

Island nodes of resilience - insuring against global societal collapse

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Adapt Research

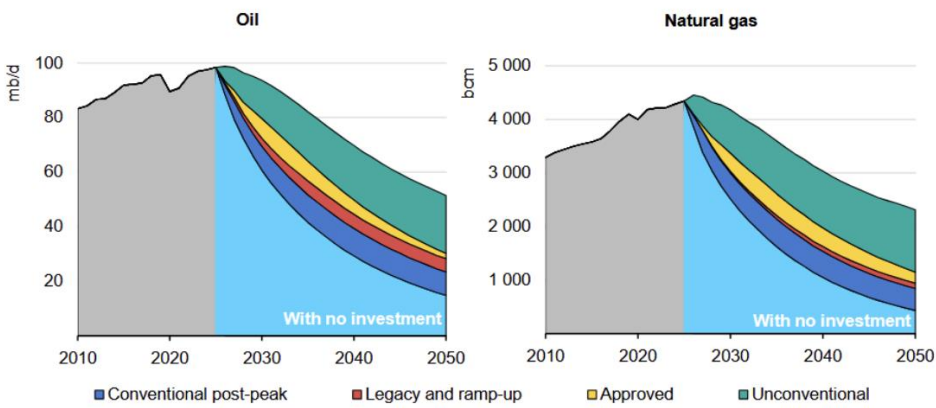
As we build our world we build our minds



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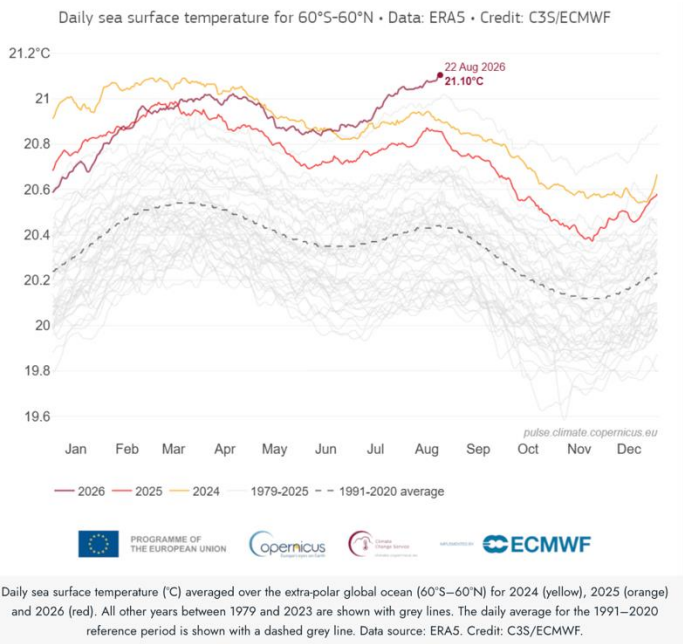
Deteriorating energy, climate, resource, and geopolitical conditions load interacting stresses onto highly connected, fragile global systems

Figure 40 Oil and natural gas production with no investment and additions from investment in existing and approved projects

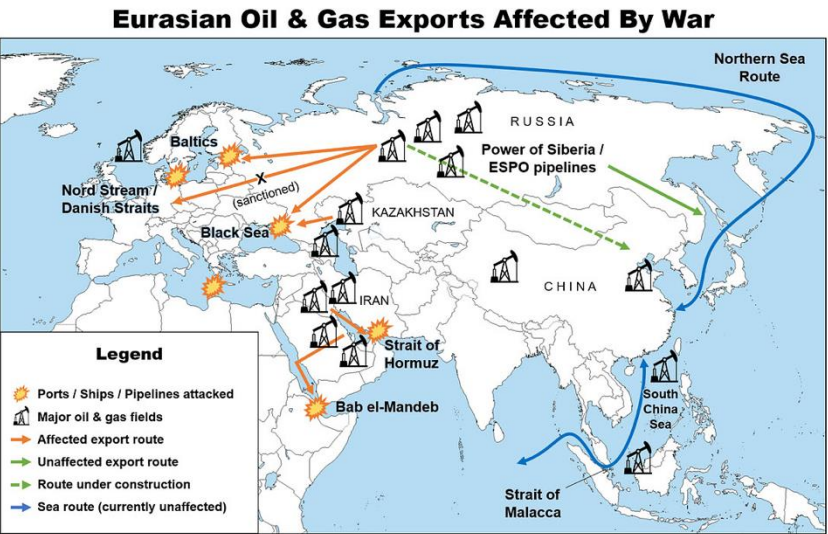


IEA. CC BY 4.0.

