

Towards Integral Scenarios

Creative suggestions for translating AQAL integral theory into scenario methodologies

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Abstract

This paper is part three of a series that introduces the rationale, theory and methodological suggestions for an integral approach to scenario development. This paper builds on the previous two to offer suggestions for how integral theory may translate into new scenario methods.

Introduction

This paper outlines a range of methodological suggestions for approaching the design of scenarios from an integral theory perspective. The integral theory used is based primarily on the work of Ken Wilber, and his AQAL meta-theory.¹ As an integral approach to scenarios, and Futures Studies (FS) generally, is only just beginning in the 21st century, there are few examples to draw on that example the promise of integral scenarios. Accordingly this paper is largely a creative exposition of potential. The suggestions herein will need to be tested, refined and will undoubtedly evolve in quite different ways as the realities of practical application shape their forms into value adding, repeatable, grounded methods and practice insights. There are also many areas where further development are identified as being possible and beneficial for scenarios and FS more generally.

Summary of This Series

Part one of this series of papers reviewed the worldviews of foresight and how they have characterised the varied development of the scenario methodology within the field of FS. The outcome of the broad analysis was the identification of a range of core competencies that each worldview of foresight, or worldview of scenarios, has brought forth. In addition, two quality maxims for scenario methods were also deduced from the insights that a worldview analysis provides. These are summarised in Figure 1 below. The conclusion of the paper was that one pathway to arriving at a more ordered understanding of the breadth and depth of approaches to scenarios would be to investigate the utility of integral theory for providing a common framework for understanding scenarios. A brief introduction to what an integral approach to scenarios might entail was offered, with the need for further development, based on sound theoretical foundations being central.

Worldviews	Competencies
Progressive Foresight	Technical interest, external trend focus, excels at progress forecasting and prediction
Political Foresight	Technical interest, external systems focus, excels at decision support
Critical Foresight	Emancipatory interest, internal structures focus, excels at social discourse renewal
Consensus Foresight	Pragmatic interest, collective commonality focus, excels at participatory action learning
Quality Maxim 1	Include as much worldview and discourse variation as possible and relevant to the originating context and purpose of the scenarios
Quality Maxim 2	Include as many different worldview approaches to scenarios as possible and relevant to the originating context and purpose of the scenarios

Figure 1: Summary of scenario worldview competencies and quality maxims.²

The second paper presented in more detail an approach to integral theory called AQAL. The chief proponent of this approach is Ken Wilber. It should be noted however that it isn't the only approach to integral foresight worldview level theory. It is however a useful one because it allows for the interfacing and classification of many other approaches from both integral and other worldviews. A generic conception of the scenarios methodology was outlined to enable a broad and inclusive conception of scenario development processes. The AQAL integral meta-theory was detailed, along with several integral 'principles of practice' (POP) and the approaches of 'integral methodological pluralism' (IMP) and generic 'root questions method' for moving from theory to praxis. Taken together these AQAL integral theory elements constitute an Integral Operating System (IOS). An IOS can serve to guide the development and application of an integral worldview approach to scenarios and FS more generally. A summary of the core elements is presented below in Figures 2 and 3.

<p>Step 2: Analysis POP: Unfoldment <i>Action:</i> Analyse the data to determine driving forces, their casual chains, critical uncertainties etc and the scenario type to best accommodate the requirements and inputs of the scenarios.</p>	<p>Step 1: Input POP: Non-exclusion <i>Action:</i> Use appropriate methodologies to gather information from, and about, the contextual environments relevant to the focus of the scenarios.</p>
<p>Step 3: Interpretations POP: Enactment <i>Action:</i> Investigate different interpretations and relationships between the key variables within each scenario developing most significant into internally consistent descriptions/stories.</p>	<p>Step 4: Applications POP: Uncomfort <i>Action:</i> Communicate scenarios and their implications to relevant parties for application, eg informing strategy development, monitoring signposts and so on. The relevance of scenarios for concerned parties is assessed.</p>

Figure 2: A generic scenario method.³

Element	Description
Quadrants	Four fundamental perspectives on any human occasion: individual-internal, individual-external, collective-internal, collective-external
Levels	Levels, waves or worldviews of consciousness. Different developmental stages in the evolution of different streams of activity and/or competence
Lines	Global or relative analysis of one stream or developmental trend of focus
States	Different states of consciousness, commonly waking dreaming, sleeping, and including things such as highly imaginative states, non-ordinary states, and peak experiences of different stages of consciousness
Types	Different types of emphasis, like masculine and feminine, personality types, and other variations within a line and level of subject focus
POP 1: Non-Exclusion	To consciously remain open to the inclusion of relevant differences in worldview, and other relevant aspects of any given subject of study
POP 2: Unfoldment	To appreciate and identify the developmental sequences involved in the evolution of aspects of the subject of focus
POP 3: Enactment	To understand and appropriately investigate the nature of all knowledge as contextually bound and co-created by the act of human engagement
POP 4: Minimise Uncomfort	Uncomfort in achieving higher order integrations is unavoidable. The aim is eliminate unnecessary discomfort, distortions and inconsistencies, and also reduce as far as possible any that seems unavoidable
Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP)	IMP represents an approach to using the AQAL meta-theory to provide rigour to the selection of appropriate discipline based methods of enquiry and activity given the subject of focus

Figure 3: Elements of an Integral Operating System, or AQAL integral theory in praxis framework.⁴

Building on the contributions of these papers the purpose of this third paper is to use the scenario worldview competencies, quality maxims, and Integral Operating System to develop a framework for methodological renewal of scenario development processes. Given that a developmental history of scenarios invites the investigation of an integral worldview approach, and the presentation of an integral worldview level theory provides the means for this investigation, the first new task of this paper is to provide an explanation of how the theory meets the worldview quality maxims and can incorporate the core competencies of the previous worldviews of scenarios.

