

AEON & MEWTRONIX

A FUTURES TALE



COPENHAGEN
INSTITUTE
FOR FUTURES
STUDIES



TEACH THE
FUTURE 



Greetings, explorers and curious minds! I am Mewtronix, your guide and companion. In a not-so-distant future, we are going on a journey to visit my friend Aeon in the vibrant city of Futropia. Aeon's world is a blend of the familiar and the surprising, a glimpse into what tomorrow might hold.

Ever wondered when the future starts? It's actually right now in your imagination. It's a story that we're all telling together, where every choice we make can turn "what if" into "wow look at that!"

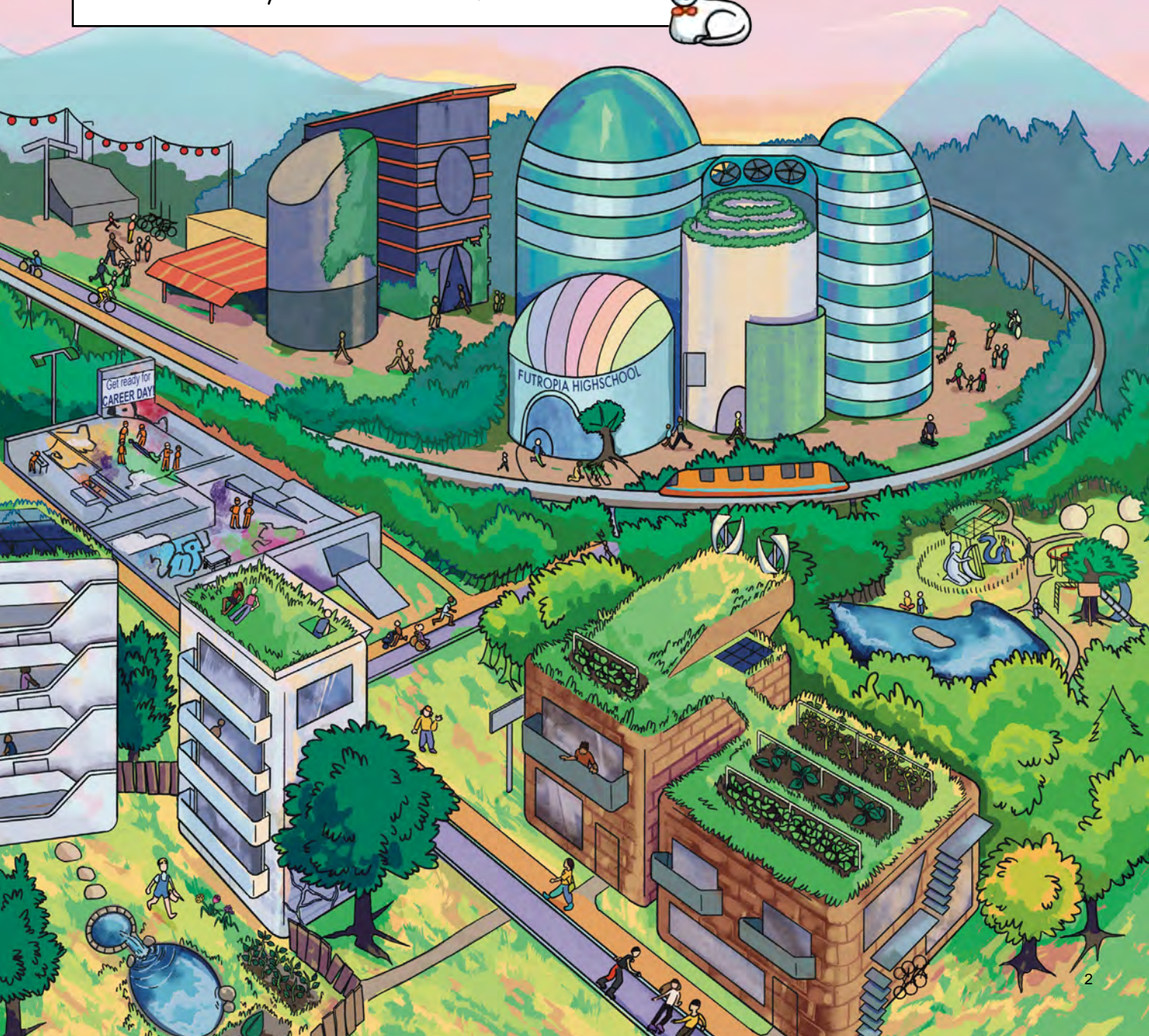
Are you ready to explore Futropia?

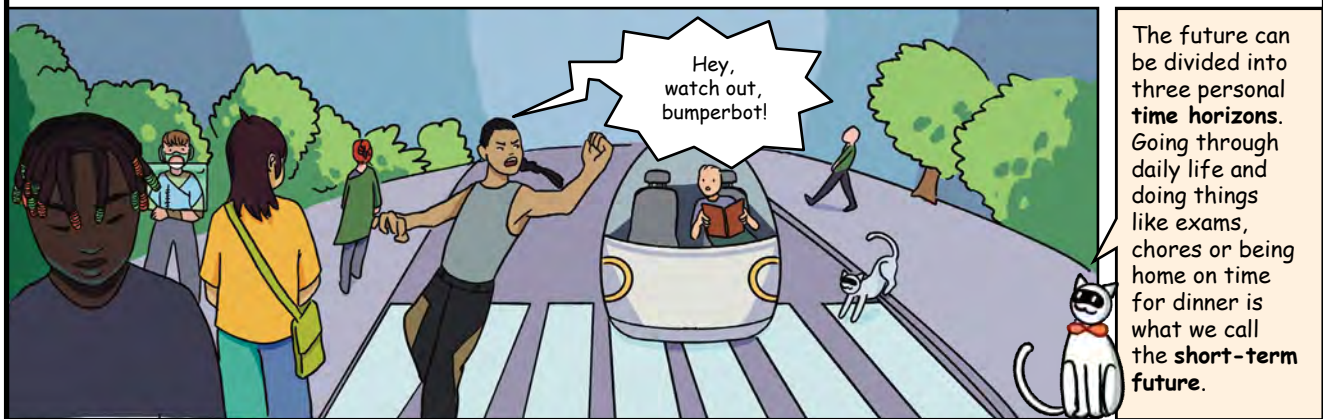
Together with Aeon, you will learn to look at the future in new ways, and you will explore both close and distant futures. The future isn't predetermined, and together we will look at how you might be able to influence it. We will end our journey by trying to understand how others might view the future and explore what a good future could look like.

