

Trends:

**What we should be
looking at in 2021
and beyond?**

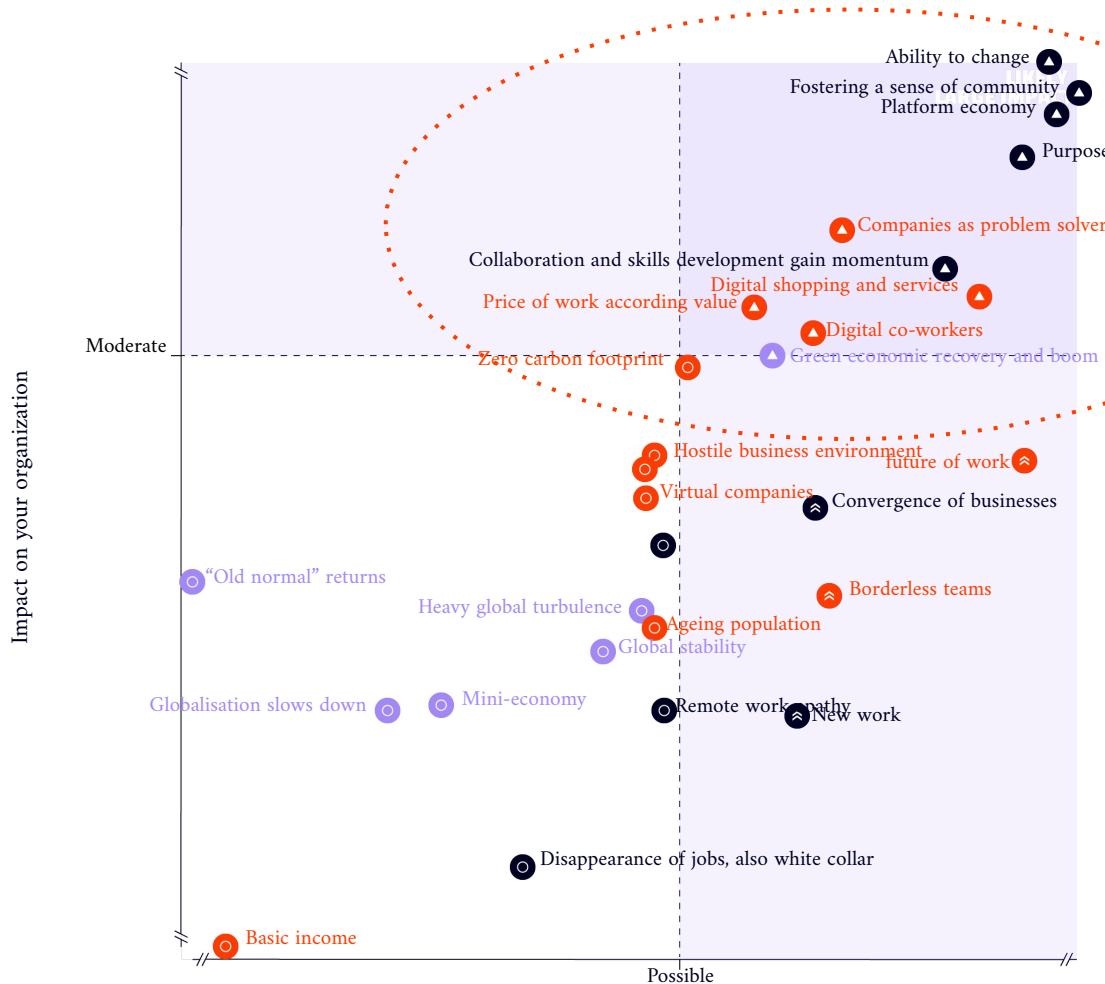
We assessed the future of business with over 100 companies



Ellun Kanat invited companies to share what the future looks like from their perspective during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

