



9<sup>th</sup> Safety Forum  
30 June - 01 July 2022

# THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

Harry Nelson

*“If our descendants were to diagnose the ills of 21st-century civilization, they would observe a dangerous short-termism:*

*A collective failure to escape the present moment and look further ahead. The world is saturated in information, and standards of living have never been higher, but so often it’s a struggle to see beyond the next news cycle, political term, or business quarter”*

*Richard Fisher*

What culture have you experienced most often at work?

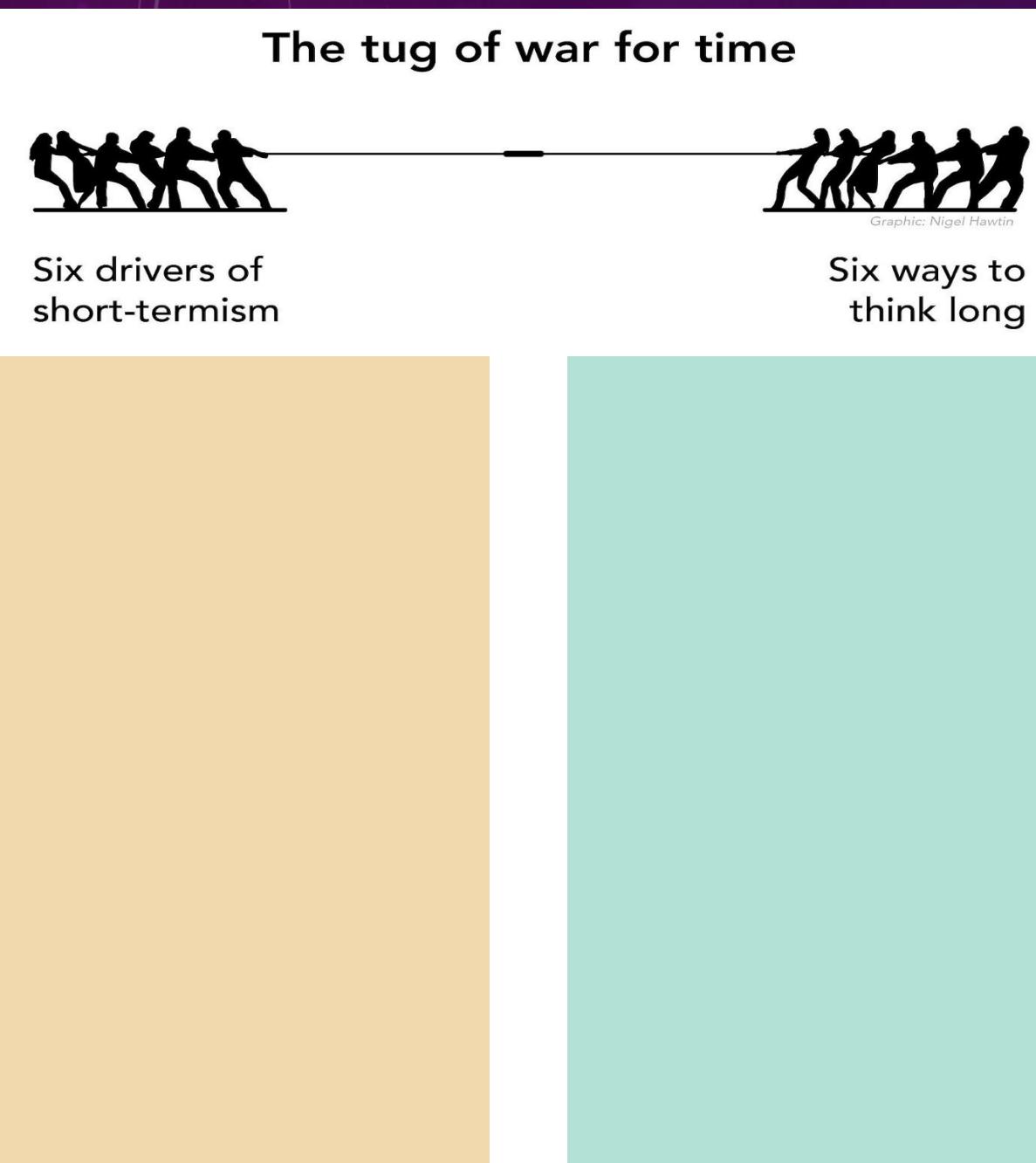


# THE PARADOX we face

To solve the long term issue of sustainability we need immediate, courageous and wise decisions that will lead to effective action plans being put in place within a short time window

Even if we have the collective courage to do this, will our current, short termist focus allow us to achieve it?

