

# Learning Adventure 3

## LEARNING JOURNEY

Creating My New Good Life



### **LAI3. Assess The Threats**

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ESTIMATED TIME: 90+ MINUTES

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# CONTEXT



The **Creating My New Good Life Learning Journey** has been developed for anyone who would like to explore how to live their own version of a good life and make it more resilient to external local or global threats.

**This could include anyone who:**

- Feels that their life is somehow lacking (perhaps despite having everything they had hoped would bring them happiness).
- Is satisfied with their life but is concerned that “Shadows” on the horizon (climate change, political and financial instability, war etc.) could negatively affect their future.

**This Learning Journey comprises four Learning Adventures and is designed to support you:**



Envision what your own “New Good Life” (NGL) could look like.



Explore the resources available on the journey toward your NGL.



Assess the potential threat to your NGL from global and local “shadows”.



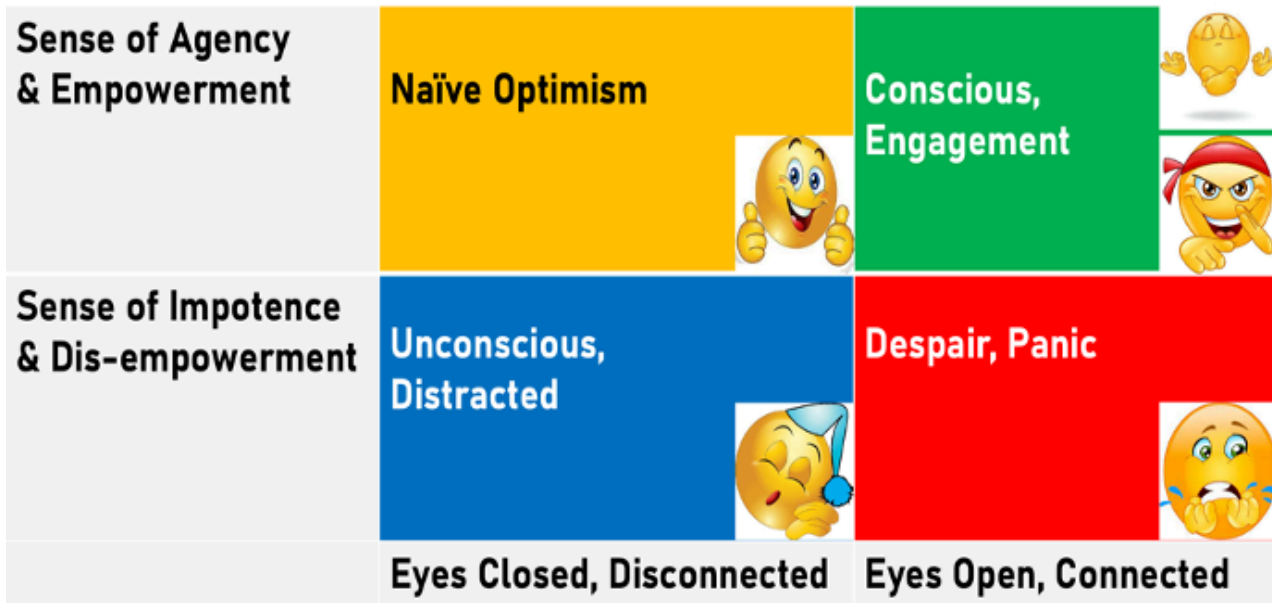
Develop strategies to achieve your NGL in a way that is resilient to change.

**We recommend completing the Learning Adventure in several sittings, perhaps skipping optional exercises to begin with. It can also be very helpful to have a thinking buddy to work with. A fictional case study that is intended to illustrate the process outlined in this Learning Adventure is included in Appendix 1. You may find it helpful to refer to it as you go along.**

# Objectives

As we start this Learning Adventure, it is worth mentioning four broad stances that all of us probably adopt at one stage or another when facing significant challenges:

- Despair or panic.
- Remaining deliberately unconscious (what problem?).
- Ignoring or denying (all will be well).
- Being aware and acting thoughtfully (conscious engagement).



None of these stances is intrinsically either good or bad. Some may represent helpful short-term strategies. However, as poet Robert Frost is quoted as saying, "The only way out is through." This is a simple statement with a profound meaning that you can apply to many situations in life. Often, the best way to overcome a challenge is to face it head-on rather than trying to avoid it.

This Learning Adventure (LAI3), the third in the series, is designed to help you to do just that, by supporting you in thinking about the current situation and potential future opportunities and threats as they relate to your NGL. This process may be hard work and / or cause you to feel difficult emotions. If you need support, please reach out to us (see details below).

