POST-U.S. ELECTIONS
REORGANIZATION SCENARIOS

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The U.S. Elections are an inflection point in the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. Covid-19 is a [Discipline scenario](), in which top-down and/or bottom-up control and order are required. The virus is the same everywhere; it is leadership, policy, and civic duty that marks the fate of one country over another. Jacinda Ardern exercised discipline. Donald Trump exercised self-interest.

The pandemic has created political instability, with dictators expanding their power across the world. The defeat of Donald Trump is an important turning point. Not only does America have the opportunity to curb its alarming high death count, but it has remained a democracy despite active attempts on multiple fronts to destroy the will of its people. Democracy has prevailed. Justice and equality are possible once again.

The next few months will not be easy. In the best-case scenario, Trump will shirk his responsibilities and sulk away from the presidency. In the worst-case scenario, he will mobilize his militia of supporters and engage in revenge politics, either to stay in power or to fully-destroy what he cannot have. While we cannot control his reaction to the results, we can control our collective response. Bullies lose when a crowd stands up to them.

This document will outline the overall current state and the possibilities that might emerge next, given the changes we are experiencing. Though it positions the U.S. elections as an inflection point, it can be used and applied in other contexts. Unlike the previous report, [Covid-19 Reorganization Scenarios](), this document will also address the importance of critical narratives that must change going forward.

THE CURRENT STATE

As outlined in the [Covid-19 Reorganization Scenarios report](#), we are in a Release period (the breakdown of stable, established systems). This Release period ends if we successfully develop, test, and disseminate a vaccine. The U.S. Election results present an opportunity for Reorganization, but may also present further opportunities for polarization and destabilization.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of important considerations that must be taken into account when we design for the future. More change is possible now. This is when the hard work begins.

- The pandemic is not over. A prolonged pandemic was unnecessary and we could have ended this much sooner. The world should look to New Zealand as an example, and acknowledge that more discipline and decisive action now will get us past this crisis faster.
- Covid-19 is a microcosm of climate change (a noted challenge of which is the simultaneous spread of many diseases). We need to use the recovery from this crisis to offset the next, more detrimental one.
- Our global response to the pandemic reflects a failure to meet a [minimum specification for future-proofing](#). Environmental harm and tampering created the conditions for Covid-19 to arise; which surfaced challenges for justice, democracy, and equality; and has now created the conditions for widespread surveillance and coercive technology.
- The U.S. is divided. More than 70 million people voted for Trump, and the strength of that number should not be underestimated or ignored. Trump's desire for celebrity drives him. He has considerable influence over his base and may seek to establish his own media company now that Fox News has abandoned him.
- Vice President-Elect, Kamala Harris, is a vision of a hard-fought future. She represents a possibility for women and people of colour that seemed lost over the past four years. Her presence on the global stage may help shape equality movements around the world. Trump supporters will target her.

CALL TO ACTION: REDESIGNING NARRATIVES

We take many of the myths and narratives that shape our society for granted. Some are broken. Some are insidious. It is important that we take an active hand in designing the collective stories we tell in order to shape our present and future. The following narratives were designed using the [Seven Foundations](#) model and the possibilities laid out in this document.

HERO ENTREPRENEURS VERSUS HERO POLICYMAKERS

Younger generations were sold a myth about entrepreneurship and government. Our 'hero entrepreneurs' have undermined the fabric of our society, and Millennials and Gen Z have paid the economic price for their success. This myth was coupled with the message that government is ineffective, bureaucratic, and not worth our time. We were sold this myth by those who wanted to retain power and ensure that our progressive values and visions of equality do not shape the future. We have been set up to serve the economic engine and lured away from redesigning the system.

Policy is power. Covid-19 and 2020 U.S. elections prove it. For this world to reflect our values and visions, Millennials and Gen Z must run for office and become active players in the political landscape. Otherwise, we will continue to live in a world made for us, not by us. Not everyone can or should be entrepreneurs. Some of our best and brightest should be policymakers. Startups don't make the world a better place. Good policies do.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM VERSUS AMERICAN EVOLUTION

'America the good and the great' might be wonderful as an aspiration. It is detrimental as an internalized narrative. It suggests that no matter what America does, good or bad, great or disastrous, it can do no wrong. It is a blinding, military-styled narrative that has prevented a great number of Americans from evolving and wanting better for their country, while ignoring the empirical evidence that suggests otherwise. It would serve America better to acknowledge its shortfalls, learn from other nations, and actively work towards improvement. **American exceptionalism should give way to American evolution.** The narrative and ideas tied to American exceptionalism are rooted in the past, while American evolution is future-oriented and

suggests growth and adaptation. The term 'evolution' will also reinforce the importance of science to a healthy society.

