

February 2024

One of the problems of working in the fields that we do is that some of them are sensitive. Sometimes that is for commercial reasons, such as when we helped the Board of a very major international charity run a drivers of change exercise which completely changed a key element of their strategy. Sometimes it is because the project is actually classified, such as a project – well, it's classified. And sometimes it is because we have won something – but are not yet in a position to announce it. We find ourselves in at least two of these situations at the moment. So, we would like to say “Hurray!” But quite quietly. We will tell more when we can.

It is an interesting problem with futures work. Looking forwards is scary – and for good reasons, our clients want both to understand the future, and keep that understanding to themselves, at least for a while. Futurists have a privileged view – we know the concerns of our clients, and we have a sense of the way the world, and their work, is going. We live in the future enough to understand its risks, and its opportunities. And both of those can be quite intimidating, especially if futures work is new to the client – or the future is fuller of change than they find comfortable. Part of our role is to help them understand that future – but perhaps most importantly, to help them face it.

As our tagline says, “Robust decisions for uncertain times.” Our job is to show them the uncertainty they face, sure – but most importantly, it is to help them make the robust decisions they need so they can face it with confidence. If that sounds like what you need, feel free to get in touch. And if you are in government, remember we are on the Futures Procurement Framework – there are funds available to help you.

Joe Ravetz is hosting an open public seminar on– ***‘Cities for & of the future? Foresight as the key to transformation’*** on March 8th 1200 CET (hybrid), at the KU Leuven - www.kuleuven.be/lusi/news-and-events/lusi-lunch-seminar. You can see other discussions on the Foresight 3.0 theme at www.manchester.ac.uk/synergistics/foresight-3-0-theme/ - for general ideas and special issue info – and one application, a UN project www.manchester.ac.uk/synergistics/foresight-3-0-circular-economy-ukraine/

Executive Education

We will be running our online course ***“Understanding the Future”*** again on 28th and 29th February. The course fee is £490 + VAT - discounts may be available for self-funded individuals. Take a look at our [training brochure](#) for more details. We also organise bespoke courses to suit specific clients’ needs.

Having completed the refresh of the **GO-Science Futures Toolkit**, we are looking to build that expertise into a new version of our course. If you have specific issues you would like to see covered in our courses please do get in touch – training@samiconsulting.co.uk.

SAMI Principal Garry Honey offers a course on ***“Navigating Uncertainty”*** aimed at governing boards & senior leadership teams. Check our current blog series to get an idea of his thinking and approaches.

For more information, please email training@samiconsulting.co.uk.

Futures Issues

The UN [Global Resource Outlook](#) highlights that the totality of human-made products have exceeded that of all life on Earth and is set to rise by a further 60% by 2060. This is leading to a demand for more “urban mining.”

A [screw-shaped robot](#) small enough to fit inside tiny blood vessels and guided by magnets can move through arteries to treat stroke patients. Echoes of the 1966 film “*Fantastic Voyage*”.

[AI agents in simulated war-games](#) with arms-race dynamics tend to escalate conflict, leading in rare cases, even to the deployment of nuclear weapons.

The [encryption arms race](#) between algorithms and quantum computers shifted as Apple unveiled a new approach. The potential threat to end-to-end-encryption by a step-change in computational power is mitigated by a key rotation scheme.

A “[gravitational battery](#)” where heavy weights suspended in a deep shaft are winched up when there is excess electricity and released when energy is needed is being trialled in a disused mine in Finland.

CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing is powerful but as it makes permanent changes also has its risks. A new approach [editing mRNA](#) instead using Cas13d overcomes this problem as the mRNA doesn't last very long in a cell, so any mistakes will quickly disappear.

Our Blogs

Our recent blogs have explored a variety of topics:

- Firstly we continued our series of posts taken from the book ‘Navigating Uncertainty’ by looking at the [issue of ‘risk blindness’](#) and then concluding by looking at [why uncertainty matters to boards](#).
- We also looked at some topics relating to AI - one blog examined [Artificial General Intelligence](#) and the second looked at a way of [using AI to enhance ways of communicating scenarios](#).
- And, lastly, we reviewed some of the messages arising from the [Covid-19 enquiry relating to how to move from plans to action](#).