# Risks and Challenges

As Adam Tooze says “There’s a lot of stuff happening here all at once. And that’s precisely why we are trying to wrap our heads around it.”

Before you dive deeper into this Learning Adventure, take a few minutes to capture what you see as the biggest global risks facing humanity now and, say, 10 years in the future. Rank them in order of impact.



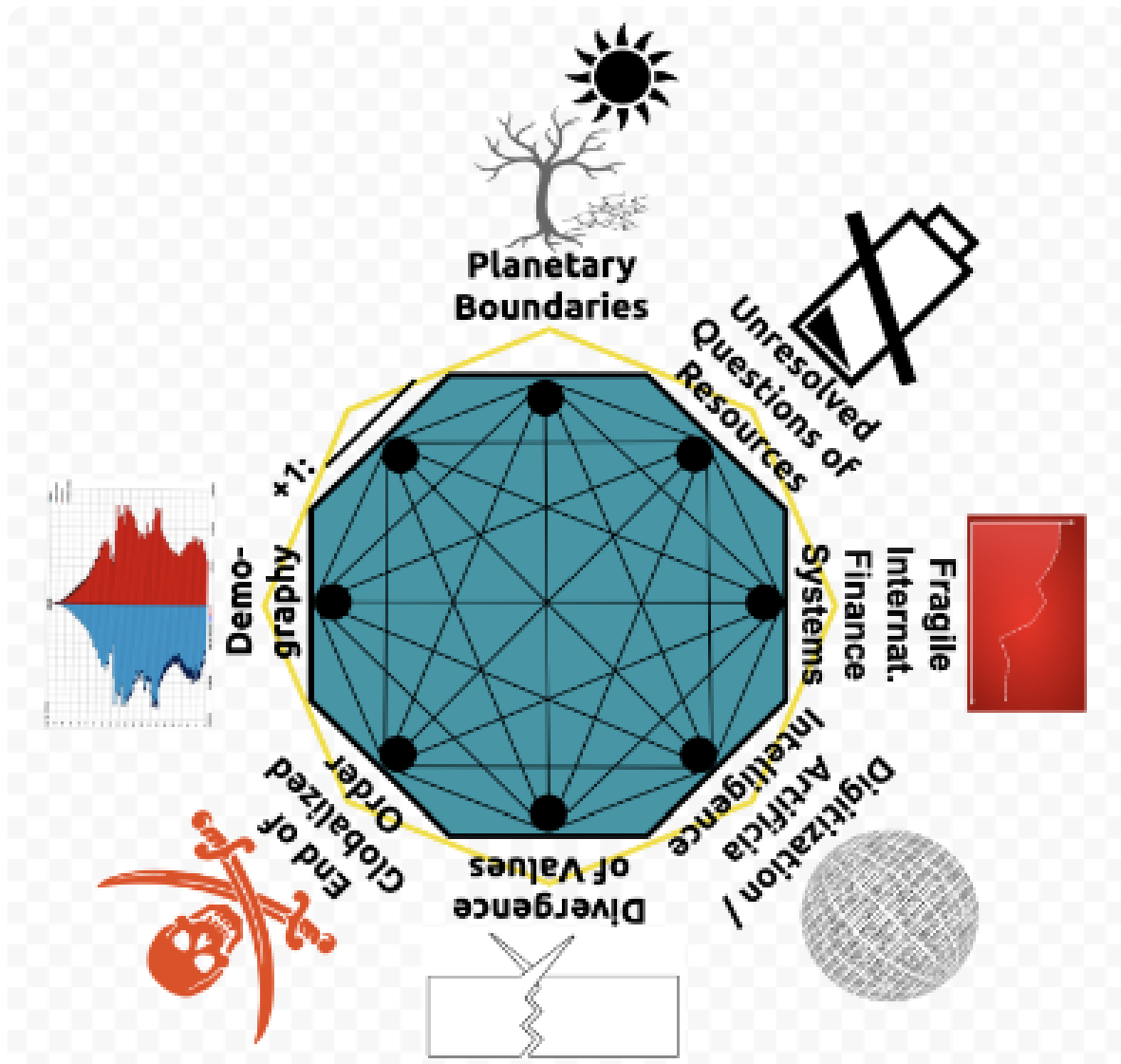
*Capture your thoughts in the box below.*

Once you have completed your list, compare it with the summary of the largest risks faced by humanity, created by the World Economic Forum in 2023. How does it compare?



Capture your reflections on the exercise and how your perspective aligns with “expert” opinions.

Here is our summary of the the risks in the form of 7 “Global Shadows”:



We have left a space holder for any other Shadow you can identify.

