



**The Uses and Limits of Visionary Scenarios:**

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## The Uses and Limits of Visionary Scenarios: Learning from the African Experience

**There has been no shortage of rosy visions for the future of Africa or its regions. Almost without exception, these visions have been dashed by reality. The question therefore arises: to what extent or under what conditions is visioning an ideal future a worthy exercise? Or, under what conditions is it useful and when is it limiting? In anticipating the future in general, and seeking a better future for Africa in particular, might foresight tools built on another (non-visionary) basis provide better fruit? The paper considers this question as it applies to scenario planning in particular, by investigating recent, contrasting case studies of scenario-building activities in Africa (Tanzania and South Africa). It determines the appropriate uses and limits of 'visionary' scenario planning, and suggests a contrasting 'adaptive' basis for scenario work.**

The studies below identify and describe two archetypal purposes in foresight work, and draw the implications of these archetypes for scenario-building in Africa and beyond. "Purpose" means *why* a future-investigation is undertaken; what the protagonists hope to achieve by it. (The foresight activities may variously include horizon scanning, trend tracking, scenario planning, Delphi studies, etc, so as to investigate changing circumstances in society, markets, technologies, regulation, and industry or global conditions). The two purposes are: (A) to adapt the subject organisation (or business, or institution, or country, or continent, etc.) to changing external future conditions it will face, in order to most profitably align with these external future conditions; vs. (B) to make an intervention to change what external future conditions will apply, that is, influence the future so as to be more to the liking and general success of the subject organisation.

The first seeks to change the subject organisation or stakeholder group itself, to achieve alignment with anticipated external future conditions. The subject organisation creates advantage for itself by mutating (or being ready to mutate) to align with future conditions – and so being ready to take opportunities and avoid threats more quickly or more elegantly, and therein prosper. The second seeks not to change the subject organisation, but to influence and change the course of external events acting on it (and the rest of the world), promoting desirable trends and heading off apparent calamities, to bring about a different future in which the subject organisation (and the world at large) will prosper. In this paper we will refer to Purpose A as "adaptive" and Purpose B as "normative" or "visionary." Those organisations or stakeholder groups involved in

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3 foresight for Purpose A, are referred to as “future-aligning”; those involved in  
4 foresight for Purpose B are “future-influencing.”  
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8 As scenario planning has come into the foresight and planning mainstream it is no  
9 surprise that its methods have been adopted by both types of future purpose exponents,  
10 future-aligning and future-influencing. Future-aligners use scenarios to explore future  
11 possibilities, to ready the organisation for a wide a range of plausible outcomes. Future-  
12 influencing scenario builders seek to do “consensus-building” towards an ideal  
13 outcome (vs. dispreferred outcomes) and then create scenarios to raise public or  
14 policymaker consciousness in order act on the world to bring it closer to the ideal.  
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19 It will be argued that each of these approaches is useful, but maintaining their purpose-  
20 platform distinction is fundamental to getting value out of scenario work in general, and  
21 in the African context in particular. The distinction is commonly *not* made adequately,  
22 causing confusion and loss of efficacy in scenario work. It is precisely the basis of the  
23 distinction that this paper seeks to clarify. The aim in the case studies that follow is to  
24 clearly set out why the adaptive-normative distinction is important; how the different  
25 fundamental purposes each demand different use of the scenario process tools that  
26 currently exist, and show why failure to fit scenario approaches to purpose greatly  
27 diminishes the efficacy of the tool for either purpose – and therefore diminishes the  
28 efficacy of future management approaches at the organisational, national, or continental  
29 level.  
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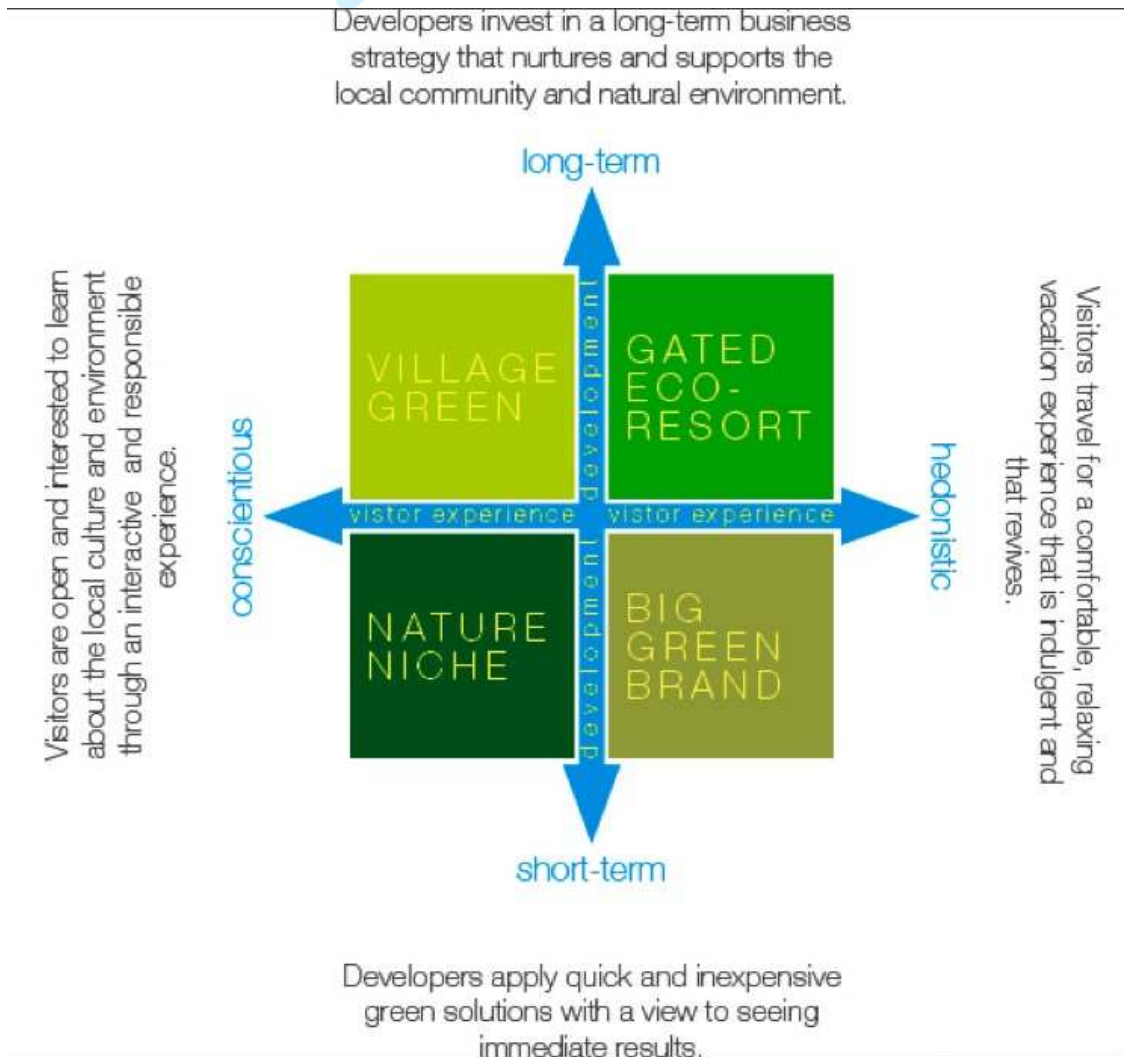
### 36 **Scenario Case Study 1. *Eco-Resorts of the Future*, Ngurto Mountain Lodge,** 37 **Tanzania, 2008 (scenarios for 2028)** 38