1. Welcome to the future

– Time horizons

Let's travel in time to Aeon's city, Futropia!
On the way home from school, Aeon is wondering when
the future starts. Aeon is both excited and a bit
unsure about their own future. What do you feel
when you think about the future?

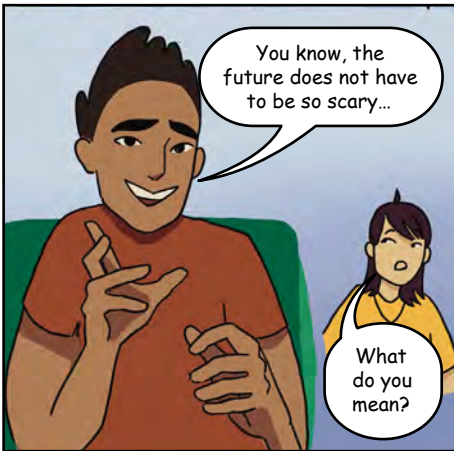






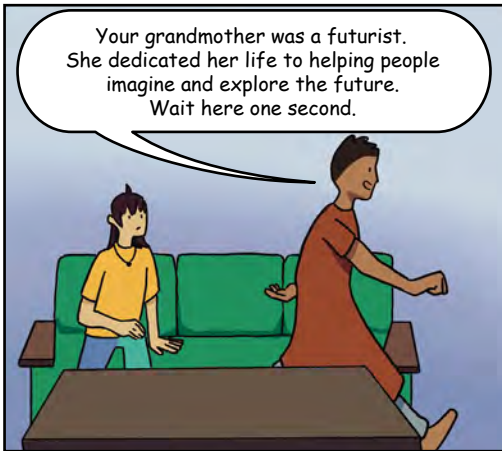
Soon, we may all have hydroponics in our kitchens! It's like a special drink for your plant that has all the nutrients it needs instead of using soil.

When imagining how society might change by the time that we are old, we're thinking about the **long-term future**. It's like painting pictures of what life could be someday.



You know, the future does not have to be so scary...

What do you mean?



Your grandmother was a futurist. She dedicated her life to helping people imagine and explore the future. Wait here one second.



This used to be her toolbox of notes and exercises. Check it out, I am sure you can find something interesting in it.

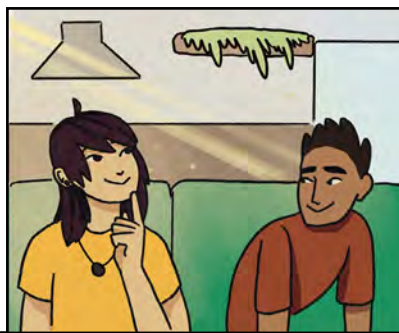


See! It's full of notes and models that help you imagine.

Whoa! This looks fun. I will bring the journal with me to explore the future.



What do your future horizons look like?
Short-term?
Mid-range?
Long-term?



Take some time to reflect on your **short-term, mid-range and long-term futures**. What do they look like?



What do your future horizons -
short-term, mid-range, and long-term -
look like?

SHORT-TERM

Example: Homework, after school activities, e.g. soccer, getting up on time.

MID-RANGE

Example: Choosing what to study next, new relationships, exciting things to do,
5 years or so from now.


LONG-TERM

Example: How the world is changing, e.g. how people interact with each other
when you are old.

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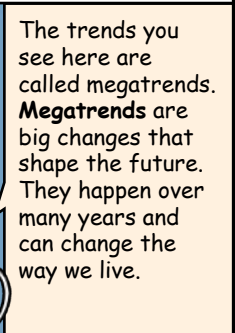
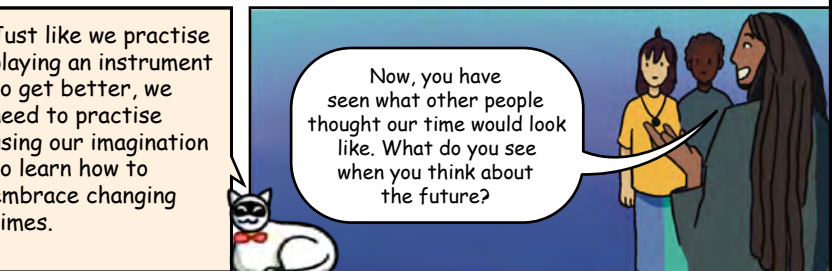
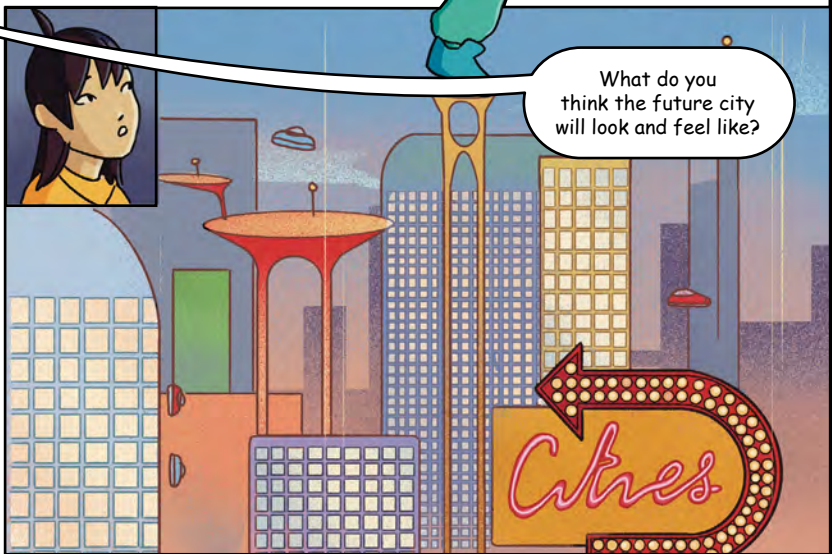
2. Images of the future