**Optional:**

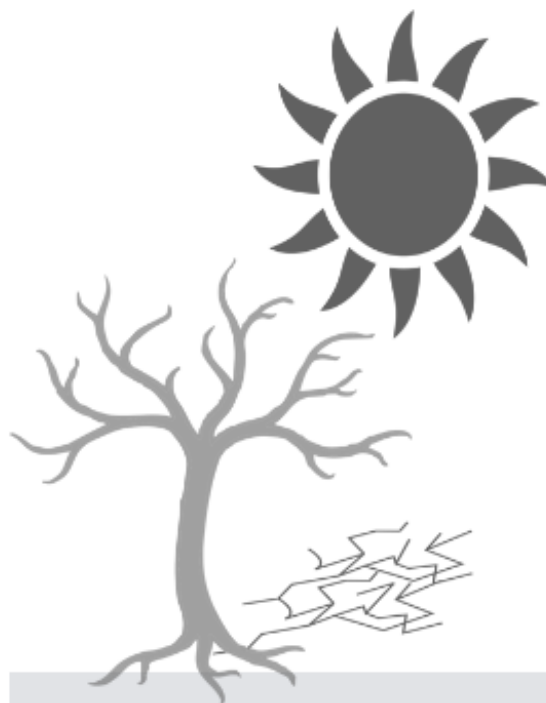
In this admittedly long video, Daniel Schmachtenberger provides a comprehensive introduction to the landscape of interconnected risks and challenges that we will need to confront over the next few years. If you would like to go deeper into any specific challenge, a list of resources is provided at the end of this Learning Adventure.



We will explore each one of the Global Shadows in more detail below.

## Environmental changes

- We are already in a runaway processes: rising temperatures, heat waves / droughts, floods / storms, etc.
- Sea levels are rising, arable land is being lost.
- Many countries will become too hot to live in.
- Water and food shortage will lead to more migration and conflict.
- Food chains break, seas collapse, soil erodes
- Fertility of humans and animals is in decline.
- Pollution, including microplastics, is growing.
- New bacteria and viruses are emerging, and antibiotics are losing their efficacy



See the References below, and Appendix 2 for more details.

### Optional:

If you happen to be living in Europe and are thinking that climate change is unlikely to affect you, then you might want to check out the [European Climate Risk Assessment – Executive Summary](#) and watch Dave Borlace’s [video](#) introduction to it on his YouTube channel: “Just have a think”.



No changes are universally good or bad. For example, environmental changes may make growing new plants species possible in your region or inspire you to take on a project that provides your life with greater meaning.

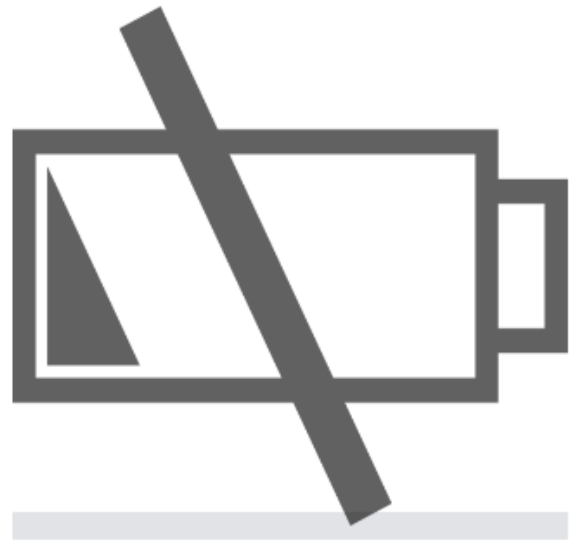
**How could environmental changes have an impact on your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*



## Resource uncertainties

- Oil and gas reserves are dwindling and the cost of extraction is increasing.
- Replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy will take time and require large financial investments.
- We don't have the metals and minerals we would need to develop a "green" energy infrastructure.
- Oil, gas, ores, water, ... are already pawns in the new emerging power structure.
- Prices for raw material and energy are bound to rise, at a time when nearly all processes in industry, offices and households depend on oil and electricity.



Resource uncertainties are encouraging private individuals to think about their patterns of energy consumption and are already providing new business opportunities for some e.g. house insulation or solar panel providers.

**How could resource uncertainties have an impact on your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

## Fragile Financial Systems

- Since the introduction of money, we have experienced turbulent financial markets. This was as true for the Romans as it is today.
- We have created new financial instruments that many compare to gambling in a casino.
- Our financial system with credit and interest depends on economic growth.
- With environmental destruction, a declining workforce (e.g. due to demographic changes), energy and ore scarcity, problems with supply chains etc. is continued growth really possible?



