



Imagine if...

To bring the future to life, we have developed a series of "Imagine if" scenarios which consider the possible sociopolitical and cyber security implications of technological trends.



Reality and fiction blur

Imagine if... we couldn't differentiate between truth and fiction

Augmented
reality



Artificial
intelligence



"Where do we draw the line, or what happens in the case of a one-way migration from the physical to the virtual world? Considering the nature of these questions it is not unlikely that philosophy will gain relevance in the field."

Prasad Jarayaman
Americas Cyber Security Leader
Partner, KPMG in the US

The first of our groups of "Imagine if" scenarios explores the creation of virtual worlds, the value we attach to assets in these worlds, and our ability to differentiate reality from synthetic experience.

By 2071, developments in immersive virtual reality, deep fake and behavioral manipulation technology have blurred reality and fiction. In this world it has become impossible to be certain that the constructs you are immersed in are real or fictional. Real world scenes can be replicated and manipulated in real time, convincing replicas of people can be constructed and interacted with. The uncanny valley has been crossed.

Truth was always subjective, but in this new world people have few ways of differentiating truth and fiction, and a greater willingness to believe what they wish of "facts". Group think leads to self-reinforcing echo chambers of increasingly extreme views, fed by both self-selection of content and by algorithms which emphasize the exceptional. The Internet becomes polyinstantiated with many separate instances.

Societies must find new ways of maintaining trust and of constraining the extremes of reality manipulation as well as providing tools to allow people (or machines) to do so. Some authorities take advantage of this to provide immersive control environments, others create definitive sources of trusted information but are tempted to manipulate those truths.

The concept of trust becomes increasingly important, as does securing "reality". Crime finds many ways of manipulation by social engineering, but so too do states and corporates as they seek to control the narrative and to influence the behaviors of populations. The authenticity of information becomes paramount with a need for robust mechanisms for detecting tampering and forgery. Automated filtering and suppression of certain types of information become routine. Privacy concerns dominate as fake personas are created and real personas manipulated. Legal frameworks around the protection of personal images evolve but struggle to keep pace with AI-driven manipulation.