ANTI-VAXX VERSUS VACCINES ARE CLEAN

Detrimental movements are often driven by a desire for belonging. These movements offer community, conversation, and connection — all of which people may lack and seek out in the wrong places. This is why some parents will present themselves as anti-vaxxers online while secretly having their children vaccinated or why flat-earthers will continue to hold on to their beliefs after their own experiments prove them wrong. We adhere to what we think is the status quo amongst our peers, and distorted perceptions of the status quo are easier to spread online.

If we are to stand a chance against Covid-19 and its future mutations, we have to remove every obstacle to vaccine development and dissemination. The consequences of allowing Covid-19 to evolve are too severe for us to have a meek approach to this problem. From a narrative standpoint, there are two potential avenues here:

1. Reframe **anti-vaxx as pro-disease**. We need to highlight the societal danger of this movement in its name if we are to prevent Covid-19 from spreading and evolving.
2. Learn from toilet paper hoarding: **equate vaccination with cleanliness**. If you're not vaccinated, you might be dirty inside. #BeCleanWithVaccines

Changing the narrative can change the outcome. Your call to action is simple: share these new narratives far and wide. Share them often to change the story.

USING THE SCENARIOS

The following modular set of possibilities can be configured to create a vast array of scenarios. The future will contain elements of all four scenario archetypes (as described below), and which elements will come into play, in which configurations, and for whom remains to be seen. These possibilities will evolve as the aftermath of the U.S. elections and Covid-19 crisis unfold.

The purpose of these scenarios is not to predict the future, but to build complex prototypes of what might emerge next and better respond to those scenarios. Context matters; different possibilities will emerge in different places. Using a greater variety of possibilities, we can design and test more comprehensive strategies.

To create the scenarios, two strategic foresight methods have been used as follows:

First, **Jim Dator's Generic Images of the Future** provided archetypal templates to layout four possible futures. Though the modular pieces are sorted into the above categories, they can be combined with each other across scenarios to construct new images and possibilities. The scenario archetypes are as follows:

- Continuation: Business as usual/growth
- Discipline: Order and control
- Collapse: Systemic breakdown
- Transformation: High-tech and/or high-spirit [1]

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[1] These definitions are summaries provided by Jim Dator in Alternative Futures at the Manoa School. Retrieved from: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bc578bdfb22a52798f8a038/t/5d1844ec3a01db000100f67b/1561871599474/3.+Dator-Alt+Futs+Manoa.pdf

Second, the **Seven Foundations**[2] model was used to assemble the fundamental aspects of any given system for each scenario. Each 'foundation' is present in every system, though we tend to privilege some over others (e.g. Western systems favour economic outcomes). Though this model is typically presented as a wheel (figure 1), it is laid out as a grid in this document to allow for linear navigation. It is crossed with Generic Images to facilitate a holistic view of all possibilities at once and to allow for comparisons of each foundation across all four scenario archetypes.
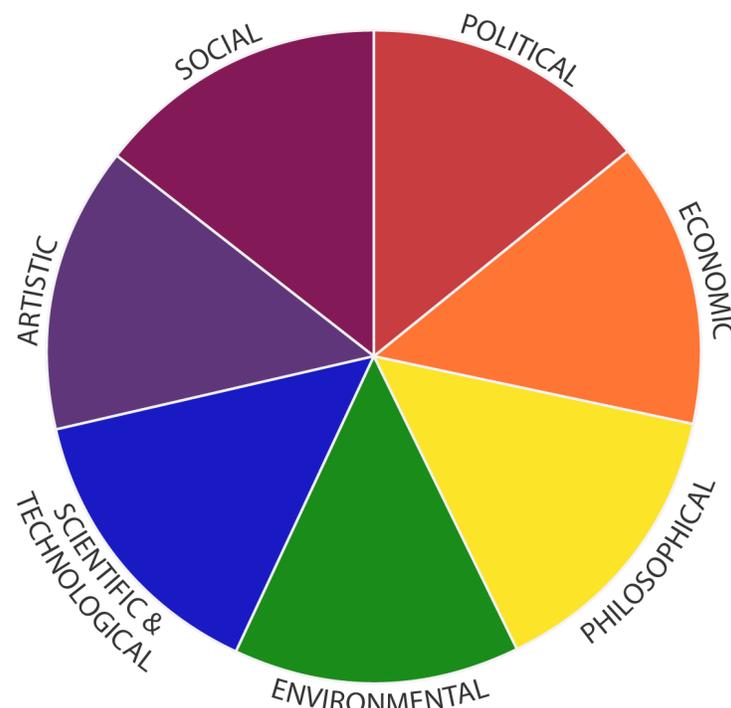

