

# the future is a balancing act

As we step into the next decade, we see a world that is out of balance. Wealth is skewed across nations, across communities, and across households.

Youth and aging is similarly skewed. Cities and rural areas depend on one another, but their interests are often at odds. If we map access to education, health, and technology around the globe, we see surprising patterns of abundance, excess, and scarcity. Citizen rights are non-existent in some areas while the very meaning of citizen rights is hotly debated in others. The planet itself is struggling to balance the basic elements of life.

These imbalances will drive the next decade. Money, land, and time—the basic resources of our daily lives—will demand new ways of organizing ourselves to create new kinds of wealth. Innovations in language and law, in our communities and even our deaths, will lend new meanings to our shared realities. Climate change will demand adaptations that are both simple and complex, constraining and transformative.

Atop this balancing act sits the household—the interface between us, as individual humans, and the complex world we inhabit. Here is where we will perform our balancing acts on a daily basis. This is where we will confront a million small failures and create fresh, new templates for success.

Our tools? **Five critical balances** will give us our strategic toolkit. Disintegration will lead to new kinds of integration. Exposure will pair with accountability. Slow movements will be matched with a new capacity for fast response. Social contagion will mobilize change, even as isolation rebuilds local stability. And powerful new forms of persuasion will reshape our approaches to regulation and control.

In the decade ahead, we will work as individuals and households, as corporations and communities to turn these dials to find the right balance. As in all balancing acts, the threat is collapse. The alternative, in this decade, is to use these balances to achieve what we might call a “social soft landing.” The *2011 Map of the Decade* is a guide to a decade in search of this kind of social resilience.



[www.iff.org](http://www.iff.org)

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## rebalancing the world: the 2011 map of the decade

This map is all about balancing acts. From the strategic balances at the bottom to the resilient households at the top, it is both a snapshot of the decade ahead and a guide to the task of rebalancing the world. It's a starting place for exploring the social innovations that will create an entirely new strategic toolkit for addressing the world's imbalances while securing the daily lives of individuals, households, corporations, and communities.

### how to use this map

#### START WITH THE CRITICAL BALANCES



At the base of the global balancing act will be five critical balances—five tensions that will give the decade its distinctive character. These are the strategies we will debate worldwide. But they are also the values we will use to measure our progress toward our goals for a more liveable world.

Think of each balance as a dial that you can set for all your major undertakings. How will you balance slow with fast, or the risk of exposure with the rigor of accountability? Explore the signals on the map and in your own world to see how they might change each balance in the larger world—or serve as tools for adjusting the balance to support your goals.

#### THEN EXPLORE THE INNOVATION ZONES

##### new meanings

From the adaptive strategies at the bottom of map, work your way up the pyramid of new meanings and basic resources that will be key zones of innovation in the coming decade. Which zones offer the best win/win opportunities for balancing your own goals with the goal of social resilience? How will you use these trends and transformations to hone your own adaptive strategies?

#### FINALLY, BUILD SOME SOCIAL RESILIENCE

For an hour or a year or a decade, focus on the household.



**ASK:** How can I or my team, my project, my company, or my community increase household resilience while achieving all my other objectives?

If you're a company, consider how your products or services could help households prepare for disasters, make the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle, or participate in a more collaborative economy.

THINK about households all around the world and in all income brackets. If you need help picturing the realities of these households, go to [globallives.org](http://globallives.org) and watch the short videos of 10 households. Then play our new **Ten-Year Forecast game**. It's called **Stack-It! The Household Resilience Game**, and a version is included in the *2011 Ten-Year Forecast*.

INNOVATION ZONES

INNOVATION ZONES

basic resources

basic resources



**HOUSEHOLDS:**  
The Resilient Interface

As households prepare for climate disasters, manage their sustainability transition, and engage in collaborative consumption, a new social resilience will rewrite the rules of good housekeeping.

**PORTFOLIOS OF THE POOR**  
Managing on \$2 a day  
How the World's Poor Live on \$2 a Day

**RelayRides**  
Neighbor-to-Neighbor Carsharing  
relayrides.com

**Sharing to create wealth**  
relayrides.com

**MONEY:**  
Banking Deconstructed

New payment platforms, new currencies, and new open money strategies will deconstruct banks and money itself—and perhaps rewrite the rules of our larger political economies.