The Value of the Integral Foresight Worldview

The integral foresight worldview offers several developmental advantages over previous worldviews of foresight. These include its openness to the inclusion of previous worldview contributions, as well as new insights; a consistently contextualised appeal to transparent frameworks for the identification, critique, ordering and application of knowledge; and, an integrative approach that goes beyond syncretic attempts, or balancing of worldview differences, into a higher order framework out of which categorically new insights, and thus method and practice approaches, become available.

The integral worldview is inherently open to the appropriate inclusion of different worldviews because it is itself the emergent outgrowth of the preceding successes of each worldview, and it is, quite distinctly, conscious of this observation. So much so, that it becomes, within the AQAL approach, a principle of practice for *any* integral practice. The 'non-exclusion' principle of practice leads to a greater inclusion of previous worldview contributions than any other preceding worldview, and consciously reminds its users to remain open to further developments. Often early developmental worldviews of humanity were obscured, discredited or simply discarded from many discipline discourses. An integral approach seeks to re-connect with these earlier and foundational developments, and re-instate their value within continuing developments. The examination of the competencies of each worldview of foresight in the first paper in this series is an initial attempt to evidence this valuable integral worldview contribution in the FS discourse of scenarios. The key theoretical mechanism for this inclusion is the element of developmental levels. Accordingly, the worldviews of foresight has provided one level conception capable of identifying and incorporating the various previous scenario competencies.

In light of this awareness a new appreciation of the gifts of each of the preceding worldviews becomes apparent. Accordingly an IOS is designed to achieve as much transparency as possible in presenting the valuable contributions of each worldview, including their developmentally appropriate critiques of preceding worldview contributions. Here, the 'unfoldment' principle of practice comes to the fore. Many worldviews of foresight before the integral level unduly threw the developmental baby out with the excessive or limited bathwater of previous worldviews. An important aspect of an integral foresight approach then is to rescue the developmental competencies, while highlighting as clearly as possible, the more mature versions thereof in a fair and 'checkable' fashion. This is likely to often prompt a new critique of previous theories, methods and practices, grounded in a developmental logic. The unfoldment principle reminds integral theorists and practitioners to seek out the developmental evidence that can ground the process of critique and integration in a rigorous fashion. An initial effort to outline the key critiques and value of each worldview of foresight's approach to scenarios was presented in paper one of this series, and this paper, the third, will continue this effort in the proposal of new methods built on these observations.

Underpinning the non-exclusion of different worldviews and discourses, and the critical relational appreciation of their unfoldment, are the insights of the critical worldview and post-modern thought in general. Here, the contextualisation of all knowledge, and its socially constructed nature, recognised through the 'enactment' principle of practice, enables the integral worldview to adjudicate the appropriate paradigmatic approach to relevant aspects of a subject of knowledge, arriving at an integral methodological pluralism.' A pluralistic approach to methods involves more than a sequential-process-inclusion, common to the practice of scenario development processes, and goes further than critically reviewing what may have been left out of previous discourse approaches. An integral worldview approach observes that different dimensions, or 'quadrants' of a subject matter are only adequately investigated by a corresponding injunction, and hence employs these as appropriate, in a newly integrative fashion. The quadrants, respected by an integral methodological pluralistic approach, reveal the grounds for including many of the different dimensional focuses of the preceding worldviews of foresight and scenarios. In addition, the consistent meta-mapping elements of 'lines,' 'states' and 'types' provides room for each concern of previous worldviews to be situated within an integral formulation of scenarios.

This new integrative approach is more than just an external systems perspective characteristic of the political foresight worldview. It goes beyond the critical worldview's call for inter-subjective depth inquiry, and also finds more solid grounds than the consensus worldview's approach of simply including the different approaches and reductively harmonising them around commonalities. The integral worldview here shows its truly unique contribution, in recognising the need, and through various means, providing the conceptual frameworks to achieve a correlative understanding of and means for engaging in practice, the manifold varieties of knowledge acquisition and actioning. The AQAL framework provides for diverse disciplines of knowledge to not only be validated but also brought into a meaningful relationship. This integrates each knowledge discipline's value while minimising the distortions, or 'uncomfort,' inevitable in affecting such an outcome.

In short, the integral worldview holds the promise, through such expositions as Wilber's AQAL meta-theory framework and IOS, to transcend the limitations and yet include the benefits of more of humanity's knowledge development in general, and various FS approaches to scenarios in particular, than any preceding worldview of foresight.

AQAL Integral Scenario Possibilities

So theoretically at least, an AQAL Integral Operating System approach appears able to live up to the demands of a whole new level of foresight worldview and scenarios development. The question becomes next, how would this be realised in practice? How might an integral approach to scenarios renew the method? To be fair, it is yet to be seen on any significant scale. Even prototype examples are hard to find, especially within the scenario discourse, and even in the FS field in general.

