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# CIFS Toolkit *for* Applied Strategic Foresight

*2026 update*



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# Introduction

Welcome to the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies' foresight toolkit. This collection of tools and approaches has been carefully curated and refined based on our own extensive experience in the field of foresight, combined with insights drawn from other thinkers and practitioners. This updated edition expands the toolkit with additional tools and refines the material throughout.

While the toolkit will help you apply strategic foresight to your work, it will not teach you how to predict the future, or provide you with definitive answers. It can help you explore and analyse emerging change and possible futures as a powerful and valuable addition to your strategic thinking, but it cannot tell you when to act, or exactly what to do.

The toolkit is also not a beginner's step-by-step guide to each of the tools nor a theoretical overview. Rather, the toolkit offers practical insights, honed through many years of CIFS' applied foresight work. It gives an overall description of each tool/approach, along with key considerations that can help in successfully delivering the technique. The tools are adaptable, and can hence be customised to meet the needs of most futures projects. After all, there is no one right way to do foresight, and every futures project is different.

A final principle underpins everything that follows. Foresight always emphasises that the future is plural. But effective foresight should also always understand that plurality exists in the present and past as well. The present and past are experienced differently by people of different backgrounds, circumstances, and beliefs. If we ignore this, we risk making sense of the future in ways that are too confined and narrow. Therefore, good foresight practice pays attention to the assumptions and narratives that shape how people make sense of the future.

**“This collection of tools and approaches has been carefully curated and refined based on our own extensive experience in the field of foresight”**

# Vocabulary of the Future

Foresight practitioners reference a variety of terms to describe the work that they do. We have collected a brief, non-exhaustive glossary of some of the most common terms used in the field of foresight.

**Strategic foresight:** A discipline that involves systematically anticipating and preparing for future challenges and opportunities in ways that expand conventional strategic thinking in the face of change. It typically deals with the medium- to long-term future (beyond the current strategic planning horizon) with the overarching goal of enhancing awareness of change and considering multiple alternative futures in ways that generate valuable insights for better strategic anticipation.

The aim of foresight is never to predict the future. Rather, in a time where forecasts, projections, and linear decision-making methods are not enough, strategic foresight aims to achieve a high-quality view of how the future might show up in the form of new assumptions, behaviours, and realities. In this sense, the outset for practising foresight should always be to challenge the tendency to favour the 'business as usual' future and to adequately explore viable alternatives.

Without foresight, strategy risks becoming blind to contextual change and a recipe for failure when change occurs. Conversely, without connection to strategic or decision-making purpose, foresight easily becomes conjecture and disconnected from organisational reality.

**Forecasting:** The process of projecting future developments or conditions based on the analysis of past and present data and observations. It involves identifying trends, patterns, and relationships within the data to make informed projections. Forecasting is entirely extrapolative in nature and typically assumes that an observed relationship will continue into the future.

Forecasting is useful when trying to understand an environment that is relatively stable and where you have a good understanding of the variables in play.

**Megatrends:** Long-term and large-scale transformative forces that profoundly shape both the present and the future. For the most part, megatrends stay their course even in turbulent times. They shape the future landscape of societies, economies, industries, and cultures over extended periods. While they are global in scope, their impact varies locally.

In a principally uncertain and complex world, megatrends help us recognise that there are also relatively stable, yet powerful, forces at work in shaping future outcomes.

**Trends:** Observable and/or measurable directional shifts in a situation or in the way people behave. They can vary in strength, direction (increasing, decreasing, or stable), and impact.

A trend can be represented numerically, through indicators that can be measured and supported by data, or non-numerically, as a perceived development that may only partially be supported by data, often understood through examples or observations. In practice, most trends carry elements of both.

Trends shaping the future are interconnected and interdependent, with different time horizons, reach, and levels of impact. They often blend into each other, making them difficult to separate. There is no guarantee that a trend observed in the past will continue unchanged in the future, and counter-trends often emerge in response or opposition to the dominant one.

**Drivers of change / Driving forces:** The forces causing change by shaping and amplifying trends, increasing or decreasing their potential impact. Drivers are dynamic and interconnected, and include such things as shifts in attitudes and awareness, as well as economic and technological forces that influence how something spreads and grows. In essence, a driver is an underlying force that acts on something else, and consequently a trend can itself act as a driver when it exerts influence in other areas. In practice it is often impossible – and often unimportant – to distinguish between the two.

**Weak signals:** Subtle and often early indicators of emerging trends or disruptions that are not yet widely recognised or understood. Weak signals have the potential to significantly impact the future, but may also completely fade away before manifesting into a trend or a driving force.

These signals typically originate from the fringes of society, technology, economy, culture, or from other parts of the world, and may initially appear insignificant or disconnected from mainstream developments. In this sense, weak signals can be thought of as ‘pockets of the future’ already embedded in the present.

**Wild cards:** Events or developments with low (perceived) probability but high impact when they occur. Wild cards have the potential to significantly alter the future landscape in unpredictable ways, by disrupting existing realities and developments, making them critical considerations for strategic foresight.

Although wild cards cannot fully be anticipated or planned for, wild card analysis helps organisations better adapt to disruptive surprises by considering possible wild cards and assessing their potential implications.

The term was co-introduced by CIFS in 1992.

**Uncertainty / Uncertainties:** Uncertainty is a feature of complex systems and is fundamentally inherent when working with the future. Recognising it

highlights the potential for novelty, emergence, and discontinuity. It can arise from having limited knowledge about the future, or from future developments being genuinely undetermined, with multiple ways they could plausibly play out.

Genuine uncertainty also compounds over time. Many future outcomes are contingent on other developments that have not yet played out – and those, in turn, on others still. Uncertainty accumulates the further into the future we look, which is part of why the long term cannot simply be extrapolated from the present.

Uncertainty is different from risk. Risk refers to situations where the probabilities of different outcomes are known, or can be estimated with some degree of confidence. Uncertainty involves situations where those probabilities are unknown, unknowable, or cannot be reliably estimated, reflecting a lack of information or predictability about future events or developments, and implying a higher level of ambiguity and complexity.

Uncertainty is at the heart of all foresight work, and a fundamental aspect of strategic foresight involves identifying and engaging with critical uncertainties. These are defined as high-impact drivers with uncertain outcomes.

**Scenarios:** Plausible and coherent narratives describing alternative futures, based on key drivers and uncertainties, and expanded through storytelling to create credible and compelling images of how the future may unfold. In foresight, scenarios often exist in sets, allowing different futures to be contrasted with one another and with the present, helping to break away from a deterministic view of the future.

Scenarios are not predictions of the future. They are not meant to be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Rather, their function is to challenge current assumptions and provoke us to think about the future in new ways, including outcomes ‘beyond the numbers’ that might otherwise be overlooked.

The discipline of scenario planning offers a structured approach to exploring a set of plausible future conditions that are different from the present. This allows organisations to widen their strategic perspective and consider alternative future outcomes that may be difficult to grasp in the present.

**Emergence:** A feature of complex systems, like societies. New patterns, behaviours, or properties arise from the interactions within the system and could not have been inferred from the individual parts alone. Emergence is a source of genuine novelty, and a central reason the future cannot be known in advance, only anticipated, because complex systems continually produce what was not there before.

**Worldview:** How people see the world, with an emphasis on the unconscious assumptions and biases they do not call into question. Worldviews are shaped by the culture, experiences, norms, and mindsets we carry with us, and influence our habitual ways of thinking and perceiving our situations and reality. Becoming aware of our own worldview, and holding space for those of others – who may make sense of the world, and of the future, quite differently from ourselves – is an important part of foresight. It helps people become mindful of the ‘frame’ they are using, including what is left out of that frame.