**Banking with your phone**  
starbucks.com

**Gamifying the value of social interaction**  
imhmedia.com

**LAND:**  
The Right to Place

From urban to rural, from the global north to the global south, demands for the Right to Place may trigger a global wave of social movements focused on land reform.

**Protecting squatter land rights**  
RHOONWATCH.ORG  
rionwatch.org

**Fighting foreclosures across the U.S.**  
ussf2010.org

**TIME:**  
A New Affluence

As a new generation of time economists declare that "time isn't money," we will invent and advocate new ways to appreciate our most universal human asset: the 24/7/52.

**Banking social contributions**  
timebanks.org

**Building time affluence**  
timeday.org

**COMMUNITY:**  
Beyond Polemics

Our digital experience of reality will make the connection points between communities more visible and malleable—and new persuasive technologies will challenge the long-standing divisions between *us* and *them*.

**Making disparities visible**  
IFTF

**Seeing ourselves through network eyes**  
IFTF

**LANGUAGE:**  
The Multilingual Internet

For the first time in human history, thousands of languages that give meaning to human experience are going digital—changing the economics, politics, and culture of global exchange.

**Translating the world on your smart phone**  
jibbigo.com

**Crowd-sourcing translations with humans and machines**  
research.microsoft.com

**LAW:**  
Strategic Personhood

Already expanding well beyond *Homo sapiens*, the boundaries of personhood are likely to grow further over the next decade, in unexpected, disruptive, and increasingly strategic ways.

**Debating the bounds of personhood**  
en.wikipedia.org

**Protecting the rights of future persons**  
intergenerationaljustice.org

**DEATH:**  
Ghosts in the Machine

Death will remain an inescapable fact of life, but the abundance of self-documentation will create digital emulations of individuals, with growing—and potentially disturbing—accuracy.

**Digitizing memorial markers**  
personalrosettastone.com

**Emulating the dead**  
virtualeternity.com

**CLIMATE:**  
Adaptation Strategies

Even as we work to mitigate climate change, we will adapt in thousands of small and local ways to our changing environment—leveraging strategies that range from simple to complex, from constraining to transformative.

**Applying four models to climate adaption:**

- The Light Bulb Model
- The Hybrid Car Model
- The Distributed Energy Model
- The Cap & Trade Model

IFTF

**critical balances**

**disintegration** integration

**exposure** accountability

**slow** fast

**contagion** isolation

**persuasion** regulation

**critical balances**

**SCALE:**  
Selection Pressure

In a decade of instability, biology gives us a strategy for evolutionary success: rapid innovation, rapid reproduction, and rapid failure of small systems—but with an eye toward large future niches.

**Applying r/K selective pressure theory:**

Google leverages experimentation, rapid iteration, and willingness to fail in service of the big goal of aggregating detailed user data.

google.com

adaptive strategies

adaptive strategies

**HOUSEHOLDS: The Resilient Interface**

As the interface between individuals and the environments they inhabit, households are critical zones for adaptation to a volatile decade. The strategies they adopt, however, will depend not only on their income level, but also on their perception of threats from catastrophes, demands for sustainability, and opportunities afforded by a growing economy of sharing.

**SIGNALS****PREPARING FOR THE WORST:**

Across income levels, households use a variety of strategies from stockpiling to backing up to diversifying their assets and options and outsourcing their security as a way to hedge against all kinds of disasters.

→ **TRACK:** Strategies that address *Portfolios of the Poor* (Daryl Collins, et al) / Black Umbrella disaster preparedness services

**BECOMING SUSTAINABLE:**

All but the poorest households will use a combination of “reduce” and “reinvent” strategies to cope with the demands of shifting from an oil-based economy with abundant water to an electricity-based economy with scarce water.

→ **TRACK:** Global Village Construction Set / Tiny House Design / Rising Sun Energy Center’s green energy training services

**BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY:**

From the poorest to the richest, households will use new social technologies to build new value from social exchanges while reducing the friction in mutual support and sharing.

→ **TRACK:** NeighborGoods / RelayRides / Woody Tasch’s *Slow Money*

## basic resources

**MONEY: Banking Deconstructed**

Money—and the practices around it—are being reinvented daily as new mobile payment platforms, new forms of currency, and new platforms for creating value from human interactions rewrite the rules of the marketplace. The innovations in our on-the-ground use of money and near-money over the next decade have the potential to reach well beyond the marketplace to challenge the very foundations of our governance systems.