On the one hand it makes this paper's purpose of outlining some possible translations of the theory into practice easier, as there are few examples to contrast and critique it with. However, on the other hand, it is more difficult for the same reason because there are no precedents to build on. A creative exposition of propositions is called for. It is important for those wishing to incorporate any of the ideas presented herein into their methodological or praxis approaches to scenario development processes to remember the relatively untested nature of these propositions. It is highly likely that those best able to action any insights from this paper will have both a experiential background in scenarios and a grounded knowledge of the AQAL Integral Operating System. This does not, however, mean that others won't be able to action any insights found herein. If this is possible, Wilber's theory and the knowledge of the practitioner are to be credited.

In systematically generating a range of scenario method suggestions, the generic scenario development process combined with the AQAL integral principles of practice has been used as a guide. Subsequently there are four areas of methodological suggestions offered within this paper. For each step in the generic scenario development process, a different method of approach is outlined. Each of these in practice will have impacts on the whole process, and this will need to be accommodated by practitioners when incorporating any of the methods into their scenario development process design. Needless to say, there are many areas wide open to further development, and plenty of theoretical grounds for completely different methodological approaches to be brought forth. Each of the method suggestions can be used individually except, at their fullest intent, the third and fourth method propositions, as they represent a degree of integration of each of the preceding steps of methodological suggestions.

Comprehensive AQAL Scenarios

Comprehensive AQAL scenarios are about the use of each of the core elements of the AQAL theory to guide the identification, analysis and resultant inclusion of both the breadth and depth of relevant information into the scenario development process. The key value of this approach is the focal issue 'reach' rather than depth detail. The difference in the term depth is about including depth of worldviews, of subjective depth, on the issue of focus, rather than deep or detailed knowledge about any single given variable relevant to the issue of focus. The comprehensive approach is about touching all the bases, and seeing what important, unique and relevant information can be incorporated into the scenario development process. It means that the external quadrant focuses of both the progressive and political worldviews are combined with the internal quadrant focuses of the critical, and to some extent, consensual worldviews.

The generic scenario development process emphasis here is on step 1, getting the input up to an integral level, to then inform the rest of the process.

Method Suggestions

The AQAL framework has been shown by Slaughter and Voros to significantly expand the breadth and depth of a common input to scenario development processes, environmental scanning. In essence, this approach guides the identification of relevant information from each of the quadrants, and across a range of relevant levels. This means from the outset that the content for the scenarios will include a more realistic range of worldviews and discourse perspectives on the subject of focus.

