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# COMPASS

THE GLOBAL VOICE OF PROFESSIONAL FUTURISTS

**WATER  
AND  
FUTURES**



**ASSOCIATION OF  
PROFESSIONAL  
FUTURISTS**



# COMPASS

## Compass Magazine OCTOBER 2023

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### About Compass

Compass magazine strives to be the global voice of futurists and foresight practitioners. As an official publication of the APF, our mission is to bring out the voices of foresight professionals of all ages and all backgrounds to create opportunities to advance the foresight profession and enhance the knowledge, wisdom and insight of our members, who serve as ambassadors for the profession wherever they are.

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To contribute an article to Compass, please contact the editor or a member of the APF board of directors. For the next issue of Compass, submit article ideas to Stephen Dupont at [stephen.dupont@pockethercules.com](mailto:stephen.dupont@pockethercules.com)

**Writer's Guidelines:** Compass seeks articles that are 750 to 1,500 words in length. Submit articles, written in English, in a Word document, along with a short bio and a photo of the author. The editor of Compass reserves the right to edit all articles for grammar and length.

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# SHOOTING FOR THE STARS: NEW PARADIGMS AND THE ROLE OF NEXTGEN LEADERS IN NAVIGATING THE FUTURE

Dr. Seren Dalkiran

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APF 20TH Anniversary Future of  
Futures: Voices of NextGen Leaders  
in Navigating the Future Panel at  
the Museum of the Future, Dubai.

We live in an era marked by unprecedented socio-economic and ecological challenges such as climate change, rising inequality, and disruptive technologies. Yet, from one crisis to another, an opportunity exists to transform the challenges we face into a future that allows humankind to move toward a new phase of collective evolution.

As a futurist and researcher, I am passionate about understanding the role of NextGen leaders (18-35 years) in facilitating and leading us through global change. How can a new generation of leaders help us – from Boomers to Beta Gen (those being born now) – to explore and define a new narrative and paradigms responsive to social and sustainable change?

What is needed to support them take on their leadership roles? What are their learning needs, what skill sets will they need to develop, and what values do they need to uphold to prepare them for what's next?

Furthermore, what role does foresight have to play in supporting NextGen leaders to become more resilient and better equipped to tackle these challenges they'll face 10, 20 or 30 years from now?

### **THE NEED FOR A NEW STORY**

Cultural historians reflect that throughout the course of history, humans have always had a story to make sense of our time -- to understand how we got from the past to the present and to find a collective sense of direction for the future. This old story seems not to respond to our current transitional times, but our new story has

not emerged yet. We are in a liminal phase between stories, undergoing a rite of passage like the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

This transition reveals a couple burning questions: What is the emerging story of our time, and what is the role of young people in defining that story? What is the story of the younger generations who will take up leadership roles and drive meaningful and lasting change?

### **THE EXPLORATION OF NEW PARADIGMS AND NEW LEADERSHIP**

In exploring a new story there is a need for new paradigms and approaches such as rethinking learning, leading, collaboration, designing organizations and communities, and doing business towards a paradigm shift centered on human and planetary flourishing and sustainability. What leadership do we need to explore new paradigms on multiple levels? How can we define a responsive leadership agenda for tackling these challenges?

As the leadership theorist Peter Drucker noted, "Every few hundred years in history there occurs a sharp transformation. Within a few short decades – society, its worldview, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its institutions, rearranges itself. We are currently living through such a time."

### **HUMANIZING THE DIGITAL AGE**

In this fast-paced digital age that we live, it is important to preserve and develop the human aspect alongside technological advancement. This involves nurturing multiple sources on human intelligence

alongside artificial intelligence (AI) focusing on worldviews, values, and skills that machines lack. Strengthening the cultural, social, and human spheres and considering this in innovation processes is vital. This is important for unlocking creativity and ingenuity for human and planetary flourishing. However, this will require a shift in mindset, behavior, and rethinking our worldviews and values to shape new paradigms. This leads to additional questions, such as:

- How can we humanize the digital age of techno-optimism for the benefit of people and the planet?
- How can we steer technological advancements to enhance the development of the human aspect serving our relationship with ourselves, our human-to-human relationships, our relationship to Earth, and also the human-machine interface dynamics to enable us to move to the next phase of our evolution within planetary boundaries?