**SIGNALS****NEW PAYMENT PLATFORMS:**

Mobile payments got their start in Africa, but they’re spreading worldwide, with fierce competition between carriers, device manufacturers, and retailers to take the friction out of payments and make money from millions of transactions daily.

→ **TRACK:** Apple’s iPhone payment strategy / Starbucks’ mobile iPhone payments card / Visa’s acquisition of Playspan

**ONLINE LOAN PLATFORMS:**

Robust personal information profiles held by Internet giants like Amazon and Google streamline risk analysis and make small, quick loans less expensive.

→ **TRACK:** ZestCash online loans by former Google CIO Douglas Merrill

**CURRENCIES OF ENGAGEMENT:**

All kinds of companies are turning to gamification to keep people engaged with their products and services, creating new kinds of value and micro-economies out of human interaction.

→ **TRACK:** Bunchball’s client list / IMHO’s media player site

**LAW: Strategic Personhood**

The legal concept of a “person” has implications far beyond the law. It organizes social, political, and ethical systems. Over time, the concept has been defined ever more broadly, opening the door to new and unexpected definitions of personhood that could include not only ad hoc networks of people but also non-human entities such as animals, nature, intelligent machines, and future generations.

**SIGNALS****POLITICAL STRATEGIES:**

Achieving legal personhood has been a long-standing strategy of empowerment from slaves to women to corporations. The next decade is likely to see more focus on legal personhood as a strategy for achieving political and social goals.

→ **TRACK:** Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations

**NON-HUMAN PERSONS:**

Already scientists and legislators are showing a willingness to endow non-human entities with legal personhood. Some of these “persons” may be individuals of another species, but just as corporations may be persons, non-human collectives may also be accorded personhood.

→ **TRACK:** Ecuador’s granting of constitutional rights to nature / Scientists’ recent calls for dolphins to be treated as “non-human persons”

**AD HOC NETWORK INCORPORATION:**

Seeking the same rights and protections as corporations, networks of individuals will likely create entirely new classes of lightweight organizations, distributed cognitive systems, and mind-bot collectives.

→ **TRACK:** Vermont’s efforts to become the “Delaware of the Internet” by providing ease of incorporation to network organizations

**DEATH: Ghosts in the Machine**

As digital technologies continue to infiltrate every aspect of our lives—and as more of our lives are captured digitally and stored in the cloud—the social rituals surrounding death are evolving in ways that may fundamentally alter the lives of the living. As “ghosts in the machine,” the dead are present in life in new and sometimes disturbing ways.

**SIGNALS****DIGITAL PERSISTENCE:**

More and more people are building identities and relationships in social networks and virtual environments, and these often persist in the digital world even after they die, sometimes causing pain and awkwardness to those who come upon these digital ghosts accidentally.

→ **TRACK:** Professional services that emerge to handle the details of shutting down digital personas after death

**VIRTUAL MEMORIALS:**

Digital technology is also supporting new ways of memorializing those who have passed on, including webcasts of funerals, tombstones with embedded digital images of the deceased, and online “obituaries” that capture the digital memorabilia.

→ **TRACK:** 1000 Memories / RosettaStone headstones that use Near Field Communication (NFC) technology to offer a “living record” at the grave site

**VIRTUAL IMMORTALITY:**

As life-caching practices capture more and more of a person’s daily life online, the cutting edge of life-after-death will be social platforms for memorial avatars—avatars that are built to look, sound, and behave identically to the deceased.

→ **TRACK:** Virtual Eternity’s platform for memorial avatars

**COMMUNITY: Beyond Polemics**

Over the next decade, our digital connectedness, combined with our new understanding of our biological bonds, will make the patterns of connection and separation more obvious. In the short term, these newly visible patterns will highlight both injustices and the potential for new group identities. Longer term, they could actually change the way our minds function and allow us to re-imagine ourselves as porous entities and our communities as a single living system.

**SIGNALS****NEW CATALYSTS OF EMPATHY:**

From social contagion theories to new work on group intelligence, research is showing us that individual traits are not as important as our connections (often to three degrees of separation) in shaping our health, happiness, and even wealth. How will we treat strangers when we understand that they could be essential to our own well-being?

