

# Scanning Our Future



## RESEARCHER RECRUITMENT BRIEF

### 1. Introduction

Scanning our Future is a partnership between writer/social entrepreneur Alan Heeks and Schumacher Institute. The overall aim of Scanning our Future is to identify ways that individuals, communities and public service teams in the UK can evolve super-resilience, a meta level of adaptation, over the next 10-15 years, to handle positively the likely future pressures.

There are three main phases envisaged in the project. Part I is research to identify major trends and pressures worldwide which may affect the UK over the next 30 years. Work on this, by Palden Jenkins, is due for completion in late 2017. We are now seeking to appoint a researcher to start on Part II.

The time input for Part II is envisaged as four months, working 2-4 days per week, target start October 2017. The focus of the research will be to identify who are the principal individual experts and centres of knowledge and excellence in the field of resilience, both in the UK and abroad. Details of the research Brief are in Sections 4 and 5.

### 2. The Context

#### *A 10-20 year outlook*

Think of significant increased pressures in the past 5-10 years, and imagine them increasing a lot further:

- Political and economic disruption through cyber-attacks (cf the last US Presidential election).
- Further growth in refugee and migrant movements.
- Major and minor terrorist attacks in developed countries.
- Further rise in income disparities and the wealth of the uber rich.
- More frequent and extreme weather events.
- Ongoing cuts in public services, leading to some significant problems (such as Grenfell Tower)

#### *Now add some new pressures*

- Major rise in food prices, and occasional supply shortages.
- Frequent cyber-disruption of daily activities (banking, social media, mobile phone use).
- The 'culture of cuts' leads to a significant rise in disruption from strikes, walkouts, and protest actions, by both workers and service users (e.g. NHS patients, commuters).
- The NHS have to make major policy decisions on priorities, e.g. cease life-extending treatments for anyone over 80.
- Technological innovations become more radical, and seem to have a life of their own (driverless cars, genetic modifications).
- More to come...

#### *And remember the upsides*

- Along with the negative pressures, there are many individuals and organisations in the UK already developing skills to respond positively.

### **3. Research Scope**

This research is intended to map the broad terrain for the next stages of the project, including identification of individuals or organisations who are potential partners in taking the project forward.

Scope: We want to explore super-resilience, defined as follows:

*Resilience is the capacity to respond positively, adapt, learn and progress through challenges, both sudden and gradual. We want to explore super-resilience for UK individuals and communities, including neighbourhoods up to city scale, also work teams, especially those delivering key services such as health and education.*

*We are interested in the physical/logistical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. Our aim is both to understand what creates super-resilience, and how this can be learned and developed. By super-resilience we mean the capacity to respond positively, and adapt to exceptionally high levels of challenge, complexity and uncertainty. This capacity could arise from personal or group skills, from technology, organisation structures etc.*

Most organisations and initiatives work with a concept of resilience that often means just recovery from detrimental change (disasters, crises, emergencies etc.) – a bounce back mentality. Some consider the next stage, which is to use resilience as a way to improve functions and to learn from coping with change to be better prepared when new changes occur – a bounce forward concept. Panarchy is a term that is often used to describe ecological types of resilience where complex systems adapt through cycles of change that improve or learn each time round - this term can be applied to socio-economic systems.

Adaptive resilience is defined as ‘the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity while absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances.’

Super-resilience is the ability to anticipate different futures, to be attuned to weak and early signals of possible change, and to prepare to adapt in the moment as changes appear – it is a constant state of readiness that appreciates that the actual future that unfolds will not have been anticipated and that the learning from previous events and actions is vital but inadequate to cope with the future and that learning comes from not just experience but from imagination. The ‘super’ aspect, meaning ‘above’, refers to placing resilience thinking in a whole system, long-term context by considering the interactions and interference of all the complex global issues that are shaping the world and that any local considerations of resilience are bound up in this flux of change and must make sense within them.

Super-resilience requires the capacity to respond positively, and adapt to exceptionally high levels of challenge, complexity and uncertainty. This capacity could arise from personal or group skills, from technology, organisation structures etc. It includes integrating the highest levels of resilience skills currently available (logistical, emotional, spiritual), and the ability to learn and invent responses to the unimaginable.

### **4. Brief for phase 2**

This is a short description of work (DOW) for the first part of the phase two of Scanning Our Future.

## **Deliverables / outputs**

D1. Initial mapping – who is playing in the game of resilience thinking and futures? This will include governments, civil society, academic departments, business sectors, associations, and think tanks. The objective is to identify the types of organisations and individuals involved in resilience (including those doing it for commercial reasons to identify new markets and products). The aim is to produce an initial diagram (a mind-map) of these types of organisations and individuals involved in resilience for our target groups.

D2. Database design – field definitions derived from the initial mapping. This will involve thinking about and agreeing what it is we need to know about the organisations and individuals for the purposes of our own scanning and for partnership purposes – profiles and critiques of their work up to about half a page. It will contain fields for links to delve further into their work and resources. We need to capture contact details for any potential partner.

D3. Database platform choice – evaluate different possibilities for where to hold the database and what system(s) to use. The criteria are ease of producing queries on the data and ease of access for people in different locations. (Likely to be either Excel spreadsheet or Access database, online database may too expensive). This will lead to constructing the database, plus any forms and reports.

D4. Populate the database – use the existing data collection held by TSI, also scour horizon scanning material collected by TSI and AH. This will be followed by extensive searching on the web. The emphasis will be on getting a comprehensive UK assessment of resilience-focused organisations and individuals but important global players should also be included. We want those looking especially at the future evolution of resilience, and in some sense the idea of super-resilience (see above), for our target client groups.

D5. Devise and apply a ranking system – this is likely to be subjective and fairly simple a 1-to-5 approach that embodies the idea of super-resilience.

