<p:a_no_indent>INTRODUCTION

<p:text>Education has a particular relationship to the future. For policy-makers and leader-writers it's an engine of generational change, the mechanism through which societies meet the perceived challenge of the future. In this guise, it gives young people 'future-proof[1]' skills and capabilities, creating the new technologies and knowledge[2] on which continued growth depends (Irwin 2020; Facer 2011; Robertson 2005). In contrast to this instrumentalist view, a more humanist tradition within the philosophy of education imagines education as a venue for becoming a particular kind of person, creating futures through growth and flourishing (e.g., Hodgson et al., 2018; Osberg 2018; Biesta 2015). For others, education ensures that the values and beliefs of the present are reproduced, enduring into the future.

Universities produce the future in many ways: through the new possibilities for thought and action opened up through research; through the students that leave their campuses seeing the world in particular ways; through advice offered to policy teams and the wider public; and through all the other connections the university, as an institution, holds with civil society and the private sector. However, when it comes to the future of individual universities as organisations, managers tend to confine themselves to thinking about economic projections and contingency planning. These might be fine ways of thinking about the future in stable times, but the events of the last year have demonstrated how fragile and illusory stability can be.

The impacts of the global pandemic have abruptly challenged all aspects of university education (Watermeyer et al. 2021), demanding urgent responses on immediate operational horizons and raising difficult questions about the longer-term sustainability of business models, from remote students challenging fees set with the expectation of learning in person, to the capacity of university estate management to adapt to new guidelines on ventilation, or the new relationships between universities and technology providers. These pressures have also revealed deeper ongoing concerns over institutions' resilience in the face of wider oncoming economic, social, and environmental changes.

Moving forward without looking ahead can't be an option. The post-pandemic university will necessarily look very different to the institution that initially faced the pandemic. As Charters and Heitman (2021, 210) note, "epidemics are as much social, political, & economic events as they are biological; the 'end,' therefore, is as much a process of social & political negotiation as it is biomedical". Even the arrival, therefore, of the 'post-pandemic university' is subject to a degree of uncertainty which means it cannot be forecast, but requires the tools of strategic foresight for discussion.

In this chapter, we suggest that universities need to develop ways of creating their own narratives of the future, in order to anticipate what lies ahead and recognise possibilities for change. Our argument is that by developing their own capacity to imagine possible futures, rather than working with future narratives designed outside the university, institutions will be better placed to recognise their distinctive and heterogeneous character, to be clear about their particular orientation to the future and potential contribution to its development, and to strengthen the university community through this shared process. We use the practice of scenario planning as an example, describing one particular approach and suggesting that scenarios can be a useful device within a university for forming common futures.

The chapter is organised in the following way. First, we make a case for universities, as organisations, to consider the future and anticipate change, and briefly describe some of the features of universities that characterise their special relationship to the future. We then go on to describe the practice of scenario planning, drawing on work in futures studies and strategic planning to suggest that more benefit is derived from scenarios situated within the context of the organisation, and produced in collaboration with organisational stakeholders, than using pre-packaged, 'off-the-shelf' scenarios offered by consultancies and other organisations. We illustrate some of the benefits of this approach with reference to a case study from the University of Oslo, exploring the future of schooling in Norway at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on this and other examples, we make our principal argument for universities developing their own internal processes and capacity for creating scenarios, and close with a description of some of the necessary features of such a process.

<p:a_no_indent>'Engines of the future': the university's distinctive relationship to the future

<p:text>Facer and Wei (2021) and Facer (2019) explore the role of universities in society's conversations about the future, highlighting their role in producing and regulating ideas of the future, and suggesting that the institution of the university makes use of this capacity to maintain its position as an epistemic authority in the face of challenges from new authorities and sources of knowledge. They suggest (Facer and Wei 2021, 203) that universities might take on a new role, one in which their epistemic authority stems from the transparent and reflexive way in which they steward the production of knowledge about the future: their task is to "stimulate dialogue amongst different knowledge traditions" (Facer and Wei 2021, 205) to build new ways of imagining the future, recognising multiple accounts of change and causation, sensitive to the ways this knowledge accomplishes work in the world and the futures it might bring about, and mindful of the responsibility for these futures that accompanies the production of this knowledge, even if (or especially because) the outcome of the actions precipitated by this knowledge is unknown.