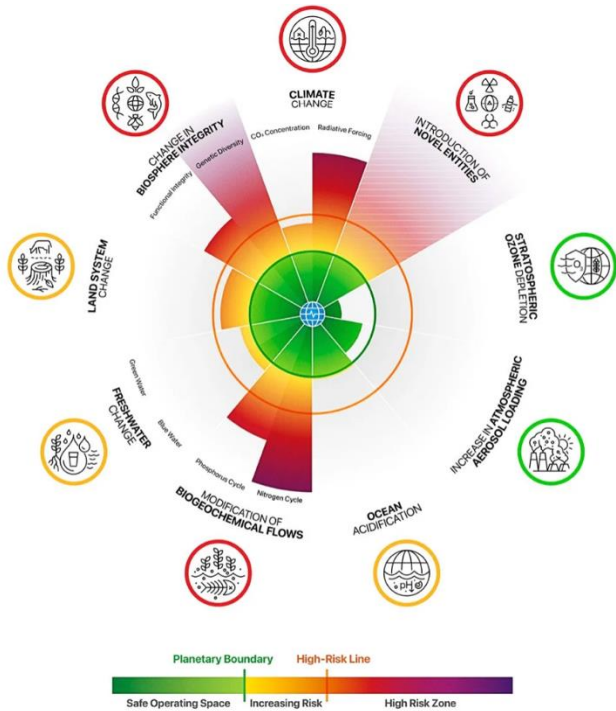
Source: IEA analysis based on data from Rystad Energy (2025).



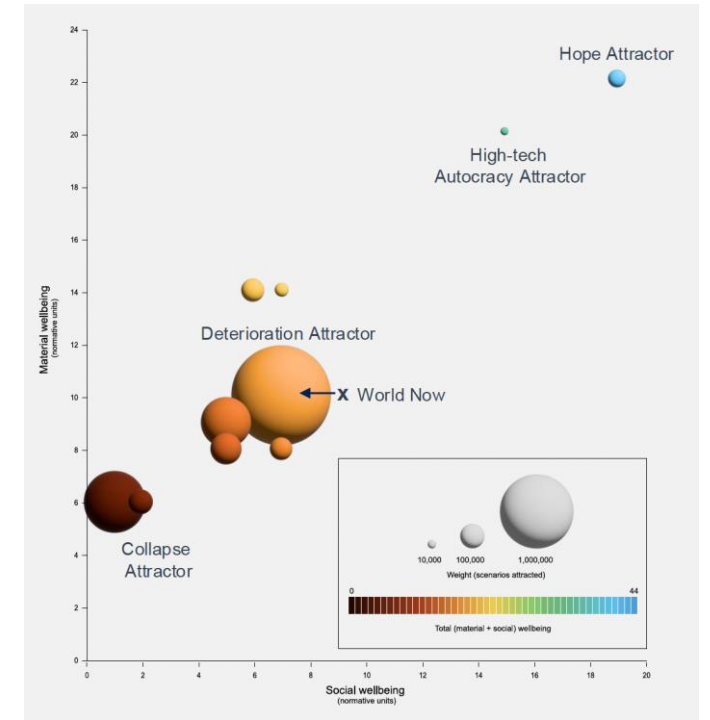
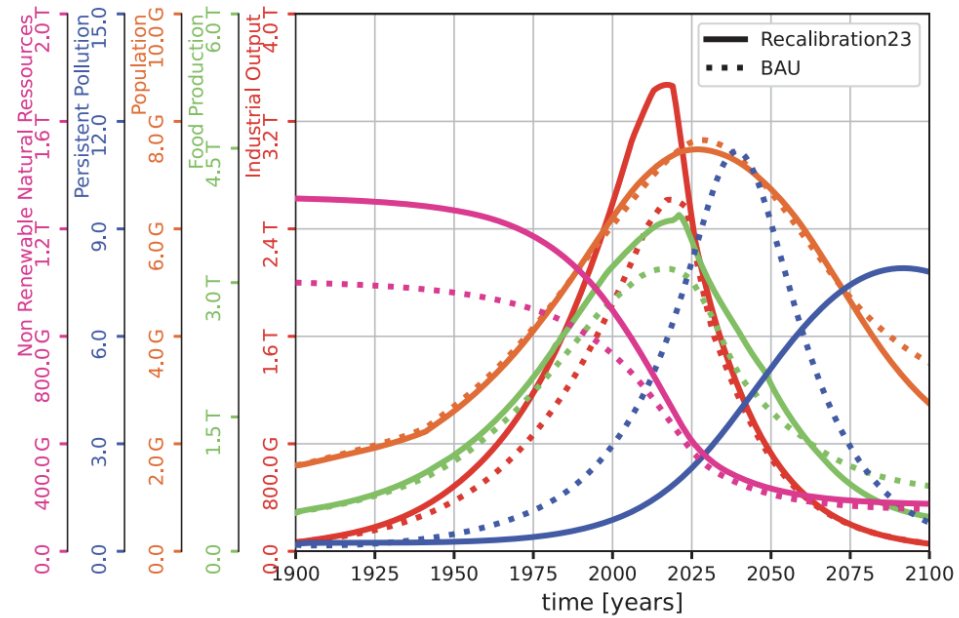
Daily sea surface temperature (°C) averaged over the extra-polar global ocean (60°S–60°N) for 2024 (yellow), 2025 (orange) and 2026 (red). All other years between 1979 and 2023 are shown with grey lines. The daily average for the 1991–2020 reference period is shown with a dashed grey line. Data source: ERA5. Credit: C3S/ECMWF.



