

Transforming the Future – Vision to Implementation

The Transformationpillar becomes possiblethrough innovation and prototyping the new into action. This means experimentation, discerning what might work. Who will resist, who will lead the change? Who will watch the process? Who will need to be encouraged? and then performing. From the vision, a backcast is developed. The future is remembered. The question asked is: *what logically had to happen in the last fifteen years for today to be achieved?* Participants are asked to remember the future that was created (now the past). This memory serves to open up the capacity to change. Once the map is filled out, then a more current strategy can be developed.

In creating the preferred future Inayatullah’s six pillars are ways of navigating the anxiety of the new (the adaptive leadership challenge) and incorporates a process of sharing—sensemaking—discovering common intention and then prototyping innovations that will be reliable and effective through challenging groups to progress their thinking about creative alternatives and assist to discover ideas, tools and techniques to use in their own project research and practice.

**Visioning as a method has three approaches.**

**First is the analytic.** In this approach, participants write down characteristics of their preferred future. These should be a mixture of general statements as well as more specific – as per the scenario methods – how is reality measured, what is the prevailing system, the preferred worldview or culture, and finally the underling narrative.

**The second is the interview method** developed by Ziauddin Sardar. In this, a facilitator questions the respondent. Quick fire questions as to the nature of the person’s daily life – work, technology, family, nature, challenges – force the respondent to not edit but to utter the first thing that comes to their mind. This often accesses what a person actually wants instead of what they may be trained to think they should say (because of parental or societal expectations).

**The third is creative visualisation.** In this, participants close their eyes. They are then taken on a path with each step representing a year forward. They arrive at a ledge which demarcates the present from the future. They travel over the hedge into their preferred future. Participants then visualize their preferred future. After the process, participants open their eyes and write down aspects of their preferred future.

**Backcasting as a method seeks to remove obstacles to creating desired futures** by imagining that one has already created the desired future and what remains are technical issues of determining the next steps. It can be a powerful methodology in overcoming cynicism and fear.

Futures thinking is the rigour you need to challenge your assumptions and to help you become aware of trends and patterns that are taking shape that could play a significant role in formulating your vision.

When people and organisations are not aware of their choices they may well end up being part of someone else’s future. In order to create desirable futures, futurists encourage others to think more carefully and plan further ahead than before. But it is not just a case of thinking further into the future. It is also one of thinking more richly about what is possible and desirable. In part this involves critiquing current ideologies, understanding cultural biases, diagnosing the effects of particular interests and opening up futures work to non-Western sources, languages and ways of thinking.

It could be possible for applied futures thinking to make a difference if we use the tools and epistemology for leadership transformation by entering a different conversation about what it means to be a human, not as a resource, but as a living person, in an organisation and in our modern society as a whole. This becomes our shared meaning, our source of inspiration, and articulates the purpose, our aspiration, of what it is we are trying to achieve together.

My model below links futures thinking and methodologies with leadership. It is a continuous process.