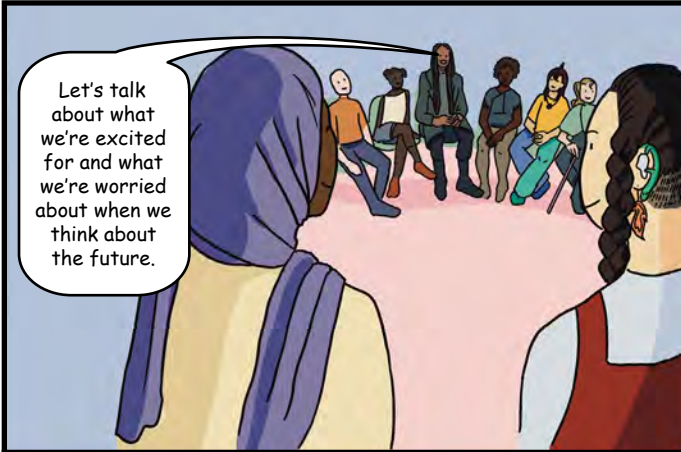
– Imagination brings action and change



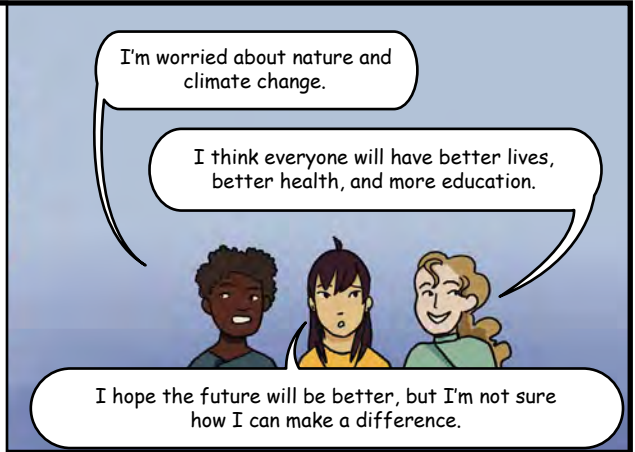
Whoa! The 1939 "Futurama" showed a vision of 1960! The car company General Motors sponsored it, so they imagined futuristic cities with automated highways and way more cars - which would be good for their business.

Thinking about what could happen later on can feel like having a huge puzzle with missing pieces. Today, Aeon and their classmates are becoming detectives of the future, searching for changes. They need your help. Let's dive in!





Let's talk about what we're excited for and what we're worried about when we think about the future.



I'm worried about nature and climate change.

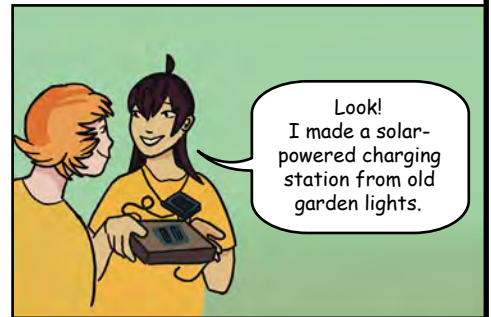
I think everyone will have better lives, better health, and more education.

I hope the future will be better, but I'm not sure how I can make a difference.

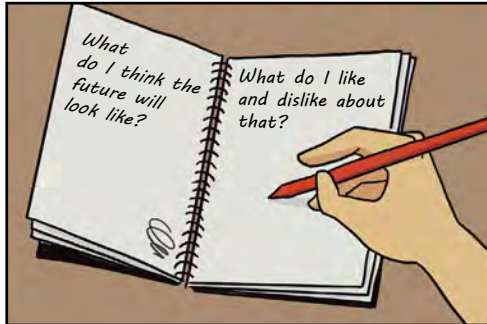


Hey Aeon, do you want to come to a workshop at the repair cafe about reusing stuff?

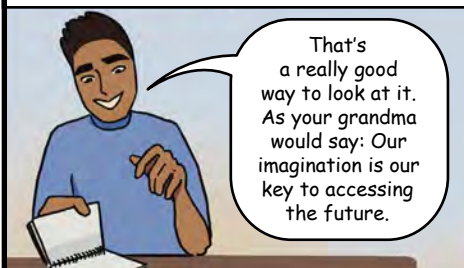
Sure!



Look! I made a solar-powered charging station from old garden lights.



