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F&S April 2021

The UK is slowly and carefully working its way to the end of what we are promised will be the last lockdown of the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst we appreciate that “slowly and carefully” are not normally words one would associate with the current government, we do see in them one of the more obvious coronavirus impacts: moving too fast, without foresight, and with minimal planning, has no benefits. We are hopeful that the lesson has been learned.

Indeed, we are seeing increased focus on foresight in the wider public sector in the UK. SAMI is currently working on projects for the public sector which illustrate what may be a systemic change – an understanding that scenario work, with its deep engagement in the whole galaxy of trends, the intensity of thinking developed in scenario generation workshops, and the creation of truly flexible plans, is preferable to single-point planning.

Two important reports from the US illustrate the point: the [Global Trends](#) analysis from the [Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#); and the same office’s unclassified [Annual Threat Assessment](#). The latter “examines the diverse array of threats that exist against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, great power competition, and rapidly evolving technology.” Both are worth reading – and for those just who want the headlines take a look at [Huw Williams’ blog](#).

Foresight, scenarios and trends. Is it possible that futures thinking is becoming mainstream? We would very much like to think so.

SAMI is pleased to welcome two new Associates:

Tanja Schindler: Tanja supports companies, start-ups and freelancers in understanding Futures Thinking as a holistic, sustainable and goal-oriented organizational and life direction. Formerly working for large German corporates in the industrial and lighting sector, she now supports organizations to transform their businesses successfully into the future. She also leads and contributes to Foresight projects at UNESCO, the EU Commission and WFP. She is the founder and guardian of the global community Futures Space. Her biography is [here](#).



Harry Wilby: Harry specialises in scenario planning, crisis management, political advisory, and the implementation of business strategy. He has advised financial institutions on their operating models as well as their commercial and communications strategies. He has successfully managed and delivered projects for Coutts & Company on Brexit and ICB Ring-fencing. Harry's biography is [here](#).



Jonathan Blanchard Smith gave a talk on " Britain in 2030 - Four Post-Brexit Scenarios Revisited" to the Greater Manchester branch of the Chartered Quality Institute. Taking our "Four post-Brexit Scenarios" publication as his starting point, he re-examined the scenarios in the light of the withdrawal agreement. Now the direction of travel is more clear, this was a useful opportunity to see what happens when scenarios become actual, and to think again about where we are – and where we may be going.

The [Institute of Leadership and Management](#) is publishing an article by Huw Williams on scenario planning, called “Expect the Unexpected”. Using an example from SAMI’s work for the EU’s Health and Safety Agency (EU-OSHA), the article goes through each of the steps of a scenario planning project, from identifying key drivers, through creating scenarios to testing policies against each of them (“wind-tunnelling”).

One of the attendees at our current **SAMI Cohort** reported that *“the sessions were full of insights and provided me a lot of food for thought and further considerations.”* We are now recruiting for a second cohort where in a small group with other professionals you can explore the issues surrounding your foresight work. Cohort members choose the topics for discussion - in the first group these included improving your horizon scanning, winning over internal customers, and examples of successful scenario planning. Please contact Jane.Dowsett@samiconsulting.co.uk if you are interested.

The blocking of the Suez Canal by a megaship is a lesson on resilience. Developing systems with single points of failure is a recipe for chaos. At the beginning of the month, Guardian writer Flora Lipo reported on plans to build [a second canal](#). Where are the points of failure in your systems?

Executive Education

Our online course “Understanding the Future” will be run again on 26th to 30th April 2021. The course fee is £490 + VAT, and discounts may be available for self-funded individuals. For more information, please email us at training@samiconsulting.co.uk.

A range of information on various [futures techniques](#) – our version of the GOS Futures Toolkit - is available on our website.

Futures Issues

[Four strains of bacteria](#), three of which were previously unknown to science, have

been found on the space station. They may be used to help grow plants during long-term spaceflight missions in the future.

[“Smart bricks”](#) could act as supercapacitors to store energy and power your lighting. The bricks are coated with a conductive polymer made up of nanofibers that get absorbed in the porous structure of the bricks, eventually turning the whole brick into “an ion sponge” that conducts and stores energy.

Low power chips can convert [contacts lenses into augmented reality displays](#) to enhance the vision of people with diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, retinitis, pigmentosa, and macular degeneration.

The US Army is using Microsoft’s [HoloLens AR](#) to provide “enhanced situational awareness, enabling information sharing and decision-making in a variety of scenarios”. HoloLens is also [enabling surgeons](#) to match 3D images with what they are seeing front of them.

A [second-hand car market for EVs](#) is needed, both to increase their adoption and to reduce waste. It’s an interesting example of how tech adoption is about more than just the tech itself.

Custom-fitted [mouthguards with sensors](#) that measure collisions and direct impacts to the head could give a greater understanding of when rugby players potentially become at risk of concussion or head trauma.

A [“smart forest”](#) has been equipped with a system for real-time monitoring and warning on sounds specific to illegal logging operations. Acoustic sensors send sounds via the cloud to an AI system, which analyses them in real-time, and if noises such as chainsaws or cars are detected sends real-time alerts to an app installed on forest rangers’ phones.

Gucci sneakers for \$17.99? The catch – they’re virtual! Their first [‘digital’ shoes](#)

can be worn only in virtual or augmented worlds online.

Our Blogs

Our blogs recently have looked at overviews of reports and articles looking at future trends and themes that may anticipate the future. In March we first considered [resilience which a BCG blog](#) argued that the focus on efficiency left us no longer resilient to crises such as the pandemic. Following that we reviewed a book edited by [Riel Miller on futures literacy and anticipation](#). In April we reviewed an online event held by [the Alan Turing Institute which explored the state, and future, of AI in the UK](#) and latterly looked at the [US National Intelligence Center's report on Global Trends to 2040](#).
