Liquid Foresight in an AI-Mediated World

As generative AI becomes more accessible and embedded in everyday tools, it's worth asking what role it might play in the future of foresight itself. Could AI shift from simply supporting existing foresight practices to fundamentally reshaping how we think, explore, and engage with possible futures?

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Faster processes, lower costs, broader access – that's the promise at the heart of AI's efficiency mantra. And foresight is no exception to AI's growing influence across knowledge work. The ongoing integration of AI in foresight has surfaced existential questions about how to maintain the discipline's integrity while also taking advantage of the potential benefits of the new tools. How do we ensure foresight remains meaningful and useful *with* AI, and what happens to the depth, pause, and human reasoning if the tools do more of the heavy cognitive lifting for us?

These questions are on the minds of many foresight practitioners – and rightfully so. This exploration must begin with the recognition that our own incremental mindset may be keeping us from noticing deeper changes already unfolding beneath the surface, and that the potential of AI may far exceed merely adding new tools to existing foresight practices.

What if the shift AI brings is something more profound than just augmenting the traditional practices within the discipline? Will exploring possible futures need to begin from entirely new premises in a world that is becoming increasingly AI-mediated? What if we allowed ourselves – in a safe, speculative space – to explore what might emerge when humans and AI systems start to co-create futures insights?

To be clear, we aren't suggesting scrapping the foresight toolbox in favour of AI. Nor do we intend to downplay the very real challenges that come with integrating AI into foresight practices – including the negative effects of cognitive offloading, biased models, homogenised outputs, or model collapse. Instead, we suggest building on the strong foundations of foresight practices while considering what new, AI-mediated approaches those foundations could support.

At the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) we have coined the term *Liquid Foresight* to describe this more adaptive, evolving type of foresight.

As we move into an AI-mediated reality, shaped by developments such as agentic AI, experience AI and perhaps even conscious AI, it's hard to imagine how we will interact with and consume information, generate knowledge about the future, and make sense of emerging change and uncertainty.

We don't need to look to the future to recognise some of the current shortcomings in foresight that AI may be able to help resolve. Although foresight is an established practice, there are areas where the practice consistently falls short and where it hasn't evolved sufficiently.

The feasibility of a more liquid type of foresight rests on two assumptions about how the foresight field could improve to better meet the evolving demands placed upon it. Firstly, reality increasingly outpaces foresight. Scenarios and other foresight outputs often remain frozen in time while the world continues to shift around them. When insights are locked into static outputs, the opportunity for ongoing reflection and reframing is often lost.

Secondly, as foresight practitioners, our role is to help others engage with the possibility that things could be different – to enable "reperception". To paraphrase Pierre Wack, the French scenario planner who first applied scenario planning to corporate strategy, reperception is the sudden mental jolt experienced when one's understanding of the future slips and realigns.

However, the spark of reperception tends to fade once a foresight session or engagement ends. Typically, only a select few are involved in the participatory parts of the process, and it is often difficult for the wider organisation to engage meaningfully with the outcomes. As a result, the strategic value of foresight can fade away, becoming something insightful in the moment, yet left to wither thereafter.

Yet, much of the discipline continues to rely on static formats with (rather) formal processes and outputs to spark this transformation. Whether this is an effective

way of achieving long-lasting reperception is questionable. As an alternative, we should explore how intelligent systems could help address some of the long-standing gaps inherent in traditional foresight approaches, potentially turning reperception into a more continuous, ongoing experience than it is today.

The aim of a Liquid Foresight approach is to build more responsive, layered foresight that links stable long-term perspectives and consistent future logics with dynamic, real-time signals and contextual shifts that can influence how different scenario outlooks develop. This could potentially turn foresight into a living "interface" where AI helps us reimagine scenarios as conditions shift. If done well, it might offer a way for foresight to become a living conversation, responsive to change while still being resistant to noise, personalised to context, and capable of nudging people into new ways of thinking as reality moves.

Liquid Foresight does not stand in opposition to human reasoning and intuition. Instead, it should operate within meaningful boundaries defined by foresight practitioners, helping to maintain a degree of control to prevent it from losing relevance by becoming "over-responsive" to short-term volatility and elusiveness. We see the combination of AI and human input as an opportunity to continuously challenge assumptions and introduce more random, unexpected – and at times also uncontrollable – friction into futures thinking as a source of divergent insights and reperception.

We might not always need polished deliverables, but rather adaptive foresight infrastructures. Sandboxes, not temples. Interfaces, not end-products. Spaces where ideas can grow, break, rebuild, and remix.

This would also mean more room for speculative AI models, imperfect data experiments, and open-ended "what ifs." We as foresight practitioners would still be the curators and facilitators of futures work – but the process and output of this work might take the shape of dynamic worlds rather than a static end-product which has traditionally been a main delivery of a foresight process.

Imagine a foresight framework that functions as a dynamic narrative system. One where users and stakeholders can adjust parameters, shift perspectives, play with data and scenarios. Something akin to an interactive futures interface that lets people test, stretch, and refine their futures thinking in real time. Instead of passively consuming stories about the future, you can actively engage with them.

If we could build that, Liquid Foresight might help overcome some of the persistent challenges of foresight: making reperception more enduring, and keeping scenarios relevant over time in a world that refuses to stand still. ■