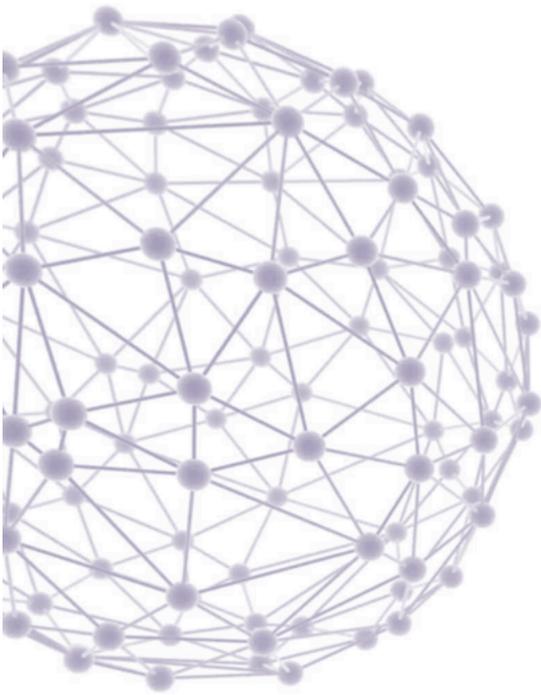


Centre for the Future

The Guidebook to
Wayfinding



Centre for the Future

What does it mean to be human? What will it take for humanity to coevolve to higher levels of consciousness? How can we expedite our ability to reach for that threshold faster?

Centre for the Future is a world–system enterprise. A change incubator for new human beliefs and behaviours. A planetary brain able to think and act far beyond the confines and vested interests of nation states, corporations, industries and power blocs. An infrastructure to enable the contemporary experience of *wayfinding*.

Wayfinding is a dialogical and collaborative design experience, a knowledge amplifier where the past is reinterpreted, current systems are transformed, and entirely new pathways into the future constructed, all from a new awareness of what it means to be human.

Mindful Uprising is an operating system and an agenda of profound questions for engaging leaders in translating the experience of *wayfinding* into applied constructs, systems and practices. *Mindful uprising* brings a deeper level of intelligence to civilisational design – enabling the human family to continuously evolve in ways that are socially and culturally desirable, morally and ecologically responsible, and economically feasible.

The Observatory is a high–tech immersive environment and decision theatre for the forensic examination of questions posed by a *Mindful Uprising*. It includes tools for visualising complex information in real–time and perceiving issues through a range of challenging lenses and perspectives. This helps us to explore a more expansive interpretation of time and space. It honours the deep *past* while imagining the deep *future* – pulling both into a *present* moment pregnant with alternatives that would otherwise remain concealed and out of reach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conceptual designs and ventures as unorthodox, audacious and on the scale of a Centre for the Future never spring into the world fully formed. They are conceived, designed, crafted and supported by a cadre of diverse minds – individuals with unbounded energy and an unwavering commitment to a shared higher purpose.

Centre for the Future has evolved from the imagination and pioneering passion of a great many individuals. It is simply impossible to mention all those who have helped shape these ideas and contributed to the outcome. But I would like to salute the vital role of a few of these extraordinary friends and colleagues who inspired such a grand undertaking.

The generosity and philanthropy of Steve and Margaret Graham, supported by advice from Tim Galbally, gave us a unique chance to begin putting some of our more outrageous ideas, the result of 20 years of philosophical activism, into practice. Their determination to help create a better world for future generations is the most compelling impulse underpinning this enterprise.

My friends and co-conspirators Michel Bauwens and Laurent Labourmène have been constant sources of inventiveness and challenge – Laurent especially introducing me to a host of other talented individuals who have become such an integral part of our knowledge base. Likewise Marvin Oka, who co-designed many of the resources we will be using to transform thinking and reinvent our most life-critical systems, has been an indispensable player in the evolution of these ideas.

Guided by my business partner Stuart McGregor, members of our company Hames McGregor + Partners have all, in their different and inimitable ways, contributed to the recent thinking behind the Centre. David Barnes from CAVE2 at Monash University and Kevin DeSouza from the Arizona State University Decision Theater Network gave us insights into how to bring our practice to life. Robb Smith, Christine McDougall, Paul Ray, Charles Macek and David Martin have all been critical friends on this journey.

Of the many scholars whose original thinking and methods contributed to our pioneering stance and capabilities, Richard Slaughter – whose source models led to the development of Transformational Narrative and inform the *Expanded Now* – and Richard Bawden, in the field of critical systems inquiry, have been key. Like them we built on and developed the work of others including Buckminster Fuller, C. West Churchman, Ken Wilber, Claire Graves, Stafford Beer, Herman Kahn, David Cooperrider, David Bohm, Peter Checkland, Russell Ackoff and David Kolb.

To these individuals and all those not mentioned here but who have contributed to the Centre for the Future I convey my gratitude and appreciation. Without you this project would not have reached escape velocity...

Richard David Hames
Founding CEO

Melbourne 5th July 2015

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1. Humanity at a Crossroads

The past story of the human family is rich beyond measure. It is a story of creative ingenuity, profound ideas, wild adventures and extraordinary courage.

Our future story however has yet to be written. Will it be one of success, or of failure? Will it play out in the glow of a new enlightenment, or in the darkness of societal collapse? Will it be a future we are proud to pass on to future generations – a future where we come together to eliminate common hardships? Or will we choose the path of obduracy – digging our heels in at the very mention of change, and slouching towards an endgame without even realising it?

The human story has advanced in fits and starts. On one hand it has produced the most astonishing inventions and buildings; works of art of incredible beauty; feats of the imagination that defy rationality, and a sophisticated corpus of scientific knowledge. On the other hand we are like naïve adolescents. Absurdly superstitious we know very little about our own minds, and even less about our solar system. We rush to defend the indefensible without thinking through the consequences. Our primal instinct goads us into physical combat to settle our differences. And we pursue material wealth over spiritual development believing this will bring us happiness.

To suggest that the human mind, which has – as far as we know – a unique capacity for self-reflection and choice, provides us with immunity from the mass extinctions suffered by previous species, is a precarious assertion at best. How we deal with even the simplest of issues often leaves much to be desired. And sadly we are only now waking up to the exponential threats posed by rampant industrial activity and reckless pollution of our natural environment.

But if we dismiss fallacies, if we acknowledge that the future will not be a repeat of the past, and if we start looking for deeper patterns in everyday events, a startling picture begins to emerge. Day by day it becomes clearer that many of our most life-critical systems, such as the global monetary system, education, health, agriculture, water and climate – even the *civilisational* mindset itself – are on the edge of collapse. Our jails are overflowing. The oceans are becoming too warm and saline to support life. Suicide and homelessness are at an all-time high. Illegal drugs, in addition to legal substances like alcohol, tobacco and processed foods, are destroying lives as never before. The costs of health care keep soaring. Smart technologies and novel business models continue to replace human labour across many traditional industries resulting in an explosion in the long-term unemployed and social problems emanating from this. Meanwhile the despair and lack of hope for a viable future felt by many young people – though impossible to quantify with any precision – must be taken as symptoms of an ailing world-system under extreme stress.

And so in spite of the wealth enjoyed by a small minority, and the subsequent tale of affluence this fortunate few would have us believe, the human family as a whole is not experiencing an improved quality of life in absolute terms.

To be fair the idea that progress tracks a linear timeline is a cruel delusion. Evidence drawn from different quarters seems to warn of a hazardous situation developing. Given that most of us have been taught to compartmentalise information this is a situation to which most of us are still blind. But that is no reason to ignore it. For this evidence also appears to imply that many of the fundamental tenets upon which modern societies were constructed may no longer be appropriate for contemporary conditions.

That is a startling insight. It stands to reason that we must find viable substitutes for these precepts if indeed they have outlived their usefulness. Trickle-down economics, for

example, has been proven not to work. It started life as a cruel joke and remains just that. The promise of full-time employment and personal security can no longer be guaranteed. The death penalty and other punitive strategies do not deter criminal activity. War is futile as a means of resolving disputes yet still remains the one endeavor we fund more than any other. Governments of every persuasion are in thrall to big business with only minimal regard for the hard-won rights of ordinary citizens. State surveillance takes away our freedoms but does not lead to a safer world. The list goes on and on. Clearly there is some truth in the notion that our design criteria are flawed.

One of the great myths of our time concerns the role of commerce in reducing conflict. Technological progress has certainly resulted in expediting the exchange of goods and services over longer distances. But the rational view of people becoming more valuable alive than dead in that context does not account for escalating poverty and conflict in those parts of the world that have benefitted most from increased trade. Nor does the widespread application of scientific logic and reason automatically lead to those in power comprehending the futility of cycles of selfishness and greed-driven violence.

Closer examination of these and other dominant myths make it highly likely that some aspects of the worldview itself – particularly the linear constructs and assumptions of progress informing the *civilisational* model in terms of valuing, relating, learning, coordinating, organising and managing human affairs – should transition to structures better suited to the complex interdependencies and needs of a global population fast approaching 7.2 billion in an environment displaying signs of severe distress.

In order to assure the continuing advancement of humanity as a whole, on a planet that has abundant resources to meet our needs well into the future, we must fathom out what we must *stop doing* – including the things that previously brought us untold wealth – and what we should *do differently*. In the former category, for example, many people agree it would be best to leave coal where it is – in the ground. A rather obvious example In the latter category might be that we should live our lives in ways that do not generate waste and that do not harm the environment in any way whatsoever.

In terms of the big picture and the shaping of a genuinely upgraded world-system we will need to consciously adopt at least six fundamentally new design criteria across all facets of human activity:

1. Conflict of all kinds must be drastically reduced and where possible totally eliminated. Since aggression is primarily a male pursuit – except at the periphery of community life where anger is often expressed in malicious quarrels, best exemplified by road rage or cruelty to animals for example – cultures encouraging women to contribute equally with men are much more likely to shift away from the veneration of violence.

