

WDR¹

GENERATION ALPHA

The future of a new era of users

A WDR Innovation Hub future report

INNOVATION HUB

INTRODUCTION

2035: Generation Alpha are young adults. Alice has just landed her first job, lives in a smart home and is guided through the day by her digital assistant Neo. She is one of many different Alphas.

Who is Generation Alpha? How can we imagine the Alphas in their future everyday lives? And how does it affect media companies?

We – the WDR Innovation Hub – answer these questions in our future report “Generation Alpha”. Together with futurologists and WDR employees, we have developed three sample alphas and let them experience a day in the year 2035. Why three? Because there is no uniform Alpha. The future of our potential users can always take different forms. We don’t know which one exactly. But we want to be prepared.

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WHO IS GENERATION ALPHA?

ACCORDING TO leading Generation Alpha researcher Mark McCrindle¹, the first Generation Alpha babies were born when the first iPad appeared in the USA in 2010. McCrindle's notion of Generation Alpha includes all people born since 2010 and those who will be born by the end of 2024².

In generational research, people are grouped together in cohorts like Generation Alpha, as people of a generation tend to share experiences, attitudes and forms of behavior.³ How many years comprise a generation is a matter of dispute among scholars. Some research teams propose life spans of varying lengths up to 22 years⁴. The majority of researchers prefer a uniform time span of 15 years^{2,5} to facilitate comparisons. Therefore, we

also go with the latter in this future report. Especially for the characterization of younger generations, technological progress is a crucial factor, such as the launch of the iPad in 2010. Younger generations in general, and Generation Alpha in particular, are growing up with technologies that are advancing rapidly. Alphas usually have their first contact with displays of digital devices as toddlers. Their parents use the devices for entertainment purposes or educational games. Thus, Generation Alpha is also known as "Generation Glass". This makes the Alphas the first generation to be commonly surrounded by digital technology at an early stage. Hence, their everyday life is

increasingly impacted by systems based on artificial intelligence^{2,6,7}. Continuous changes in all areas of their lives are the norm for Generation Alpha, they don't know it any other way.

The Alphas are strongly influenced by neo-ecology. As a result, they develop their own set of values that extend into every area of their daily lives. They are growing into rapidly changing working worlds in which long-established social standards have to be redefined over and over, and "the" one working environment has ceased to exist long since.

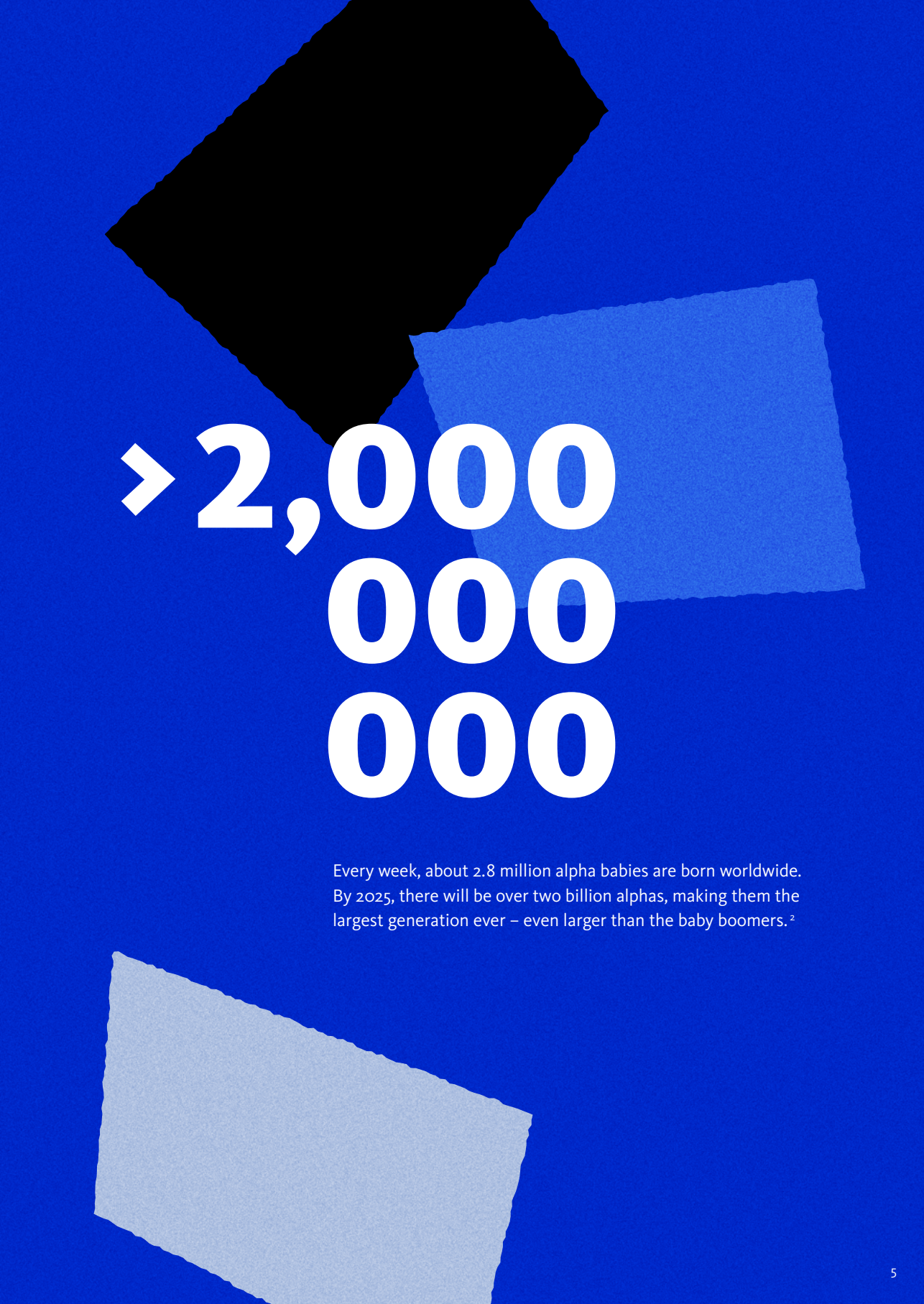
“GENERATION ALPHA IS PART OF AN UNINTENTIONAL GLOBAL EXPERIMENT WHERE SCREENS ARE PLACED IN FRONT OF THEM FROM THE YOUNGEST AGE AS PACIFIERS, ENTERTAINERS AND EDUCATIONAL AIDS.”¹

Family and security are of high importance to them and function as an anchor – countering a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world.