We suggest that this important task is necessary within individual universities as much as it is needed outside them. Indeed, such an internal focus may be a necessary precursor to universities creating the external conditions for bringing different accounts of futurity together, providing a venue in which to develop the practical capabilities this task requires. Just as 'the university' is, as Facer and Wei remind us, a diverse collection of institutions with their own settings and histories, so too is any one university a heterogeneous collection of different groups, all working with their own disciplinary, practical, and professional forms of knowledge. The task of convening a dialogue amongst these internal groups, all working with different ideas of how to create and police knowledge of the future, might be just as valuable as doing so externally.

Universities, as organisations with strategic decisions to take, and long-term projects to shepherd, must reflexively consider their own futures. This is not, however, a recipe for institutional introspection; rather, it is an acknowledgement that 'the university' is itself an ecosystem composed of diverse actors and relationships, whose boundaries are at certain times and places porous; if foresight work is understood as what van der Heijden (2005) calls "the art of strategic conversation", then that conversation must be careful to also capture the internal nuance, richness, and polyphony of the institution whose future is under discussion. If, as Facer and Wei suggest, the current conditions in which we need to act require new forms of knowledge about the future, collectively produced, then universities' reflexive consideration of their futures would also require this kind of approach, in order to coordinate action in the way demanded by the times.

Researchers and practitioners working in the fields of strategic foresight and futures studies have experience bringing together groups with different ways of creating knowledge about the future. They are sensitive to the ways that different disciplinary frames make some futures

more readily imagined, and make it impossible to imagine others. Narratives of possible futures produced within economics might differ greatly from those emerging from the environmental humanities, for example. Beyond disciplinary differences, the professional perspectives of institutional managers and administrators might include ways of thinking about the future that are hard to align with some academic colleagues. Maree Conway has explored the differences between academic and administrative perspectives in an Australian university using causal layered analysis, a technique developed within futures studies (Conway 2021): this is an example of the potential of tools from futures studies to help universities better understand themselves.

The field of futures studies offers, too, an example of disciplinary reflexivity, in the way that it has had to accommodate multiple forms of producing knowledge about the future since its inception after the Second World War. Beyond the probabilistic projections and policy-focused 'futurism' catalogued by the historian Jenny Andersson (2018), practitioners in the field have developed speculative and design-led approaches to imagining possible futures, developed community-focused participatory approaches to democratising futures, and learned to recognise future knowledge produced by groups and traditions outside the historic colonial powers of Europe and America. In these respects, the academic field of futures studies and the practice of strategic foresight have much in common with other fields of knowledge production. Futures as a field, however, was a home for early critique of modernist techniques for managing the future through quantitative models, with tools like scenario planning developing into techniques for enlarging participants' sense of the possible, moving beyond narrow conceptions of risk and contingency, or prediction and projection (Ahlqvist and Rhisiart 2015; Son 2015; Slaughter 2002; Bell and Mau 1971).

COVID-19 has created not just new challenges for the university, but also an intensification of issues which institutions already faced prior to the outbreak. In addition, the unsettling experience of the pandemic has encouraged a greater awareness of the extent to which institutions' operating contexts are characterised by turbulence, uncertainty, novelty, and ambiguity – the "TUNA conditions" described by Ramírez and Wilkinson (2016). These extend from the immediate context to wider uncertainties about how climate change might play out, or the future of infectious disease beyond the current pandemic. The Centre for Economic Policy Research's Beatrice Weder di Mauro, speaking in 2020 about the global economic impact of COVID-19, noted that despite the fact that expert scientists were well aware that a pandemic outbreak was a possibility: "There was no imagination to see where something like this could come from" (Sandbu 2021).

Many in higher education will recognise this sentiment, as they survey their sector in pandemic times: beyond the direct impacts of the coronavirus itself, the various technologies and procedures put in place to mitigate or overcome its impacts, such as hybrid and online teaching, have created their own uncertainties, wicked problems, and haphazard ways.