**Reperception:** The process of shifting perspective to think of the world and of the future in a new way, recognising that the future can be different from the past or from what one currently expects. One of the main goals of futurists and foresight practitioners is to facilitate reperception, for example, by utilising scenarios or other foresight tools. Reperception is a key element in developing systems and strategies that can respond to emergent futures in the face of uncertainty.

**Futures literacy:** The capability to imagine, question, and use the future as a resource for better understanding the present and acting with intention. Developed within UNESCO as a core competency for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it treats engaging with the future as something that can be learned and strengthened,

much like reading and writing, and it enhances our ability to prepare, recover, and invent in the face of change.

A futures-literate person is able to hold many possible futures in mind, rather than a single expected one, and to draw on them to see the present differently, becoming more comfortable with uncertainty, novelty, and emergence.

# What Tools to Use When?

Given the extensive number of tools available, how does one pick the right ones? The same tool can serve different purposes, and different tools can help achieve similar ends, so knowing how to choose and combine them is much a matter of practice and situational awareness. There is no single right or wrong answer, but here are some criteria that may help with selection:

**Objective:** Be absolutely clear and intentional about what you want your futures work to deliver. Every futures project is different, and should be based on its own specific context, premises, and objectives. Some tools are useful for opening minds to novelty and different perspectives, while others are more about creating a shared sense of the future or understanding what drives change in the present. Some provide insights relatively quickly and with little effort, while others are more demanding and require substantial effort. Some work very well in explorative workshop settings, while others are more geared towards developing or testing strategy in a decision-making context.

**Mix & match:** Combining and adapting foresight tools and methods is often necessary as part of a foresight process, as no single tool does everything. Different questions call for different tools, and some of these tools work better in unison than others. Some tools may yield an output that naturally flows as input into the next phase of the process.

**Intended users:** Know the recipients of your work as well as the people involved in the process. Some are more open to divergent futures thinking, while others can be more constrained in their thinking and views at the initial stage. Knowing both your 'intended users' and the people involved in the process or project allows you to, for example, start with 'lighter' tools that are easier to grasp, and then progress onto more challenging ones.

**Striking the balance:** This is connected to the point of knowing your intended users. At a high level, part of your role as a foresight practitioner is finding the edge of your users' comfort zone and helping push them just past that. This implies that what is considered provocative for one group may not be for another, and vice versa.

Experience suggests that when people engage with foresight work they consider too extreme or implausible, they tend to become even more confident in their original view of the future. This can contribute to their distrust in foresight, as they might think it is too speculative to be useful. Conversely, if the foresight work is not challenging enough, it is easily dismissed as pointless, which again can contribute to distrust in foresight. For foresight work to be used efficiently, your users must be convinced of the soundness, relevance, and value of the process, whatever its objective. Only then is there a chance it will influence decisions and actions.

# A Note on AI in Foresight

AI in foresight is a fast-moving, opinion-laden topic, and some of what is written on this page may soon be dated. While AI is undeniably becoming more helpful and transformative for foresight work, its ongoing integration into the foresight practice has also surfaced existential questions about the discipline itself.

Part of practising foresight increasingly involves knowing when and how to use AI intentionally and responsibly – and, perhaps more importantly, when not to use it at all. We find ourselves in a period of transition, and at the same time in a balancing act. How do we maintain the integrity of the discipline while taking advantage of what these tools can enhance, augment, and perhaps even reshape in the way foresight is practised? And how do we make sure AI is used to provoke better thinking about the future, rather than to churn out shallow foresight work that feels derivative or little more than reskinned content in an already noisy information environment?

Different AI tools can truly support and augment different parts of the foresight process. But always remember that foresight is more than the outputs that are produced with the methods and tools. It is a way of thinking and reasoning with context, intent, and lived experience.

So, as you engage with this toolkit, if your intention is to build your own foresight capability and cultivate your own futures thinking, we encourage you to actively practise the tools yourself and grapple with the discomfort and friction that come with it. The cognitive capabilities and mental models that underpin foresight must be developed through your own engagement with the work, and in exchange with other people.

Use AI to explain unfamiliar concepts, challenge your reasoning, introduce alternative perspectives, or expose weaknesses in your analysis. Ask it to disagree with you. Ask what assumptions you might be making, what futures you have failed to consider, or what evidence would strengthen your argument. But resist the temptation to let AI replace core interpretation, sense-making, or framing on your behalf.

Simply running all the tools in this toolkit through AI does not make you a better futurist. *A fool with a tool is still a fool* – and when it comes to foresight, AI doesn't change that.

**“Part of practising foresight increasingly involves knowing when and how to use AI intentionally and responsibly – and, perhaps more importantly, when not to use it at all”**

# Scoping a Foresight Project

Scoping a foresight project properly is key to ensuring impactful outcomes, and a lot of consideration must go into scoping a foresight project well. Foresight is applied in many different contexts, and takes on many different forms. Your approach may look very different depending on the purpose of your foresight intervention and where the request and mandate come from. Foresight in organisational settings often carries a particular requirement, in that foresight efforts should always be aligned with the specific organisational context and strategic objectives.

Scoping involves more than just deciding on ‘foresight properties’ like the focal issue, scope boundaries (making sure that the scope does not become too broad or too narrow), or time horizon. It is equally important to understand why you are undertaking the foresight project, within what system or context the project exists, and which decisions you are hoping to influence. This is critical in avoiding a mismatch between what the people/team who asked for the project want vs. what they need.

It is also a crucial part of managing expectations of what can feasibly be accomplished with the foresight intervention. Oftentimes, foresight interventions are expected to achieve things they cannot or should not do, setting them up to underwhelm – or outright fail. Being realistic about these answers is key, especially when the project sponsor may not have the experience needed to properly set expectations.

Part of the scoping process is also to make sure that you are engaging the right people as a critical factor for the success of any project. This helps ensure that there is a mandate and buy-in from the right people and decision makers, and hence, that you have their permission to challenge the status quo. Who you speak to and who you choose to bring with you on the journey will affect the insights and impact of your project.