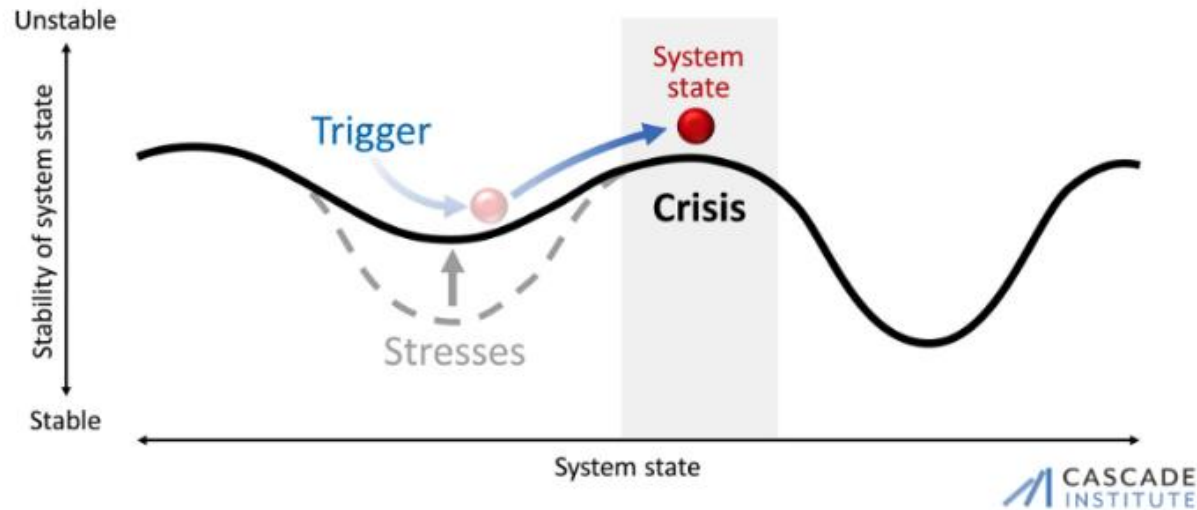
The cascading consequences of these processes and events threatens, and even makes likely, global systemic collapse



State of the World plot - BAU & Recalibration23

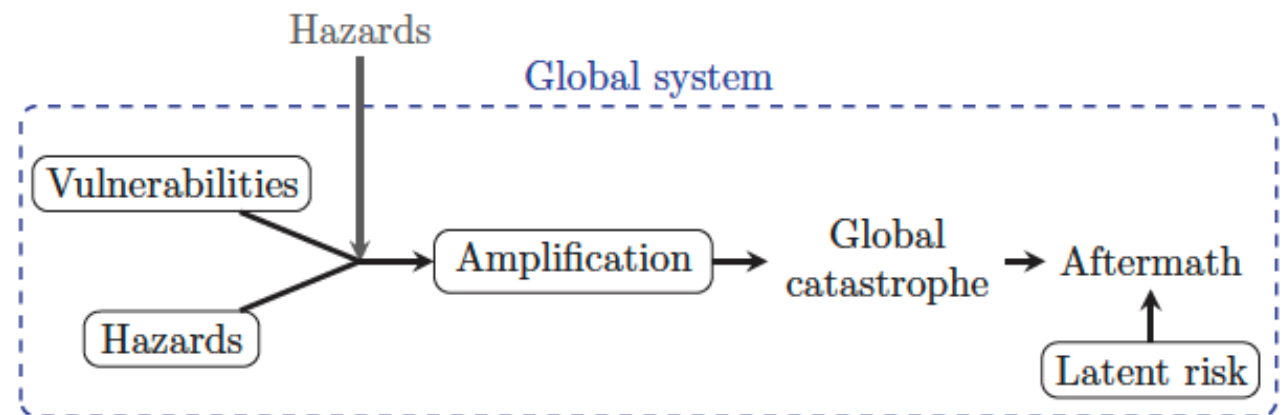


Under a stress–trigger–crisis dynamic, a single hazard or event can propagate through networks of food, transport, energy, and communication, causing harm far beyond its origin



