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Introduction

In an era marked by rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), the landscape of education and employment is undergoing significant transformation. The advent of generative AI has not only expedited the pace of innovation but has also challenged our preconceived notions about the job market and the nature of creative work. Where we once anticipated AI to automate repetitive and mundane tasks, tools like generative AI have shown the potential to reshape roles traditionally considered immune to automation, such as those in the creative industries.

This seismic shift presents a complex challenge: how do we adapt our educational curriculum to prepare the next generation for a job market in constant flux? The task is daunting, spanning across various demographics - from those just entering the job market to mid-career professionals, seniors, and even the retired population looking to re-enter the workforce. Additionally, this challenge is compounded by the acceleration of the 'digital divide' into what can now be termed the 'Al divide', highlighting disparities in access to cutting-edge technologies.

This paper narrows the focus on the context of the challenge to the local colleges while keeping in mind the bigger context of education and society as a whole. Within that context, the paper is focused on the design and implementation of Level 3 and Level 4 courses. These courses stand at the critical juncture of secondary education and higher learning, providing a vital bridge to either further education or direct entry into the workforce. With Al's evolution reshaping industries at an unprecedented rate, these levels of education must evolve and prepare society for the transition to the new era of Al-powered future.

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Transitioning To The AI-powered World

While the context seems to be that we need to prepare students for jobs that do not yet exist, using technologies that are being invented, to solve problems we are not yet aware of, and we don't have time, the opportunities are endless too.

The breakthroughs in generative AI in 2023 have ushered us into a new era. An era anticipated for its characteristics, but not for the swiftness of its arrival. It took everyone by surprise, the experts more as they can see "what's possible" now and can compare the pace at which it is happening to the previous advancements of technology.

One of the features of this era (the AI-powered era) is that the viability of current and future job roles is in question, indicating a time when human intervention in many jobs we know today might become minimal or redundant. Historically, significant technological disruptions, such as during the Industrial Revolution or the birth of the Internet, necessitated a reevaluation and adaptation of the education system to equip society for the changes. Similarly, but without having the luxury of time we had in the past, today's education system including the local colleges, must be redesigned to prepare individuals not just for the current job market but for a future where AI plays a central role.

The responsibility we bear is to envision education not as a mere transfer of knowledge but as a dynamic platform that instils adaptability, critical thinking, and ethical considerations in leveraging AI. It's not about teaching AI as a course, it's about changing the way we look at education, considering AI becoming a central part of our lives.

With that backdrop, the aim is to outline strategic recommendations for reshaping Level 3 and Level 4 courses to meet the demands of the Al-driven future, ensuring that learners are equipped with the skills, mindset, and ethical understanding to thrive in the coming decades.

While some, ignorantly, argue this "new technology" is no different and we will just have to adjust our education system over time, some others, including the author of this paper (and that's mostly the experts who understand how fast AI is advancing and the impact of each step of advancement on the jobs and wider aspects of the society), are warning us that we have to act fast and be very intentional and cohesive, at all levels of governance, to be able to take our society through the transition to the new AI-Powered world. The reasons are:

1. The Nature Of Al

The intrinsic nature of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is unlike any technology we have encountered before. Its ability to learn, adapt, and make decisions based on data mimics cognitive functions traditionally seen as uniquely human. This capability positions AI not just as a tool, but as a potential collaborator, capable of enhancing human work or, in some instances, replacing it entirely. The transformative potential of AI extends beyond mere efficiency improvements, offering new ways to tackle complex problems, innovate, and drive progress across every sector of society. Understanding this unique nature is essential for reshaping educational systems to prepare individuals not just to use AI, but to collaborate with it, innovate upon it, and navigate the ethical considerations it raises

2. The Pace At Which AI Is Advancing

The velocity of AI development is unprecedented, far surpassing the evolutionary pace of previous technological advancements. This rapid progress, fueled by breakthroughs in algorithms, computing power, and data availability, has led to AI systems capable of outperforming humans in specific tasks much sooner than anticipated. The swift advancement means that skills and jobs can become obsolete at an alarming rate, necessitating an education system that emphasises adaptability, lifelong learning, and a deep understanding of AI's potential and limitations. Preparing society for this fast-paced evolution requires an education system agile enough to keep up with the technological forefront.

