nextcontinent

THE FUTURE OF COMPANIES:

How can survival organisations face up to a major socio-ecological collapse?

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Introduction.

The corporate world finds itself at a crossroad : the world order, the environment, society and technology have been evolving extremely quickly over the last years, and the numerous resulting trends indicate imagining that the pressures and changes will continue to accelerate (societal pressure on sustainability, resources scarcity, climatic “events”, geopolitical turmoil…). The best way to prepare for these future changes is to explore the different scenarios for the future, in a discovery journey aimed at helping you understand the key elements to see, analyse and take into account when considering the future of your company, and how to prepare for it as of now. This is why we initiated a large study on the different scenarios for the future of companies. This note will concentrate on one of these explored scenarios: the one concerning “survival organisations/ companies.”

The current environmental degradation, occurring at a planetary level, can result in massive societal destabilisation, implying profound changes in the business environment and a need for extensive adaptation with regards to companies. This White paper aims to explore this survival-framed future from the following points of view: why it is to be taken seriously? How could such a future look and with what impact for companies? How could companies evolve accordingly? What can be done as of now regarding this situation?

Executive Summary.

The main goals of this note are to help you understand and navigate the potential "survivalist" future of organisations: Why might it happen? What would it look like? What could/should you do about it?

To achieve these goals, we outlined the note as follows:

Part 1: What is this "major collapse scenario," and why should it be taken seriously?

- The collapse scenario represents one of the most influential perspectives for the future of the world… for a good reason.
- This collapse scenario should be taken very seriously as it is very well-supported by facts, figures, and experienced reality.
- This is all the more worrying since the current actor dynamics are not facing up to the challenges, thus threatening potential threshold ruptures. A few counter-narratives mitigate the overall diagnosis, but they soften rather than contradict the general direction.

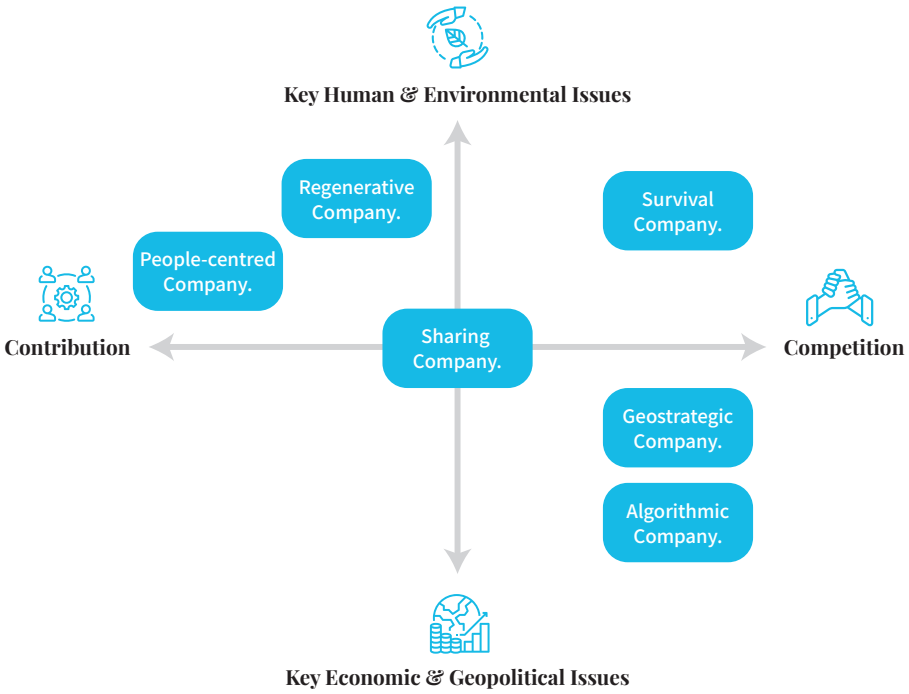
Part 2: Five different potential pathways for a collapse scenario.

- Five subscenarios emerge when we look at the main variables that shape a potential future collapse.
- What are the consequences of each one of these scenarios for business?

Part 3: Operational conclusion.

- What can we do in the present with this information?
- Two invitations as a general conclusion.

As a reminder, this reflection is part of a larger body of work on the future of corporations.



We produced a first "framing note" on the main trends shaping the future of organisations, and identified some of the key breakthroughs that could distort the "usual future" (future to-be if the current trends were not rerouted by some major game-changing events or ruptures): as a result of this work, we identified various alternative scenarios for the future of the corporate world.

The main alternative archetypes for the future for companies are presented as shown on the left.

Each one of this alternative scenario can be linked to some key disruption factors that we listed here under:

Alternative Scenarios.	Baseline.	Main disruption factors advocating such a scenario.
Survival companies.	Surviving the crises.	Global shortage of energy and/or resources Partial climatic collapse: entire regions of the world become difficult to inhabit creating major changes (migrations, wars, shortages…).
Regenerative companies.	Regenerating the planet as a goal.	Global "pro-climate" governance: UN and international institutions rule a worldwide system reshaped to mitigate climate change.
People-centred companies.	Putting people first.	Work revolution: a mental and motivational crisis marking a radical shift in the relationship with work, to which organisations must adapt.
Algorithmic companies.	Digitalisation at every level, companies have to find their place in an algorithmic world.	Global algorithmic governance: AI, extraterritoriality, and emancipation of the economic world (lead by the GAFAM) out of the control of the political world.
Sharing companies.	Reinventing companies in a functional and open-source society.	P2P society: blockchain, open-source and power distribution are the driving force of society and innovation.
Geostrategic companies.	Playing your part in Cold War 2.0.	Cold War 2.0: world divided into polarized blocs (China vs US) and/or Competitive protectionism: market closures and productive relocation.

Introduction: scenario of emergence of survival organisations as a way to resist a significant societal collapse.

As we write this White paper, the scale and seriousness of the environmental challenges we face — from climate change and biodiversity loss to ocean acidification — are becoming harder to ignore. Their urgency, intensity, and potential consequences for human societies are no longer theoretical; they are increasingly evident in data, first hand experience, and institutional reports. Across the globe, scientists are raising the alarm, international organisations are publishing increasingly urgent assessments, as youth movements and NGOs are pushing for decisive action in response to what they see as an existential threat.

Yet, despite this growing awareness, public understanding of what is really at stake — and what it could mean for our societies — remains limited. Confusion, speculation, and disagreement remain about how serious the risks are and how they might unfold. One key point is often overlooked: environmental collapse does not happen in isolation. It triggers and amplifies social and economic tensions — through food insecurity, mass migrations, or institutional breakdown — which in turn make it even harder to respond to the crisis effectively. In other words, environmental and societal risks are deeply interconnected, forming a feedback loop of increasing instability… and risks.