The move towards online learning has accelerated changes in the political economy of education (Williamson et al. 2020), with commercial education technology providers and their champions seeking to frame the pandemic as the catalyst for a new model of higher education. Universities' funding models are under examination, too, as students consider the value of learning remotely. There are certainly grounds for seeing this moment as an opportunity to recognise the limits of the present institutional form and build a new form of institution, perhaps acknowledging the role of universities in enabling the extractive and colonising industries at the root of the issues we collectively face.

The process we outline here is proposed as a way of doing some of the necessary work towards developing these post-pandemic universities, by giving them the tools to reframe and reperceive their situations in ways which remedy the want of imagination which Weder di Mauro diagnosed.

<p:a_no_indent>scenarios: an approach to thinking about multiple futures
<p:text>One well-recognised approach to thinking strategically and actionably about our relationship with the future is scenario planning. Spaniol and Rowland (2019) note that 'scenario' is a widely used, yet ill-defined term deployed by both scholars and practitioners who work on futures and foresight. They suggest that scenarios can be defined as a systematised set of comparatively different narrative descriptions about their users' external context, future oriented and plausibly possible.

Scenario planning emerged in the early days of the Cold War. Researchers at the RAND Corporation and Hudson Institute sought ways to wargame unprecedented nuclear conflicts in which, by definition, strategies could not be developed by analogy to previous military experience. A key figure, Herman Kahn, began to devise imagined futures that might sharpen leaders' thinking and highlight the implications of strategic choices:

<p:quotation>attempts to describe in some detail a hypothetical sequence of events that could lead plausibly to the situation envisaged [...] Some scenarios may explore and emphasize an element of a larger problem [...] Other scenarios can be used to produce, perhaps in impressionistic tones, the future development of the world as a whole, a culture, a nation, or some group or class. (Kahn and Wiener 1967)</p:quotation>

<p:text>Scenarios subsequently entered the corporate strategy toolkit, notably pioneered by Pierre Wack and colleagues at Royal Dutch Shell. As Kleiner (2008) discusses, Wack's work focused on the creation of imagined futures that were plausible, rather than probable or preferable: the aim was to enable decision makers' reperception of a strategic situation. The Shell approach inaugurated a new tradition, in which alternative futures could be used to frame and reframe a situation: testing strategies against scenarios like an aircraft design in the 'wind tunnel'; using imagined futures to generate fresh perspectives from which to reflect on today's decisions and their implications; creating a space for discussion and debate about future developments and their impact.

This tradition, we argue, can empower universities to engage in the kind of strategic contemplation of futures which will enable them to surmount or adapt to the challenges of the COVID-affected world. Specifically, the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach, with its emphasis on strategic reframing, offers a methodology for the reframing and reperception of present strategic circumstances from the vantage point of an imagined future.

<p:a_no_indent>Reperceiving the present through a collective learning experience
<p:text>In the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach, developed by Rafael Ramírez and Angela Wilkinson, the sense of the future is attended to "as a way of knowing the present, rather than considering the future as something that is knowable in advance" (Ramírez and Wilkinson 2016, 162). The future is understood as "part of the present; it comes to us and is expected to be different from the present as it unfolds and passes" (Ramírez et al. 2021). The scenario process invites participants to participate in cycles of perception and reperception, using plausible imagined futures to stretch their sense of what is going on around them and what is yet to transpire. Scenarios serve as alternative assessments of the future context, and their usefulness stems from their capacity to challenge the frames through which a situation is currently considered by its stakeholders.

By eschewing normative futures for an exploratory approach, scenario planning in this tradition also encourages a degree of humility in recognising our limited power to influence the environment in which we operate, by explicitly dividing that environment into two categories. The first is the immediate "transactional environment [...] which one can influence by interacting with the other actors that comprise it" (Ramírez and Wilkinson 2016, 222). This is distinguished from the broader "contextual environment [...] that is beyond the direct and indirect influence of a strategist [...], an actor (or set of actors)" (Ramírez and Wilkinson 2016, 217).