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40 In mid-2008, Arup Foresight (UK) conducted a scenario-creation workshop in Tanzania  
41 on behalf of its client Habitaem and their partner ISTCD.<sup>1</sup> Tourism plays a vital role in  
42 Tanzanian economy. As in many places in Africa, it is a crucial forex earner, but  
43 beyond this, it has a key role to play in develop grassroots communities economically  
44 and socially. Tanzania has significant potential for the development of eco- tourism  
45 projects that can help to conserve vast lands belonging to rural municipalities. Investors  
46 can only acquire these lands through the Village Land Act, a progressive law that  
47 greatly respects traditional rights of land tenure.  
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55 <sup>1</sup> Aside from pre- and post-production, the scenarios centred on a 2-day workshop in Tanzania. Other  
56 contributing organisations were: Arup Botswana, Arup NYC, Arup SA, BT, Central St. Martin, Dissing &  
57 Weitling, Eikosphere, Governess Films, Hines, Make, The Mountain Institute, Nature & Kind, NYU Film  
58 School, P2P Safaris, Planning Kenya, Sleeper. “Eco-resorts of the Future” Arup Foresight, 2008, p.39  
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The goal of the scenarios was “to explore how sustainable resorts (Eco-resorts) could emerge into the Tanzanian tourist industry, what these might look like, what types would be successful, and why, and to build towards new and improved concepts of sustainable resorts.” The client, Habitaem had raised funds to develop a model for (profitable) eco-resorts that are efficient tools for both conservation and rural development. It had chosen Tanzania and Nepal for the development of pilot projects to test models that would bring about a symbiosis between eco-tourism, conservation and rural development, and to anticipate formats for partnerships between local communities and outside investors in developing sustainable African resorts. From this we may glean that the scenario makers had to balance normative considerations to do with sustainability and rural African development against business/investment considerations. In the event, following a standard scope of trends and emerging issues, the workshop participants came up with the following scenario architecture, projecting to the world of 2028:



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3 One axis plots resort developers attitudes towards projects: whether they would take a  
4 long- term or short-term approach; the other plots consumer attitudes to their African  
5 lodge experience: whether people would mostly indulge in a more superficial  
6 “hedonistic” and ecologically superficial experience, or whether they would be more  
7 fundamentally conscientious in their choices and have a deeper relationship with the  
8 place and local inhabitants. The polarities of the axes are described as follows:  
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13 **“Long term:** Developers invest in a long-term business strategy that nurtures and  
14 supports the local community and natural environment, vs.

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16 **Short term:** Developers apply quick and inexpensive green solutions with a view to  
17 seeing immediate results  
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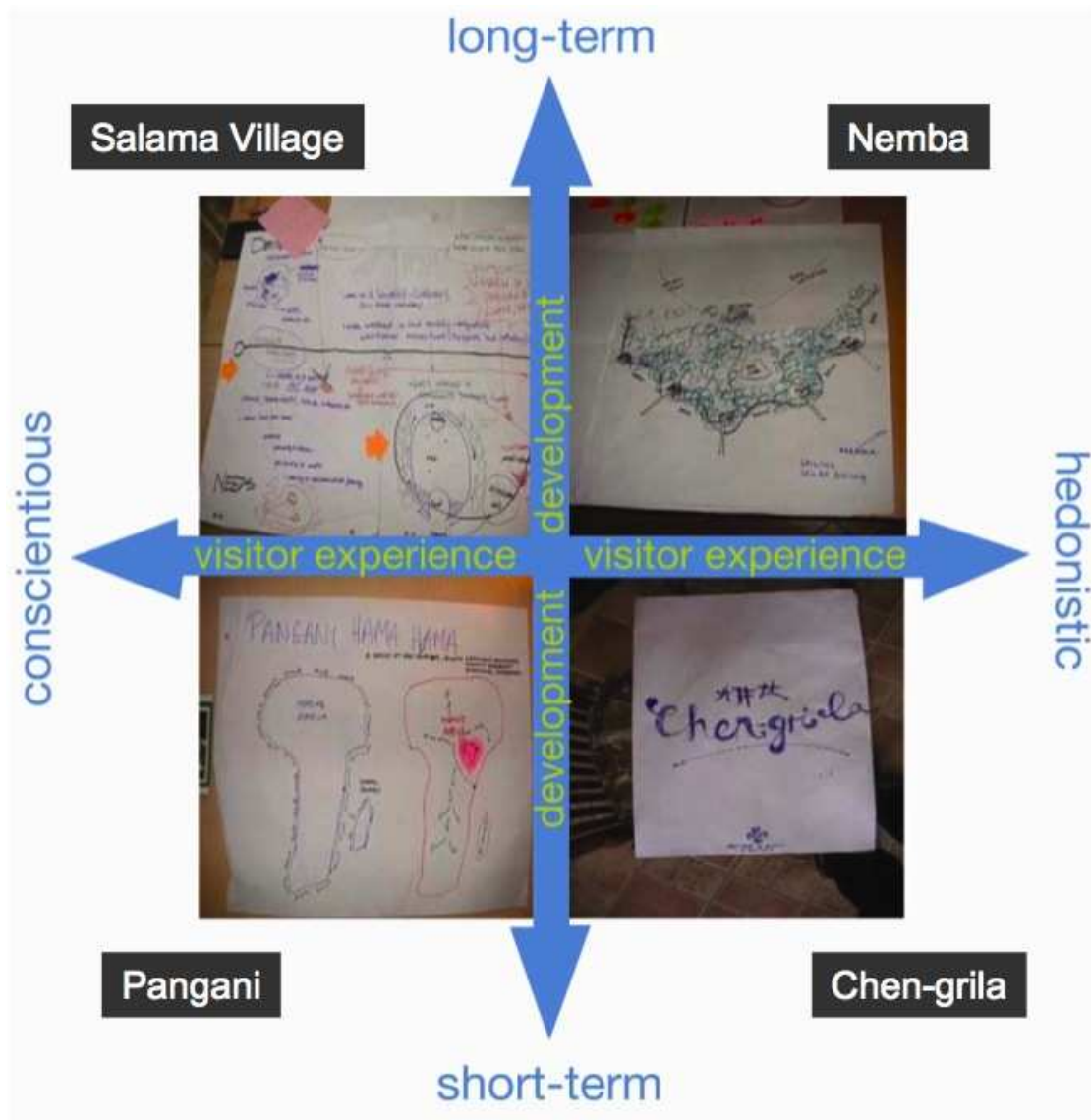
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20 **Hedonistic:** Vistors travel for a comfortable, relaxing vacation experience that is  
21 indulgent and that revives, vs.  
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23 **Conscientious:** Visitors are open and interested to learn about the local culture and  
24 environment through an interactive and responsible experience.”<sup>2</sup>  
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27 For each of these alternative worlds a specific eco-resort was envisaged:  
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58 <sup>2</sup> “Eco-resorts of the Future” op.cit., p.23  
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**1. Salama Village (conscientious visitors and long-term investors)**

[key terms: niche market, cultural exchange, eco-village community]

**Visitor Experience:** The 5000 hectare resort has been transformed into an eco-village of bungalows. On average the length of stay is anywhere between 1 week to 6 months. The resort will be developed and designed to cater to tourists' needs and will be flexible enough to meet the desires of the market sector.