# The tug of war for time





Graphic: Nigel Hawtin

Six ways to  
think long



Deep-Time Humility  
grasp we are an eyeblink  
in cosmic time



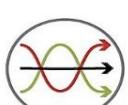
Legacy Mindset  
be remembered  
well by posterity



Intergenerational Justice  
consider the seventh  
generation ahead



Cathedral Thinking  
plan projects beyond  
a human lifetime



Holistic Forecasting  
envision multiple pathways  
for civilisation



Transcendent Goal  
strive for  
one-planet thriving

# Deep Time Humility

Human kind is at THE most critical point in its cosmically  
short history

We either take on the challenge of survival  
(and quality of life improvement)

or

We don't survive (at least not as we know it now)



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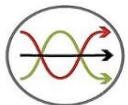
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# Legacy mindset

But who are we to make that decision on behalf  
of all the generations that have a right to follow ?

Those generations are alive now and are demanding  
that we listen and act  
(that's what my kids and grandkids are telling me!!)



Graphic: Nigel Hawtin

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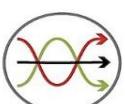
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# Intergenerational Justice

How many younger people are in this audience ?

Hands up please if you are younger than 37

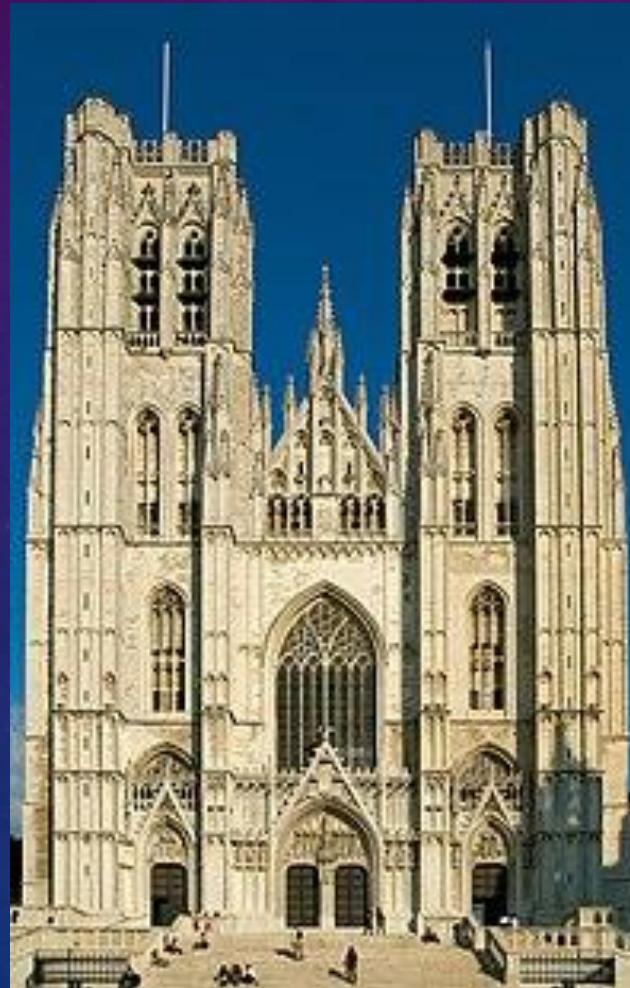
Hands up please if you are over 54

# Cathedral thinking

The Sagrada Familia – Barcelona



Brussels Cathedral.



Durham cathedral



Notre Dame





Graphic: Nigel Hawtin

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# Holistic forecasting

Old Danish proverb

“It is difficult to make predictions,  
especially for the future”



Graphic: Nigel Hawtin

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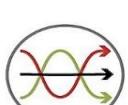
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# Holistic forecasting

## Jonas Salk's "S" curve

Curve B

Curve A

Consumption Excess  
Independence  
Short range

Sustainability  
Balance  
Interdependence  
Long range



Graphic: Nigel Hawtin

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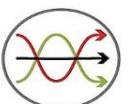
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# Holistic forecasting

What is our fundamental role?

