

## Examining services 2.0 through future lenses

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“Change is the only constant in life”, said the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. This seems all the more relevant now when the world is changing quite rapidly and in a complex way, be it in (geo)politics, the economy, technological development, social structures, shifting values or the breaking of planetary boundaries.

If you could go back in time to 2019 – the time before the pandemic – and tell your past self what the world would like in 2026, would you believe it? I doubt that any of us could have foreseen such an all-encompassing systemic change in such a short time. The world is changing rapidly, and we are facing a tsunami of change. What will the world look like in another 7 years?

How can you think about the future of services, regardless of the sector, when the world seems to be changing by the week? How will services change, or how should they be changed, when the entire systemic level is undergoing a transformation?

Foresight has already become mainstream, and in its framework, the changing world is approached from a phenomenon-based perspective. This angle has not become outdated, but before reflecting on it, I’d like to pause for a moment to consider this tsunami-like systemic change.

### Tsunami of systemic change and services 2.0

In his latest book, *Now what? How to ride the Tsunami of Change* (2025), futurist Dr. Mark van Rijmenam says:

“The future isn’t coming, it’s here, and it feels like a tsunami. Transformative technologies are converging, disrupting industries and society in mere moments. This

is a tsunami of change, and the question is no longer whether we can adapt, but how individuals, organizations and institutions can ride it and build a future of abundance.”

This sums up well why examining only trends and phenomena is no longer enough. To reflect on what services 2.0 could mean, we must first be able to understand the fundamental change that affects societies, the economy, different sectors, culture and values, and ask: What does tomorrow’s world look like? What are the boundary conditions of your industry in tomorrow’s world? In this day and age, those who passively wait for the world of tomorrow will quickly fall off the wagon.

Services 2.0 is perhaps, above all, a change in thinking. When the world is changing at a systemic level, the logic of service development must also change: from reactive to proactive, from product-centric to human- and planet-centric, from linear to dynamic. Organisations capable of interpreting and embracing change in an agile manner, questioning their own operating models and building their services for several possible futures will not only survive the tsunami but learn to ride it.

## Phenomenon-based analysis

In practice, phenomenon-based analysis means observing what is emerging around us, identifying early signals of change, and interpreting what they could mean for our services - now, in two years, and over a five-year horizon. These signals do not evolve linearly, which makes it essential to explore alternative development paths: which phenomena may gain momentum, which may fade, and how they might interact and reshape each other.

One of the defining phenomena of our time is the explosive growth in the use of artificial intelligence and its combined impact with social media on the human mind. Together, they have reshaped how we consume information, how we relate to others, and our overall capacity to be present - and have contributed to increased loneliness and distress. Research evidence also suggests that our attention spans have significantly declined.

When automation and AI bots take over service encounters, something paradoxical happens: genuine, attentive interaction becomes luxury. At the same time, values and norms are shifting. What is considered normal, desirable or outright disgusting changes

with time. The broader global transformations, from climate anxiety to geopolitical instability, shapes what people expect and value from services.

And yet, amid all the changes, we should remember to ask what is not changing. Our basic psychological need to be connected, seen and understood is so deep-rooted in humans that technology cannot erase it. This is a key insight for service development: compassionate and empathetic encounters are not “soft” added value; they can become the main competitive factor in services 2.0, and there are already signs of it, for example in tourism, where *new luxury* has become a trend. In tourism, new luxury means a break from ordinary and authentic encounters, and the same trend can also be seen in health and wellbeing services.

It’s interesting that clear countertrends to technology have already emerged: the digital detox among Generation Z, for example, and the growing need for slow living and genuine connection with others. So the fastest doesn’t always win. The wisest is the one who can read both the trend and the countertrend and build their services around them.

What about your services or your organisation? Are you riding the tsunami of change or playing it safe and waiting to see what tomorrow brings?