The current fragility of our financial system, with its need for constant growth, may inspire the development new economic models that more economically and environmentally sustainable.

**How could changes resulting from fragile international and local finance systems impact your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

## Digitalisation and AI

- It is not clear what the psychological impact will be of no longer being the most intelligent “kid on the block”.
- We may lose our most basic competences: calculation, writing, creating, etc. Human beings may become obsolete.
- Our life and work will become increasingly dependent on technology, increasing the fragility of our systems
- These systems are completely dependent on electricity. In the future electricity could become much more expensive and / or unreliable.
- AI will affect or completely take over a range of jobs.
- We are already seeing the military potential of digital technologies that are relatively cheap and accessible to terrorists



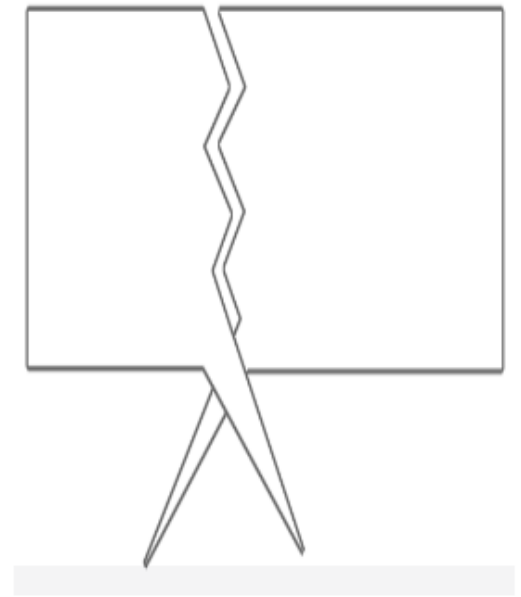
As well as threats, new technology offers many opportunities. For example, AI may radically transform education, giving students access to personalised learning by the best teachers who have ever lived.

**How could changes resulting from increasing digitalisation and AI impact your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

## Divergence of Values

- Value tensions are growing within and between organizations and within and between countries (Global North / the “West” against the Global South).
- Social media algorithms that favour the provision of news, trigger reaction and accelerate this dynamic.
- Some divisions run between generations and along the rural / city-borders. Other battlegrounds include the kind of human rights, diversity, climate action, taxation, actions in pandemics, migratory policies, science, ...?
- The willingness to publicly ridicule or hate people, to take people to court, to accept or recommend violence or to use it oneself, seems to be growing.
- Fewer people are able or willing to understand and dialogue with different audiences. Few individuals are respected across camps.



The growing divergence of values is a threat for society. However, it could inspire people to radically re-evaluate how they related to other human beings.

**How could changes resulting from increasing divergence of values impact your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

## The End of Global Order

- There was a time when many believed that all countries will get capitalism, then democracy and finally human rights. This story is now over.
- How will the new power dynamic look like between China, Europe, India, Russia, the US and the next most powerful, but not always stable nations?
- The international presence of the US Navy used to guarantee supply chains. If (and some say when) the US withdraws, pirates will make international shipping much more difficult and expensive.



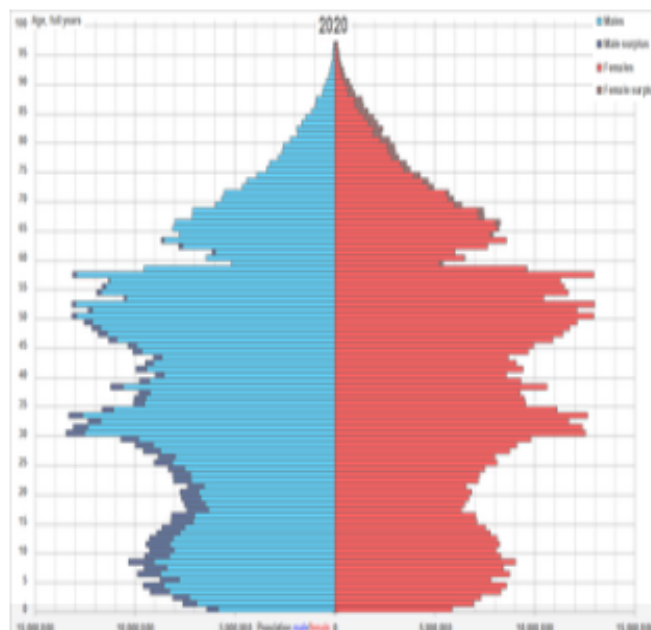
The end of the global order will have negative consequences, such as increased costs. However, it could also encourage the consumption of more locally produced goods that in turn would strengthen local communities.