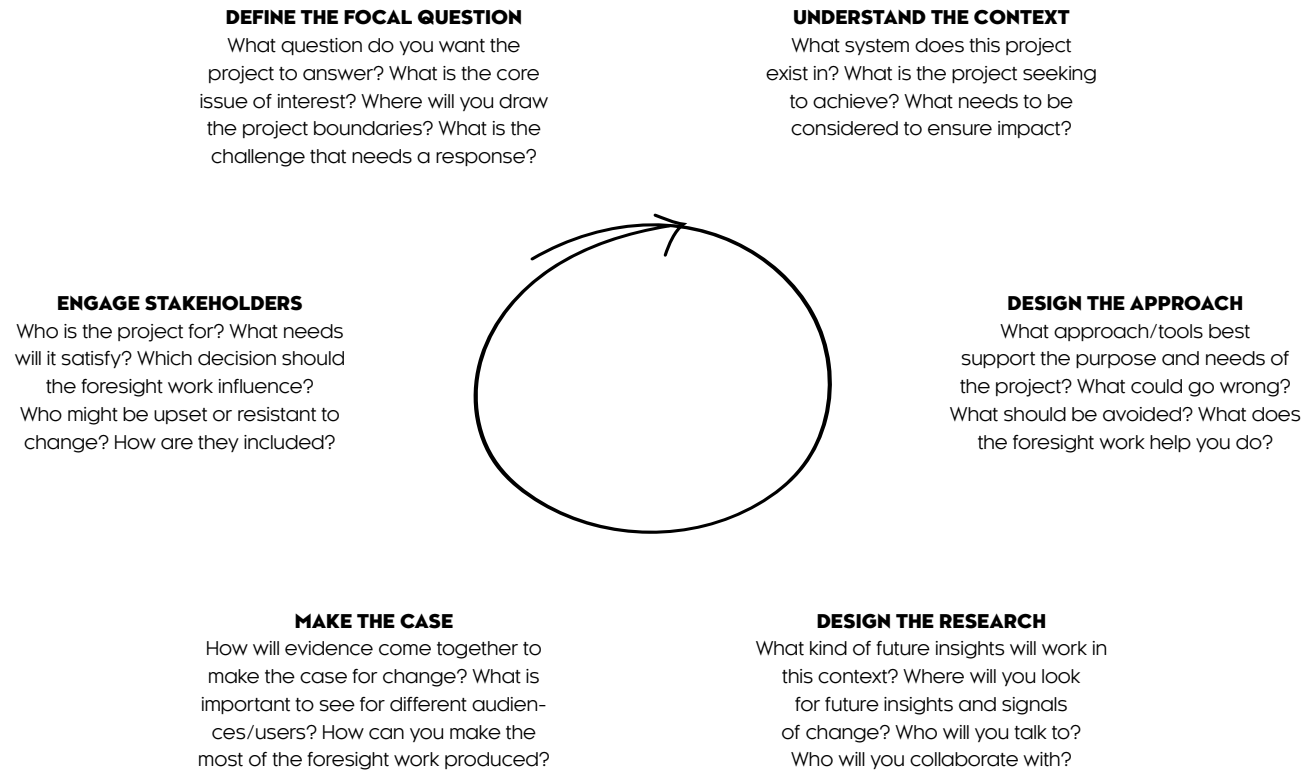
## The Scoping Circle

California 100 and School of International Futures have developed a powerful yet simple approach to scoping a foresight project which they call the Scoping Circle (see figure 1). It is a set of six steps that can be used to get a clear understanding of your question, purpose, context, and approach.

You start with the question that you have the clearest answer to and work your way around the circle as many times as is useful. Using it iteratively helps you refine your thinking, and you should always consider including different perspectives in the scoping exercise, such as the people/team who asked for the project, project beneficiaries, and other relevant individuals or groups. This helps to ensure that the project stakeholders agree on the scope and boundaries of the project.

**Source:** California 100 & School of International Futures (2023), “Beyond Strategic Planning: A Foresight Toolkit for Decision Makers”.

# Figure 1: THE SCOPING CIRCLE



Source: California 100 & School of International Futures (2023), "Beyond Strategic Planning: A Foresight Toolkit for Decision Makers".



# AWARENESS OF CHANGE

Researching and exploring the future

**Horizon & Environmental Scanning**  
**Driver Mapping**  
**Futures Triangle**  
**Delphi Method**

# Horizon & Environmental Scanning

Most foresight work begins with scanning the environment for evident driving forces and emerging patterns of change. There are different scanning practices that are often referred to interchangeably, though they actually serve distinct purposes.

**Horizon scanning** focuses on the structured gathering of early signals and emerging developments (as well as discontinuities) that may have significant impact when they develop, but that are not yet widely recognised or understood. These emerging developments typically originate from the margins of current thinking, the fringes of society, technology, economy, or culture. They may initially appear insignificant or disconnected from mainstream developments, and by their nature they are often faint, unstructured, and unintended. One of the main objectives of horizon scanning is to broaden the perspective beyond what is currently on one's radar. Hence, incomplete information and uncertainty about a signal's future development trajectory are inherent to this exercise. Certain signals and emerging developments may develop into strong drivers in the future, and they may come with a new set of strategic issues (not yet understood) – others may not.

**Environmental scanning** focuses more specifically on identifying influential driving forces and trends that exist in the external environment and that have the potential to change the future. This helps us understand what is already visible and what is (somewhat) evidently driving change, by analysing data and observing trends.

One of the underlying principles of foresight work is that change happens 'outside-in', which in turn influences the envisioned strategic setting. Overall, an organisation's external environment can be considered in two 'layers' (see figure 2). The *contextual environment* describes factors at the macro level that shape longer-term developments, and that an organisation has little or no influence over. The *operating environment* includes industry-related developments that are closer to the organisation, including developments in adjacent industries. The contextual environment affects the operating environment, and many of the drivers that will shape development in the longer term will emerge from outside an organisation's operating environment.

**“One of the main objectives of horizon scanning is to broaden the perspective beyond what is currently on one's radar”**

Source: European Environment Agency (2023), "Horizon Scanning – Tips and Tricks: A Practical Guide"; UN Global Pulse (2022), "Horizon Scan User Manual".

## Use Scanning to

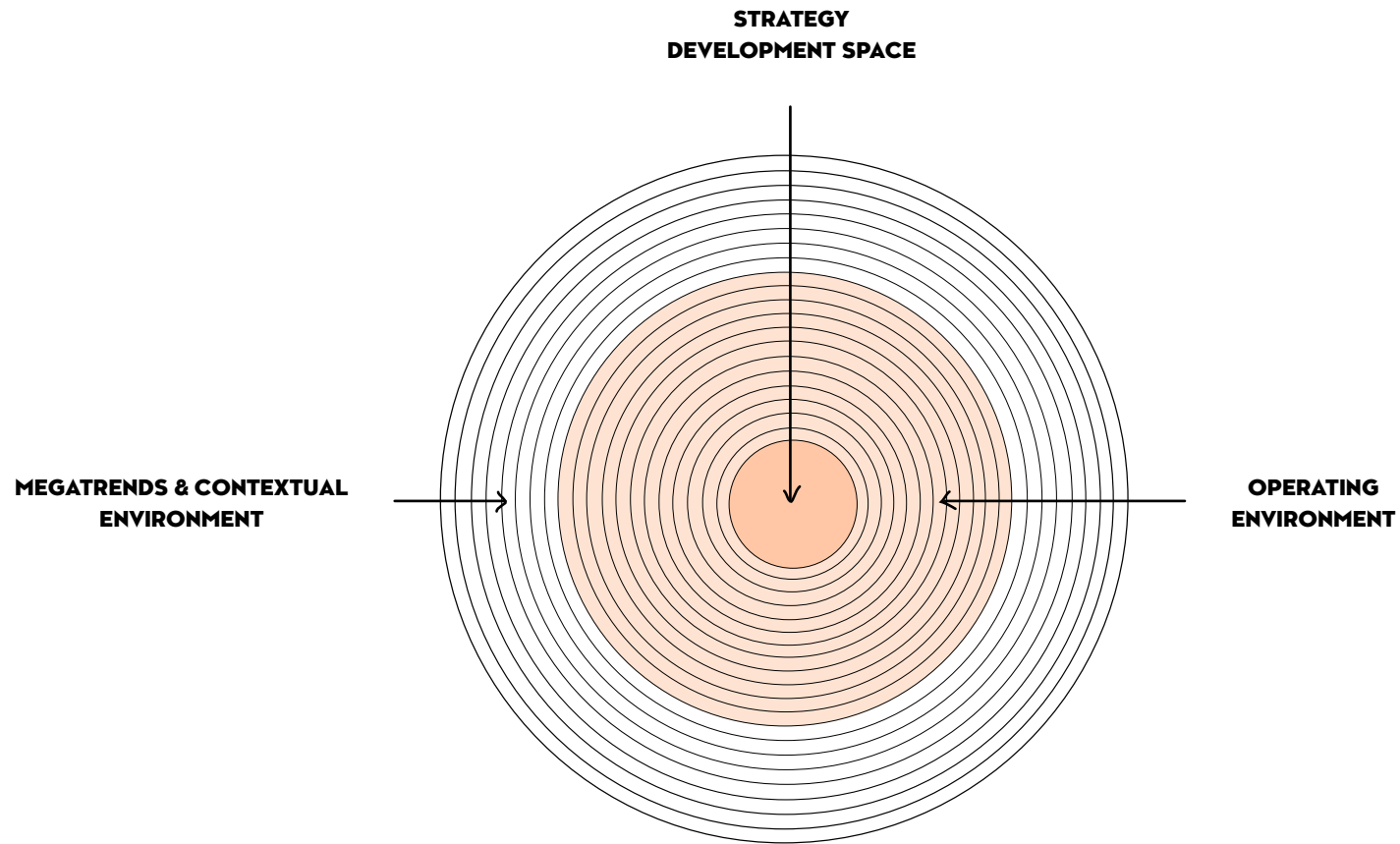
- Broaden your perspective beyond what is currently on your radar and detect potentially impactful ‘weak signals’ that might otherwise be overlooked, allowing for early recognition of emerging opportunities and threats.
  - Monitor developments as part of early warning systems or risk management, helping organisations respond proactively to changes.
  - Look beyond the most obvious trends and drivers to explore developments that fall outside current understanding.
- .....