Such scenarios are generated from the juxtaposition of key uncertainties from the contextual environment: how might forces beyond our influence change the transactional environment of entities we can interact with over time? This style of scenario planning changes the sense we make of the world by shifting the frame or interpretive schema which enables perception (Ramírez and Wilkinson 2016). By highlighting that which previously lay beyond the frame of our understanding, scenarios show us more than merely expectations, projections, or the fulfilment of our wishes.

Scenarios of this kind may be valuable, as Burt and Nair (2020, 2) argue, not just for what is learned, but what is unlearned through the process of reperception: "letting go or relaxing the rigidities of previously held assumptions and beliefs, rather than forgetting them." The question becomes, in this tradition: whose perceptions are challenged? As Ged Davis, a former head of Shell's scenarios team, put it: "All successful scenarios are focused in the sense that they are derived from a fundamental consideration of their client's dilemmas and needs" (Wilkinson and Kupers 2013).

For the post-pandemic university, it is vital to reflect on the user, use, and purpose of the scenarios being constructed, and on which voices are welcomed into the scenario-building process. Ramírez and Wilkinson (2016) apply a culinary metaphor to scenario planning. "A good chef," they state, "does not simply follow the recipe book; instead, he [sic] is mindful of the quality of the dining experience. He does not just cook and serve up dishes" (p. 123). Later, they explain the purpose of their introduction to the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach: "rather than providing a good recipe [...] we aim to cultivate chefs capable of delivering remarkable gastronomic experiences" (p. 151).

The entire art of strategic foresight may be seen through this extended metaphor, with professional 'chefs' preparing strategically nourishing and piquant future visions from ingredients available in the present: evidence, insight and expert opinion, signals of emergent change. Different schools of thought regarding strategic foresight may be seen as rival practitioners of haute cuisine, but there is also a danger of the post-pandemic university relying on 'oven ready' scenario planning, reheating future visions which are pre-packaged and not tailored to their dietary needs – with some stakeholders shut out of the kitchen, and not even allowed to state their dietary requirements.

Ramírez and Wilkinson note that scenario planning must be alive to the dynamics between stakeholders in a given issue: "[i]n helping people in groups and organizations to develop their own sense of future it is important to pay attention to power and governances" and that attention to social processes can help avoid "what might be considered the 'colonization of the future' by dominant powers or vested interests [...] when 'the strategic agenda' is imposed from the outside or unilaterally by the powerful" (2016, 47).

<p:a_no_indent>'Oven ready' futures

<p;text>Ramírez et al. (2021) have commented that "COVID-19, the economic inequality enhanced by the pandemic, the climate crisis, and geopolitical tensions have accelerated the desire and need for excellent scenario planning. Unfortunately, the demand for seasoned, competent scenario planners has outstripped supply." Their tongue-in-cheek prescriptions for "sure-fire ways to do scenario planning badly" serve to remind readers that generic scenarios are "relevant to no one without significant re-working and adaptation".

Elsewhere, Lang and Ramírez (2021) have noted that "[m]any entities produce scenario sets and make them publicly available with the intent that they be used widely by leaders". They question whether such "off-the-shelf" scenarios can deliver the usefulness offered by bespoke work tailored to an organisation's unique circumstances, and problematise the question of using scenarios developed for another setting or purpose. Lang and Ramírez offer the example of corporate planners using a set of scenarios from the World Economic Forum (WEF). As the corporation came to face issues which had not been covered by the WEF, planners added a

new scenario which could not fit into the pre-existing set. This reduced the value of the set as a whole, given that meaningful contrast between scenarios is a key aspect of this approach. The public scenarios of futurist Bryan Alexander offer an example relevant to the higher education sector. In his book *Academia Next* (2020a) and his blog post "Higher education in fall 2020: three pandemic scenarios" (Alexander 2020b), Alexander sets out sketched visions for the future of the university, primarily focused on the United States and drawing on a foresight approach involving the extrapolation of identified trends, alone or in concert. Such scenarios are limited by their necessary broadness. Alexander's pandemic scenarios essentially cover whether COVID-19 impacts the general population in a single, short wave; successive uneven waves over a longer duration; or a 'long plague' of steady impact over one or two years. They then set out how actors such as the university have responded, especially with regard to online, in-person, or hybrid teaching.