A critical question arises from this: are we witnessing just another chapter in humanity's long history of adaptation, or are we facing a rupture so deep that it redefines our systems and ways of life? We do not claim to have all the answers. But in this White paper, we aim to explore some of the main dynamics of this possible systemic crisis and shed light on how it might reshape business itself. Specifically, we look at the emergence of what we call "survival companies": organizations that anticipate, adapt to, or operate within conditions shaped by collapse scenarios.
This may be an unsettling journey — but we believe it to be a necessary one. Understanding what is coming is the first step toward acting with foresight and resilience.

1 What is this “major collapse scenario”, and why should it be taken seriously?

1.1 The collapse scenario stands as one of the most influential narratives for the future of the world.

Disclaimer: we decided to present you with an unbiased and solid presentation of the collapse, the concept as well as the scientific perspective that lays behind it- as a first part. Our intention is to fully clarify the state of the art of this complex topic, which, although omnipresent in today's conversations, can be hard to grasp.

This part is therefore purposely theoretical; the more concrete aspects of the future scenarios and their consequences will be dealt with in the second part of this presentation.

The perspective of general collapse is not new, but it has taken a new dimension with the global ecological challenges we are currently experiencing.

The idea of a major collapse threatening humanity is not new. Apocalyptic prophecies and millenarian fears have always filled history with collapse narratives. However, over the past 50 years, the concept has taken on a new, more concrete dimension: the risk of a systemic collapse driven by global ecological degradation. What sets this scenario apart is the unprecedented convergence of environmental disruption and societal fragility, as well as its planetary scale.

Today, when we speak of collapse, we refer primarily to a socioecological disruption — a non-linear, systemic breakdown where environmental damage weakens the foundations of human society (food, water, stability), while political, economic, and cultural systems fail to tackle the crisis, or even worsen it. This interdependence between ecological systems and human institutions is what makes the threat so alarming.

Other risks — technological failures, financial crashes, pandemics, or geopolitical shocks — may be severe, but recent history (financial crisis of 2008, Russian sanctions, Covid crisis…) has shown that they rarely trigger global collapse on their own. Without an underlying ecological rupture, societies tend to adapt or recover. It is the ecological dimension that now defines the most credible and consequential collapse scenarios.

It is important to stress that a collapse does not necessarily mean a global disruption of the whole society : it is a process more than an event, generating the vulnerabilisation of society, making it more difficult for everyone to access the same goods, services, possibilities over time. The reasons are multiple, but the environmental crisis and resources depletion stand at the heart of the problem. Many societies worldwide are already experiencing a partial collapse, and the general trend is leading to a deep fragilisation of many institutions or certainties.

This scenario is about the deepening, worsening, and widening of that vulnerabilisation of societies, the associated shrinking access to resources, services and basic living conditions, and the global consequences that follow.

This potential collapse is at the centre of the preoccupations of many political, academic, and economic actors.

Researchers and analysts from diverse disciplines have long highlighted the interconnectedness and fragility of ecological and social systems. Social-ecological systems theorists such as Elinor Ostrom[1] have shown how societies and ecosystems co-evolve — and how collapse becomes likely when governance structures are too rigid or fragmented to adapt to environmental change. Building on this foundation, the field of collapsology, initiated by Pablo Servigne and Raphaël Stevens[2], has developed a systemic framework to explore the early warning signs and internal dynamics of what they call the “thermodynamic society” — a society increasingly constrained by energy, resource, and ecological limits.

These academic debates mirror the growing attention the topic receives from policymakers, business leaders, and even some high-profile figures in the tech and finance worlds. While some actors still dismiss global collapse as implausible, a growing number — including traditionally orthodox voices — now acknowledge the scale of the uncertainty ahead. Elon Musk speaks, for instance, openly about the need for planetary backup options, promoting Mars terraforming as a response to earth’s jeopardised future. It is highly significant to see such a prominent technology and innovation believer take such a stance and acknowledge fully a potential lack of response to the scale of the challenges ahead of us.

Together, the convergence of scientific analysis, historical precedent, and real-time environmental signals have brought collapse scenarios from the fringe into mainstream strategic thinking — whether as a threat to be prevented or a disruption to be prepared for.

[1]American political economist, first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2009, best known for her seminal work on the governance of Commons (common-pool resources like water, soil or forests…), challenging the usual “tragedy of the commons” narrative.
[2]Raphaël Stevens and Pablo Servigne are two French authors working on the functioning and potential collapsing of modern western societies, analysing their structural weaknesses mainly through energy dependency (in the face of the potential exhaustion of resources)

Understanding the logic at work with a zoom on the socioecological loop at the centre of this collapse dynamics: how environmental and societal dynamics interact in mutual fragilisation.

A substantial body of historical and scientific research demonstrates how environmental degradation can directly impact human societies. Historian and geographer Jared Diamond, in his seminal book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed (2005), documents how the decline of civilisations such as the Mayans and the Easter Islanders was closely related to deforestation, soil exhaustion, and water mismanagement. Even the French Revolution has been partly linked to climate-related crop failures in the years preceding 1789.

These dynamics are not limited to ancient history — they are visible in recent and ongoing crises. A growing body of research links environmental stressors to social and political instability in the modern context. For example, several studies have pointed to the prolonged drought in Syria between 2006 and 2010 , the worst ever recorded, as the key factor that exacerbated rural poverty, forced mass migrations to urban centres, and intensified underlying social tensions prior to the 2011 uprising.

More recent interdisciplinary studies have begun to identify systemic mechanisms connecting ecological stress to social disruption. At the centre of these lie the “planetary boundaries”, limits in areas such as climate, freshwater use, and biodiversity loss, the transgression of which weakens the environmental foundations of modern societies. These studies show that when critical resources are depleted or ecosystems destabilised, the resulting stress cascades through social systems: increasing inequality, weakening institutions, and heightening the risk of conflict or collapse.

[3] Kelley, C. P., Mohtadi, S., Cane, M. A., Seager, R., & Kushnir, Y. (2015). Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 112(11), 3241–3246. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1421533112

In short, environmental degradation is not just a context for human activity, it is an active driver of future societal trajectories. Below is a schematic representation of the underlying mechanisms and feedback loops typically involved in socioecological collapse, which commonly includes dynamics such as these:

Environmental Degradation	Societal Consequences	Resulting Dynamics
Biodiversity loss, soil erosion, drought.	Agricultural failure, food insecurity.	Migration, unrest, collapse of livelihoods.
Climate change impacts.	Infrastructure stress, displacement.	Political destabilization, authoritarian responses.
Resource depletion (water, forests, etc.).	Economic contraction, capture by a shrinking minority.	Widening inequality, loss of trust.
Pollution, disease spread.	Public health crises, service breakdown.	Civil unrest, governance failures.