Generation Alpha is the first generation to be wholly born in the 21st century. This is another reason why

McCrindle chose the Greek "alpha" to name this generation instead of restarting the generational list with the Latin A. This choice illustrates the beginning of something completely new².

NEO-ECOLOGY: Neo-ecology refers to the processes of social change toward a climate-conscious, resource-conserving and sustainable economy. The "Fridays for Future" movement is a manifestation of this trend.



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Every week, about 2.8 million alpha babies are born worldwide. By 2025, there will be over two billion alphas, making them the largest generation ever – even larger than the baby boomers.²

GENERATIONS⁵

GENERATION BETA, 2025 – 2039: ...

GENERATION ALPHA, 2010 – 2024:

They have known smartphones and tablets since infancy. Alphas grow up with artificial intelligence and voice assistants as their best friends.

GENERATION Z, 1995 – 2009: Crises in politics, economy, environment and terror coined this generation. They use smartphones every day and are addicted to feedback and confirmation in social media.

GENERATION Y, 1980 – 1994: Economic prosperity, e-mails, smartphones and freedom characterize the Y's which are also called Millennials: self-realization comes first, family planning comes second.

GENERATION X, 1965 – 1979: Chernobyl and computers were disasters and sensations at the same time for this generation. Consisting of individualists, they search for meaning and try to reconcile work and life.

BABY BOOMERS, 1955 – 1964: The Cold War, the economic boom as well as the peace and freedom movement of the '68s shaped this generation. They have high career goals, are adaptable and liberal.

TRADITIONALISTS, 1922-1954: A generation shaped by World War II and the following post-war reconstruction period. They are used to strict rules of conduct, respect authority, and are hardworking because for them, "work is life".

**“THE GENERATION
ALPHA IS CONTROLLING
THE ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE, NOT
THE AI IS CONTROLLING
THEM.”**



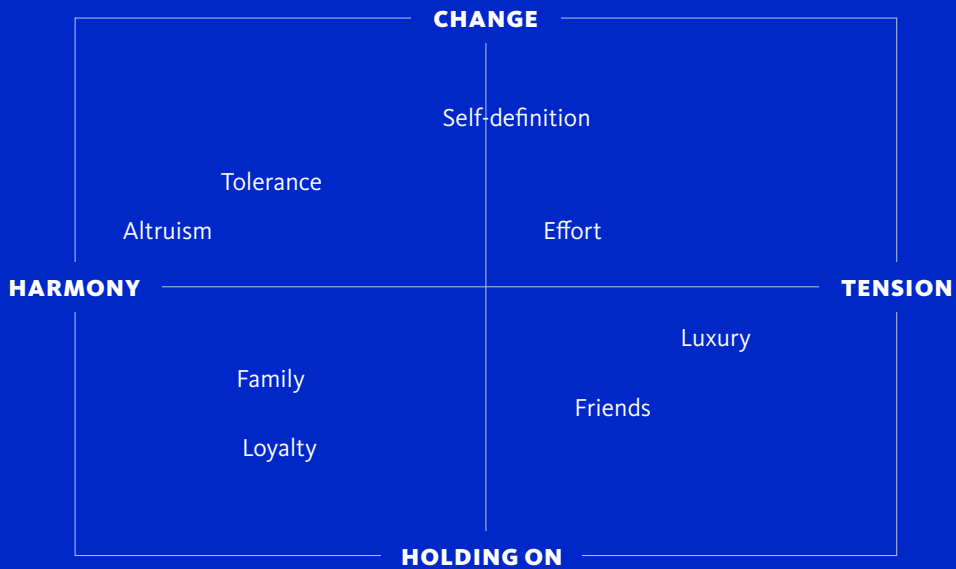
ASHLEY FELL

Speaker & Director of Advisory @ McCrindle

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH



How will Generation Alpha live in the future? And what will their media usage look like? To get closer to answering these questions, we used a combination of three instruments for this future report, namely generational research, trend research and persona methodology. Our three **future personas** are the result.



SINUS YOUTH STUDY 2020 “Universal Values of Adolescents 2020”⁸

PERSONAS are prototypical images of a person in a specific target group. They are used in media organizations to develop new production formats. In futurology, personas are combined with trends and scenarios to create future personas.

WE STARTED with a classic literature review to catch up with the current state of knowledge and research on Generation Alpha. Keeping the future personas in mind, the current youth milieus of the Sinus Institute⁹ attracted our attention in particular. They provide empirical data on the current living environment and value systems of young people in Germany. These datasets are the basis

of today’s personas Alice, Baram and Leonie. To turn them into real future personas, we had to use an additional method: trend research. We’ve been working on this at the WDR Innovation Hub since our founding in early 2020. Yet, combining youth research and trend research was new for us. Gladly, it worked out well. We connected the living environments and values of our three personas Alice, Baram, and Leonie with trends and transforming phenomena, catapulting them into the year 2035. The result of this work is the centerpiece of our Future Report.

BUT NOW: Get to know Alice, Baram and Leonie!

WHO ARE ALICE, BARAM AND LEONIE?





