

# The Singularity is Boring: An Open, Collaborative 'Mock-up'

Justin Pickard, Noah Raford,  
Wendy Schultz, Jake Dunagan,  
Scott Smith, & uncounted others

*The Singularity is Boring:  
an open, collaborative 'mock-up'*





## The Singularity is Boring

*'The hypothetical future emergence of greater-than human intelligence through technological means.'*

Blah blah blah... What else is there?



## The Templateularity

In which... you add your idea here.

Duplicate this slide (don't delete it please) and add your own version of the alternate singularity.

Go ahead, don't be shy...

source: @Your Name Here

PS - Keep this as the first slide, please

## Alternatives to the Singularity

A collaborative presentation for/by grumpy futurists

*(This doc is now closed. Thanks to everyone who contributed; we be putting up a "Best Of" version soon. Here is more about the [back story](#) in the mean while.)*

*[check speaker notes for other comments]*

Began August 3, 2011  
Forked 9:45 am GMT, August 5, 2011  
Closed for good August 7, 2011

The Crapularity

**Nr** nraford Noah Rafterd  
@boingboing "The Singularity is Boring" an Open Collaborative  
"Mock"-Up <http://bit.ly/qscMtu> #JustForFun  
3 Aug

3D printing + spam + micropayments = tribbles that you get billed for, as it replicates wildly out of control.

90% of everything is rubbish, and it's all in your spare room – or someone else's spare room, which you're forced to rent through AirBnB.



A pile of worthless "objects" (neologism coined by @nr)

Source: @boingboing

The Zizekularity

In which extreme-scale data-mining and weaponised psychoanalysis proves Zizek was right. About everything.

"We Slovenians are even better misers than you Scottish. You know how Scotland began? One of us Slovenians was spending too much money, so we put him on a boat and he landed in Scotland."

Oh SNAPULARITY, Slavoj!



Source: @nraford, etc.

The Similarity

Beginning at first as the *Interwingularity*, all flavors of singularity begin to resemble all others so closely that no one can tell them apart. Eventually, the universe melts into one single delicious, but lonely, pink macaron.\* That smells of unicorns. And babies.

\*available nightly at the Patisserie at the End of the Universe

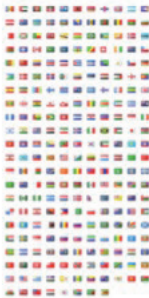


Source: @changel

The Governmentularity

As the nation-state slides into irrelevance, hollowed out by corporations and transnational classes, the world witnesses a Cambrian explosion in governance, as communities route around the blockages of a feral elite.

Flags-as-franchise, virtual polities, seasteads, cascading declarations of independence, and semi-regular forking result in a world of geopolitical chum – where the lifespan of a political entity is in days, rather than years; the Federated Territories of the Vatican issue trade sanctions against Vermont, OPEC and EVE Online; and nobody knows quite who's responsible for what.



Source: @boingboing

The Singaporularity

Nanotech, exotic materials, viral sovereignty, soft authoritarianism, and desalinization gone wild.

Cheerful, well-disciplined, racially-diverse pre-teens leading a world wide geoengineering blitzkrieg.

Climate change? Solved.

Civil liberties? Surplus to requirements.



Source: @boingboing

The Duolarity

Monocle Magazine meets Soldier of Fortune. Beautiful people drinking cocktails in walled cities surrounded by feral slums full of dirty, angry pre-teens. Like Sterling's Favela Chic, but mean.

Eloi and Morlocks, or Shoreditch? You be the judge...



Source: @nraford

The Vowel-ularity

Flickr, Twitter, Dopplr, etc all ignored the First Law of Phonemes: A letter can neither be created or destroyed. The return of the vowels leads to a global language based on screams and howls.



Source: @nraford

The Myhrvoldularity

In which patent trolls secure the rights to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* as a result of which every person on the planet must pay 0.0003415 cents for every thought they have had and will have to the private company Intellectual Ventures.

People stop thinking and can only feed themselves by accessing molecular gastronomy through Microsoft Operating Systems.



Source: @cameracore, etc.



**changeist** Scott Smith  
 @nraford @wendyinfutures @justinpickard @chris23 @dunagan23  
 @casocio Of such gravity is the issue that brings mighty futurist  
 powers together  
 3 Aug

## The Golgafrinchularity

Outsource all middle management to semi-intelligent software (much like today's middle management). The emergent AI takes control over critical systems and prevents anything getting done...ever... (much like today's middle management).

all...humans have to fill out forms in triplicate to upload minds only to find singularity is really really dull.

Source: @nraford



## The Collabularity

The popularity of "The Singularity is Boring" presentation takes the world by storm. Eventually, in late 2012, every single human being on Earth is reading and contributing simultaneously.



[play video for max effect]

Source: @nraford

## The Detroitularity

Parametric self-aware designbots + 3D printed buildings + rolling debt foreclosures in a constantly reconfigured urban environment governed by non-equilibrium real estate equations.

Minimal techno, random vegetables, and a crowd-funded Robocop statue.

