



**GRENOBLE
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BUSINESS LAB FOR SOCIETY

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Titre du sujet: A global UBI

By Patrick Brown (Campaigns and Operations Director at *Equal Right*)

In September, Pope Francis attended the World Meeting of Popular Movements, an initiative he launched 10 years ago as a platform for grassroots organisations to come together and address the “economy of exclusion and inequality”. During his speech at the event, the head of the Catholic Church renewed his call for a global universal basic income (UBI), saying that implementing such a measure would not only be a reflection of compassion but also “strict justice”.

Pope Francis has joined a growing international movement advocating for income redistribution through a scheme of unconditional monthly cash payments to every individual to cover their basic needs and provide economic security as a fundamental human right.

A global UBI is not just a question of poverty relief. It's also a question of social justice. Centuries of exploitation and overextraction of resources have concentrated wealth in the Global North, and as a result, most Global South countries lack the tax base and fiscal firepower to fund their own national UBIs. A global UBI would not only end world poverty, but also represent a necessary and equitable redistribution of wealth from north to south.

Critics of the movement have often pointed to the significant cost that implementing UBI could incur for governments. So is there a sustainable way to pay for it?

At *Equal Right*, a non-profit that also advocates for UBI, we have developed detailed modelling laid out in our paper “Climate Justice Without Borders”. It shows that a charge of \$135 per tonne on the global extraction of fossil fuels could raise as much as \$5 trillion a year and fund a global UBI of at least \$30 a month. A progressive wealth tax ranging between 1 and 8 percent on the world's richest multi-millionaires and billionaires could yield another \$22 for every person in the world, and a financial transactions tax of just 0.1 percent could raise another \$16 each.

These payments could be supplemented by other taxes on the global commons, including land, mining and artificial intelligence tools, recognising the equal right we all have to a share of the world's wealth and resources.

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Titre du sujet: 'AI is well aware of its own impact'

By Eloise Gibson

Microsoft has unveiled its first hyperscale data centre in New Zealand, joining another colossal centre operated by the company CDC. Amazon Web Services is also due to open one soon. Their growth is partly riding on a boom in using artificial intelligence, for everything from web searches to complex modelling.

Training and using AI is an energy-hungry undertaking. According to Goldman Sachs, a ChatGPT query needs nearly 10 times as much electricity to process as a Google search and data centres globally are expected to more than double their power use by 2030.

Reuters recently cited Morgan Stanley research putting data centres' 2030 climate impact at about 2.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide. Like Microsoft, many other tech giants have ambitious goals to lower or eliminate their greenhouse gas emissions. But they are also recording explosive growth in a world with finite renewable energy supplies.

One investigation by the Guardian found many of the big tech companies were artificially lowering their climate impacts using products called renewable energy certificates. Other similar reports have increased the pressure for companies to show they are growing the renewable supply where they operate, enough to cover their operations and growth.

Thanks to a deal with Contact Energy, Microsoft says its new data centre at Westgate in Auckland is powered entirely by renewable electricity. Technically the power comes from the national grid, but Microsoft NZ managing director Vanessa Sorenson says signing a 10-year supply deal with Contact two years ago gave the electricity company the certainty it needed to build a new unit at the Te Huka geothermal field. Microsoft also paid Contact \$300 million to support building the geothermal facility.

Although the deal was done before the advent of ChatGPT and the subsequent AI explosion, Sorenson says Microsoft has run the numbers 30-odd years into the future and will have plenty of renewable power to back its New Zealand growth.

Like the internet itself, the impacts of that energy use are global - unless a customer, such as the New Zealand government, has specifically contracted with the likes of Microsoft to have its data stored here in New Zealand.

By Dora Mekouar

Numbering 2 billion and counting, Gen Alpha (born 2010-2024) is expected to be the biggest generation in history. And even though its oldest members are only 14 years old, Gen Alpha is already an economic force to be reckoned with.