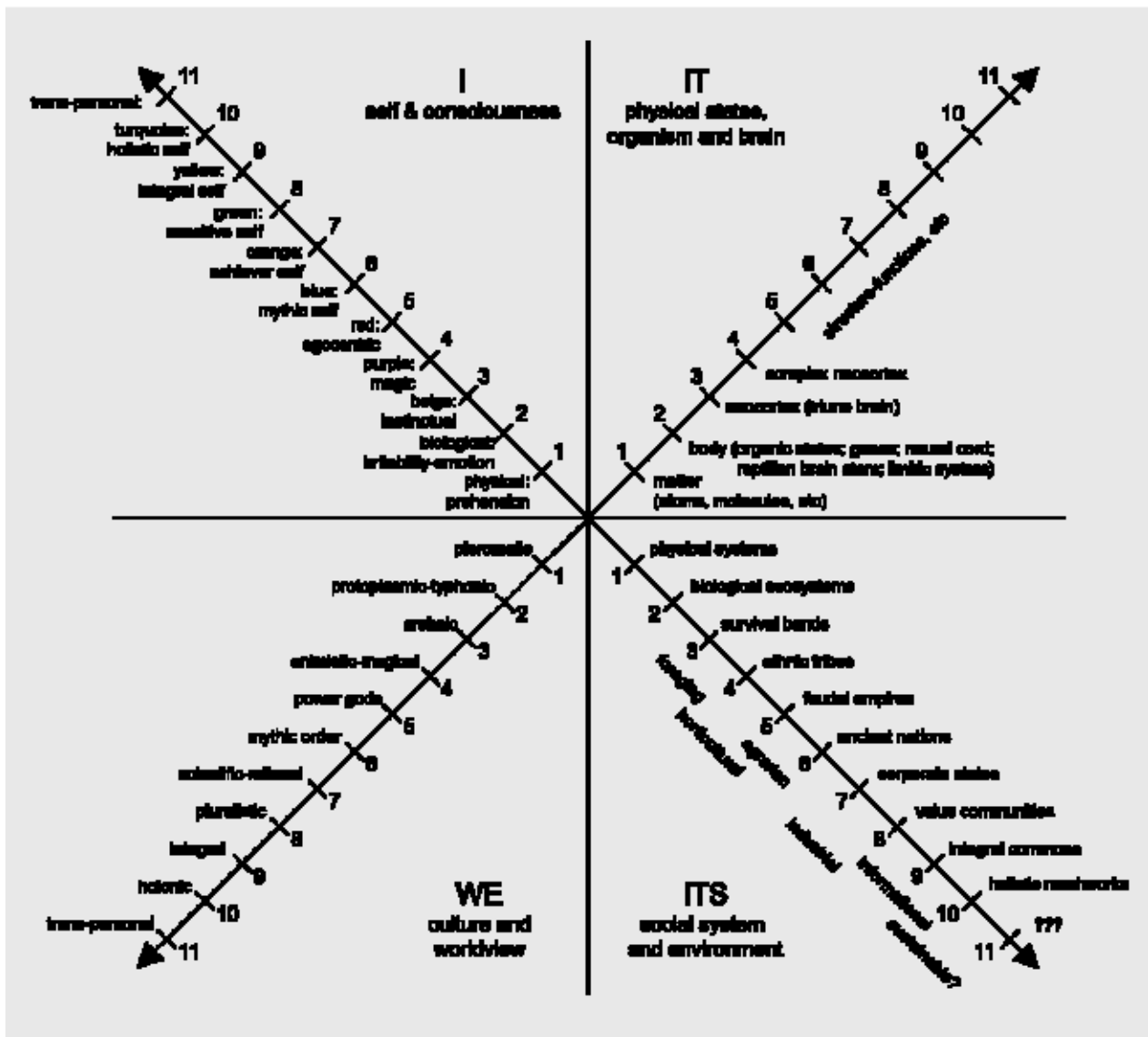


Figure 4: Voros' 4Q/11L environmental scanning framework.⁵

Note that Spiral Dynamics, based on the 'values line' research of Clare W. Graves, is used by Voros as a levels technology. This may be replaced however, with any other suitably developed levels technology that is appropriate to the subject of study. For example, Hayward's worldviews of foresight, based on Jean Gebser's levels research, was suitable for this series of papers as it is already integrated into concerns of the FS discourse to some extent. Spiral Dynamics would have been an equally valid and useful approach as well, as has been exemplified by Marcus Barber.⁶

Other means for using the AQAL framework to ensure sufficient quality input is acquired includes the application of the AQAL root questions method presented in paper two of this series. This can be used to inform the structuring of interview questions to ensure that each quadrant, key discourse, and different worldview levels of relevance are first, represented in the interviewee sample, and second, elicited from each of the interviewees. If a workshop, or collective action research process is conducted, the root questions method can be used to guide the process, ensuring that all relevant dimensions of the issue are at least brought to mind for the participants through their acceptance via open questioning.

The AQAL elements of states and types have not been explicitly related as a research input dimension to date. This is likely because they represent more coverage than most scenario's would require. There are however many subjects of focus that may well benefit from their inclusion, for

example those concerning psychology and religion. The general idea of this approach, regardless of which integral approach is used, or how many of the AQAL elements are combined in the framework, is to incorporate at least the key elements of quadrants and a few levels into the input gathering step. These alone will provide a significantly expanded and more rigorous input framework than previously offered by other worldviews of foresight. This framework more accurately identifies the diversity of perspectives and the information they generate, the value they have to contribute, as well as the influence they have on the change of any issue under investigation.

Generic Process Impacts

The results of an expanded integral input phase will likely demand a more comprehensive analysis phase. This analysis may be handled by existing techniques, or they may need updating to accommodate the number and clarity of the AQAL information classification elements. Here, the root questions method presented in the second paper in this series can also be of use for it brings in the causal relationships aspect that applies the unfoldment principle. When modelling, systems mapping and other analysis techniques are used, the primary impact will be the need for them to be either adapted to accommodate the multi-level internal realities represented in the information, or to be sufficiently augmented to do so.

Workshops and other more informal, or commonly 'analytic' or 'intuitive' approaches, will likely most easily incorporate the increased input information. Using the AQAL framework and principles of practice to guide these processes of analysis and trend identification will most likely simplify what might otherwise be a rather daunting endeavour. More notes on how an AQAL approach to trends may be more fully applied is presented in the second method suggestion, element scenarios. For comprehensive scenarios, a common trend analysis approach might suffice, and benefit most from the quadrants of activity classification. The two approaches could however, be combined for a further degree of depth, breadth and thus capability to handle complexity in a robust manner.

Other approaches to generating an integral analysis methodology are yet to be fully investigated. This is likely however, a rich area of development for both the field of FS in general and scenarios in particular.

The incorporation of the expanded input and more integral analysis steps in the scenario development process will also generate the need for this increased complexity to be represented in the presentation of the final scenarios that are developed. The simplest way for this to occur would be to use the AQAL elements as check lists to ensure that a holistic picture of the scenario is provided. The narrative or description would therefore touch on the different perspectives involved in the presentation of any issue or change event. A more nuanced approach to including, for example, the levels element within scenario construction is addressed in the elements scenarios method suggestions.

Comprehensive AQAL scenarios may seem like a large undertaking and unwieldily, and indeed, it could easily be used in such a fashion. It has the robustness, and provides the consistency between the different steps of the scenario development process to handle extremely detailed and widely scoped scenario projects. The ambitious will find plenty of methodological support. This does not, however, have to be the only way it is applied. Comprehensive means that it is important to remember to check in with each of the main quadrant perspectives, and key discourses within them, or across them, as well as the core worldview levels of relevance. It does not mean each aspect has

to be delved into to impossible levels of detail. The breadth that the AQAL framework provides can allow for a relatively efficient covering of the issue of focus.