- What kind of innovation is needed to achieve this?
- What is the true pursuit and meaning of innovation through this lense?

## THE ROLE OF NEXT GEN LEADERSHIP

By 2025, Millennials will comprise 75% of the global workforce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). As the oldest Millennials reach 40-years-old, they have a pivotal leadership role to play in defining new leadership paradigms. Generation Z, followed by Alpha Gen and Beta Gen are right behind today's Millennials.

While younger generations have been dramatically affected by the Covid pandemic (80% of youth facing severe mental health issues, dubbed the "Pandemials," according to the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2021), they are stepping up and taking leadership roles throughout our world on a number of major issues, such as climate



**APF 20TH Anniversary Future of Futures: Voices of NextGen Leaders in Navigating the Future Panel at the Museum of the Future, Dubai.**

change and social inequality. Amidst the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” and the movement toward a “Fifth,” they will need to navigate a world with a constant flurry of disruptions.

NextGen leaders are not sole targets for inclusion, but active collaborators in shaping the future prospects of our world. They play a critical role in the exploration of new paradigms and leadership. As Boomers and Gen Xers see Millennials and Gen Zers stepping into leadership roles, they need to ask themselves two important questions: *How can we equip these NextGen leaders with the skillsets of the future to become resilient and take up their role in social and sustainable change processes? And, how can generations cooperate across disciplines and sectors to enable this?*

### SCIENTIFIC FRAMING FOR NEXTGEN TALKS

Over the course of my academic career, I have focused on the nexus of science and

society and theory and practice to drive 21st century leadership innovation in the exploration of new paradigms. I have established various global organizations and networks that bring values-based leaders across generations together to tackle the most pressing challenges of our time. I founded the [Synergized Earth Network \(SEN\)](#) and the Millennial Leadership Lab (MLL).

My Ph.D. research has delved into defining innovative paradigms capable of driving societal change and sustainable development. In particular, I have looked closely at whether Millennial leaders worldwide have an inclination to these emerging paradigms.

To generate data on a global scale, I conducted fieldwork with youth leadership networks in 28 countries across 6 continents, engaging more than 5,000 youth leaders. My integrated approach facilitated this Ph.D. study at the University



of Notre Dame Australia, Utrecht University, and Varna University of Management with the support from the esteemed Professor Geert Hofstede and market research firm Kantar Nederland and the Millennial Research Team. I collected quantitative and qualitative data in 117 countries representing Millennial leaders across diverse backgrounds. This work was recognized with the 2020 Emerald & HETL Outstanding Doctoral Research Awards.

My Ph.D. research insights emphasizes the potential of individuals and organizations to foster value-based leadership styles and stimulate learning cultures to fuel disruptive innovation and drive social and sustainable change. Toward this end, Millennial leaders value enabling learning environments that respond to their lifelong learning needs, cultivate values-based leadership, develop and align their personal and professional development. Developing the necessary skillsets to succeed in their need to be purposeful and thrive is significant for them to excel in their fields of occupation and drive meaningful and lasting impact in their contexts.

## **FUTURES AND FORESIGHT IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Through my research and fieldwork, I learned that futures and foresight have a critical role in addressing 21st-century challenges by helping individuals, organizations, and communities to become future-fit and future-proof. Bridging leadership development and futures and foresight practices is key to equipping NextGen (thought) leaders, futurists, foresight practitioners, innovators, creatives, professionals, and decision-makers with the resilience and tools needed to prepare them for the future.

For NextGen futurists, foresight is often a leadership capability to navigate global challenges and drive social and sustainable change. Foresight methodologies can empower NextGen leaders with strategic visioning tools to anticipate, prepare for, and shape preferred and alternative futures across generations, disciplines, and sectors. Facilitating NextGen leaders to equip themselves with foresight skills can help unleash their leadership potential.

## **CREATING A PLATFORM FOR NEXTGEN TO EXPLORE NEW LEADERSHIP PARADIGMS**

So how will we get there?