3. Ease Of Access To Al

At no point in history, an advanced technology become accessible to millions overnight. The democratisation of AI has the potential to unleash a wave of creativity and entrepreneurship but also raises challenges in ensuring equitable access and preventing misuse. An education system that encompasses not only the technical skills to leverage AI but also the critical thinking and ethical judgment to use it responsibly is crucial for harnessing this widespread accessibility for the greater good.

4. The Digital Divide Turning Into Al Divide

The digital divide, the gap between those who have access to modern information and communication technology and those who do not, threatens to morph into an Al

divide. This new form of inequality could further exacerbate social and economic disparities, as those without access to AI technology or the skills to use it effectively find themselves at a growing disadvantage. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to make AI education and resources available to all segments of society, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the AI-powered future. This includes special considerations for age-related accessibility and tech literacy, ensuring that the benefits of AI do not bypass older generations or the technologically underserved.

5. The Complexities Of The Impact Of AI On Society

Al's impact on society extends far beyond the technological and economic realms, touching on ethical, legal, and social dimensions. From questions of bias and fairness in Al algorithms to the implications for privacy, employment, and social interaction, the ramifications of Al are complex and far-reaching. Navigating this landscape requires a multidisciplinary approach to education, one that not only equips individuals with the technical skills to develop and implement Al but also fosters an understanding of its broader implications. By integrating perspectives from the humanities, social sciences, and ethics, education must be intentional in preparing individuals to contribute positively to the Al-powered world.

We know education is the superpower to create a better life for all, hence we have to seriously look at our education system and use it to prepare our societies against the devastating impacts of uncertainty and disruption ahead, as well as utilising the full potential of AI for good.

The Role Of Education In Transitioning To The New Era

From the informal transmission of skills and knowledge in ancient times to the structured institutions of learning we recognise today, education has always served as the cornerstone for societal progress and individual development. Ancient civilisations established the early foundations of education, emphasising philosophy, mathematics, and sciences, and setting the groundwork for systematic educational practices.

The modern education system, characterised by structured curricula, compulsory education laws, and standardised testing, emerged in response to the demands of the Industrial Revolution. This period necessitated a skilled workforce to meet the needs of rapidly advancing industries, leading to the formalisation and expansion of educational institutions worldwide. The design of contemporary education systems is heavily influenced by this industrial model, focusing on standardisation, efficiency, and preparation for the workforce.

However, as we transition into the Al-powered era, we need to rethink and reshape the education system. The goal is no longer just to produce a workforce but to foster adaptable, lifelong learners who can navigate complex problems, think critically, and contribute meaningfully to society in an era of constant change and recognition of co-existing with Al. This perspective underscores the need for education systems to evolve continuously, reflecting the changing demands of society and empowering individuals to constantly adapt to new ways of life, whatever that might look like.

To achieve that we need to consider the below suggestions for our education system evolution (and other ideas will emerge as we evolve our understanding of the new world):

1. Incorporate Al Literacy Across Curricula

Integrate basic AI and machine learning concepts across all levels of education, ensuring that students from a young age understand how AI technologies work and their implications on society.

2. Emphasise Interdisciplinary Learning

Develop programs that combine STEM subjects with humanities, arts, and social sciences, encouraging students to explore the ethical, cultural, and social dimensions of technology and AI.

3. Al-Based Critical-Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Move beyond traditional teaching on critical thinking, creativity, and complex problem-solving skills and teach them in augmented-intelligence mode, where students learn them in collaboration with AI.

Strengthen Core Academic Subjects For Al Era

Reinforce the importance of subjects such as English, mathematics, and science. Specifically English plays a pivotal role in developing communication and ethical reasoning skills. It's about understanding the human context in which AI operates. For instance, enhancing English courses with content that encourages students to analyse and critique the societal impact of AI, debate ethical considerations, and articulate complex ideas clearly can provide them with the comprehensive skill set needed in a technologically advanced society.

5. Promote Digital And Al Ethics

Embed discussions on digital citizenship, ethics, privacy, and the responsible use of AI into the educational framework, preparing students to make ethical decisions in a technologically advanced society.