Examples of Application

To provide an example, the AQAL root questions method was used by a group of Australian Foresight Institute students to analyse their contributions with a unit of study called 'outlooks for the early 21st Century.' As each student provided their summary presentation on an issue within the extremely broad scope of the topic, other students noted down the different quadrants and levels of information included. These were then mapped onto an electronic chart of the AQAL framework elements of quadrants and levels. A couple of hours of effort resulted in a richly rewarding review session, again of a couple of hours duration, where each student, and the group as a whole, reviewed their AQAL coverage, and discussed the gaps in information, and if, given different subjects of focus, they were problematic, or appropriate. The value of the exercise was the coherence of the overview and depth of the critical appreciation facilitated by the approach. Individual, subject based, and the group's biases and knowledge type preferences were surfaced for diagnosis and developmental dialogue. The key challenge for repeating such an activity resides squarely on the knowledge of the AQAL theory held by the participants. A little depth returned many rewarding insights for further development.

A more detailed application of the AQAL framework has been in operation over the past couple of years at the Swinburne University's Foresight Planning and Review (FPR) unit, in Melbourne Australia. FPR have implemented Voros' AQAL environmental scanning framework. Managed primarily by one person, a couple of days a week, it has been attributed to an increased quality, in terms of relevance, breadth, and depth, and in identifying more weak signals than previously. The results allow for a greater requisite variety of inputs into the unit's other activities. It has also been of significance in identifying external clients and being able to offer a differentiated and uniquely high quality product with little additional effort.

Elemental AQAL Scenarios

Elemental AQAL scenarios are about the use of one of the core elements of the AQAL theory to guide the identification, analysis and resultant inclusion of a depth approach to the information relevant to the subject of focus. The key value of this approach is the focal issue of 'depth' rather than reach. This does not preclude a breadth of information being incorporated about the particular subject of the depth analysis. In fact, it may necessitate it. It is, however, more about applying a specific element of AQAL as a scenario generation method. These approaches may seem to reflect one or another of the previous worldview approaches to scenarios. It does, however, provide more rigour to the method and invite far more breadth and depth in the consideration of the subject in focus. This is, in part, because the element emphasis invites the awareness of other element based information to be more tightly coordinated with it.

The generic scenario development process emphasis here is on step 2, guiding an integral analysis of subject matter to then inform rich and clearly focused outcomes for the rest of the scenario development process.

Method Suggestions

Each of the AQAL meta-theory elements can be used to guide a scenario development process. Each is subject to its own dynamics of change and relationship to other dimensions of being, knowing and doing that involve human concerns. The most likely value for scenarios will be found, however, with the use of the elements of levels and lines. Related more specifically to developmental aspects, the dynamics of change and variation provide richer grounds for difference to be recognised, as it indeed already plays out in human affairs.

Lines – Lines may or may not be seen as trends and issues of focus. In a detailed analysis one line of development may reveal numerous trends and uncertainties at a certain level. The most likely valuable contribution of a line trends analysis will be to clarify the trends by grounding them in a line's developmental logic. Applying a developmental-lines analysis to issues may in itself surface key uncertainties, say for example, whether a development will or won't occur in the first place. Although there are many possible permutations, two of the simplest would be to either look at the changes within one line of development, or contrasting two lines of development. Here, the lines would need to meet the criteria of high impact uncertainties, and a good understanding between the differences of the deep structure of developmental change verses the surface shaping of them would need to be understood. For example, the developmental change of the internet is of a categorically different order to novel advances in the software that is used to facilitate exchange within the internet structure.

Levels – In a similar way, levels are also a simple yet a significant enhancement to scenario driver identification, analysis and selection. Two key approaches also present themselves for levels. The first builds on a lines analysis and then adds a levels contrast to compare and relate the lines of development of interest. Here the change between levels, or groups of lines, or between different lines, or as a perspectival base, say, for consumer values in relationship to a line of technological development, can all be used as the dynamic between chosen scenario drivers. The second approach centres on levels of worldview changes in a collective of people – be they in an organisation, industry, or market for example. This depth perspective can lead to a multi-dimensional appreciation of drivers of change – what they are, how they are acting and how they are perceived within a cross-level analysis.⁷ A primary insight of this method is that people at different worldviews will a) identify different drivers of change, b) when the same, likely see them changing in different ways, and c) quite distinctly interpret the meaning of them in terms of their impact.

For example in a recent integral trends analysis was undertaken for a large financial institution in Australia. Within the broad social context a change in the family structure can be seen by one worldview as a decline in values while another sees the situation as a rise in freedoms. This simplistic casting of the issue is indicative of how a trends analysis from a developmental levels framework can help elucidate the core issues of debate, separating and relating the key positions that are having influence, and grant access to a deeper appreciation of the worldview commitments involved. These in turn can lead to insights into how the issue may play out, and affect changes in the future of the issue of focus. A levels approach to scenario generation allows significant room for two, three or even more drivers to be incorporated, and builds in a significant increase in the grasp of the complexity that exists.

States – Altered states and their reach into early developmental levels and those yet to be fully actualised, can be accessed to surface and incorporate a fuller spectrum of developmental levels into a visioning process. This approach, developed by the author and called Deep Visioning, is based on a combination of Ken Wilber's AQAL meta-theory, Jean Gebser's structures of consciousness, and

Claus Otto Scharmer's Presencing U-Model.⁸ While this may sound daunting, the deep grounding in theory yields a simple and powerful method that can be a relatively quick approach to generating either a vision, or alternative visions, that can be cast as scenarios to inform a strategic conversation.