## Key things to consider

- In our information-saturated world, there are almost unlimited sources of signals, insights, and ideas available, so it is key to be intentional about the specific scanning exercise. Scanning that is too broad risks drowning in noise, so decide on a clear purpose and understand your scanning needs. Different modes of scanning require different tactics and potentially software tools. Scanning processes can vary from small-scale project-specific setups that are more ‘handheld’ and maybe even manual, to extensive and continuous organisational-level setups that are powered by complex digital platforms.

- The future ‘intelligence’ you are scanning for can be both qualitative and episodic as well as quantitative and supported by data. In scanning setups with the purpose of continuous monitoring, leading indicators or data sources that provide an early warning of changing conditions are identified. However, this is not required in many cases.
- You need a clear taxonomy, and clearly defined elements that are used for processing each of the scans, which also helps you make sense of your findings later (see figure 3). Scanning output can take many forms, from one-pagers with overall considerations and key indicators to extensive horizon scanning reports. Often, depending on purpose, endorsing simplicity in your scanning exercise provides the most useful outputs.
- Encourage divergent thinking and look to include signals that might feel uncertain or weird in the beginning. Throughout the process, the less relevant signals can be filtered out. Scanning is not the same as searching, as you are not on a mission to look for what you know or want, but rather to look for novelty. Think outside the box and investigate a broad range of sources.
- Conduct touchpoints or sessions to review, discuss, and refine scanning outcomes. The scanning itself can be done alone, but it creates far more value when you collaboratively explore interactions across a wide range of trends and signals and assess their impact.
- Treat scanning as a capability that builds over time. As you keep practising, you develop a richer base of knowledge, which sharpens your ability to tell real signals from noise and to spot what others overlook.

*Figure 2:* **EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT & STRATEGY SPACE**



## *Figure 3:* **USEFUL ELEMENTS IN A SCAN**

| ELEMENT                   | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title of scan</b>      | Give your scan a title that captures the essence of the signal                                                                                |
| <b>Description</b>        | The scan in a nutshell: What is the signal about? What do you see?<br>Why is it important and for whom? How and where is the signal emerging? |
| <b>Awareness</b>          | Is the observation already on the radar of the organisation?<br>Does this change something you already know? Is this something new to you?    |
| <b>Strength/Imminence</b> | Assess how strong the signal is and how soon it may materialise (e.g. use a 1-5 scale)                                                        |
| <b>Impact</b>             | Assess the potential impact the development could have (e.g. use a 1-5 scale)                                                                 |
| <b>Implications</b>       | Speculate on the possible implications of the signal                                                                                          |
| <b>Opposing forces</b>    | Consider opposing developments that potentially refute the impact                                                                             |
| <b>Horizons</b>           | Consider implication pathways and the way a signal might develop in the near and far future                                                   |
| <b>References</b>         | Name the source and the publication or interview details                                                                                      |

# Driver Mapping

**“Driver mapping is essentially about making sense of gathered insights, such as from a scanning exercise, and identifying leading drivers based on their nature or typology”**

Driver mapping helps to identify the most influential drivers of change in a system or in relation to a specific domain or focal topic. A driver of change is an underlying force that generates or shapes a trend or development (see definition on page 6). Drivers include things like shifts in attitudes and behaviour, as well as economic and technological forces that influence how something spreads and grows.

Driver mapping is essentially about making sense of gathered insights, such as from a scanning exercise, and identifying leading drivers based on their nature or typology. There are different ways to do this. One of the most common techniques is the PESTEL framework (or other acronym variants) where drivers are mapped across six different macro dimensions (see figure 4). Alternatively, the Verge framework, developed by Richard Lum and Michele Bowman, takes an ethnographic view, mapping change by its points of impact on people (see figure 5).

**Source:** UK Government Office for Science (2024), “The Futures Toolkit”; Lum, R. (2014), “Verge: a General Practice Framework for Futures Work”.

### Use Driver Mapping to

- Organise and understand key drivers of change and provide a more detailed picture of future developments facing an organisation.
- Produce a set of critical or important drivers as key input into further futures work and for the creation of futures scenarios.
- Look for affinity between signals to reveal the larger drivers beneath them. Where several signals (e.g. from a scanning exercise) move in the same direction, they often point to a single underlying driver.

- A driver should be ‘neutral’ and allow for different outcomes. In that sense, a driver should not be framed in a positive or negative form. For example: ‘job loss from automation’ is not neutral, but ‘impact of automation on jobs’ is a suitable driver.
- Look for possibilities to eliminate duplicates and merge drivers that are too similar. Too many drivers risk a longer analysis and treating less influential drivers as influential. Conversely, too few may limit the important dimensions of the analysis and lead to a simplistic one that omits critical drivers.
- At this stage, it can sometimes be desirable to identify the most important drivers by mapping them according to their impact on the domain/topic of interest and the uncertainty of the future direction or outcome of the driver. This approach is described in more detail as part of the ‘Uncertainties Assessment’ tool.

### Key things to consider

- Driver mapping does not have to follow a predefined framework like PESTEL or Verge. Sometimes it may be desirable to cluster drivers by your own alternative themes that emerge from your brainstorm or research that are more suitable for your specific purpose.

## *Figure 4:* **PESTEL FRAMEWORK**

|                       |                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>P</b> olitical     | Political factors, such as interventions in societies and economies, (geo)political tensions, development goals, etc.   |
| <b>E</b> conomic      | Economic factors, such as overall economic growth, markets, inflation, etc.                                             |
| <b>S</b> ocial        | Social factors, such as demographic change, changes in people's behaviour, values, and lifestyles, etc.                 |
| <b>T</b> echnological | Technological advancements and their influence on society, businesses, new innovations, etc.                            |
| <b>E</b> nvironmental | Environmental/Ecological aspects, such as the effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity, new energy sources, etc. |
| <b>L</b> egal         | Legal/Regulatory factors, such as data protection, anti-discrimination laws, global regulatory issues, etc.             |

## *Figure 5:* VERGE FRAMEWORK

|                |                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Define</b>  | Concepts, ideas, and paradigms we use to define ourselves and the world around us (worldviews, social values, attitudes, etc.)                                    |
| <b>Relate</b>  | Structures, relationships, and ways of interaction which organise people and organisations (social structures, governance structures, business models, etc.)      |
| <b>Connect</b> | Technologies and practices used to connect people, places, and things (digital technologies, media, music, language, etc.)                                        |
| <b>Create</b>  | Processes and technologies through which we innovate, design, and produce (manufacturing, engineering, life sciences, rule-making, etc.)                          |
| <b>Consume</b> | Ways in which we acquire and consume the goods and services we create (modes of exchange, consumer preferences, marketing, etc.)                                  |
| <b>Destroy</b> | Ways in which we destroy value and the reasons for doing so (waste, attempts to undermine rules and norms, repression, harmful reproduction of old systems, etc.) |

Source: Lum, R. (2014), "Verge: a General Practice Framework for Futures Work".