"They're spending money, and in significant amounts. Not only that, they influence parental purchasing decisions in a significant way," says social analyst and demographer Mark McCrindle. "We estimate that the global spend of Generation Alpha direct, and in influence, is \$5.5 trillion already, so a pretty phenomenal economic footprint to go with their unsurpassed demographic footprint."

Its youngest members will make their appearance this year, but the oldest Alphas were born the same year the iPad came out.

As the first entire generation born into the world of smartphones and other connected devices, Alphas have become consumers much earlier than previous generations. That's thanks, in part, to online forms of payment linked to parental credit cards or other digital currencies. And they're using that money to buy digital games and accessories.

"They're buying virtual items using virtual currency," McCrindle says. "So, there's whole new ways of spending and means of spending for this generation that's really leading to that increased commercialization."

Being born into a digital world means Gen Alpha will likely have excellent technical skills. But what about developing other skills like playing, exploring, collecting and going on adventures that help children learn to understand the world around them?

"The world has shrunk in the big five areas for children, which used to be playground and sport and outdoors and nature and neighborhood," McCrindle says. "They have become all compressed into a virtual environment."

Constantly being virtually connected to others can diminish a child's sense of agency, according to licensed professional counselor Shelly Melia.

"One of the things that being away from your parents, and away from somebody who can instantly solve your problems all the time, is that it causes you to sit with things. It causes you to sit with discomfort. It causes you to struggle. And that's how you grow," says Melia, who is also a professor in the fields of children's and family ministry at Dallas Baptist University.

Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, which he says is appropriate for a generation marking the "beginning of a whole new reality."

By Dora Mekouar

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the American work landscape, with a significant shift to hybrid schedules. While millions now work remotely, traditional offices remain stuck in pre-pandemic designs. Aditya Sanghvi from McKinsey & Company notes that offices were historically uninspiring, designed as obligatory spaces. However, as the workplace becomes a choice, Sanghvi emphasizes the need for offices to surpass the appeal of working from home.

A McKinsey survey revealed that 58% of Americans worked from home at least one day a week in spring 2022, with the U.S. Department of Labor reporting 34% working remotely in 2022. Despite this, the physical workplace hasn't adapted to the changing work landscape. Ryan Luby from McKinsey suggests that if office environments mirror uninspiring cubicles, employees might as well work from home to avoid unproductive commutes.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), responsible for federal buildings, is taking a proactive stance in redefining the future office. Chuck Hardy, GSA's chief architect, leads the Workplace Innovation Lab, a 25,000-square-foot space allowing federal workers to test various layouts and technologies. The lab aims to create diverse and productive environments based on worker feedback.

Hardy emphasizes the need for offices to be magnets rather than mandates, offering flexibility and tailored solutions for different agencies and offices. The lab features movable furnishings, air quality monitoring, and sustainable technology solutions. Sanghvi envisions immersive conference rooms, anticipating an evolution in meeting spaces over the next decade.

Luby argues that the changing role of the workplace requires offices to focus on group work and community-oriented collaboration. The office of the future, he suggests, will be more group-oriented, flexible, and modular. Sanghvi proposes integrating errand services like pet care and child care into offices to accommodate workers' needs.

While the pandemic reshaped work dynamics, the physical workplace lags in adapting. Forward-thinking initiatives, like GSA's Workplace Innovation Lab, aim to redefine offices by prioritizing flexibility, collaboration, and employee needs, making them more appealing than remote work options.

By Dora Mekouar

West Virginia (41%), Louisiana (40.1%) and Oklahoma (40%) are the states with the fattest populations in the nation, laying claim to the highest proportion of adults with a body mass index (BMI) of 40% or greater, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"The latest data from CDC is looking grim," says Jamie Bussel of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a health-based philanthropic organization. "Twenty-two states had an adult obesity rate at or above 35%. And that was up from 19 states the year before. And when we look back a decade ago, no states had an adult obesity rate at or above 35%. So yes, clearly, when you look at the numbers, they're not going in the right direction."

In addition to West Virginia, Louisiana and Oklahoma, the 22 states with an obesity rate of 35% or higher are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

The highest prevalence of obesity can be found in the Midwest and South, followed by the Northeast and the West. Obesity rates trended higher among Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Alaska natives.

