

The scenarios of evolution of the economic intelligence in Algeria

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Abstract: Business intelligence is a system for anticipating events. It uses a variety of techniques and tools. This article focuses in particular on the tool of foresight and specifically that of morphological analysis.

In order to carry out an economic intelligence forecast of the Algerian economic intelligence system, it is necessary to review the main concepts relating to the construction of scenarios and to explain the methodology to be followed.

Keywords : prospective, intelligence, forecast.

Jel Classification Codes : O1, 02.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Economic intelligence is of great importance in today's economic world. With its Monitoring, Security and Influence compounders, it has a proactive approach to anticipate events and prepare for action and defence.

Algeria has taken several actions to set up a national economic intelligence system and encouraged its companies to integrate this system into their management.

Long inspired by the French model, we are curious to know **How will the Algerian economic intelligence system evolve?**

The approach to be followed is obviously a prospective approach using the scenario method; it aims mainly at presenting the main scenarios for the development of this national system.

The approach is purely qualitative and does not, of course, present research hypotheses.

The main objective is to propose probable scenarios through interviews with experts. The importance of this article lies in understanding the possible futures of the practice of economic intelligence at the level of high public institutions in Algeria.

2. DEFINITION

2.1. foresight

To define foresight, we can give the following definitions:

One that is very simple: "*the study of the distant future*".
(BERGER, 1964, p. 271)

Another, more in-depth definition is as follows:
"*foresighting consists of exploring the possible futures that lie in wait in the current situation, to*

help determine desirable futures and identify the means to achieve them". (De Jouvenel, 2009, p. 3)in (Remy & Pichault, 2011, p. 278)

According to Fabrice Hatem (Hatem , 1996)it was the Englishman H.G. Wells who laid the foundations of the discipline of foresight at the beginning of the 20^{ème} century. In the book War of the Worlds, this novelist talks about the future and claims to know "the facts of the future" in a realistic way in order to help decision-makers in their orientation of social progress.

2.2. scenarios, the results of foresight

Etymologically, the word scenario first appeared in the 19th century, meaning "the outline of a theatrical play"¹ , It is a "*synopsis, a sequence of events that follow one another in a logical sequence of the imagination*" . (De Brabandère L., Mikolajczak A., 2008) , but it was a literary book in which a lot of imagination was used to make predictions (Godet M., 2007).

¹ <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/sc%C3%A9nario> (on 17/10/2024 at 19:55).

The word "scenario" was introduced into foresight by Hermann Kahn in his book *L'an 2000* (Kahn Hermann and Wiener J. Anthonny, 1968.)

The scenario can be defined as "*a means of representing future reality with a view to clarifying present action, in the light of possible and desirable*

futures; it is a coherent set of hypotheses leading from an original situation to a future situation" (De Brabandère L., Mikolajczak A., 2008)

The scenario is therefore an intellectual construct whose objective is to shed light on present action and give it meaning. It is based on a constructivist approach (Ramirez R. and Wilkinson A., 2016).

One of the first to stress the need to integrate the scenario method into foresight, at the end of the 1950s, was the Frenchman Gaston Berger (Godet M. and Roubelat, 1996) (Boyer L. and Scouarnec A. 2008). As for the word scenario, it was first used in planning and foresight by Hermann Kahn (Godet M. and Roubelat F., 1996) and explained the possibility of studying and exploring the future in a different way (Julien P-A., Lamonde P. and Latouche D., 1975.)

The scenario method is also one of the most commonly used methods in foresight (Julien, Lamonde and Latouche, 1975; Mandel, 1983).

FORESIGHT IS NOT FORECASTING

It should be emphasized that the concepts of foresight and forecasting are synonyms that are sometimes difficult to separate. (De Brabandère & Mikolajczak, 2008) :

- Foresight is a dynamic, global and proactive approach that aims to build scenarios based on a spirit of creativity and imagination. It encourages open-mindedness and takes account of disruptions. It enables risks to be anticipated and the necessary measures to be taken to remedy them in the short and long

term. It can be based on quantitative and/or qualitative data. Its assessment is based on criteria determined by the futurist.