**Economics:** The project will involve the community as an integral part of the financial model for the resort. Dynamic pricing will be set to discourage short and passive stays and to encourage repeat business. Guests, as primary shareholders, can put their

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4 property back into the rental pool when not in use. CSR operating partnerships have  
5 also been identified.

6 **Eco-Concept:** The resort will incorporate the natural landscape into its design. There  
7 will be the use of natural resources for passive ventilation and the use of local  
8 geothermal ground conditions for producing electricity and hot water for the resort. The  
9 resort will be entirely self-sustaining in terms of food, energy and water. Animal  
10 conservation will also be an element.

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13 **Prototype client: Pratima**

14 (Each of the four groups was assigned a character. The characters were carefully  
15 developed taking into account global demographic and lifestyle trends in the next  
16 twenty years such as the growth of the Chinese and Indian middle class, the growth of  
17 the ageing population, and the increased mobility of female professionals.)

18 Pratima is beginning the fourth chapter of her life. Indian, recently widowed and an  
19 empty-nester, she is looking for a new place to call home. Community and the ability to  
20 be part of one are extremely important to her. Her immediate surroundings are also  
21 critical to her spiritual world.

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27 **2. Nemba, a private island (hedonistic visitors and long-term investors)**

28 [key terms: high-end, luxurious, exclusive, branded philanthropy, customised]

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31 **Visitor Experience:** The property offers a maximum of six units. All units are 100%  
32 private and provide shared central services to the occupants. The central core has  
33 private spa and service facilities. A personalized host serves each guest and is able to  
34 provide the guest with the kind of service they are accustomed to receiving in their  
35 primary home.

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38 **Economics:** There is a total of six investors on the property, which include Taylor and  
39 five other suitable occupants. The members pay an annual fee for exclusive and  
40 unrestricted use of the facilities.

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43 **Eco-Concept:** The immediate community benefits from jobs and dividend flows. The  
44 property maps the fishing populations to assist the fishing community, which is  
45 dependent on this trade for their subsistence. The theme for the buildings is low rise  
46 and low impact.

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49 **Prototype client: Taylor**

50 Taylor is a successful partner at a NY law firm, Taylor is extremely ambitious and used  
51 to getting what she wants. She is selective about her brands and is equally discerning  
52 about her leisure time. She is willing to pay a premium for quality.

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55 **3. Pangani: conscientious visitors and short-term investors**

56 [key terms: mobile eco-resort, layers of private space, local community interaction]

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5 **Visitor Experience:** The self-contained mobile pods can be assembled and  
6 disassembled to move to new locations and to incorporate other social pods. The design  
7 of each pod balances the guest's need to be connected with a desire for privacy. The  
8 pods can travel on land and water so that guests can follow migratory patterns in Africa.  
9  
10 **Economics:** A large part of the economics of this project are that a percentage of the  
11 revenue will be re-invested into the local communities via partnership agreements and  
12 shareholding in order to invest and develop human capital.  
13

14 **Eco-Concept:** The pods aspire towards carbon neutrality. They are built from  
15 renewable materials and are sustainable in their operations. A roof clad of PV panels,  
16 internal composting toilets and grey water treatment are part of the design. Guests also  
17 contribute to the local education system by fostering a child from the community.  
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19 **Prototype client: Lars & Stephan**

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22 Lars and Stefan are a young gay couple still excited to discover new places and  
23 experiences. However, they are also quite conscious of their impact on the natural  
24 world. They are open to new ideas, but any holiday they take will need to be  
25 sustainable.  
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29 **4. Chen-grila: hedonistic visitors and short-term investors**

30 [key terms: big brand get away for families, Chinese-centric, feng shui design, invisible  
31 green eco-resort]  
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34 **Visitor Experience:** The minimum stay at the hotel is seven nights. The resort has been  
35 carefully designed to take into account feng shui principles. The Chen- grila offers  
36 adventures within guidelines to cater to its' Chinese clientele. The resort is safe, offers  
37 child care, and holds no surprises for the visitor.  
38

39 **Economics:** The anticipated cost of construction for the resort is \$13M US. The  
40 operator has invested considerably towards efficient hidden or invisible green  
41 technology. The economics of this concept highlights the extreme hidden efficiency of  
42 the operational side. The world is resource constrained so the design of the back of  
43 house is very sophisticated.  
44

45 **Eco-Concept:** The resort will operate as a closed self-sustaining loop and respect  
46 cradle to cradle principles (i.e. grey water from showers will be used for laundry, power  
47 generation from PVs on the man-made volcano lake). A close connection to the  
48 community will be developed with an understanding that many of the resort employees  
49 will be locally employed.  
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51 **Prototype client: Chens**

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54 The Chens are part of the recently emerged Chinese middle class. They are hard  
55 workers and operate their own franchise. They value their traditions and the time they  
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3 spend with their immediate and extended family network. Ideally they look for holidays  
4 where they can reconnect and play with family.  
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8 In summary, In *Eco-Resorts of the Future* the overall approach of the scenarios is  
9 adaptive. Certain ideals and goals are part of the basis of the scenario development  
10 (particularly eco-sustainability, African rural social and economic development, and  
11 African tourism industry development) but the scenarios consider how these principles  
12 may be achieved in a world that is essentially beyond the control of the scenario makers  
13 (particularly along key eternal determinants: whether investors are short or long-term  
14 oriented; whether tourists are hedonistic or conscientious). In other words, the purpose  
15 is to consider how ecologically sustainable resorts may be enacted in world that the  
16 client and the African stakeholders in general have little influence, or are making the  
17 strong assumption they have influence. The scenarios are therefore future-aligning: how  
18 to best achieve eco-sustainable tourist solution is a world of weak influence.  
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## 25 26 27 **Scenario Case Study 2.**

### 28 ***Live the Future, Metropolitan Life, Cape Town, 2005 (scenarios for 2025)***

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31 In 2004/5 Metropolitan Life and the Metropolitan Life Foundation created a set of  
32 scenarios for AIDS in South Africa to 2025. The goals of the Live the Future scenario  
33 project are defined as follows:<sup>3</sup>

34 “The *Live the Future* project aims to mobilise leadership from all sectors, and anyone  
35 else who can make a difference, with a view to drawing together and intensifying  
36 efforts to mitigate the effects of HIV and AIDS in South Africa. Our donor,  
37 Metropolitan Group, has for a long time played an active role in the HIV and AIDS  
38 arena, having developed the Doyle model – the first actuarial tool to project the  
39 demographic effect of HIV and AIDS in southern Africa. We view the *Live the Future*  
40 scenarios as an equally pivotal tool to:  
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- 46 • create a shared understanding of the key factors driving the HIV and AIDS epidemic  
47 so as to minimise the spread and the effect of the epidemic;
- 48 • create a vision of a successful future that will inspire people from different sectors to  
49 commit to specific actions at an individual, organisational, community as well as at  
50 national level;
- 51 • identify key actions required to align, intensify and broaden efforts countrywide so as  
52 to maximise synergies and more effectively use limited resources;

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57 <sup>3</sup> source: <http://www.livethefuture.co.za/overview.php>

- influence policies and agendas at different levels.”