In this chapter, we go on three individual time journeys to the year 2035, where we repeatedly encounter trends such as autonomous mobility, artificial intelligence or new forms of work. Nevertheless, Alice, Baram and Leonie are three very different alphas who live in different milieus. This way, you will get to know three different possible users of the future and experience how they spend a day in 2035.

ALICE



ABOUT ALICE

SITUATION OF LIFE: Alice is 21 years old and lives in the new building district of Cologne-Kreuzfeld for rent. Alice is heterosexual and in a happy relationship, but prefers to live in separate apartments. She has no children yet, but plans to have them within the next ten years. Alice's mother is Nigerian, her father is German. She sees this biculturalism as an advantage.

WORK: After graduating, Alice got a job as a junior VersTech specialist at a large insurance company. She can choose whether she wants to work from home or in the office. She only knows the classic “nine to five” from her parents, Alice works a flexible schedule and likes to squeeze in a sports session in between her appointments.

MINDSET: Alice is determined and always has a plan. Nevertheless, she tries to be as spontaneous as possible. Although, when confronted with major changes, she needs time to think things over. Ethical consumption is close to her heart, but she doesn't want to give up all her comfort for it. She also likes to travel abroad and sees her experiences in foreign countries as important opportunities.

VALUES: Alice aims for a career, but still pays attention to work-life balance. She wants to protect the standard of living she has built. Therefore, she doesn't like to take risks. While her friends

gamble on cryptomining, Alice prefers to invest her money for the long term.

HOBBIES: Alice almost studied dance, as she loves dancing a lot. Although she ultimately opted for a “proper” business degree, she dances as often as she can after work. Alice prefers to find quick and easy distraction and inspiration in the digital world. She likes to get together with her friends – both in real life and virtually – because they always have good ideas about how to spend their time.

DREAMS & VISIONS: Alice is oriented towards possible future scenarios, not utopias. She is skeptical of ideologies. She may have many wishes, but chooses to be reasonable. She is happy in her current situation and hopes that she can continue to unite her career, family and friends.

CONCERNS: Alice is successful in her job. But she is aware that she also has to work for it. Sometimes she experiences racism. This troubles her a lot because she always tries to do everything correctly and is not aware of any wrongdoing.

TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA: Alice isn't always the first to have the latest tech equipment. But she's not the last either. She consumes media that are currently a hot topic and often gathers information from her circle of friends. Alice tries to keep up with the latest digital developments so she doesn't lose touch.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ALICE IN 2035





“WAKE UP, ALICE!” Alice’s holographic LifeCoach Neo wakes her up with the relevant information to start the day: “Your coffee is already running, the bathroom is heating up to 21 degrees and your protein porridge has been left at your doorstep. I’ve already transferred your sleep and nutrition data to your AirGo health account.”

Alice lives in a smartment. Smartments are off-the-shelf smart apartments in Cologne’s new housing development. All Alice had to do was move in, connect her devices, and she’s done with it.

Her boyfriend bursts in with his holo wake-up call and replaces Neo on the nightstand: “Good morning, honey,” Lias calls.

“Was I faster than Neo today? And are we still on for cooking at yours tonight?” “Yeah, you were first this time! Sure, still on for cooking. I have to go to the bathroom now, see you later.”

Alice gets up, and activates the morning routine light

setting in her smart apartment. While she’s in the shower, Neo announces, “Pasta residue detected” over the speakers. A beep informs her that the additional delivery has been arranged. Alice enjoys the delivered breakfast and her automatically brewed coffee, then it’s time for work. Like her neighbors, Alice can perfectly

work remotely from her smartment. Since most of her teammates do, she sometimes enjoys working in the office. A change of scenery and rest – that’s what she needs today.

The weather is good, Alice skips on taking the mover, the autonomous bus, and walks instead. This directly adds a few points to her health account with her statutory health insurance. When the door closes behind her, Alice’s smartment automatically switches to eco mode. On her way to the office, Alice’s in-ear headphones record the ambient noise from the park. Upon arrival, the headphones automatically connect to her WorkBoard. The chirping of birds and rustling of leaves soothe her and help her to concentrate.

Alice likes her work and is glad that she landed a junior position as a VersTech specialist with the AirGo Insurance Group right after graduating. She is currently working on the “Cyber Insurance” project, which AirGo Insurance uses to cover biohacks of the population. On the workboard, Alice is working on the project plan when a push message reminds her that she still wanted to go to the hybrid meditation session organized by AirGo. The last time she was there, the participants talked about the new working method “Hyper Agile Thinking” (HAT), which is supposed to be very effective and simple. As Alice doesn’t know HAT yet, she organizes a virtual one-hour coaching session directly at the workboard. On her way home, she reminisces about how she can use HAT for her work and the creation of the project plan.



ALICE GETS UP, AND ACTIVATES THE MORNING ROUTINE LIGHT SETTING IN HER SMART APARTMENT.

In the evening, Alice takes a break from work and does a dance workout, led by holographic LifeCoach Neo. During the cooldown, her boyfriend Lias bursts in, this time for real. He wants to start cooking dinner, “I can never figure out your new tech stuff in the kitchen, can you help me?” “I’ve already set everything up for you, all you have to do is throw the ingredients in the Thermo-Max and start it up. I have a quick appointment with Esra and Dani in Holo-3000 right now.”

Alice doesn't really like video games, but her friends are big fans. That's why she lets herself be persuaded today to meet virtually in-game.

Esra talks about eco-creator Leonie, where she saw that people only travel virtually from now on, because of the carbon footprint. She suggests booking a virtual girls' trip spontaneously. This has already been possible directly in Holo-3000 for some time. Alice lets herself be pulled

along and one voice command later, the V-trip to St. Tropez is booked.