6. Instil Lifelong Learning As The Norm For Everyone

Develop adult education, reskilling, and upskilling programs focused on AI and emerging technologies to accommodate the workforce's needs as industries evolve.

7. Introduce Flexible And Adaptive Learning Models

Utilise AI to create personalised learning experiences that adapt to the individual student's pace and style of learning, enhancing engagement and understanding of complex subjects. This is crucial as we face a need to educate students from all backgrounds and prior experiences.

8. Implement Project-Based And Experiential Learning

Encourage hands-on learning through projects and real-world problem-solving that utilise AI tools, fostering an environment where students learn by doing and understand the practical applications of AI.

9. Foster Global Collaboration And Exchange

Promote international collaboration and exchange programs focused on AI and technology, facilitating a global dialogue among students, educators, and policymakers on best practices for integrating AI into society responsibly.

10. Continually Eliminate Courses With No Future

Continually evaluating and phasing out courses that no longer align with the future needs of the workforce is not just a matter of curriculum relevance but also of economic and time efficiency. Investing in courses that have no future in an Al-driven world equates to squandering valuable resources—both financial and temporal—that could otherwise be allocated to programs that prepare students for imminent technological integrations in their respective fields.

By embracing these transformations, education can serve as a powerful vehicle for preparing societies for the challenges and opportunities of an Al-powered future, ensuring that individuals are not only capable of adapting to technological change but are also equipped to use Al for the betterment of humanity.

Level 3 And Level 4 Courses, Laying The Foundation

The exploration and redevelopment of Level 3 and Level 4 courses are not just about meeting the immediate needs of a changing job market; they are about laying the groundwork for a society that is not only adept at using AI but also capable of steering its evolution towards the greater good.

As AI technologies begin to pervade every aspect of our lives, from healthcare diagnostics to environmental conservation efforts, the educational framework at these pivotal levels must be dynamic, fostering a generation that is both technically proficient and ethically grounded.

For instance, a course on AI in healthcare could go beyond coding and algorithms to include case studies on patient privacy, algorithmic bias, and the socio-economic implications of automating diagnosis and treatment. Similarly, a program on environmental AI could involve projects where students look at AI models that track biodiversity, analyse climate change patterns, or optimise renewable energy sources, encouraging them to see technology as a tool for global stewardship.

Moreover, as the digital landscape continues to evolve, these courses should also aim to instil a sense of agility and lifelong learning in students. This could be achieved through modular course designs that allow for rapid updates based on technological advancements, or through partnerships with tech companies and research institutions that provide students with real-world projects and internships.

Imagine a Level 4 course where students collaborate with a tech firm to develop AI-powered solutions for urban planning, integrating smart technologies into city infrastructure to improve traffic flow, energy consumption, and emergency response systems for their local council. Such collaborations not only enhance the learning experience but also bridge the gap between education and industry, ensuring that students gain relevant, up-to-date skills that will serve them in the workforce.

Ultimately, the redesign of Level 3 and Level 4 courses should not just adapt to the changes brought about by AI; it should anticipate and shape the future, encouraging students to envision and work towards a world where AI enhances human capabilities, promotes equity, and addresses our most pressing challenges. This forward-thinking approach will not only prepare individuals for the careers of tomorrow but will also empower them to use AI as a force for positive change in society.

For Level 3 courses, the focus should be on laying a strong foundation in both technical skills and critical thinking. This might include:

- Al Fundamentals And Ethics: An introduction to Al technologies and their ethical implications, covering basic principles of machine learning, data ethics, and the societal impacts of Al.
- Al Literacy And Cybersecurity: Teaching students about digital and Al safety, data protection, and the responsible use of technology, preparing them for a world increasingly dependent on Al-powered platforms.
- Al-Assisted Language-Agnostic Programming: Demystifies the concept of being bound to a single programming language by embracing the power of Al to adapt, learn, and solve software challenges in any required syntax. Students will embark on a transformative journey, acquiring the skills to not only understand

multiple programming paradigms but also to efficiently use AI as a partner in generating code, debugging, and optimising software solutions.