The purpose is further elaborated as follows: “The key question we asked when developing the scenarios was: 'How will HIV and AIDS *and our responses* (new italics) shape the future of South Africa by 2025?'... The Live the Future scenarios suggest that unless we aim to prevent new infections, collaborate and adopt a holistic and integrated approach, we will make little progress in stemming the tide... Join us in 'living this dream' by taking the necessary steps to shape South Africa's future in areas where you have influence, i.e. in your personal life, in your community and in your work or professional capacity. Together we can create a South Africa beyond expectation.”

Scenarios were built around the uncertainties high vs. low economic growth; and high vs. low social collaboration, as follows:



The scenario elaborations are as follows:<sup>4</sup>

**Scenario 1: Autumn of Limited Opportunity (High economic growth, low social collaboration)**

**Key characteristics** • Weak self-serving leadership • Few partnerships • Focus on blame, stigma and conspiracy • No behaviour change: drugs, sexual violence, gender inequality • Contradictory beliefs about HIV and AIDS • High crime • AIDS response: fake cures, corrupt systems

<sup>4</sup> The scenario elaborations provided are transcripts of the scenarios, as found at <http://www.livethefuture.co.za/overview.php>

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4 **The focus:** Under a Winter of Discontent South Africans are focusing on apportioning  
5 blame for the unabated effects of the HIV and AIDS epidemic on South Africa. Stigma,  
6 denialism and conspiracy theories are the order of the day in the absence of a strong  
7 integrated response to HIV and AIDS. The response to AIDS has become desperate under  
8 a weak and self-serving leadership. Few partnerships are formed and the National AIDS  
9 Plan becomes ineffective. Business response is limited under this low growth scenario  
10 and labour is regarded as dispensable. There is a weak civil society, which is  
11 disappointed by the State Welfare system, and criminal and violent behaviour fuel the  
12 epidemic. Donor programmes are implemented on hidden agendas and with a short-term  
13 focus. Donor funding is significantly reduced over time.

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17 **Individual behaviour:** Awareness of HIV is low with only one in five of South Africans  
18 knowing their HIV status by 2010. A high level of gender inequality and sexual violence  
19 still exist and criminal activity exploits these weaknesses in society. Condoms are only  
20 used consistently by around 40% of youth and 24% of adults. Those not in a long-term  
21 relationship change partners more frequently and South Africans are not taking individual  
22 responsibility for their health.

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26 **The new society:** The Winter scenario society experiences negative economic growth  
27 and low social collaboration. There is an increase in income inequality and  
28 unemployment, which exacerbates criminal and corrupt behaviour. This results in the  
29 flight of the wealthy and the exploitation of the poor. The Human Development Index  
30 (HDI) continues to drop after 2005 and AIDS reverses years of developmental gains  
31 made by some communities. Life expectancy drops to 50 years by 2025. Households are  
32 severely affected by AIDS with income reduction, increased borrowing, the sale of  
33 productive assets, and illiteracy and malnutrition being the order of the day. The State  
34 welfare system is strained and unable to cope. The large proportion of unskilled labour  
35 increases unemployment and skilled labour remains in short supply. Reduced foreign  
36 investment coupled with continuous deaths in the workplace leads to some companies  
37 closing down. The market shrinks with most expenditure focused on basic goods and  
38 security. Insurance remains expensive and unavailable to most HIV positive individuals  
39 along with most financial services.

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46 **What does the HIV epidemic look like by 2025?** The total number of people infected  
47 with HIV in 2025 will have increased to 5.4 million from current estimates of 5 million.  
48 The estimated HIV prevalence rate amongst the ages 20 to 64 will remain high at 18%. A  
49 total of 786 000 South Africans will be in the final stages of the disease and in need of  
50 antiretroviral treatment. AIDS deaths per annum will be a high 445 000.

#### 51 52 53 54 **Scenario 2: Winter of Discontent (Low economic growth, low social collaboration)**

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57 **Key characteristics** • Weak self-serving leadership • Few partnerships • Focus on blame,  
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3 stigma and conspiracy • No behaviour change: drugs, sexual violence, gender inequality •  
4 Contradictory beliefs about HIV and AIDS • High crime • AIDS response: fake cures,  
5 corrupt systems  
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7 **The focus:** Under a *Winter of Discontent* South Africans are focusing on apportioning  
8 blame for the unabated effects of the HIV and AIDS epidemic on South Africa. Stigma,  
9 denialism and conspiracy theories are the order of the day in the absence of a strong  
10 integrated response to HIV and AIDS. The response to AIDS has become desperate under  
11 a weak and self-serving leadership. Few partnerships are formed and the National AIDS  
12 Plan becomes ineffective. Business response is limited under this low growth scenario  
13 and labour is regarded as dispensable. There is a weak civil society, which is  
14 disappointed by the State Welfare system, and criminal and violent behaviour fuel the  
15 epidemic. Donor programmes are implemented on hidden agendas and with a  
16 short-term focus. Donor funding is significantly reduced over time.  
17

18 **Individual behaviour:** Awareness of HIV is low with only one in five of South Africans  
19 knowing their HIV status by 2010. A high level of gender inequality and sexual violence  
20 still exist and criminal activity exploits these weaknesses in society. Condoms are only  
21 used consistently by around 40% of youth and 24% of adults. Those not in a long-term  
22 relationship change partners more frequently and South Africans are not taking individual  
23 responsibility for their health.  
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25 **The new society:** The *Winter* scenario society experiences negative economic growth  
26 and low social collaboration. There is an increase in income inequality and  
27 unemployment, which exacerbates criminal and corrupt behaviour. This results in the  
28 flight of the wealthy and the exploitation of the poor. The Human Development Index  
29 (HDI) continues to drop after 2005 and AIDS reverses years of developmental gains  
30 made by some communities. Life expectancy drops to 50 years by 2025. Households are  
31 severely affected by AIDS with income reduction, increased borrowing, the sale of  
32 productive assets, and illiteracy and malnutrition being the order of the day. The State  
33 welfare system is strained and unable to cope. The large proportion of unskilled labour  
34 increases unemployment and skilled labour remains in short supply. Reduced foreign  
35 investment coupled with continuous deaths in the workplace leads to some companies  
36 closing down. The market shrinks with most expenditure focused on basic goods and  
37 security. Insurance remains expensive and unavailable to most HIV positive individuals  
38 along with most financial services.  
39

40 **What does the HIV epidemic look like by 2025?** The total number of people infected  
41 with HIV in 2025 will have increased to 5.4 million from current estimates of 5 million.  
42 The estimated HIV prevalence rate amongst the ages 20 to 64 will remain high at 18%. A  
43 total of 786 000 South Africans will be in the final stages of the disease and in need of  
44 antiretroviral treatment. AIDS deaths per annum will be a high 445 000.  
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### Scenario 3. Spring of Hope (low economic growth, high social collaboration)

**Key Characteristics** • Idealistic broad-based but uncoordinated leadership led by communities • Small duplicating partnerships • Powerful pockets in civil society responding well • Focus on acceptance and care • Moderate behaviour change • Better gender equality • AIDS response: chronic, manageable disease

**The focus:** The Spring of Hope focuses on acceptance, care and cooperation. AIDS is seen as a chronic disease and society learns to live with the epidemic despite its devastating effect. Leadership is idealistic in certain pockets of communities, but efforts are uncoordinated and not powerful on a national level. Civil society becomes very strong in their response to AIDS and occasional partnerships are formed with the public and private sector as well as international donors to address the effect of HIV and AIDS. Churches play a key role around care. These efforts largely remain fragmented and uncoordinated leading to duplication and resulting in the unsustainable use of time and resources. Business response to the epidemic is strong in the workplace and community, however, due to a low GDP growth environment, business input is mostly limited to those few who are employed.