“Dinner is ready,” Lias announces from the kitchen. Alice says goodbye and leaves the game. At the dinner table, Alice talks about the V-trip. She and Lias decide to go on vacation together

as well. But they both want to travel “for real”. “If we book one of those slower hybrid airlines, it's not sooo bad. And no one has to know.” says Alice, “I like it. Then we'll just lie lazily on the beach somewhere. We can look for bargain flights. Or even better, Neo can finally prove

himself.” Neo finds the perfect offer for the two of them and books directly. As the two lie in bed, Alice watches their daily news summary that is projected onto the ceiling. After that, it's all feel-good fiction. When Neo realizes that both of them are asleep, he turns everything off.



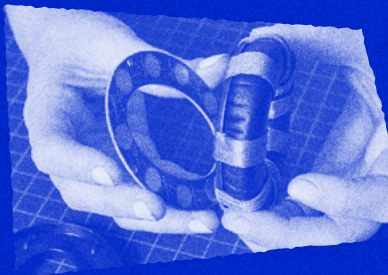


SMART HOME¹⁰: Singapore-based Nestron has presented a 25-square-meter prefabricated house (Tiny House) equipped with smart home technology. It includes networked household appliances such as a washing machine, refrigerator, stove and air conditioner. These can be controlled centrally via the AI-based smart home assistant “Canny”.

→ nestron.house/portfolio/cube-two

KI SMALLTALKS¹¹: The technology company Google has developed an artificially intelligent system that can hold informed conversations. Lamda (Language Model for Dialogue Applications) answers questions and conducts natural-looking conversations that vary thematically. Lamda can put itself in different characters and refer to specific facts and events throughout the conversation.

→ blog.google/technology/ai/lamda



HEADPHONES TRACK BRAIN WAVES FOR BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE¹²:

Start-up Neurable has developed a brain-computer interface in the form of a headset that aims to increase productivity and improve work-life balance by evaluating brain activity. The device helps its user manage their time by suggesting breaks to increase concentration throughout the day. Or it automatically mutes notifications when users are busy.

→ www.neurable.com

LANGUAGE TRAVEL IN VIRTUAL REALITY¹³: New Zealand startup ImmerseMe has launched a virtual reality-based language learning platform that allows users to travel the world virtually and learn languages in real-life situations. For example, users can virtually go to a street bistro in France to order a baguette in French in an almost real atmosphere.

→ immerseme.co



BARAM



ABOUT BARAM

SITUATION OF LIFE: Baram is 19 years old and lives in a shared apartment in Herne with his single mother. Baram grew up bicultural and bilingual and appreciates culture and customs from both Germany and Syria.

WORK: After finishing secondary school, Baram was trained to be an insulation specialist and now commutes to work every day.

Mindset: It is important to Baram to be financially independent, and he works towards that. If he can get discounts, he's in. He sees things in a realistic and pragmatic way. Baram feels equally at home in the real- and in the virtual world.

VALUES: Baram is a family man. He is loyal and attaches great importance to a close relationship with his girlfriend Kira and his family. His sense of justice is strong: Whenever he can help others, he intervenes.

HOBBIES: Baram is always interested in the latest tech gadgets. Video games are his passion. Baram has several digital identities and likes to slip into different roles. He also enjoys watching Let's Plays, especially when he's on the road.

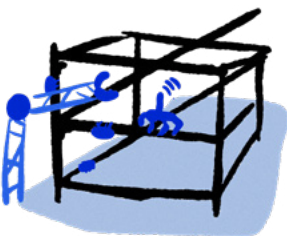
He enjoys crafting, as well as helping family and friends when, for example, the dishwasher breaks. In the evenings, Baram does sports to look good and stay fit.

DREAMS & VISIONS: The most important thing for Baram is the social security of his family and his girlfriend. He is about to move in with his girlfriend.

CONCERNS: His great enthusiasm for new technical gadgets often turns into frustration because Baram cannot afford most of the novelties. He feels there is an imbalance in society, but doesn't believe he can change anything in the real world.

TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA: Baram belongs to the early majority, so he knows a lot about what's hot right now. Data protection is only of minimal importance to him. He is perfectly fine with the deal "data for performance" and doesn't question it. For Baram, gaming isn't just about distraction and fun. In the game, he can be whoever he likes, address grievances and make a difference.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BARAM IN 2035





6:15 AM. Digital assistant Dana wakes Baram: “Good morning, Baram! Get up! You have 32 minutes until the mover leaves. If you miss it, you’ll be late for work.”

Baram jumps out of bed, gets dressed and heads to the bathroom. Through the in-ear headphones, he receives the latest game news from Holo-3000 right away and learns that his friend

Said moved up a level last night.

Baram reaches the community mover just in time.

On the autonomous bus, Baram sees an elderly lady being harassed. He courageously intervenes and takes her side. His EyeGlass captures the

scene and streams everything live to his Holo 3000 followers and closest friends. Baram is rewarded with likes and celebrated for his intervention.

Baram’s company, where he is training to become an insulation specialist, has a good order book; many property owners are currently having to convert their homes to the new

eco-insulation standard. Because he is often distracted at home, Baram has taken on driving to the company. He is supported by his artificial assistant “Bau-Bot,” which filters data and orders, informs Baram of deviations and helps control the repair robots on the construction sites.

Sometimes, Baram is still required to go to the construction site himself for some manual work. Usually, the repair robots can take care of small mistakes, carrying out the instructions precisely.

