Part II
Meta-Prospective: An Enhanced Approach for Strategic Prospective

The review about directions in the planning of scenarios done by Varum and Melo (2010) offers a panoramic view of the inference process to visualize futures. In their analysis, they consider the proposal of Eisenhardt (1999) as well as that of Chermack, Lynham, and Ruona (2001) on the development of methods and strategies to improve the understanding of the future, particularly in the corporate environment. They argue that the traditional approaches turned out to be insufficient in the face of the challenges posed by an environment increasingly immersed in an ocean of uncertainty, where islands of certainty are lacking. They highlight the need to have a process of strategic inference, which, apart from being able to anticipate and recognize changes, must have better capabilities to inform decision-makers in all the relevant domains. So, according to Van der Heijden (1996, 2004), the scenario-based inference process offers an alternative approach to traditional strategic planning, which focuses on developing a rational process whose main goal is to quickly identify "optimal" strategies. Therefore, even though the use of scenarios does not give an "exact" reading of the future, it does constitute a means to reflect on the uncertainties that must be faced.

In Varum and Melo's contributions to scenario planning (2010), they trace the idea of scenario planning back to the works of Kahn (1964). In addition to the developments in France via Pierre Wack, Schwartz, and Van der Heijden, who, by the mid-1970s, had become a source of inspiration for Michel Godet (Godet & Roubelat, 1996; Godet, Roubelat, Chapuy, & Monti, 1999) and his proposal of *la prospective*.

They say together with the proposal about scenario-based planning, there were other developments that argued for different approaches: From Godet's point of view (Godet & Roubelat, 1996), there is a "construction of strategic scenarios" that, following Bachelard (1936), is expressed as the ability to be ante-perceptive. From Andrea Martelli's perspective (Martelli, 2001), there is a process that explores the complexity of the environment to "speculate about uncertainty." Additionally, Varum and Melo (2010) argue in their literature review that during the 1975–2006 period, concerning scenario-based planning, 42.6% of the works were theoretical

research, 40.6% were empirical works, and 16.8% belonged to the realm of methodology research.

From the perspective of prospective thinking (Godet, 1986), the idea of scenarios provides a road to the strategic reflection that is genuinely oriented toward the future. It is like having the opportunity to create a suitable environment for mindful meditation that allows for the introduction of multiple future evidences from varied sources such as the extrapolation and anticipation of trends. This environment of reflection on the future helps, therefore, to the communication between communities of interest with an optimistic mindset toward the construction of futures to guide the conscious appreciation of certainties and early warnings, the elaboration of narratives and the appreciation and foretelling.

However, the approaches mentioned above are lacking in diversity considering the available literature. Therefore, according to Varum and Melo (2010), some better approaches could be those of Börjeson, Höjer, Dreborg, Ekvall, and Finnveden (2006) and Kosow and Gaßner (2008). The latter argue that scenario-based methods must increase their pertinence and coherence, no matter the intellectual trend in the field of Futures Studies they belong.

The literature found out five reasons: (1) the growing confusion in the use of scenario-based methods in multiple domains that demand some degree of adaptation according to the needs that must be met; (2) the wide variety of goals and functions to develop, considering the initial demands that were defined decades ago; (3) the epistemological and ontological perspective of schools of thought and paradigms, e.g., the French approach proposes the strategic prospective, the American approach proposes forecast, and the British approach proposes foresight; (4) the relative importance of scenario design in a research process which, of course, is determined by objectives and characteristics that have been outlined by those who have motivated the development of a Futures Study; and (5) what different approaches call scenarios, i.e., the ways that are used to label the idea of scenario.

The use of a scenario-based method, according to Godet (1990a, b; 2000), provides an opportunity to enable the construction of models that allow for a holistic understanding (perhaps postpositivist) of the future. There, deliberation, epistemological contributions, and the understanding of systemic behavior create an opportunity to "converse" about the future. It is therefore a stimulus for creativity, thanks to the seduction offered by a phenomenological Bachelardian understanding, where futuribles can identify the fluctuations that arise in the systems of interest during the research of futures. Based on the use of methods taken from Soft Computing, in the following chapter the teleological elements of Meta-Prospective will be introduced.

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