**Individual behaviour:** Within this self-reliant society, certain pockets of the community become quite powerful and encourage people to get tested. Just more than one third of South Africans know their HIV status by 2010. More than 70% of the youth and around 40% of adults use condoms consistently. Those not in a long-term relationship change partners less often due to pressure from society. Many communities empathise and care for AIDS affected households, and encourage higher gender equality and less sexual violence.

**The new society:** Low economic growth and an inadequate response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic result in a South Africa with low GDP per capita. Education remains poor, but life expectancy increases slightly to 56 years by 2025. Not much improvement has been made in the Human Development Index (HDI) since 2005. Skilled resources emigrate due to lack of employment opportunities and poor service delivery. Most households are affected by AIDS but communities form cooperatives and assist with healthcare provision. The State Welfare system becomes overburdened and government resources are limited. Shortage of skilled labour worsens with emigration and poor education leading to the struggle of business to remain competitive globally. Foreign direct investment reduces in this low growth environment. Funeral insurance remains highly popular and the market for basic goods and services is strong.

**What does the HIV epidemic look like by 2025?** The total number of people infected with HIV in 2025 will have reduced to 3.4 million from the current estimates of 5 million. The estimated HIV prevalence rate amongst the ages 20 to 64 will have reduced

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3 to 11% from the current estimated 19%. A total of half a million South Africans will be  
4 in the final stages of the disease and in need of antiretroviral treatment. AIDS deaths per  
5 annum will be reduced to around 292 000.  
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9 **Scenario 4: Summer for All People (high economic growth, high social**  
10 **collaboration)**  
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13 **Key characteristics** • Strong collaborative leadership committed to a developmental  
14 society and led by government • Effective large-scale public-private partnerships • Focus  
15 on prevention, also provision of treatment and care • Personal responsibility for health  
16 • Wide-spread behaviour change • Strong social net • Integrated AIDS response  
17

18 **The focus:** The Summer for All People focuses on prevention in order to reduce new  
19 HIV infections in an already advanced mature HIV epidemic. Care and treatment are also  
20 important but the AIDS response is integrated to ensure that every level of society  
21 focuses on prevention, care and treatment. In order to achieve this, a strong collaborative  
22 leadership has emerged by 2010 with effective public-private partnerships to support the  
23 National AIDS Plan resulting in successful implementation. In the *Summer* scenario  
24 business becomes sustainable as a result of the new environment that has led to a smaller  
25 HIV epidemic but also as a result of its own initiatives around socially responsible  
26 investment and HIV and AIDS workplace and community initiatives. A strong civil  
27 society is consulted and integrated in the National AIDS response. Donor programmes  
28 become sustainable and are well coordinated.  
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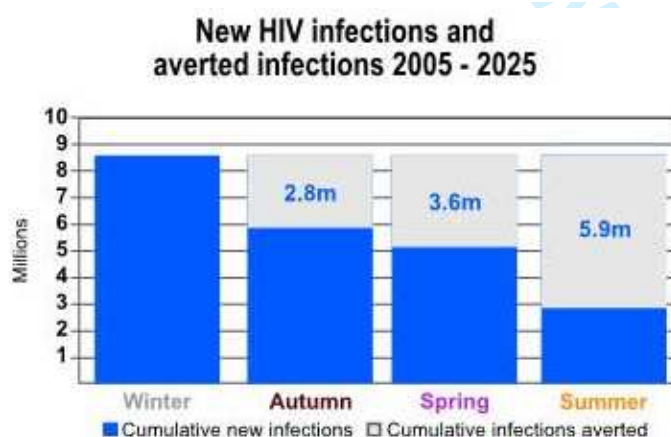
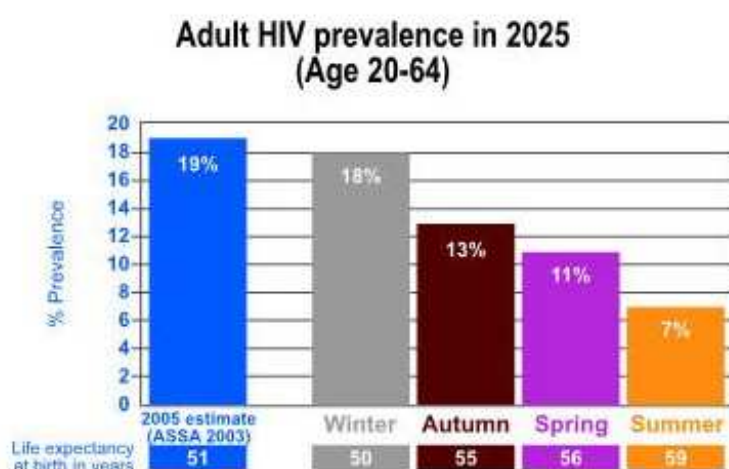
30 **Individual behaviour:** The above positive environment results in widespread behaviour  
31 change. Around 40% of all South Africans and 60% of HIV-positive South Africans are  
32 aware of their HIV status by 2010. Most South Africans test regularly for HIV.  
33 Individuals take personal responsibility for their sexual health and behaviour. More than  
34 90% of the youth and around 60% of adults use condoms consistently. Those not in a  
35 long-term relationship change partners less often. A strong social net breaks the  
36 downward spiral of poverty and the increased risk of HIV infection. Effective law  
37 enforcement has a dramatic effect on averting sexual violence and drug abuse.  
38

39 **The new society:** South Africa emerges as a society where people are living longer and  
40 becoming more educated and skilled. The Human Development Index (HDI) increases  
41 slowly after 2005 as a result of higher life expectancy (59 years instead of 51 years),  
42 education and GDP per capita. Fewer households are affected by AIDS and those that are  
43 still affected receive support via state and private sector initiatives. Private and public  
44 healthcare initiatives reach most people. The stronger, more skilled labour force drives  
45 South Africa into a new era of economic growth. Business is utilising labour effectively  
46 and the cost of labour is competitive. More people enter the first economy, thereby  
47 spreading wealth. Skills are developed and retained. Foreign direct investment improves  
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and South Africa becomes more competitive globally.

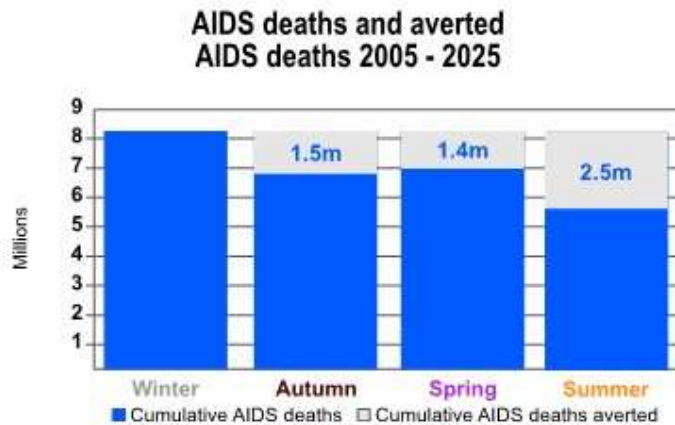
**What does the HIV epidemic look like by 2025?** The total number of people infected with HIV in 2025 will have reduced to 2.4million from the current estimates of 5million. The estimated HIV prevalence rate amongst the ages 20 to 64 will reduce to 7% from the current estimated 19%. A total of 340,000 South Africans will be in the final stages of the disease and in need of antiretroviral treatment. AIDS deaths per annum will be reduced by 50% to about 200,000.