At 5 p.m., the end-of-work signal sounds from the construction bot. Baram sets off to return home with the community mover. Worn out from his day at work, he streams the new Let’s-play video by Tarik Gameking on the way back. Gameking is his favorite streamer, who regularly shows new Holo-3000 hacks. During the drive, Baram notices another one of those local politics billboards: “Get out of your bubble! Be open to real truths in your block space. Collect points whenever you read news with our seal. Your City.” The block space is a digital meeting place where Baram is also registered. However, unlike many other members, he does not share content with the community. Because the rooms are not moderated, a lot of alleged “truths” circulate



ARRIVING HOME, THE FRONT DOOR OPENS AFTER THE IRIS SCAN. BARAM HAS EQUIPPED HIS MOTHER'S APARTMENT WITH ALL THE GADGETS HE CAN AFFORD.

there, including deepfakes. Arriving home, the front door opens after the iris scan. Baram has equipped his mother's apartment with all the gadgets he can afford. His girlfriend doesn't like that he spends money on new gadgets instead of saving for furnishing their shared apartment. They often fight about it. After his workout, he orders dinner at his favorite restaurant via Alirando for him and his girlfriend. There are barely any delays since autonomous buggies started delivering the food. Dana reports: "Five minutes until delivery. To tide you over, I'm streaming an exclusive wait time video."



Baram loves these funny clips. When everyone is asleep, Baram starts his Holo 3000 game. In Holo 3000 he is a successful freedom fighter for

AleppoX. Within the game, he jointly initiated several protests at food companies with the help of his friends Leo, Said and Mehmet. The game has had such an impact that in the real world, the international water price recently fell by 10



coins as a consequence of the enormous wave of virtual protest. The game always starts with the latest news. "As in the nights before, there are riots again". Time to fight for the good cause in Holo 3000. At 11:30 p.m., Dana reminds him to go to sleep: "Baram, in seven hours I have to wake you up again. You have 15 minutes until you collect minus points on your AirGo insurance sleep scorecard." Baram, whatsoever, has no desire to collect minus points. He therefore turns off the game. From bed, he asks Dana to start the sleep program and lies down.

AUTONOMOUS BUS IN HAMBURG¹⁴: The city of Hamburg has integrated an autonomously driving minibus into the city's public transport system. The HEAT (Hamburg Electric Autonomous Transportation) can autonomously transport up to ten passengers at speeds of up to 50 kilometers per hour along a 1.8-kilometer ring route. The vehicle is monitored by the transit authority's control center.

→ www.hochbahn.de/en/projects/the-heat-project



ROBOTS ASSIST AT WORK¹⁵: Techman Robot, a start-up founded in Taiwan, has developed robots that can collaborate with human employees. The integrated technology makes it possible for the robotic arms to perceive their environment and the people with whom they interact. The robots could be used in warehouses, packaging, painting, welding and assembly work, or in food preparation.

→ tm-robot.com

LOYALTY POINTS FOR VIP PASS¹⁶: The start-up POAP has launched an NFT loyalty points campaign in which users can scan QR codes at events to collect points. They can redeem these points, for example, to get VIP tickets to exclusive events.

→ poap.xyz

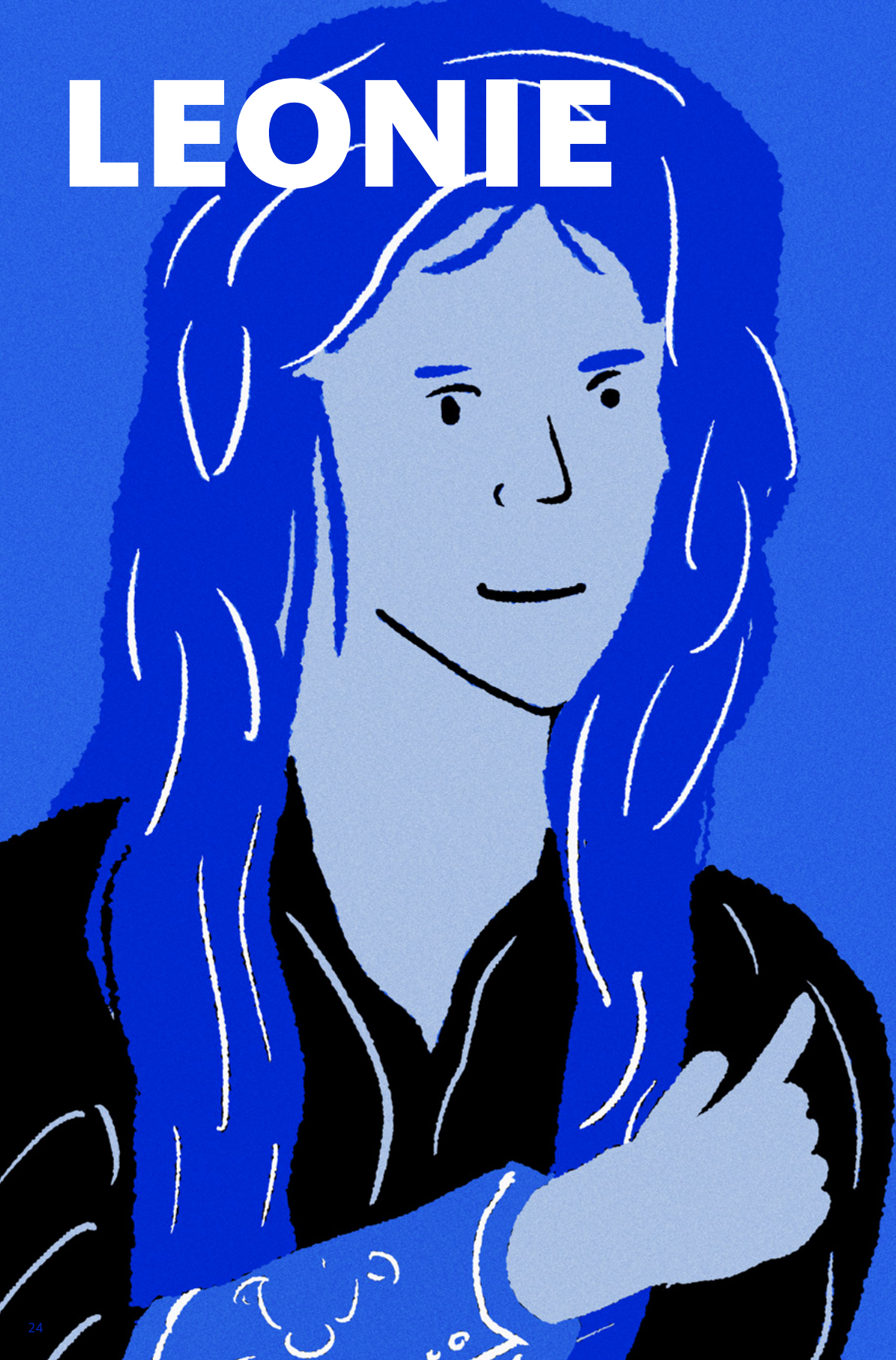
LEARNING HISTORY IN THE GAME “AGE OF EMPIRES”¹⁷:

Microsoft and Relic Entertainment have added historical facts and documentation to the fourth part of the 3D real-time strategy game Age of Empires. This allows players to learn and understand the historical context from the characters themselves during the game. The characters in the game speak in a language corresponding to the respective time.

→ www.theverge.com/2021/4/10/22375911/age-of-empires-4-history-lesson-documentary-footage-music-languages

NFT: A Non-Fungible Token (NFT) is a digital certificate of authenticity for a digital protected content. It is based on a stored code that – unlike a fungible token – cannot be exchanged or copied. The technology is used to identify files such as digital works of art as individual items, amongst other uses.

LEONIE



ABOUT LEONIE

SITUATION OF LIFE: Leonie is 24 years old, pansexual, currently single and free of traditional labels. She lives in a shared flat with six flatmates on the outskirts of Wuppertal. Except for the bedrooms and a few personal things, the flat-sharing community shares everything.

WORK: Leonie has a bachelor's degree in "Games Programming". She has been working hybrid in 80% part-time since then. With her 30% permanent job as an IT consultant she secures her livelihood, 50% of her time she works as a freelance coder. Her mission is to make the digital world greener.

MINDSET & BEHAVIOR: Leonie advocates for diversity in society and fights against inequality. As a coder, she earns more than her roommate Akim, who is a nurse. That's why Leonie has set up an account for her shared apartment. The concept: everyone shares 60% of their net income with everyone else. This way, the shared apartment balances out inequality at least to some extent. Nevertheless, everyone has enough "private income" for their personal expenses.

VALUES: Leonie has a very extensive and humanistic set of values: Democracy, equality, freedom, tolerance, justice, as well as caring for people, animals and the environment. Sustain-

ability plays an important role in her life.

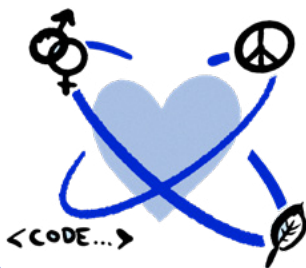
HOBBIES: Leonie is always looking for something new and is politically as well as socially engaged. She has hobbies in arts and crafts and takes part in a wide range of cultural activities. Leonie has a demand for travel catch-up. Instead of flying quickly around the world, she travels through Europe slow-style. Or even better: virtually.

DREAMS & VISIONS: Leonie aspires to lead a life with meaning, but still wants to be materially secure so she can afford the good things in life like travels, cultural offerings or technology.

WORRIES: Leonie is afraid of being pigeon-holed and therefore wants to keep all options open. It is difficult for her to decide. She is depressed by the injustice in the world, but also doesn't know where she should start to change something. She feels overwhelmed by this.

TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA: Leonie loves meetings with her friends in real life as much as she loves her digital social life. She knows about the latest hypes, as she is an early adopter. Data protection is very important to Leonie. Instead of an off-the-shelf digital assistant, she programmed her own, who accompanies her from morning to night. It is very important to her to be able to switch everything off easily.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF LEONIE IN 2035





7:45 AM. Buddy, Leonie's digital assistant, simulates the sunrise with the room lights and speaks up: "Good morning, Leonie! It's time to get up." In the bathroom and on the way to the shared kitchen, Buddy tells Leonie the news of the

day, which is most relevant to her. On her way to the coffee machine, he informs her, "You've got a lot going on today, I'm increasing the caffeine content by 10%. First thing on the agenda today is tech detox. Why don't you grab your coffee and head out to visit the sheep or go for a walk? You'll get the work done even if you

don't start for another 30 minutes."

Leonie looks through the kitchen window at the sheep in the garden and receives a piece of info in the window glass: "38 more days until shearing!". Before Leonie leaves the house to go for a walk, Buddy signs off: "I'm turning off now and will check back in when your detox level is in the normal range." Because Leonie programmed Buddy herself, she trusts him.

When Leonie is back from her walk, she starts working. Currently, she is working on a project at the well-known e-commerce company Ecolando, which wants to reduce its carbon footprint. Leonie is clearing out the technological infrastructure of unnecessary code to improve customer

loading times and thus save energy. Her workstation is her Smart Wrist, which projects all screens and input fields to where Leonie needs them.

"Leonie, you're focused at work right now, but the Mover is leaving in eleven minutes, and I've calculated that you need to stop working in two minutes and get on the road to catch it," Buddy reports back from his detox timeout.

Leonie arrives at the mover station just in time. She and her friend drive to Wuppertal together and enjoy their time together. When they arrive at Wupperspace, they have to wait a short while: there is a problem with the safety scanner that disinfects visitors, checks for prohibited items and activates their account for Wupperspace. The account of the woman in front of them is blocked, so the door won't open. The scan works for Leonie and her friends. They look for a free seat and listen to the hologram Beyoncé, who is giving her very last concert, which is therefore streamed simultaneously all over the world.

