifth already knocking on our doors. The question is, are we prepared?

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