The risk with scenarios like this, created outside the university for a hypothetical institution by a single author, is that they become reductive, constraining rather than enlarging thinking and offering a generic depiction of the higher education sector. Scenarios developed by institutions are particular to them and their organisational context; while 'oven ready' work such as Alexander's might be useful in stimulating thought about the higher education sector as a whole and its relationship to wider society, it lacks two aspects of 'home cooked' scenario building.

The first is specificity: pre-prepared scenarios cannot be responsive to the particular context and aims of an individual organisation. The second is that, by omitting the scenario creation and iteration process, the chance is lost to develop an internal dialogue, bringing together the diverse voices which make up the organisation and its stakeholders. This not only affects the richness of the strategic conversation which might ensue, but means that the scenario set will not have been specifically designed to challenge the current assumptions of the scenario users, limiting its ability to encourage strategic reframing.

Lang and Ramírez (2021) offer suggestions for "getting the most from publicly available scenarios", including tailoring and testing of their usability – but these demand rather more than the "tweaking" Alexander (2020b) acknowledges might be necessary "depending on local circumstances."

<p:a_no_indent>The scenario as transitional space

<p:text>Ramírez and Wilkinson (2016) argue that when the scenario "meal" is well prepared and thoughtfully served, scenario planning can create "transitional spaces", building on Winnicott's research into how young children use teddy bears as "transitional objects" (p. 35). For Ramírez and Drevon (2005), in such spaces "the status quo can be suspended or temporarily bracketed, freeing thinking from established here and now constraints and allowing one to look at one's current situation from an alternative point of view" (p. 197); not only is a scenario-building workshop a transitional space, but "the scenarios produced [...] are themselves also objects that can be used transitionally to enhance change" (p. 211).

Such products benefit from interpretative flexibility. As Mueller and Whittle argue (2011, 188), "[t]he success of ideas, it seems, depends not on remaining stable and invariant but instead having 'interpretive viability' [...] that is, leaving room for interpretation in different contexts". Ramírez and Wilkinson (2016, 164) present the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach as "a form of what social scientists called bricolage, a rigorous approach of qualitative inquiry pragmatically making use of tools and techniques [...] developed in other fields [...including] developments in non-futures fields such as systemic risk assessment, issues management, stakeholder analysis, competitive intelligence, and other strategy-related methods and tools".

To implement such an inclusive and participatory approach, Lang and Ramírez (2020) have argued the importance of establishing a host within the scenario-using organisation, following

the thought of the late Claudio Ciborra. In *The Labyrinths of Information*, Ciborra (2009) argued that a language of hospitality is needed to understand the ways in which organisations accommodate, or fail to accommodate, new technologies and new ways of working: it is necessary to "drop the language of planning, controlling, and measuring through which organizations, teams, and projects have been managed so far" (pp. 103–104) and find ways to attend closely to the everyday, emotional, and messy ways in which humans dealt with technology.

"Hospitality," Ciborra writes (2009, 103), "[...] is an institutional device to cut down the time needed to merge cultures, and to integrate alien mindsets and costumes. Hospitality can precipitate the turning of an ephemeral contact into a relationship that has the look (and feel) of long acquaintance."

If scenario planning is seen as a technology, then Ciborra's principles can also apply to this form of knowledge in practice. Lang and Ramírez (2020) argue that introducing scenario planning into an organisation requires a host with the power and personal qualities necessary to invite a new process across the institutional threshold. These include: a credible track record of innovation and delivery, formal and informal power within organisational structures, and the ability to create and hold a safe space necessary for people to experiment with a new practice. Maree Conway's (2021) case study from an Australian university highlights some of the pitfalls of losing such a host, including scepticism, an unwillingness to engage with the method, and abandonment of the approach by a new leadership team.

