Unintended Consequences

Imbalance in the benefits of technology

Unforeseen Uses

Erosion of trust

Impact on the environment
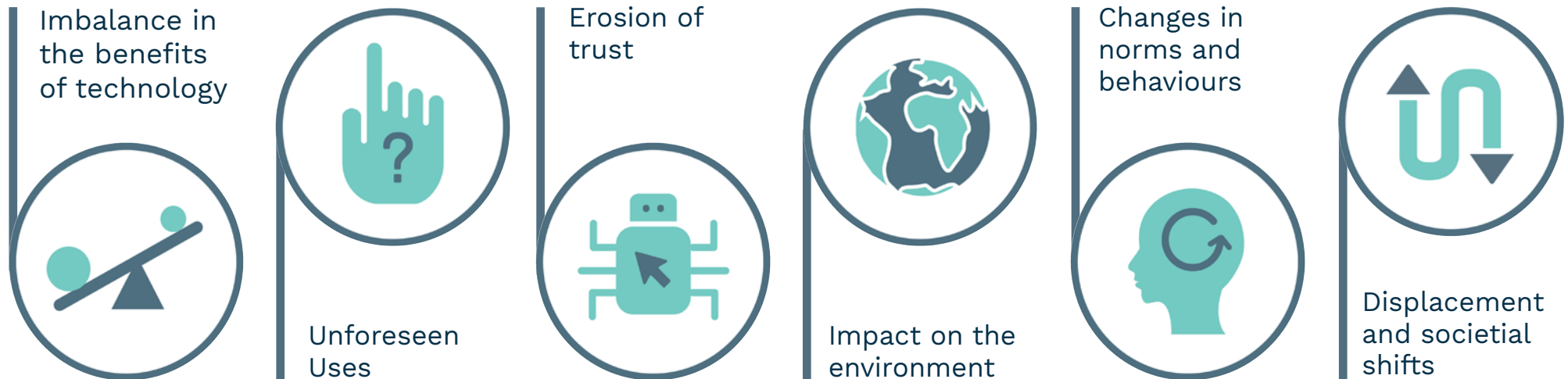
Changes in norms and behaviours

Displacement and societial shifts

Unintended Consequences of Digital Technology

Imbalance in the benefits of technology

Causes of consequence

- Digital divide
- Imbalance of representation online
- Imbalance of representation within the process
- Imbalance in digital understanding
- Imbalance in power

Unforeseen uses

Causes of consequence

- Uses not imagined
- Users not imagined
- Replicating features into new products
- Lack of system monitoring and support
- Categorising humans in data
- Challenging traditional ideas of what it means to be human

Erosion of trust

Causes of consequence

- Not designing for those with bad intent
- Weak security policies and procedures
- Privacy without context
- Transparency without context
- Lack of reliability
- Information without permission

Impact on the environment

Causes of consequence

- Innovation for environmental protection
- Energy and resources to make tech
- Energy and resources to use tech
- Technology infrastructure
- Materials and supply chains

Changes in norms and behaviours

Causes of consequence

- Design incentives that change behaviour
- Online dynamics that change relationships
- Products that change our social norms
- Products that change how we work
- Features that change language
- Faster pace of change
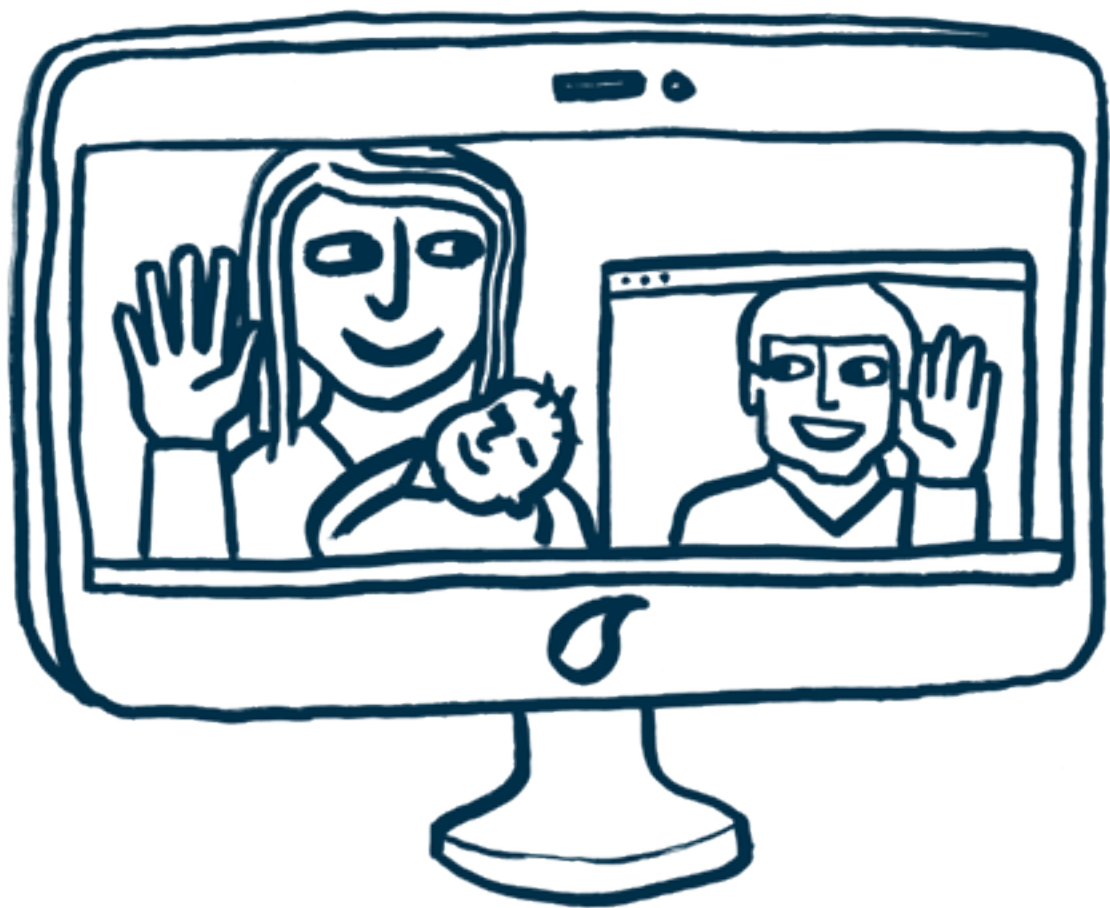- Features that shift what's socially acceptable

Displacement and societal shifts

Causes of consequence

- Automation of functions, jobs or sectors
- New economies and business models
- Changing public institutions or services
- Changing sectors
- Displacing and replacing communities
- Treating humans as machines

What could this mean to the consumers of your product? Have you considered security, reliability, support & monitoring, understandability?

What could this mean for wellbeing or relationships? Who else does your user experience your product with?

What could this mean if everyone in the world were doing it? How could this affect the communities you operate in?

What could this mean to people in their professional life? How could this affect different markets?