



SCENARIOS FOR GOOD

The Playbook

A practical guide to exploring plausible futures
- built on the Oxford Scenarios Planning Approach

NOVEMBER 2026

01

Introduction

What scenario planning is, where it comes from and why it matters NOW.

In a nutshell

Scenario planning is a disciplined method for exploring multiple plausible futures rather than predicting a single outcome.

It helps leaders think strategically when the world is too uncertain, too fast-moving, or too complex for traditional forecasting to be reliable.

Scenarios are learning tools - they help organisations see blind spots, challenge assumptions, and prepare for change.

“Scenarios are not about predicting the future - they are about preparing for it.”

Jacqueline Koay, Foresight Practitioner

A METHOD USED TO



Stretch thinking

Push strategic conversations beyond business-as-usual.



Reveal hidden risks

Surface exposures that single-point forecasts miss.



Identify emerging opportunities

Spot openings before they become obvious.



Support better long-term decisions

Test choices against several futures, not one.



Create shared language

Give teams a common vocabulary for strategy.

A brief history

COLD WAR ERA

Military strategy

Used to explore adversary behaviour under deep uncertainty, when data alone could not anticipate an opponent's moves.

1970s

Shell

Famously used scenarios to anticipate the oil shocks — transforming corporate strategy and proving the method's commercial value.

TODAY

Global policy & finance

Now widely used by central banks, governments and multilateral institutions to navigate structural change.

This lineage matters:

Scenarios were built for high-stakes, high-uncertainty environments - exactly the world we inhabit today.

How scenario planning differs from forecasting

FORECASTING

Tries to predict the single most likely future — and assigns probabilities to outcomes.

WHY PROBABILITIES MISLEAD

- Probability creates false confidence
- It hides low-probability, high-impact risks
- It blinds us to unknown unknowns
- It encourages linear thinking

SCENARIO PLANNING

Explores multiple plausible futures — and deliberately avoids probabilities.

WHAT IT DRAWS ON INSTEAD

Trend data

Early indicators

Structural drivers

Proximity analysis

Deductive logic

...to build futures that are plausible, challenging, and analytically grounded.

Why it matters now

We live in a TUNA environment:

T**Turbulent****U****Uncertain****N****Novel****A****Ambiguous**

Historical data is less predictive



Shocks are more frequent



Structural change is accelerating



Geopolitical & technological uncertainty is rising

In such conditions, forecasting alone is insufficient. **Scenario planning creates the space for strategic conversations that build preparedness, resilience, and imagination.**

TUNA – the future is unpredictable

On 22 February 2022, Al Jazeera published an analysis titled "No, Russia will not invade Ukraine."

Two days later, on 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

ambiguity

The UK has had four Prime Ministers in five years (2019–2024), signalling institutional turbulence and rapid leadership turnover.

unpredictable uncertainty

TUNA

turbulence

Silicon Valley Bank

8 March 2023, Silicon Valley Bank announced a capital raise.

48 hours later, on 10 March 2023, the bank had collapsed - the second-largest bank failure in US history.