We move people and cargo from one place to another

We encourage global communication

We deliver vital health products to countries in need  
but we can also speed up disease transmission

We advance the global economy  
but not necessarily in a balanced manner

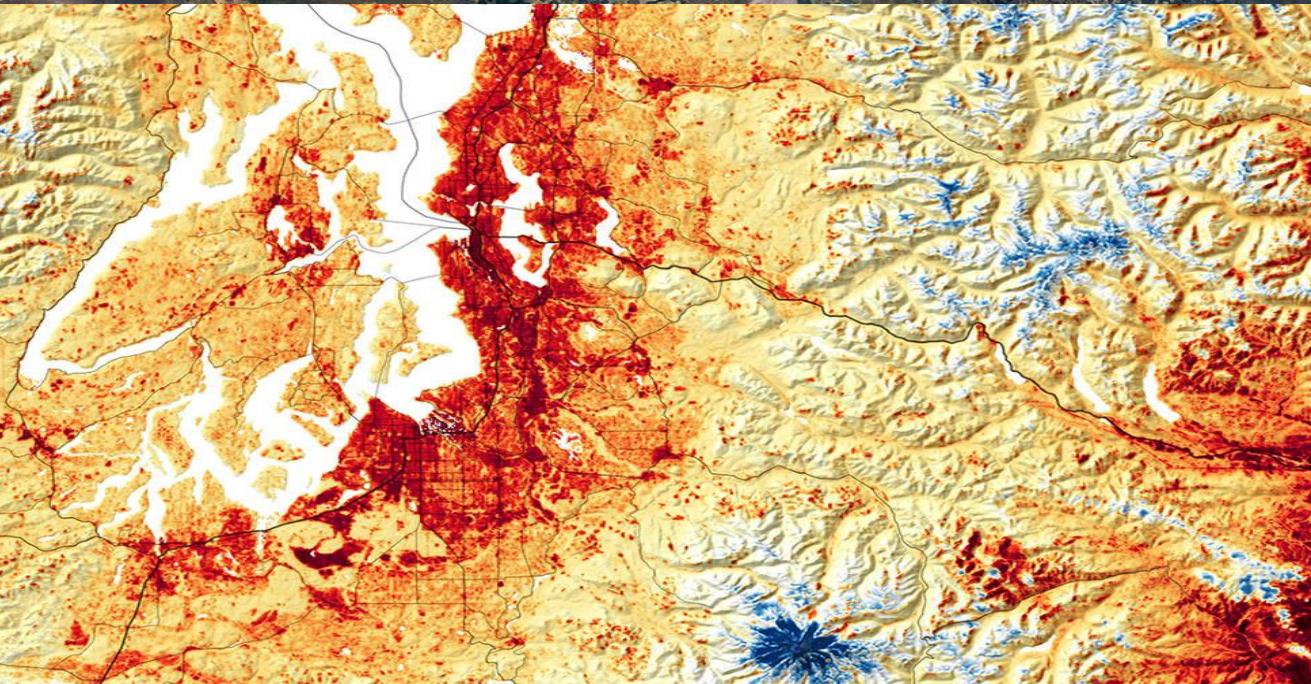
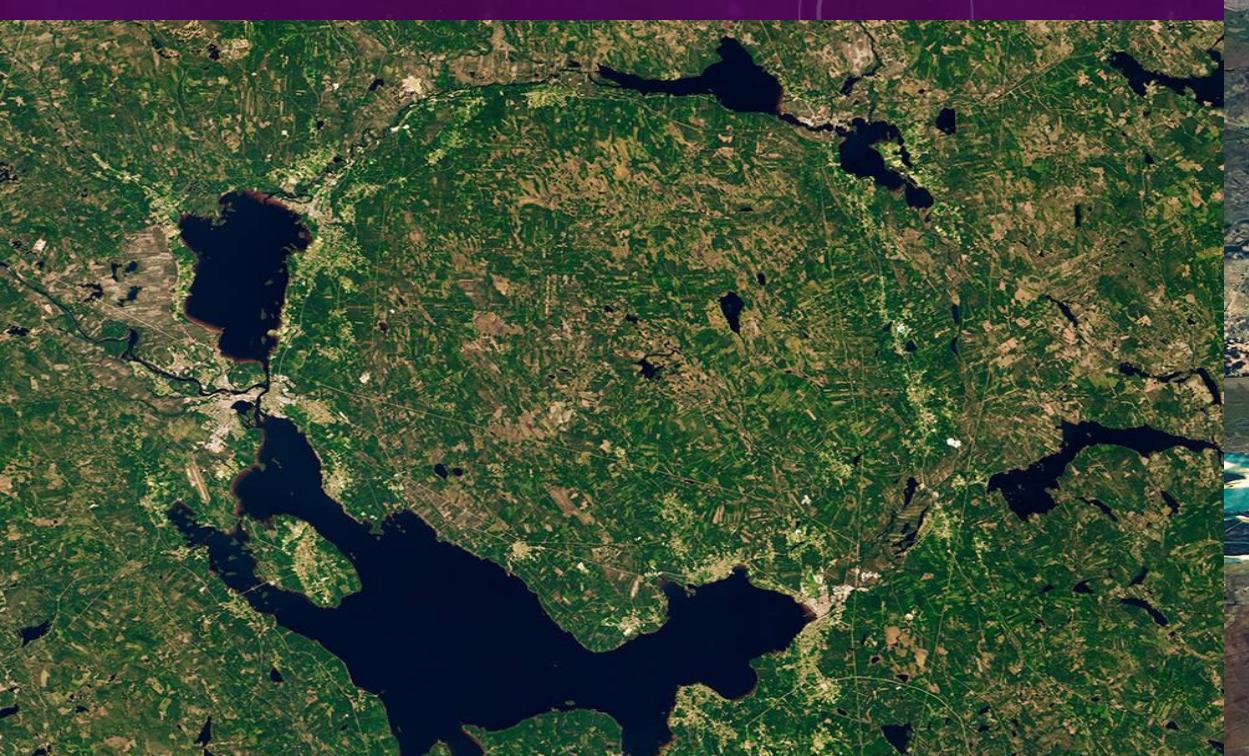
We can generate understanding and tolerance across the globe  
We are a force for peace (and war)