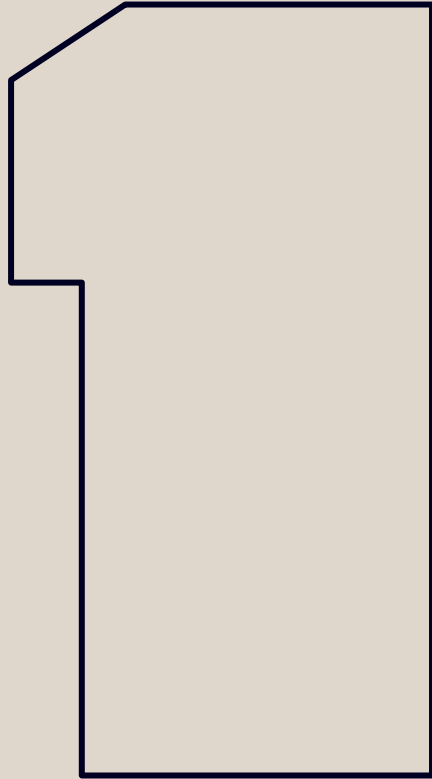
We used the [Inclus](#) risk management tool to help companies to evaluate different trends and their impact, with over 100 companies taking part. Questions within the tool were based on our own extensive futures report “[Double Disruption - What every company needs to know about the future](#)” and our analysis of the implications of COVID-19.

Here's what we found out!



Inclus tool:

We asked companies to evaluate 28 different trends and megatrends in the near and long term future. We'll discuss those most likely to materialise and to have a significant impact.



**The ability to
change internally
defines success
externally**



The ability to change internally defines success externally seen as the most important trend

“Don’t miss a good crisis. We won’t. Strategy changes when it has to. It needs to be watched all the time.”

The ability to change defines a company’s success because rapid changes in the business landscape have a huge impact. This requires not only continuous strategy work but also fostering a sense of community, ensuring collaboration and creating new ways of developing skills. Besides strategy, these three were named the most important prerequisites of success. It’s also even more critical to include people in planning and creating change, whatever their role within the company. We must manage emotional and human needs to nourish collective curiosity.

Leadership challenge of the digital era accepted?





Increasingly immersive and digital work (and life)

"Yes, the future is data-driven and mobile. However, not everything will be automatic, because the future also remains a realm of enjoyment for human beings."

In the long run, the quick transformation to remote work will lead to an increasingly immersive and digital working world. The price of work done at home will probably be measured by the value of the contribution, rather than the hours spent doing it. Remote work might lead to quicker adaptation of AI-led and digital services, while more frequent remote work after the pandemic will likely increase the use of digital services and shopping. This will have major consequences in all aspects of life.



“It will probably be even more important to be able to both “think strategically” and “act strategically” on a daily basis. In my opinion this can and will be very demanding but you have no choice if you want to be successful.”
(14. Administrative and support service activities)

“There might be a desire to get back to normal, but that day might never come. So you need to be ready to change and react to changes in the business environment. For example, the green recovery plans will transform businesses and you need to be aware of what is happening in that area.”
(13. Professional, scientific and technical activities)

“I think that fostering a sense of community and amplified emotional intelligence will be part of the management skills of all really successful C-level professionals from now on.”
(14. Administrative and support service activities)





- Office work has had a massive impact on our social life and culture - everything from urbanisation to shopping and services, transport and people flows. A lasting change in office culture will have huge implications on society, people and businesses that should be followed closely.
- Remote and digital work and life are convenient but lonely. We risk ending up bowling alone. Solitary societies are vulnerable to populism and information warfare. Radical digitalisation requires radical human connections and dialogue by its side. The human factor should be amplified as digitalisation intensifies.



**Purpose is key in
turbulent times**



A sense of shared purpose becomes even more important

“As organisations become more virtual there is a clear need for shared values, purpose and culture in order to keep everyone working towards the same goals.”

There’s been a lot of talk about purpose. But in 2021, it’s finally time to make purpose a real thing. A sense of shared purpose becomes even more important for companies when they need to keep people motivated in the era of remote work, social distancing and generally turbulent times. However, purpose can easily become an empty marketing slogan. In the 2020s that’s not enough. Purpose must be the guiding star of a company's vision and strategy. It’s about thinking holistically of why the company is relevant and needed in today’s complicated and turbulent world.





Companies become problem solvers for people and the planet

*“A great reset is needed. But how
it’s done needs to be figured out.”*



The current business paradigm, born around 40 years ago, is based on Milton Friedman’s famous idea that companies only exist to create profit for their shareholders. This has been changing in recent years as the economic system and its main operators, companies, have had to face the planet’s ecological boundaries, questions of fairness and their contribution to public values such as democracy. In the future, we will live in a world where profitable businesses increasingly solve problems for people and the planet and not produce them. But this isn’t about charity. It’s about doing business in a changing environment and answering the difficult questions of what value really means in the future. The great reset is advocated by the World Economic Forum, Financial Times and US Business Roundtable.