# Futures Triangle

The Futures Triangle, developed by Sohail Inayatullah, serves as an intuitive tool to guide our thinking and help us map the dynamics at play when change occurs across the three dimensions that shape future outcomes: The *push of the present*, the *pull from the future*, and the *weight of history*. The tension and interaction between these three forces highlights that the way future change occurs depends on the outcome of the ‘friction field’ created between different forces. This helps us recognise that change is often not straightforward, and always multifaceted, as it is shaped by interacting forces. The three dimensions in the Futures Triangle can be described this way:

**Push of the present** represents what is currently and evidently influencing future change in the external environment: *Which trends and developments are creating change and carving out the trajectories ahead?*

**Pull from the future** represents the novel developments and images of the future that may show up in the form of new assumptions and realities: *Which matters at the margin of current thinking do not seem to fit into existing patterns? What visions and images are pulling us towards particular futures?*

**Weight of history** represents the constraints and legacies of the past that shape the current situation and influence future possibilities – both in negative and positive terms: *What are the deeply rooted structures that resist change? What are the dominant narratives that hinder progress? What are the sources of stability and values that are desirable to preserve and sustain?*

**“The Futures Triangle helps us recognise that change is often not straightforward, and always multifaceted, as it is shaped by interacting forces”**

**Source:** Inayatullah, S. (2008), “Six Pillars: Futures Thinking for Transformation”.

### Use Futures Triangle to

- Understand dynamics of change as a reflection of the tension and interaction of different forces and visualise the complexity inherent in how change occurs.
- Inquire into how the past has shaped the current system, and how deeply rooted structures and assumptions continue to influence future possibilities.
- Facilitate a process of thinking beyond the now and exploring novel developments and signals of change that are not always obvious in the present.

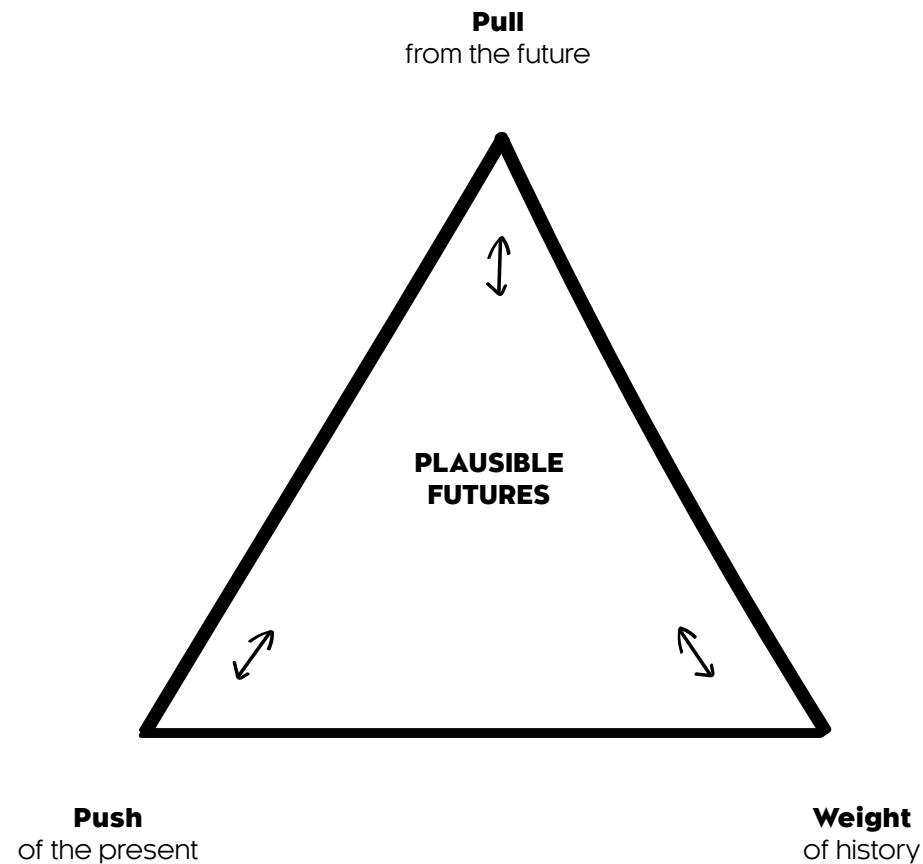
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### Key things to consider

- The Futures Triangle is a simple tool that can be deployed anywhere, with minimal resources required. It is particularly useful in a collaborative setting where people can bring diverse perspectives to the table and build on each other's thinking.

- Be mindful that this is an explorative tool to help guide thinking and reveal how different dynamics work together to shape how the future may unfold.
- The primary focus of the exercise should not be to categorise and place things correctly along the three dimensions. It is the process of exploring the different dimensions of change that is most important.
- After you have explored the three corners of the triangle, have a discussion about the tensions and interactions that you encounter between the three forces. This should give you a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of change that emerge within the triangle. Consider looking for paradoxes and friction points as well as factors that enable each other. It is a healthy sign if your triangle reveals paradoxes and aspects that are counterintuitive and point in 'opposite' directions.
- One way to surface these tensions is to zoom out and look across the triangle as a whole. This helps reveal where several entries share a common root – an underlying driver – even as they carry opposite charges, pulling in different directions across the corners. Identifying shared drivers beneath these surface signals is often what reveals where the deepest tensions lie. These drivers can then be carried forward and prioritised by their impact and uncertainty, as described in more detail as part of the 'Uncertainties Assessment' tool.
- Exploring dynamics of change by using the Futures Triangle is relatively straightforward. It relies on insight, but also on intuition and divergent thinking, especially when it comes to the pull from the future. This can feel counterintuitive to those who are more practised in evidence-based strategic thinking.

*Figure 6:* **THE FUTURES TRIANGLE**



**Source:** Inayatullah, S. (2008), "Six Pillars: Futures Thinking for Transformation".

# Delphi Method

A Delphi study is a collaborative foresight method designed to elicit consensus building among a panel of experts on a series of future hypotheses and propositions. The method is based on the principle that the collective foresight from a carefully selected group of experts – the Delphi panellists – provides superior insights and orientation on potential future developments compared to individual judgements and forecasts. This is especially true when dealing with complex areas with a high degree of uncertainty and incomplete knowledge.

While Delphi study applications are diverse, at its core, the Delphi method is a controlled debate carried out over two or more iterative learning rounds. The first Delphi round establishes the group's initial views. In the second and subsequent rounds, feedback from the previous round, including current overall panel consensus measures and anonymised answers, is provided to all participants. This allows them to learn from the views of others and further develop their own opinions and reasoning based on their co-participants' input. A Delphi panel will usually move towards some level of consensus over several rounds. But even when this does not occur, the reasons for disparate positions and any high level of uncertainty become clear. The anonymity of a Delphi study is a key characteristic. Participants can know who else is involved, but not what they have said. This helps avoid groupthink and ensures that the process is not influenced by biased group dynamics.