On the return trip with the mover, Leonie first checks her Wupperspace expenses on the Smart Wrist: "8 euros drinks, 50 euros stream concert." Billing takes place automatically during the final scan at the exit – all cashless, of course. "Twenty-seven minutes to go," Buddy signals. That's perfect for a new episode of her current favorite series. Leonie starts the stream via her Smart Wrist and leans back. Lucky for her, this time she's alone on the bus and can even watch the episode through the Mover speakers without in-ears.



HER WORKSTATION IS HER SMART WRIST, WHICH PROJECTS ALL SCREENS AND INPUT FIELDS TO WHERE LEONIE NEEDS THEM.



“Ninety minutes until sunset,” Buddy tells her when she arrives home. Leonie decides to take advantage of the last hour of sunshine to get her work done for her 30%-permanent position. She sits down on the terrace. Over the in-ears, she receives to-dos from Buddy. Meanwhile, she quickly sets up her Smart Wrist to work again and gets going. After 75 minutes, Buddy applauds: “You didn’t get as much done today as yesterday in the same amount of time. Don’t work much longer anyways, so you’ll be fit for work tomorrow. Happy after hour!” Leonie’s roommates are already hanging out in the kitchen. Minh has called in her mother from Vietnam for a joint cooking session. They’re serving vegan Phở. The Commune stream plays music based on the preferences of all seven

residents. After dinner, Leonie retreats to her bedroom, because Buddy is right: the past few days have been a bit stressful, she needs sleep. To calm down, Leonie streams another episode of her favorite series. In the last five minutes of the episode, the light installation in her room simulates a sunset, and it gets dark. Leonie hits the all-off switch to have peace from Buddy for the night. Although everything is quiet and dark, Leonie is still tense. She wasn’t prepared to see her ex-girlfriend at Wupperspace with her new guy. “It’s only been three weeks,” she thinks, and turns Buddy back on to watch another episode.



SOFTWARE PROTECTS PRIVACY¹⁸: Researchers at the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering and Princeton University have developed »Pretty Good Phone Privacy« software that protects the privacy of smartphone users. It works by decoupling personal data and making it anonymous.
→ viterbischool.usc.edu/news/2021/08/is-your-mobile-provider-tracking-your-location-this-new-technology-could-stop-it

MATCHING PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATIVE HOUSING PROJECTS¹⁹: Bring Together is a social start-up that aims to respond to demographic change. Interested parties can be matched with like-minded people and start joint housing projects. The founders support the idea of sharing and want to promote a sustainable and resource-saving lifestyle.
→ bring-together.de

WORKING ON VIRTUAL DISPLAYS WITH AR GLASSES²⁰:

Chinese electronics company Lenovo has unveiled the ThinkReality A3, AR glasses that can overlay the wearer's field of vision with up to five virtual displays. The device doesn't look like a flashy AR headset, but rather a pair of rugged glasses that can also show 3D holograms.

→ lenovo.com/us/en/thinkrealitya3

EVENTS IN HYBRID REALITY²¹: Music promoter London Warehouse Events has teamed up with live event platform Sansar to develop the "Tobacco Dock Virtual" event concept. For this, the London venue is virtually recreated in detail and becomes the location for virtual parties. Live events are to take place simultaneously in the real and the virtually recreated space.

→ tobaccodockvirtual.com

THE THESES

At the WDR Innovation Hub, we asked ourselves what Alice, Baram, and Leonie could teach us for today. Our findings led us to propositions that we can use to engage in exchange, to trigger debates and to get to know many different perspectives. Thus, we want to prepare ourselves for the next generations.

Together with experts from various fields of futurology, youth research, generational research, the technology industry and format development, we discussed and conceptualized 14 theses about Generation Alpha in 2035:

THE THESES

- 01 Alphas consume hyper-personalized content that adapts to changing moods, needs, devices, and locations. In this way, each alpha becomes the center of gravity of their individual universe, with content gravitating towards him or her as the opportunity arises.
- 02 The fragmentation of the digitized media market makes it harder for media houses to reach the alphas, and they can hardly generate mass media moments. Anyone who rejects new technologies is not a mainstream alpha.
- 03 Alphas are used to all offers, devices, services and people being connected and making their lives easier.
- 04 Alphas control their media world with their eyes, with gestures, and with their voice.
- 05 AI assistants are the gatekeepers for media consumption. They support the everyday life of alphas – from getting up to going to bed.
- 06 Gaming is an integral part of everyday life at Alpha. Games are multi-optional platforms that no longer focus solely on actual gaming. They are also a place for media content.
- 07 In media companies, AI assistance systems are used throughout the value chain. Alphas have no reservations about handling and working with AI systems.
- 08 Alphas opt for jobs that enable them to work independently and flexibly in terms of time and location. An appreciative environment is just as important to alphas as the meaningfulness of their own tasks.
- 09 Anyone who rejects new technologies is not a mainstream alpha.
- 10 Alphas live in a world where reality and virtuality have merged.
- 11 Diverse identities are a defining part of the lives of alphas. Diversity factors include ethnicity, age, gender, religion, physical ability, education, sexuality, income, and many others.
- 12 The gap between privileged and less privileged alphas is growing.
- 13 Climate change is also on the minds of the alphas. Their reactions range from CO₂-neutral living to flying shame.
- 14 For Alphas, autonomous mobility is normal – both in private transport and in public transport. On the road, alphas use media of all kinds.

EXPERTS IN AN EXCHANGE ABOUT THE THESES

“Generation Alpha will no longer use the *terms technology and digitization*, similar to us no longer speaking of industrialization today.”

— Tristan Horx

“I hope that we can use the *increased productivity* brought about by digitization to give people a different kind of life. A life in which people can pursue their own ideas and creative projects, and the actual work that has kept many people busy up to now can be done by computers automatically.”