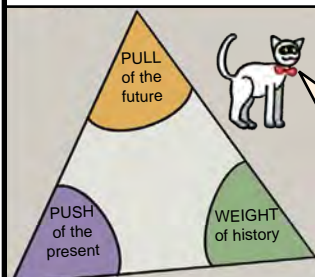
Today, we explored different visions of the future and our feelings about them. It was difficult, but also fun.



That's a really good way to look at it. As your grandma would say: Our imagination is our key to accessing the future.



We all have a part to play in steering towards the future we want. Even small steps count! Your grandma sometimes used the **Futures Triangle** to help navigate change. I'm sure you've seen it in her box?



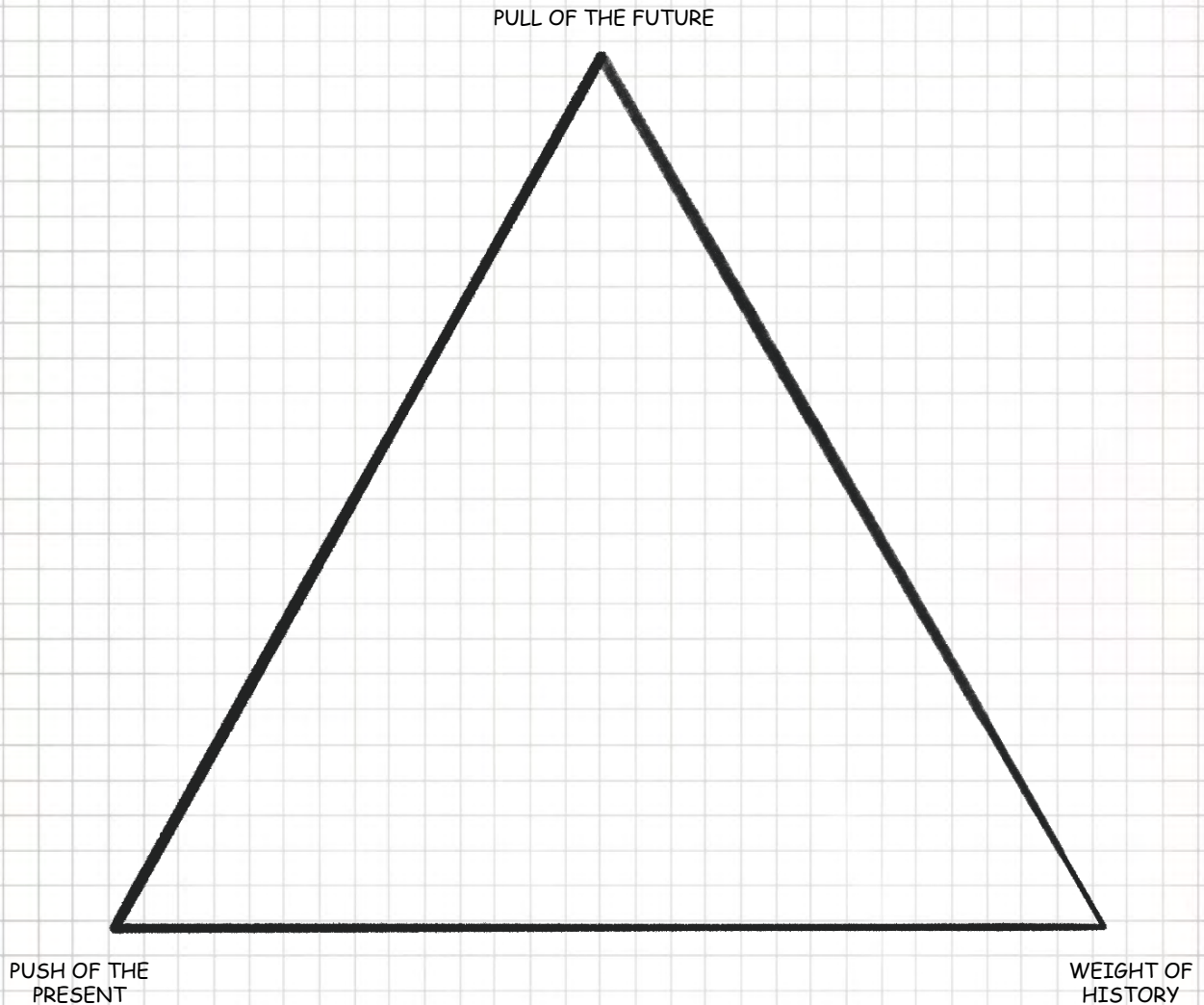
The Futures Triangle is a tool for understanding the forces that shape our future. Consider your dreams and aspirations for the world (pulls). Take note of what trends are driving you forward right now (pushes), and don't forget the things that might be challenging your progress (weights). This will help you gain a clearer understanding of what futures are more likely than others.



I can't wait to use this!

Aeon has now explored images of the future and trends. What images and trends do you see, and how do they suggest the future could look and feel like?

What trends and images of the future do you see,
and how do they suggest the future could look and feel?
Try putting them into the futures triangle!