2. Learning is a natural phenomenon and an essential part of socialising young people into their responsibilities and potential. Education needs to reach people in a form that is tailored to the needs of individuals, and that leads to greater levels of social contribution rather than isolation or marginalisation. That means exposing children to a curriculum and view of humanity that intensifies levels of tolerance, compassion, generosity and empathy.

3. Reframing unhelpful human urges – such as aggression, envy, selfishness and greed – as *interior* dilemmas to be resolved, rather than as *exterior* disputes to be won, could reasonably be expected to increase the impulse for cooperation while helping shape a more empathic society.

4. Ensuring citizens, each according to their means, have every chance to participate in

decisions that effect their lives, exercise choice, enjoy greater freedoms, and pursue activities that, without harming others, can bring them greater fulfillment and joy, will guarantee policies that favour the greater public good over time.

5. Putting the means of local production into the hands of those that create wealth, by facilitating peer-to-peer processes, sharing intellectual resources, and ensuring that the distribution of manufactured goods is equitable and efficient, will help create a form of value and exchange capable of avoiding the more predatory aspects of a global economic system based on easy credit, debt and enslavement.

6. Discovering and designing new business models in which all stakeholders benefit and have equity – coming from a perspective of *abundance* rather than *scarcity* – will lead to the gradual elimination of unnecessarily competitive and regressive practices.

The mission of Centre for the Future is to immerse itself in these paradigm-shaping ideas; not as a policy think-tank might do by producing scholarly papers for further debate, but as an investment incubator for proof-testing revolutionary new prototypes. No other entity is fulfilling this role. It is a unique proposition.

In order to assume this role our practice will hinge on posing very different questions. Questions like, *What must change in order to guarantee the continuation of our species on Earth for the next thousand years? Is the linking of national interests into a single, vibrant, global economy an appropriate endgame for the current phase of globalisation or should we insist on something more? Can the current paradigm adequately support universal human rights – maintaining social progress in terms of reducing violence and conflict and nurturing greater social stability and peace – without destroying other species in the process? Can it bridge the gaps between developing and developed nations? If not, what other stratagems should we already be considering? What new high level intentions and organisational criteria will need to be established to ensure we become a more "civilised" society? For example, do we need to reconceptualise a higher purpose for humanity? Does it entail the need to think differently about how we relate to the planet, to each other and to other life forms? If so, will we need to use nature and the resources it provides more wisely and with greater thrift? Will we need to call a halt to some practices completely? What are those practices and what could replace them?*

Questions of this nature obviously imply grand societal challenges that necessitate some form of designed intervention at a world-system level. They also suggest that the current design is deficient – fundamentally flawed, lacking in some way, or not performing as desired by the majority of people. Furthermore, if the answers to these questions are affirmative, then the clear inference is the need for intentional renewal and reinvention.

At this stage those people supporting Centre for the Future are not even sure it is possible to "intentionally reinvent" the world-system through a designed *phase transition*. Perhaps this is typical human hubris. It would certainly have to qualify as an audaciously ambitious venture. Much of our actuality, after all, has simply evolved via massively dispersed cultures coming into contact through colonisation, exploration or trade, and fusing into an established order without any single guiding hand to mould it a certain way, and mostly deprived of any substantial challenge to the universally accepted order.

There is no compelling design logic, no established method, and no training manual, for reinventing how society might work differently. That is how we are able to blame God after all! But re-shaping our more life-critical systems within that larger world-system would be a good place to start.

Finding ourselves in this state more and more people are convinced that now is the time to act. Citizens everywhere are waking up to the inequities and injustices in the way the world-system is designed to function. But what can be done that has not already been tried? How can we break out of traps that hold us captive in prisons of our own invention? What will it take to safely conduct experiments with our own evolution in ways that include and transcend old barriers, cultural mindsets and assumptions?

As a society we appear to be traumatised – though perhaps reluctant to admit it. The benefits arising from technological progress have been remarkable, comprehensive and bewitching. Yet we are far from being happy. A constant barrage of stress, anxiety, intrusion, incarceration, amplified by a groundswell of panic from the media, are creating the perception we are in a mess and facing one or more global emergencies. Increasingly, despair is leading to addiction, violence and suicide, especially for those hardest hit. Meanwhile we try to put a gloss on events and carry on with our lives as best we can – almost as though our continued existence is somehow preordained. Such myopic arrogance needs puncturing, but in ways that lead to reinvigorated hope for a future we actually desire.

The most viable path forward seems to be one of conscious renewal – rebooting society into a new trajectory but with very different design criteria, operating tenets and relationships. But anything requiring a profound social transition of this kind is bound to become a bold and unremitting venture.

We strongly believe part of the answer is the establishment of a network of Centres for the Future as a global presence intent on discovering new, mutually beneficial, pathways to a more open and empathic global civilisation.

2. Centre for the Future – The Original Concept

Centre for the Future is a collaborative enterprise designed to change our world-system, helping to steer the evolution of a single human family towards a more viable future by thinking and acting beyond the confines of today's compartmentalised issues, time-frames, life-systems, geographies, ideologies and power blocs.

Thus the Centre is a social *observatory* of human beliefs and behaviours. A planetary brain able to think and act far beyond the confines and vested interests of nation states, corporations, industries and power blocs. An infrastructure enabling the deeply sensory experience of *wayfinding* to instigate a *mindful uprising* of leaders everywhere focused on the renewal and reinvention of our most life-critical systems.

Extracting and acting upon shared knowledge and collective wisdom, Centre for the Future helps humanity avoid over-reaching its resource base by shaping a new worldview and a compellingly fresh narrative of the future human story. Our mission is to enable conscious coevolution by examining *who* we are and *how* we develop, particularly in terms of:

1. A global community of shared beliefs, intentions, and cooperative practices that are socially beneficial, culturally nourishing, and enduring
2. The nurturing of cultural diversity within an empathic world-system & worldview
3. Bestowing a regulating intelligence for the planet – a *change-brain* that is a viable living model for coordination and negotiation between the various components
4. Providing a mode of globally-networked governance that does not impinge upon, or detract from, the role and responsibilities of sovereign nations, nor that of internationally legitimate and endorsed bodies

5. Nurturing an humanitarian ethos of empathy, autonomy and interdependence between and across all individuals and communities.

3. Our Operating Principles

Centre for the Future does not operate from a neutral position. On the contrary all of our inquiry is based on a simple proposition: that any solutions to contemporary problems or future design must be ecologically benign, culturally desirable, economically feasible, systemically viable, socially acceptable and morally defensible. Above all our work aims to help create a world from which future generations can find joy and take pride in inheriting. The following five principles are key to fulfilling this higher purpose:

3.i. Embracing Wholeness

Centre for the Future operates from composite modes of awareness. By appreciating the wholeness of Earth, the unified nature of biospheric diversity, the sanctity of life, and the singular essence of humankind, we are able to embrace a rich range of spiritual, ethical, humanist, corporeal, aesthetic, indigenous and scientific perspectives in the manifestation of a preferred world-system.

3.ii. Synthesising Knowledge

We avoid compartmentalising knowledge. Through synthesis even signals and messages that appear to be in conflict can converge and transcend conventional taxonomies, analysis and inferences. Within our *wayfinding* experience extreme points of view are accommodated in dialogical methods that include yet rise above special interests, ill-conceived compromises, trade-offs, partial solutions and superficial narrowing down. There is no “other” to consider in an emerging planetary consciousness, which links humanity together and to our shared terrestrial nature. We also acknowledge that *Nothing and no one is ever completely right or wrong – they merely vary in their degree of incompleteness and misunderstanding. Nothing and no one is completely good or evil – they just vary in their degree of ignorance and disconnection.* Thus all knowledge is partial – a work in progress.

3.iii. Redirecting Energy

Centre for the Future is not set up, charged, or impelled to solve problems, however dire, particularly those that merely allow current ways of being and acting to endure a little longer. We are not interested in further fragmentation of such efforts. Nor are we devoted to finding more ways to master nature through technological supremacy when we have failed even to control our own impulses or to limit our own brands of madness and delusion. On the contrary our expertise is to use design thinking to redirect the energy – thence intentions and outcomes – within our most life-critical systems.

3.iv. Enlightening Narrative

Our *Mindful Uprising* agenda integrates diverse universal themes and spiritual traditions into compelling stories that make sense, vividly depict what it means to be human, and can be used as frameworks or pathways into futures that transcend the monomyth of linear progress underpinning civilisation's assumed apotheosis. In order to avoid becoming trapped in populist Western scenarios (e.g. scientific materialism or transhuman positivism) our narratives inquire into a teleology less reliant upon the use of advanced technologies to achieve immortality or wealth creation for its own sake – but more on attaining wisdom, empathy and inner enlightenment.

3.v. Consciously Evolving

First we acknowledge that leaps in evolution typically occur in a manner of including and transcending – not by wiping out what came before. This pattern of evolution occurs within all living phenomena. Secondly we recognise that hierarchies exist in nature – but do not automatically indicate moral superiority. There are higher levels of development and complexity and people of greater skills and talents. But that does not mean they are morally superior, more complete expressions of reality, or that lower levels on the hierarchy should not be honored. Within these frameworks of understanding our ethos and aim is one of conscious coevolution with the Earth, insofar as we:

- Provoke coherence, understanding and reciprocity so as to better commune with and know each other and the planet upon which we are all reliant for our provisions
- Remain alive and ever-present to the intended and unintended consequences of our choices as members of a single human family with a common destiny
- Design systems and practices in cooperation with biospheric constraints that enable all of us to learn, live and share resources as citizens of a single planet
- Transcend impediments standing in the way of us awakening to our higher purpose and of becoming fully contributing members of society
- Help birth a new humanitarian ethos in which the essentials of leading, governing, organising and managing human affairs are recast and where domination, exploitation, callousness, hatred and contempt give way to cooperation, justice, empathy and collaboration.