<p:a_no_indent>'Schools and/or screens': the Oslo case study

<p:text>To illustrate the principles of scenario planning in this approach and their application to learning institutions in the COVID era, we offer the case study of a scenario set for the future of Norwegian schools commissioned by the University of Oslo, facilitated by one of the authors, and delivered at the start of the coronavirus outbreak. While the scenarios were not themselves intended to explore the future of the university itself, the project exemplifies the key features of the scenario approach we are describing. In some respects, it might also serve as a prototype or prefiguration of the approach described by Facer and Wei (2021), in that it was hosted and run by a university as a conversation with many other voices. It also indicates, by relating the scenarios to the events of the pandemic which followed their publication, how the outputs of this approach relate to uncertainties and emergent change in a given transactional environment.[3]

Researchers from two University of Oslo initiatives convened the scenario project in late 2019. "Screen Cultures" seeks to challenge received understanding of people's relationships to screen-based technologies, while "Living the Nordic Model" explores the lived implementation of the Nordic model of child-raising. By inviting stakeholders from across the Norwegian education sector to participate in a scenario-building process, they sought to expand the circle of conversation around their research, and to jointly discover new and emerging focal points for investigating the digitalisation of education: in essence, the blind spots around Norwegian perceptions of the future relationship between schools, students, and digital devices.

A one-day workshop was convened in October 2019, attended by schoolteachers, public officials, university researchers, and representatives of education nonprofits and tech firms. Scenarios focused on the transactional environment of Norwegian school headteachers, seen as principal decision makers with regard to the digital technology selected for use within a given school. Key uncertainties were drawn from the contextual environment of forces which lay beyond the headteacher's influence or control. These uncertainties structured three scenarios which were iterated twice in the workshop and then subsequently online by a core group of University of Oslo researchers.

The process led to three scenarios for the year 2050: "Norway Prime", "The Child Who Had To Grow Up", and "Make Norway Great Again".

In "Norway Prime", education and other public goods were bundled with employment in a corporate-dominated future where work and domestic life merged thanks to advanced telepresence technology. Heavy surveillance was accepted as the price of material comfort by the citizens of "Amazon-Norway", but when algorithmic monitoring systems intervened in questions of health and wellbeing, parents and carers pushed back, insisting they knew what was best for their children. Tensions between privatised education institutions and carers ranged from petty squabbles over when a child should wipe their own runny nose to incidents of Munchausen's Syndrome By Proxy, where parents sought to defy the pervasive authority of the system through a perverse expression of care.

The second scenario, "The Child Who Had To Grow Up", envisaged a world of 'teacherless' education in which children and teenagers self-educated in peer learning groups supported by autonomous software agents and immersive virtual environments. Schools had ceased to exist, replaced by a library of technologies and media which were designed to encourage independent and exploratory learning. This pedagogical transformation meant that learning designers and content creators had even greater power to shape learning than ever before, but also that young people's independence was greater than in our time: the line between adulthood and childhood blurred as new digital responsibilities and freedoms were granted at an ever younger age.

Finally, "Make Norway Great Again" depicted a future in which an accelerated global abandonment of fossil fuels combined with mismanagement of the national finances, leading to a rapid social and economic crash in which Norwegian quality of life plummeted relative to the rest of the world. As social tensions rose, governments grew increasingly authoritarian and digital technology investment focused on security, leading to an education environment in which teachers and schools existed much as they do today, except that they were now tasked with additional roles akin to social work, dealing with youth tensions via a series of ideologically charged digital systems guiding their interactions.

Each of the 'schools and/or screens' scenarios served to test received wisdom around how the digitalisation of education might play out in years to come. Reports such as the Norwegian government's "The School of the Future" (Ministry of Education and Research 2021) exemplified this received wisdom as they investigated questions framed by the status quo, such as asking what the content of the future school curriculum might be.

The Oslo scenarios offered plausible new environments within which education might take place, unfurrowing assumptions about schools as enduring institutions, the stability of Norway's social model, the definition of childhood, and the projected decline of Norway's oil wealth.