1.2 This collapse scenario is to be taken very seriously, being very well-supported by facts, figures, and experienced reality.

An undeniable environmental crisis with solid scientific evidence.

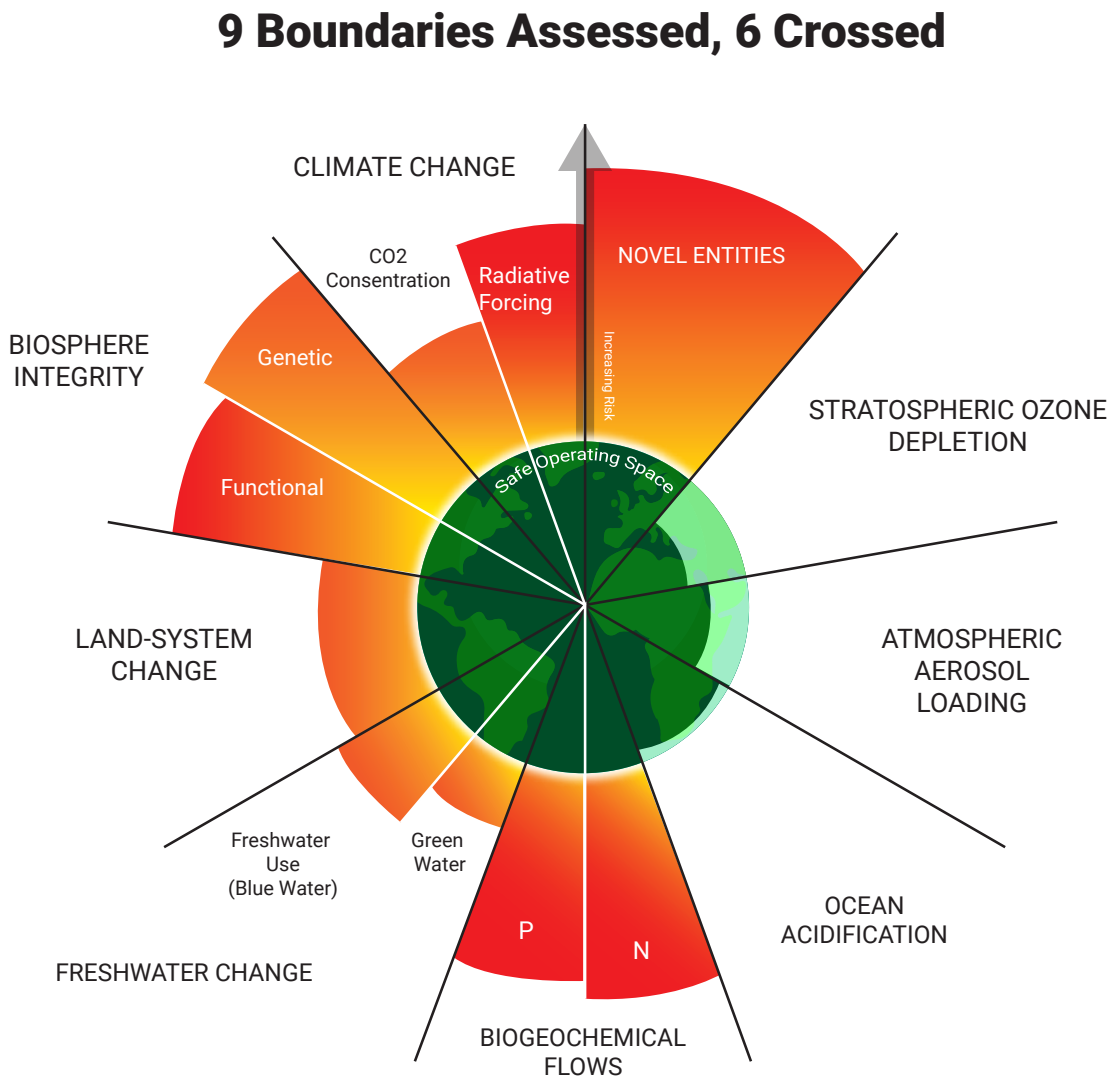
The scientific models and experienced events leave little doubt about the environmental crisis. Indeed, the planet's environmental health has reached a critical point. Scientific assessments show that we are pushing Earth's natural systems beyond safe limits. The planetary boundaries framework, developed by Johan Rockström and his team from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, outlines nine key systems needed to keep the planet stable — and as of 2023, six of them have already been breached[4]. These include climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, freshwater use, pollution from nitrogen and phosphorus, and the spread of synthetic chemicals like plastics.

[4]Richardson, K., Steffen, W., Lucht, W., Bendtsen, J., Cornell, S. E., Donges, J. F., Drüke, M., Fetzer, I., Bala, G., von Bloh, W., Feulner, G., Fiedler, S., Gerten, D., Gleeson, T., Hofmann, M., Huiskamp, W., Kummu, M., Mohan, C., Nogués-Bravo, D., … Rockström, J. (2023, September 15). Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries. Science Advances, 9(37), eadh2458. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adh2458

The numbers are explicit: in 2023, CO_2 emissions exceeded 36.8 gigatonnes, pushing atmospheric levels above 420 parts per million — the highest in over three million years. Global temperatures have risen 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, and 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded. Wildlife populations have collapsed, with an average 69% drop in monitored vertebrate species since 1970 (WWF Living Planet Index). Tropical forests, especially in the Amazon and Congo, continue to be cleared, weakening global carbon sinks and water cycles, as first of many consequences.

Scientists warn that we are approaching irreversible tipping points — such as the potential collapse of major ice sheets — that could trigger runaway climate effects. The conclusion is clear: the environmental crisis is no longer a future risk, it is a measurable, accelerating reality.

Here, as an illustration, the 2023 Planetary Boundaries assessment. We can see that six boundaries (out of nine) are overstepped:



(Credit: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University. Based on Richardson et al. 2023)

Additionally, the environmental collapse as a process is already an experienced reality.

Indeed, each and every continent (or even country) can share specific events that testified of some environmental disorders.

We already mentioned Syria and the Middle East and the fact that a long-lasting drought was a key contributing factor to the 2011 uprising. Over the past decade, every continent has faced escalating environmental disruptions linked to planetary instability. In North America, unprecedented wildfires have devastated vast areas from California to British Columbia, while severe droughts have affected the U.S. Southwest. South America has witnessed accelerating deforestation in the Amazon, pushing the rainforest toward a tipping point of irreversible dieback. Across Africa, desertification in the Sahel and worsening water scarcity have intensified, threatening food security and ecosystems. Europe has endured historic heatwaves, glacier retreat in the Alps, and increasingly destructive floods, such as those in Germany and Belgium in 2021. In Asia, intensifying monsoons, heat extremes, and air pollution crises have affected millions, while Himalayan glaciers melt at alarming rates. Australia has suffered unprecedented bushfires, and in Antarctica, ice shelf collapse marks a profound shift in polar stability. These events underscore that no region remains protected from the cascading effects of environmental destabilisation.