**How could the end of the global order impact your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

## Demographic Changes

- Few countries have a reproduction number of greater than 2.1 per woman. Populations are no longer growing because there are more children, but because people are living longer.
- The graph (opposite) is from China. Europe (with some exceptions) and Russia are no better. Only a few countries e.g. France and US have reasonably healthy demographics.
- Fewer people are entering the workforce, more people are in retirement, dependent on public money and social and medical services and family support.
- Countries will need to contain or reduce social and medical services, leaving more burden on families



Demographic changes will provide challenges, but it will also reduce consumption (older people typically consume less), spur innovation and provide new business opportunities.

**How could these demographic changes have an impact on your NGL? What opportunities and / or threats do you foresee?**

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

## Global Shadows Summary

We face a lot of actual and potential global threats. However, there are clearly many ways in which the future could unfold. You may think that this Learning Adventure exaggerates the dangers. We hope that you are right! Please do your own research and let us know what you discover.

We are open to alternative perspectives and will regularly update the Learning Adventure to reflect the latest thinking. Ultimately, what is central to My New Good Life is not the threats, but rather the Elements that can support us to thrive in the world, no matter whether the Shadows do or do not materialise.

**These Elements are explored in the next Learning Adventure LAi4 – Develop strategies.**

*Before continuing to the next section, capture any thoughts or feelings here:*

# Scenario Planning

Thinking through the various possible future scenarios is complex, so it can be helpful to consider three “buckets”:



The first “bucket” is for scenarios that already exist for which you can take immediate action. So, for example, global weather patterns are already changing. We are experiencing more frequent serious weather events, such as intense storms and consequent flooding.

There are probably actions that you could take now to mitigate the worst effects of these weather events. What other changes are already noticeable for which you could take some immediate action?

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*



The second “bucket” is for scenarios that are likely in future and for which the impact on your NGL would be high. This could include the impact of AI on previously secure jobs. Middle-class knowledge workers are likely to be particularly hard-hit. If you are in this category, is there anything you could start to do now to reduce the risk to your future employment opportunities? What other likely future scenarios can you already start to prepare for?

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

The third “bucket” is for scenarios that are unlikely and difficult to prepare for, but which could have a significant impact. For example, diverging values could lead to social unrest, with difficult-to-predict consequences. However, it may be possible to start exploring possible options, such as moving house away from potential areas of conflict. What other possible future scenarios might you start to develop options for? What are the early warning signs you need to pay attention to?

*Capture any important insights, shifts you need to make or possible actions to take here:*

# Reflection

In this Learning Adventure, you have started to develop a sense of what potential opportunities and threats to your NGL may lie ahead.

**Before moving on, reflect on the following questions:**

- How do you feel now after completing this Learning Adventure?
- How might you feel if you were much younger, knowing what you know now?
- If you are now young, how might you feel if you were much older?
- How do you think much younger or older people today feel about the situation?
- What are your top 3-4 take-aways? What actions do you plan to take?
- Has this Learning Adventure had any impact on your driving questions?

*Capture your reflections here:*

## Support

Having faced the issues, you are now in a better place to take appropriate action. This is the focus of the third Learning Adventure in the series, which will support you in developing strategies for creating a resilient NGL, taking account of the global Shadows.

If you would like to speak with someone about thoughts or emotions stirred by this Learning Adventure, or to join our community, please reach out to us at [support@mynewgoodlife.com](mailto:support@mynewgoodlife.com)

## References

### Websites:

[New Good Life](#)

[European Parliament: Future Shocks](#)

### Books:

Zeihan, Peter: The end of the world is just the beginning: ISBN [978-0-063-23047-7](#)  
Wikipedia book [summary](#).

Hawkins, Prof. Peter et al: Environmental & Climate Conscious Coaching:  
ISBN: 978-0-367--72200

Macy, Joanna & Johnstone, Chris: Active Hope: ISBN 978-1-57731-972-6

Machado de Oliveira, Hospicing Modernity: ISBN 978-1-57731-972-6






### Videos:

1. The End of Global Order: [Making Sense podcast](#).
2. [An interview of Yuval Noah Harari](#) by entrepreneur and podcaster Steven Bartlett.
3. A series of three videos, covering environmental challenges, is offered by [The Week](#).

# Appendix 1 – Karin’s Case Study (Part 3)

The following is part 3 of a fictional case study that is intended to illustrate the process outlined in this Learning Adventure and the one that follows. Karin’s case study is continued in Learning Adventure LAi4 – Develop strategies.