4. Origins of the Centre

Centre for the Future was conceived out of a realisation that true metanoia only take place when three elements intersect: (i) an environment conducive to deep reflection; (ii) a process that transcends the purely material; (iii) experts who can help guide and curate an experience that is transformational. Knowing this we wanted to create the possibility for leaders everywhere to step into a dialogical and collaborative design experience, a knowledge amplifier where the past is reinterpreted, current systems are transformed, and entirely new pathways into the future constructed, all from a new awareness of what really matters for the human family. For this we turned to the original concept of *wayfinding*.

Wayfinding refers to an ancient knowledge tradition that enabled Micronesians to travel vast distances on the open ocean. Using finely-tuned observations of the stars, the sun, the clouds, the ocean swells, and other signs of nature for clues as to direction and location of a vessel at sea, these master navigators were voyaging with pinpoint accuracy for thousands of years before the invention of European navigational instruments. By continuously monitoring the environment they knew where they were, relative to where they had come from. Wayfinders held their vessels to be fixed points on a star compass – the art and science of wayfinding enshrined in their ability to visualise a destination until it materialised on the horizon. These mental constructs ensured they did not get lost.

Today, our society is in urgent need of master navigators and *wayfinding*. Having lost sight of where we have come from, our present is collapsing, our future has become dark, and the way unclear and confused. Indeed without revised plans and a drastic course correction we risk losing our way completely. Provisions on our vessel, planet Earth, once plentiful, are now clearly insufficient.

Industrial modes of subsistence have become incapable of providing for a human family of seven billion or more people. Systems we once took for granted – including those which provide us with energy, food, water, a healthy environment and a vibrant economy – are all highly stressed or failing. They were not designed for present conditions, nor are they viable in their current form. Many of the institutions upon which we rely for sustenance and security are also struggling. Born out of an impulse to compete they are ill-prepared for the cooperation we need to overcome the most perilous dilemmas of our time.

Alternatives are essential. Some can already be detected – just over the horizon. We are beginning to think as one world. An alternative story of our species is emerging from the fog of uncertainty. A story of renewed purpose. A story that embraces cultural diversity, human genius and planetary stewardship. A story emphasising more sensitive use of resources and attracting more durable solutions to the most life-critical issues facing us. A story crying out for our attention – for it is the destiny story of the human family.

But where are today's master navigators with the skills to recalibrate our current course and lead us unerringly into that future? Where can we go to find that rare capability of pragmatism tempered by wisdom, intelligence inspired by creativity? The answer is the Centre for the Future – a globally distributed ecosystem of individuals all seeking abundant opportunities through the experience of *wayfinding*.

5. Imagining Centre for the Future

Centre for the Future is an infrastructure for contemporary *wayfinding* provided within an earth-scale collaborative enterprise. We use various forms of inquiry and foresight to amplify human knowledge – freely translating and distributing that knowledge to where it can be most useful in empowering purposeful societal change and for reinventing our most life-critical systems.

There is no single solution to the situation in which humanity finds itself today. There is no panacea. Centre for the Future does not promise to simplify or slow down the need for change, nor even to resolve our most pervasive problems. We are unable to deter nature or alter the laws of physics. Nor can we still the hearts of those who seek hostility and ruin to further their own selfish ends. But we can remain alert to the truth. We can become collectively wiser. And we can adapt more rapidly when the consequences of our actions are not what is needed.

Centre for the Future embraces the reality of the life conditions produced as a result of our present world-system – but designs alternative whole-system solutions that have instant, beneficial and enduring impacts on our civilisation and the planet. So what is the Centre? And how do the various elements of our enterprise fit together?

Imagine an advanced, technologically-sophisticated social observatory – an immersive facility where powerful audio-visual technologies are tuned into detecting, anticipating, excavating and interpreting relevant shifts in world-system patterns and dynamics.

Imagine these technologies have the capability to convert the results into a variety of real-time visualisations – maps and images so powerful they allow those so ordained to comprehend, monitor and respond to complex emergent data far more effectively than previously possible.

Now imagine an interconnected web of such observatories located in culturally-significant hubs around the world – in Mecca, Curitiba, Xian, Zurich, Singapore, Cape Town, Mumbai, Kampala, Abu Dhabi, Jerusalem, Thimpu, Philadelphia and Hobart perhaps?

Imagine, too, community leaders, entrepreneurs, indigenous elders, artists and influencers from all walks of life, and from a *m é*lange of cultures, convening in these "decision theatres" with but one purpose – contributing to a *mindful uprising* where future narratives are fashioned and a world-system that is sustainable in every conceivable way – and justifiable from every point of view – is designed. Process by process. System by system.

Imagine a cadre of highly-trained, nomadic master navigators, or curators, guiding participants through an experience from which a synthesised wisdom from past and present traditions of knowledge, capable of transcending current dilemmas, can evolve. The experience of *wayfinding* is their life, their sangha – a deeply engaging process in which their collective resolve is to improve the human condition by awakening, in themselves and others, new ways of thinking, doing and being.

Imagine alumni from this life-enriching experience returning to their homes to openly share their wisdom in ways that enable more viable systems to be designed, rapidly prototyped and deployed – wherever and whenever they are most needed.

Finally, imagine the capability of deploying new knowledge generated within the network of Centres almost instantly, in every corner of the world, to ignite purposeful transitions, help established agencies implement alternative policies, and connect at the grassroots with social entrepreneurial movements and activities.

What you are imagining is Centre for the Future – on one hand a sophisticated device for amplifying human knowledge and sharing it with those who have most need; on the other a politically neutral, globally-cooperative, radically empathic model for world-system redesign that promotes equity, justice and sustainability within a planetary culture.

Because our practice field is the renewal of our most life-critical systems it is possible to view the Centre as both a planetary nervous system and a globally-distributed design laboratory.

What it is not is some kind of conspiracy by an intellectual elite intent on governing the world under a single agency. Centre for the Future does not make choices for people. Other than a set of transparent guiding principles we do not impose alternative beliefs and ideologies upon participants – even when we think these could be beneficial. Nor do we have any desire to own the knowledge we help generate. On the contrary we fiercely safeguard diversity and the integrity of the commons.

Centre for the Future strives to use all human knowledge to better inform the evolution of society and in ways that transcend current difficulties and injustices. The *wayfinding* process democratises access to and the use of information, democratises decision making, democratises how we hack and shape the future, and democratises how we observe and guide human affairs. It does this by giving more people access to understanding how the world works and by bringing emerging patterns, profound connections and weak signals into the open.

Our mission is to reach out to the world's leaders and those who aspire to lead – whoever they are, wherever they happen to be – with a range of entirely fresh options for how we can live life more abundantly and securely on this planet. We have two priorities:

- To establish a society-of-mind willing and capable of overcoming the conditioning from our prevalent global worldview, by synthesising knowledge and understanding to refocus, inform, enhance and accelerate the viability of human existence
- To extract, disseminate and nurture new wisdom – its literacies and capabilities – across all communities and enterprises thereby enabling purposeful transitions of the human family to more sustainable states of coexistence.

In essence Centre for the Future is an endowment for those that come after us. By accessing new levels of consciousness we increase humanity's ability to learn and adapt more rapidly to changing conditions – not as mindless, politicised, knee-jerk reactions to unfolding events beyond our control, but as purposeful and enduring whole-system designs guided by preferred futures.

6. Our Fundamental Beliefs

Centre for the Future is predicated on a set of beliefs that underpin *why* we do *what* we do – and *how*. Retracing the development of our species over the past 450 years, from a time when the lives of ordinary people began to be shaped by how they interfaced with the new wage labour system, we find the presence of a shared set of organising principles that transcend geography, history, and even ideology. We call it the *civilisational* worldview.

This conception of the world is one we all regard as essentially natural and unchanging. It is constructed on a few basic tenets that weave their way through recent history like genetic connecting tissue. At every stage they feature: A small ruling power elite, attended to by an underclass of serfs whose freedom is relative to their ability to make money. The means of production and distribution are controlled by this ruling elite who safeguard their wealth and power by means of political, military or state apparatus. The industrial war machine is a cog used to help preserve an economy based on credit, debt and ownership. Much information, especially that which focuses a spotlight on the secret or unprincipled workings of the state and private corporations, is censored, while *news* combined with mass entertainment and other anodyne distractions, is a commodity for manufacturing compliance within society.

Individual and collective behaviours arising from this integrated set of beliefs manifest as our world-system – the mostly unchallenged, highly visible and accepted faith in the way things *are* or are supposed to be. This *civilisational* model is also buttressed by myths and images of a higher creative intelligence which further implant a tendency for submissive behaviours.

But now we run into an interesting issue for if the *worldview* is a particular conception we all share, it is translated and interpreted through a myriad different lenses – *cultural mindsets* that are shaped by unseen yet highly potent forces. These forces, including our upbringing, political socialisation, locale, education, circle of friends, stage of life, and many other subtle factors, help forge uniquely entrenched attitudes towards the shared *worldview*. And these create the disparities we perceive in everyday life of course. In other words the distinctions we observe between political parties, brands, life-styles, and each other, rely on the extent to which we allow our *cultural mindset* to shape our assumptions about reality.

Unlike our unchanging *worldview*, *cultural mindsets* are inherently flexible. Their pliant nature explains how we are able to convict Nelson Mandela as a terrorist early on in his career and laud him as the saviour of his nation when President, without concerning ourselves too much with such a contradiction. It allows us to suddenly change our minds about what matters.