— Sven Bliedung

“Let’s assume that in 2035 machines will have taken over large parts of our work. What will Generation Alpha do then? Then something like a basic income, a *digital dividend*, could become an issue again. This will definitely keep this generation thinking.”

— Tristan Horx

“Digital assistants will be like your best friend, a companion on your *personal path* who is always with you.”

— Dani Woytewicz

“This Generation Alpha is going to be more *diverse* in their identity and what they define, and I think that it might not be either or.”

— Ashley Fell

“On the one hand, autonomy will be something regular, just as it is in the area of mobility, but on the other hand a very strong need for self-efficacy will remain. This does not solely mean sitting in a car and being driven, but driving the car yourself. The fascination of being able to do something yourself remains.”

— Birgit Langebartels

“Generation Z is used to getting feedback all the time. I post something and don’t wait a minute for feedback. The expectation of instant feedback is also becoming more and more common in the job market and will thus become even more prevalent among Generation Alpha.” — Simon Schnetzer

THE EXPERTS



ASHLEY FELL

Speaker & Director of Advisory @ McCrindle



BIRGIT LANGEBARTELS

Dipl.-Psychologist & Director kids & family @ Rheingold



DANI WOYTEWICZ

Strategic format developer @ WDR COSMO



SIMON SCHNETZER

Speaker & Youth Researcher



SVEN BLIEDUNG VON DER HEIDE

Managing Director @ Volucap



TRISTAN HORX

Author & Future Researcher @ Zukunftsinstitut

“The Alpha generation has a better developed *digital instinct*. The instinct must be strengthened, otherwise the Alphas will fall into the same trap as all of us before them.” — *Tristan Horx*

“There are differences between the countries across the world, but this next generation is very *global*, and the trends that impact them will impact all of them.”

— *Ashley Fell*

“In a *hybrid work environment*, you no longer necessarily have to move for the job and can thus settle in the region of your dreams. Employers need to adapt to this.”

— *Simon Schnetzer*

“Trust is a strong emotion one requires, especially in reference to news. First and foremost, I think we need to build an *image*. To simply become attractive and entertaining again, to want to be seen.”

— *Dani Woytewicz*

“There will also be a *counterbalance to hyperpersonalization*. In 2035, people will still actively decide for themselves which content they want to consume. As an example: when I make a virtual date with friends in a game, I make a conscious decision.”

— *Sven Bliedung von der Heide*

“Alphas ask themselves questions like: What can I do that is meaningful? What makes me and others happy? They focus more on the *social aspect of personalization*. They want content that makes them feel addressed authentically.” — *Birgit Langebartels*

“WE PUBLIC BROADCASTERS NEED TO BUILD CASTLES INSTEAD OF TOWNHOUSES, BECAUSE THESE ARE SIMPLY NO LONGER ATTRACTIVE TO GENERATION ALPHA.”



DANI WOYTEWICZ

Strategic format developer @ WDR COSMO

WDR – NOW WHAT?

It's not just our future personas that show us what kinds of futures we can expect. Generation Alpha is already showing us the direction it is leading towards: Three-year-olds are trying to zoom in on photos in magazines with their fingers. Five-year-olds command Alexa and Co. to play their favorite songs. In schools, the latest games and climate change are on the agenda at the same time.

Today's experiences and our knowledge of possible futures give rise to challenges we would like to meet with recommendations for action, which we developed in the WDR Innovation Hub.

- › We don't think we can reach the majority of Generation Alpha via radio and television any longer. Instead, we should focus on knowing the individual needs of the Alphas in the digital and virtual space and accordingly provide tailored offers.
 - › We should find a way to provide the alphas with hyper personalized content. For this reason, we process our users data but at the same time ensure that transparency about the gathering and use of the data is always given.
 - › We should be looking at how artificial intelligence will influence the production, distribution and use of media. At WDR, a dedicated team will be working on these issues in the future – same for ARD.
 - › In the future, we would want to attract alphas as employees to WDR as an employer. This will be difficult because WDR is no longer perceived as an attractive, innovative and diverse employer as it was in the past. Yet, there are many different exciting job profiles at WDR, ranging from project manager to programmer to media designer. We need to make our benefits more transparent and better known.
 - › We want people to trust us. We are working on ensuring that Generation Alpha perceives WDR as a trustworthy partner. That's why we plan on continuing our dialog with users as we did recently, for example, in the ARD's future dialog.
 - › We should never regard our findings about Generation Alpha and subsequent generations as final. Through constant exchange with Generation Alpha and users of all other generations, we want to learn how their individual worlds they are living in are changing, what new needs are emerging and what may no longer matter to them.
- THIS FUTURE REPORT** is also the start for exchange and discourse at WDR itself. We at WDR are now entering into a conversation – about and with Generation Alpha, our users, now and in the future.

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SHAPING THE FUTURE WDR.



We are the WDR Innovation Hub, an interdisciplinary team. We are driven by many questions: how does the WDR remain innovative and fit for the future? How will we work in the future? In which way are we going to

produce content? How will we distribute it? What new media ecosystems are emerging? What will the users of the future look like? Which trends and innovations will benefit journalists, developers, and editors?

WE ARE RESEARCHING AND ANALYZING FUTURE

SCENARIOS. We study trends and social developments, either solo or in cooperation with partners. We are most interested in fields that will be relevant for the WDR in two to five years. These selected fields of innovation will then be turned into innovation projects.

WE ARE MANY. We work with experts, learn from other organizations' developments, and consult scientists. We are willing to share our knowledge and ensure that the various disciplines at the WDR exchange their ideas more effectively. You cannot tackle the future alone – and neither can we. Therefore, we always work in teams consisting of WDR colleagues and external partners.

THE FUTURE REMAINS EXCITING and we are shaping it.

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