According to a CIA climate risk assessment, by 2050, entire regions across Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and parts of Latin America, home to over a billion people, could face conditions so extreme that large areas may become uninhabitable, triggering mass displacement, state instability, and global security threats.

1.3 The current dynamics and trends do not give cause for huge optimism.

The actors' dynamics do not face up to the level of challenge.

Despite growing scientific warnings and visible signs of environmental degradation, the actions of governments, businesses, and global institutions remain far from what is required. While many policies are now branded as "green transitions," most still prioritise short-term economic growth over long-term sustainability. In 2022, fossil fuel subsidies hit a record $7 trillion globally (IMF), showing how far we are from aligning with climate goals. Many companies have made only modest changes — often more about image than impact — while continuing to expand extractive activities.

International efforts have fallen short of filling the gap. The COP climate talks have yet to deliver a plan that complies with the 1.5°C target, and global biodiversity goals remain largely unenforced. Financial markets still reward short-term business as usual over long-term regeneration transformation, with less than 5% of financial flows aligned with sustainable outcomes (UNEP FI[5]). Many countries in the Global South face deep structural issues — debt, resource dependence, and trade imbalances — that limit their ability to invest in resilience or sustainability.

Rather than changing direction, the global system continues on a path that favours slow reform, and business-as-usual. As things stand, we cannot really say we are slowing down a potential collapse.

We are under the threat of potential disruptions that could accelerate the current socio-ecological degradation:

Here are the main types of disruptions that could act as collapse accelerators, knowing that they can interact systemically:

Climate Tipping Points
Sudden, irreversible shifts in Earth systems that amplify global instability.

Food System Breakdown
The food system is highly globalised and fragile small disruptions could trigger cascading effects.

Energy System Shocks
A sudden energy disruption would see a major failure of infrastructure and undermine trust in institutions.

Geopolitical or Military Escalation
Conflict reduces international cooperation at the exact moment when collective action is most needed.

Pandemics or Biosecurity Failures
COVID-19 was a first worldwide alert future pandemics could have more disruptive effects.

Digital Infrastructure Failure
Modern societies are digitally dependent but poorly resilient to technological failure.

Financial System Crash
Financial crises could accelerate social and political collapse, especially where inequality is already high.

(...)

[5] United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, https://www.unepfi.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Finance-for-Nature-Positive-3-1.pdf

1.4 A few counter-narratives mitigate the overall diagnosis, but they soften rather than contradict the general direction.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of alternative perspectives that would question the collapse scenario:

Technological Optimism and Decoupling Theory Main argument: Human "genius" and innovation will allow decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation.	**Key facts:** • Some countries (UK, Denmark as examples) have shown relative or even absolute decoupling of GDP from CO_2 emissions and resource use. • Renewable energy capacity has grown rapidly, and "For the first time ever, power generation from renewables and nuclear covered two-fifths of total global generation in 2024" . • Precision agriculture, lab-grown meat, circular economy technologies, and AI-driven efficiencies are cited as pathways to reduce pressure on ecosystems.	**Limits:** Critics argue this is too slow or narrowly focused to prevent crossing ecological tipping points globally. Plus, the ability to globally decouple remains to be proven at this point (Jevons effect).
Historical Resilience and Human Adaptability Main argument: Societies have faced major ecological or systemic stress before and adapted or transformed.	**Key facts:** • Agricultural productivity has increased dramatically since the 1960s, feeding a growing population. • Past environmental crises (as the London's air pollution in the 1950s, acid rain in the 1980s, ozone depletion…) were addressed through regulation and innovation.	**Limits:** Critics argue current crises are global and interconnected in ways that past examples were not. Plus, alternative past examples support the idea that civilization can collapse (Roman empire, Mayans…).
Data Showing Global Improvement in Some Indicators Main argument: Many human development indicators are improving globally, suggesting increasing capacity to manage risks.	**Key facts:** • Global extreme poverty has fallen from 36% in 1990 to around 8% in 2020 (World Bank). • Child mortality, hunger, and illiteracy have also declined significantly.	**Limits:** These improvements do not necessarily reflect ecosystem health and may mask growing inequality and externalisation of ecological costs. Plus, the latest figures might be less positive.
Geoengineering and Emergency Solutions Main argument: If collapse becomes imminent, humanity will deploy large-scale interventions (solar radiation management, carbon capture…).	**Key facts:** • Research into direct air capture, carbon sequestration, and solar geoengineering is increasing, with early pilot projects underway.	**Limits:** These are unproven at scale, raise ethical questions, could be some kind of carry on regardless and present high governance risks.
No "Collapse" Yet Despite Severe Degradation Main argument: While ecosystems are stressed, global system collapse has not materialised; current systems show inertia and persistence.	**Key facts:** • Global trade, finance, and food systems—although strained—have not collapsed during recent shocks (COVID-19, Ukraine war…). • Urbanisation and infrastructure growth continue, especially in the Global South.	**Critique:** A system remains solid until proven otherwise: the fact it has been so until now does not mean it will always be.

[6] International Energy Agency, Global Energy Review 2025, https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/5b169aa1-bc88-4c96-b828-aaa50406ba80/GlobalEnergyReview2025.pdf

If these views challenge the collapse narrative on various grounds, they do not deny environmental degradation, or the societal vulnerabilisation. There are therefore more sources of hope for collapse mitigation, than alternative visions that would deny such a collapse scenario. They bring a few positive potentials to the scenario, but do not deeply alter it.

As a general conclusion to this first part, the very essence of the scenario we examine in this white paper is that we are facing a very serious and well-documented complex risk that endangers both the environment in which our societies live and the key functions of the societies themselves.

The real danger of socioecological collapse is not just one disruption — it involves multiple disruptions happening simultaneously or in tight sequence, amplifying each other:

> “It’s not climate change, or food, or migration, or political unrest — it’s all of them, at once, feeding each other.”
>
> Adam Tooze, historian of crisis (2022)

This is a harsh statement to make. But since a key principle of foresight is to look into the future in order to anticipate, prevent, and proactively pave the way for more desirable scenarios, we must first rely on a thorough and realistic diagnosis. Only after this has been done will we be able to meaningfully assess what is at stake, imagine the possible scenarios, and determine the corresponding potential courses of action.