Stresses gradually shallow a basin of attraction so that a trigger event can push the system out of equilibrium and into systemic crisis.

Figure credit: Cascade Institute's 'Stress-Trigger-Crisis' [model](#) (2024)



Arnscheidt et al 2025.

These processes could be accelerated, if triggers are large and abrupt



However, evidence suggests remote, island nations may escape direct harm in many catastrophe scenarios

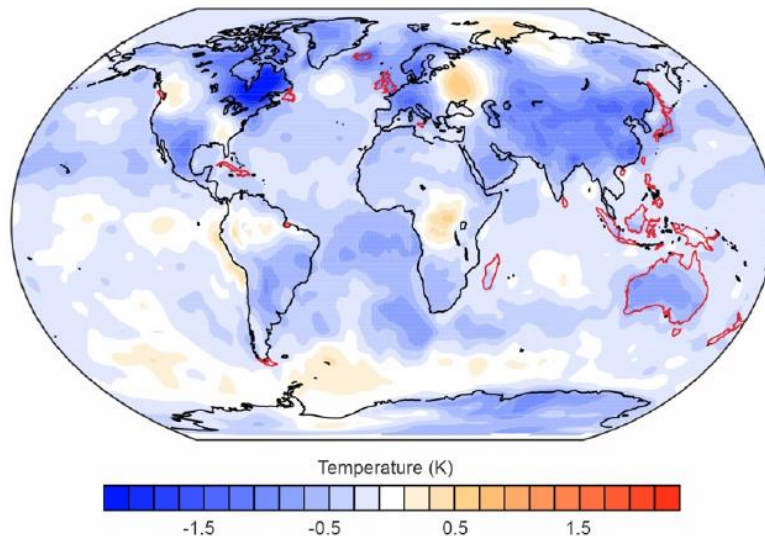
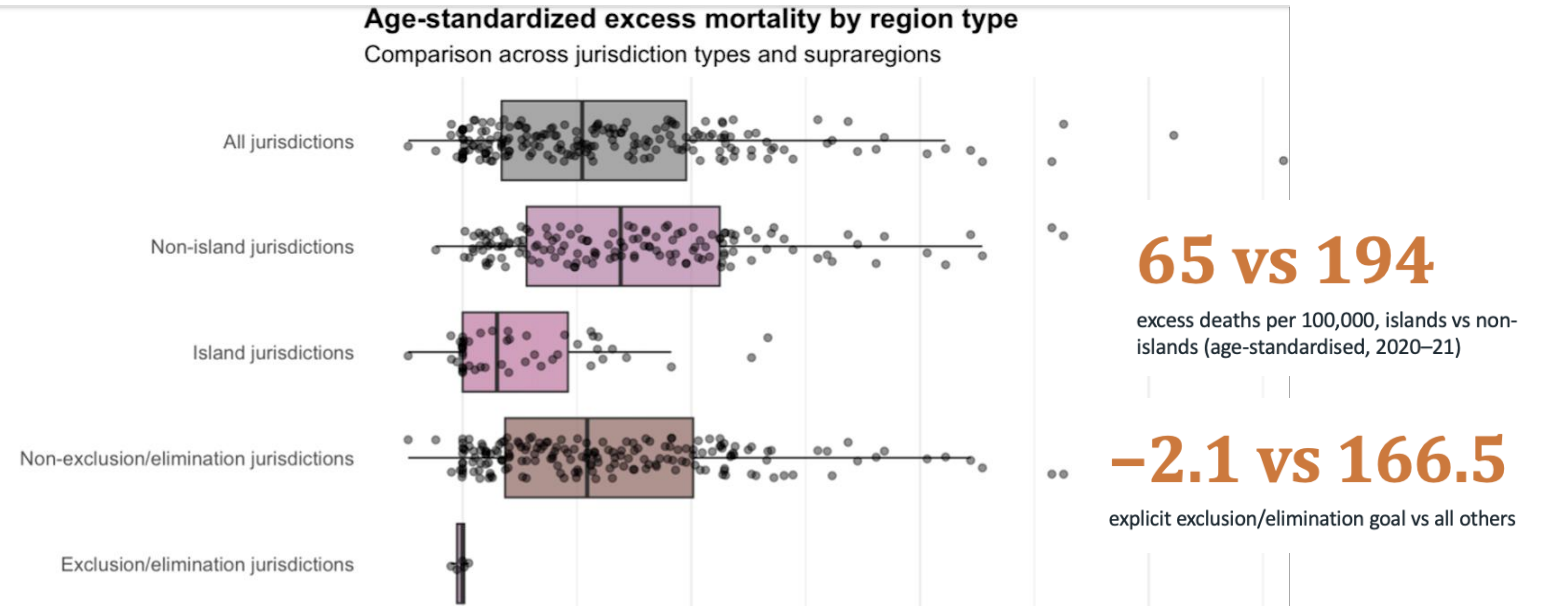
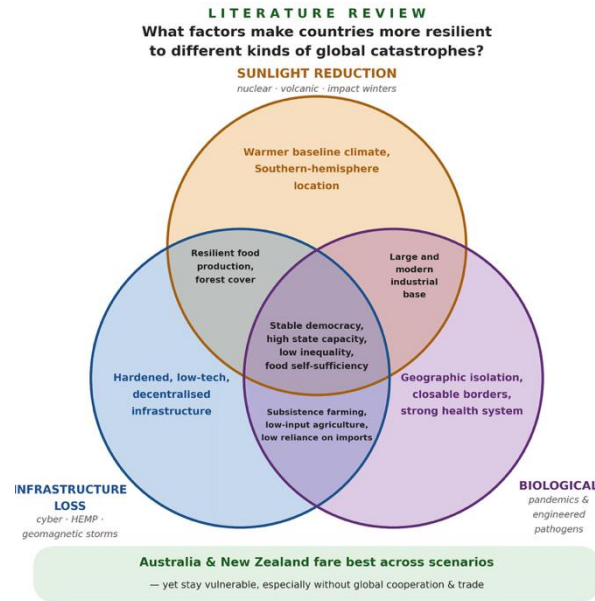
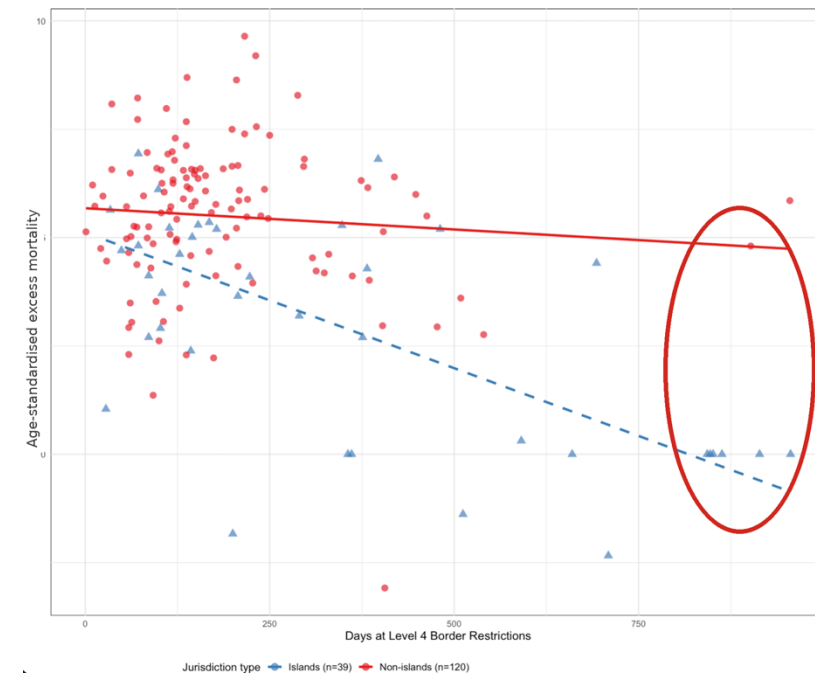


Figure 3

Reconstructed temperature anomalies in 1816 ("the year without a summer") relative to the "non-volcanic" reference period (1779 to 1808) using monthly data from the reconstruction EKF400v2