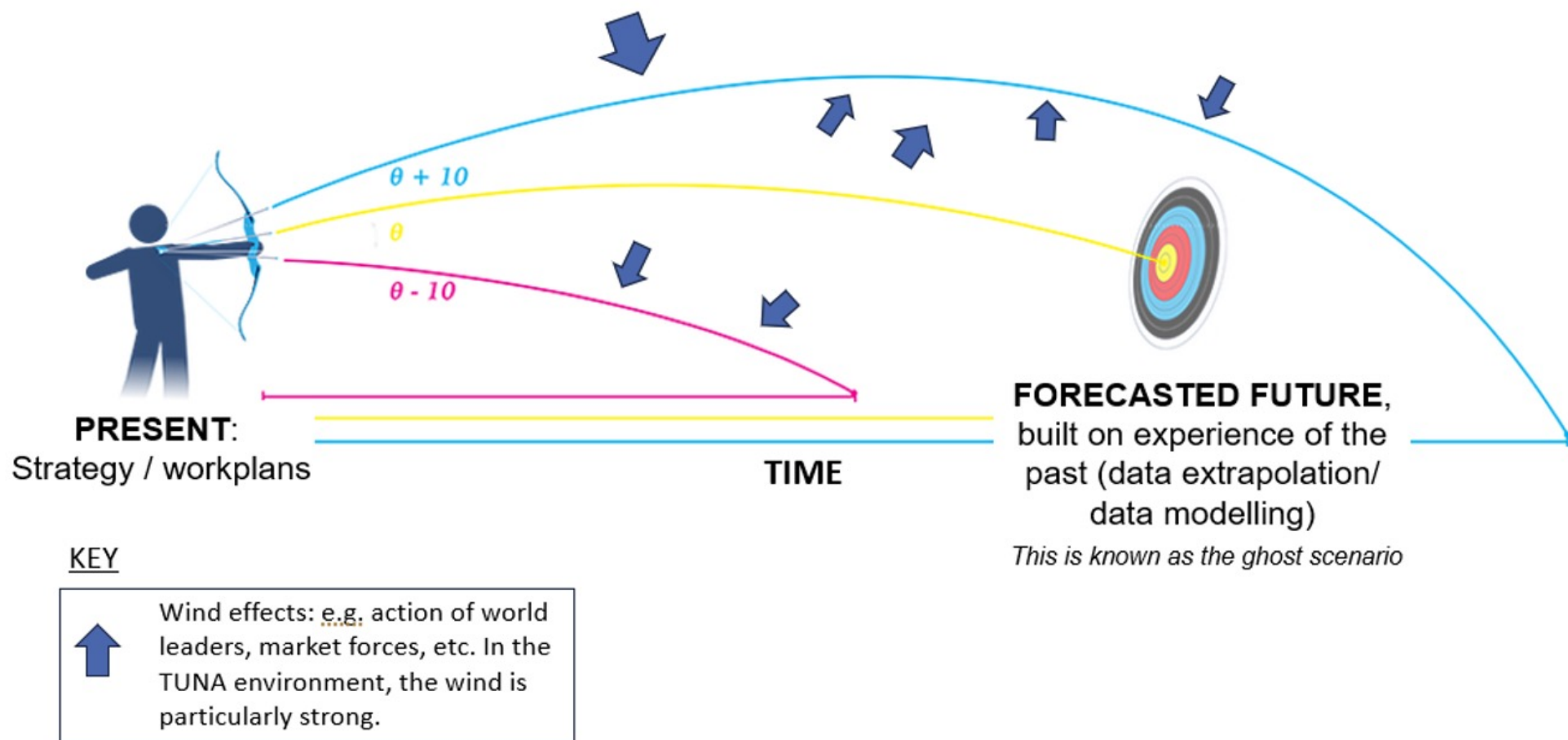
novelty

COVID:

From first WHO notification to global pandemic: 71 days.

From genome publication to first authorised vaccine: 11 months — the fastest in history.

The TUNA environment and why traditional ways don't really work



Economic volatility. Unexpected political events. Natural disasters. Disruptive innovations.

02

How to Use This Scenario

How to Turn This Scenario into Strategic Conversations

Exploring, Challenging and Learning from This Scenario

“Ellie and Amahle”

- At dawn, Ellie and Amahle wake thousands of miles apart, connected by the same global economy and shared family history yet living radically different lives, their expected trajectories reversed.

By 2050, technology has transformed work and care, but choices made in the 2020's about ownership, community, risk and resilience determine who thrives and who struggles.

Download the script [here](#)

Origins of “Ellie and Amahle”

1

Human-led

No AI in ideation; 10 participants across 3 continents and 9 industries co-created the scenarios. AI created the film.

2

Structured

We collided state of employment with isolationism/nationalism to manufacture a plausible future world in Year 2050.

3

Stress-tested

We worked with invited observers to **challenge assumptions, test plausibility and stretch our thinking**, ensuring the resulting scenario was both provocative and strategically useful.