- Forecasting, on the other hand, is a positivist approach in the true sense of the word, based on quantifiable data. Its level of uncertainty is lower than that of foresight, which is limited to the short and medium term, and its objective is to extrapolate from the present and generally only concerns a given sector. In forecasting, structures are stable and static and are not considered to be evolving as in foresight. With regard to the future, it is a passive or reactive approach.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FORESIGHT

Hatem and Prével define 5 characteristics of foresight (Prével & Hatem , 1995):

- Foresight is a global approach: it is both cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary. It is a systemic approach based on the long term and creativity.
- Long-term approach: foresight is an approach that allows us to see far and wide, and this allows us to identify changes in trends, breaks with the past, etc.
- Rational approach: the foundations of foresight are rigour and common sense. Foresight is also an approach that favours transparency and clarity.
- Ownership approach: foresight is a participatory process whose value is

determined by the involvement of decision-makers and their advisors;

- Vision for action: foresight enables us to imagine possible changes and guidelines, so that we can see what action needs to be taken.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF FORESIGHT

Gimbert identifies three major obstacles to Foresight: circumstantial obstacles, epistemological obstacles and the poverty of the imagination (Gimbert, 2004).

- Circumstantial obstacles: The quality of foresight depends on the circumstances in which the futurist works. They may, for example, depend too much on mathematical tools, which will lead to poverty of thought, or they may appeal to the sensationalism often used by 'gurus'. Among the failures of foresight are the failed attempts in the 1950s to use the expert panel approach used by the Rand Corporation, and unforeseen events such as the implosion of the USSR in 1989, the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, etc.
- Epistemological obstacles: By epistemological obstacles, Gaston Bachelard means all unthinking habits, all routines, our naïve knowledge, our desires, our experience, ...
- Poverty of the imagination: generally speaking, the human mind favours scenarios based on tendency, and the poverty of the

imagination is often engendered by our fascination with reason.

FORESIGHT METHODOLOGY

According to Fabrice Roubelat, the foresight process can be divided into three stages (Roubelat , 2016):

1. explore: this involves researching and discussing trends, breakthroughs and strategies.
2. form-transform: this is the scenario-building stage. The futurist will choose several starting points for his reasoning. They will construct several scenarios, the number of which will depend on the method chosen, the angle of approach and the time taken. Scenario design is an iterative process. Once the scenarios have been constructed, they will be analyzed and studied. The futurist will try to study how they evolve, transform them, study the relationships between them and compare them. He will also highlight the oscillations between the rules of the game and the differences between the stakeholders (governments, companies, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), etc.). To construct a scenario, the futurist chooses a starting point (a war, an accident, a crisis, etc.) and gives it meaning. He also proposes the rules of the game for the action, in the knowledge that the representation he forms from the scenario is debatable and contestable in an iterative way so as to create

new scenarios.

3. Evaluate: this involves assessing the scenarios constructed on the basis of sustainability, stakeholders' capacity for action, innovation and the risks they represent.

The following table summarizes the three stages of a foresight approach:

Table 1 Stages in the foresight process.

Stage	Objectives	Terms and conditions
Explore	Problematization of the study. Research, discussion and selection of action movements.	Interviews with stakeholders, documentary research, focus groups.
Training and transformation	Construction of scenarios as a system of evolving rules.	Scenario building using rule systems.
Evaluate	Assess the sustainability of the scenario, the innovations and the capacity for action, and analyze the risks.	Carry out a group assessment based on the scenarios.

Source: (Roubelat , The Foresight Dimension, 2016)

THE DIFFERENT METHODS OF FORESIGHT

There are several methods of foresight, and we drew our inspiration from the methods of the Centre d'Action pour la Prospective, which succeeded the Cercle des Entrepreneurs du Futur, created in 2004, in 2015. It has over forty members, companies and organizations. Its main objective is to contribute scientifically to the development of foresight methods. (GODET, 2017)

In total, the Centre d'Action pour la Prospective has identified seven methods: the foresight workshop method, the structural analysis method, the stakeholder strategy analysis method, the scenario method, the parabolized scenario method, and the method for analyzing the representations of experts and stakeholders for identifying and evaluating strategic options.

Given the limited number of pages of the article, we will explain only the method used for developing scenarios:

7.1. Morphological analysis (Godet, 2007)

Morphological analysis allows us to scan the field of possible scenarios by stimulating the imagination. This method was invented by Fritz Zwicky in the mid-1940s.