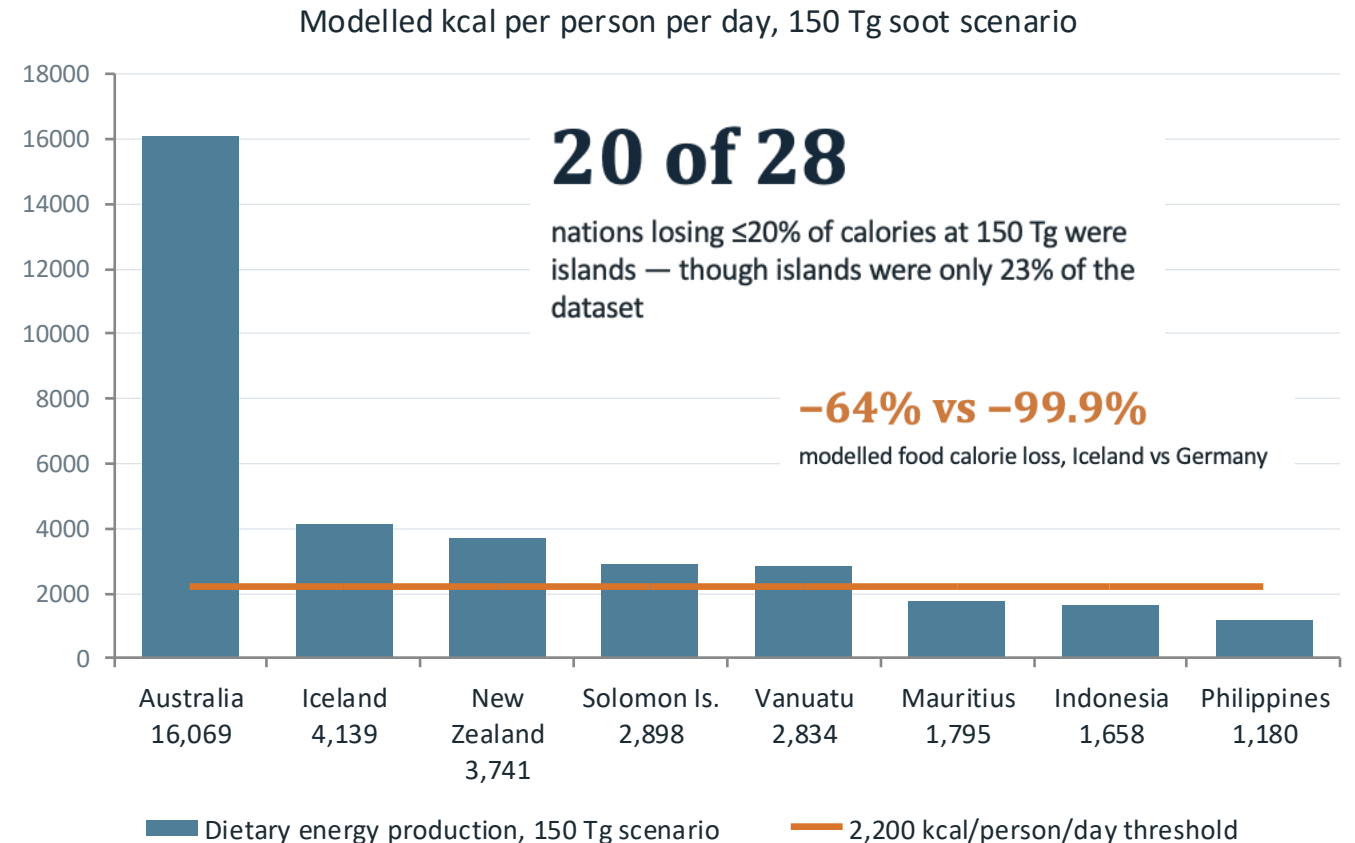


Clockwise from top:
Jehn et al. 2026; Boyd et al. 2025; Wilson et al. 2023; Boyd et al. 2025

BUT, trade-dependent island nations, are vulnerable even as they may escape direct hazard impact.
Energy shortages, low manufacturing, and sectoral interdependencies can drive failure of complex systems