Quadrants and types may also yield interesting and valuable scenarios. The quadrants could be used, for example, to categorise different trends of change, with summary influences and uncertainties being identified. The two most uncertain and high impact trends from different quadrants could be combined in a scenario generation framework and contrasted for their differences in outcomes and impact on the other quadrants. Types may also prove valuable in a similar fashion of contrast, at one level and in one line of focus.

Generic Process Impacts

No overt integral input process need be adopted. The information gathered can fruitfully be analysed according to the most relevant element/s of AQAL. This may raise the need to conduct further research to fill in pressing gaps in the knowledge available, or it may simply sort down into the core issues and trends with greater rigour and transparency.

Any of the elements may be used to classify the trends identified for the scenario generation process, which means two things. First, contrast between different element trends/issues, and second, contrast within an element's trends. This could lead to either complex combinations of the elements or relatively simple scenario driver identification – which still provides potentially more complexity than commonly available through previous approaches.

Examples of Application

Lines – In a recent social trends analysis project for a major financial services company in Australia, the author applied a lines analysis. The key trends were identified and cast as wildcard 'trend points,' noting that mapping any trend change would require substantially more research than time allowed. The trend points were then analysed from the perspective of 'value-line based markets.' Using Spiral Dynamics, the possible perceived movement and meaning interpretation from several levels on the values line were explored. The results led to a substantial revision of the company's strategic visioning process that was underway, and has been ear marked for further application in the market analysis and product strategy development processes in the coming years.

Levels – Recently a scenarios project was conducted for Land and Water Australia, a key government funding body. Following a more traditional interview and situational analysis input stage, an integral analysis revealed two core dimensions of tension within the organisation and its stakeholders. One of the drivers reflected a difference between two levels of worldviews, similar to the difference between the political and consensus foresight worldviews. The second driver was a discourse difference that covered both of the worldview levels. The discourse was polarised between two main competing positions. Combined in a two-driver scenario construction, the resulting four scenarios were a rich reflection space that surfaced the key aspects of the strategic conversation as it was already experienced in a competitive frame within the organisation. It has contributed significantly to a 'self' understanding of the different perspectives within the organisation, and the common differences in those of their stakeholders.

States – The simple approach of surfacing alternative visions to frame a strategic conversation was adopted by the author for a daylong strategy workshop for the National Centre for Sustainability in

Australia. Using a Deep Visioning approach facilitated a rich and continuing dialogue concerning alternative visions held by the staff of the centre. It underpinned the removal of covert contention in the strategy formulation process by creating a safe space where the differences and similarities could be surfaced and explored in a strategic conversation.

Quadrants – A recent scenario process conducted for the Victorian State Government Environmental Protection Agency on The Future of Alternative Transport Fuels and Technologies, covertly used a quadrants approach. An expanded and redefined STEEP framework was used to guide the research, analysis and trend identification process steps. The change to the STEEP was made to explicitly incorporate both the LL and LR quadrants. As a result the integrally informed team, involving this author, were able to highlight the contrast between the high impact uncertainties of a LL and a LR trend/issue. The contrast was between a values shift (LL) and an oil price change (LR). The resulting scenarios were successfully used to generate a range of quiet distinct policy options for the client. A scope involving a depth of complexity that had not previously been understood was shown to be relevant to the topic in focus.

Long-Term AQAL Scenarios

Long-term AQAL scenarios are about using the deep structural elements of AQAL theory to guide the identification and analysis of the emergent, innovation and regressive potentials of human activities. The key value of this approach is the sturdiness of the long-term reach possible with AQAL meta-theory. This does not mean that all surface changes will be understood or even potentially envisaged. Rather it is about highlighting the deep structural dynamics and potentials that human futures are most likely to be subject to. Long-term AQAL scenarios are arguably the main strength of an integral approach to scenarios, when it is understood as a theory of macrohistory.

Macrohistory is relatively new in FS. Andrew Wynberg, in providing an integral review of macrohistories, notes that macrohistory informs all steps in the generic foresight and scenarios process, but is most notably a third step interpretation method.⁹ Spanning but not belonging to either the theory or method side of FS, Wynberg observes that macrohistory is most useful as a depth technology that can serve to critique and inform new worldview conceptions of what is and what might be. Due to a range of factors, Wynberg, following Sohail Inayatullah, situates macrohistory approaches to creating forward views as more plausible than most other approaches currently evidenced in the field of FS. This observation lends an AQAL integral approach to scenarios considerable validity. This is because AQAL meta-theory is essentially a developmental macrohistory of humanity. One covering everything from the origins of life right through to its highest, open-ended, spiritual potentials. Based on extensive cross-cultural research, it is also arguably the most comprehensive macrohistory theory available to date.

The generic scenario development process emphasis here is on step 3, guiding an integral interpretation of the deep structural continuities of the subject in focus to inform more realistic and robust scenarios of long term futures.