This journey was not necessarily easy or comfortable. The art of the process lay in encouraging participants to probe that which was most uncomfortable, mysterious, or uncertain – that which had previously lain outside their framing of the problem: parents driven to Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy by a cloying corporatised notion of care; teens who challenged the current boundary between youth and adulthood; a vision of today's clean, wealthy Norway as a diminished future 'rustbelt' nation.

Scenario building concluded at the end of February 2020, with the finished scenarios published in early March. Norway had registered its first case of COVID-19 on 26 February, and almost immediately, the pandemic highlighted how close to the surface some of the framed-out issues identified by 'schools and/or screens' truly were.

"Norway Prime" had indicated that the battle between carers and education institutions over the right to define and determine children's health and wellbeing might be a key tension of digitalised education. On 12 March, the *Verdens Gang* news outlet reported (Storas 2020) that

parents who disagreed with the City of Oslo's ruling to keep children in school during the pandemic were lobbying via Facebook; warring notions of what was best for children's health were playing out in the digital realm.

Once schools did close, homeschooling in the age of Microsoft Teams came to resemble the world of "Norway Prime", with the familiar environment of the home subject to new institutional pressures as parents were deputised to support the delivery of education via the medium of Microsoft Teams. There were also resonances with the "Child Who Had To Grow Up", in which the absence of teachers in a traditional classroom setting meant that greater emphasis was placed on the impact of learning design, and on students' own independence and agency.

Even the 'rustbelt future' of "Make Norway Great Again" had new relevance as the pandemic developed. While workshop participants in October 2019 had been strongly resistant to framing a post-oil future in any terms other than a successfully managed 'green transition', by May 2020, the economic shock of COVID-19 led Norway to break its self-imposed cap on spending from its sovereign wealth fund, as the government wrestled with the economy's most severe ever peacetime setback (Solsvik and Fouche 2020). The scenario process had led participants to explore less comfortable answers to the questions "How long will your oil riches last?" and "How well will you manage their decline?" Within months, those answers seemed less hypothetical and more pressing.

While these examples show how COVID-19 brought to the fore issues which had been framed out prior to the scenario planning process, it is not to say that these were successful 'predictions'. Gauthier (2020) argues that foresight work is not to be retrospectively assessed in the light of its predictive power, despite the temptations of doing so; for Ramírez et al. (2021), given that scenario planning has developed to address conditions of unpredictable uncertainty and uses imagined futures to serve present purposes, "suggesting scenarios can somehow predict the future is to call on magic and is a sure way to drive bad scenario planning".

Nonetheless, Ramírez and Drevon (2005) point to the example of a corporate scenario engagement which had experienced some resistance from the executives involved; when elements from one of the scenarios set 20 years hence began to transpire just three years after the scenarios were built, "this lent credibility, not to the scenarios as such, but to what they were meant to help the company to do: to get managers to look for, unearth, and question hidden assumptions, and to consider alternative futures as real possibilities" (p. 212). While the immediate demands of pandemic response stalled use of the Oslo school scenarios in 2020, a number of actors including the university's Screen Cultures team and the library cooperative Biblioteksentralen have resumed working with them in 2021.

The Oslo case study shows how a scenario planning conversation around educational futures can help participants to entertain possibilities which seem wild precisely because they lie outside of the current frame of their expectations, yet prove useful for strategic purposes. In particular, the initially uncomfortable notion that warring notions of health might be a key issue in the future of digitalised education seemed increasingly evident as the pandemic progressed.

<p:a_no_indent>Building anticipatory capacity in the post-pandemic university

<p:text>We argue that developing an internal capacity for scenario planning would help the post-pandemic university to engage with the future productively. It would surface anticipatory assumptions, enabling the identification of strategic blind spots – along with the opportunities and threats that lie within them. Scenario planning on the Oxford model is one example of an approach which might serve to usefully develop this internal capacity.