→ **TRACK:** Group intelligence research by Thomas W. Malone, director of the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence / *Macon Money* game that tries to build interactions across economic lines in Macon, Georgia

**POROUS PERCEPTION:**

As our digital experiences map the interconnectedness of our material lives, we will see in some surprising ways that humans operate not only as discrete nodes in networks but also as an integrated biological and social system, leading to a more porous perception of who we are. We may begin to evolve entirely new ways of perceiving and of responding neurologically to the communities we occupy.

→ **TRACK:** Tools and systems that connect present-moment experiences to those of others around the world

**LANGUAGE: The Multilingual Internet**

For the first two decades of its existence, English has dominated the web. Now that is poised to change as the architecture of the Internet allows countries and language groups to set up domain names in non-Roman scripts and tools support rapid translation in both written and spoken resources on the web.

**SIGNALS****INTERNATIONAL DOMAIN NAMES (IDNS):**

Activists have convinced the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which regulates the core code for the Internet, to enable non-ASCII scripts at the level of .com and .org extensions.

→ **TRACK:** First IDNs introduced in 2010: United Arab Emirates, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt

**TEXT-TO-SPEECH CONVERSION:**

Innovations in voice recognition, speech synthesis, optical character recognition, and human-assisted or autonomous machine translation are making oral and written communications more fungible and thereby the wealth of Internet knowledge available to the illiterate or those who speak one of the thousands of languages that have never been committed to text.

→ **TRACK:** Google’s online repository of oral presentations with interactive text transcripts

**CROWDSOURCED TRANSLATION:**

While autonomous machine translation continues to improve, tools that tap crowdsourcing practices to translate rare languages or valuable documents will increasingly support minority languages and usher in an era of linguistic human rights.

→ **TRACK:** Wikibhasha, the crowdsourced translation platform from Microsoft Research India

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## adaptive strategies

## CLIMATE: Adaptation Strategies

The dialogue about climate change is moving from mitigation and large-scale geoengineering to adaptation to the changes that global warming will bring over the coming decades. Taking a systems approach, comparing strategies of simplicity and complexity on one hand with conditions of constraint and transformation on the other, we will see a proliferation of strategies using four models of adaptation.

### SIGNALS

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#### SIMPLICITY/CONSTRAINT MODEL:

Easy to accomplish and generally inexpensive, these adaptations will become the default expected behavior.

→ **TRACK:** Solutions like fluorescent light bulbs

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#### SIMPLICITY/TRANSFORMATION MODEL:

Harder to imagine, these are innovations that reduce the brittleness of the system. They are disruptive but resilient.

→ **TRACK:** Adaptations like distributed energy production

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#### COMPLEXITY/CONSTRAINT MODEL:

Also hard to conceptualize and implement, these adaptations require the formation of densely connected systems to boost efficiency and reduce waste. They create new dependencies but promise sustainable results

→ **TRACK:** “Cap-and-trade” types of systems

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#### COMPLEXITY/TRANSFORMATION MODEL:

These adaptations are more substantial, more expensive, and often politically and practically challenging to implement.

→ **TRACK:** Adaptations like hybrid cars

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## SCALE: Selection Pressure

E.O. Wilson’s theory of *r/K* selection provides some guidelines for strategic use of scale in the coming decade. So-called *r* strategies are found among species (such as rats and bacteria) that are small, have multiple offspring, and spend little time on any one of them. *K* strategies are pursued by species like whales and gorillas that are large and have few offspring that mature only slowly.

### SIGNALS

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#### *r* STRATEGIES:

These strategies do best in times of ecosystem volatility, when adaptation to rapidly changing conditions provides a strategic advantage.

→ **TRACK:** Mobile applications, which will provide the textbook example

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#### *K* STRATEGIES:

These strategies do best in stable environments where they can slowly develop a high degree of adaptation to a niche environment.

→ **TRACK:** Large media corporations

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#### *r* IN THE SERVICE OF *K*:

Perhaps most adaptive over the next few decades, *r* strategies that are all designed to serve a larger *K* strategy will position organizations and communities for the greatest success.

→ **TRACK:** Google’s strategy of constant experimentation and rapid iteration in service of the overarching goal of linking users to advertisers

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