Method Suggestions

The most fruitful application of AQAL as a macrohistory for long term scenarios will likely involve elements of each of the preceding integrally informed steps in the generic scenario development process. The key distinction will be to focus on not only a comprehensive application of AQAL, but also on the deep structures involved, rather than more surface level detail as likely focused on in

the element scenarios. Here, the interpretive focus is on the deep dynamics of change informed through AQAL meta-theory, and the bounds on emergent forms that will arise within any human future.

Another approach to using AQAL as a macrohistory is to focus more on the interpretative step, and use it to identify, critique and open up the worldviews of the participants in the scenario development process. Here, it may be fruitful to contrast alternative macrohistories to create a rich reflection space on the nature of future possibilities.

Generic Process Impacts

While it seems realistic that a long term macrohistory approach would require a consistent integrally informed design through each step of the scenario development process, the second suggestion above highlights how it could be brought into the process at the third step to deliberately open up the process. This use however, is likely to presage a considerable review of the input and analysis process steps already undertaken.

Examples of Application

To date, the author is not aware of any significant application of AQAL long-term scenarios. The field is wide open for development, refinement and discovery of the practical values of this approach.

An AQAL 3D Scenario Space for Strategic Planning

The AQAL 3D scenario space builds on each of the three previous broad approaches and goes another step further to generate a new, flexible and robust scenario planning space ideally suited to informing strategic management and decision support. The AQAL 3D scenario space is about using AQAL's deep structural elements to guide the mapping of both explorative scenarios with a strong plausibility correlation, and a normative scenario with multiple pathways to its realisation. The key value in this method is the continuing support of strategy formulation and decision-making as the future envisaged comes to pass.

The generic scenario development process emphasis here is on step 4, using AQAL scenarios to develop a new approach to strategic option generation, selection and implementation. The most ambitious of the method suggestions in this paper, it also holds the most promise for strategy enhancement.

Method Suggestions

The closest correlation to the AQAL 3D scenario space is the Harman scenario fan.¹⁰ The key difference is twofold. First, this approach adds a depth perspective to the breadth of scenarios. Second, the scenario selection is based on the deep structural analysis provided by AQAL, and is hence more likely to generate plausible scenarios. The four key aspects of the AQAL 3D scenario space are:

1. Quadrants framing the breadth uncertainties for the diamond;
2. Levels framing the height and depth uncertainties for the diamond;

3. Lines and possibly levels measuring out the length of the diamond; and,
4. Normative conceptions framing the end point of the diamond.

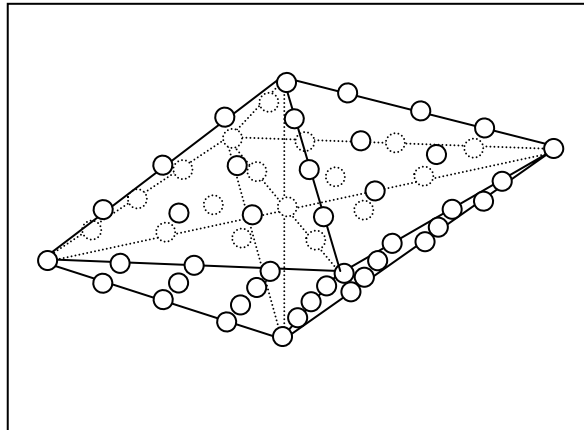


Figure 5: A partially completed AQAL 3D scenario diamond.

There are likely numerous ways to construct the 3D scenario diamond. Importantly, the approach also lends itself equally to simple, rapid scenario generation, as well as to extremely detailed efforts. While the method may be valuably used as a once off, its greatest value arguably lays in the continual updating and monitoring of its scenarios.

One approach to constructing the diamond of scenarios is to identify the relevant high impact uncertainties in each quadrant, at several levels of worldview (or using a similar, relevant levels technology), with detail for key lines, and where of value, incorporating other elements as well. This broad collection of possible drivers, instead of being whittled down to the possibly most significant, can then be used to generate the breadth, depth and length of the diamond. Grouping the left-hand and right-hand quadrants and lines, correlated against a common levels analysis, they are split by significance and probability, with the more likely change eventualities becoming the first circumference of scenarios around the notionally normative centre line.

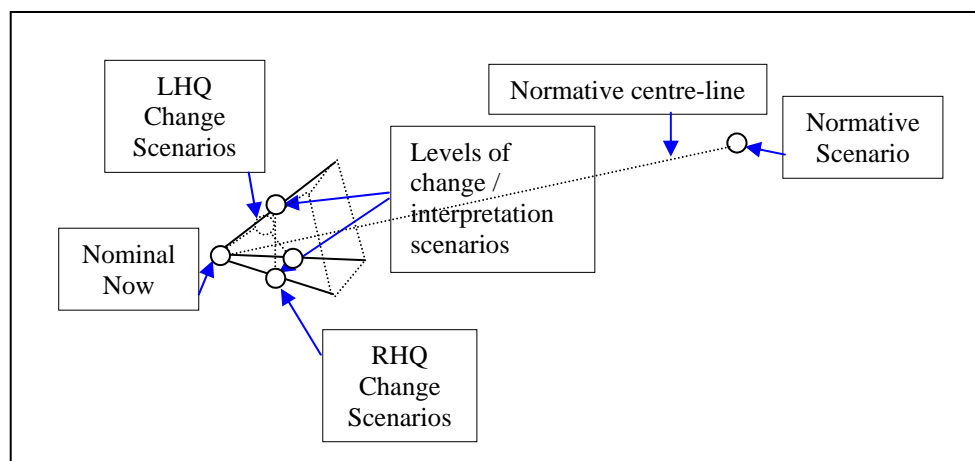


Figure 6: Using AQAL to shape the scenario generation process.