- Innovative Problem Solving With Technology: Encouraging creative thinking and problem-solving through the use of AI tools for generating solutions to real-world challenges.
- Interdisciplinary STEAM Projects: Offering case studies of real-world problems that have been solved with AI, the students work through them as a hands-on course and analyse the solution step by step.
- Al And Society: Exploring the relationship between AI, society, and the
 environment, preparing students to think critically about the role of technology in
 addressing local, national and global challenges.

For Level 4 courses, the aim should be to deepen technical expertise while enhancing leadership, project management, and ethical decision-making skills. Suggested courses might include:

- Sector-Based Applied Al And Machine Learning: Offering hands-on experience with Al and machine learning projects, focusing on the application of these technologies in various industry sectors. This must be sector-specific.
- Data Science And Analytics: Teaching advanced techniques in data analysis, visualisation, and interpretation, crucial for leveraging the power of data in decision-making processes.
- Advanced Language-Agnostics Programming: Emphasising mastery in leveraging advanced AI tools and platforms to automate, optimise, and innovate across the software development lifecycle, applying AI to enhance code quality, performance, and creativity in a language-agnostic framework.
- Responsible Leadership In The Al Age: Developing leadership skills with an emphasis on ethics, social responsibility, and sustainable practices in an Al-powered world.

- Al In Business: For existing and future business leaders and managers, delving
 into the strategic application of Al technologies to optimise operations, drive
 innovation, and create competitive advantages in various business domains.
 Students will explore case studies of successful Al implementation, understand the
 challenges of Al integration, and learn how to devise Al-driven business strategies
 that are both effective and ethically sound.
- Advanced Digital Fabrication And Al-Enhanced Design: Exploring advanced concepts in 3D printing, robotics, and Al-driven design tools, uncovering new avenues for innovation across diverse fields. The curriculum emphasises the synergy between Al and digital fabrication, from automated design processes to intelligent material optimisation, and how these technologies are revolutionising industries such as manufacturing, architecture, and product design.

By focusing on the above areas at L3 and L4, the education system can ensure that learners not only possess the technical competencies required in an Al-powered world but also the ethical, creative, and critical thinking skills necessary to use these technologies for societal benefit. It also prepares them for a lifelong learning mindset which is crucial as we navigate the uncharted territories of transitioning to the future, such as the lack of "learning on the job through mentoring" due to the increased and ongoing demand on senior workers to upskill themselves.

National Considerations

The UK's economy is significantly driven by the service sector, including financial services, professional services, and the creative industries. This economic structure necessitates L3 and L4 courses that not only impart technical AI skills but also emphasise soft skills such as critical thinking, communication, and ethical judgment. Courses designed to integrate AI into service-oriented roles could provide the UK workforce with a competitive edge, combining technological savvy with interpersonal skills crucial for service-based industries.

The Creative Industries

The UK boasts a vibrant creative sector, spanning arts, media, fashion, and design. Al's growing role in these fields presents both opportunities and challenges. L3 and L4 courses

need to address how AI can be a tool for enhancing creativity and production while also tackling concerns about job displacement and the integrity of creative works. Offering courses that explore AI in creative contexts, such as "AI for Digital Media" or "Design Thinking in the Age of AI", could empower the creative workforce to leverage AI, ensuring the UK remains a global leader in creative innovation.

The Diversity Of Population

The UK's diverse population includes a wide range of ages, cultural backgrounds, and educational needs. This diversity requires a flexible and inclusive approach to AI education at the L3 and L4 courses, ensuring that courses are accessible to all, from young students making their initial foray into higher education to older workers seeking reskilling opportunities. Addressing the digital skills gap in underserved communities and ensuring that AI education is not confined to elite institutions are crucial for fostering a broadly capable and inclusive workforce.

The Educators Challenge

Addressing the recruitment and retention challenges within the teaching profession, especially in computing and STEM subjects, necessitates a revolutionary approach to how we train, value and support educators. The difficulty in attracting and retaining talented individuals in teaching roles is not only a pressing issue but also a barrier to achieving the significant educational transformations required for the Al-powered future. For example, in BCS Chartered Institution for IT Professionals' contribution to the 11-16 curriculum committee in the House of Lords, the concept of braiding careers was proposed, a model where professionals from the industry take on teaching responsibilities part-time. Such an innovative approach aims to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application, enriching the learning experience for students. An example of this in action is the collaboration with Microsoft through **TEALS** (https://www.bcs.org/deliver-and-teach-qualifications/teachers-schools-and-colleges/teals/), where industry experts co-pilot classes with educators in Key Stages 3 and 4. These initiatives not only enhance the curriculum with practical insights but also offer a sustainable model for bolstering the teaching workforce, ensuring that education evolves in tandem with technological advancements.