A less resource-intensive variant is the real-time Delphi method, which does not require multiple rounds. Instead, it leverages a digital platform to facilitate continuous, asynchronous interaction in the panel. This approach allows participants to monitor the panel's overall opinion and shifting consensus, and view comments and arguments made by other participants in real-time.

**“A Delphi study is a collaborative foresight method designed to elicit consensus building among a panel of experts on a series of future hypotheses and propositions”**

**Source:** Gordon, T.J. (2009), “The Delphi Method”.

Part of Futures Research Methodology V3.0 by The Millennium Project.

### Use Delphi Method to

- Leverage the collective intelligence from a diverse group of experts.
- Provide orientation on complex future issues by understanding where expert judgement converges, where it diverges, and where genuine uncertainty remains.
- Support informed decision-making by providing structured expert judgement and a deeper understanding of key future issues.

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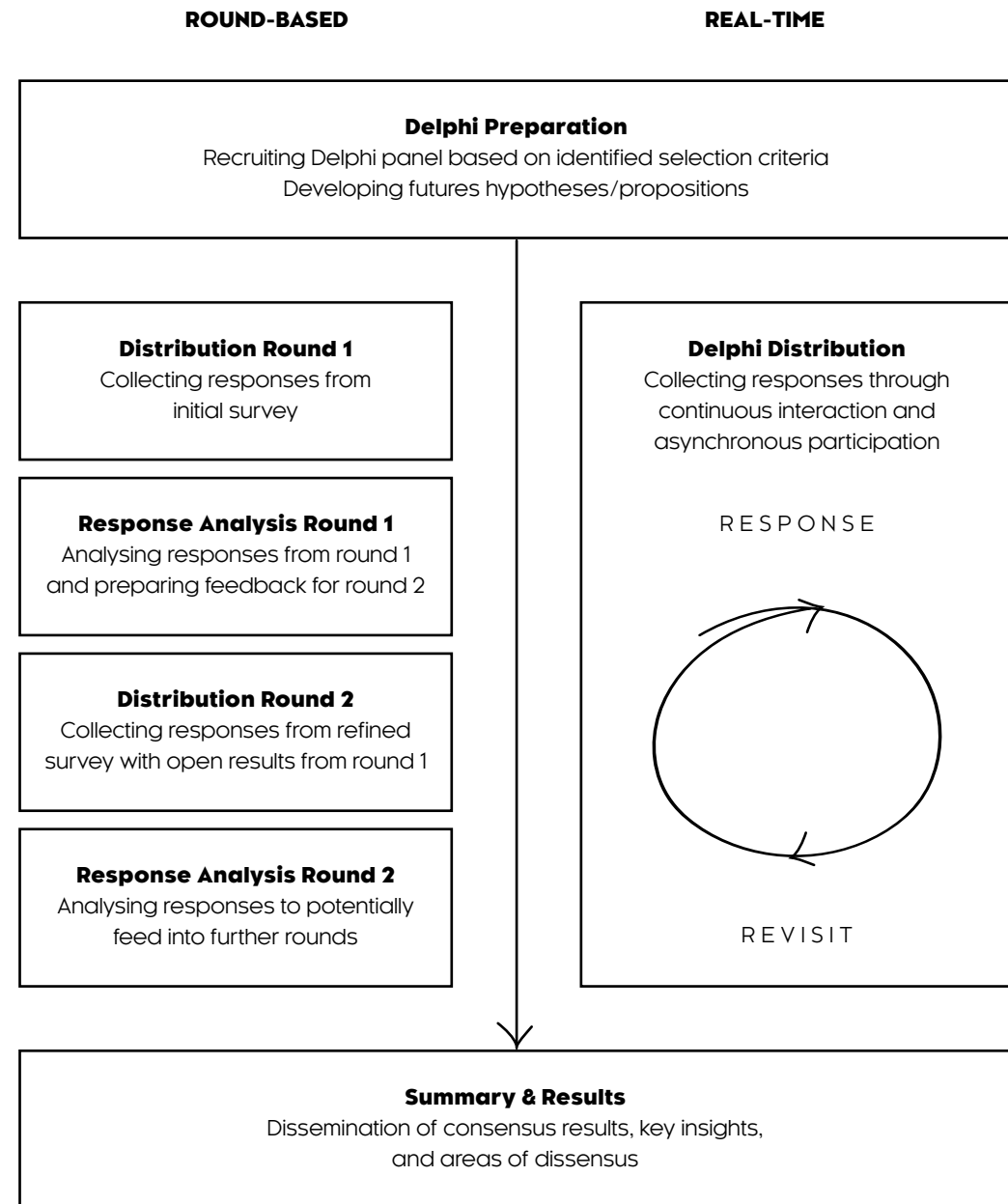
### Key things to consider

- Delphi studies are difficult to do well, and a poorly designed Delphi can provoke antagonism and leave you with poor-quality insights. Therefore, a great deal of attention must be given to the choice of panellists. The experts involved need to be selected based on their knowledge and experience so that they can contribute with valuable insights, while also representing diversity of perspectives. It is crucial to bring in different areas of expertise related to the same focal issue to enrich the discussion and enhance the quality of the findings.

- The future hypotheses/propositions and their answer scales included in the Delphi must be meticulously prepared and tested to avoid ambiguity. The quality of the results depends on all panellists interpreting each hypothesis in the same way. If a hypothesis is ambiguous, panellists will respond based on their own differing interpretations, making the results difficult to trust.
- Delphi studies always tackle issues formulated in hypotheses/propositions about which uncertain and incomplete knowledge exists, and unlike traditional questionnaires, they do not rely on direct questions. The panellists should be prompted with the importance of providing elaborate argumentation for their choices and assessments, for the other panellists to consider in subsequent rounds.
- Normally, the number of participants in a Delphi is relatively small. Consequently, a Delphi study does not (and is not intended to) produce statistically significant results across a representative sample. It represents the synthesis of opinion of the group of panellists – no more, no less.
- The Delphi method is relatively complex to execute. It is a time-consuming and resource-intensive process and may therefore not be appropriate for projects with a short timeline or limited resources.

# Figure 7:

## DELPHI METHOD OVERVIEW



Source: CIFS based on: Gordon, T.J. (2009), "The Delphi Method".

# DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

Understanding uncertainty and how change behaves

**Uncertainties Assessment**  
**Enablers & Blockers**  
**Futures Wheel**  
**Pace Layers**  
**Cross-Impact Analysis**

# Uncertainties Assessment

A fundamental aspect of strategic foresight is identifying and engaging with critical uncertainties for the purpose of longer-term strategic planning. Critical uncertainties are high-impact drivers with uncertain outcomes that can significantly influence the future. To identify these uncertainties, the Impact/Uncertainty matrix (see figure 8) can be used to assess drivers based on their impact and degree of uncertainty in relation to the focal issue. Identifying critical uncertainties often serves as the starting point for defining axes of uncertainty, which are then used in scenario building to explore different possible futures.

Uncertainties are different from trends in that they involve a lack of predictability regarding the future direction, strength, and/or outcomes of a particular driver. Uncertainty, in this context, refers to the unpredictability of how things might manifest in the future. Hence, we should be able to identify two ‘extreme’ but plausible directions of development or outcomes – polarities – by describing alternative ways that a driver might bring change. Uncertainties are then deemed critical when they are also assessed to have high strategic impact.

The different quadrants in the Impact/Uncertainty matrix can be described this way:

**High-impact/low-uncertainty drivers (top left quadrant):** These are the high-impact drivers with relative certainty. These are factors that should be monitored closely and preferably acted on in current strategic planning.