Further iterations of change, grounded on a deep structural framework of developmental logic inherent in AQAL analysis, form the next and expanded range of scenario possibilities. Each new iteration can also be used to map out lines and or levels changes. Here the normative centre line at the one level of the diamond may involve probable levels changes. This allows especially for longer-term scenario conceptions to incorporate realistic levels changes into the normative conception. For most uses however, the normative level of the diamond is more likely to valuably

reflect incremental, or surface lines changes. The Diamond may also be conceived as on only two dimensional, with the third dimension, depth of level interpretations built into each scenario at the same level of the diamond depiction.

The degree of time being considered in the total diamond scenario space, might ideally reach half way at the widest point of the diamond, with the remaining time space used for plotting similar developmental scenario eventualities that can guide the direction towards a nominally normative scenario. It would be prudent when using this method to map the strategic decision space to reformulate the scenario diamond at or before the mid point is reached in actuality.

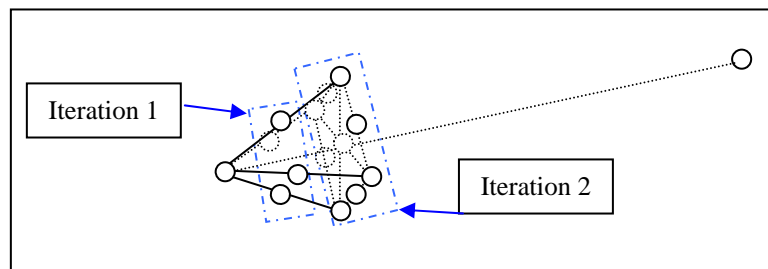


Figure 7: Iterations in the diamond scenario space.

Each scenario in this approach then comes to represent a key developmental change of relevance to the subject of focus. It may be a simple abstract statement, or a detailed exploration of what that change, taken as the leading change of significance, may imply for a full AQAL conception of the scenario's logic.

The idea behind the 3D scenario space is not that any of the scenarios in themselves will actually occur (although you never know), but instead that an organisation may plot its position relative to influences of the abstracted significant change points. It is more likely that a feature of one of the scenarios will indicate, like a lighthouse, that the operating environment has shifted towards that particular developmental change based scenario. In effect, it will be like navigating an organisation through the spaces within the scenario diamond, with several possible pathways available at any one point in time, depending on the desired route towards the nominally normative scenario. Used in this manner, a 3D scenario space may be able to stay relevant for decades at a time, and indeed, may well be applied in a macrohistorical sense for long term futures, be they underpinning the strategy of nations, imaginations of science fiction writers, or the big picture, long-now curiosity common to futurists.

Generic Process Impacts

It is likely that to competently apply the 3D scenario diamond method on any significant scale that each step of the generic scenario generation process would need to be integrally informed. This is to ensure that the relevant information is identified, and made available through analysis, and cast in the right dimensions via interpretation to adequately inform the diamond creation process and allow for meaningful watching briefs to be deduced.

Examples of Application

The 3D scenario diamond is yet to be applied for a substantial client. Skeletal use by the author however, has informed personal career development and small business development. As a covert application, in the role of a small business development manager, the author has facilitated a clearer understanding and management of the internal development requirements of the business in balance

with the strategic pressures of its operating environments and key markets. The business is growing steadily.

The Cauldron of Practice

The development and application of AQAL scenario methods is only at its infancy. Already, many lessons have been learned, and great potential is being realised for generating scenarios that are at once richer in meaning, accommodate more complexity and achieve higher degrees of quality than previous methods. It is up to FS practitioners to judge however if they are able to use aspects of AQAL scenario methods within their contexts to achieve the same higher degrees of success. It is with a wider uptake of integral scenarios that its full promise will be realised. Such developments will likely dramatically refine the suggestions made within this paper, and also produce completely new approaches. This author, for one, has many more ideas for how to practically bring AQAL meta-theory to bear on generating better scenarios. Hopefully more papers in this series will provide new successful/learning case studies and more precise method descriptions and praxis insights.

Notes

- ¹ For an introduction see Wilber (1999), and an application to the field of psychology see Wilber (2000).
- ² Stewart (2004).
- ³ Stewart (2003).
- ⁴ Stewart (2004).
- ⁵ Voros (2001).
- ⁶ See Barber (2003). The key difference in these two levels technologies, in how they have been related to the concerns of FS is that Hayward focuses more on the theoretical and historical antecedents, where as Barber focuses more on practical insights for day to day FS practitioner activities.
- ⁷ For an introduction to a cross-levels analysis, see Voros (2001).
- ⁸ The approach was developed out of an action research activity on visioning conducted at the Australian Foresight Institute. A copy of the research report and method development paper is available online here: http://www.quantumhealing.com.au/Articles/Deep_Visioning.pdf
- ⁹ Wynberg (2004) p1.
- ¹⁰ For a brief introduction to the Harman fan see: <http://www.infinitefutures.com/tools/sbharman.shtml>

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