

Fast Forward

Virtual Social Spaces

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Perhaps you'll recognize this familiar, if less than perfect, scenario. You're teleconferencing with your friend whom you haven't seen in years and who lives halfway around the world. His face looks a bit tired, tilted at a strange angle. The better part of you knows it's a pleasure just to be able to talk to him and see his face. Decades ago you wouldn't have had this luxury. But the voice in your other ear is less tolerant, dissatisfied with the way this interaction, like many interactions across distance, are mediated by technology. Today's connective "thin-media" (bits of content we consume on devices like a smartwatch, without opening our phone or computer, such as a notification) may attempt to draw us closer, but this closeness often seems fractured and incomplete.

You'll be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with colleagues in Rotterdam, Shanghai and Mumbai at an augmented reality whiteboard, moving about and speaking to others in the room as though they were in your office.

But we believe recent technology is poised to reframe these interactions and build trust in the future through highly immersive and visual experiences. You'll be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with colleagues in Rotterdam, Shanghai and Mumbai at an augmented reality whiteboard, moving about and speaking to others in the room as though they were in your office. Distributed global teams are not going away, but the frustrating aspect of your interactions with these teams—the presence disparity created by a two-dimensional screen, ambient noise and distracted colleagues—will wane as meetings are held on equally experienced, common ground. What will be preserved is a diversity of geographic and cultural viewpoints that inform strategic decision making and enrich the character of the workplace.

Telepresence holds us frozen to the camera and keyboard, much like being seated behind a steering wheel in a car. Now imagine a walk through a park, or a game night with your colleagues—our physical freedom will extend by orders of magnitude: from seated to standing to moving, as well as all the postures in between.

Get ready to say farewell to presence disparity. The future of space has arrived.

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