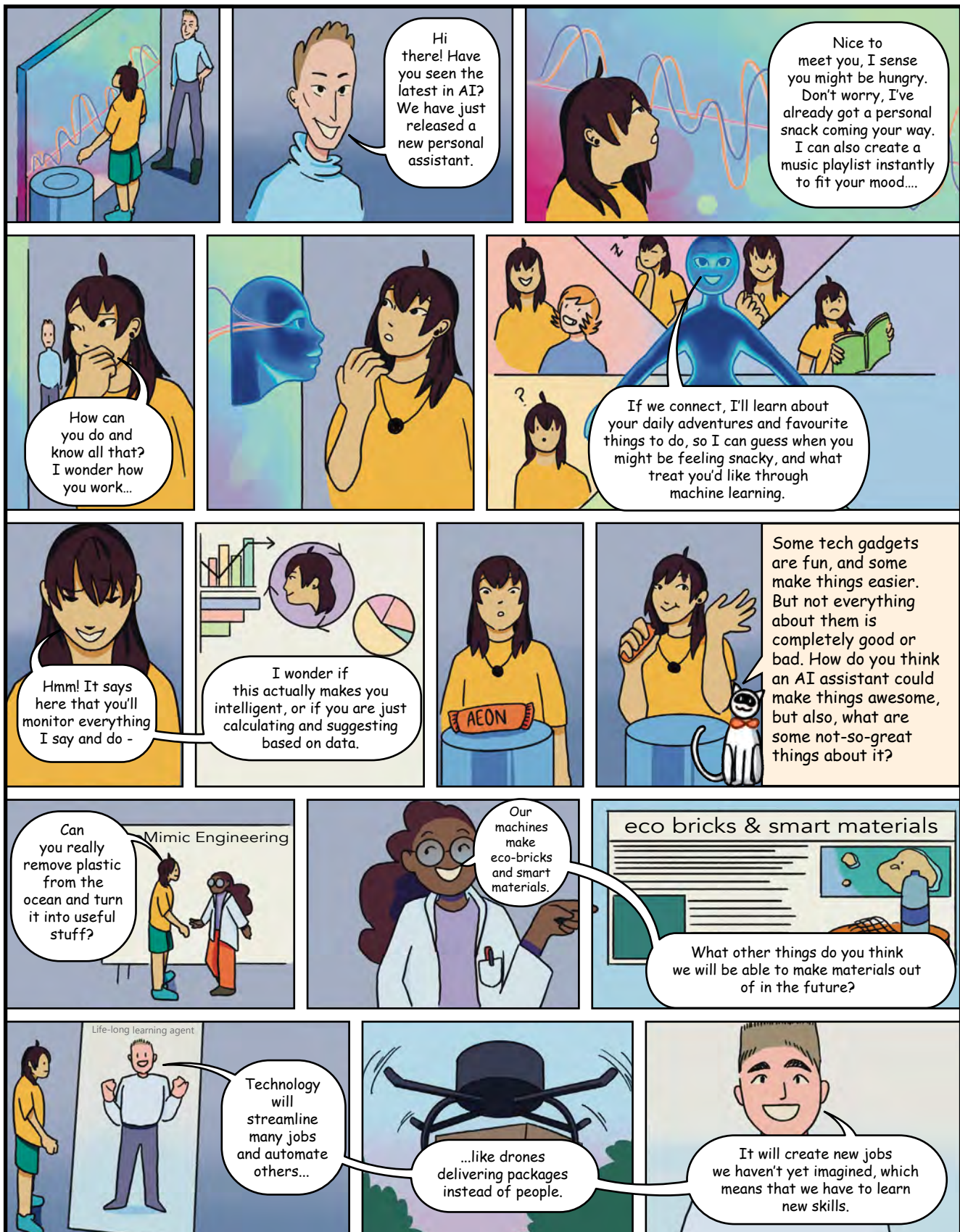
Credit: Sohail Inayatullah (2008)

3. Futures fair

– Scenarios of tomorrow



Today, Aeon's class is exploring a futures fair at the skate park - a peek into the future filled with cutting-edge inventions and new ways of working. Join their exploration!





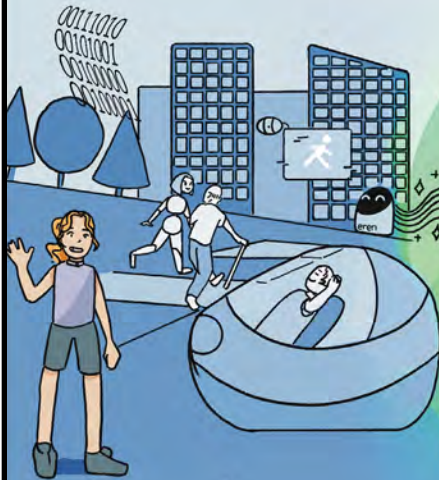
When we combine several trends, the future can open up in new ways. Some stories might happen, and others not. In this simulator, Aeon experiences these stories which we call 'scenarios'.



Scenario A

Scenario B

Scenario C



Tech is everywhere! Robots and holograms in a smart city! It's like stepping into a sci-fi movie. Here, data is currency, and constant monitoring allows the city to adapt to its citizens' needs.



The Buildings are lush with greenery, powered by clean energy, and everything is recycled. Communities embody sustainability. Therefore, people rarely have new things.



Everything is a bit slower here. People live in smaller cities and get their food locally. Everybody in town knows each other but, they do not have a lot of contact with people in cities far away.



Imagine being able to have a conversation with someone from each of these fascinating future scenarios.



What is school like in your own futures? I'm really curious to hear what it's like!

We can learn anything, anytime, and from anyone, anywhere. All of our data is gathered so the government and companies know a lot about us.

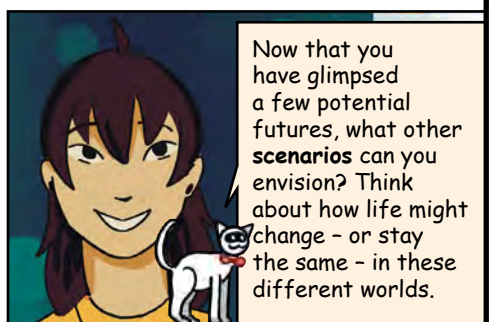


What about you two?



