1) Digital trendspotting 2018 – The first prelude

The digital year 2017 has more than ever been a mix, a product of two worlds. One, a reinforcement of the [enormous tsunami of digital trends we've already seen](). The other, a strong disruptive force of a number of newer trends, was powerful enough that you'd be justified in saying what's happening now for global transactions is every bit as big as the internet age was for global information.

All with enormous consequences for both individuals and society at large, body and spirit alike, structure as well as culture. In a number of posts, we'll be looking at what has been the biggest things in technology this year, but also and above all look at what will make the biggest difference going forward.

2018 will be nothing other than a complete revolution, and new year is the time when the intellectuals give time to reflect on the things that stand to change your life and how. But first a little preamble.

1) The four social conditions

Last year we saw how a [handful of notable changes in the world](#) laid the contextual foundation for how the digital development will continue to change it.

On the one hand, we had an enormous population growth, which continues into this year at the same incredible rate, even as birth rates are now declining in many parts of the world as advancements in medicine have led to a continuously growing degree of longevity for the elderly, particularly in what is already the most densely populated continent in the world – Asia. We are set on a path to go from a population share of 75% being of working age to 55% in 30 years, resulting in fewer and fewer young working adults supporting a rapidly growing number of elderly and children.

The second prominent factor is an ever-increasing degree of automation. Something which is claimed in some circles to ["save" the aging population](#), while others warn that it will only mean fewer and fewer will be able to work to support those who will come into the market only to find themselves unemployable.

To add to this, a record number of refugees, over 66 million of them, as a result of the largest number of armed conflicts in the world since the fall of

the Berlin wall. This year, the biggest war is finally over, but the number of refugees of the region has already reached record highs, while those displaced by natural disasters and environmental change, man-made or otherwise, is [projected to reach 200 million by](#) 2050.

Overall, this has fueled the debate on how fewer young adults with employment will support not only the elderly and unemployed, but the increasing number of refugees worldwide. On the other side of that debate, both elderly and unemployed feel the increasing competition of ever more limited resources from refugees. This volatile combination of elements have in later years led to the rise of significant populist forces gladly stoking the fires of discontent and malicious divide in the struggle for these above mentioned limits of resource.

Back in the superpower of yesteryear, Europe, thankfully Macron won the battle for the soul of France just as Markel has grown stronger in her resilience in neighboring Germany. In the thus far strongest power of the world, Trump has however capitalized greatly on the situation, with more scapegoating of Middle easterners and Latinos than ever before. In the superpower to be, China, Jinping has in turn expanded and solidified his hold

on the country, even having his name written into their constitution – an honor previously only given to Mao during his lifetime. Jinping may now with greater force still denounce all resistance, covertly protect the emerging modern nation of North Korea and with impunity shut out all foreign competition in the greatest dictatorship in the world through censorship and alternative facts as a fact of life. A semblance of "populism" of a higher order than Trump or Putin could ever even dream of.

2) The four technological conditions

With these four social conditions ringing in our ears, we can quickly give an update on what we have previously seen as indicators for the technological developments to come.

Firstly, over 50% of the 7.5 billion people in the world now have access to the internet in one form or another, of which 3 billion, or 80% of that number, use social media. Social media has over the past years grown in significance at twice the rate of the adoption of the internet itself. The ongoing "trend" of supplanting traditional media with its social equivalent thus continues to develop at a tremendous rate, indeed to such a degree that Zuckerberg can be considered at a moment's notice the de facto president, while his "peers" in

traditional media, Murdock, Turner and the lot, quiver in the death throes of their failing empires.

Secondly, the trend of motion media is developing just as fast, with 80% of all online traffic expected to be video by 2020. All the whilst, the road to the elevated motion media in the form of VR is gaining traction as technology grows cheaper and applications of it multiplies.

Third, the mobile has over the past year taken a stronger hold of the marketplace over other devices, with over 8 billion subscriptions and 34% global penetration. This represents an increase of over 21%, compared to the decrease of desktop and laptop usage of 18%. For the first time, we use smartphones more than desktops for online uses (54% versus 41% respectively) while tablets are miles away at a mere 5%. And all of this in anticipation of the fall of the smartphone in the wake of the next big thing in mobile, AR-glasses.

Finally, the real disruptive force will be how digital data is gathered, processed and used both between different machines in IoT as well as how they guide people in their day to day lives through AI. And as soon as we begin talking about the latter, we can deduce that there will in the end be three

significant factors that will change the entire world more than any other in the months and years to come.

One of which has begun to a large degree already, the second being strongly in development today while the third is marching on tomorrow. In a [number of upcoming posts,](#) we will discuss these three in turn. We'll see you up ahead – for now, let us say thanks for the year past and wish you all a happy new year.