The following charts summarise the projections for each of the scenarios on key variables:<sup>5</sup>



5,9 million new HIV infections are averted in the Summer for All People scenario by 2025.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.livethefuture.co.za/overview.php>



In the Summer for All People scenario we are likely to avert 2,5 million AIDS deaths by 2025.

Further, the Metropolitan Life scenario work is presented with the following advice and exhortations:<sup>6</sup>

**“Respond to the Challenge”**

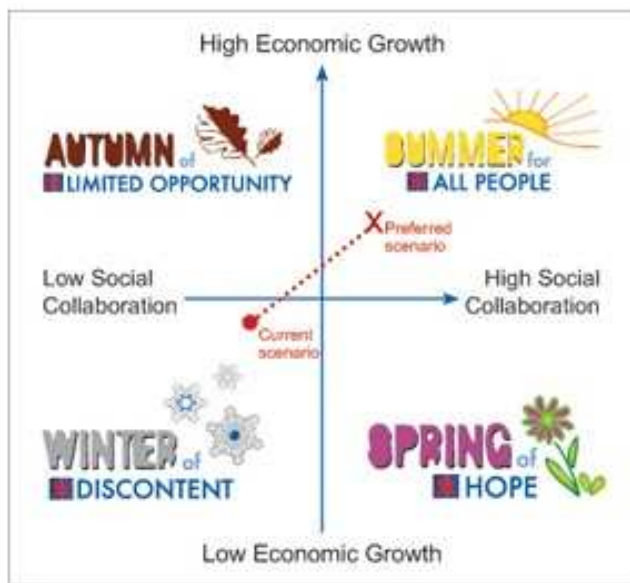
“For us to achieve a Summer for All People in South Africa, we need ‘Leadership by All, at All levels’. Everyone can play an important part to make the Summer for All People a reality. To make a real difference, we need concerted, integrated and coordinated efforts by individuals and groups across the country. We believe that you can play a role in areas where you have influence, i.e. in your personal life, in your community and in your work or professional capacity.”

**“How do you move from the current scenario to your preferred scenario?”**

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.livethefuture.co.za/map.php>



Figure 5. Current versus Preferred Scenario



**An individual level:** For example, you could go for voluntary HIV counselling and testing so that you know your HIV status.

**A family level:** For example, provide a sibling who is living with HIV with love and care or speak to a family member about situations that may put them at risk of becoming HIV positive.

**A community level:** For example, participate in a community group that is providing HIV and AIDS prevention information to youth in schools.

**An organisational/institutional level:** For example, you may volunteer your time to assist in the development of a workplace policy and programme.

**A macro-level:** For example, you may work collaboratively with other institutions to implement strategies that are well coordinated and organise resources so that they assist those working at the other levels.

### Live the Future Workshops

The centrepiece of the scenario-based initiative are the *Live the Future* community workshops. These seek “to create awareness, transfer knowledge, empower and inspire personal and group action. The existence and purpose of workshops are explained as follows:<sup>7</sup>

• **Who can apply for a Live the Future workshop?** □

Any organisation that would like to address the health and related challenges around HIV, AIDS and TB in its community.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.livethefuture.co.za/live-the-future-workshops.php>

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4 • **What is the cost involved?** □ The Metropolitan Foundation sponsors the fees of the  
5 Live the Future facilitators, the workshop material and, pending approval, the venue  
6 and equipment hire as well as catering and transport costs.

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8 • **Who can benefit from a Live the Future workshop?** □ Everybody, including:  
9 corporates that would like to establish the driving forces behind the HIV epidemic in  
10 their own communities; small businesses that cannot afford expensive training and  
11 motivational workshops; NPOs that would like to collaborate with other NPOs,  
12 businesses and government departments; organisations faced with HIV-related  
13 challenges on a regular basis; community leaders and development workers; teachers  
14 and youth workers; and social workers.

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16 • **How do I apply for a free Live the Future workshop?** □ Send an e-mail to  
17 [organiser email and phone number provided]. You will be sent a Workshop Request  
18 Form and, pending approval, an accredited Live the Future facilitator will be assigned  
19 to your group.”  
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25 Summary: The *Live the Future* scenarios are created to *change* the future of the AIDS  
26 epidemic in South Africa. They do not suggest that South Africans should be ready to  
27 adapt as best as possible to each of the scenarios, nor mechanisms for best managing in  
28 each. Rather they develop a picture of what the world will look like if poor choices are  
29 made vs. if better choices are made, and they drive and agenda for getting people,  
30 communities, and policymakers to make the better choices. They seek to influence the  
31 future towards a vision, through consciousness-raising and collaborative action,  
32 changing behaviour (at the individual, family, group, organisation, and macro level) so  
33 as to bring about a better future.  
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42 These two scenario projects are highly instructive in their similarities and differences,  
43 thus their comparison is illuminating for understanding contrasting archetypal purposes  
44 in scenario work, and methods that best fit these purposes. The projects are similar in  
45 that they are both situated Africa, consider effectively the same 20-year future, and  
46 have a clear social and developmental agenda. Both stress uncertainty and  
47 unpredictability concerning the direction and nature of future developments; both  
48 examine change drivers and resulting trends in their sector, provide integrated images  
49 of future outcomes, and consider the implications. Further, methodologically they  
50 follow a very similar scenario preparation phases (identifying drivers of change,  
51 predetermine elements, etc., in workshop forums) and then use the same (2x2) axes of  
52 uncertainty as scenario scaffolding to provide the basis for four alternative pictures of  
53 the future, which they then elaborate in story form. It would therefore be tempting to  
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4 conclude merely that they both “use the scenario method,” but this would be to miss the  
5 fundamental category distinction in purpose that underlies each project, and the  
6 nuances of methodology that allows them to achieve this purpose – with very clear  
7 implications for effective scenario building in Africa and in general – as the following  
8 section elaborates.  
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### 11 **Mechanisms of shifting purpose**

12 There are many markers of visionary as opposed to adaptive scenario work, as  
13 discussed, (notably the consensus-building in the preparation phase, and the existence  
14 of post-scenario social action items). But the primary technique in shifting purpose  
15 between adaptive and normative is achieved in the *selection* of the structuring axes of  
16 uncertainty (whether or not the 2x2 scenario matrix is used). The axes of uncertainty  
17 are the key uncertainties foreseen in the future of the organisation and its stakeholders  
18 (and the scenarios are alternative explorations of them, that is, alternative “resolutions”  
19 of key uncertainties).  
20