The familiar that "Ellie and Amahle" challenges:

1. **South Africa supports Britain:** money flows from Amahle's household in South Africa to the British family that once employed her mother.
2. **The traditional migration story reverses:** opportunity draws people back to ancestral land rather than inevitably towards wealthy cities.
3. **Education does not guarantee security:** Ellie has a doctorate yet needs seven income streams simply to sustain her household.
4. **Globalisation democratises work but destroys protection:** talent can work anywhere, while workers compete with everyone.
5. **Technology advances while living standards deteriorate:** extraordinary AI and medical capabilities coexist with profound household insecurity.
6. **Longer life becomes a financial liability:** medical progress extends life, but the cost of elder care threatens family finances.
7. **Public services become private purchases:** healthcare, education and security cease to be assumed collective provisions.
8. **Children enter the labour market early:** AI-enabled education blurs the boundary between childhood, learning and earning.
9. **Technology enables survival rather than leisure:** robots and AI increase capability but do not necessarily give Ellie greater freedom or time.
10. **Rural South Africa becomes a global innovation hub:** cutting-edge climate businesses operate from ancestral land rather than metropolitan technology centres.
11. **Traditional knowledge becomes commercially valuable technology:** indigenous approaches combine with advanced materials and engineering.
12. **Community can outperform individual wealth:** Amahle accepts a lower sale price to protect local employment, skills and productive capacity.
13. **Shared ownership becomes competitive infrastructure:** community resources provide resilience that individual purchasing power alone cannot.
14. **Risk becomes the critical divide:** Ellie's household internalises illness, care and income shocks; Amahle's community distributes them.
15. **Climate adversity does not automatically mean economic decline:** severe heat and unreliable rainfall coexist with technological innovation and prosperity.
16. **The supposedly richer country may produce the more precarious life:** national GDP and technological sophistication cease to be good proxies for individual security.
17. **Care becomes economic infrastructure:** childcare, eldercare, healthcare and community support are not peripheral social issues but determinants of productivity and prosperity.
18. **Ownership matters as much as income:** access to technology is insufficient if households do not own productive assets, energy, land or businesses.
19. **Resilience is collective, not merely personal:** the scenario challenges the idea that individuals should simply become better at coping with systemic shocks.

The Strategic Conversations/Themes to Explore

T**Technological**

Technology transforms work, learning and care, but does not guarantee security or wellbeing. AI creates opportunity while intensifying competition, raising a deeper question: **will technology redistribute opportunity, or amplify existing inequalities?**

H**Health (and Care)**

Longer lives and better medicine bring new costs and responsibilities. As care becomes economic infrastructure and risk shifts towards households, the provocation is simple: **will healthier, longer lives also become less affordable?**

S**Societal**

Traditional assumptions about prosperity are reversed. Global dependence shifts, migration reverses and professional status no longer guarantees security. The scenario asks whether **individual wealth or collective resilience** will matter more in 2050.

Ellie and Amahle do not really ask us which future is better. They ask something harder: **who owns the future's opportunities, who carries its risks and who cares when things go wrong?**

The “So What?”

If Ellie and Amahle are both plausible, what choices are we making today that might determine whose 2050 we create? What are we doing/not doing today to ensure that we won't regret our tomorrows?

Q1 Who owns the upside?
If technology creates extraordinary productivity, who ultimately captures the value?

Q2 Who carries the risk?
What happens when employment, healthcare and care costs increasingly shift from institutions to individuals?

Q3 Does technology liberate or intensify?
Could AI make us more capable, yet leave us working harder and feeling less secure?

Q4 Could global fortunes reverse?
What if prosperity and dependence no longer follow familiar Global North–South assumptions?

Q5 Is health becoming economic infrastructure?
If we live longer, who pays for those additional years, and what does that mean for women's participation in work?

Q6 What actually makes us resilient?
In 2050, will resilience come primarily from individual wealth and technology, or from **community, shared ownership and collective risk?**

ANNEX 1

How we built our scenarios

Our methodology, and what it gives you.

Building the Driver & Uncertainty Library (trends and factors)

How We Built the Library

We created our driver library and critical-uncertainty shortlist by **crowdsourcing insights from 10 practitioners across three continents**, representing diverse industries, policy domains, and academic backgrounds. This breadth ensures that our scenario foundations reflect multiple vantage points — a core principle of the **Oxford Scenarios Planning Approach**.

What We Built

1

Driver Library

Structural forces shaping the decade ahead (demographics, technology, social norms, geopolitics, health & care systems).

2

Critical Uncertainties

High-impact, high-uncertainty forces that differentiate plausible futures (AI disruption, fiscal constraints, labour-market shifts, global instability)

3

Structural Forces

Deep, slow-moving drivers that anchor long-term futures (values, institutions, demographic transitions, productivity dynamics).