**High-impact/high-uncertainty drivers (top right quadrant):** These are the critical uncertainties. They could shape very different futures, so longer-term planning should seek to anticipate and prepare for them.

**Low-impact drivers (bottom quadrants):** These are secondary drivers that, for the time being, can be disregarded for the purpose of strategic foresight. However, they should still be monitored as they may develop into higher-impact drivers over time.

**“A fundamental aspect of strategic foresight is identifying and engaging with critical uncertainties for the purpose of longer-term strategic planning”**

Source: Schwartz, P. (1991), “The Art of the Long View. Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World”; UK Government Office for Science (2024), “The Futures Toolkit”.

## Use Uncertainties Assessment to

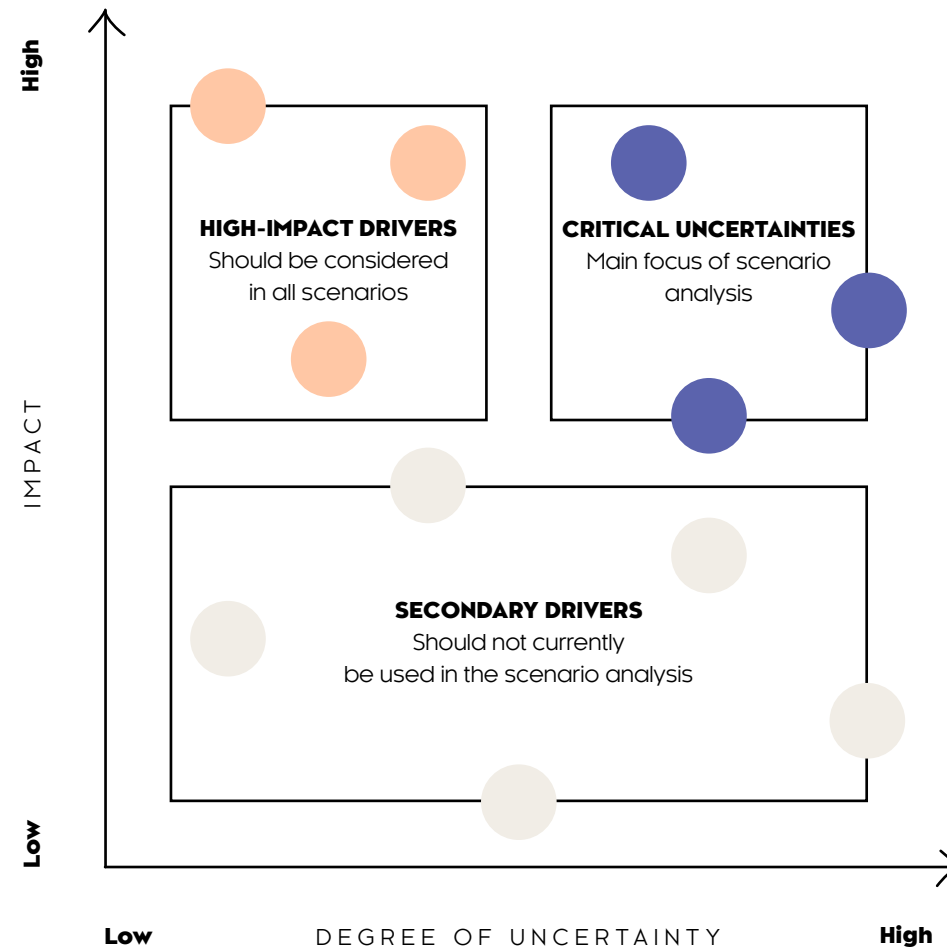
- Evaluate which drivers are surrounded by more or less certainty and identify strategically important critical uncertainties.
- Help question the assumptions we have about the direction of the future and guide decision-making under uncertainty.
- Lay the groundwork for scenario development, where two critical uncertainties form the axes of a scenario matrix.

## Key things to consider

- A driver is assessed to have **high impact** (on the 'impact' axis) when it possesses the ability to fundamentally alter the business environment or the focal issue. This axis is often used in relative terms to help prioritise the drivers with the most significant potential to drive fundamental change.
- Be especially aware of how the 'degree of uncertainty' is defined in this context. A driver is assessed to have a **low degree of uncertainty** when you find reasonable certainty around its future direction of development. On the other hand, a driver is assessed to have a **high degree of uncertainty** when you are very uncertain about the future direction in which it will bring change. In other words, a driver is deemed uncertain when we are faced with alternative ways it might bring change in the future.

- Be aware of how our biases affect the assessment of uncertainties. You should always refrain from claiming that something is not uncertain (low degree of uncertainty) just because one of the outcomes is less desirable for you or your organisation.
- It is not easy to identify genuine critical uncertainties. Hence, for the critical uncertainties (top right quadrant) you always need to have a discussion to crystallise what exactly it is you are uncertain about in relation to the specific driver. There is likely more than one uncertain factor related to a critical uncertainty. This depends on the level of granularity at which an uncertainty is described. Also, check for the possibility to group any related critical uncertainties, to make sure that you don't have different versions of the same uncertainty.
- The Impact/Uncertainty matrix can be used in two different ways. Sometimes you have a consolidated list of drivers that you want to map according to their impact and uncertainty to identify the critical uncertainties before you describe alternative ways that a driver might bring change (i.e. define polarities). At other times you may want to use the matrix as a prioritisation mechanism of already defined uncertainties with polarities.

*Figure 8:* **IMPACT/UNCERTAINTY MATRIX**



Source: CIFS based on: Schwartz, P. (1991), "The Art of the Long View. Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World".

# Enablers & Blockers

**“The way future change occurs depends on the outcome of the power struggle between enabling and limiting forces”**

The way future change occurs depends on the outcome of the power struggle between enabling and limiting forces. Forecasting methods typically derive trends from past data and extrapolate these trends forward without much consideration of the forces that nurture the trend and may eventually alter it. By using the Enablers & Blockers framework, we can get a better understanding of the dynamics of change of a given trend development (see figure 9). This understanding is gained by identifying underlying dynamics in favouring forces (enablers) that create, sustain, and catalyse a trend, and limiting forces (blockers) that stand in the way of a trend and slow it down, possibly even diverting it.

In essence, this provides a framework for analysing factors that will influence and define how a specific development plays out. Understanding a trend or development as a reflection of underlying enabling and blocking forces reveals why trend trajectories are capable of sudden surprises and reversals. When thinking about future change, we always have to keep in mind that while a lot of things might change significantly, many things might also stay the same.

Source: Gordon, A. (2010), “A DEFT Approach to Trend-based Foresight”.