We learn a lot about the climate, and recycling. If we need new clothes, we go fetch it at the recycling station.

Our classes are small and we learn about local agriculture and other things that will help us sustain our local community.



Now that you have glimpsed a few potential futures, what other **scenarios** can you envision? Think about how life might change - or stay the same - in these different worlds.

Choose one of the scenarios from the text and try to imagine what it would be like to live there. Draw and describe how the different categories below would look in the scenario you choose.

HOME

SCHOOL

FASHION

FOOD

VACATION

Try to create you own scenario

4. Mosaic gardens

– Seeing the bigger picture



Our feelings about the futures we imagine are often shaped by our hopes and fears, stories and experiences. Join Aeon and friends for a trip to Mosaic Gardens as they share their perspectives on the futures they have explored.



I wonder what people in different futures think of their own lives. Do they believe they are living in a good future? Do I live in a good future?



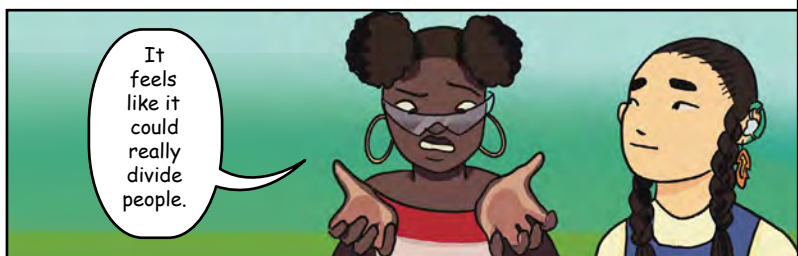
Hi Aeon, How are you?

What's wrong?

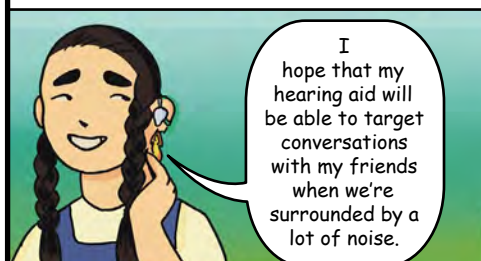
Just thinking about some questions I found in my grandma's journal. It's making me think about all the things we can't know about the future.



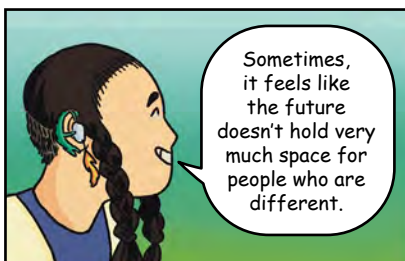
I get that. I'm concerned about where all this technology is heading, and if my family and I will be able to keep up.



It feels like it could really divide people.



I hope that my hearing aid will be able to target conversations with my friends when we're surrounded by a lot of noise.



Sometimes, it feels like the future doesn't hold very much space for people who are different.



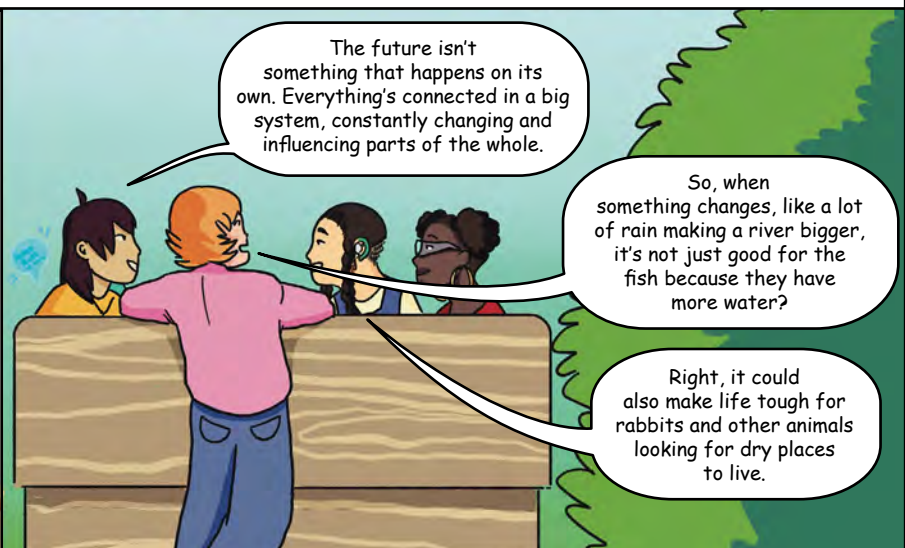
PREFERRED FUTURE

1. What challenges can you see in the future?

2. Why do you think these happen?

3. What do you wish was happening instead?

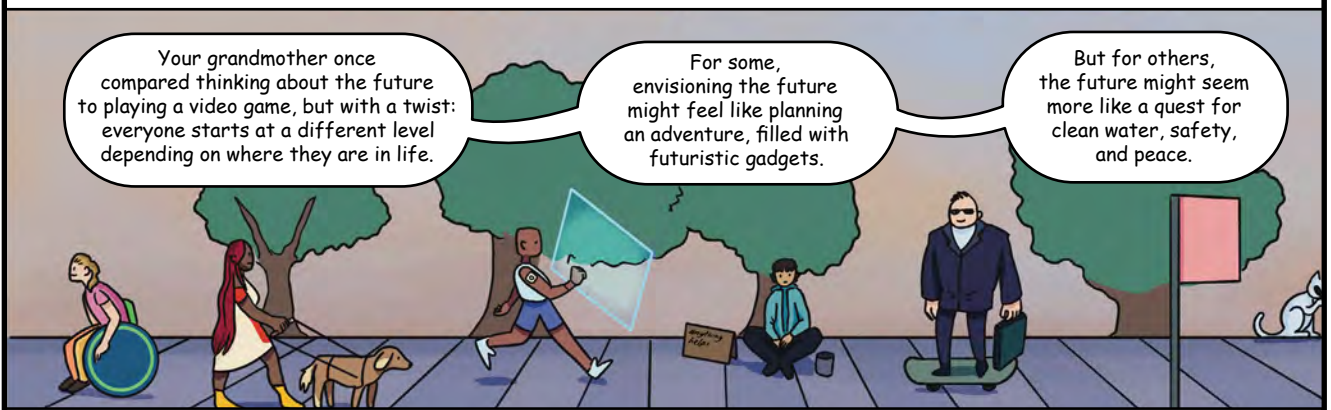
4. What do we need to do to make that happen?