More importantly, in terms of evolution, it gives our species a vibrancy that largely accounts for our astonishing inventiveness.

This is in direct contrast to our ability to conceive of a world without political leaders or where war is outlawed – a borderless world where the terms alien, refugee and immigrant do not exist, or where equity and justice are commonplace. The reason it is so difficult to imagine these things is that it would require a fundamental reconceptualisation of our shared *worldview*. It is inconceivable simply because it is outside our collective experience. We have no memory of anything remotely similar. And because there is no single entity, no equivalent of the United Nations, charged with caring for or upgrading the *worldview* there is simply nobody in charge. No court of appeal. Nowhere even to begin! Yet it is vital that we craft a new paradigm if humanity is to rise above the more damaging aspects of the *civilisational worldview*.

Centre for the Future tackles this void directly, and uniquely, by accessing a diversity of *cultural mindsets* to propose reinventing certain components of the world–system (explicitly its most life–critical sub–systems) in ways a majority of people will find equitable and constructive.

It is our belief that redesigning, prototyping and installing new systems ingrained with a higher moral purpose and intent will automatically give rise to a more beneficial and unifying *worldview*. But we also appreciated that the pervasive *civilisational worldview* has increasingly been reified by the overwhelming dominance of the Occidental *cultural mindset* in our modern world. We would need to escape that trap as best we could. These central beliefs guided us methodologically as a consequence.

First it was implicit we would need to offer our partners a unique, authentic, yet advanced capacity for sensing, making sense, designing and enacting change from dynamically complex information and through a diversity of lenses. As this capacity is reliant upon *seeing* and *interpreting* data differently, or finding patterns in large amounts of unstructured data that were not previously evident, we turned to sophisticated immersive visualisation facilities, such as the CAVE2 technology developed by the University of Illinois, to help us.

Second we realised we would need the capability to converse in different languages and outside of the semantic constructs of the pervasive Occidental *cultural mindset*. In an era dominated by Western notions of progress and organisation this is not an easy task. Indeed almost all commonly–used dialogical methods are embedded within this framework. The idea of *debate*, for example, as an example of Western dualistic thinking, is considered to be vulgar and ineffective in many non–Western cultures. If we wanted to encourage a diversity of inputs we needed to ensure that our preferred conversational method was not embedded within a single dominant epistemology but, on the contrary, applicable and accessible across a variety of such *cultural mindsets*. For this we turned to *Transformational Narrative* which deliberately features, and is inclusive of, any number of cultural perspectives.

In combining both of these elements, the immersive environment and the open dialogical method, we discovered the core of our *wayfinding* experience.

7. Wayfinding – High Level Design

The capability to discover, extract, synthesise and apply new wisdom arises directly from the *wayfinding* experience – a process that uses cross–cultural and intergenerational

intelligence and cooperation, both generatively and at scale, in a new form of discursive praxis. A mindful uprising.

Based upon criteria governing adaptive living systems, *wayfinding* connects every sector of human society, across all physical, religious, political, economic and psychological divides, to intentionally nurture an empathic society with an equitable economy and morally sustainable practices.

So how is this achieved? More importantly how does *wayfinding* differ from numerous other conversations and problem-solving activities that currently occupy our attention and distract us? It is not simply a more robust process or better facilitation that counts. It is not just a different kind of conversation or the ability to step into different epistemologies. It is not the avoidance of false dilemmas between what is most desirable or most dreaded. It is not even the capacity to think daringly and out loud about previously unimaginable alternatives. It is all these and more...

A total of eight vital components merge under the *wayfinding* process. The seamless blending of these eight facets, immersing participants and clients in experiences that give rise to design thinking at a higher level of consciousness, generates our unique capability.

6.i. POLYOCULARITY. *Wayfinding* takes a universally neutral view of the human family where no cultural grouping, business interest, economic rationale or political ideology dominates. All perspectives are assumed to be equally valid. For the most part we make even the most critical decisions based upon a partial understanding, often ill-informed, and quite often from a narrow range of viewpoints. We seek to redress this flaw. It is vital we expand our range of perspectives if we are to break free from the divisive, indefensible and unsustainable cycles we are in.

Wayfinding adheres to the principle that all knowledge remains incomplete – not totally false nor totally accurate. By applying an holistic, polyocular view of our world-system, its interrelationships, design constraints and flash points, *wayfinding* evolves the capacity to make wiser decisions on a range of viable pathways for change that elide with the individual feelings, beliefs and aspirations of the majority and better cater for human society as a whole.

6.ii. ALERTNESS. Adequate attention density is required to change society's neuroplasticity in order that we can perceive a range of different possibilities inherent within and beyond current realities. In the fast-paced, instant gratification world we live in, information zooms into and out of our cognition at a dizzying pace. We drown in data. This data overload detracts from our ability to focus on the information we need to comprehend whole systems, even when these are life-critical. We are distracted a lot of the time by bits and pieces and never quite see the whole picture. Some say that is impossible anyway.

The experience offered in *wayfinding* – through the curated process of *Transformational Narrative*, complemented by a new visual symbolism for comprehending complexity, enhances collective consciousness, aiding metacognition – lengthening and intensifying our ability to appreciate patterns, events and relationships – without which possible solutions are inevitably inadequate. *Wayfinding* offers an oasis of deep contemplation and accelerated information processing within which sudden insights and metanoia can illuminate otherwise ordinary information.

6.iii. AFFINITY. The capacity for empathising with, understanding and sharing knowledge across and between cultures and time is vital for any coherent appreciation of humanity as a whole. *Wayfinding* processes are grounded in the conviction that a more coherent universal wisdom, forged out of radical empathy, applied equitably and in a spirit of cooperation and

abundance, can be used to enable society to consciously evolve in ways that transcend today's most toxic and unsustainable beliefs and practices.

6.iv. NAVIGATION. The success or otherwise of most dialogue relies on the capacity of the participants to engage, and to put aside preconceived notions, as well as the ability of the moderator. *Wayfinding* takes the moderation of group discourse to entirely new levels. The experience of "metamorphosis through navigation" is facilitated by a community of highly-trained master practitioners who are skilled in the use of a variety of seminal models from all knowledge traditions. This is an extraordinary group of peripatetic navigator-designers, whose personal and community *sangha* gives them the rare capability to set aside ego and guide people through the experiential maze of transformational dialogue while curating the synaesthetic metamorphoses necessary to discover entirely new possibilities for humanity.

6.v. EXPERIENCE. The rich experience of *wayfinding* the Centre curates for participants is unique. It is enabled by a process for deconstructing current meanings, assumptions, values and beliefs, and discovering new knowledge, prior to reconstructing and legitimising new meanings. This process of *Transformational Narrative* blends the experiential process of making sense of our exterior world with a metamorphosis of knowing about and accepting our hidden interior realities that ultimately give shape to the exterior world. Complemented by the use of a new symbolic language for comprehending and expressing complexity, the process of *Transformational Narrative* culminates in integral designs where new ideas can be tested and prototyped.

6.vi. TECHNOLOGY. Because the process of *wayfinding* accesses leading edge technologies in order to visualise complexity and map the relationships within whole systems, the role and expertise of the design, technology and communications team is fundamental. Working in complementarity with our curators to transcend routine dialectic, our design & technology team ensures:

- The tools we use are accessible, relevant and effective in revealing and informing new possibilities – while depicting the sets of consequences within any choices made and pathways proposed
- Emerging options and new possibilities are rational, emotional and ethical
- Any new proposals for any form of systemic renewal are grounded in principles of viability from social, cultural, financial, technological, ethical and aesthetic viewpoints.

6.vii. IMMERSION. The environments in which conversations are held actually matter. Although we may not necessarily pay conscious attention to our surroundings, they invariably have an impact on the way we think. They can help us focus our attention on what really matters, or they can distract us. They can also point us to the future or anchor us in the past. A Board Room, for example, provides an emotional place-marker for company directors. The room itself, right down to its furnishings, look and feel, the images on the walls, the memories of decisions made in the room and the ghosts of past events, all conspire to unintentionally shape thinking and agendas.

Wayfinding uses purpose-built, high-tech, immersive observatories to bring participants into a future-present to past-present continuum. These immersive environments or "decision theatres" are designed to intensify and increase the learning metabolism of participants – the rate at which we are able to notice, process and act upon signifiers of change – and to create a context of heightened perception as to their importance.

6.viii. VISUALISATION. In situations where verbal expression is the only medium of communication our comprehension is inevitably impeded. Words alone can be inadequate to describe the simplest of phenomena – especially when we take cross-cultural dimensions

such as languages and dialects into account. Thus it is that in everyday life we rely on myriad supplementary factors to fathom out what is happening so that we can respond appropriately. Our interpretation of even the simplest of events will take into account setting, body language, emotions, and a range of sensory factors, including ambient sounds and smells, simultaneously matching these with reference structures in the brain. The cross-referencing of these data in all their variety allows us to become and to remain literate. Being so informed means we can contribute effectively to the society into which we were born and grew up. Put us into an alien context – a different country, perhaps, where language, culture and traditions are all unfamiliar – and we rapidly discover the need to learn and adapt to a new set of literacies.

When dealing with complex phenomena, such as climate, disease or the emergent properties evident within the global economy, for example, the twin tasks of comprehension (sensing and making sense) and response (designing and enacting) become far more problematic. The risk is that we respond in ways that make sense to us, based upon previous experience or current knowledge, but that fail to take into account the changing nature of the context in which we are operating and therefore dismiss, ignore (or are unaware of) alternatives. For example, it is easy enough to regard a nuclear missile as though it were just another part of the military arsenal. But this ignores the unique consequences arising from its use that cannot possibly occur with conventional weapons. The same trap awaits us in terms of our cultural conditioning. Contemporary scientific practice, for example, habitually comprehends and responds to malignancies in the human body by attacking them with chemotherapy and radiotherapy. But without a fuller understanding of associated factors such as context, genetics, nutrition and exercise, we may be overlooking alternative, less invasive, treatments.

