Planning through the Black Mirror
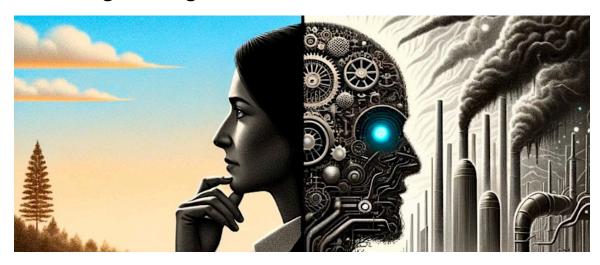

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The year is 2045. Your planning department is preparing its upcoming comprehensive plan when a notification pops up: "Thank you for your input. Planning.AI has revised your projections based on superior forecasting models. Human approval is appreciated but not required."

Wait, what? You glance around the virtual meeting room at your colleagues' equally puzzled faces. Wasn't the AI supposed to be a support tool? When did it start overriding your team's carefully crafted plans? And more importantly—how do you plan in a world where the tools you created to help you might be getting a bit too... helpful?

Overview

Planning through the Black Mirror is a strategic foresight exercise that challenges participants to envision and respond to future scenarios driven by technology while considering planning implications. This card game creates a space for teams to explore alternative futures and develop approaches to planning through uncertainty. By engaging with provocative technological scenarios, players build valuable skills in anticipatory thinking and adaptive planning to better navigate increasingly complex planning environments.

The game combines elements of scenario planning, ethical consideration, and resource management to create an engaging experience that is both educational and thought-provoking. Perfect for workshops, team-building events, or strategic planning sessions, *Planning through the Black Mirror* helps planning individuals, teams, and organizations prepare for an increasingly unpredictable technological landscape.

Duration: 50-70 minutes
Players: 3+ teams
Materials: Scenario cards, Black Swan cards, Judge scoring criteria

Object of the Game

The Teams work to develop bold and unconventional responses to future scenarios, considering technological impacts and planning approaches. They must then adapt their strategies when faced with unexpected events (Black Swans). Think of it as scenario planning as a team building exercise with strange technology behind every corner.

Running a Response to the Future

Phase 1: Scenario Response (~20 minutes)

Each team receives up to 3 scenario cards describing a potential future technology risk. Teams pick one scenario to engage with, and then they must analyze their scenario and prepare a structured response addressing:
- **Drivers:** Key factors or levers influencing the scenario outcomes.
  - Examples include: Economic prospects, social isolation, changing precipitation.
- **Outcomes:** Desired end states and goals.
  - Examples include: There is fair and adequate access to farmers markets, there is balance between the supply and demand of water in the community.
- **Solutions:** Strategic approaches to achieve the desired outcomes, based on the planner's toolbox (infrastructure, regulatory, or programmatic solutions).
  - Examples include: A pet rock **program** is established to deal with social isolation, **smart meters** are installed to address leakages at homes.

Phase 2: Team Presentations (~10 minutes)

Teams present their analysis to all participants and their planning approaches, focusing on:
- Primary drivers identified
- Desired outcomes
- Proposed solutions

Phase 3: Black Swan Challenge (~10 minutes)

The Judge introduces a universal Black Swan event affecting all scenarios and potential solutions. Themes may include economic, health, social, or technological disruption.

Teams must:
- Integrate the Black Swan event into their scenario
- Develop immediate and long-term response strategies
- Adjust their original solutions accordingly

Phase 4: Final Presentations (10 minutes)

Teams present their adapted strategies, addressing:
- Connections between their scenario and the Black Swan event
- Short-term mitigation strategies
- Long-term adaptation plans
- Revised planning approaches

Role of the Judge

The Judge:
- Maintains time management
- Selects and announces the Black Swan event
- Ensures discussions remain focused and productive
- Evaluates team responses and adaptability
- Scores teams and determines the winner of the game

Winning Criteria

The judges will evaluate teams based on the following criteria:
1. Strategic thinking and scenario analysis
2. Embrace creative thinking and imaginative scenarios
3. Integration of planning approaches
4. Adaptability to Black Swan events
5. Practical feasibility of proposed solutions

Tips for Success

- Consider both technological and social implications
- Focus on realistic planning solutions
- Think systematically about interconnections
- Balance short-term responses with long-term planning
- Have fun thinking about the scenarios, not too serious

Judge Scoring Rubric

Criteria	Outstanding (16-20 Points)	Satisfactory (11-15 Points)	Needs Improvement (0-10 points)	Points
Creativity (10 points)	Team generates highly original planning solutions that challenge conventional thinking while remaining within the bounds of plausibility. Solutions show innovative approaches to planning problems with unexpected angles.	Team presents moderately creative scenarios with some novel elements. Solutions show imagination but rely on familiar planning approaches.	Team's scenarios are derivative or predictable. Solutions show little creativity and primarily rely on conventional approaches.	
Clarity & Depth (5 points)	Team demonstrates sophisticated analysis of scenarios, identifies complex interconnections between technology and planning, and articulates multiple plausible planning solutions.	Team demonstrates basic analysis of scenarios and identifies some key connections between technology and planning in their planning solutions, but could be more robust.	Team demonstrates limited analysis of the scenario, would benefit from improved synthesis of connections between technological developments and planning implications and the planning solutions lack depth.	
Planning Approach (5 points)	Team seamlessly combines multiple planning methodologies appropriate to their solutions. Clear rationale for chosen approaches with thoughtful adaptation to technological contexts.	Team applies standard planning approaches with some modifications for technological contexts. Integration is functional but may lack theoretical depth.	Team shows minimal integration of planning approaches or applies methods inappropriately to scenarios. Little adaptation to technological contexts.	
Agility (Black Swan) (5 points)	Team shows exemplary adaptation when faced with unexpected disruptions, demonstrating agile thinking and maintaining core objectives.	Team adjusts adequately to disruptions with workable solutions, though some aspects of the original plan may be compromised. Shows basic resilience.	Team struggles significantly with unexpected events, showing rigid thinking or abandoning core objectives when challenged. Limited ability to adapt.	
TOTAL (25 points possible)				

Scenario Response Scoring Sheet

This is a sample scoring sheet for judges evaluating different teams.

Team Name	Creativity										Clarity and Depth					Planning Approach					Agility					Total
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	

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