Every U.S. state had an obesity rate of at least 20%. The CDC calls additional support for obesity prevention and treatment "an urgent priority." Bussel says more robust federal food programs are necessary to help families living in poverty. "In February of 2023, the USDA proposed updates to the school meals to align them with a diet that was [in line with] the latest dietary guidelines, and some of those changes include limits on added sugar, reductions in sodium levels, etc.," she says. "We believe that those types of changes are really important changes that could improve students' health and diet quality."

Sheldon Jacobson, a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois, has studied obesity and says the government should invest more in public transportation to get people moving. "We are such an automobile-centric society. We build our communities centered around suburbs," he says. "We focus on driving rather than bicycling or walking or even public transportation and, as a result, that basically contributes to the fact that this inactivity is forcing people to gain weight, whether we like it or not, because we do less."

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Source de l'article : <https://www.bbc.com>

Titre du sujet: Kids banned from social media

By Hannah Ritchie

"I felt really scared to be honest," says James, describing an incident on Snapchat that left him questioning whether it was safe to go to school. The Australian boy, 12, had had a disagreement with a friend, and one night before bed the boy added him to a group chat with two older teenagers. Almost instantly, his phone "started blowing up" with a string of violent messages.

"One of them sounded like he was probably 17," James tells the BBC. "He sent me videos of him with a machete... he was waving it around. Then there were voice messages saying that they were going to catch me and stab me."

James - not his real name - first joined Snapchat when he was 10, after a classmate suggested everyone in their friendship group get the app. But after telling his parents about his cyberbullying experience, which was ultimately resolved by his school, James deleted his account.

His experience is a cautionary tale that shows why the Australian government's proposed social media ban on children under 16 is necessary, says his mother Emma, who is also using a pseudonym.

The laws, which were tabled in parliament's lower house on Thursday, have been billed by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as "world-leading". But while many parents have applauded the move, some experts have questioned whether kids should - or even can - be barred from accessing social media, and what the adverse effects of doing so may be.

Albanese says the ban - which will cover platforms such as X, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram - is about protecting kids from the "harms" of social media. "This is a global problem and we want young Australians essentially to have a childhood. We want parents to have peace of mind," he said on Thursday.

The new legislation provides a "framework" for the ban. But the 17-page document, which is expected to head to the Senate next week, is sparse on detail.

Instead, it will be up to the nation's internet regulator - the eSafety Commissioner - to hash out how to implement and enforce the rules, which will not come into effect for at least 12 months after legislation is passed.

According to the bill, the ban will apply to all children under 16 and that there will be no exemptions for existing users or those with parental consent.

Tech companies will face penalties of up to A\$50m (\$32.5m; £25.7) if they do not comply, but there will be exemptions for platforms which are able to create "low-risk services" deemed suitable for kids. Criteria for this threshold are yet to be set.

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Source de l'article : <https://www.bbc.com/news>

Titre du sujet: France's new dictionary struggles to keep up with the times

By Hugh Schofield

Forty years after they began the task – and nearly four hundred years after receiving their first commission – sages in Paris have finally produced a new edition of the definitive French dictionary.

The full ninth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* was formally presented to President Macron this afternoon in the plush surroundings of the 17th century Collège des Quatre-Nations on the left bank of the Seine. This is where the 40 wise men and women of the French Academy – so-called *immortels* (immortals) chosen for their contributions to French language and literature – have met since the body was first created by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635.

Their task at the start was to “give certain rules to our language, to render it pure and eloquent” – to which end they set about writing their first dictionary. However, the job has proved so slow – the first book was not produced until 1694 and today it takes more than a year to get through a single letter of the alphabet – that the relevance of the enterprise is increasingly in question.

“The effort is praiseworthy, but so excessively tardy that it is perfectly useless,” a collective of linguists wrote in the *Liberation* newspaper on Thursday.