Our methodology

Using the Oxford Scenarios Planning Approach framework

1

Crowdsourced trends

Gathered signals and trends from a diverse group of participants.

2

Deductive-based approach

Trend-led deductive structuring: collided two observed trends, explored the consequences of their interaction, and built a plausible but deliberately stretching future around them.

3

Tested scenario logics

Challenged each logic in a mixed group for coherence and rigour.

4

Built futures for Year 2036

Developed a set of distinct, plausible futures for Year 2036.

WHAT THIS GIVES YOU



A disciplined framework



A plausible future



A shared language for strategic dialogue



A tool for stress-testing decisions

Inductive Method: Building from Trends

We used an **inductive approach**, starting not from theory but from **real-world signals** gathered across sectors, geographies, and disciplines. Ten contributors from **three continents** provided trend inputs reflecting their lived experience, industry knowledge and policy insight.

How We Built the Foundations

- **Crowdsourced trends** from practitioners in finance, policy, academia, technology, health, and industry
- **Clustered signals** into coherent themes
- **Identified emerging patterns** across geographies and sectors
- **Derived structural drivers** from repeated, persistent trends
- **Surfaced critical uncertainties** from volatile, contested, or divergent signals
- **Built the scenario space inductively**, letting the data shape the architecture rather than imposing a pre-determined frame

Why Inductive Method Matters

The inductive approach ensures the scenario foundations are:

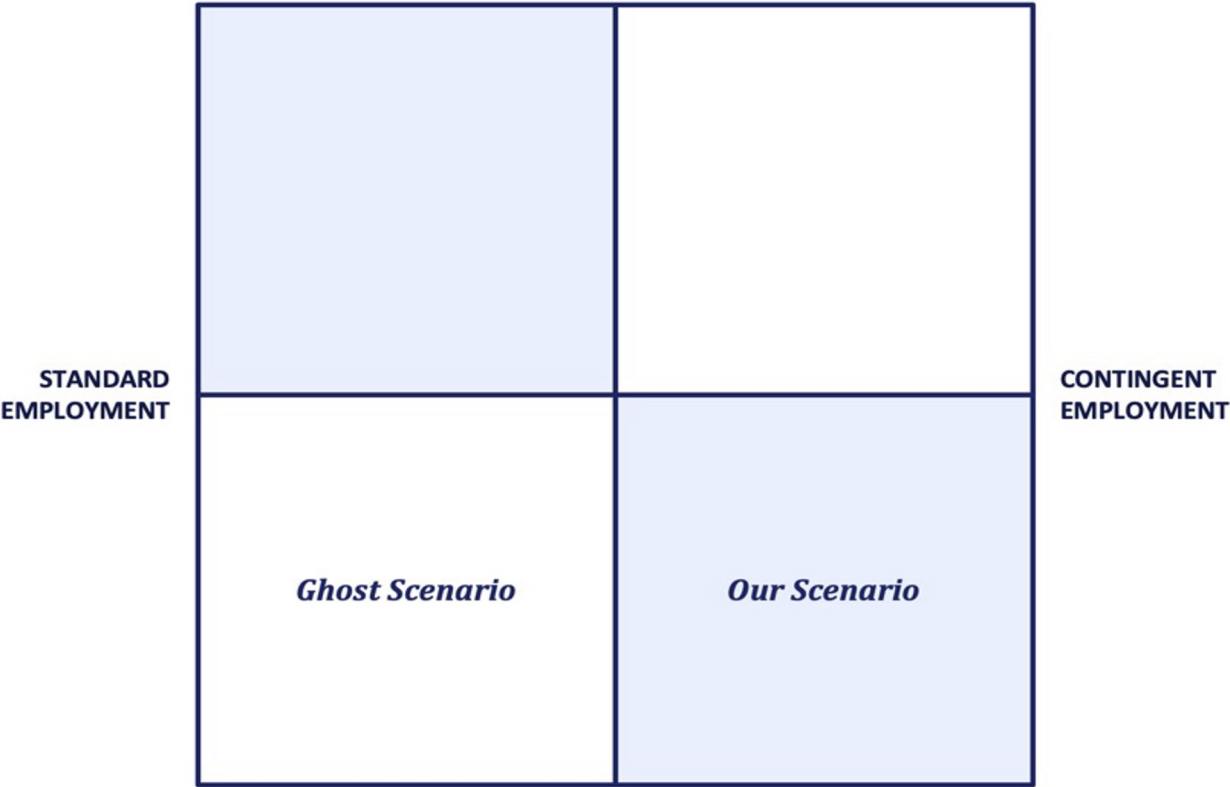
- **Grounded in lived reality**, not abstract theory
- **Inclusive of diverse perspectives**
- **Sensitive to weak signals** that traditional analysis overlooks
- **Aligned with OSPA**, which values plurality, challenge, and collective intelligence
- **Robust enough** to support deductive structuring in later stages