2 Five different potential pathways for a collapse scenario.

A first outline of the collapse macro scenario was presented in the first part of this note. Here, we aim to explore, based on this solid foundation, the various sub-scenarios according to the various potential pathways that a nuanced collapse scenario could take.

in order to adhere to the standards of a proper foresight approach, we will:

- Identify the key variables that could differentiate between different future horizons, identifying the most critical and distinctive ones.
- Present significant collapse subscenarios, based on the key hypotheses emerging from these variables.
- Explore what each one of these would mean for the business context and companies, in terms of constraints or opportunities.

2.1 Five subscenarios emerge when we look at the main variables that could shape collapse futures.

We identified six key variables/polarities that could shape very different futures depending on the direction of future developments:

Technological Integration and Centralisation vs. Decentralisation:
The role of technology in enabling centralised control (technocratic globalism) or distributing control to regional or local actors (regional fragmentation).

Environmental Pressures: total degradation or contained harm
The severity of ecological degradation and the failure to address climate change will push the world toward ecological collapse or demand localised resilience (regional fragmentation).

Geopolitical Dynamics: fragmentation or global cooperation
International power struggles, trade wars, and political fragmentation may determine whether global systems break down into regional blocs or lean toward global power.

Corporate Power:
The level of corporate consolidation and its control over key resources and technologies may lead to a corporate feudalism scenario, especially if governments weaken.

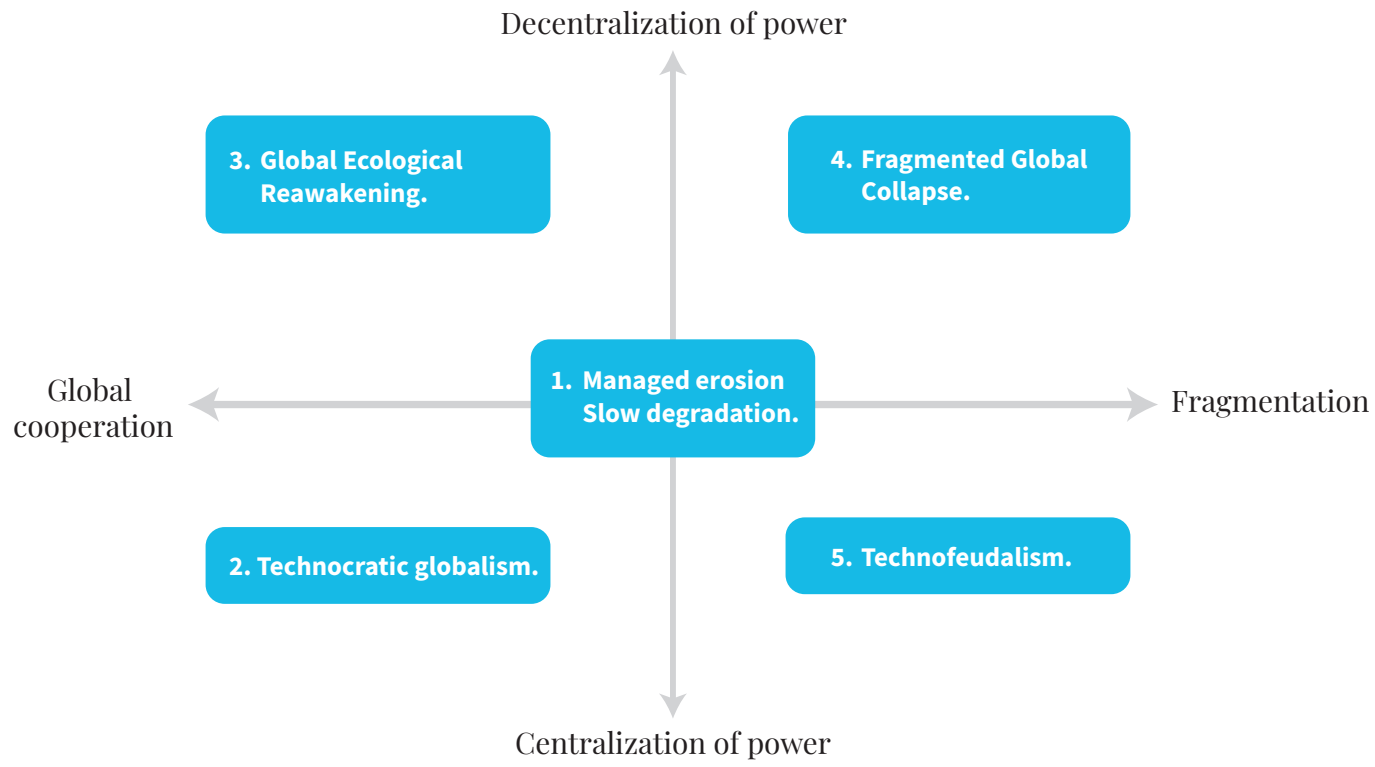
Social and Political Movements:
Widespread social unrest or democratic decline could fuel a technocratic or corporate-driven path, or it might lead to more self-sufficient regional systems.

Level of Economic (In)Equality:
The level of economic equality and fair distribution of resources versus severe inequality between and within nations.

Blending the different hypotheses that emerge from these six variables, we designed five main potential scenarios:

- on the one hand there is a scenario of continuation, showcasing a progressive degradation of the socio-ecological balances without key rupture. We called it the “manage erosion” scenario.
- on the other hand, we imagined four scenarios of rupture, which would be based on what we considered to be the key polarities at play:
  - Global Cooperation vs. Fragmentation.
  - Centralisation vs. Decentralisation of Power.

Here the representation of those five key subscenarios:



The five subscenarios in a nutshell: description, key features, and weak signals we can witness as of today.

1. "Managed erosion - "Degrading status quo" (no real change in "governance" or "(de) centralisation").

In this scenario, environmental systems degrade steadily, but no rupture or systemic collapse occurs. Climate impacts become normalised, and global governance remains fragmented, reactive, and slow. Mitigation efforts exist but are insufficient; adaptation becomes the dominant logic at work in the attempts to tackle the challenges.

The path to this scenario does not require a rupture but displays on the contrary a status quo governance. The world drifts into crisis slowly, resembling a "boiled frog" metaphor. Collapse remains here plausible — just postponed.

Key features	Resulting Dynamics
• **Incrementalism as a key principle:** Policy and corporate responses adapt around symptoms, not causes. • **Disaster normalisation:** Droughts, fires, and floods are frequent but do not generate a systemic response. • **Green capitalism prevails:** ESG, net-zero pledges, and carbon markets become financialised but disconnected from planetary repair. • **Ecological inequality deepens:** Wealth buffers ecological shocks for privileged territories and social classes; poorer regions suffer escalating losses. • **No tipping point awareness:** The public narrative frames crisis as linear and fixable.	• COP stagnation despite scientific alarm. • Rise of climate insurance and resilience investing without decarbonisation. • Sustainable development goals remain aspirational, not binding. • Planetary boundaries breached with little institutional response.

