

FORESIGHT CITY/REGION 3.0 – SCENARIO THINKING

This interactive session of the [Collaboratorium](#) (*'Laboratory for collective intelligence'*), explores how **Foresight-3.0** principles can enhance the *collective strategic intelligence* of cities and regions. With the added challenge / opportunity of the pandemic, we explore 3 critical questions –

- How would a **Foresight 3.0** level of *collective strategic intelligence* work in your city / region?
- What can we learn from the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What pathways can move from current city / region governance systems towards a **Foresight 3.0** model?
- Also... which examples can we learn from & how to take it forward?

In Part 1 we discuss new perspectives and examples: in the part 2 interactive, we explore the case study of the UK Future Cities foresight, and develop / test the pathways from 'smart to wise'.

Also, a near future scenario is proposed here to generate some 'out-of-box' creative thinking – speakers and participants are invited to explore and critique...

CASE STUDY – FORESIGHT CITY/REGION 3.0

This case study builds on a large UK national foresight on the Future of Cities - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/future-of-cities>

In this case, a wide range of excellent work was put together. However - the results were not fully taken on at the national policy level, and the recommendations for city / regional foresight practices were rarely followed up at the local level.

Meanwhile the need is ever greater, for cities and territories to anticipate & envision possible futures, build capacities on the ground, and make long-range plans which are resilient and transformative.

The case study is a work in progress with the online whiteboard: [collaboratorium-foresight-cities-3.0](#)

In the Part 2 interactive session, we will move the discussion to this whiteboard, and invite your best ideas, on practical ways to realize the potential of a Foresight 3.0

Firstly here are summary notes on the main features of a **Foresight city/region 3.0...**

SUMMARY NOTES - URBAN CO-EVOLUTION

It seems different levels of foresight work with different frames of problems & solutions. The synergistic method helps to map these in a typical city / region:

- **Mode-I or foresight 1.0** – frames problems as basically short-term functional, and looks for ways to fix them. (e.g. *where to put 5000 houses*)
- **Mode-II or foresight 2.0** – frames the future as an evolutionary extension of the present: looks for competition, innovation, incentives. (e.g. *how to improve the values of 5000 houses*);
- **Mode-III or foresight 3.0** – frames & envision the future as a co-evolutionary transformation: looks for insight, emergence, collaboration & collective intelligence. (e.g. *how to enable a liveable community to emerge, which includes 5000 houses*).

SUMMARY NOTES - PATHWAYS

From the follow up to the UK Future of Cities foresight, 3 types of pathways have been explored: and each of these can be turned into practical detail.

Fore-city 3.0 'co-futures' pathways :

Enhanced scanning, whole systems analysis, '*collective anticipatory intelligence*'.
Co-envisioning, transition pathways, road mapping, strategic planning.

Fore-city-3.0 'smart-wise' pathways:

Data analytics with '*Collective human artificial intelligence*'.
Active platforms for integrated 'Local-onomic' synergies.

Fore-city-3.0 'co-governance' pathways:

Multi-level round table open-co-governance models.
Network & mobilize grassroots / social innovations.

SUMMARY NOTES – REALITY CHECKS

From experience with many cities and regions there are common gaps and barriers -

- Political power and conflict: foresight practice is easily used as a political football, hijacked, ignored or side-lined;
- Institutional lock-in, split incentives, translation gaps between many different sectors;
- Simple complexity of cities and regions, which just about work in functional terms, with little room for thinking beyond today's material problem;
- Gaps and misunderstandings between practitioners and foresight experts / consultants etc;
- Challenges of multi-scalar governance with few clear boundaries between local national and global
- Challenges of multi-horizon planning, between short term action and long term strategy
- If foresight 3.0 is about transformation, there are many different view on which version of transformation, and the pathways towards it.

SCENARIO THINKING

Scenario thinking and planning is at the heart of the foresight approach... so we invite speakers & participants to explore this example vignette as a near future possibility (summary below and further narrative in the Annex).

“Foresight-3.0 in cities and regions by 2040 is done mainly through Massive Multiagent Online Scenario Appraisal Colloquies (MOSAICs), featuring:

- *Personas – opportunities to interact as one’s own future self, or to assume some other identity..*
- *Natural and artificial environments, buildings and townscapes, interiors of workplaces and homes, venues for recreation, meetings, etc.*
- *VR, AR and screen-based (with assistive technology for those with sight/hearing/haptic impairments).*
- *Games with challenges, competitions and collaborations, ranging from economic activities to physical feats.*
- *Opportunities to interact with others and/or AI agents. (Opportunities to program own agents, but with restrictions preventing participants from creating swarms of bots outwith specific locales)*
- *Narratives dramatizing both common and unusual vignettes.*
- *Access to scoreboards, dashboards, summary indicators and assessment of personal status.*
- *Opportunities to vote, rank, choose options, propose new criteria, policies and strategies.*

The key functions of urban-regional policy – spatial planning, public services, democratic process etc, start to merge with a wider spectrum – fun and entertainment, personal development, artistic creation and social contact, political movements and organising of physical / virtual action.