Figure 1: Seven Foundations Model

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[2] Created by Leah Zaidi, introduced in Brave New Worlds: Science Fiction and Transition Design. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321886159_Building_Brave_New_Worlds_Science_Fiction_and_Transition_Design

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Complexity requires variety: What we will see unfold is not simply elements of the future as outlined, but complex relationships between those elements. We need to consider a variety of factors and how they relate to each other when designing strategies.
- Create combinations and permutations: Working within and across columns and rows to create nuanced images of the future. Combining any three lines from the grid to create something new allows for 21,717,360 possibilities.
- Not mutually exclusive: Reality is complex. Elements of Continuation, Collapse, and Transformation will play out though the called for archetype is Discipline.
- Uneven distribution: Even if a dominant scenario emerges, the future will not be equal for everyone. It is possible for some to experience Transformation while others experience Collapse within the same geographic boundaries.
- Signposts: The more elements you see emerge across a particular scenario, the more likely that scenario's archetypal cultural narrative is emerging. Expect other possibilities within that archetype that are not listed in this document to play out.
- No timeline: some incidents, events, and signposts will occur sooner than others. The system is shifting too quickly to predict what will happen and when.
- Not all these possibilities are equal: For instance, an environmental disaster will have a significant detrimental impact and must be accounted for in contingency plans. A single environmental disaster during or after the height of Covid-19 may tip a system towards Collapse.

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These scenarios have been constructed by combining *Generic Images of the Future* with the *Seven Foundations* model. The scenario types are as follows:

-Continuation (business as usual): **Deepening Divide** in which previous tensions persist into the future.
-Discipline (order and control): **Taking Charge** in which ongoing Release period creates the need for top-down and bottom-up control, with cues taken from New Zealand, Canada, and other social democracies.
-Collapse (systemic breakdown): **Spiraling Society** in which problems compound and cripple our systems.
-Transformation (high-spirt): **Rise from Ashes** in which the Release period is used to Reorganize as a more equitable and empathetic society.