2. Technocratic globalism (centralised, tech-driven global governance): centralised algorithm-supported ecological governance.

In response to deep ecological shocks, centralised systems deploy AI and data infrastructure to manage survival. Efficiency, monitoring, and planetary system control take precedence over liberty, equity, or democracy. It is a technocratic emergency mode built for climate and resource constraints.

On the path to this scenario, rupture has occurred, governance is centralised, technical, and authoritarian. The planet is managed like a cybernetic system; liberty and agency being sacrificed for control.

Key features	Resulting Dynamics
• **Algorithmic governance:** AI systems optimise water, food, carbon emissions — enforcing limits in real time. • **Digital rationing and scoring:** Citizens and companies get eco-scores; non-compliant actors are penalized or excluded. • **Surveillance-sustainability ecosystems:** Smart grids, Internet of Things, and digital ID are used to ensure eco-efficiency. • **Geoengineering becomes viable:** Solar radiation management, engineered weather patterns, or synthetic ecology. • **Control over trust:** Central authority relies on big tech for infrastructure.	• Expansion of China's environmental social credit pilots. • EU digital identity systems tied to emissions tracking. • Corporate AI tools for "net-zero optimization." • Global push toward carbon and nature accounting.

3. Global Ecological Reawakening (Global and Inclusive Cooperation & High Decentralisation): Decentralised, community-driven global efforts for environmental restoration.

Following climate-driven collapse events, a global coordination effort emerges —lead by a legitimate, empowered "Planetary Council" that governs ecological boundaries and equitable resource use. This future hinges on political rupture and cooperative reinvention.

On the path to this scenario, a major rupture has occurred, private interest have proven themselves unreliable, and governance becomes globally centralised and cooperative. A transition to post-growth civilisation through political and ecological coordination has therefore been set in motion to tackle the depth of the faced challenges.

Key features	Resulting Dynamics
• **Planetary governance:** Climate, biodiversity, oceans, and atmosphere regulated through binding treaties. • **Resource-sharing frameworks:** Global carbon budgets, and food security compacts. • **Ecological citizenship:** Rights and responsibilities based on biospheric impact. • **New economic paradigms:** Degrowth, doughnut economics, and regenerative accounting become dominant logics. • **Public-led innovation:** Green industrial policy and technology transfers from Global North to South.	• IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) moving toward actionable frameworks. • Loss and Damage Fund mechanisms evolving. • Rise of legal rights for nature and universal ecological citizenship discourse. • Calls for climate tribunals and global democratic reforms.

4. Techno-Dystopia or Techno-feudalism (Global Fragmentation & High Centralization): authoritarian control by elites, environmental degradation, high inequality.

In this scenario, a new form of feudal order emerges where private tech-corporate power and elite networks dominate resource access, governance. Traditional state sovereignty weakens or merges with corporate interests, and populations become "users" or "subjects" rather than citizens. Ecological breakdown is not solved, but it is managed unevenly for elite survivability.

From our contemporary perspective, one can think of it as a return to feudal relationality (lord/subject, land/resource control), with AI, drones, and cloud computing as the castles and lands, plus the gig economy as a prefiguration. Ecological services would be rationed as privileges, and collapse would not be total — just selectively outsourced.

Key features	Resulting Dynamics
• **Private governance replaces public governance:** Tech conglomerates, billionaires, or private security regimes function as quasi-states (controlling housing, water, food…). • **Surveillance and data control become tools of control and belonging:** Subjects offer data, attention, and labour in exchange for ecological safety or access. • **Land, energy, and infrastructure privatised:** Ecosystem services (like clean air, water, or weather control) become commodified and sold to those who can pay.	• Corporate cities and special economic zones (NEOM in Saudi Arabia, charter cities…). • Privatisation of climate adaptation tech (exclusive insurance, desalination, vertical farming). • Platform control over labour, information, and logistics (Amazon, Meta, Alibaba as infrastructures, not just firms). • Private space colonies or bunkers funded by elite members. • Growing academic discourse: Cedric Durand, Yanis Varoufakis, and Shoshana Zuboff have all explored proto-feudal logics in platform capitalism.

5. Fragmented Global Collapse/Environmental Sovereignty (Global Fragmentation & High Decentralisation): regional self-sufficiency, rising nationalism, localised crises.

In this scenario, global systems break down into isolated, competitive zones. In the absence of centralized coordination, societies respond to collapse in radically diverse ways. Some become eco-authoritarian, others neo-tribal or anarchic. Tensions over food, water, and safe zones escalates. Survival depends on local adaptation, force, and luck.

To get to this situation, the world governance has become fragmented and competitive. Survival has replaced prosperity, and innovation has become tactical and local.

Key features	Resulting Dynamics
• **End of globalisation:** International trade collapses; regions become insular. • **Resource wars and migration waves:** Ecological refugees reshape borders; armed conflict intensifies. • **Localised resilience or decay:** Some communities adapt (through permaculture, militias, barter economies); others disintegrate. • **Loss of infrastructure:** Energy grids, healthcare, and internet access become uneven or vanish. • **Rise of neo-tribal orders:** Identity, territory, and tradition dominate politics.	• Collapse of basic services in climate-hit regions (Syria, Sudan…). • Growth of private militias, climate migration conflicts at borders. • Degrowth and survivalist communities in the Global North. • Infrastructure attacks and critical system fragility. • Water wars, failed states, and climate migration conflicts. • Collapse-prepper culture and gated resilience projects.

Conclusive remark to the scenarios analysis:

Each reader will naturally gravitate toward certain scenarios — some may appear more probable, others more desirable. But it is essential to stress that these futures are not mutually exclusive paths. The world ahead is unlikely to unfold as a single, isolated scenario. Instead, it will most likely emerge as a mosaic of overlapping dynamics, with some trajectories becoming dominant in specific regions, sectors, or timeframes, while others remain marginal but still influential.

What matters is not to predict which future will "win," but to use these scenarios to surface the key challenges and choices they present. They are lenses to enhance our perception, not scripts to follow. With this in mind, we now turn to a brief analysis of what these emerging futures might mean for companies — not just as economic actors, but as institutions capable of shaping, resisting, or adapting to what lies ahead. The question becomes: how do organisations position themselves in those potential futures, and what responsibilities — and opportunities — do they choose to embrace?

2.2 Assessing the consequences of each one of these scenarios for business?

Here we give a succinct summary, for each scenario, of the key evolutions we could witness in the business environment, followed by the strategic elements that could prove useful to navigate the new circumstances (constraints, opportunities, and potential adaptations).