Based on my research and practice-based insights, I created a platform called [\*Millennial Motion: The Next Generation of Leadership, also known as NextGen Talks.\*](#)

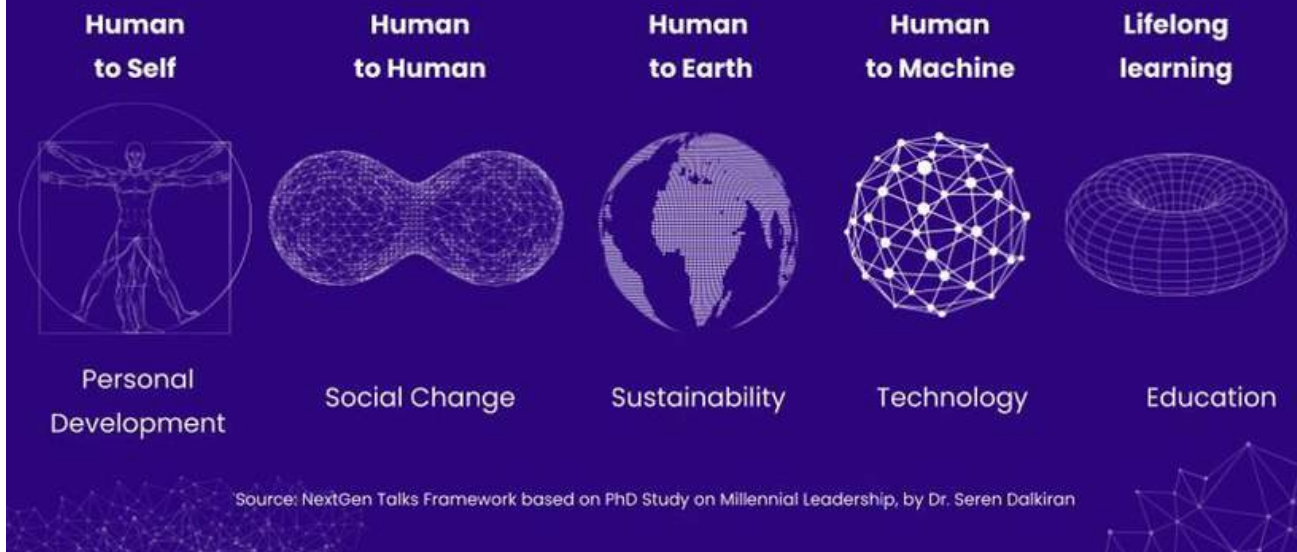
NextGen Talks are events that bring together NextGen leaders globally who represent and navigate the future of various impact areas.

I organized NextGen Talks in many cities around the world to help Millennial and Gen Z leaders explore new paradigms and address pressing complex global challenges. In these talks youth leaders share their visions, real-life impact stories and the calls to action they feel leaders, including themselves, need to take to generate solutions to our world's most pressing challenges.

NextGen Talks helps to develop the leadership potential in youth leaders and provides them with the tools to drive social and sustainable change.



# NextGen Talks Impact Areas



For example, at a recent edition of the NextGen Talks event within the MENA region, youth leaders explored five key areas of impact, which include 1.) human to self, 2.) human-to-human, 3.) human-to-Earth, 4.) human-to-machine interface, and 5.) education and lifelong learning as an underlying fabric to all the impact areas.

My participation in Expo2020, the first World Fair of Innovation that took place in the MENA region, and the Dubai Future Forum in December 2022, inspired to bring the NextGen Talks to the MENA region. This led me to conduct the NextGen Talks at the [Future of the Futures: Voices of Nextgen Leaders in Navigating the Future](#) panel moderated by futurist Dr. John A. Sweeney within the framework of the 20th Anniversary of the Association of Professional Futurists (APF) hosted by the Dubai Future Foundation (DFF) at the iconic Museum of the Future in Dubai in April 2023.

During this event, presentations were offered by NextGen leaders on navigating the future of each of these impact areas. These presentations offer examples of how NextGen leaders will approach the challenges of today, and tomorrow.

[Introduction New Paradigms, NextGen and the Global Perspective](#) by Dr. Seren Dalkiran.

[Introduction on NextGen and the MENA Perspective](#) by Modafar Akhoirshieda (APF Board Member, Founder Emkan Futures).

[Human to Self](#) (personal development and wellbeing) represented by Raghad Fatheddin, Founder of Sangha Estidama Hub.

[Human to Human](#) (social change) represented by Dana Shashaa, Community Architect at ATÖLYE.

