## INTRODUCTION

# Deciding Without a Map

Every morning, somewhere in the world, a leader reads the news and realizes that the context has shifted again.

A geopolitical tension suddenly disrupts supply chains.

A technological breakthrough reshapes an entire industry overnight.

A regulatory decision transforms the economics of a business model.

A social movement challenges assumptions that once seemed unquestionable.

In such moments, the task of leadership remains unchanged in principle: decisions must still be made, directions set, and resources committed. Organizations cannot suspend action while waiting for the world to become clearer.

And yet, the environment in which these decisions must be taken has profoundly changed.

For the last decades, strategy[1] has developed in relatively stable contexts. Markets evolved gradually, institutions provided structuring frameworks, and analytical models offered decision-makers a certain degree of predictability. Strategy was never easy, but it operated within a world that remained broadly readable.

Over the last years, that readability has been fading away at an accelerating pace.

Leaders find themselves navigating environments where signals are increasingly contradictory, frameworks more fragile, and the future more difficult to interpret. Decisions that once relied on relatively stable assumptions must now be taken in contexts where those assumptions can shift unexpectedly. How can organizations make strategy when the context becomes nearly impossible to interpret? How do leaders structure plans when they have no vision of a desired future?

There is consequently a growing tension at the heart of strategic exercise.

1. Our working definition of strategy: the coherent set of decisions and actions through which an organization structures and uses its means to achieve desired outcomes, in accordance with an interpretation of the context (environmental conditions, internal capabilities, and the estimated possibilities).

Organizations must continue to decide and commit to long-term directions. But they must do so in a world where the future cannot be confidently predicted. And where, if you anchor yourself to a single vision of the future, you risk being caught off-guard by developments you failed to anticipate (tariffs, wars, pandemics, shortages, political turmoil, and the list goes on).

This creates a set of paradoxes that lie at the center of contemporary strategy:

***How can organizations explore the future without prematurely committing to a single vision—and still make coherent, actionable decisions?***

Too often, responses to this paradox fall into two opposite traps.

The first consists in attempting to restore the illusion of predictability. Faced with uncertainty, organizations multiply forecasts, models, and scenarios in the hope that better information will eventually make the future more certain again. That is some version of the "more of the same thing" reflex, when the given "thing" has been established as not relevant anymore.

The second consists in giving up on the ambition to strategize in the face of uncertainty, treating the future as fundamentally unknowable and reducing strategy to short-term adaptation.

Neither of these responses is satisfactory from a strategic standpoint. The first one blinds organizations with false certainties. The second one deprives them of the orientation and coherence that is needed by organizations, and that strategy is supposed to provide.

This book proposes a different path—a third way.

It will be a practical one, that is also supported by some theoretical considerations. Rather than attempting to predict the future, it seeks to structure the way we explore it. Rather than simplifying reality, it aims to organize the questions that allow organizations to navigate it.

To do so, it introduces a framework designed to connect the exploration of possible futures with the practice of strategy. At the heart of this framework are two tools that will be presented in this book:

- First and foremost, the Strategic Futures Compass for the Future of Organizations (developed conceptually at the end of Chapter 1 and practically in Chapter 2).
- The Strategic Architecture Table (Chapter 3) provides the practical bridge from futures exploration back to present-day strategy. It delivers the framework through which insights from the future gathered from the Compass can be translated into concrete and present strategic decisions.

However, before presenting these tools, we must first understand why the practice of strategy itself appears increasingly fragile today, and how the Strategic Futures Compass constitutes a valid alternative to explore. This is the purpose of the first chapter of the book, to which we now turn.

**Disclaimer: Use of Artificial Intelligence**

The free version of **ChatGPT (based on OpenAI's GPT-5.3 model)** was used during the writing process of this book.

Its use served three main purposes: assisting with reflection on the structure and outline of the manuscript; helping cross-check analyses and challenge certain ideas during the development of arguments; and improving the clarity and quality of the English language, as the author is not a native English speaker.

The author reviewed and edited all generated content and takes full responsibility for the final text, interpretations, and conclusions.