This ninth edition replaces the eighth, which was completed in 1935. Work started in 1986, and three previous sections – up to the letter R – have already been issued. Today the end section (last entry Zzz) has been added, meaning the work is complete.

In its press release, the Academy said the dictionary is a “mirror of an epoch running from the 1950s up to today,” and boasts 21,000 new entries compared to the 1935 version. But many of the “modern” words added in the 1980s or 90s are already out of date. And such is the pace of linguistic change, many words in current use today are too new to make it in.

Thus common words like *tiktokeur*, *vlog*, *smartphone* and *émoji* – which are all in the latest commercial dictionaries – do not exist in the Académie book. Conversely its “new” words include such go-ahead concepts as *soda*, *sauna*, *yuppie* and *supérette* (mini-supermarket).

For the latest R-Z section, the writers have included the new thinking on the feminisation of jobs, including female alternatives (which did not exist before) for positions such as *ambassadeur* and *professeur*. However, print versions of the earlier sections do not have the change, because for many years the Académie fought a rear-guard action against it.

Likewise the third section of the new dictionary – including the letter M – defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, which in France it no longer is. “How can anyone pretend that this collection can serve as a reference for anyone?” the collective asks, noting that online dictionaries are both bigger and faster-moving.

By Jessie Lau and Fan Shan

Every morning, the first thing 64-year-old retiree Li Yulan does when she wakes up is to plant some trees in Ant Forest.

It's a popular carbon footprint-tracking mobile game in China. Players tend to digital trees – and by doing so, help plant real ones. "The game has enriched my life," says Li, who used a pseudonym over security concerns.

Ant Forest has earned international praise for its business-friendly approach to helping the climate. Players earn points and credits for environmentally responsible activities in the real world, like biking to work or choosing sustainable products. These "green energy points" can be used to grow more digital trees, or claim an area in the game for conservation. Ant Forest is built-into Alipay, the world's biggest online payment platform. The more you play, the more you use the Alipay app. Ideally, it's a win-win.

The game's green energy points are supposed to measure the climate benefits of players' activities. Ant Group claims that every point you earn represents 1g of carbon emissions reduced by your behaviour, and the company boasts its users generated some 38 million "tonnes" of points. But the BBC has found examples where some players are generating points not through eco-friendly choices, but with hacks and work arounds. It means some of Ant Forest's advantages could be overstated.

Some users are so eager to boost their performance that they harness special apps that trick their phones into reporting climate-friendly behaviour. Some actually pay other players to rack up their in-game points and trees. As the game has grown in popularity, a black market has emerged, with individuals and groups profiting by selling energy points on social media and offering tips on how to cheat the system in massive online "co-planting" groups.

Even Li, who says Ant Forest encouraged her to be more environmentally conscious, admits to some unscrupulous gaming. Li says she uses three other phones to water trees for her one account, and even bought a device that swings her phone back and forth to make it seem like she's walking more. "Usually, after shaking it for over two hours, I can get over 18,000 steps," Li says.

She says cheating deviates from the point of the game, but she's compelled to outrank other players. "I feel myself having become addicted," Li says.

Wang Xiaoying, head of the Ant Forest programme, says the points generated by users are intended to motivate players to embrace sustainability and are not counted towards Ant Group's own carbon neutrality targets and metrics. However, he acknowledges the game faces issues with cheating.

By Natalia Guerrero

The day I started working on this story about Duolingo it seemed to be everywhere. I heard from a friend who was celebrating her 800-day Spanish practice streak on the app. I read about a journalist from The Guardian who became addicted to learning Italian. A Sri Lankan waitress in Brooklyn switched from English to Spanish when she heard my mother and I speaking, crediting Duolingo for her skills.

But my deep interest in the world's most downloaded language-learning app truly began last year when I saw first-hand its significant impact on new migrants to the US, a country undergoing one of the largest migration waves of the decade. At some point in their long journeys, Duolingo becomes an essential tool for these people on the move.