“Thinking about the future and a sense of purpose are meaningful to young people entering working life or new to it. It would be foolish to think this wouldn't have any effect. However, it's good to understand that there may also be people who work to be able to do meaningful things in their free time; for them it's a bit of a different story. Finding a good balance between accepting people who don't find a sense of purpose so important and people who are passionate about purpose is crucial.”

(19. Other service activities)

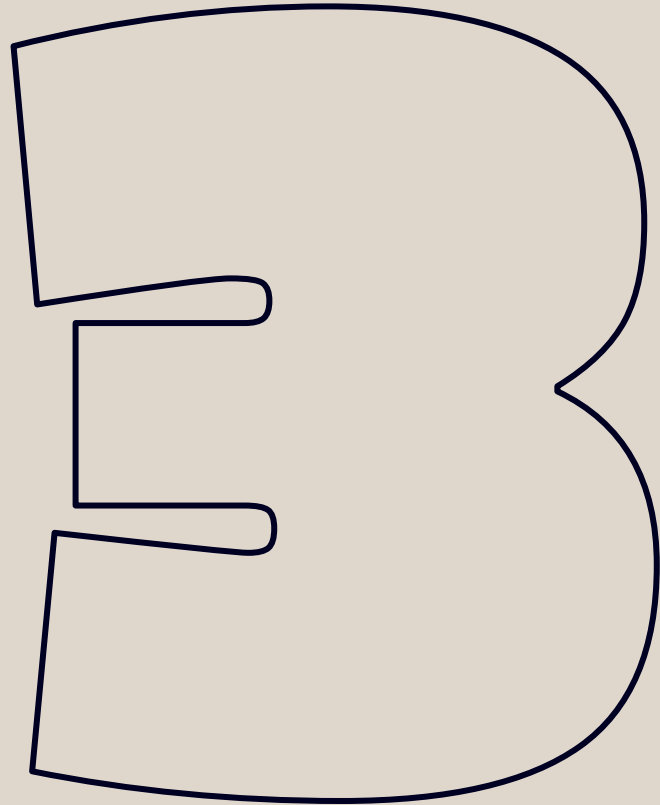
“If people do not have a clear picture of a shared purpose, there are only individual interpretations of the purpose that can be totally different from the company's goals.

“(13. Professional, scientific and technical activities)





- Finding purpose in a changing world was clearly recognised as an important trend. However, based on open comments, it seems that purpose is understood in many different ways. So, too, is thinking how to bring purpose to everyday work. More research, thinking and acting is needed on this.
- The role of companies in our changing world was clearly recognised. Corporate responsibility doesn't take place in the marketing or comms department. Instead, it's the very heart of an organisation's strategic choices. Besides guiding marketing and communications, it's also a key part of the everyday life of employees. As humanity has roughly a decade left to solve the most critical issues of the planet, those who find the solutions and purpose for building the future are the forerunners of the new normal.



**The future will
happen on digital
platforms and it
will be green**



Platform economy intensifies

“You could, in my opinion, argue that platforms are the lifelines of business ecosystems!”

Platform economy grows rapidly and most companies need to adapt their strategies accordingly. COVID-19 has accelerated this rapid transition. The challenge is that this changes the entire logic of production and consumption, requiring not only technical skills but also a deep understanding of the user, the changing marketplace, and the risks and possibilities involved in a business transformation that’s faster than anything seen in years. When restrictions are putting a stop to physical globalisation, platform globalisation only speeds up. However, platforms and their business models will be under close monitoring due to the intensifying debate around them.





Green economic boom

“Green economic transition creates new business opportunities, and we need to be aware of the resulting changes and recovery plans to see and detect business potential.”

Upcoming stimulus packages are designed to orient investment towards those sectors and technologies that can accelerate green transition, as well as improve resilience to future problems caused by climate change. Over 100 countries have already adopted carbon neutrality goals for 2050, requiring transformative change in many economic and business sectors. However, countries’ commitments for 2030 collectively fall short of what is needed for carbon neutrality. Governments must be consistent in their policies to ensure investments if they want to ensure the path towards a zero carbon, sustainable world.