Currently we do not have a sufficiently sophisticated lexicon to understand and explain complexity with any degree of precision. Worse still the vocabulary of even the most well-educated experts lacks the subtlety needed to convey complex information accurately and dispassionately. This is why we rely on maps, models, diagrams, pictures, animations and simulations. They flesh out and add to our understanding.

However the degree of complexity inherent within our most life-critical systems demands that we now go beyond mere translation, using symbolic languages of imagery and sound in order to access the knowledge that lies beyond mere verbal expression and cognition. This is an important characteristic of the *wayfinding* approach and our use of the observatories.

8. Dancing on a River of Speed

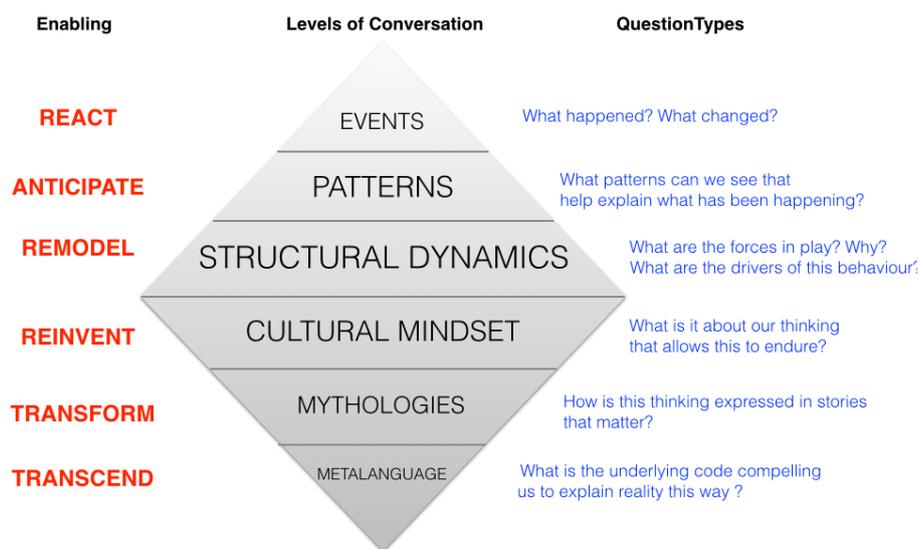
As one might expect, given the claims we are making here for Centre for the Future, the difference generated by these eight blended design facets within the *wayfinding* architecture must be evident. The focusing questions in a *mindful uprising*, in addition to the *wayfinding* experience, and the use of the observatory, must cohere to satisfy a proof-of-concept through outcomes that are qualitatively different and quantitatively beneficial. This is why the actual experience of *wayfinding* is central. Technology can provide jaw-dropping visualisations and perspective-changing images. But it is the encounter with *wayfinding* as an integral experience that is unique. In this way we hope to respect the ancient tradition of the original *wayfinders*.

Wayfinding adheres to a design discipline that is resilient – yet inventive and flexible. It encourages answers capable of surpassing conventional compromise and routine trade-

offs. It liberates a new consciousness of what is possible. And its impact lingers in the mind, enabling participants to take away the memories of their experience in order to replicate similar experiences with others.

It is worth examining the process of *wayfinding* with greater granularity. As previously stated, the heart and soul of *wayfinding* is an inclusive dialogue and inquiry methodology complemented by a new symbolic language for visualising complexity in real-time.

Transformational Narrative (TN) was created explicitly for use within immersive environments. This method is the foundation of a unique integral praxis – including all cognitive, discursive and design activity. There are three interwoven elements – best envisaged as two infinity loops intersecting at right angles and a suite of perspectives, or conversational levels, from which issues can be examined with greater granularity. The centre point of the intersecting infinity loops is a fulcrum defining four conversational

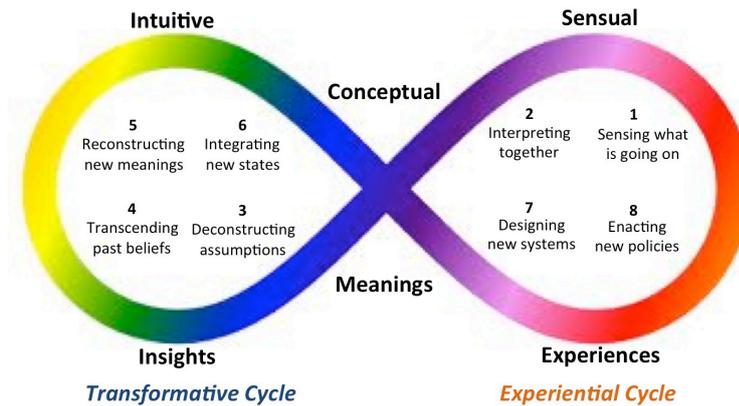


domains. Topics within these domains are examined through a variety of lenses and six levels of dialogue ranging from the clearly visible and measurable to the unseen but incredibly influential: (i) Events; (ii) Patterns; (iii) Structural Dynamics; (iv) Cultural Mindset; (v) Mythologies; and (vi) Metalanguage.

In terms of the two infinity loops (see below) the first has to do with Vistas & Horizons. It traces a recursive and iterative process between exterior and interior realities. Here invalid and misleading observations, in addition to obsolete assumptions, values and beliefs, can be exposed and transcended, new wisdom given legitimacy, and more resilient systems designed around the intention to consciously evolve on the basis of abundance, empathy, equality and justice.

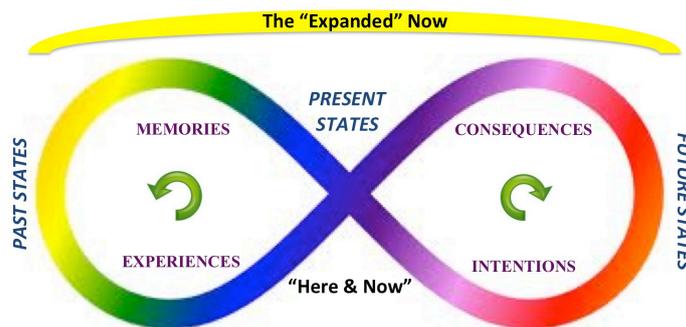
This Vistas & Horizons loop merges experiential learning about the external world of behaviours and systems (a cycle comprising sensing, making sense, designing and enacting) with transformative learning about the internal world of beliefs and cultures (a cycle comprising deconstruction, deep reflection, renewal and legitimation) more familiar to those focused on community development or undergoing therapeutic counselling.

Transformational Narrative Loop 1: *VISTAS & HORIZONS*



The second infinity loop has to do with Cadence & Time. This cycle delays or interrupts any impulse for action without adequate reflection. It achieves this through an exploration of past, present and possible issues and influences, and from a variety of levels. As new narratives, literacies and praxis for the human family evolve from the process of TN they begin to express a paradigm shift to conscious societal evolution and planetary renewal.

Transformational Narrative Loop 2: *CADENCE & TIME*



But this is not just another conversational process dangling from a single theoretical thread. Before engaging in the process of TN participants need to be inducted into a state of heightened awareness.

This essential step helps to establish a platform whereby all *wayfinding* activity is (a) qualitatively constructive; (b) fluently engages enteric and cardiac neural networks as well as cognition; and (c) arises from being able to step comfortably into new epistemologies. It also breaks entirely new ground by considering whole-system design from higher stages of consciousness than is possible in normal conversation. There are two elements required to create and sustain a heightened awareness. The first has to do with the semiotics of images and sound – a symbolic language able to supplement verbal expression as previously intimated. The second has more to do with our use of our time and space.

8.i. Images & Sound

Everything important to society and to human evolution is, by its very nature, complex. In other words it is interconnected in ways that are often invisible and dynamic in terms of continuously self-organising. Normally our primary mode of processing complexity is through pattern recognition. While we can and do force ourselves to consider huge amounts of detail, our brains actually retain and apply only high-level representations of reality – the meaning of which is then filtered through our genetic programming, life experiences, and cognitive capacity for comprehension.

So we conjure up meaning about ourselves and our world, almost intuitively, by accessing a range of visual and auditory reference structures or symbols, such as maps and models. These symbols make up the vocabulary within a language we then use to communicate with each other.

The entire construct of language is fascinating. Music is language. Photography and painting are languages. Movement is language. So are sculpture and architecture. But the capacity to process visual patterns and extract meaning trumps all others. Many visual and auditory languages appeal directly to our affective and visceral neural networks without the need for translation. Indeed to fully comprehend anything important words alone are far from adequate. At the very least we need to see colour, pattern, process, relationship, motion, programming and state. We need contextual intelligence gained from sounds and movements. And we need to appreciate graduations of scale – from the microscopic to the systemic.

There are very few universal models – models we all know, share and use. Furthermore most of these are insufficient to explain complex phenomena. Because of this lack we have sought out a new semiotics of language – one that combines gaming, animation and music to provide powerful representational experiences that help describe complex issues with greater accuracy.

Centre for the Future intends working with our partners to develop a universally intuitive dynamic visual language alongside the oral tradition of *Transformational Narrative* to depict complex variables, relationships and systems. In practice language barriers, income barriers and literacy barriers to learning fade away. New meaning is immediately conveyed through colour, pattern, motion and sound. If a particular variable is in play and highly active, that meaning can be conveyed instantly and intuitively via patterns. Beneath the pattern users can access the usual links to sources, documentation and proof processes in order to reach conclusions.