21 Assuming the 2x2 matrix structure is used – as is by far the most common technique,  
22 and the case in the studies above – a normative scenario set is achieved by choosing at  
23 least one of the two axes where the uncertainty can be, or it is assumed to be *under the*  
24 *control* of the stakeholders or participants in the future, and therefore which could be  
25 resolved to a better outcome by better choices. In *Live the Future*, the high vs. low  
26 economy is considered at least partially controllable through positive action  
27 (particularly good governance and stamping out corruption); but it is the social  
28 collaboration axis, particularly, that is considered wholly within the power of people  
29 and policymakers (to shape towards a positive outcome). In contrast, both axes chosen  
30 in the *Eco-Resorts of the Future* scenarios – axes of uncertainty to do with the future  
31 actions of resort developers and tourists – are considered effectively beyond the control  
32 of Tanzanian stakeholders and policymakers.  
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34 To summarise: if the uncertainty chosen is an internal uncertainty – an uncertainty as to  
35 how the scenario-builders or the stakeholder groups they represent – will behave, with  
36 the implication this behaviour can be influenced, then the scenarios will have fulfilled  
37 one condition on the road to becoming normative.  
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40 The other condition is that the internal uncertainty over the choice the subject group  
41 will make has a clearly and commonly agreed positive vs. negative outcome. Where the  
42 axes of uncertainty are internal and characterised in such a way that there is no question  
43 (all stakeholders would agree) which outcome would be the better outcome for all  
44 concerned, we have normative scenarios. In *Live the Future* everyone would prefer  
45 social collaboration and a good economy.  
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4 Note that when one crosses two axes, both with clearly agreed good vs bad outcome  
5 profiles, the result is “heaven-and-hell” scenarios. That is, in the quadrant where good  
6 outcome meets good outcome, the result is “heaven”; when bad meets bad, it’s “hell”;  
7 and the other two scenarios are middling, muddle-through worlds. This is clearly the  
8 case in the Metropolitan Life set, dominated by “Summer” vs “Winter” outcomes (with  
9 Spring and Autumn being the muddle-throughs). In the *Eco-Resorts* set, by contrast, it  
10 is unclear that all stakeholders would agree which outcome on each of the two axes is  
11 preferable. Therefore the scenarios emerge not as heaven-and-hell, but as various  
12 alternative worlds in which the stakeholders would have to act differently to achieve  
13 their goals (ecologically sustainable resorts, rural community development, and tourism  
14 development). Although some scenarios fulfil this brief better than others, there is no  
15 one clear scenario to aspire to or norm to. The entire purpose platform is different: it is  
16 to achieve as far as possible the goals of the Tanzanian stakeholders, no matter what  
17 future comes to pass.  
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### 25 **From scenario purpose to strategy**

26 To understand the distinctions between adaptive and visionary-normative scenario  
27 building more fully, we need to consider the alignment between each scenario purpose  
28 and strategy. Those who build scenarios for future-aligning, “adaptive” reasons are  
29 looking to tell consolidated stories about the possible evolution of driving forces and  
30 uncertainties in order to improve their own competitive alignment with future  
31 opportunities. They create scenarios to understand where and how to change their own  
32 offerings or business model or policy initiatives or alliance base, etc., to align with and  
33 benefit from forces over which they have little or no control, and so achieve best  
34 outcomes whatever scenario plays out.  
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40 Adaptive scenarios improve strategic decision-making because they provide different  
41 plausible future worlds which function as “wind-tunnels” or “testbeds” in which to  
42 consider decisions.<sup>8</sup> An organisation’s current strategy (or alternative or proposed new  
43 strategies) can be analysed in each of the scenarios, forcing managers to ask themselves  
44 whether their means of achieving their goals make sense and would work in different  
45 contexts. In other words, management is able to investigate the key success factors in  
46 each future scenario and how they might be different to those of today. They have  
47 means to see what key capabilities will be required in each scenario, and consider the  
48 organisation’s present strength or weakness in these capabilities.  
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57 <sup>8</sup> Heijden, K vd., et al, “The Sixth Sense” Wiley & Sons, UK, 2002.  
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4 An organisation is also able to derive strategic suggestion – ideas and options they had  
5 not yet thought of – by asking: “What does this scenario tell us about what will be  
6 necessary?” What kind of organisation or company would be best adapted for this  
7 scenario? Obviously, two organisations looking at the same scenario set may derive  
8 different interpretations and therefore different strategy from it. Where there is a gap  
9 between an enterprise’s current competencies and the knowledge and capabilities the  
10 enterprise will need to succeed in each of the scenarios, it must then find ways to close  
11 it. Gaps are typically plugged via organisational learning or R&D and product  
12 development; investment in expansion or in another company; partnerships and  
13 strategic alliances; outsourcing and buying in skills; etc.  
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19 In adaptive scenario work, therefore, there should be no intrinsically good or bad  
20 scenarios. In fact, to be useful as decision testbeds for a future where the subject  
21 organisation has little, if any, control, scenarios must each be plausible and challenging  
22 in their own way, while being neither good or bad *per se*. For example, in its 2001  
23 Global Scenarios “People and Connections: Scenarios to 2020” Shell describes two  
24 possible worlds, *Business Class*, a globally integrated, business dominated world led by  
25 American culture and values; and *Prism*: a world with different cultures and ethnicities  
26 circumscribing and shaping the business environment. Neither is better or worse. Each  
27 forces managers to consider how they would best operate in such an environment. An  
28 organisation or company should only see a future operating environment as “bad” with  
29 reference to its particular legacy competencies, and a bad scenario should therefore  
30 raise questions about the relevance of these competencies for the future. In fact, every  
31 scenario is good for someone (rising incidences of skin cancer in Australia is fabulous  
32 for sun cream makers, etc.) and the question the organisation should be asking itself is,  
33 for any scenario: who would it be good for? Why is that? How do we become more like  
34 that?  
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36 (Notwithstanding this, managers are prone look at a scenario set and judge one as  
37 “good” – because it implies robust demand for current products and services or would  
38 be a favourable contextual environment to operate in given the organisation’s current  
39 resources and goals, that is, the organisations legacy skills and resource base.  
40 Nevertheless managers are tasked with and judged by their ability to find the initiatives  
41 that advance their organisation, whatever context emerges, assuming, as is almost  
42 always the case, they do not have power over how the future evolves.)  
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### 53 **From visionary purpose to strategy**

