

It's life but not as we know it

Imagine if... people and machines became one

Robotics



Bio
engineering



Artificial
intelligence



“If the aging process is reduced or reversed, it is a completely different world. Who is going to control how long we live, and what impact will this have on the world?”

Nashikta Angadh

Risk Consulting Partner,
KPMG in South Africa

Our last group of “Imagine ifs” is perhaps the most challenging, and asks us to consider whether our definitions of life itself will remain unchanged by 2071, or whether perhaps our world will be very different indeed.

By 2071, developments in medical devices and neural implants led to integration of computers and human beings... for fashion, for medicine, for warfare. Sophisticated prosthetics have replaced and augmented human limbs. Neural implants have helped deal with neurological disease, brought sight to the blind and sound to the deaf. Some have succumbed to the attraction of embedding co-processors in their brains, perhaps they had no option. Fashion trends come to embrace machine technology implants.

The limits of machine augmentation become a societal debate. Cure moves to become improvement – as both neural implant and prosthetic

technologies develop. The military seeks combat advantage, but so too might those with financial resources to buy such capabilities. Medical devices become increasingly sophisticated and increasingly interventionist – and with that comes increasing dependency or even addiction.

Debates around the limits of machine augmentation continue, but it seems inevitable that some states (and corporates) will push those boundaries further while regulation lags. As people (augmented by technology) cross borders, what are the implications of those movements and migrations?

The cyber security of machine implants is a growing concern as such devices become the target for exploitation. Privacy becomes the right to freedom from unauthorized intrusion into lives – in a world where machines and people fuse. The hacking of machine implants has growing real world consequences on lives and welfare, and there is no option to be off the grid when medical implants depend on continuous monitoring.