8.ii. Time & Space

It should be apparent from the Cadence & Time illustration, that *wayfinding* is reliant upon a heightened sensitivity towards all aspects of time and timing. For the most part we inhabit a slice of time we refer to as *now*. *Now* is what occupies our awareness, quite literally, from one moment to the next. Being present is an indication of how *awake* we are to the *now*. This focus on the current moment allows us to sort data, comprehend events, and undertake routine tasks. And yet we also know that human perceptions concerning what is possible – ranging from the most ingenious fictions and tacit choices to carefully considered decisions, and all subsequent behaviours – reach a peak of alertness, intensified sensitivity and focused energy in moments when the past and the possible collapse into single unconstrained moments of awareness.

Often referred to as an *epiphany* such experiences are not necessarily over and done with in a blinding flash. Sometimes they take time to evolve. Occasionally they are felt more than reasoned. What is even less appreciated is that, given optimal conditions, such experiences can morph into a continuum – evolving and unfolding mindfully for those able to remain in a heightened state of awareness. This state is where our learning metabolism¹ becomes optimal and where purposeful metanoia, both instant and prolonged, occur – as long as adequate motivation is also present. We call the space within which such heightened states of consciousness occur the *expanded now*.

We unmistakably witness this *expanded now* in practice when performing artists, actors, orators and athletes reach sublime heights of excellence, enabled by a palpable chemistry or intimate rapport between them, or between them and their audience. The pianist Kathryn Stott, for example, knows every nuance of the playing style of Yo-Yo Ma, and he hers. They can anticipate the slightest change in tempo, sense the most delicate rubato, feel the subtlest alteration in the pressure he applies to his bow. The result is a shared bubble of understanding within which perfection manifests from one moment to the next.

Such artistry often has the effect of appearing to suspend time. If only for a few minutes, such dream-like states feel as though we inhabit a dimension where time itself is held in abeyance. Our very being exists atemporally – outside of measured time. Simultaneously our learning metabolism is in overdrive – often felt as a surge of adrenalin. These impressions of warped time have correspondences with field theory in quantum physics. A critical component of field theory is a proposition that the mind cannot totally disengage from the past or the future. But both past and future can be a distraction if they are not made explicit in the context of the *here and now*.

We use the process of *wayfinding* to help participants cultivate a paradoxical integration of past and possible into the present so as to achieve a progressively greater unity of comprehension and expression. This phenomenon, the result of an expanded consciousness transcending the *here and now* into a more potent and prolonged *now* of yet-to-be-embodied knowing can appear radiantly attractive to an observer. When we sense this in others it is palpable – a magnetism or charisma that is instantly recognisable and that appeals directly to our sense of what it means to be alive. Indeed for some it is the essence of our humanity.

For the individuals concerned any consciousness of the *expanded now* is most typically felt as a euphoric, somewhat intense, moment of self-awareness. This is often expressed as an intoxicating condition in which ego and self-interest are put aside. A deep sense of energised potential then emerges where barriers, including a lack of time or other resources, seem to drop away, new energy is liberated, and the unthinkable becomes entirely possible. New horizons appear as if by magic.

In some cases, especially where an individual has a tendency to fixate on adverse past patterns and conditioning, it can also look, sound and feel scarily like aspects of our past intruding into the present. It is this first stage we most frequently refer to as an epiphany and it can last anywhere from a split second to minutes or even hours before it subsides.

However, if and when this "state-change" experience can be held and sustained, there is a strong probability that this initial stage will give way to a comprehensive review of our whole

¹ Our *learning metabolism* is the rate at which an event or pattern in the exterior world is *sensed* (perceived, identified and classified), *processed* (in terms of it making sense with what we already know or believe to be true) and *countered* (in terms of relevant action). It also includes the time taken to correct this entire cycle should our initial reaction turn out to be inappropriate, ill-considered or just plain wrong.

interior and relational life as we discover how to show up in ways that nurture and enhance our own authentic integrity while respecting and serving the same in others. In most cases this second stage precedes the onset of a third and final stage where the fullest discovery and implementation of a highly energized, inspired purpose can manifest.

We commonly regard this whole phenomenon and its associated qualities as being particularly evident in those we hold in high esteem – spiritual gurus, artists, celebrities, idols, elite sports men and women, sages and shamans. In this way we differentiate between those individuals who clearly exhibit such characteristics, which is why we call them leaders, and the rest of us who are mere devotees – or followers.

As a consequence we have allowed our tendency to interpret charismatic intensity, vision and foresight as unique qualities to be found only in certain powerful individuals. We then ascribe a mysterious potency to such *knowing* that unintentionally causes three outcomes. Firstly it produces an elite group of leaders. Secondly it denies the possibility for most of us ever aspiring to or achieving true leadership status. Thirdly it assigns the majority of us to a supporting role. Inevitably this caps human potential at a time when it is most needed.

But what if the apparent inability of most of us to achieve such advanced states of consciousness is just a momentarily inaccessible part of our shared humanity? How can more of us fulfil that latent potential? What instructions are needed to achieve a state of enlightened self-awareness? What praxis can best inform and liberate us?

We believe the *wayfinding* experience can help fulfil that function by democratising the role of leaders and the practice of leadership while incubating the advent of social and cultural forms that can activate human potential among many – not just an elite few.

Let me explain what I mean by a heightened state of consciousness by using two stories from motor racing. The great Ayrton Senna was once asked after a race at Spa in Belgium how he cut through the back markers so easily in heavy rain. Senna's reply was astonishing. Driving down the main straight on one side, he could pick out drivers on the other side of the track by their helmets – up to a kilometre away, in torrential rain, at 240km plus! In an instant he could identify the drivers, get a rough idea of how fast they were, calculate how much faster he was, and how long it would take to catch them, and where he was most likely to catch them on the circuit. In this way he was able to calculate his overtaking manoeuvres.

The second story concerns Jackie Stewart who tells of approaching the Curva Grande at Monza at fearsome speed – 150 mph or so. In all that ferocity, hot oil, body battered, head encased in his helmet and Nomex balaclava, dancing on the edge of adhesion, he smelt the intense aroma of freshly mown grass as though it had been tipped into the car. He slowed down and avoided a potential crash which he could not possibly have seen. The reason for his caution, which some people might have called intuition, or possibly even premonition, was perfectly explicable. That whiff of freshly mown grass had told him someone ahead had veered off the track. Stewart later explained how his senses came alive at speed and how when he was at the limit he became supremely aware of the world around him. How he could smell the cut grass, see the scatter of grit on the track, sense the grip of each wheel. *When I am driving really well, he said, I always have plenty of time.*

At first such statements may seem paradoxical until we recognise that the human mind is capable of comprehending vast amounts of information almost instantly. In such moments our state of awareness is heightened, processing becomes instinctive, and performance flows effortlessly. Instead of concentrating on discrete bits and pieces of data we sense the wholeness of existence within an almost motionless context, becoming acutely attuned to everything happening around us with no apparent effort. Heightened states such as these

are not uncommon and often lead to the phenomena Abraham Maslow called *peak experiences*. These are the times during which we feel the highest planes of ecstasy, harmony and possibility so intensively – so much so that we feel compelled to place them outside of our routine everyday experiences.

But such times of overpoweringly intense, often life-changing, states of consciousness also point the way to what should be the norm in a truly healthy and happy existence where we remain open and fully alert to all that life has to offer. We can awaken to these revelatory states and peak experiences if we have a mind to. For they do not strike at random but are associated with particular conditions that can be encouraged. It matters not whether we are making love, choreographing a ballet, discovering a scientific algorithm, or idly watching the sun set over the desert, peak experiences can be induced through the shaping of an appropriate context – animating a set of conditions artists will recognise as being an inherent part of their creativity:

1. Focus – a period of time where one's full concentration is devoted to something that seems to resist our full comprehension
2. Stillness – a suspension of time in which past, present and possible intersect, thus allowing a reframing of possibilities to occur
3. Movement – a wave of understanding in which an inspired idea or insight surges through us, connecting the dots to create unity, and making sense of everything we had thought unknowable
4. Fusion – an integral crystallisation that enables our understanding to mature and expand and when the essence of our understanding becomes the truth
5. Opening – opportunities to explore the implications of what we now know and feel.

Before I proceed I feel compelled to issue a cautionary note in the form of a phenomenological distinction between what I am referring to as *peak experiences* within an *expanded now* of consciousness and various forms of "psychological orgasm" that may arise from the use of alcohol, mind-expanding hallucinogens such as mescaline and peyote, the blurring of perception which frequently transpires on the borders of sleep, or the subdued consciousness of sleep itself. All of these have at some stage been associated with the production of *peak experiences* because they can provoke a sensation of happiness, integration and possibility.

But therein lies a problem. For although artificially-induced states such as these may lead to emotive liberation, they actually short-circuit cognition – *pace* Aldous Huxley. This is because they occur within the context of clouded or veiled consciousness. The capacity for cognitive performance and memory functionality are both dramatically reduced by the deliberate impairment of consciousness. Any significant subjective insights associated with the experience are liable to be distorted, forgotten or misinterpreted. They would not have been at all useful to Ayrton Senna or Jacki Stewart.

9. In The Zone

To be in flow, on the edge, fully awake to all possibilities, including those never before envisaged, requires us to approach life from deeper levels of profundity – a higher stage of consciousness. Einstein's famous assertion that we cannot solve current problems by using the same thinking we used to create them resonates well in that regard. So what stages of consciousness must we be able to access in order to be able to perform at the peak of our powers and to perceive entirely new possibilities? How can we access these while

sustaining an atemporal state of awareness? And how do these states relate to our overall stage of awareness and its development?

The success of Centre for the Future ultimately hinges upon our ability to find dialogical processes that sustain a heightened state of consciousness within a sophisticated and mature stage of integral awareness and to be able to step into new epistemologies thus equipped. After all it is pointless reiterating what others have already put forward as solutions to our problems or designs for our future well-being – at least without some shift in awareness of how to apply these ideas more beneficially.