The government could use different leavers to implement such initiatives nationally e.g. direct tax incentives or reverse the Apprenticeship model.

The Limitation Of Our Past Successes

This is also important to make sure, we do not limit ourselves to what the UK has thrived on in the past. For example, there is a huge opportunity in environmental jobs, from research through to green construction jobs.

The Infrastructure Investment Strategy

The UK also is suffering from an ageing infrastructure which will be a challenge to overcome to create an equitable and fair future. It is important to invest in infrastructure that enables Al advancement rather than a traditional economy that is based on logistics and transport.

Local Considerations

Having a local strategy for transitioning to an Al-powered future creates the opportunity to allow for a nuanced exploration of how Al can be integrated into education, the workforce, and the community in ways that align with the specific needs, strengths, and challenges of the area. Doing this also highlights the collaboration and resource-sharing opportunities between local areas, as well as better business cases for securing public and private funding to achieve a greater impact.

- Current State Of Educational Facilities: Review the capacity of schools, colleges, and vocational training centres in the local area to deliver Al-focused L3 and L4 courses. This includes an assessment of available resources, teacher readiness, and existing curricula that could support Al education as well as courses that should be retired to free up resources.
- Community Engagement And Lifelong Learning: Explore how local community centres, libraries, and online platforms can contribute to lifelong learning and public education on AI, ensuring that all age groups have opportunities for upskilling.
- Local Economy And Employment Sectors: Examine the local economic composition, identifying key industries and employment sectors that could be transformed by Al. This could include the service sector, healthcare, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This is important for offering sector-based Al courses.

- Workforce Readiness For AI: Assess the readiness of the local workforce to adapt to AI-driven changes. Consider prioritising initiatives to reskill workers in vulnerable sectors and strategies to integrate AI literacy into workforce development programs.
- **Demographic Profile:** Analyse the local demographic profile to understand the diverse needs of its population. This includes age distribution, socio-economic status, and cultural diversity, which will inform tailored approaches to AI education and community engagement. This is very important to consider the population who are not digital natives (35+) and are in middle-management and senior roles.
- Al Divide And Inclusivity: Anticipate and address the risk of Digital and Al Divide in the local community, identifying areas with limited access to digital infrastructure and proposing measures to ensure equitable access to Al education and resources.
- Al In Public Services: Investigate the potential for Al to enhance public services in the local area, such as healthcare, transportation, and municipal services. Highlight pilot projects or initiatives that could serve as models for Al integration.
- Community Engagement And Ethical Considerations: Consider the different ways of engaging the local community in conversations about Al's impact on society. This includes ethical considerations, privacy concerns, and the role of Al in public life.
- Collaboration Between Educational Institutions And Industry: Highlight opportunities for partnerships between local educational institutions and local businesses to foster Al innovation and education. This could include internships, joint research projects, and community workshops.
- Government Support And Policy Frameworks: Outline the role of local government in supporting AI education and integration in the community. Discuss existing policies, funding opportunities, and any gaps that need to be addressed to create a supportive ecosystem for AI.
- Local Success Stories: Share case studies of successful Al projects or initiatives in the local area that showcase the positive impact of Al on the community,

education, or local economy. This can serve as an inspiration and a model for future endeavours.

This localised focus will help in developing targeted strategies that leverage local areas' unique strengths and address their specific needs in the journey toward an Al-powered future. It will also create a baseline to compare different local areas, and share knowledge and learning from success stories as well as failed attempts. It will foster a lifelong learning mindset and be a source of inspiration for the whole country.