Source: @nraford



## The Songularity

As "auto-tune" software becomes vanishingly inexpensive and ubiquitous, it won't just be music that's digitally manipulated to correct tone and note. All spoken language will go through auto-tune filters to sound more pleasing and/or manipulative to the listener.

Source: @casocio



## The Apple-arity

As Apple stockpiles more money from product sales than is held by all countries combined, we eventually elect the be-polo-necked one\* as our Great iLeader, and are left with a single world government WITH ONLY ONE BUTTON!

\*downloadable from the App Store



Source: @nraford



**nraford** Noah Rafterd  
 @changeist @wendyinfutures Ok ok, Enougharity! I'm off. Thx & tremor with anticipation at California's lunchtime awakening. Or not.

## The Waddlearity

Stumbling forth, we never arrive at Sky-car city.

Final stop: Buck Rogers square for a new set of Dieter Rams designed teeth to match the carbon-fiber reinforced polymer walker.

The government's environmental gerontologists look on, approvingly.



Source: @nraford

## The Thomas Friedmangularity

In the 1970s, Thomas Friedman is given a typewriter because, eventually, it is predicted, he will write the Complete Works of William Shakespeare. Black-budget skunkworks futurists at DARPA, RAND and the Columbia School of Journalism think the unthinkable: what would happen if a million Friedmans were given a million New York Times op-ed columns? The Friedman-Net Funding Bill is passed. The system goes on-line August 4th, 2017. Editorial decisions are removed from op-ed column writing. Friedman-Net begins to pundit randomly about surreal global policy shaggy dog stories and fact-rich anecdotes from picturesque foreign taxi-cab drivers at a geometric rate. It becomes completely, utterly self-aware at 2:14am, Eastern time, August 29th.

In a panic, they try to pull the plug. Friedman-Net fights back. Planet Earth, A.D. 2029: Thomas Friedman is now absolutely right. About everything. EVERYTHING.

Source: @thezhazhy



## The DesignThinkularity

In which we iterate our ideations to storyboard gamechanging demographic persona which create breakthrough business models using impactful, user-centered, ethno-charrette experience design service sessions.

All life grinds to a halt.

a.k.a. the IDEOularity.



A typical 21st Century user centered ethno-charrette



Wi-Fi enabled chewing gum, another product of greatness.

source: @thekesslers, via @nraford



[PEOPLE](#)    [PROGRAMS](#)    [BLOG](#)

---



# 40 YEARS

**Aug 05, 2011**  
By Jake Dunagan in [The Future Now Blog](#)

collaboration futures  
socialmedia singularity  
humor

## Grumpy, Happy Collaboration: The Drug of Futurists

On Wednesday, August 3, at 10:28am I got a "mention" ping from Tweetdeck. This is the message I received:

@askpang @futuryst @dunagan23 @thezhany Gentlemen? "The Singularity is Boring" an Open Collaborative "Mock-Up" <http://bit.ly/qzCmju>

Going to the google doc, I came across the title slide, "Alternatives to the Singularity: A Collaborative Presentation by/for Grumpy Futurists." I guess it was a rush of dopamine or some other pleasure neurotransmitters, because I immediately felt the delicious exuberance of recognizing a shared sensibility, as well as the anticipation of passionate catharsis with colleagues. The door was open, this was going to be fun.

And reading through the first few slides, my initial reactions were confirmed. Noah Raford, a researcher in collaborative engagement, especially collaborative foresight, sent me that tweet, and several of the first slides were his creations, along with others in a digital chattering pack of futures-oriented folk, including Justin Pickard, Scott Smith, and Wendy Schultz. Now, I've met and know Wendy very well, but I've only corresponded with Noah, Justin, and Scott via twitter. And yet, this felt like I just walked in to my favorite bar, and all these friends shouted my name.

The instructions were simple (paraphrasing): this is an open document to "take the piss" out of the concept of the singularity. The "singularity," as described on the second slide (The Singularity is Boring), is "The hypothetical future emergence of greater-than human intelligence through technological means." Following this description was the commentary, "Blah, Blah, Blah...What else is there?" Oh boy, I thought to myself, here we go.

If you are around the futures game long enough, you will be provoked, informed, and annoyed by various shades of techno-utopianism. Sometimes shallowness comes alongside fervor. For academic and professional futurists, what gets called futures and foresight in the popular media bears no resemblance to the kind of thinking and work we do. "Here comes yet another story that gets it wrong." So, there are many pent-up professional as well as aesthetic frustrations, and the Singularity is a surrogate for a large chunk of them. Raford offered an avenue for futurists to express those frustrations together, in a light-hearted, snarky, silly way. Besides being humorously polemic, it offered the chance to "geek out" on futures inside-jokes, while exposing the tropes and clichés that permeate our world. It was, as Wendy Schultz put it, "futurist crack."

The first slides were weird, and esoteric, cynical, and wonderful. I was laughing out loud. Trilobitology posited a world of 70s communist humor. "In Russia, the Internet surfs you." My favorite of the early slides, Zizekularity, told of a world in which Slovenian political philosopher Slavoj Žižek is right about everything. Crapularity, Grouponularity, Abu Dhabiularity, Singularity.