	Political	Economic	Philosophical	Environmental	Scientific and Technological	Artistic	Social
Continuation: Deepening Divide	Trump tantrums, lawsuits, loyalist backlash	Continued tech exodus	High tech, low life	2°C+ warming likely	Genetic engineering as disease prevention	Neoliberal dystopias versus mundane utopic comedies	Civil unrest: ongoing protests on both sides
	Hard-pressed change, rocky transition with recounts	Multi-national corporate hedging	Hygiene theatre versus hygiene denial	Coal, oil persist until their bitter end	Trump era Covid deaths climb high	Virtual and gaming worlds thrive	Empowered, emboldened racism
	Polarizing, diverging state policies	Gun and bullet sales climb	Persistant, wilfull ignorance and self-defeating ideologies	Renewed commitment to Paris agreement	Prolonged healtcare strained from Covid side-effects	Comedy and ridicule as an effective weapon against far right	Social, class, wealth divides deepen
	Active undermining of left, democracy by right-wing zealots	Biden-Harris Effect: World rewards U.S. with post-Covid travel	Strained common good	Medical waste continues to pile up	Increased disease management, PPE, vaccine efforts	Disney++: studio owned theatres	Roe v Wade overturned
	Diverging definitions of civic duty	Bully entrepreneurs persist	Backlash against tepid and complict media	Car culture comes roaring back	Hygiene, touchless tech development	Vertical integration: device + content + consumer ecosystems	Benevolent, ambivalent sexism persist
	Identity and party politics persist	Corporate real estate sell-off, mild dispersion of large cities	Institutional mistrust deepens	Uneven global efforts	Aggressive automation and IOT	Crowdfunded indie stories, films, shows, music	Breakdown of dialogue and conversations, social media shifts
	Government + House + Senate clashes, gridlock	Economic depression	Resistance to change with violent opposition to truth	Lawns, gardens, and backyards desired	Geo-engineering research and development	American redemption narratives	Self-inflicted wounds: people of color for Trump
	Revenge politics, mailcious bill passing (high impact damage)	Improverished Gen Z, early inheritance transfers	Idiocracy is reality (e.g. anti-vaxx ideology)	Barely impactful individual efforts	More apps, digital goods and services	Artistic COVID-free communes and compounds	Migration marriages: passports as social assets
	Weaponized judicial systems, supreme court, lawsuits	Strained trade	Increased polarization of values, "white supremacy" fantasies	Corporate environmental extraction persists	Digital and emerging interfaces	Stagecraft, EPIC's Unity becomes go-to tech	Conservative movements mobilize
	Self-cannibalizing politicians, parties	Covid revenge spending	National identity crisis	Geo-engineering seen as the only solution	More synthetic media and content	Trump Nation media company established	Activated, but anxiety-ridden youth
Discipline: Taking Charge	Transparent governments issue lockdowns	Infrastructure, spending driven recovery	Civic duty, first and foremost	Climate change action to mitigate national security threats	Slow development, distribution of vaccine	Creative exodus begins	American diaspora (especially from red states)
	Global border control: America's invisible wall	"Not made in China" efforts, home grown essential services	Emphasis on the common good	Renewables driven recovery plans	Exploitative algorithms	Decentralized, distributed, globally assembled art	Women's economic power diminished
	Decisive policy change	Decentralized cities (large cities shrink to mid-sized ones)	Constant state of viligance	Mass animal cullings of Covid susceptible species	3D and 4D printing in hospitals	Continued rise of speculative, science fiction	Coalition of allies as movements consolidate power
	Increase in sanctions, international efforts to contain Covid	Economic recession; redistribution of budgets	Mask culture, with stigma/service denial for anti-maskers	Lab grown meat investments soar	Mass adoption of Covid breath tests	Decline of American exceptionalism myths	Systemic introversion, socially distant youth
	Interstate borders; more city/nation states	Semi-universal crisis income; saving small businesses	Hero policy makers displace hero entreprenuers	Climate migration begins in earnest	Workplace surveillance, tracking tech advancements	Celebrities keep silent, decline of influencer culture	Underground parties and speakeasies
	New Zealand exports COVID policies, plans	Behavioral economics dominates	Murdoch media properties banned from democracies	Post-Covid pilgrimage of the Earth	Touchless tech becomes the gold standard	Advertising reimagined, more ambient	Mental health, loneliness epidemics
	Regulation of disinformation	Tax haven wealth seized, high foreign-owned property taxes	Loophole-seeking, rule-breaking	Corporate sustainability efforts increase (PR bids)	5G, 6G infrastructure build accelerates	Escape to virtual worlds	Slow dismantling of elitism
	Party-first versus people-first tensions	Capitalism as wealth stewardship, not wealth hoarding	Mild pleasure-seeking versus selfish rebelling	Single-use plastics curbed (outside of medical necessity)	Unreal Engine rules: acceleration of the metaverse	Fewer blockbusters, more mini-series	Growing restlessness
	Commonwealths rise	Antitrust regulation: tech companies are villains, not heroes	"Always on eggshells" reality	Push for environmentally sustainable healthcare products	Connection, co-location, co-presence tech (e.g. haptics)	Uptick in warm-hearted, everyday utopias (e.g. Schitt's Creek)	Restrained enforcement and policing
	Expansion of supreme court seats	Assisted living economy	Conspiracy-seeking hyper-vocal dissenters	Stricter goals for Paris Agreement	Synthetic biology advancements	Decentralization of entertainment industries	Harmful movements curbed