Looking at the matrix, Karin could see that she had tended to live most of her life in a state of unconscious distraction as she struggled to manage the many demands on her time. However, recently she was aware of a background level of anxiety that occasionally turned into panic.

<b>Sense of Agency &amp; Empowerment</b>	<b>Naïve Optimism</b> 	<b>Conscious, Engagement</b>  
<b>Sense of Impotence &amp; Dis-empowerment</b>	<b>Unconscious, Distracted</b> 	<b>Despair, Panic</b> 
<b>Eyes Closed, Disconnected</b>		<b>Eyes Open, Connected</b>

Karin started watching the video of Daniel Schmachtenberger but soon realised that it was going to make her to feel too uncomfortable. She made a mental note to come back to it later and then moved on quickly to explore the 7 global Shadows.

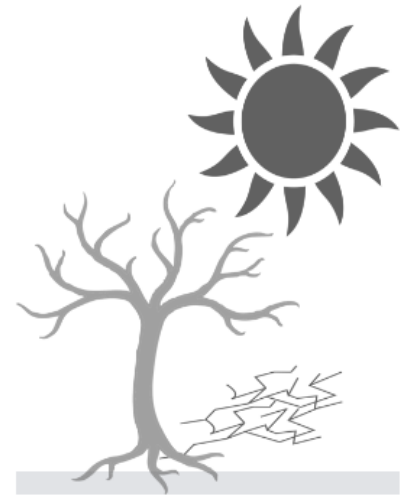
The 7 global Shadows helped Karin put a “face” and some structure onto the sources of her anxiety.



## Environmental Changes

The impact of environmental change was already obvious to Karin. She had witnessed the seasons changing and the summers growing warmer. Even in Belgium, the summer heat had occasionally been oppressive and recent storms had left their basement flooded. The Syrian war, which some linked to climate change had caused a surge in immigration, which was obvious to see in Brussels. The decline in wildlife was also clear.

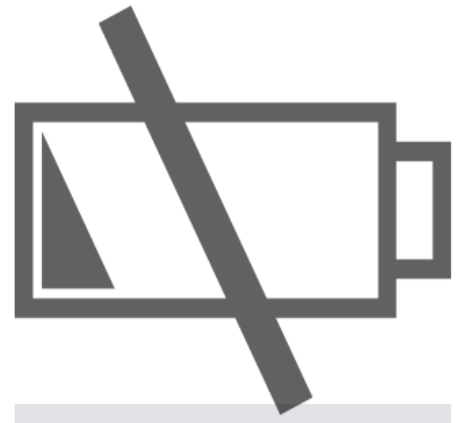
As a child, she remembered seeing more wildlife. Rabbits used to be everywhere, but now they were a rarity. Environmental changes had already had some negative effects on Karin's life and was a significant threat to her NGL.



## Resource uncertainties

Resource uncertainties also had a significant impact. The price of electricity and gas had gone through the roof after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Food prices had also risen dramatically over recent years. The cost of the weekly shopping seemed almost to have doubled, but perhaps some of this was down to the insatiable appetite of her teenage son!

Resource uncertainties would be a key threat to her NGL. Perhaps there could also be opportunities, such as investing in resources like gold or land. She would need to reflect further on this.



## Fragile Financial Systems

Karin still remembered the financial crisis in 2007. Although she did not have much in the way of savings at the time, she remembered her father being devastated at the possibility of losing his life savings, just as he was coming up to the point of retiring.

As she thought about her own retirement, she made a mental note to ensure that she was not overly exposed to stock market fluctuations.



## Digitalisation and AI

Karin had already experienced the impact of technology changes in her own job. Many of the changes had been positive allowing her to work regularly from home. She had also seen how her children were now using AI in their studies. Her daughter Lisa had been involved in a project to create a graphic novel using ChatGPT to help generate the story line and Midjourney to generate images. But what would be the impact of no longer being the most intelligent thing on the planet?

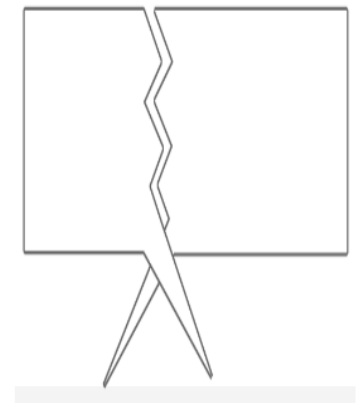


Clearly there were both opportunities and threats in the emerging technologies. She needed to find the time to think about the potential impact in her own work.

## Divergence of Values

This global Shadow had already impacted Karin's life. She had lost a friend in the Brussels terrorist attack of 2017 and Brexit had had a big impact on her husband. When he arrived from the UK to work in Belgium, he had never considered the possibility that the UK would one day vote to leave the EU.