“There's no room for many platforms in any given market. The competition for the #1 position and #1 platform in our market has already started. Companies approach data from different value propositions, but eventually the one who can capture significant market share and amounts of data (profitably) will be able to find new business models with the data. If you do not have enough market share (data) you are out of those business models.”
(10. Information and communication)”

“People have woken up to the need for change during COVID-19, and partly accepted that we cannot continue as before. People have taken a great digital leap this year, and hopefully this has led to cleaner processes. I therefore believe this will also have a positive impact on the fight against climate change.”
(11. Financial and insurance activities)





- COVID-19 has hit the economy hard, and its implications will be seen in many years to come. Despite the vaccination, the horizon remains unclear for a long time.
- For many companies this can be an opportunity for renewal. Digitalisation and the transition to clean, environmentally friendly modes of production and processes are tremendous megatrends that gain the more momentum the longer the COVID-19 crisis lasts, pushing forward digitalisation and also temporarily lowering emissions. This brings questions on new ways of work, regulation and know-how more quickly on the table.
- However, none of this will happen automatically. Both megatrends require serious target setting, practical know-how and completely new thinking and skills in many organisations. It's a long but necessary road to minimise negative impacts.



**What
should
we be
looking
at?**

2021

**Ability
to change
internally
defines
the success
externally**

**Purpose is
the key in
turbulent
times**

**Platform
economy
intensifies**

2028

**Increasingly
immersive and
digital work
(and life)**

**Businesses
become problem
solvers for people
and the planet**

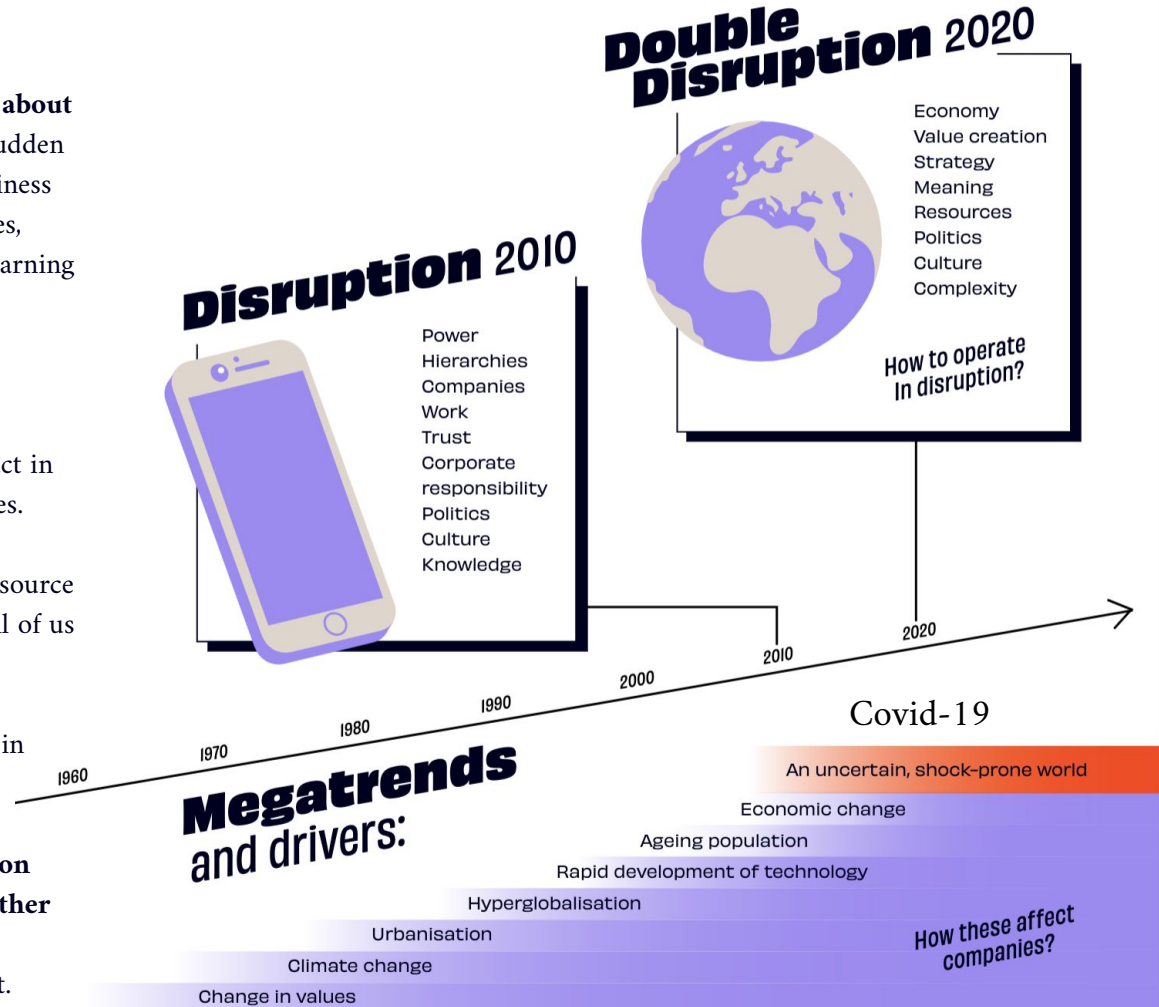
**Green
economic
boom**



And we believe these changes take place in the world of Double Disruption. This is our own interpretation of the framework where these trends take place.

Double Disruption - WTF?

1. **The massive paradigm shift has been brought about by new communications technology.** All of a sudden we all became communicators. The effects on business models, politics, trust, transparency and hierarchies, among other areas, have been huge. We are still learning to adapt as the questions related to platforms are shaking societies as we have witnessed recently.
2. **Reaching the limits of the earth's ecological capacity.** Humanity has roughly a decade left to act in order to adapt to the planet's ecological boundaries. This development will accelerate and disrupt the economy, value creation, consumption, politics, resource use, purpose of companies and everyday life for all of us - even more profoundly than the communication disruption. This transformation will have massive effects on companies and the society and the way in which they operate.