1. Managed erosion.

In a managed erosion scenario, we anticipate a few key evolutions shaping decisively the future:

- Environmental degradation continues without systemic rupture, generating tensions without ruptures
- Patchy regulation increases compliance costs, as reputational and legal pressure grows accordingly
- Growing legitimacy crisis for business-as-usual is witnessed as the social and environmental impacts of its continuity get more visible

Jointly to those defining traits of the future, the current economic model stretches without rupture, under growing stress, with the following characteristics:

- **Power Centre:** They remain transnational corporations and financially dominant states.
- **Coordination Mode:** A mix of competition, lobbying, and soft -though increasing- compliance sets the frame.

Strategic takeaways for companies			
Ecosystem potential actors	**Key constraints**	**Opportunities**	**A few ideas for strategic adaptation**
• **Multinationals (energy, finance):** shape regulations, manage image crises. • **ESG Intermediaries (ratings agencies, consultants):** arbiters of legitimacy. • **States**: fragmented regulators. • **Investors:** pressure for green narratives, not necessarily outcomes. • **NGOs:** watchdogs, sometimes co-opted into partnerships. • **Consumers:** incentivised to "green choices" but structurally limited in their influence.	• ESG compliance burden grows. • Climate volatility disrupts logistics and sourcing. • Brand trust erosion • Legal/market greenwashing scrutiny. • Insurance & Hedging: Climate insurance and risk-pooling mechanisms.	• "Eco-optimisation" services: supply chain decarbonisation, adaptation consulting, risk hedging. • Narrative leadership: Brands that go beyond greenwashing can gain disproportionate loyalty. • "Transition as a service": Helping legacy industries adapt incrementally. • Regional resilience niches: local sourcing, water security, insurance.	• Build modular compliance systems. • Invest in resilience (supply, energy, data). • Shape and co-opt narratives (green PR, lobbying). • Explore regional regulatory arbitrage.

2. Techno-globalism.

In a techno-globalism scenario, we anticipate a few key evolutions shaping decisively the future:

- Collapse or near-collapse triggers global eco-regulation by AI-state systems
- Market replaced by ecological optimisation logic
- Firms exist as system-integrated nodes

Jointly to those defining traits of the future, AI-led, centralised governance enforces ecological boundaries strictly, displaying the following key features:

- **Power Centre:** Supranational techno-governance alliances
- **Coordination Mode:** Algorithmic regulation

Strategic takeaways for companies

Ecosystem potential actors	Key constraints	Opportunities	A few ideas for strategic adaptation
• **Governments + AI platforms:** cyber-ecological regulators. • **Compliant Corporations:** survive by aligning ops to algorithmic constraints. • **Eco-infrastructure providers (sensor networks, AI auditors, grid tech).** • **Carbon/data marketplaces Individuals:** quantified agents with personal eco-budgets.	• Systemic loss of decision autonomy. • Quota systems override price signals. • Tech-infrastructure dependency. • Algorithmic exclusion risk.	• "Governance-tech" builders: smart sensors, real-time eco-audits, digital twin ecosystems. • Eco-credential leasing: specialised services that help others remain compliant (like carbon buffers). • Algorithm trainers: companies that feed quality environmental data into learning systems. • Scarcity arbitrage: mastering how to operate within strict material/ energy quotas.	• Become ultra-transparent, eco-compliant. • Specialise in modular services or real-time data flows. • Invest in technological "infrastructure": sensor networks, digital twins. • Align strategy with eco-algorithms, not markets.

3. Global ecological awakening.

In a Global ecological awakening scenario, we anticipate a few key evolutions shaping decisively the future:

- Collapse sparks unprecedented coordination
- Degrowth, regenerative economics, planetary budgeting
- Global social contracts and civic-based markets emerge

Combined with these defining traits of the future, a rupture leads to unified, ecological global governance, displaying the following key features:

- **Power Centre:** Planetary institutions and global civic coalitions
- **Coordination Mode:** Cooperative planning and planetary budgeting

Strategic takeaways for companies

Ecosystem potential actors	Key constraints	Opportunities	A few ideas for strategic adaptation
• **Ecological enterprises:** regenerative agriculture, circular manufacturing. • **Commons-based institutions:** water, forests, soil governance entities. • **Worker-owned cooperatives:** local production, global solidarity. • **Global unions + civic tech platforms:** participatory budgeting, deliberation. • **Ecological accounting networks:** new value metrics (an example of new concept would be living capital vs financial assets).	• Degrowth/post-profit paradigms. • High governance scrutiny. • Ecosystem-service accounting. • Redistribution expectations.	• Mission-aligned innovation: companies tied to planetary regeneration (soil repair, rewilding, carbon drawdown…). • Commons-based entrepreneurship: co-owned platforms, circular manufacturing. • Participatory governance tools: civic tech, deliberation platforms, ecological accounting systems. • Bioregional specialisations: businesses serving the ecological uniqueness of each region.	• Convert to post-growth business models (stewardship, repair, commons logic). • Join cooperative alliances and open value networks. • Internalise social/ ecological accounting metrics. • Adopt democratic and participatory governance models.

4. Techno feudalism.

In a Techno feudalism scenario, we anticipate a few key evolutions shaping decisively the future:

- Collapse leads to elite-controlled enclaves.
- Corporations become semi-sovereign.
- Economy is access-based, not open.

Combined with these defining traits of the future, collapse leads to elite techno-territories that are governed via platforms and private resources, displaying the following key features:

- **Power Centre:** Corporate dynasties, technocrats, maybe even gated city-states
- **Coordination Mode:** Vertical control + proprietary platforms.

Strategic takeaways for companies

Ecosystem potential actors	Key constraints	Opportunities	A few ideas for strategic adaptation
• **Platform-" lords":** own housing, energy, education, AI, even citizenship. • **Loyalty-dependent partners:** food, health, protection for enclave dwellers. • **Gig economy producers:** labour as a service inside controlled ecosystems. • **Excluded masses:** live outside the system, rely on shadow economies. • **Private armies + AI security:** ensure order and border integrity.	• Mass exclusion from services. • Market fragmentation into closed sovereign spaces. • Dependency on platform sovereignty.	• Elite-resilience services: high-end sustainability, personal carbon security, biotech wellness. • Micro-supplier status within dominant platforms. • Parallel economies: serving non-elite shadow markets (repair, black market access, encrypted finance).	• Seek platform patronage or enclave access. • Design loyalty-driven services for elite markets. • Automate aggressively to serve gated clients. • Build contingency plans for social exclusion or conflict zones.