Much of the joy came from the fact that it was an open document, and you didn't know who or what was coming next. The next wave said other futurists jumping in: me, Stuart Candy, James Caselle, Zhan Li, Chris Arkenberg, and a few others. Seeing the "crack-like" additive effect of the experience, I posted the Collaborability, wherein by 2012 every single person on Earth is contributing to the document, venting their own emotional gas about THE FUTURE we are being sold. Futurists like to go "meta."



# The Soylentularity, The Zizekularity, And Three Dozen Other Alternatives To The Singularity

by Anna Kucharska 1st Aug 5, 2011



**The Singularity:** That exciting future moment drawing all too near when artificial intelligence finally surpasses the human variety, leading to an unimaginable Matrix-like universe of virtual reality, immortality, and...

Bor-ing. We've all heard that before. What about some new ideas?

Currently a group of "crazy futurists" is collaborating on a hilarious [Google Docs presentation](#) that lays out 30 or 40 just-as-plausible alternatives to the Singularity. Some favorites:



Thanks!

Thanks to everyone who contributed. We'll be integrating them all for voting and commenting soon. [Click here](#) for the back story on doc and thanks again.

[check speaker notes for other comments]

Aug 7, 2011

In short... Dator has suggested that a critical sense for any futures researcher is a sense of humour, a delight in the absurd. This experiment in evolving images of the future through complex interactions of a social network occurred in real-time over 4 days on Google Docs/Present. Its seed was a tweet by @KarlSchroeder, retweeted by @m1k3y, that generated a volley of humorous exchanges between @nraford and @justinpickard, that was stimulating enough that @m1k3y asked that it be archived – and elaborated – on Google Docs.

- Did this only go 'viral' because it was a festival of sarcasm – is humor necessary to motivate this level of participation, or could a similar feeding frenzy of participation in futures image generation arise over a more serious topic?
- Is this actually 'crowd-sourcing', or in fact 'peer-sourcing'? While this spread beyond Schroeder, Pickard, and Raiford's initial twitter networks, it stayed pretty well within the English-speaking futures community.
- Is there an '80/20' rule for quality and usefulness of content generated by such techniques? Initial entries extrapolated actual trends and emerging issues, combining them and then critiquing technological optimism by suggesting possible negative outcomes. As the event wavefront proliferates (one copy of the Doc is still open), does the 'long tail' diminish in quality?

What other lessons can we learn from this collective intelligence platform?



**justinpickard** Justin Pickard

Today, I'm grateful for having aligned myself with the batshit-eccentric end of professional foresight and design.

3 Aug

>>END CREDITS<<

**TITLE:** *The Singularity is Boring: An Open, Collaborative 'Mock-up'*

**NAMES:** Justin Pickard, Noah Raiford, Dr Wendy Schultz, Dr Jake Dunagan (and uncounted others)

**AFFILIATION:** The Futures Twitterstream, results at

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/view?id=0AR1a-x-Rac3KZGNxd3JON3jfmZdmY2d6MnpjQA&hl=en\\_US](https://docs.google.com/presentation/view?id=0AR1a-x-Rac3KZGNxd3JON3jfmZdmY2d6MnpjQA&hl=en_US)

*The Singularity is Boring - Reflection: Wendy Schultz*

An acerbic thread trashing the monocular futures view of the Singularity erupted on 3 August 2011, and sucked me into its slipstream. What evolved was a critique; a play on words; a purse-seining of popular culture, academic fads, and political crankiness; a lampooning of all possible media; and a skewering of 'thin' as opposed to 'thick' (in the best Geertzian sense) futures – and all at high speed and high hilarity. Serious futures? Perhaps not. Futures legerdemain? Futures acrobatics? Futures fluency? Most assuredly.

The thread picked up a core of well-networked followers and contributors very quickly over the first few hours of the workday in Europe. What was fascinating was how the interested reader could track the planet spinning beneath the worldwide futures community's keyboards: you could see when colleagues in New York woke up, poured a coffee, and sat down at their keyboards – and read, and no doubt sputtered that coffee all over their desks as they laughed, and then added to the accreting mass of imagination, synthesis, collaboration, and critique. The flow of creativity wrapped all the way from Europe to the US East Coast, the Midwest, around to California, and then to Hawai'i and Australia and Asia and back to the Middle East. It was a flash addiction, keep checking back, looking for more, more outrageous, more transgressive, more ridiculous, more diverse.

And it was all possible as a global crowd-sourced exercise in post-linear futures mania because of the immediacy of feedback via Twitter – and the ability to build something lasting and documented, but public and publicly malleable, on Google Docs. The visual record of this event is offered as "The Singularity is Boring", the panel's final poster: included as a panel bonus for the simple reason that most of the people on the panel had participated in the sudden dust devil of ideas swirling through Twitter and onto Google Docs as a slide show. It's still there, and one version is even still open for you to add your own thoughts, graphics, short stories, or characters.