Scenario planning is, as Ramírez and Wilkinson (2016, 164) write, not in itself "a silver bullet": it works in concert with other processes, analyses, and techniques to support strategic thinking. Indeed, part of its strength lies in its pragmatic, adaptable quality of bricolage. Scenario processes could create a vehicle for the wider university community to debate and discuss plausible alternative assessments of the future contexts which the institution, its people, resources, and services may have to inhabit. The university includes within it a great diversity of formal and informal bodies, identities, voices, and movements which each will bring different perspectives on what is desirable, knowable, or worthwhile to discuss about the future. Any anticipatory capacity within the post-pandemic university must necessarily be broad enough to accommodate this variety, in its conflicts and contrasts as well as its points of consensus, coherence, and compromise.

Serving as a 'transitional space', scenarios provide common ground for manifold perspectives. On such ground, meaningful consensus might be achieved, or hard-to-reconcile differences at least accepted; the experiences of scenario planners in post-apartheid South Africa and Colombia's civil conflict – recounted by Kahane (2017) – indicate the extent to which inimical parties can find agreement when they contemplate multiple plausible futures.

<p:a_no_indent>Conclusion

<p:text>In this chapter, we have suggested that anticipating and addressing post-pandemic changes in higher education and wider society will require universities to go beyond contingency planning and develop their own narratives of possible organisational futures. We imagined an organisational capacity for developing these narratives based on participatory scenario methods developed within futures studies. We have conjectured that developing such an organisational capacity would offer universities not only the strategic benefits of enhanced anticipatory thinking, but also the institutional benefits of a vehicle through which to recognise and convene an organisation-wide conversation on the future, recognising the distinctive and heterogeneous nature of the institutional community and establishing a shared orientation towards the times to come. The future narratives produced in this way would address the particular context and aims of the institution, and would also be a product of the particular perspectives, knowledges, and capabilities from which the institution is constituted. One distinctive aspect of this capacity, as described in this chapter, would be the central place within it for the idea of hospitality. We follow Lang and Ramírez in arguing that to successfully bring together the diverse internal voices required for the process to represent the institution as it is, some group or individual needs to act as a host. This might involve: bringing people together with tact and respect; setting the purpose and tone; remaining alert to opportunities to foreground different voices at various moments; demonstrating a commitment to facilitating a shared endeavour; and managing an ongoing conversation that, though it might at times feel chaotic or confrontational, would be illuminating, sustaining, and strategically useful.

Perhaps the principal task and opportunity facing such a host would be to ensure that the conversation is convivial, in Illich's (1973) sense: a meaningful exchange amongst autonomous but interdependent individuals, and between these individuals and their institution. Thinking of this futures-focused exchange as a structure for promoting conviviality might help participants to think of it as existing outside any institutional discourses of productivity or efficiency, and guard against it being subsumed into a managerial process of 'consultation'. Its success would depend on being able to imagine futures and present actions outside those conceivable with the existing institutional habitus (Çelik 2021). Rather, the scenarios and speculative possibilities that this internal futures capacity needs to generate would be recognised as immanent within, and emerging from, the combined imaginations of the communities that inhabit and sustain the institution.

We have presented this suggestion in the context of a discussion about 'post-pandemic' institutions, as an approach to managing the immediate uncertainties and changes precipitated by the crisis. But developing and maintaining the future-generating capacity we describe is a long-term process, and something that should be sustained beyond any present emergency. Being able to work and act in conditions of turbulence, uncertainty, novelty, and ambiguity, conditions which in this case happen to have been occasioned by COVID-19, will remain a vital art in this era of planetary heating, technological advance, and social and economic transformation. Perhaps, in establishing such a capacity amongst its institutions, higher education can model an approach that would serve other parts of society, as we learn to adapt and transform in the face of the coming changes.

<p:a_no_indent>NOTES

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1. The Business Council of Australia (2018) provides an example of this well-worn framing of education as a means to 'future-proof' young people against the demands of a changing labour market.

2. For example, in the UK, the shadow education minister recently promised, in a familiar phrase, to 'give every young person a brighter future' (Green 2021), while the Chancellor announced 2,000 'AI scholarships' and research fellowships to develop the artificial intelligence industry (Sunak 2021).

3. This project is discussed further in Finch et al. (2021), Finch and Krueger (2020), and Finch (2021).