APF 20TH Anniversary Future of Futures: Voices of NextGen Leaders in Navigating the Future Panel at the Museum of the Future, Dubai.



APF 20TH Anniversary Future of Futures: Voices of NextGen Leaders in Navigating the Future Panel with moderator Dr. John. A. Sweeney at the Museum of the Future, Dubai.

[Human to Earth](#) (sustainable development) represented by Haya Aseer, Arab Youth Center, Global Council on SDG13: Climate Action.

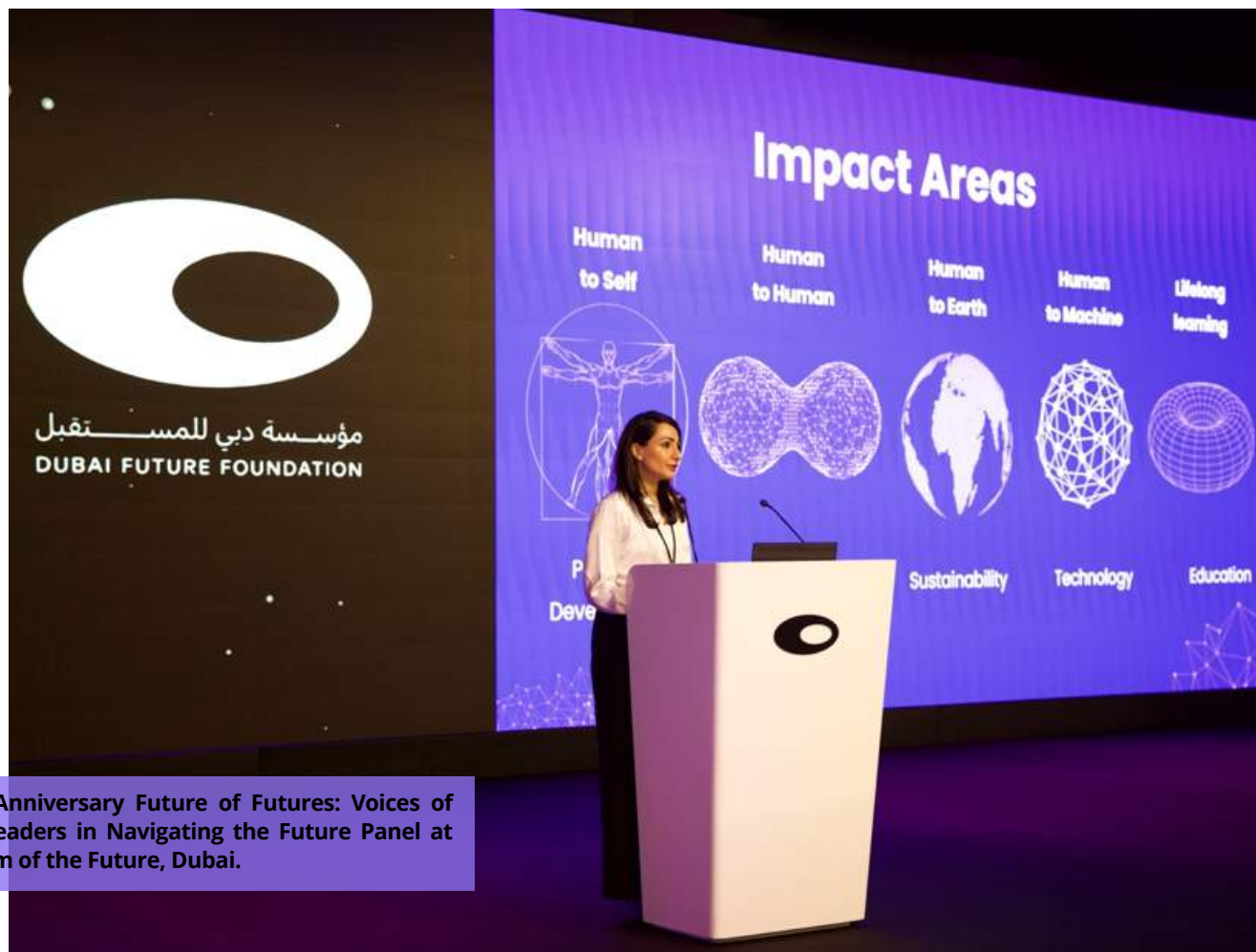
[Human to Machine Interface](#) (technology) represented by Mohamed Al Moosa, Program Manager (Governance in Tech) at the Pearl Initiative.