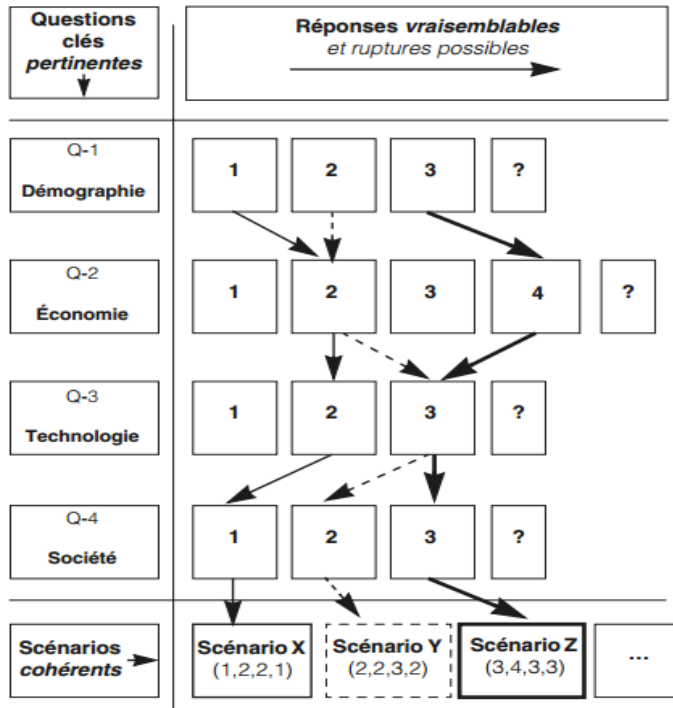
Morphological analysis was used more in the technological field and less in the economic field. It

enables scenarios to be constructed by dividing a system into several variables or key issues for the future: technical, social, economic, etc., with hypotheses formulated for each of them.

The following diagram is made up of 4 key variables, with different numbers of assumptions: 4 for question 1, 5 for question 2, etc. The number of scenarios that can be constructed is the product of the numbers of assumptions. In the following case, it is $4 \times 5 \times 4 \times 4 = 320$ scenarios.

¹⁰ Matrix of alliances, conflicts, tactics and objectives, and recommendations.

Figure 1 Representation of a morphological analysis



Source : (Godet, 2007, p. 22)

Morphological analysis is carried out by consistently combining a hypothesis (possible response) with each variable. It is the morphological space that determines the possible futures.

In order to avoid getting lost in a large number of possible futures, the futurist generally limits himself to a few combinations - the most probable - and hypotheses on the key variables of 4 to 5 maximum.

WHAT ARE ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE SCENARIOS FOR ALGERIA?

It has to be said that we have not carried out an in-depth prospective study of the economic intelligence system in Algeria, as this would have taken a great deal of time.

The future intrigues us and the patience of the subject led us to carry out a mini foresight study-even an economic intelligence tool-of the Algerian economic intelligence system. In previous studies, we came to the conclusion that economic intelligence in Algeria has not been the subject of a strategy with appropriate resources and people capable of working in continuity in order to have a solid economic intelligence system capable of overcoming the difficulties and crises.

In order to build our scenarios, and based on the data and information collected previously in our field surveys and our bibliographical research, we were able to draw up three scenarios on the future of business intelligence within Algeria's senior public institutions.

The first stage of exploring the field was carried out in a previous research (Belkacemi, 2018). For this part, we interviewed experts and carried out a documentary search to establish Algeria's position in terms of the practice of business intelligence at the level of senior public institutions. Of the five experts interviewed, only two answered the following questions:

Main question:

How do you see the future of business intelligence in the Algerian public sphere (senior public institutions)?

To answer this question, we can guide you with the following questions:

- 1. Who do you see as the dominant and emerging players in business intelligence in Algeria?**
- 2. What do you think are the trends in the practice of business intelligence in Algerian public institutions?**
- 3. Is the current economic crisis a strong signal that a business intelligence system needs to be rebuilt in Algeria?**
- 4. What is the trend in business intelligence training in Algeria?**
- 5. What is the current state of Algeria's national information system? Are there any reforms underway to address its shortcomings?**
- 6. In your opinion, are Algerian companies aware of the importance of business intelligence in Algeria?**

Based on what we'd read and our imagination, we came up with three scenarios:

8.1 The first scenario is that of the further deterioration of the Algerian economic intelligence system:

Algeria's economic intelligence system may not recover and will continue to be in the dark, given the lack of a real strategy for national industry and the conquest of foreign markets, particularly in

Africa.

Variables to work on :

- the education system, which remains average;
- the national information system, which has not yet been reformed, and
- the total absence of a PPIE (Public Economic Intelligence Policy).

The first scenario, considered to be the worst, is that of the stability of the current system, a system we described as archaic in a previous research.

- **Public economic intelligence policy:** Algeria has not put in place an efficient public economic intelligence policy to meet the objectives of economic intelligence. Since 2008, no political decision has been taken and no council has been held to review public economic intelligence policy in order to adapt it. In our numerous research studies, particularly our interviews in the field, we felt that there was a total lack of interest on the part of senior public authorities in defining this policy. In the present scenario, this policy remains non-existent.
- **a national information system that does** not meet the needs of public and private bodies: the national information production system remains poor.
-
- **business intelligence training that will**

remain weak and unattractive: if Algeria does not invest in business intelligence training, there will be no improvement in practice and Algerian companies will experience considerable delays in winning markets, particularly abroad.