Recommendations

Given the location of the London Borough of Sutton, with its diverse population spanning various ages, cultures, and economic backgrounds, as well as its history of collaboration with neighbouring boroughs, it's essential to leverage these strengths in designing educational courses. In this context, access to role models becomes a critical factor in inspiring and guiding students towards future careers, especially in fields influenced by Al. "You cannot be what you cannot see" underscores the importance of exposing students to successful figures who have navigated similar paths. Thus, it is recommended that the following courses be developed and delivered in partnership with local organisations, businesses, and leaders. This approach not only enriches the curriculum but also fosters stronger links between the college and local employers/leaders, providing students with tangible examples of success and avenues for mentorship and career development. By integrating role models into the educational experience, we can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, empowering students to envision and achieve their full potential in an Al-powered future. I recommend the following courses to be delivered in partnership with the mentioned organisations:

- Al Fundamentals and Ethics for Teachers (in collaboration with schools)
- Al Fundamentals and Ethics for Public Servants (in collaboration with the local Councils)
- Al Fundamentals and Ethics for Care Professionals (in partnership with public and private care providers and NHS)
- Al Fundamentals and Ethics for Middle Managers (in collaboration with local businesses)
- Al Fundamentals and Ethics for Senior Executives (in collaboration with local businesses)

- Al Literacy and Cybersecurity for all (covering beginner and essential levels)
- Al-Assisted Language-Agnostic Programming
- Al and Society
- Sector-based Applied AI (for sectors with the highest demands in the borough or maybe in the form of one-session events between multiple boroughs)

The biggest challenge for Sutton (and Nationally) will be sourcing qualified and capable educators and teaching materials that can keep up with the pace of change. While the government can influence this challenge nationally (as discussed above in the "National Considerations" section), locally, the only way to successfully implement this perspective is to form strong and active partnerships nationally and internationally. For example, BCS The Chartered Institute for IT Professionals can be a great resource to the local areas to expand their expertise as well as share knowledge and resources: CAS, Computing at School, is a BCS-powered community of professional practice for educators. Their AI-themed community is currently the most popular and now has over 300 members. It's also the most active community in terms of sharing, posting and community-driven activities. There are some great community-driven activities including the creation of a General Guide for Teachers and an AI Policy Template for schools.

Conclusion

The future is more uncertain than ever and will remain uncertain, and we can only try to think of different possible scenarios, engaging actively with these varied scenarios to navigate the unfolding landscape of possibilities with agility and informed judgment.

To thrive, we continuously need to expand our learning horizons, absorbing new knowledge, skills, and perspectives that enable us to refine our understanding and adapt our strategies. By fostering a mindset that embraces change and leverages it as a catalyst for growth, we position ourselves to not only withstand the ambiguities of the future but to shape it.

Thus, our journey forward is one of perpetual adaptation, a dynamic interplay between envisioning possible futures, engaging with them deeply, and recalibrating our path according to our new understandings.

About The Author

Our world is driven forward by changemakers who strive to transform their industries. They have the power to imagine new ways to solve problems, the passion to bring the world with them, and the conviction to break through the barriers along the way. Somayeh has dedicated her career to working with those leaders.

A technologist with an optimistic view of the world, she sits at the centre of the triangle of Technology-Education-Business, with a lens of Anthropology, and she is working optimistically and



intentionally towards building our Al-powered future. As a changemaker, she has co-founded a few tech businesses: Geeks, WordUp, and most recently London School of Innovation which is going to be the UK's first tech-specialised university.

She has a BSc and MSc in Software Engineering. She is also a Fellow at BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT Professionals, The RSA (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce), Forward Institute, The Society of Leadership Fellows, and Women's Engineering Society.

As a passionate storyteller, she regularly hosts changemakers or their advisors on The Innovation Room podcast and they discuss points of view that you will not hear in the mainstream media.

As a geekess, she is a big believer in people, their development, and their contributions, regardless of their gender. She continues to find, develop, mentor, and showcase role models who prove the point.

She has been recognised by many national and international award bodies including:

- Winner of Queen's Award for Enterprise in Innovation
- Winner of the UK Innovation and Entrepreneurship Award
- Winner of the Gold Stevie Award: Most Innovative Company of the Year in Europe
- Finalist at Inclusive Tech Alliance Awards: Business Leader of the Year
- Finalist at The Digital Entrepreneur Awards: Entrepreneur of the Year

You can find her regularly speaking at events on the topic of AI, often engaged in a passionate debate about the future of education, work, business, politics, smart cities, and anything about dogs!

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