Ellie & Amahle

Scenario Framework & Assumptions

ISOLATIONISM/ NATIONALISM

(open markets)



Assumptions our scenario challenges

- 1** Data privacy stays fiercely protected — by individuals and by UK/EU regulation — and existing protections are trusted to hold.
- 2** Employment stays largely “standard”: AI reshapes roles more than it grows the gig economy.
- 3** Self-employment remains the default for platform work, underpinned by regulation such as the Employment Rights Act; social media stays an open route to market.
- 4** Government protects the corporate tax base and the employment status quo, as gig/cross-border work is harder to tax and public funding is under pressure.
- 5** AI lifts solo-worker productivity and grows demand for oversight/verification faster than it destroys routine tasks; expert roles (e.g. “the economist”) stay valued.
- 6** Digital infrastructure is universal, and cross-border digital services remain lightly regulated.
- 7** Working from home is the norm, generally easing women's path to full-time work and career progression — though its effect on sectors' gender mix is unclear.
- 8** The gender pay gap persists, with women still clustered in less financially rewarding sectors.
- 9** Labour participation is dampened by health issues (especially mental health) and continued climate stress.
- 10** Formal care exists but is costly; a migrant care workforce continues to cover domestic demand.

INTERNATIONALISM (Open Markets)

ANNEX 3

Going Deeper into the Scenario

Go deeper: Explore the assumptions, provocations and strategic implications beneath the story.

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The Focal Statement for ELLIE & AMAHLE Scenario

01

The Focal Statement anchors the entire scenario process.

It defines the strategic question, the users and the decision horizon. Clarity at this stage is essential: it ensures that every scenario is built around a real dilemma faced by real decision-makers. For Scenarios for Good's *Ellie & Amahle* scenario, the focal issue centres on the long-term futures shaping women's economic participation and wellbeing in the year 2036 - a domain marked by uncertainty, structural change and profound policy significance. This framing guides the deductive logic, the uncertainties we explore, and the strategic conversations the scenarios are designed to support.

Focal Issue — Drivers shaping women's economic participation and wellbeing in the Year 2036

[Strategic Users]

Economists
Policy leaders
Decision-makers

[Decision Horizon]

2026–2036
Structural change
Long-term choices

[Core Dilemmas]

Participation
Productivity
Care systems
Economic agency

[Structural Drivers]

Demographics
Technology
Social norms
Health & care

[Critical Uncertainties]

Tech disruption
Geopolitics
Fiscal pressure
Labour shifts

[Scenario Purpose]

Illuminate choices
Challenge assumptions
Support policy design

[Scope & Boundaries]

2036 futures with global influences
Structural, not short-term forecasting

Enter the future world

02

Start by placing yourself inside the scenario:

- Imagine waking up in that future.
- Picture the social, economic, technological and political environment around you.
- Consider what feels familiar — and what feels strange.
- Notice what is absent: what has faded, collapsed, or become irrelevant.
- **But keep focused on the Focal Statement (previous slide).**

This is scenario immersion as a cognitive shift: ***you are not analysing the future from today — you are experiencing today from the future.***

TEMPORARILY SET ASIDE

- Current constraints
- Current policies
- Current organisational priorities
- Current assumptions about what is “normal”

This exercise trains mental flexibility. The present is only one of many possible reference points.

Immerse yourself in the scenario

03

Immersion is the most important part of scenario work - it is where scenarios stop being documents and start becoming thinking tools. It means treating each scenario as if it were real, not hypothetical: the disciplined act of stepping into a future world and letting it challenge your assumptions, expectations and mental models.