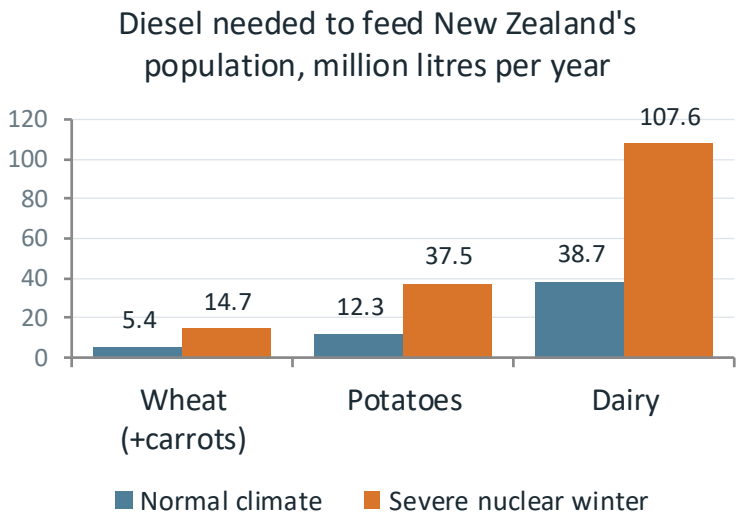
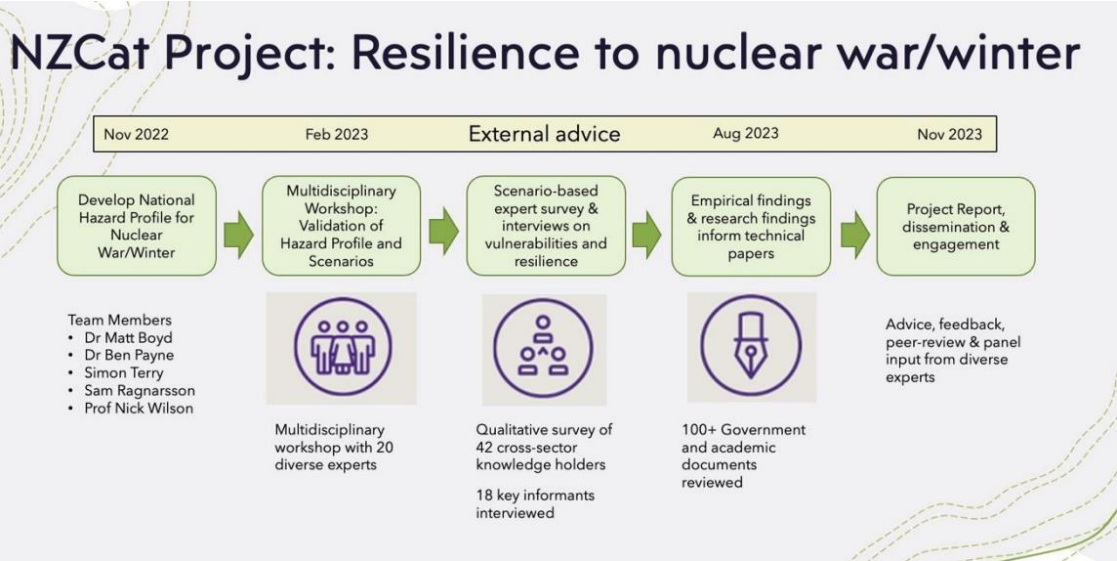


Dr Wren Green, ecologist and lead author, NZ Nuclear Impacts Study (1987).
Funded by French reparations for the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior.

