

Roadmap for the Trans-COVID Period

An Update to our Foresight Roadmap for COVID Futures

Foresight Roadmap v1.1

Things continue to evolve rapidly as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds. The big idea that is finally sinking in for many folks right now is that *this is not likely to be a brief disruption*. Infections, deaths, containment practices, and a worsening economy are almost certainly realities into the mid-term future, and very likely to be central features of our longer-term future.

We continue to update our foresight roadmap, and some of the emerging issues added in this version:

- Actors (with a desire to alter the status quo) more aggressive in seeking to change the world
- Accelerated conflict over the South China Sea
- US weakened for follow-on disruptions
- New markets for health and safety products and services

Preparing for the Bad Scenario

As we see more indications of the potential depth of the impact to economies within the US, the key uncertainty on the roadmap of Economic Recovery begins to loom larger in everyone's minds. Because of this, we are reiterating our anticipation that the current crisis is not a "four-week" disruption. Indeed, as experts gain a better understanding of what we are dealing with and what the social, economic, and political impacts may be, it seems increasingly clear that we are going to be dealing with this situation for some time.

Given the many analyses and indicators that have been emerging recently, it seems prudent to start to consider more challenging scenarios. This is not about promoting doom and gloom; it's about good futures thinking. So, let's consider the kind of possible future most of us fervently hope (and desperately want to believe) won't happen. Our advice is to consider the following **near-term scenario**:

- US cases of the initial COVID-19 outbreak don't peak until the summer
- Stay at home orders and social distancing guidelines remain in effect in many states through the summer
- The uneven application of pandemic measures and the too-early easing of restrictions in some places prolongs this initial outbreak
- US enters a serious recession with dramatic and prolonged unemployment

This scenario, which is admittedly simple, does not take into account other potentially critical changes external to the US, such as outcomes in Europe, economic and political relations with China, and other possible second and third order effects of the initial pandemic.

Implications and Questions

Considering the obvious and serious implications of the scenario above, there are several questions to begin exploring now.

For government and business leaders:

- What roles can you play to support significant new business creation when COVID-related restrictions begin to ease?
- How can you support an acceleration of basic business model innovation, which would generate new businesses specifically adapted to a changed health and economic landscape?
- What are your contingency plans for community stability should you face a sustained downward trend in resources?

For conflict and security professionals:

- How prepared are we to respond to a second, different type of disruption *right now*?
- COVID-related phishing attacks aside, how are malicious non-state actors likely to take advantage of a prolonged pandemic?

For nonprofit and community leaders:

- How will changed priorities alter the philanthropic landscape as we reach the Fall?
- What positive examples of community and citizen adaptations might offer sustainable benefits?

For education leaders and professionals:

- How would you deal with reduced enrollments for the Fall?
- How will you effectively adapt to prolonged requirements for distance and distributed learning?

For parents and families:

- How could you maintain your children's *effective* learning and social development in the absence of regular school and human interaction for the next year?
- Even if governments and schools announce classes are open in the Fall, will you be willing to expose your children to the possibility of infection in subsequent outbreaks?

A Little Foresight Practice

Some of the questions above can only be answered after a lot of frank discussion. Some of these could benefit from some genuine foresight work. To use a couple as examples, we would recommend the following projects as valuable:

Question	Valuable Foresight Work
COVID-related phishing attacks aside, how are malicious non-state actors likely to take advantage of a prolonged pandemic?	Scenario forecasting would be useful, as this question is more open-ended and needs to be explored with more flexibility and variety. Informed, creative exploration would be important in the forecasting here.
How will changed priorities alter the philanthropic landscape as we reach the Fall?	Scenario work would also be useful here. Given the similarly open-ended nature of the question, and given how the diversity of interests and needs across philanthropy will interact with the 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd order effects of the pandemic, this question is about much more than just, “how much funding could we lose.”

In each of the above examples, it will be important to be picky with the actual scenario forecasting methodology you select. Scenario methods have differing advantages and drawbacks, at it is important to align the method with your particular intent for the foresight work.

Key to the Foresight Roadmap

Surface: issues and changes in daily experience and practices; change tends to happen often, seemingly erratic, and *tends* to have little deep immediate impact on society

System: changes at the level of infrastructure, institutions, and law; changes take longer, and take much more energy to make

Worldview: change in values, outlook, and shared stories about the world; change *tends* to unfold over long periods of time

Short-term: for this particular roadmap, short-term is the next 6 months

Mid-term: for this roadmap, mid-term is 6 – 18 months

Long-term: 18+ months

Issues and changes: recent changes that have happened or more enduring issues of importance; a general item (shape) used in the roadmap

Key uncertainties: important uncertainties that represent pivot points for the future

Emerging issues: possible threats and opportunities in the future; typically, things like future technologies, public policy issues, or new concepts and philosophies

Scenario forecasting: any one of a number of qualitative methods for forecasting multiple possible futures; selecting the right scenario method for a given project is key to the project success

Emerging issues analysis: conducting environmental scanning and identifying possible future technologies, policy issues, and concepts that might play a big role in shaping the future

Modeling: any of a number of methods for quantifying relationships between key variables in order to forecast future outcomes

Probabilistic forecasting: developing probabilities for a range of possible, discrete outcomes

Vision Foresight Strategy LLC

Vision Foresight Strategy is a foresight and strategic analysis firm headquartered in Honolulu, Hawai'i. We are a global network of trained foresight professionals that works with organizational leaders to navigate the uncertainty and complexity they face in the world today. Our services include original futures research and analysis, facilitated workshops, and foresight training.