John Jairo Ocampo, a former bus driver from Colombia, recalls struggling to find work in his first days in the US in 2023, when a boss at a construction site in New York City explained simply, "More English, more money." He used Duolingo to learn. Now, the family lives in Indianapolis, and John's wife is using the app to get along better at her job in an elementary school kitchen; she says her boss is using it, too, to learn Spanish.

The migrant experience is not foreign to Duolingo's CEO and co-founder, Luis von Ahn, who was born and raised in Guatemala, a Central American country with over 55% of its population living in poverty.

"In a Latin American country, and in Guatemala in particular, if you have money, you can buy a very good education, but if you don't have money, sometimes you don't even learn how to read and write," Von Ahn told the BBC in a recent interview at Duolingo's brand new office in downtown New York. "That made a big impression on me."

So when non-native English speakers Von Ahn and Severin Hacker, Duolingo's CTO and co-founder, started their company in 2012, they knew that learning languages, and in particular learning English, has the potential to change people's lives. "This is why we've worked really hard to keep Duolingo free, because we want to give access to education to everybody."

The app combines short, engaging lessons and game-like elements to help users develop speaking, reading, writing and listening skills in 41 languages. Around half of users are practicing English, and Duolingo can be used to learn other major world languages like Spanish and Chinese, as well as some lesser-spoken languages.

Despite the success of his app the founder does not believe that Duolingo could replace schools and universities. According to him, "schools and universities serve other purposes. Schools, for example, serve the purpose of childcare. And universities, you get to learn how to be an adult."

Along a small street in Nepal's Bhaktapur city stands an unassuming building with a strange name - the Museum of Stolen Art. Inside it are rooms filled with statues of Nepal's sacred gods and goddesses. Among them is the Saraswati sculpture. Sitting atop a lotus, the Hindu goddess of wisdom holds a book, prayer beads and a classical instrument called a veena in her four hands. But like all the other sculptures in the room, the statue is a fake. The Saraswati is one of 45 replicas in the museum, which will have an official site in Panauti, set to open to the public in 2026.

The museum is the brainchild of Nepalese conservationist Rabindra Puri, who is spearheading a mission to secure the return of dozens of Nepal's stolen artefacts, many of which are scattered across museums, auction houses or private collections in countries like the US, UK and France. In the past five years, he has hired half a dozen craftsmen to create replicas of these statues, each taking between three months and a year to finish. The museum has not received any government funding.

His mission is to secure the return of these stolen artefacts - in exchange for the replicas he has created. In Nepal, such statues reside in temples all across the country and are regarded as part of the country's "living culture", rather than mere showpieces, says Sanjay Adhikari, the secretary of the Nepal Heritage Recovery Campaign.

Many are worshipped by locals every day, with some followers offering food and flowers to the gods. "An old lady told me she used to worship Saraswati daily," says Mr Puri. "When she found out the idol was stolen, she felt more depressed than when her husband passed away." It is also common for followers to touch these statues for blessings - meaning they are also rarely guarded - leaving them wide open for thieves.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, hundreds of artefacts were looted from Nepal as the isolated country was opening up to the outside world. Many of the country's most powerful administrators back then were believed to have been behind some of these thefts - responsible for smuggling them abroad to art collectors and pocketing the proceeds.

For decades, Nepalis were largely unaware about their missing art and where it had gone, but that has been changing, especially since the founding of the National Heritage Recovery Campaign in 2021 - a movement led by citizen activists to reclaim lost treasures.

But there are many hurdles. The Taleju Necklace, dating back to the 17th century, is a case in point. In 1970, the giant gold-plated necklace engraved with precious stones went missing from the Temple of Taleju - the goddess known as the chief protective deity of Nepal. It's still unclear how it might have been stolen and many in Nepal had no idea where it might have gone until three years ago, when it was seen in an unlikely place - the Art Institute of Chicago.

It was spotted by Dr Sweta Gyanu Baniya, a Nepali academic based in the US who said she fell to her knees and started to cry when she saw the necklace. "It's not just a necklace, it's a part of our goddess who we worship. I felt like it shouldn't be here. It's sacred," she told the US university Virginia Tech.