Chris was a supporter of the European project and Brexit had led to bitter arguments with his parents. Political extremism was clear in other European countries. Even Sweden and the Netherlands had recently voted in right-wing governments. There were clearly threats to Karin's NGL here.



## The End of Global Order

This Shadow also felt depressingly real for Karin. The period of relative stability in the western world brought about by the Bretton Woods agreement at the end of WW2 was over. War had returned to Europe with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Israel and Hamas were at war in the middle east and China was flexing its muscles over Taiwan.

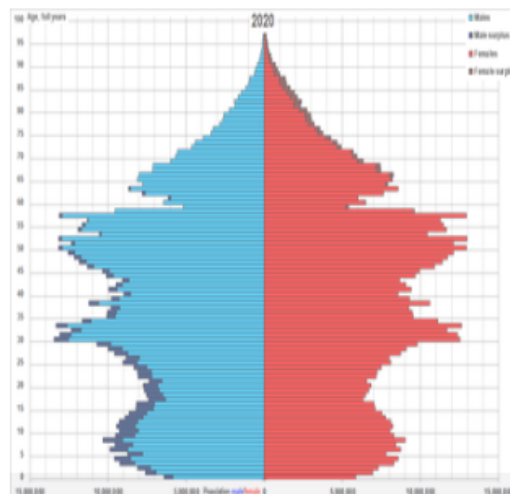
Karin no longer felt confident that her life would remain untouched by war. She could not think of any possible opportunities here.



## Demographic Changes

Demographic changes were not yet having a large affect in Belgium, but her German colleagues could already see shortages in the availability of young people to fill the gaps as people retire. With an aging population, there would be more burden on a smaller work force. Whenever Chris returned from his trips to the UK, he brought back stories of difficulties in getting doctor and dental appointments and long waiting lists for operations.

In the future, Karen feared that Belgium was going to struggle to pay pensions and fund the social services that she would rely on as she grew older.



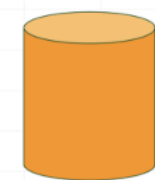
## Strategic Planning

In the Learning adventure, Karin quickly captured the following initial ideas:

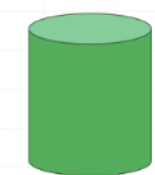
- Focus more on my mental and physical fitness. Get more exercise and commit to a regular mindfulness practice.
- Make the family house as energy efficient as possible to cut costs and reduce carbon footprint.
- Consider the possibility of moving to a more part-time contract to get more time to think and enjoy life.
- Explore first steps to taking the house more “off-grid” e.g. by installing solar panels and heat pumps.
- Stay abreast of AI developments to explore future opportunities and threats.
- Explore alternative investments that are less risky and more Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) compliant
- Explore options for alternative sources of income, should I be made redundant.
- Explore options for some kind of mutual support community of family and friends.



**Exists already:  
can take action  
now**



**High likelihood & /  
or impact: can start  
preparations now**



**Not able to act  
now, but can start  
to explore options**

Having completed her first thoughts on possible actions, Karin realised that her NGL would be different than she had first envisaged, but that despite the global Shadows her life and that of her family could still be good. She decided to move on to the fourth Learning Adventure to see how she could make her NGL more resilient to the global “Shadows”.