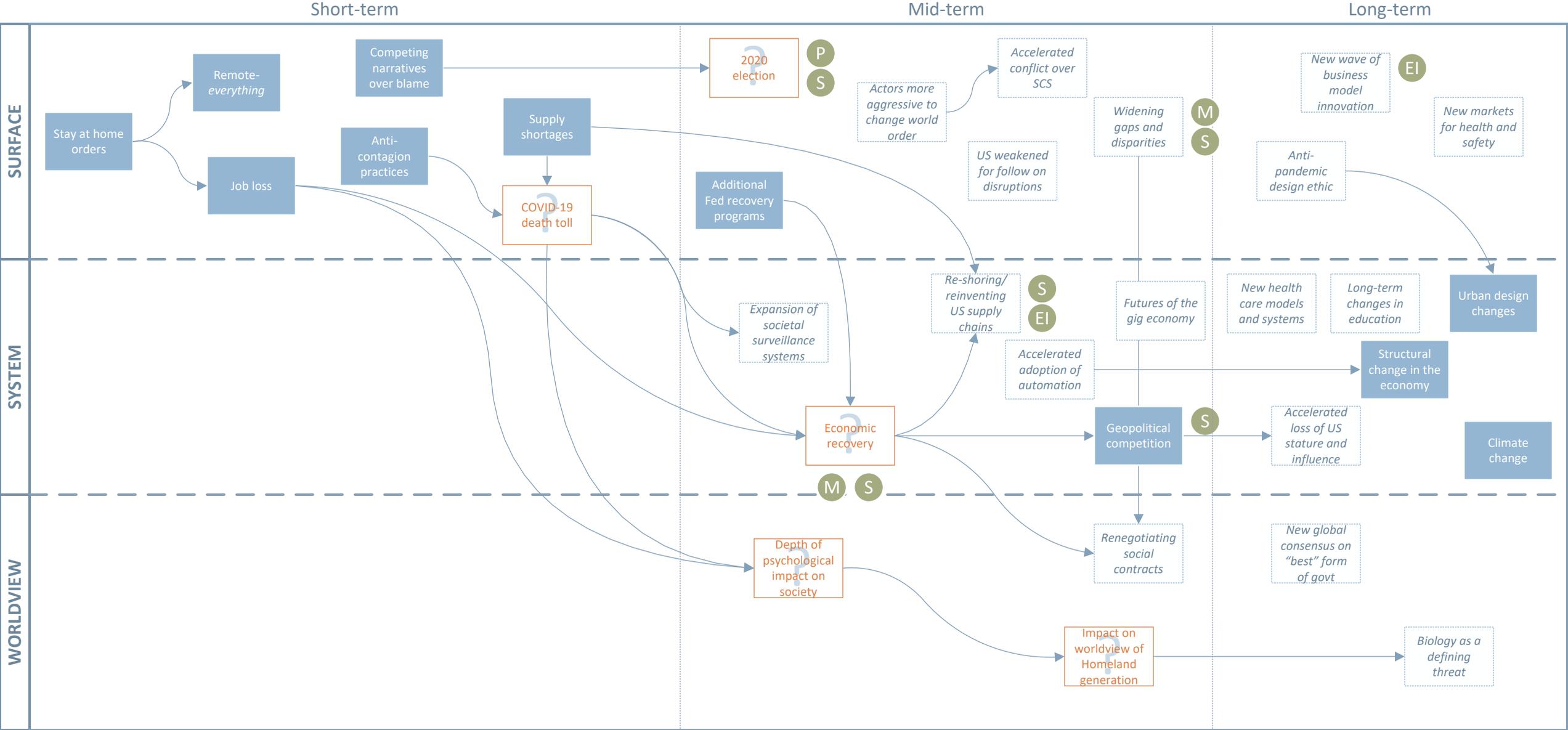
If you would like assistance with building out a roadmap for your organization, then please contact us and we will be happy to work with you.

We can also assist with doing a range of rapid forecasts, horizon scanning and emerging issues analysis, and scenario forecasting.

Another excellent resource is the book, *4 Steps the Future: A Quick and Clean Guide to Creating Foresight*. Written by Dr. Richard Lum, it is an easy-to-read guide to essential foresight work. It is available to order from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, and other book sellers.

Find out more at www.visionforesightstrategy.com

What is missing from this map? What future issues, opportunities, and threats may confront your organization or community?



Issues and changes (blue box)
 Key uncertainties (orange box with question mark)
 Emerging issues (dotted box)

S Scenario forecasting M Modeling
 EI Emerging issues analysis P Probabilistic forecasting