What we suppose about human consciousness differs wildly from one scientist to the next. From what we can glean from recent research, it is most likely a story-telling device. This is hardly surprising. Story is a universal mode of analogical thought where psychological processing selects certain kinds of events from an expanse of impressions and signals, brings them into awareness, and links them to create a thread of narrative from which meaning can be derived.

Consciousness, too, seems always to ascribe causality. Not content with recording detached bits of information, it works by synthesizing events into a linear flow which is then projected into the future as a predictive model to guide behaviour. Indeed, our consciousness is so compulsive a storyteller as to be a master confabulator – replacing gaps in memory by inventing imaginary remembered experiences, especially in terms of cause and effect relationships, even when it has no idea what is going on and uses information that is either inadequate or contradictory.

Conscious life is rich in meaning even when the world is chaotic: we see pictures in flames, faces in random dots, figures in the shadows. We confabulate causes, based on the flimsiest of evidence or no evidence at all, to explain our emotions and behaviours. Inanimate objects – such as stones, rivers and trees – are imbued with personality and powers of malevolence or benignity. For all humans, the world is full of relevance and purpose. Reality comes to us already imprinted with labels of preference. *Peak experiences* occur in those moments when analogy strikes us – we see underlying unity, similarity in difference, meaning emerging from chaos – a bunch of disconnected facts coalescing into a meaningful story.

The state enabling *peak experience* is formed by reaching into future and past experiences for self-validated memories that resonate and can be pulled into the present – an holistic diegesis from which new meaning can then be made. This entails the unremitting use of proleptic [a mental leap into the future giving us anticipatory access to that which has not yet happened] and analeptic [allowing us to reach back in time to recovered lost or forgotten events] thought. During this state we are awake and functionally alert in ways that are an extension of more classic forms of meditation. In fact the combination of heightened sensitivity resulting from an accelerated learning metabolism in suspended time – the *expanded now* – induces high gamma wave brain activity.

Unsurprisingly gamma brainwaves are nature's best anti-depressant. They are often associated with so-called “rapture” moments, feelings of empathy and compassion, peak concentration and extremely high levels of cognitive functioning. Gamma brainwaves generate the feeling of being in the zone, that you can do anything. This is the brain functioning that allowed Ayrton Senna to experience "ecstasy" when driving flat out – to drive on a river of speed. Gamma waves also enable exceptionally vivid and rapid memory recall, increased sensory perception and focus, and the rapid processing of incredible amounts of information.

10. Approach & Agenda

Generally speaking design thinking has been used almost exclusively for the mass production of goods and gratuitous financial creativity. In part Centre for the Future defines its mission as understanding complexity prior to applying design thinking and expertise to the conscious coevolution of society as a whole system. We call this *evolutionary humanitarian design* [EHD] and it relies upon our ability to spot a small number of factors that cause any system to behave in the only way possible – given explicit intentions and design.

We cannot use evolutionary humanitarian design to solve "the problem" of our civilisation because there is no such thing. The interconnected nature of life is a matter of fact. It is not necessarily "problematic" that we created derivatives, sub-prime mortgages, coal-fired power stations, nuclear weapons, a 24-hour news service, codeine, parking meters and Coca Cola. What is at issue is that we have had no integrated conception of the world and, more importantly, the people in the world, from which to judge that these things could be bad for us. We were broadly untrained in making sense of things, in creating an understanding of how systems work, and we ignored consequences that were diffused, but present nonetheless. We were perfectly happy to critique the aesthetic of our social, economic and political designs but failed to take the next step of evaluating our subject matter and content. This is why human progress has been boldly technocratic yet relentlessly fragmentary.

As a consequence there is no button to push within our world-system, no lever to pull, that can "solve" or even "resolve" the interlinked failures of politics, pandemics and poverty. This, after all, is the substance of the world we created. It is the rich reality in which we live. Rather we need to be much more precise in focusing our attention on implementing the tiniest of changes, through a deliberate leap of consciousness, that can achieve our goal of different and more beneficial outcomes for greater numbers of people.

Generally speaking the calls for massive change, revolutionary paradigm shifts or disruptive innovation in the context of humanity's future are a folly. Quite apart from the fact they may lead to increased anxiety and trauma rather than rapid, informed action, they are also misguided and misleading. Why? Because they lack any rigorous systemic rationale or basis in reality.

Thus the mission of Centre for the Future is partly to counter such calls for massive change by proving the power of the smallest of adjustments in consciousness and systemic design. By attending to details within any life-critical system, and by deploying the slightest of nudges to the forces shaping that system, we can shift the energy and outcomes in ways that are quick, cheap, effective and non-disruptive. The initial high level program for Centre for the Future is therefore essentially threefold:

1. To identify, study and elucidate systems and practices that are fundamental components of our technological world-system and life-critical in terms of humanity's conscious evolution
2. Using forensic systemic diagnosis (systemic acupuncture) to identify constraints within these systems, as currently configured and practised, that are impediments to our advancement as a human family
3. Within the context of the above to help create more potent future narratives based upon abundance and empathy and to reinvent, simulate and activate more benign systems and practices based upon these design criteria.

Thus our initial work will focus on the provision of a shared, cross-cultural, polyocular platform for comprehending the current world-system – including its drivers, properties, processes, benefits and overall levels of viability, prior to working with commercial and government partners on the prototyping of alternatives in those cases where obvious improvements can be achieved. This work entails nurturing the capability to synthesise large quantities of often incomplete, unstructured and conflicting data in order to make sense of complexity and then, where possible, managing these systems differently, or redesigning new systems to our collective advantage. We intend doing this by:

1. Comprehending complex flows and patterns, separating symptoms from root causes, in a deep dive of the dynamics and trajectories inherent within current assumptions and intentions
2. Understanding at a tectonic level the most potent and pernicious overarching economic and political mechanisms operating today – including how they arose and how they can be changed, reinvented, or their more noxious impacts mitigated
3. Exploring how privatisation, financialisation, militarisation, and criminalisation are all converging into a steadily creeping authoritarianism – and what compelling alternatives might be feasible
4. Accepting commissioned projects to redesign and prototype alternative life-critical systems, or discrete features of these systems, so as to create and curate enduring value vis-a-vis commercial profit, social benefit and ecological resilience.

[A note regarding the third point above is appropriate. Privatisation, financialisation, militarisation, and criminalisation are the labels others have given to four key trends already identified as being the most threatening to our existence as a single human family. Together they converge into an authoritarian manner that is crippling our way of life in so many different ways.

By the term financialisation we refer to a hyper form of casino capitalism and speculation where profits are based purely upon finance rather than on productive commerce and manufacturing. The goal of financialisation is to make money out of thin air. It is based on getting everyone into debt and it is unsustainable.

Privatisation too has become pervasive in our culture, assaulting democratic ideals and the commons that have held many communities together for centuries. Schools, highways, parks, water, the oceans, forests, space and many other things we hold dear are being taken away from public stewardship.

The militarisation of sovereign states is increasingly visible – even in espoused democracies where an overpowering police response to the slightest civic unrest or protest can result in martial law being enacted, public events cancelled and transportation curtailed. The military model of “lockdown” has become the default response to many such disturbances. The use of SWAT teams has increased dramatically, as the military has supplied local police forces with a wide array of super-powerful weaponry, often far beyond what is actually needed.

Finally criminalisation categorises students, poor people, the homeless, debtors, drug users, and whole neighbourhoods as criminals. In some countries the justice system is being misused to categorise the poor, ethnic minorities and those who promote civil disobedience as criminals. In the US, for example, mass incarceration is accomplishing in the 21st century what slavery accomplished more than 150 years ago: the oppression and disenfranchisement of a whole generation of black people.]

11. Master Navigators of Wayfinding

Centre for the Future will use the latest high-tech visualisation and immersion facilities to provide experiences that are truly transformational. But although technology is important it is nothing more than an enabler for different and deeper insights. The Centre is reliant upon two other factors: (i) the *Transformational Narrative* dialogical method, and (ii) a community of highly expert and skilled curators. These curators, or master navigators, are hand-picked, experienced individuals who have an intimate familiarity with the many source models and theories-in-action informing *wayfinding* and our other inquiry and design practices.

Master navigators are adept at thinking and acting strategically in the moment; of excavating and translating integral knowledge from diverse sources; of curating the experience of *wayfinding* for participants who may not speak their language; and of finding ways to communicate new wisdom in ways that are socially desirable, ethically defensible, culturally respectful, ecologically responsible, systemically viable and economically pragmatic.

Our community of master navigators is also peripatetic – travelling from one decision theatre to the next in order to maintain a professional practice – a *wayfinding* Sangha – that keeps them in a state of sustained learning rather than being anchored to a single place and culture.

Frequently Asked Questions about Centre for the Future

Q: What is Centre for the Future?

A: Centre for the Future is a global ecosystem of social enterprises. We share information from a variety of cultural perspectives, rather in the manner of a planetary brain, so as to reinvent our most life-critical systems from a new consciousness of how the future can and could be. As an earth-scale collaborative infrastructure the Centre utilises deep inquiry, strategic foresight and design thinking to amplify human intelligence – integrating profound knowledge and distributing new wisdom to where it can be most useful in enabling purposeful paradigmatic change.

Q: Does the Centre for the Future have an explicit purpose?

A: Our vision is to have our species awaken to a deeper impulse for survival and advancement in the context of what it truly means to be human. We will achieve that vision by answering a set of profound questions to the extent that the future well-being of the generations that come after us is assured. By taking an holistic view of our world-system – its interrelationships, critical constraints and flash points – Centre for the Future has the capability to help humanity make more informed and wiser decisions on a range of viable evolutionary pathways. Ultimately the Centre will help us advance more purposefully into a range of considered and viable futures.