The future isn't something that happens on its own. Everything's connected in a big system, constantly changing and influencing parts of the whole.

So, when something changes, like a lot of rain making a river bigger, it's not just good for the fish because they have more water?

Right, it could also make life tough for rabbits and other animals looking for dry places to live.



What does your preferred future look like?
And what steps can you take to reach that future?

5. The gift from the future

– From thought to action

Aeon sits by their desk at night working on tomorrow's homework. The teacher gave three steps for Aeon to find a path to the future. But Aeon is finding it tricky. Could you lend a hand?

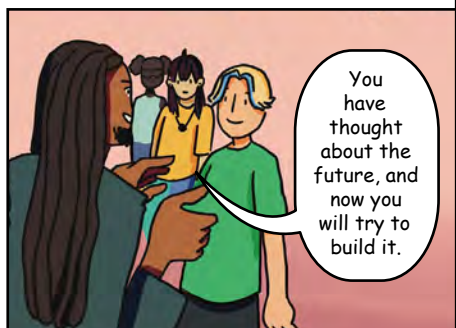
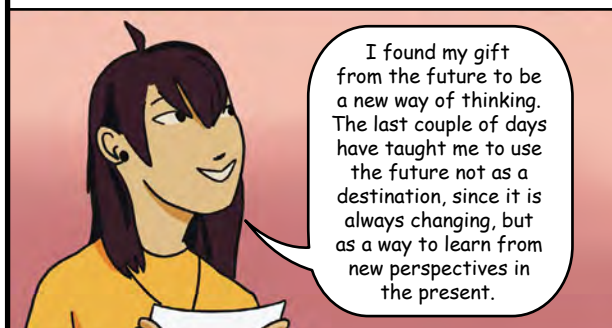
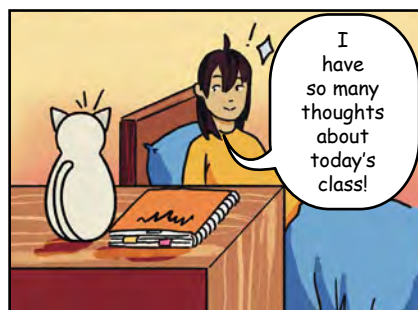
Step 1: Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine walking down a path. Take ten steps forward until you reach a fence blocking your way. Behind this fence is your **preferred future**, ten years from now. Step through and explore your future. What do you see? How does it feel?

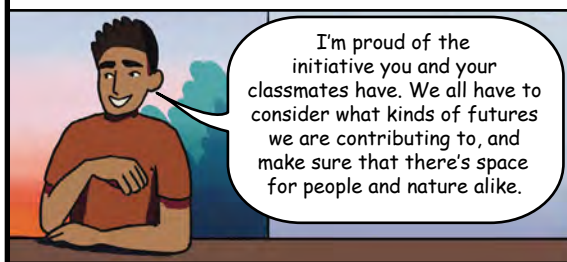
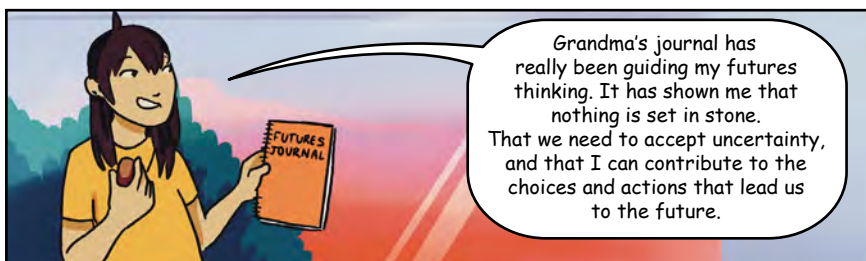
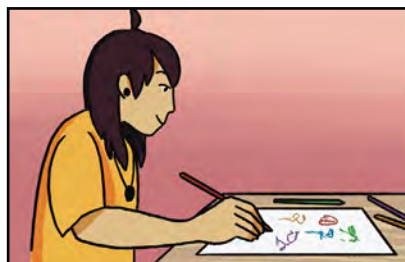
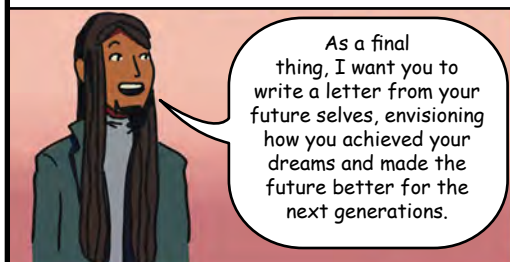
Step 2: You encounter an ancient tree with a magical door. Enter the door and find a staircase leading to the sixth floor. In a large room, you meet your future self. Bow respectfully, receive a personal message, and accept this as a gift from the future.