But so do other industries

Perhaps the answers lie in closer collaboration with these  
'other' industries, particularly transportation industries

Transcendent goal





# Our generation and its legacy responsibility

We are the first generation to experience the impact of climate change

We are the last generation to have the opportunity to deal with it

How do we want to be remembered?

# ..... but I want to do something now – some ideas ???

- Set up ‘future generations’ departments in all businesses and activities
- Review the company return on investment (ROI) periodicity
- Agree that all meetings conclude with a review of long-term impact (if any) and actions to reduce any negative impact
- Set up training modules that encourage and allow people to think and plan long-term
- Arrange video briefing sessions on ideas and initiatives in other industries on sustainability
- Take a personal interest in what your company or organisation is doing about sustainability  
Does it have a sustainability team,? – its your future and that of your family
- If you have ideas of your own, feed them to the sustainability team. It will be the millions of small changes that make the difference in the end

- The risk of non-action is profound and not unlike that of global nuclear war in its significance. If nuclear war was imminent, how would we respond?
- The most likely risk is of international political competition wanting to gain or maintain advantage one nation unto another – short-termist thinking again when a collaborative, longer-term approach is vital
- Aviation, with its risk awareness and unity of purpose, can ‘light a beacon’ on the way forward for others to follow.
- **If correct, this demands rapid, decisive and co-ordinated activity from the UN, from ICAO and then from all regulators and influential bodies**

We understand RISK and we communicate our learning

# Conclusions

1. The current business mindset is increasingly ‘tuned’ to short-termism particularly in financial matters. We need to increase the awareness of this trend and ‘balance it’ with
2. We need to convince the business world, and the general public, of the value in pursuing more long-term thinking safety policies while we drive for sustainability. Such persuasion must capture the over-riding necessity to do this and the value of the longer-term prize
3. We need to include in initial project financial planning the cost of achieving longer-term safety (and not let it be removed later in a cost cutting exercise)
4. We must share and spread effective approaches to this major re-education initiative
5. Aviation has within it, the potential to take a leading role in the coming years

# Reference Material

The LONG TIME PROJECT. <https://www.thelongtimeproject.org> Katie Paterson  
The future library project.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/overview/in-the-news/the-case-against-corporate-short-termism>

Sophie Howe – Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/news/wales-leading-the-way-with-future-generations-legislation-un-plans-to-adopt-welsh-approach/>

The Good Ancestor – How to think Long Term in a Short Term World  
Roman Krznaric. Plus numerous TED talks

The Long Now Foundation <https://longnow.org>

# Thank you for listening



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