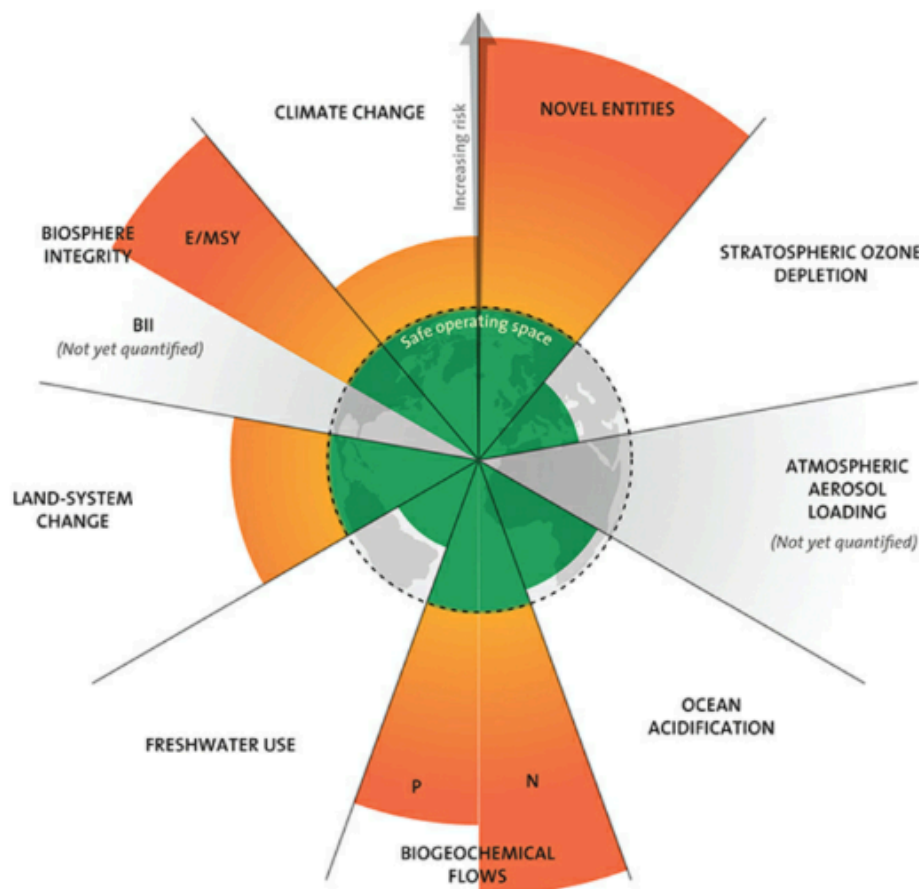


## Appendix 2 – Environmental Crisis, Facts and Figures\*

Here is a short summary of environmental facts and figures.

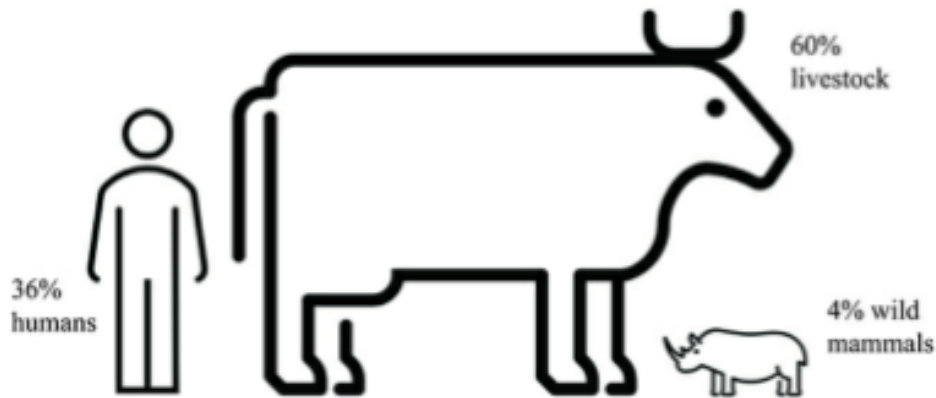
### Since the “Industrial Revolution”:

1. Surface temperatures on Earth have risen by 1°C. Most of this has happened in the last 40 years. An increase of over 1.5°C is generally agreed to be critically dangerous. We are on track to reach 3°C by the end of this century.
2. Global sea levels have risen by 20 cm. The rate of increase has doubled since 2000.
3. The acidity of surface ocean waters has increased by about 30%.
4. Half of the most productive soil has disappeared. At the current rate, we will run out of topsoil in 60 years.
5. We have already surpassed many “planetary boundaries”. Planetary boundaries are a framework to describe limits to the impacts of human activities on the Earth system. Beyond these limits, the environment may not be able to self-regulate anymore.



## The impact of this is already clear:

1. There are already 150,000 human climate-related deaths per year, and this is expected to rise to 300,000 by 2030.
2. The population of mammals, birds, amphibians, and fish has decreased by 68%. Many species become extinct every year.



**Comparative mass of mammals on Earth@2022**

3. Climate change-induced floods, storms, forest fires and drought are increasing each year making people homeless, and hungry and furthering migration. It is estimated that 3 billion people will become climate refugees in this century.

## Coming Soon ...

1. The Arctic is forecast to be ice-free in summer by 2050, which is likely to trigger further extreme weather changes.
2. Permafrost across the Arctic is beginning to thaw irreversibly. This will cause the release of carbon dioxide and methane.
3. Parts of the west Antarctic ice sheet are melting, triggering further collapse and more drastic sea level rise.
4. The Amazon rain forest is at high risk of flipping from carbon sink to carbon source and then to savanna within the next few years.
5. 99% of tropical corals are projected to be lost when average global temperatures rise by 2%.

\*A brief extract from Environmental and Climate Conscious Coaching – A Companion Guide to Evolving Coaching Practice