Our economic and political institutions press us to take the short view. So does our culture: our calendars go out only one year. Would our psychology of time change if we adopted another measure?

As a thought experiment, imagine changing the basic unit from a year to millenium, which we could abbreviate as an M (pronounced “em”). Then we’d have the following system of units:

1 kiloM is a million years.

1 M is a thousand years.

1 deci-M is a century.

1 centi-M is a decade.

1 milli-M is a year.

1 micro-M is about 7 hours.

2100 is less than .09 M from now. It’ll be here before you know it!