

JOBS OF THE FUTURE



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ABOUT VOICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Voices of Sustainability is a thought leadership platform launched by the Zayed Sustainability Prize to explore the challenges and opportunities of the global transition to an inclusive and

prosperous future. Each month, the series hosts some of the top global thought leaders to discuss the latest trends and themes in the sustainability agenda.



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INTRODUCTION

The Zayed Sustainability Prize hosted the 25th episode of its virtual fireside chat series called Voices of Sustainability, featuring Richard Watson, Founder, nowandnext and Futurist-in-Residence, Entrepreneurship Centre, CJBS, Cambridge University; and Angela Oguntala, Founding Partner at Greyspace. The thought-provoking discussion revolved around the dynamic landscape of the next generation of jobs. Watson and Oguntala, renowned futurists in their respective fields, offered invaluable insights into the future of work, exploring the emerging trends,

technological demands and skills necessary for the workforce of tomorrow to thrive.

With their expertise, the renowned futurists delved into the profound question of what the future holds for job seekers. They highlighted the transformative impact of technology and emphasised the importance of continuous learning, adaptability, and resilience for success in the jobs of the future. This episode inspired viewers to embrace lifelong learning and navigate the exciting possibilities in the evolving job market.



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SUMMARY REPORT

On 22 June 2023, Richard Watson and Angela Oguntala participated in a Voices of Sustainability virtual fireside chat hosted by the Zayed Sustainability Prize that discussed the future of the workplace. Titled 'Jobs of the Future,' the conversation focused on the integration of technology into human life, the need for optimism, and the balance between high-tech solutions and what works for different people and the environment.

Richard began by acknowledging the inherent difficulty in accurately predicting future jobs. Instead of focusing on job destruction and creation, he emphasised the importance of considering the types of jobs we want in the future. He stressed the need to control and shape technology according to our preferences and values. While acknowledging that repetitive and formulaic jobs are likely to be automated, he believed that jobs requiring creativity, empathy and human interaction would be more likely to remain safe. Richard firmly believes that humans have the power to determine the future of work by envisioning their desired outcomes and working backward from there.

Tatiana mentioned the possibility of technology becoming integrated into human beings rather than existing separately from them. Richard commented that such integration is indeed possible. Quoting Edward O. Wilson's observation that "the real problem of humanity is the following: we have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions, and

godlike technology," Richard expressed concerns regarding our cognitive limitations. He suggested that we can either reject technology or incorporate it into our bodies as a coping mechanism. In a somewhat playful manner, he even joked about the extreme scenario of humans becoming pure data without physical bodies.



Another way of looking at this is to ask what do we want the jobs of the future to be? We are in control, ultimately, of all this technology at the moment. And if we do not want it doing certain jobs, it's within our power to prevent its encroachment.

Richard Watson



Angela concurred with Richard's viewpoint, emphasising the paramount importance of delineating the future by scrutinising existing flaws in the present and envisioning our desired alternatives. She believes that the future should be shaped by empowered individuals and organisations who actively push against undesirable developments. Angela emphasised the need for optimism in acknowledging the problems and actively working to shape a better future.

Richard added to the conversation by highlighting that the expected future is dominated by technology that is designed by a small portion of society, and it may not be suitable for everyone. He questioned the sustainability of high-tech solutions and proposed that attitudinal and behavioural changes could yield significant benefits. He urged society to make choices and find a balance between rushing into a high-tech future and considering what works for different people as well as the environment.

The futurists both underscored the importance of choice and diversity when considering future solutions. Angela spoke to the challenge of balancing respect for nature with technological advancements. Tatiana also noted that certain sectors may continue to offer high-quality, high-paying jobs, while others may experience a reduction in employment. Richard emphasised the significance of STEM fields and jobs involving human interaction, empathy and creativity. He suggested that ethics would become increasingly important, even in technological domains.

The discussion concluded with the participants acknowledging that the future job market will differ across countries and regions due to varying demographic trends. Richard emphasised the importance of AI and automation in supporting an aging population,



while Angela stressed the need for a combination of technical and human skills. They mentioned the significance of jobs in STEM, humanities, media and the arts. While technological advancements may render certain jobs replaceable, the participants agreed that a balance between technology and human experiences should be maintained.

The discourse underscored the imperative for deliberate decision-making and the proactive engagement of individuals and organisations in shaping the trajectory of work, accentuating the significance of incorporating values, ethics, and sustainability alongside the embracement of technological progress.

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PARTICIPANTS



Richard Watson

Founder
Nowandnext and Futurist-in-Residence,
Entrepreneurship Centre, CJBS,
Cambridge University

Richard Watson is an expert in technology futures, scenario thinking, strategic foresight, global trends, weak signals, innovation, creativity, and - more generally - thinking about thinking.

He's the founder of nowandnext.com, a website that documents global trends and has worked as Futurist-in-Residence at the Entrepreneurship Centre at the Judge School at Cambridge University and the Technology Foresight Practice at Imperial College London. He has also lectured at London Business School for over a decade.



Angela Oguntala

Founding partner
Greyspace

Angela is a futurist and global authority on foresight and innovation. She is partner at Greyspace, helping organizations innovate for a world in transition. Additionally, Angela is a Salzburg Global Fellow, was named a Future Innovator by The United Nations, and speaks internationally on future-facing themes, having been featured on Sky, TED, NPR and various international platforms.

The conversation was moderated by:



Tatiana Antonelli Abella

Founder & Managing Director
Goumbook

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OUTCOMES



Jobs of the future are uncertain and difficult to predict accurately. The timeframe and the specific definition of 'future' play a significant role in shaping the job landscape



Automation and AI are likely to replace repetitive and formulaic jobs. However, jobs involving high levels of creativity, inspiration, human interaction, empathy and constant variation are expected to remain safe from automation



Incorporating technology into our bodies, such as through brain-machine interfaces, is a possibility for the future. However, it is acknowledged that there are challenges in adapting to rapid technological advancements and that choices must be made regarding the extent to which we embrace technology



Instead of focusing solely on predicting the future, there is a need to identify what is broken in the present and envision desirable alternatives. The emphasis is on shaping the future through intentional innovation and addressing social challenges



Balancing technological advancements with attitudinal and behavioural changes is crucial for creating a future that benefits a diverse global society.

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