- **Think-tanks and research centers:** In the current scenario, there will be no improvement in the production of information by think-tanks and research centers. In particular, think-tanks will not participate in the production of ideas for building a strong economy, as is the case with national economic intelligence systems in the USA, Japan, etc.
- **Public-private synergy: there** will be no synergy between the public and private sectors. The two sectors may work at cross-purposes, and local authorities will not set up territorial intelligence systems.
- **Raising awareness and involving companies:** in this scenario, companies will not be aware of the practice of business intelligence and will not feel the urgency and usefulness of practicing it.

Risk :

- Algeria's economic reforms have been delayed or have not taken place at all;
- Misreading the economic strategies of foreign countries and failing to integrate into the international economy;

- Algeria is impoverished in every way.

8.2 The second scenario is that of the appointment of an Algerian economic intelligence manager and reform of the system: this manager will carry out reforms in order to address the difficulties of the Algerian economy. The new manager will have to capitalize on the flaws in the Algerian economic intelligence system and will draw inspiration from French economic intelligence. In this scenario, we will develop the following rules:

- **the national information system:** must be reformed to produce better information;

Given the rapprochement of the French and Algerian higher education systems, the reform of IE training is bound to take place;

- **PPIE:** Public-private synergy will also be ensured, as will reform of the diplomatic system.
- **Public-private synergy:** this manager will guide local authority decisions, using a bottom-up approach, to create synergy between the public and private sectors.
- **Think-tanks and research centers:** several think-tanks will be set up, and research centers and competitiveness clusters will be involved in resolving Algerian economic intelligence issues. The academic world will work closely with the business world.
- **Raising awareness and involving companies:** several awareness-raising seminars will be held to raise companies'

awareness of the practice. Local players will be heavily involved.

Risks :

- Unsited to Algerian culture;
- Reproduction of the same errors as the French system.

8.3 The third scenario is that of the reconstruction of an economic intelligence system: French influence will diminish in this case. A scenario involving the reconstruction of an economic intelligence model specific to Algeria could emerge.

- **In terms of public economic intelligence policy:** Algeria will not have a public economic intelligence policy in the French style, but will instead create an information culture based on the variable of training.
- **Training** Algeria will invest heavily in training future generations in the field of economic intelligence and will provide training tailored to Algerian companies.
- **The national information system:** Algeria will reform the national information system by updating its working methods and creating national databases capable of responding to current and future economic and scientific issues.
- **Public-private synergy:** as in the second scenario, a strong synergy will be created between the public and private sectors.
- **Think-tanks and research centers:** again,

as in the previous scenario, there will be more think-tanks and research centers, working more closely with the business world.

- **Raising awareness and involving companies:** in this scenario, companies will not be made aware of the practice as in the second scenario; the State will only alert them to external risks of insecurity.

Risks :

- Risk of delay in implementation ;
- Risk of failure.

CONCLUSION

In previous studies (Belkacemi, 2018) on business intelligence in Algeria and France, we came into contact with the main players involved in the introduction of business intelligence in Algeria. We dealt with the practical aspects of business intelligence in both countries and understood how French-style business intelligence was integrated into Algerian public institutions.

Drawing on network actor theory, also known as translation theory, which takes into account both humans and objects as actors in a network, we have traced the history of the introduction of business intelligence in Algeria. We found that several spheres were involved: academic, political, institutional, Algerian and French. France has played a major role in introducing business intelligence into Algeria, through awareness-raising campaigns. The concept of business intelligence is innovative, even precursory in a country like France, so calling on foreign trainers seems essential given the shortage of Algerian experts in the field, and on the other hand, certain French players have found in Algeria the opportunity to sell the concept and all the tools - software in particular - that go with it. We have noticed that there has been a real mimicry of the French system, but there has been no clearly defined strategy at the highest level of government, with a precise work schedule and clearly defined objectives. The only official document that exists is the 2006 Government Council declaration, which itself is not complete. Through our interviews, we noticed a real willingness on the part of certain Algerian players, many of whom expressed a desire

to develop the scheme, but sometimes personal interests got the better of them! As the High Authorities have not appointed a dedicated Economic Intelligence officer to monitor the system with a real strategic vision.

Having completed our analysis using the chosen framework, we did not want to stop, but thought it would be interesting to end with an opening study, which will give us and potential readers ideas for future research. We have ended by identifying three likely scenarios, capable of guiding the State's decisions in the future. This prospective study is not intended to be a complete and exhaustive study, given the serious constraints we have encountered, as this will certainly require us to embark on a new field of research that could give rise to a new thesis.

Given the current international context, we have the intuition that scenario 3 is the most likely to come true.

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