[Education & Lifelong Learning](#) - represented by Mae Dickinson, Head of Admissions and Growth and learner Brielle Luis at the School of Humanity (SoH).

During a NextGen Talks event, participants explore new and emerging paradigms that enhance human and planetary flourishing.

This includes discovering leadership styles to address global challenges, defining new leadership trajectories, equipping future generations with the skillsets of the future and cultivating resilience to enable them to become active collaborators in shaping the future prospects of our world. Intergenerational collaboration is key in this approach.

Following the *Strategic Visioning with NextGen Leaders in Navigating the Future* session, held at Area2071 in Dubai and hosted by ATÖLYE, a collaborative vision and strategy emerged across various impact area. This approach fosters the idea exchange among leaders in the wider



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ecosystem of futures and foresight, youth leadership networks, and sustainable development to continue to build an intergenerational world community. The session was a partnership with School of Humanity (SoH), Arab Youth Center, Global Council on SDG13: Climate Action, Pearl Initiative, Sangha Estidama Hub and with the support of One Young World Middle East and the Association of Professional Futurists (APF).

## **SYNERGIZED ACTION ACROSS GENERATIONS, DISCIPLINES AND SECTORS**

It is vital that we move from working in silos to fostering synergy -- joining forces across generations, disciplines, and sectors to navigate a future that we are capable of co-creating together. It is a shared responsibility to shape a collective sense of direction, to find a common denominator and to facilitate the necessary outlets for this pursuit.



**Strategic Visioning with NextGen Leaders in Navigating the Future session at ATÖLYE, Area2071, Dubai.**

NextGen leaders are called to build upon the knowledge, expertise, experiences, and wisdom of the legacies that generations before have established while also becoming the authors of their own individual and collective stories, making their unique contributions towards a more just, sustainable and thriving future.

Living in such times of unprecedented crisis yet boundless opportunity prompts the pivotal question that civil rights legend John Lewis raised: “If not us, who? If not now, when?”



**Dr. Seren Dalkiran**

*Dr. Seren Dalkiran is a professional futurist, innovator, and complexity scientist, she is the originator and founder of Synergized Earth Network (SEN) and founder of Millennial Leadership Lab (MLL), which are organizations that bring leaders across generations together to tackle the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. At the nexus of science and society she enhances collaboration across generations, disciplines, and sectors. Her focus is on equipping NextGen leaders to unlock their potential to drive meaningful and lasting impact for human and planetary flourishing.*



## ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL FORESIGHT BY HELPING FUTURISTS PROMOTE THEIR UNIQUE VALUE, BUILD THEIR PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS, AND SHOWCASE THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE.

### ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL FUTURISTS: OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

#### ABOUT THE APF

The Association of Professional Futurists is a global community of futurists, dedicated to promoting professional excellence and demonstrating the value of strategic foresight and Futures Studies for their clients and/ or employers. Futurists work in global corporations, small businesses, consultancies, education, non-profits, and government. Celebrating our 20th anniversary, the APF includes more than 400 members from 40 countries.

APF sets the standard of excellence for foresight professionals. Members include futurists from businesses, governments, non-profits, consulting futurists, educators, and students in future studies.

#### OUR PURPOSE

To advance the practice of professional foresight by fostering a dynamic, global, diverse, and collaborative community of professional futurists and those committed to futures thinking who expand the understanding, use, and impact of foresight in service to their stakeholders and the world.

#### OUR VISION

A world where professional foresight guides decisions positively affecting the future.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide the behaviors of APF's Board, partners, and members:

**Collaborative:** We acknowledge our interdependence. We create and nurture relationships that are respectful, mutually beneficial, and generative.

**Intergenerational equity:** We work intergenerationally and act on behalf of current and future generations.

**Open:** We welcome all who share an interest in foresight. This includes professional futurists and those committed to futures thinking. We encourage innovation and ideas from members and partners who share our values.

**Professionalism:** We are committed to excellence and ethics in our conduct and work.