54 As we have seen, organisations such as Metropolitan Life who do scenario planning to  
55 influence the future, use scenarios in a completely different way. They create a scenario  
56 to define and depict an ideal future, that is, they make a normative scenario that carries  
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3 their preferred outcome (and sometimes, as in this case, a guideline for getting there).  
4 The vision is *not* one among various objective scenarios about the way the external  
5 environment may evolve. It makes no attempt to provide a plausible mix of good and  
6 bad. It is a story about how things would look if everything went right. This vision is  
7 made more acute by placing it alongside one or more non-ideal scenarios, each with  
8 negative consequences. Where adaptive scenarios aim to group seemingly disparate  
9 trends and variables, in order to be able to anticipate alternative plausible outcomes and  
10 broaden thinking about challenges and options for the organisation, normative scenarios  
11 are created to define an ideal state and pull an organisation or a community forward to  
12 it.  
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19 As a normative scenario is created for the purpose of guiding a community, nation, or  
20 the world to a better future, its first step is almost always eliciting the shared  
21 preferences, values, fears, and hopes of the stakeholders involved. Sometimes this is  
22 simple – we all want fresh air to breathe and clean water to drink, etc. But beyond basic  
23 goods and rights, different interest groups typically have different versions of what  
24 constitutes an ideal future. Normative scenario building therefore typically spends  
25 significant workshop time on consensus-building, surfacing and often bartering over the  
26 ideals that stakeholders wish for, to create the single, shared vision that satisfies all.  
27 Typically, divergent interests will be asked to develop a consensus future together,  
28 which encourages disparate players to find points of agreement and develops strategic  
29 alignment and “buy-in” to the desired future from all sides. (Sometimes normative  
30 scenarios workshops are themselves a catalyst for problem-solving at the national or  
31 regional level, notwithstanding what the scenarios themselves achieve). Adaptive  
32 scenarios, by contrast, never rely on consensus for any scenario. Nor are they trying to  
33 elicit or promote a consensus of future ideals in the group. In fact they thrive on the  
34 opposite – divergent, iconoclastic thinking in the scenario-building group. To this effect,  
35 sometimes special outsiders, so-called “remarkable people”, are brought in to stretch  
36 the internal debate and “problematise” consensus positions.  
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46 A classic example of normative scenarios is the 1992 Mont Fleur scenarios conducted  
47 in South Africa, where 21 representative of a cross-section of society: black, white,  
48 workers, managers, freedom fighters, left and right-wing militants, businessmen,  
49 religious leaders, youth leaders, union leaders and so on gathered to define an ideal  
50 scenario for the future of the country.<sup>9</sup> (They met during the “Codesa talks” period  
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55 <sup>9</sup> An almost identical scenario set was created by the same facilitators for Columbia in 1997. The process  
56 was marked by incorporating a particularly broad spread of interests – academics, militia fighters, peasants,  
57 left and right-wing militants, businessmen, professionals, guerillas, religious leaders, indigenous people,  
58 intellectuals, youth, media, armed forces, NGO members, politicians, union leaders, among others – were  
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3 before power went to the African National Congress government in April 1994). The  
4 Mont Fleur group came up with a visionary scenario called *Flight of the Flamingos*, a  
5 quick, peaceful transition to a popular government that maintained a free market  
6 economy. They also created *Icarus*, a rapid transition but in a context of nationalisation  
7 or other artificial redistribution of wealth; *Lame Duck* where the political transition was  
8 slow and incomplete; and *Ostrich* where there was no political transition at all. The  
9 Flight of the Flamingos scenario was *not* created to be a realistic portrait of the future.  
10 As with the *Live the Future* scenarios, it was created to be the beacon and guide to the  
11 best possible future that the representative cross-section of stakeholders could agree on,  
12 particularly considering the three alternative scenarios that described catastrophes or  
13 hamstrung situations that would result if the right choices were not made.<sup>10</sup>  
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20 Deriving strategic choices from a normative scenario is done by taking the normative  
21 scenario and determining: “What it would take to get from here to the vision and/or  
22 what do we need to do to avoid the negative scenarios?” Strategies are assessed by their  
23 ability to advance towards the vision. Scenario makers seek to identify leverage points  
24 where they can influence the evolution of events to make the future more like the ideal  
25 scenario. In the Mont Fleur scenarios, necessary strategies to effect the vision were  
26 those that promoted a quick legitimate transfer of power, growth of democratic civil  
27 society and free market institutions, and a slow but steady resolution of economic  
28 imbalances between communities. As discussed above, the ideal-scenario achievement  
29 strategies of Metropolitan Life have to do with drawing all levels of community into  
30 education and social collaboration in tackling the AIDS situation.  
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### 37 **Implications for African scenario building**

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39 Before drawing the implications for scenario work in Africa it is necessary to dispel a  
40 few shibboleths. First, it is important, above all, to see that neither method is “better”:  
41 both are exactly fit for purpose (both scenarios case studies under discussion are  
42 successful in their own terms). The Metropolitan Life scenarios are ideal for the  
43 outcome intended: to mobilise social change to head off the AIDS epidemic. The Eco-  
44 resorts scenario set prepares Tanzanian stakeholders for situations beyond their control.  
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51 brought together to define an ideal future of transformation and national reconciliation. The visionary  
52 scenario was called “In Unity Lies Strength.”

53 <sup>10</sup> This mode of future-influencing scenario work was made famous in 1980s in efforts promoted by  
54 Anglo American and Clem Sunter (‘High Road, Low Road’); and during the Codesa period (Mont Fleur  
55 Scenarios). This has been followed up by the CSIR (SADC 2015); the African Leadership Institute (SA  
56 2020); and the recent ‘Dinokeng’ Scenarios, to name just a few.  
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4 Second, both adaptive and normative approaches seek to bring about what is commonly  
5 and loosely referred to in the scenario literature as “a preferred future.” It is the *path* to  
6 a preferred future that is different. One gets to preferred by aligning with changing  
7 external conditions; the other gets to preferred by influencing changing external  
8 conditions. Third, note that both approaches are “active”. In one case the organisation is  
9 active on itself; in the other it is active on the external conditions.  
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13 Therefore none of these considerations weigh in correctly choosing which “purpose  
14 platform” – adaptive or normative – to use. The key consideration is simple: does the  
15 scenario subject group (the organisation or stakeholder base the scenarios are created  
16 for) have enough influence (or potentially enough influence, or ways of mustering  
17 enough influence) over the real uncertainties that will change its operating environment  
18 to justify scenarios based on the assumption that such influence exists? That is, if it  
19 builds scenarios based on the assumption of being able to influence the world, the  
20 assumption must be a sound one. A subject organisation always has some influence  
21 over its sector or industry, but where future-influencing scenarios are created the  
22 assumption is that a very considerable influence exists – that enough influence via  
23 social consciousness raising or social/political engineering or similar exists, so that  
24 external uncertainties can in fact realistically be influenced.  
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32 This brings us to the key implication for scenario building in Africa. It is important, as  
33 Metropolitan Life have done, to define shared future visions and show how social and  
34 policymaking choices take us closer to or further away from them. But this should be  
35 restricted to situations where, and to the extent to which, stakeholder consciousness-  
36 raising towards better choices is in fact the primary determinant of future success. In  
37 most cases in Africa, however, while socially uplifting visions are important, they are  
38 not future determinant. There are many powerful forces in geopolitics, currency flows,  
39 energy technology advancement, raw materials market shifts, to name just a few, that  
40 will impact the continent and *over which it has little influence*. In any reasonable view  
41 of the future for the next generation or two, Africa, its people and its nations will be  
42 relatively weak players on the world stage and in world markets. (If China 2020  
43 determines that, for example, the natural gas price is to be denominated in renminbi,  
44 that’s the news. Africa will have to adapt whether it likes it or not, and notwithstanding  
45 any visions of influence it may have.) By inference, the game it is forced to play,  
46 therefore, overwhelmingly, is one of adaptation. In other words, for Africa to be “the  
47 land of the future,” it will have to do a lot of creative adapting to advance its causes in a  
48 world it does not control, and it will be best served by using scenario work in “adaptive  
49 mode,” along the lines used by Arup in *Eco-Resorts of the Future*.  
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3 Scenario projects in Africa (or anywhere else) should start with a clear understanding of  
4 the scenario platform purpose divide as described above, and choose the purpose  
5 platform that matches the real situation faced. Where scenario originators and builders  
6 can honestly say that the key uncertainties determining the future they are looking to  
7 succeed in are internal to the stakeholder group (however widely defined) and therefore  
8 primarily under its own influence, then visionary-normative scenarios along the lines of  
9 *Live the Future* are justifiable. Where, more commonly, determinants of the outcomes  
10 of key uncertainties are external and mostly beyond reasonable expectation of  
11 stakeholder influence, scenarios that demand and develop adaptive intent are required.  
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