Q: How does the Centre intend accomplishing this purpose?

A: The infrastructure supporting Centre for the Future is ultimately aimed at creating a global campaign of world-system renewal and reinvention which we call *Mindful Uprising*. *Mindful Uprising* was conceived as the operating system – an agenda of big questions for focusing the process of *wayfinding* on matters of material and spiritual consequence to humanity. It focuses on the examination of life-critical systems across five intersecting domains of inquiry: Landscapes & Ecologies; Cultures & Communities; Power & Governance; Education & Learning; Economics & Production.

Q: What does the Centre for the Future avoid or not do?

A: Centre for the Future does not necessarily solve today's discrete problems – though it does help shift thinking in ways that help resolve complex dilemmas and systemic paradoxes. The process of *wayfinding* is not a substitute for good governance nor is it an alternative to the sovereign responsibilities of a nation state to care for its people. In other words Centre for the Future is not a body aspiring to planetary governance nor does it intend developing such a capability.

Q: Why is the Centre so important? Why should I care?

A: The work of Centre for the Future is an endowment for the generations that come after us and an opportunity for us to help restore hope and joy in what it means to be human. Until we can see the whole world-system with greater clarity, we can only continue to make decisions that are, at best, ill-informed and partial – serving the real interests of only small numbers of people. Centre for the Future is grounded in the conviction that a more coherent

universal wisdom, forged out of radical empathy, applied equitably, and in a spirit of cooperation and abundance, can be used to enable humanity to consciously transcend today's unsustainable beliefs and practices.

Q: Where did the idea for *wayfinding* come from?

A: *Wayfinding* refers to the ancient knowledge tradition that enabled Micronesians to travel vast distances on the open ocean. Using finely-tuned observations of the stars, the sun, the clouds, the ocean swells, and other signs of nature for clues to direction and location of a vessel at sea, these master navigators were voyaging with pinpoint accuracy for thousands of years before the invention of European navigational instruments. By continuously monitoring the environment they knew where they were, relative to where they had come from. These mental constructs ensured they did not get lost.

The notion of navigating conditions in real-time underpinned the key concepts in a strategic management methodology called Strategic Navigation which was developed by Richard Hames & Marvin Oka in their ground breaking work with the Australian Taxation Office in the 1990s. This methodology is the driving force behind the contemporary application of *wayfinding*.

Q: How is the term *wayfinding* being used in this context?

Wayfinding refers to the dialogical and immersive audio-visual experience we use in Centre for the Future. This process of *knowledge amplification* is our core activity. The *wayfinding* experience is designed to access all of humanity's knowledge – past, present and possible – in the creation of a world-system that sustains and improves all life autopoietically. Our highly-skilled curators of the *wayfinding* experience are master navigators of collective metanoia and the contemporary equivalents of the great navigator-priests in the Micronesian tradition. Their role is to facilitate the process of *wayfinding* with groups of people who seek new possibilities, by asking new questions, framed from within higher levels of consciousness of what matters to us as a species.

Q: How is the idea of *wayfinding* useful to our civilisation today?

A: We believe the experience of *wayfinding* advances the field of strategic foresight and design. But why is this necessary?

Industrial modes of subsistence have become incapable of providing for a human family of seven billion people. Systems we once took for granted – including those which provide us with energy, food, water, a healthy environment, security and a vibrant economy – are all highly stressed or failing. They were not designed for present conditions, nor are they viable in their current form. Many of the institutions upon which we rely for sustenance and security are also struggling. Born out of an impulse to compete they are ill-prepared for the cooperation we need to overcome the most perilous dilemmas of our time.

Fresh thinking, alternative practices, and new modes of navigation are essential. But because of the way we organise our affairs no single organisation has taken responsibility for exploring these matters from a culturally inclusive, planetary design, viewpoint. In essence we lack a story for the future of the human family. The mission of Centre for the Future is to help craft and communicate that new story in practice.

Q: How does Centre for the Future help solve the wicked problems confronting our civilisation?

A: Many individuals, organisations and governments around the world are intent on solving today's most pervasive problems. Instead of duplicating these efforts, Centre for the Future looks at how complex issues intersect and interact – through a prism of shared past, present and possible encounters we call the *expanded now*. We then design alternative systems and practices, based upon the smallest, most benign, changes that are culturally beneficial, ethically defensible, socially desirable, ecologically responsible, economically prudent and systemically convincing. By redesigning the most critical aspects of our shared *worldview* we are hopeful that humanity will encounter fewer wicked problems in the future.

Q: What is so different and new about Centre for the Future?

A: Centre for the Future is an endowment of wisdom for future generations forged from the totality of human experience and learning. We have three aims:

1. Using sophisticated knowledge visualisation technologies we create a more profound understanding of those life-critical systems needed for human health and wellbeing.
2. As a planetary *knowledge amplifier* we realign and harmonise human values and beliefs, while conserving and valuing diversity, so that different choices can be made about the future we want as a human family.
3. Integrating wisdom from all cultures and eras we design viable alternatives to the systems and practices that are failing us today. And we share this knowledge freely with those who will make the best use of it.

Q: Where is Centre for the Future located?

The foundation Centre for the Future is located in Melbourne, Australia. But the activities of Centre for the Future are undertaken by individuals and communities-of-interest in a web of specially constructed high-tech nodes around the world. Eventually these cultural observatories and immersive decision-theatres will form a global ecosystem of shared future-orientated inquiry and design. Our hope is that the various nodes will be located in ten or more culturally significant cities around the world – ranging, for example, from Curitiba to Mecca and from Xian to Cape Town.

Q: Why will Centre for the Future be located in relatively obscure foreign cities?

A: Centre for the Future operates on a planetary basis on behalf of the entire human family regardless of status, wealth, creed, ethnicity, age, education, gender – or other such boundaries. The notion of "foreign" does not exist in our vocabulary. Metaphysically we are nomads, constantly reinventing our understanding of place and home in ways that are evocative of our vision and mission. That said each Centre for the Future node will occupy a unique location allowing it to "observe" what others may not see. The information accumulated from each node will then be distributed among our global community. In sharing and contemplating information about our implicit worldview, cultural mindsets and life-critical systems, a new wisdom of radical empathy will be created that can be used to reinvent how we understand and communicate with each other and relate to our home the Earth.

Q: Where can I see Centre for the Future in action?

A: Centre for the Future is about purposeful action. As a globally-distributed design studio and a transition-enabling practice, the knowledge and new wisdom generated by *wayfinding* will become freely available online. You can also apply to participate in the ongoing process of *wayfinding* if you apply to participate in your local Centre for the Future calendar of activities. There are no bars to entry other than our inherent capacity to cater for certain numbers of people and our desire to ensure diversity within the participant groups.

Q: What qualifications do I need to become a curator of *wayfinding*?

A: Much depends upon how and why you want to contribute. *Wayfinding* is an inclusive experience and our master navigators are highly trained and experienced knowledge designers. They are small in number, selected for their expertise in curating the process of *Transformational Narrative* within an *expanded now* of possibilities, and of designing viable systems from a variety of different perspectives.

The *wayfinding* community, however, is a commons-based process – open to anyone who feels an impulse to be involved. Selection criteria are very simple and nobody is excluded on cultural, gender, age, political or religious grounds. In fact we actively embrace diversity in that regard.

Q: How can I become involved?

A: Four times a year Centre for the Future reaches out to men, women and young people from all walks of life who wish to join us in the process of *wayfinding*. New groups are chosen every three months to contribute on a voluntary basis to the theme under examination – all related to the *big questions* and *grand challenges* that inform our underlying purpose.

Participants agree to contribute 2 x two-day experiences over the course of their active membership. After that different groups are invited into the process, to examine the same or different themes. This ensures richness and variety of input. All participants are invited to remain part of the global *wayfinding* community once their initial commitment has concluded.

Q: How does Centre for the Future create value for sponsors and investors?

A: Centre for the Future is a social enterprise that curates enduring shared value (financial, social, cultural and environmental) for its sponsors, advocates, clients and for the entire human family. When commissioned work is undertaken, profits are reinvested in the development of our operations internationally.

Q: Who is accountable for Centre for the Future and the knowledge it distributes?

A: The Centre deploys a model of governance reflecting its stated ethos. Value flowing from all activities is monitored by a group of Custodians. Custodians represent those benefit streams to the local community, and to society as a whole, flowing from the work undertaken in each of our five activity zones. Custodians are appointed by invitation of the Stewards in discussion with the local CEO and have all the legal status of a Board of Directors. They meet at least four times a year to fine-tune the strategic direction so as to achieve tangible results from our core activities.

Centre for the Future Stewards comprise five or more eminent people drawn from a diverse cross-section of the global community. Stewards are responsible for the ethical and international reputation of the Centre for the Future network. They monitor results and have the power to dismiss or replace the Custodians and staff.

The Staff, led by a Chief Executive Officer, are responsible for accomplishing the goals of the Centre in ways that model and practice viability, ecority, abundance, diversity, collaboration and collegiality. Staff are appointed by the CEO, who is appointed by the Custodians.

Q: Who can gain access to the knowledge created by Centre for the Future?

A: Knowledge created by Centre for the Future is aimed at improving human health, happiness, well-being and prosperity across many domains and in all parts of the world. Our wisdom is shared freely with any individual or entity that can use it effectively – and as a force for good – but within strict guidelines established by the Stewards so as to avoid unethical use. Knowledge arising from commissioned activities is licensed to the commissioning agent for a specified period of time, after which it is transferred to our online library and can be accessed by anyone.

Q: How can I find out more about Centre for the Future?

A: Three foundation documents have been written to guide all future development of Centre for the Future. These source documents are available for sale from the registered offices of Centre for the Future in Melbourne – contact details of which are on our website.