5. Fragmented global collapse.

In a Fragmented global collapse scenario, we anticipate a few key evolutions shaping decisively the future:

- Collapse of global governance
- Return to fortified, local trade zones
- Basic services, security, and physical access become central

Combined with these defining traits of the future, the global rupture leads to resource wars, regional collapse, and survivalist economies, displaying the following key features:

- **Power Centre:** Local warlords, militias, fortified communities
- **Coordination Mode:** Violence, barter, scarcity trade

Strategic takeaways for companies

Ecosystem potential actors	Key constraints	Opportunities	A few ideas for strategic adaptation
• **Local "traditional" producers:** farmers, toolmakers, water gatherers. • **Militias:** control trade routes and security. • **Contraband traders:** fuel, medicine, weapons. • **Recyclers:** salvage supply chains and old-world goods. • **Survival co-operators:** basic services via mutual aid or closed loop economies.	• National/ international systems break down. • Logistics and global trade collapse. • Violence or eco-driven exclusion. • Fragile currencies and institutions.	• Essential goods & services: food, water, fuel, tools, medicine — hyperlocal production. • Durable repair economy: long-life tools, off-grid tech, low-tech resilience. • Trust-based brands: reputation, barter-readiness, ethical trade relations. • Mobile survival kits: modular goods/services adapted to instability.	• Localise deeply: production, inputs, clients. • Shift to simple, repairable products or core services (water, food, energy). • Build territory-based or mutual aid trust networks. • Create barter- or crypto-compatible business models.

To finalise, as an operational summary, here is a global view of the core logic for companies in each scenario and the key traits they should have to display:

Sub scenario	Core logic	Key adaptation traits
Managed Erosion	Flexibility & image	Resilient, Public Relations oriented, geo-diversified
Techno-globalism	Eco Compliance via AI	Real-time, automated, deeply surveyed, contributory
Global ecological awakening	Stewardship & equity	Transparent, participatory, ecologically integrated
Techno-feudalism	Control & exclusivity	Private governance, platform-based sovereignty
Fragmented Collapse	Territory & trust	Local, defensive, essential services focused

As key general takeaways, we can see that, in this collapse scenario:

- **Constraints are the main determinant:** the tighter the system (meaning the deeper the collapse), the more specialized firms must become.
- **Trust, transparency, and adaptiveness** are the new currencies across most scenarios.
- Companies will probably need to review some assumptions about scale, growth, and control, and instead design for **resilience, modularity, or cooperation.**

3 Operational conclusion.

3.1 What to do in the present with this information?

Before diving into this section, we should remind ourselves of the purpose (and limits) of foresight work: it is a tool to help you reflect on the future in order to make better decisions today. Through exploring different future scenarios, you gain perspective on what is at stake and where your choices might lead. In no case, it is a prediction, and no scenario contains what will actually happen: all of them however shed light on things that could happen, and that can influence current decisions.

By now—whether you are reading this alone or with your team—you probably have a sense of which part of the different futures you see as most probable, and which you find most desirable. They are often not the same.

Honest self-assessment.

With this in mind, here are the two key questions for the decision-maker or contributor you are right now:

- What future "sub scenario(s)" are you preparing for, as an individual or as a team? (In terms of risk and adaptation) Are you missing some key pieces of the future stakes you now identify?
- What future are you helping shape, as an individual or as a team? What scenario are you fuelling with your action? (In terms of positive impact and direction) Would you want to contribute differently?

Three potential uses for this study.

Based on the level of satisfaction you have with the current status you have just assessed just upfront; we suggest three possible ways to follow-up this study:

1. **Highly satisfied with your strategy and current actions.**
   Use this document and your answers to deepen your understanding of what is at stake today: no need for an immediate action, but no doubt this will influence your decisions at some point.
   Useful questions to ask yourself: What is relevant to keep in mind concerning two important points: things I did not know ("blind spots") and trends or ruptures I underestimated in terms of risk ("weak spots")?
2. **Moderately satisfied with your strategy and current actions.**
   Use this document and your answers to complete existing strategy with complementary elements, or to build some kind of future possibilities monitoring (strategic intelligence, collective alignment, regular review of futures scenario and their unfolding…).

Useful questions to ask yourself: What context evolution did I/we underestimate or overestimate in the way I/we built our strategies, and what actions could balance our strategy to be more accurate and consistent with the future we imagine? What actions inspired by this document could feed our actual strategy?

3. **Having doubts about your strategy and current course of action.**
   Use this document and your answers to critically assess your strategy and review it deeply for the future business landscape, should you feel it is necessary.
   Useful questions to ask yourself: What are our global convictions with regards to the future: what is probable and/or desirable? How could we reassess our role/strategy/value propositions… in the face of this future perspective? You might consider getting some expertise or support to help you move forward should you find yourself in such questioning.

3.2 Two invitations as a general conclusion.

Whatever use you find most relevant for this document, we want to conclude this white paper with a double invitation:

1. Create the conditions to be future-ready for the times to come. Today's uncertainty calls for the ability to navigate rapidly changing environments. In a quickly evolving world (repeating this fact does not lessen its truth), it is important to learn how to work with the future and integrate this practice into your institutional life. Here are a few ideas to inspire you along this path:
   - Cultivate openness and curiosity for new information by, for instance, creating a "Future Foresight Cell": establish a small, autonomous team to simulate disruptive futures—from ecological collapse to resource shocks—and test adaptive solutions.
   - Develop scenario-based contingency plans: create actionable response plans for different collapse risks (climate, geopolitical, tech failure), supported by redundant systems (e.g., dual suppliers, local production) and crisis-ready teams.
   - Shift to circular and regenerative models: move beyond linear "take-make-dispose" models by designing for reuse, leasing instead of selling, and turning waste into input. Companies like Patagonia and Interface demonstrate that this approach reduces risk and builds customer trust.
   - Prepare your workforce for what's next: reskill for resilience by investing in learning programs, agile teams, and digital fluency to stay ahead of disruption.

2. Question your responsibility in shaping the future as we act. We have responsibilities not only toward shareholders, employees, and stakeholders, but also toward the communities and societies that support us and the living environment that supports them.

   In times of profound uncertainty, businesses and their leaders are not passive observers of unfolding crises—they are active agents shaping which future becomes reality. The choices companies make today—how they source, produce, hire, invest, and innovate—directly affect whether we steer toward resilience or breakdown. Inaction or marginal adjustments risk reinforcing an unsustainable status quo, while bold, systemic shifts can redirect entire industries toward more viable pathways.

   With this influence comes responsibility. We often underestimate the impact we can have, but the good news is that more than ever, our commitment to sustainable futures can also serve as a real differentiator."

Who We Are

We are a major international network of consulting firms that we like to call *Citizens*.

13 **citizens:** diverse, independent consulting firms

30 **countries:** in Europe, Americas, Asia, Oceania and Africa

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- Stronger together — each Citizen's independence strengthened through our global reach, blending world-class teamwork with agile, flexible, personalized service to local clients

Thank you

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