Collapse: Vicious Circles	Deterioration of international relations	Great-est depression	High death counts normalized, sacrificing lives for the economy	3°C+ warming locked in	Scientists muzzled, supressed, imprisoned	State-sanctioned creative expression, artists	Ethnic cleansing, genocide, concentration camps
	Democracies fall like dominoes	Robber barons run wild	Rabid, hystrionic nationalism	Waves of natural disasters	American Flu: Covid 20-21-22-23	Art as a battleground, underground movements	Subjugation of women
	Destablizing disinformation campaigns	Extreme wealth disparity	Wild west reborn, chaos as a ladder	Bottom-line recovery: corporate destruction escalates	Exploitative and biased algorithms	Bigoted messaging in stores, media	Nazism dominates, flourishes in the open
	Rise of autocratic East and South	Amazon Crime: forced labor camps	Rabid religious right, homegrown terrorism	Collapse of food supply chains, rise of food deserts	CRISPR assisted eugenics	Propaganda, state controlled media	American, Hong Kong, etc. refugee crisis
	Secessions, annexations abound (e.g. Taiwan)	State lotteries for necessities	The Handmaid's Tale becomes reality	Extreme, erratic weather	Lost, destroyed scientific knowledge	Orwellian-style language deterioriation	Rampant xenophobia
	Multiple political assasination attempts	America's backbone breaks: small businesses die-off	End of shared reality, objective truth	Biodiversity collapse happens sooner than expected	Ambient, intrusive, coercive surveillance tech	Music as underground communication, resistance	Violence against LQBTQ+ community
	Civil war: Trump militias mobilize aggessively	State interference, co-opting of essential/desirable businesses	Chaos: no news is real news, all news is real news at once	Systemic feedback loops accelerate environmental degradation	Energy rations, grid attacks	Oral storytelling, preservation of books	Militias: everyone is armed and dangerous
	Unfathomable Covid death count	Breakdown of international supply chains	Old Testament morality	Resurgence of oil and coal	Strategically on and off internet, wi-fi instracture	Cultural deserts	Tribalism, nationalism, us vs them
	Bio, cyber warfare rise	Beyond lobbying: backdoor buying, selling, bidding on policy	"End of days" hedonism	Subjugation of nature	State-controlled tech and tech companies	Government co-opting of science fiction as strategy	Mass, destabilizing migration
	U.S. military, embassies attacked overseas	Hostile trade, international/interstate supply hijacking	End of common good	Climate change, permafrost melting trigger waves of diseases	Deep fakes flourish	Unsanctioned art destroyed	Extreme isolation
Transformation: Rise From Ashes	New allies, coalitions, and leapfrogging nations	Universal basic everything (income, healthcare, education, etc.)	Vaccines equated with cleanliness (like toilet paper)	Eco harm outlawed	Viable, free vaccine for Covid(s); active disease anticipation	Power to the authentic artists	Gen Z drives progressive social change
	Power to local governments, community organizers	Patentleft: vaccine patent shared freely worldwide	Think global, act local mentalities	Pedestrian first cities	Care and conenction tech flourishes	End of toxic influencer/celebrity culture	Reconciliation, reparation efforts
	Autocratic nations soften, lose power to people	Funding redirected to social support systems	Rise of indigenous, post-colonial/imperial values	End of coal	Rapid advancements in clean, renewable, and regenerative	Diversified, cross border collaborations	Women's, LGBTQ+ rights expand; empowered women of color
	Democracy re-invented for issue-based voting	End of unchecked corporate power	People and planet first mentality	1.5°C warming (disaster but not outright genocide)	5G as a right	Connection, regeneration narratives	Male-led movement for empathetic, vulnerable men
	Young wave: Millennials & Gen Z pursue run for office	Regenerative economy, donut economics' business models	Unity, connection, togethersness	Rewilding and rehabilitation efforts escalate	Blockchain for democracy: decentralized decision-making	Fairytale renaissance: new fantasies with modern morals	High, concerted efforts around civic dialogue
	Judicial and legal reform	Corporate community taxes	Mobilization around ignorance as a plague	Societal, economic revitalization through environmental efforts	Digital twins of the world: open source prototyping	Socio-economic and political revitalization through the arts	Institutionalized widespread justice and equality
	Privacy, anonymity as a fountainhead right	GDP no longer the standard for economic health	"Good ancestor" value adoption	Natural world enshrined with increasing rights	Planned obsolence outlawed	Art and activism increasingly blend (e.g. more eco-artists)	Multinational communities (not multinational corporations)
	All votes, everywhere: electoral college abolished	Soft social systems skills become viable exports and imports	Nationalism, tribalism mentalities equated with moral failure	War on environmental destruction	Regulated, socially assessed technology	New narratives around government, policy as power	Full, active participation in democracy
	Widespread police, paramiltary reform	High public education investment; lower tuition/debt forgiveness	Widespread truth and reconciliation efforts	International cooperation that surpasses Paris Agreement	Unbiased algorithms	Sociological stories and systems fiction flourish	Pleasure, play, and belonging are key
	More than two parties system	End of funding driven political campaigns	Spirituality, not religion	Effective green iniatives become viable exports	Respect for science and hero scientists	New, diverse visions of the future	Institutionalized learning, auditing, refining of society

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