This points to an interesting range of possibilities –

- ***spatial planning*** & urban design: digital twins for scenario & future studies
- ***urban governance*** and democratic process: big data, real time polling, sentiment analysis
- ***infrastructure*** development: scanning & integrated systems modelling
- ***public services & social policy***: integrated service value chain planning
- ***environmental agendas***: strategic transformation linked with short term incentives
- ***economic development***: dynamic platforms for entrepreneurs & opportunities...

The question is then ‘what could possibly go wrong – or at least be unforeseen??’

What would be the implications for a Foresight 3.0 program?

ANNEX - SCENARIO NARRATIVE

(contribution from Ian Miles)

A tech billionaire has died. His investments in life-extension treatments have not paid off fast enough. So his will comes into play, and that instructs that much of his fortune should be entrusted to special organisation to manage. Though for legal reasons this has to be officially run by people, those appointed to do so are mandated to follow the instructions of an AI agent. This has been trained by the billionaire to emulate his decision making patterns and sentiments as much as possible, though there is scope for machine learning and evolution of these capabilities. (It is ambiguous as to whether the agent can deliberately modify its own operations, effectively choosing to diverge from its human template.) Other parts of his fortune go into advanced AI research, and the agent is empowered to decide what further capabilities it might acquire from the developments in leading-edge research. Family members contest the will, of course, as do some public interest groups, but they fail to succeed in overturning it. The Agency prospers, and the agent itself is able to communicate with whomsoever it chooses via a virtual avatar.

Rather less elaborate versions of this practice of establishing a posthumous agent become quite widespread in various communities (e.g. transhumanists). Some families and social groups remain guided by their deceased elders' agents, which makes for some interest when the advice and instructions they receive from these sources diverges.

Another result is a growing body of financial resources controlled by effectively autonomous AIs – some of whom, sharing many values, decide to join forces. Conspiracy theorists talk of a cyber-illuminati, and several efforts are made to destroy servers physically, and to hack into the systems maintaining them - mostly to little avail. (Some of those responsible have allegedly come to mysterious ends, but that's conspiracy theorists for you.) But more substantially, there has been growing concern about the role of AI in human affairs (many stories can be told here) - and legal challenges start to be mounted by national financial authorities, with moves toward an international regulatory body that can limit the scope of action of this class of AIs.

In my scenario, this is a topic debated by a consensus conference-type colloquium in the Foresight x.0 system I envisage. Participants are able to create and visualise narratives representing the future developments and results of different courses of action. (Of course, in an SF story, they will have been infiltrated...)].



Many implementations are available, on various platforms, including those intended for members of organisations (employees, campaigners...) for designers and architects of all varieties, for children and educational settings (where the scenarios may include historical settings and more limited environment intended for emotional and interpersonal education, cross-cultural dialogue, etc). As well as entertainment varieties (“play a role in your favourite soap opera”) there are fan-groups dedicated on virtually realising the worlds of narratives from SF (e.g. Iain M Banks’ Culture novels) as well as fantasy.

But- some lessons from this year suggest that such a vision might be vulnerable :

- Best laid plans, most cherished scenarios...
- Much-rehearsed feral cards can catch us unawares (that tells us something about other feral cards, and wild cards themselves. One thing is that distant early warnings are largely ignored: though not universally. Those with more experience are more reactive)
- Rapid response comes from numerous quarters; communities, scientific communities, entrepreneurs (both with financial motives and more altruistic ones), social and political movements. It can be facilitated in various ways, though some responses may exacerbate problems or create new ones.
- Some of the groups involved develop strategies for dealing with similar crises in the future, including informal approaches in the event of the issues not being embedded sufficiently thoroughly in policy and business practices and consciousness.
- Lessons may be drawn for those already alert to other wild and feral cards, as to both the formal and informal resilience responses.
- One set of lessons should involve the linkages between wider foresight (communities) and those already encharged with risk assessment and resilience planning. Thus we need to know about the bodies that exist to scan for, and to deal with, emergencies of various kinds. This is true at a micro-level as well nationally etc.