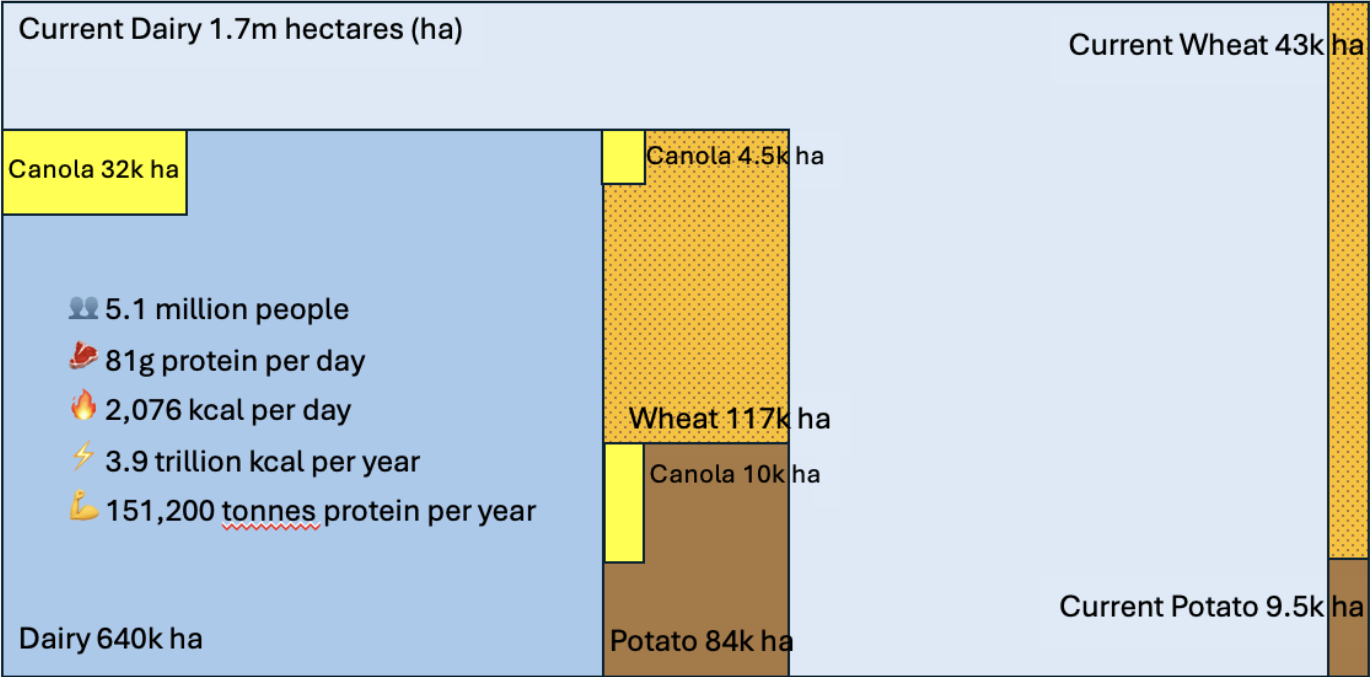
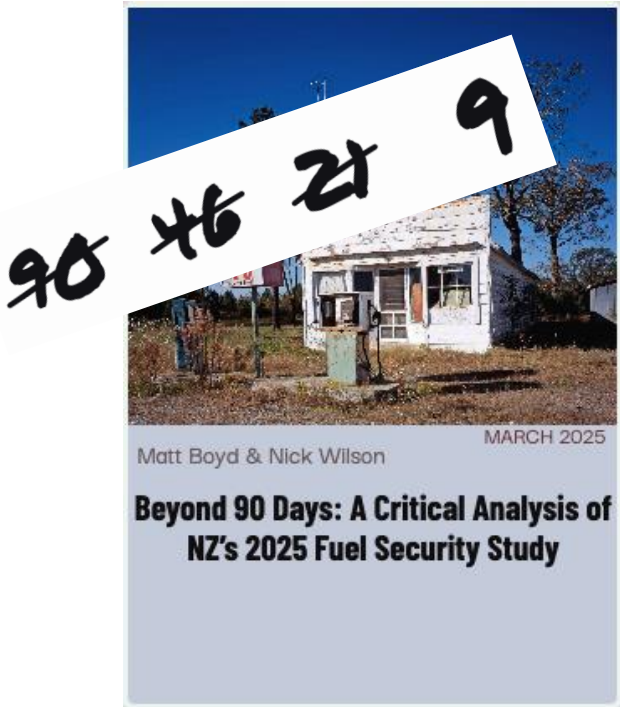


Data from Boyd & Wilson 2022

A robust hedge against global collapse is to leverage island advantages, while addressing vulnerabilities



Data from Boyd et al. 2024



Anticipatory governance of catastrophe: High state capacity

1

Global Catastrophic Risks in the national risk assessment

Move from a hazard register to a vulnerability & mitigation register organised around basic needs, with preparedness gaps made public. GCR lens: duration, external aid, ASRS & other scenarios

2

Basic needs in law; Plan B infrastructure

Food, water, fuel, transport, communications guaranteed indefinitely: local biofuel, an islandable grid, seed banks, backup comms, LLM inference, on-farm machinery, fishing, coastal shipping, payment systems

3

An independent commissioner

A Parliamentary Commissioner or Chief Risk Officer, insulated from the electoral cycle. Ensuring capability, monitoring & foresight, 'tipping points', three lines of defence

4

Citizens in the room

Trade-offs between resilience factors are value judgements: citizens' assemblies and deliberative forums, not technocracy alone. The public is ahead of institutions.

5

International regional cooperation

Pre-negotiated arrangements with neighbours (NZ–Australia–Pacific; Nordic bloc) on fuel, medicines, shipping and food AND the infrastructure to bring effect to agreements. Plan B for when Plan A & redundancy fail.

6

Scenario exercises to breaking point

Red-team trade isolation for a year, not 90 days. Find the point of breakdown, then design past it. Downward counterfactual analysis of past events.

56–63% of New Zealanders, across the political spectrum, support institutional reform to manage catastrophic risk.

Further research & information

www.adaptresearchwriting.com

- Blog
- Resilience Project (NZCat)

www.islandfutures.earth



Technical papers available here