

F&S July 2022

Events continue to demonstrate that we live in ***a world of radical uncertainty***. Whilst scenario work tends to be at its best when we consider timescales of five to fifty years away, there's a substantial list of immediate problems that make us think that "unprecedented" is going to be the word of this year. Here's a few:

- Despite an unassailable Conservative majority in the UK House of Commons, political uncertainty, exacerbated by the confusion within the party since the Brexit referendum, continues to mount as the Tories seek their fourth leader since 2016;
- The world economy teeters on the brink of a recession, with high rates of inflation and, in the UK, the return of widespread threats of industrial action;
- The war in Ukraine continues to disrupt the global economy, challenging Germany and the West on energy, and the emergent economies on food supply;
- The Sri Lankan meltdown looks like it's going to be emulated by several African countries whose economies seem to be in a similar situation;
- The climate crisis escalated again with record heat in the UK, raging fires in Europe, hotspots in the US, Asia and China.

Some of these are short-term (God willing), some long-term – and some, like climate change, go off as far into the future as we are comfortable working. Meanwhile, we hear from colleagues in some companies that they are too busy worrying about the present to worry about the future. Too many companies – and clearly, some governments – are still building plans on the assumption that the future is like today. And it shows.

Even when the present seems chaotic, the future will bring events that we can only imagine at present. That's the benefit of working with us – we can help you make sense of the future and the present. Just ask.

UK Health and Protection Awards

SAMI Fellow Richard Walsh has once again been appointed an Adviser Category Judge at this prestigious event in October.

SAMI Cohort

The Cohort is a small group of professionals working with foresight and scenario planning, who gather every couple of months to learn from each other and SAMI staffers in a mutually supportive online environment. Recent discussions have focused on how to get organisations to engage with futures. Our next cohort will begin in September - additional members are welcome. For further information, contact Jane.Dowsett@samiconsulting.co.uk.

Talks, papers and blogs

An article in Forbes magazine - [Seeing Beyond A Dangerous Decade \(forbes.com\)](#) - reviewed the recent Association of Professional Futurists annual conference. This referred to two talks by SAMI Principals and Fellows:

- Wendy Schultz gave a masterclass on tools and mindsets for describing and analysing emergent systems. Billed as 'much more fun than it sounds' it added to the toolkit needed to work through the practicalities and implications of some of the global trends.
- Patricia Lustig and Gill Ringland authors of the recent book, [New Shoots](#) (that attempts to help people use foresight to better plan in uncertain times) ran a workshop for those who want to create more space to engage in conversation about the future.

Huw Williams' article on the [Future of Paper Industries](#) for the Annual Review of the Confederation of Paper Industries in its 150th year has now been published.

Foresight and Strategy will be taking a break in August, and will return during September.

Executive Education



We will be running our online course “Understanding the Future” again from 19th to 23rd September. 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. We also organise bespoke courses to suit specific clients’ needs.

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

Futures Issues



An advisory committee to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is recommending moving to human trials of [transplanting pig organs](#). Trials would help to answer many questions, including what is the best mix of immunosuppressive drugs to give humans to help their bodies accept a pig organ, and how can physicians manage the risk that transplanted organs might harbour a pig virus. More than 100,000 people are waiting for organ transplants in the United States alone.

China is flexing its muscles in the [South China Sea](#) again, warning Philippine troops on a small reef “not to make trouble”, and preventing them from landing building materials. The reef is located 194 kilometres off Palawan within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone. China is asserting its claim over the reef despite it being 1,285 kilometres from Hainan, its southernmost province.

Dutch research organisation AMOLF have developed a valve that allows [soft robots](#) to respond to their environment without the need for computer control. This could enable robots with natural movements and tactile responses like those of living organisms. Such soft robots would be more suitable for exploring rough and unknown terrain or for medical applications.

A team of researchers at MIT have developed [tiny drones](#) that can fly, dodge, and weave like actual insects. Thin and flexible rubber cylinders coated in carbon nanotubes rapidly contract and expand when voltage is applied, flapping the drone’s wings nearly 500 times per second. That is 50 times faster than a typical hummingbird.

Trains with [Direct Air Capture](#) systems can use the power generated from braking to extract CO2 from the atmosphere.

The ONS published census results for England and Wales:

- a 20% rise in the number of [people aged 65](#) and over in the past decade means that group now outnumbers those aged under 15 for the first time;
- the population grew fastest in small or medium sized [cities](#); Cambridge, Peterborough and Milton Keynes all grew more than 15% (more than double the rate for the national average). Growth has been much slower

in northern cities, such as Birkenhead, Doncaster, Blackpool and Stoke. Population even declined in Sunderland.

Our Blogs



In the past few weeks our blogs covered a variety of subjects, although several have an underlying theme of climate change which comes as little surprise after the recent spell of hot weather.

- Firstly we looked at the [recent report from the IPCC](#) which called for strengthened policies regarding climate change and urgent action now to ensure targets are met
- We then looked at the issue of [food security, based on the responses that one of our directors](#) gave to the UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Business in a Pandemic (Covid) World as they enquired into this topic and that of the integrity of supply chains.
- Following this we explored some of the [issues facing nature conservation](#) and how some of the trends we see may play out over time.
- Finally we investigated [the recent report from the Office for Budget Responsibility on fiscal risk and sustainability](#) and the type of failings that can affect forecasts.