D6. Produce outputs: a revised initial mapping from D1, ranked lists of UK organisations, individuals and global organisations and a short report summarising the research that contains observations and topics for further exploration. This report should highlight suggested aims for Phase 3 research (see Project Overview for more on Phase 3), and potential partners.

## **5. Indicative follow-up work plan**

The intention is to use this scoping research to make approaches to potential partners, and to identify what work could be done by this project which will best contribute to our overall aim. Some of this work would probably be done by the Researcher, some by partners or other team members.

The eventual aim is to offer a range of resources which can help individuals, and community and work groups in the UK to develop the skills of super-resilience to handle future pressures well. These resources could include workshops, video tutorials, and a website and book.

## **6. About you**

We are seeking a highly experienced freelance researcher with a strong interest in this topic, and preferably previous work in this sector, who can structure their work with limited supervision and who is interested in continuing work on the project beyond this initial brief. Most of the work can be done

where you choose, but ability to attend occasional progress meetings in Bristol or Salisbury is important. Pay rate by negotiation.

## 7. Contact and Application process

If you are interested, please contact Alan Heeks (07976 602787, [data@workingvision.com](mailto:data@workingvision.com)) or Ian Roderick of Schumacher Institute (07921 970952, [ian@schumacherinstitute.org.uk](mailto:ian@schumacherinstitute.org.uk)).

The deadline for applications is September 27. To apply, please send an email with CV to both Alan and Ian.

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

- 1. INTRODUCTION:** the present is already so intense and demanding that most of us don't want to consider the future. But surely the rapid changes and pressures we face now are likely to continue, and increase? Where is all this leading to? The overall aim of Scanning our Future is to identify ways that individuals, communities and public service providers in the UK can evolve super-resilience, a meta level of adaptation, over the next 10-15 years, to handle positively the likely future pressures.
- 2. BACKGROUND:** Scanning our Future is currently a small project in startup mode, seeking to understand how it can contribute in a large, complex field. The founder and funder of SOF is Alan Heeks, a social entrepreneur and writer (see [www.alanheeks.com](http://www.alanheeks.com)). He is working in partnership with Schumacher Institute. Alan has been exploring resilience for many years: he has led personal development workshops and retreats on this theme, set up a woodland and retreat centre showing how to learn resilience from natural ecosystems (see [www.hazelhill.org.uk](http://www.hazelhill.org.uk)), and founded Wisdom Tree, who support front-line service teams ([www.wisdomtree.uk.net](http://www.wisdomtree.uk.net)).
- 3. PROJECT AIMS:** Initial research (our Phase 1) shows that there are many well-funded future forecasts available, and that the outlook is alarming in many ways. The aim of SOF is to focus on the 'UK so what?' of these future pressures.

In particular, we want to explore the 'evolutionary challenge' of the troubles ahead. We believe that the gift in these problems is an invitation to evolve to a super level of resilience, so that people can adapt and thrive in high levels of disruption, challenge and complexity.

Given our limited resources, we want to focus on super-resilience for UK individuals and communities (up to city level), including work groups, especially those delivering key public services, and small business/social enterprises who can contribute to raising resilience, partly through innovation.

- 4. PHASE 2 WORKPLAN:** This plan covers the next few months, as information and contacts gathered in this phase will shape the plan thereafter. A key aim of Phase 2 is to clarify how this project can add something distinctive to the field.

Task	Who	When
<b>1. Future threats review</b> A series of summaries on all main topics looking at major trends over next 20-30 years.	Palden Jenkins, a senior freelance researcher, has been working on this for several months.	Complete late 2017.
<b>2. Sector scoping research</b> Who are the main UK and international organisations and individuals researching and teaching on resilience?	A researcher needs to be appointed for this work.	October 2017 start, complete January 2018?
<b>3. Contact building</b> Making contact with organisations and key individuals who could be partners or advisors for SOF.	Alan Heeks and Ian Roderick.	Sept 2017 - Jan 2018.
<b>4. Strategy review</b> Assess findings to date, set aims and work plan for Phase 3.	A 1-2 day gathering to include the work team, plus selected advisors and potential partners.	February 2018.

- 5. PHASE 3 WORK PLAN:** This will be guided by the findings and new contacts from Phase 2. We hope to collaborate with other organisations and individuals to create a collective process of research and dissemination, which shares best practices in super-resilience and identifies scope for future innovation.
- 6. PHASE 3 INDICATIVE QUESTIONS:** These are some of the questions we might explore in Phase 3, hopefully as part of a collaborative partnership with a few other organisations.
- A. Scoping:** Identify the major dimensions on which we may research super-resilience, for example:
- **Individual, community, work team**
  - **Physical/logistical, emotional, spiritual**
- B. Best practice:** Where are the best, practical examples of super-resilience? They may be in exceptionally stressed societies, such as Palestine, Afghanistan, nomads or refugee camps.
- C. Gathering:** What are the best ways to gather and share the best practices we find? Possibilities might include a Wiki website, video material, blogs, and interactive workshops.
- D. Innovation:** Are there resilience needs which call for innovation to meet them? This could mean new social processes and structures, new individual skills, new services or technologies. If so, how can we encourage such innovations to happen?
- E. Dialogue:** Our aim is to find leading-edge networks with whom we can work to develop super-resilience in practice, and to learn how it could be disseminated.
- F. Dissemination:** Currently it's clear that mainstream UK struggles with the present, and doesn't want to know about the future. Exploring how to disseminate our outputs may have at least two channels:
- i. *Early adopters:* such as Transition Network, Network of Wellbeing.
  - ii. *Grain stores:* when mainstream individuals and communities decide they need more resilience knowhow, where would they turn? Can we place resources in these channels?