3. **What's more, in the world of Double Disruption companies need to understand the effects of other megatrends and drivers of change.** The global COVID-19 pandemic is a tangible example of that.



Speed of external change

Double Disruption | Covid-19 | Megatrends and other drivers for change

**organization's
ability to
change & adapt**



What next? Ellun Kanat's tips for making the most out of 2021 and beyond



Purpose.

Know who you are and why you do what you do. Knowing your purpose and why you exist helps to define everything else in a time of massive changes.



Dialogue with the future.

Understanding and anticipating the future together becomes even more important. The most successful companies and organisations are building the future they want to see and in which they and others want to live in.



Dialogue with the organisation.

Fostering collective curiosity in everyday work and getting everyone involved are the keys for taking the steps needed, especially in the era of remote work. As Ellu says, there's as much communication in making change as there's water in a human body.



Dialogue with the world.

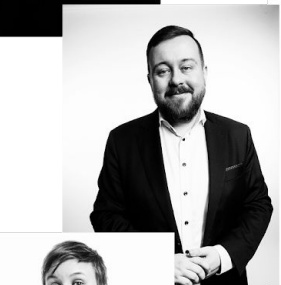
The time for lobbying in cabinets is past. When an organisation maintains an active and real dialogue with the world and people, it can truly thrive and also change the world for the better.

ELLUN  KANAT

**Thank you for joining us.
May 2021 and beyond bring
good things to us all!**



**We push for
change**



**We change the world
for the better**



**We give you
tools to change**



Ellun Kanat Company is a visionary consultant firm that helps organisations navigate their ways through turbulence and instability – and helps them at finding inspiring opportunities as well as enjoying the ride! For us, communications is the world's most powerful tool for change.

- Strategy and Foresight
- Organizational Culture
- Public Affairs
- Branding and Campaigns
- Crisis Communications

- and everything else where you need a strong vision and effective tools for change.

Contact us!

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Fact file

- Ellun Kanat sent out an invitation to its Executive Insights network to look at future trends with the digital risk management tool, [Inclus](#). The questionnaire was available from 30 November until 15 December 2020.
- Most of the trends assessed in the tool were chosen based on Ellun Kanat's extensive futures report [Double Disruption - What every company should know about the future](#) (Kiiski-Kataja, Elina. 2020) and Ellun Kanat's [Disruption Barometer](#) survey conducted together with TNS Kantar in February and October 2020.
- Using the Inclus tool, 113 participants from a variety of businesses and organisations in the private and public sector took part in assessing different trends. The biggest sectors were information and communication activities, professional, scientific and technical activities, and other service activities.
- The insights on trends was a part of Ellun Kanat's *Future as a service* project funded by Business Finland.