Step 3: Leave the room, descend the stairs, and return to the fence. Reflect on the message and gift you received. What was the message? What was the gift?

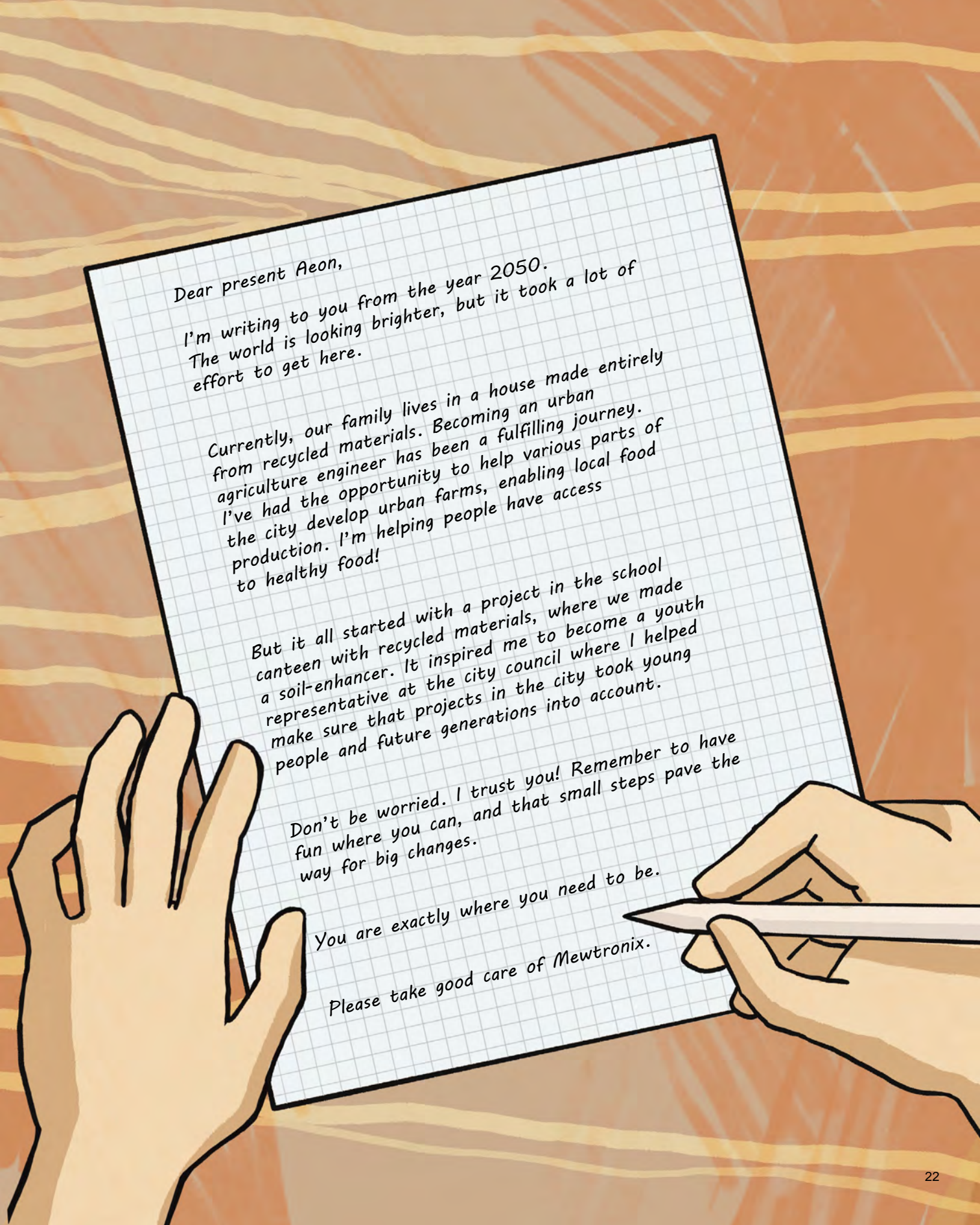
Futures triang
A method of
mapping the past,
present and future

Futures wheel
A tool used to
visualise the future





Write a letter from your future self to your current self.
What steps did you take to achieve your dreams
and make the future better?



Dear present Aeon,

I'm writing to you from the year 2050.
The world is looking brighter, but it took a lot of
effort to get here.

Currently, our family lives in a house made entirely
from recycled materials. Becoming an urban
agriculture engineer has been a fulfilling journey.
I've had the opportunity to help various parts of
the city develop urban farms, enabling local food
production. I'm helping people have access
to healthy food!

But it all started with a project in the school
canteen with recycled materials, where we made
a soil-enhancer. It inspired me to become a youth
representative at the city council where I helped
make sure that projects in the city took young
people and future generations into account.

Don't be worried. I trust you! Remember to have
fun where you can, and that small steps pave the
way for big changes.

You are exactly where you need to be.

Please take good care of Mewtronix.



About the creators

This cartoon was created by the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies in collaboration with professor in futures studies, Sohail Inayatullah. This initiative is part of the Teach the Future movement and is supported by generous donations from Knud og Dagny Gad Andresens Foundation and Brødrene Hartmanns Foundation. The cartoon can also be found in a Danish version, which is included in an open-source package of teaching materials and exercises for educators wanting to introduce students aged 12 and up to futures thinking.

Authors: Nicklas Larsen, Thor Svanholm Gustavfson, Jasmin Cramon, Amalie Mørck, and Sohail Inayatullah

Illustrator: Alyona Subkhankulova

The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of views contained in this cartoon and for opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organisation.

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