Four Narrative Scenarios: Futures to 2050

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1. Planetary Insolvency (Hot House World)

Dystopia – Civilisational Breakdown

Headline Assumption:
Between now and 2050, global temperature rises exceed +3°C under current policy. Non-linear climate feedbacks, ice-sheet loss, ocean heat accumulation, and ecosystem collapse push planetary boundaries beyond safe limits. Biodiversity loss and extreme weather events create cascading impacts on human systems, while governance and global coordination fail to respond effectively.

Phase 1: 2026–2035 – Volatility and Initial System Stress

- Extreme heatwaves, droughts, and floods occur with increasing simultaneity across continents.
- Multiple global breadbaskets fail due to heat stress, water scarcity, and fertiliser shortages. Ocean ecosystems collapse, removing fisheries as a major protein source.
- Capital markets cease to function as allocators of capital. Financial assets lose reliability.
- States struggle to maintain basic services; mortality rises sharply.

Phase 2: 2035–2042 – Structural Failure

- Global trade collapses; export bans on staples emerge.
- Energy and food insecurity drive mass migration and conflict.
- Pension and social systems strain under demographic shock.
- Informal community structures become crucial for survival.

Phase 3: 2042–2050 – Breakdown and Survival

- Global mortality exceeds 4 billion, primarily from starvation, heat stress, and conflict.
- Financial systems become largely irrelevant; survival depends on access to food, water, shelter, and local networks.

- Communities that are locally resilient fare better than isolated, high-wealth households.

Strategic Character:

- Markets, governance, and wealth are largely ineffective in mitigating extreme climate outcomes.
- Survival is determined by **access and local embeddedness**, not assets or contracts.

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2. Techno-Salvation

Utopia – Managed Stability Through Technology

Headline Assumption:
Rapid deployment of renewables, sodium-ion batteries, regenerative agriculture, and micronutrient fermentation enables the global system to stabilise warming just below +2°C. Climate impacts still occur, but tipping points are largely avoided. Society adapts with technology and strategic investment rather than crisis-driven collapse.

Phase 1: 2026–2032 – Technology Inflection

- Solar, wind, and other renewables undercut fossil fuels on cost and speed.
- Sodium-ion batteries expand storage capacity, enabling energy resilience.
- Regenerative agriculture and fermentation technologies stabilise global calorie and protein supply.
- Capital reallocates rapidly toward clean energy, storage, and nature-based solutions.

Phase 2: 2032–2040 – System Rebalancing

- Climate impacts continue but remain manageable.
- Global food supply stabilises; protein sources diversify.
- States coordinate with technocratic expertise; markets function with resilience incentives.

Phase 3: 2040–2050 – Resilient but Altered World

- Energy is largely renewable, decentralised, and reliable.
- Food systems integrate domestic regenerative agriculture and low-impact imports.

- Households benefit from lower energy costs and greater food stability.
- Markets, institutions, and wealth retain relevance while rewarding adaptation and stewardship.

Strategic Character:

- Society avoids collapse via technology and coordinated adaptation.
- Wealth and financial planning remain meaningful; resilience is rewarded.

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3. Authoritarian Thrutopia (Fortress Britain)

Failed Thrutopia – Coercion Over Adaptation

Headline Assumption:
Following economic insecurity, climate shocks, and political fragmentation, liberal democratic governance weakens. In the UK, populist authoritarianism rises, emphasizing national survival, border control, and coercive order. Warming reaches ~2.3–2.6°C. The state prioritises control over capability, ultimately undermining resilience.

Phase 1: 2026–2032 – Fragmentation and Blame

- Multilateral cooperation deteriorates; trade blocs harden.
- Popularist narratives gain traction as climate, energy, and food insecurity stress households.
- Environmental regulation is framed as elitist; fossil fuel and intensive agriculture subsidies expand.

Phase 2: 2032–2040 – Authoritarian Consolidation

- Emergency powers become permanent; media and civil institutions weaken.
- “Strategic autonomy” pursued without sufficient resources; innovation slows.
- Food systems are politically controlled and fragile.

Phase 3: 2040–2050 – Managed Decline

- Climate impacts intensify; adaptation capacity is constrained.
- State is coercively strong but service delivery weak; infrastructure and healthcare degrade.
- Inequality becomes explicit and enforced; loyalty determines access.

Strategic Character:

- Wealth and markets exist but are politically mediated.
- Institutions survive but are hollowed.
- Coercion replaces adaptation; the thrutopia fails to deliver resilience or security.

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4. Civic Thrutopia (The Civic Turn)

Viable Thrutopia – Participatory Renewal

Headline Assumption:
After repeated shocks, the consumer story loses legitimacy. Citizens adopt a participatory, bioregional, and pluralistic approach to governance, energy, and food. Warming is stabilised at ~2.0–2.2°C through behavioural change, regenerative systems, and sufficient technology. Society realigns around citizenship, shared responsibility, and resilience.

Phase 1: 2026–2032 – Shock and Disillusionment

- Climate extremes, food and energy insecurity erode trust in markets and authoritarian approaches.
- Consumer identity weakens; mutual aid networks persist beyond crises.
- Participatory political experiments gain legitimacy, including citizens' assemblies and local compacts.

Phase 2: 2032–2040 – Bioregional Reorganisation

- Decision-making devolves to regions, watersheds, and functional economic areas.
- Markets are re-embedded within social purpose; cooperative and mission-led enterprises expand.
- Food systems shift toward regenerative agriculture, local diets, and low-input protein sources.

Phase 3: 2040–2050 – Resilient Transformation

- Emissions decline through reduced demand, localisation, and behavioural norms.
- Nature recovery accelerates in restored bioregions.
- Citizenship is active, inequality moderated by participation, and wealth matters less than engagement and embeddedness.

Strategic Character:

- Markets, institutions, and wealth remain tools rather than ends.
- Resilience derives from **participation, civic engagement, and local embeddedness**.
- Society achieves coherence and functionality without eliminating hardship.