HOW TO IMMERSE



Immerse yourself in the scenario as if it were real, as if you are living in it



Step into the mindset of people living in that future



Notice what feels familiar vs unfamiliar

SCENARIOS ARE NOT PREDICTIONS

They are plausible futures. Immersion means:

- Not judging whether a scenario is “likely”
- Not trying to assign probabilities
- Not dismissing futures that feel uncomfortable

***Probability creates blind spots.
Plausibility opens imagination.***

Explore the logic of the scenario

Every scenario has an internal logic — a coherent chain of cause and effect. Ask yourself:

Q1 What forces shaped this world?

Q2 What decisions accelerated or slowed change?

Q3 What structural shifts underpin this future?

Q4 What tensions or contradictions exist within it?

This is where deductive reasoning meets imagination.

Engage with the questions

Each scenario comes with reflective prompts. Use them to deepen immersion:

- 1 What opportunities emerge in this world?
- 2 What risks become visible only from this vantage point?
- 3 What assumptions from today break?
- 4 What early indicators would signal this future is unfolding?
- 5 What capabilities would your organisation need?

These questions turn immersion into strategic conversation.

Move between scenarios

Scenario planning is not about choosing a favourite scenario. It is about moving fluidly between futures.



Compare

How do your decisions play out across different worlds?



Notice

Which strategies are robust, fragile or conditional?



Identify

Cross-scenario insights - patterns that matter everywhere.

This is the heart of scenario-based preparedness – use more than one scenario.

Return to the present with new eyes

The purpose of scenario work is not escapism - **it is transformation.**

WHEN YOU RETURN TO THE PRESENT

Your assumptions should feel less fixed

Your strategic options should feel broader

Your sense of preparedness should feel sharper

Your conversations should feel more future-literate

Scenario planning, horizon scanning and strategic foresight change how you see today.

ANNEX 3

PREPARATION FOR FACILITATING A WORKSHOP

Instructions for Facilitators (Workshop Purpose)

01

Scenario discussions are not about getting answers. They help users ask better questions, build social capital, and strengthen preparedness:

- 1 Create a safe space for strategic conversation. Ideally, prepare participants before the workshop with a warm, pre-workshop welcome email that lays the foundation (purpose of the session).
- 2 Encourage curiosity, challenge and plurality during the session. Stress from the outset that there is no wrong view.
- 3 Shift focus from “What will happen?” to “What could happen?”
- 4 What early indicators would signal this future is unfolding?
- 5 Help participants see today from the vantage point of multiple futures.
- 6 Build shared language and collective intelligence.
- 7 Strengthen preparedness through dialogue, not prediction.

Running Scenario Workshops

02

Scenario discussions are not about getting answers. They help users ask better questions, build social capital, and strengthen preparedness:

- 1 Begin with the **focal issue** (refer to earlier section).
- 2 Introduce the scenario set without implying likelihood.
- 3 Guide participants through immersion before analysis.
- 4 Use structured prompts to deepen exploration. Prepare these beforehand (based on the areas you would like the participants to explore). And let the participants do the talking.
- 5 Close by returning to the present with new eyes.

Managing Disagreement

03

Scenario discussions are not about getting answers. They help users ask better questions, build social capital, and strengthen preparedness:

- 1 Treat disagreement as data, not conflict.
- 2 Surface assumptions behind each viewpoint.
- 3 Use mental-model challenges (see previous section) to reveal hidden frames.
- 4 Use structured prompts to deepen exploration. Prepare these beforehand (based on the areas you would like the participants to explore). And let the participants do the talking.
- 5 Encourage participants to articulate why a scenario feels uncomfortable.
- 6 Redirect from “right vs wrong” to “what this reveals”.
- 7 **Protect minority perspectives - they often contain weak signals.**

Deriving Strategic Options

Scenario discussions are not about getting answers. They help users ask better questions, build social capital, and strengthen preparedness:

1 Identify opportunities visible only in certain futures

2 Surface risks that appear only from specific vantage points

3 Map organisational capabilities needed across scenarios

4 Develop options that are:

- Robust (work in all futures)
- Fragile (fail in many futures)
- Conditional (depend on specific futures)

Reframing and Re-perception

Strategic foresight is fundamentally about **changing how people see the present**. Reframing helps leaders loosen fixed assumptions, see blind spots, and recognise alternative strategic possibilities.



Reframing Exercises

These exercises support strategic reframing and open new strategic options.

Use structured prompts to shift perspective:

- “What becomes visible only from this future?”
- “What breaks if we assume the opposite of today’s norm?”
- “What if this constraint no longer exists?”



Mental-Model Challenges

This strengthens mental-model awareness

Expose hidden assumptions by asking:

- “What are we taking for granted?”
- “What would surprise us if it changed?”
- “Whose perspective is missing?”



Flip Tests

Flip tests reveal non-obvious futures and challenge linear thinking.

Flip a dominant assumption to test its strategic implications:

- If today’s trend reverses
- If today’s certainty becomes uncertain
- If today’s constraint becomes a capability

Having strategic conversations using the above suggestions enables new ways of seeing the present, provides broader strategic options, facilitates deeper scenario immersion and promotes more future-literate conversations

Embedding Scenarios in Governance

06

Scenario discussions are not about getting answers. They help users ask better questions, build social capital, and strengthen preparedness:

- 1 Define decision rights for scenario use.
- 2 Integrate scenarios into annual strategy cycles.
- 3 Refresh scenarios every 18–24 months
- 4 Use scenarios to guide capital allocation, risk management, and policy design.
- 5 Ensure leadership teams remain future-literate.
- 6 Align with internal guidance on board-level foresight.



Who we are

A collaborative initiative from the Oxford Scenarios Programme (Spring 2026), facilitated by Dr Jacqueline Koay - dedicated to producing rigorous scenario work for the public good.

For team profiles, visit www.scenariosforgood.com.



JACQUELINE KOAY (Facilitator) is a foresight practitioner and facilitator of the Oxford Scenarios Planning Approach Programme. A former investment banker and fund manager, she is the author of nine books and Founder/CEO of an Oxford University Innovation start-up, SOFIAA Health. Jacqueline holds a doctorate from Oxford, has published in peer-reviewed journals, and is now pursuing her second doctorate in quantum physics. Her latest book is *Nine Essential Lessons in Quantum*. Jacqueline's work sits at the intersection of strategic foresight, science and public good. Jacqueline is based in London, UK
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STELLA T. OPAKAS is a Kenyan who has worked in the extractive sector value chain industry for twenty years, garnering experience from industry to government. A chemical engineer who currently works for the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority in Kenya. She is an active member of the Association of Women in Extractives Kenya (AWEIK) and currently serves as the vice chair, with the aim of promoting discussions in the extractives space which may create opportunities for scalable economic growth for women and society. Stella is an alumni of OSPA and is currently trying her hands in dryland farming. sopakas@gmail.com



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ZAHRA KASSAM is an innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership specialist, with a background in urban planning and design and finance. Zahra set up an award-winning start up, building a company of a multi-disciplinary team, with local and international partners and developing best practices in East Africa. Her projects have changed public policy and influenced the new Habitat Agenda set at Habitat III in 2016. As an innovation expert, she has also supported start-ups and changemakers to realize change and bring innovation across Africa, specifically in East and the Horn of Africa, Sub Saharan and West Africa.

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Rationale for this work

Scenarios for Good emerged from the Oxford Scenarios Programme (Spring 2026), where a diverse cohort of practitioners, strategists, and leaders came together under the facilitation of Dr Jacqueline Koay to explore how scenario thinking could serve the public good.

The group recognised that the world is entering a period of profound uncertainty - geopolitical, technological, demographic, environmental - and that policymakers and decision-makers need tools that help them think more clearly, act more wisely, and prepare more effectively for what lies ahead.

From this, Scenarios for Good was born: a collaborative initiative dedicated to producing rigorous, Oxford-style scenarios for real users facing real strategic challenges.

Disclaimer: The scenario is for strategic conversations, not investment decisions.

www.scenariosforgood.com

“How can we make high-quality scenario work accessible to those shaping critical decisions?”

— the question that started the project

FIRST CYCLE USERS

UK Women in Economics Network

Senior economists and policy leaders working on labour-market participation, productivity, health, and long-term economic strategy for women.



Scenarios for Good

Strategic Foresight for Public Benefit