### Use Enablers & Blockers to

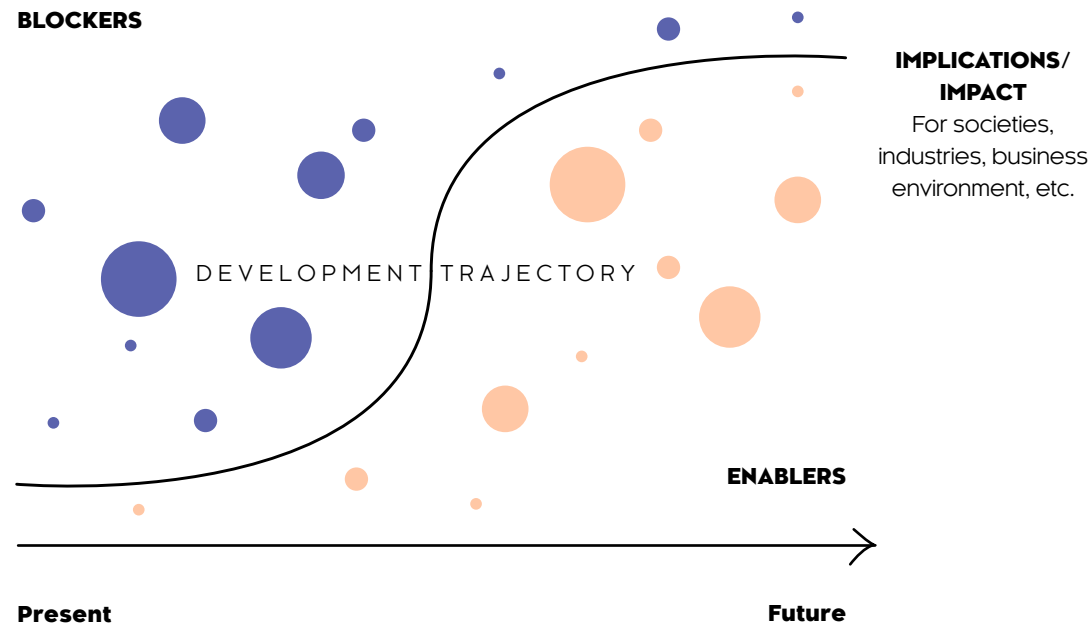
- Understand a trend as a reflection of underlying enabling and blocking forces.
- Acknowledge the complexity inherent in how change occurs.
- Better anticipate the inflection points where a trend's trajectory might shift.

- Be aware that sociocultural factors are often a key source of trend blocking. If the trend or development challenges prevailing social, cultural, or ethical norms, it is likely that change will only proceed slowly, if at all.
- Equally important to identifying enablers and blockers is to identify potential trend breaks (a moment that can signal the end of an existing trend and the start of a new one) and inflection points (a moment where the rate of change shifts significantly, often marking a transition in the growth or decline phase of a trend). This can have wide-ranging implications for current strategic plans and priorities. Very often it is about timing.

### Key things to consider

- Start by assessing how a given trend is currently impacting your area of interest (industry, sector, etc.). This is followed by brainstorming factors that promote or catalyse the trend (enablers) and the factors that stop, limit, or divert the trend (blockers).
- Try to construct your own trend development trajectory that reflects the power struggle between the identified enablers and blockers. Where/when enablers are strong and blockers are weak, we can expect the pace of change to be rapid. Where blockers are strong, we should expect them to deflect or slow the trend. Finally, discuss the future impact and implications that derive from the development.

*Figure 9:* **ENABLERS & BLOCKERS CANVAS**



Source: CIFS based on: Gordon, A. (2010), "A DEFT Approach to Trend-based Foresight".

# Futures Wheel

**“It provides an intuitive framework for analysing first-, second-, and higher-order impacts of change”**

The Futures Wheel, developed by Jerome Glenn, is a tool used to explore and map out the potential direct and indirect ripple consequences of a significant change, development, or future scenario. It provides an intuitive framework for analysing the first-, second-, and higher-order impacts of change, offering a visual representation of complex interconnections and dynamics. This makes it easier to understand how a change might influence various aspects of society, business, and other domains. Additionally, the Futures Wheel helps reveal potentially counterintuitive consequences, offering deeper insights into how change can unfold and how unexpected impacts can emerge.

To construct a Futures Wheel, you begin by placing the change at the centre of the wheel. From there, you systematically work outward through the consequence cascade, creating a web of interconnected outcomes (see figure 10). This systematic approach helps you consider a wide range of possible impacts, including unexpected or non-obvious effects.

**Source:** Glenn, J.C. (2009), “The Futures Wheel”. Part of Futures Research Methodology V3.0 by The Millennium Project; California 100 & School of International Futures (2023), “Beyond Strategic Planning: A Foresight Toolkit for Decision Makers”.

### Use Futures Wheel to

- Identify impacts and consequences of important future changes, developments, scenarios, or strategies (some possibly unintended).
- Think through first-, second-, and higher-order impacts and map connections, causalities, and even counterintuitive outcomes.
- Facilitate a participatory process that maps and visualises the cascades of impacts a significant change might generate.

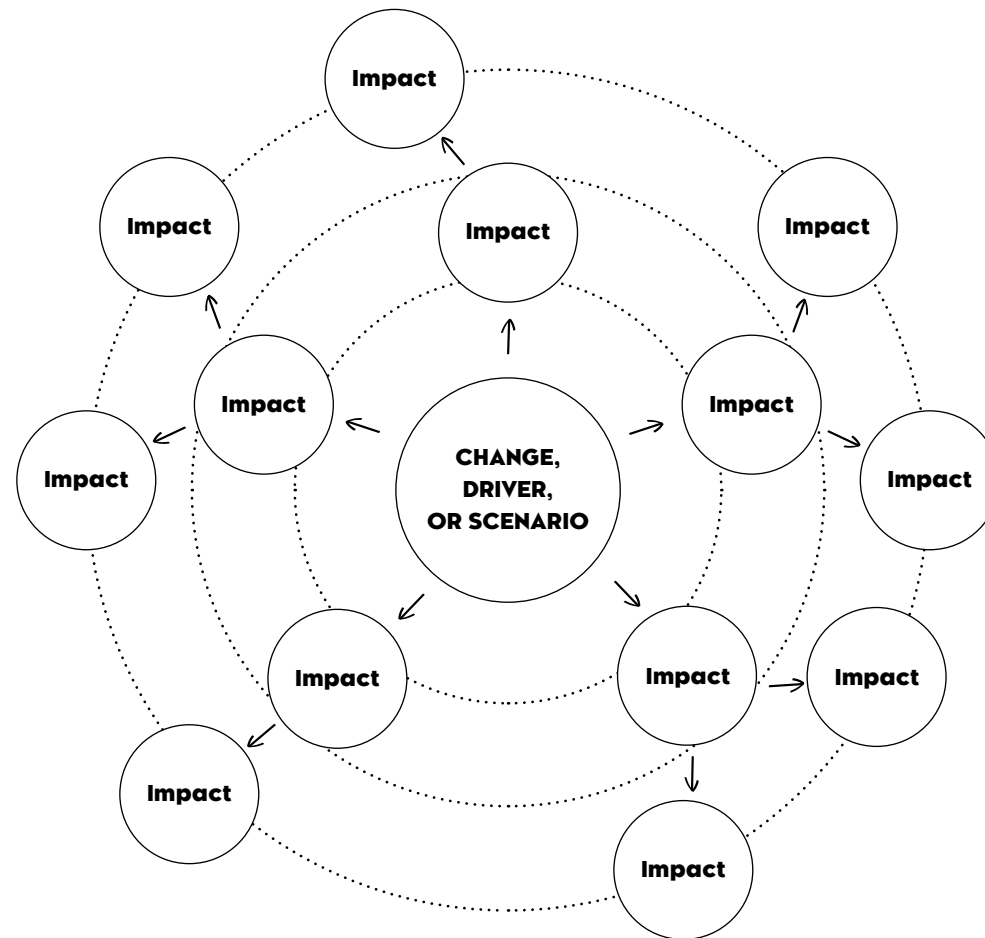
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### Key things to consider

- Focus on listing all the most immediate impacts first, before thinking about what cascades of second- and higher-order impacts may be. A good prompt is: *“If this is true, what might be the immediate impacts?”*. The more specifically the impacts can be described, the better.
- Make sure you are not just thinking about positive or negative impact cascades. Ideally, a futures wheel should be a balanced representation and will likely also include counterintuitive outcomes. Also remember that the impact – and the perception of the impact – of a change can differ depending on the stakeholders involved.

- The simplest version of a Futures Wheel explores implications one step at a time as described. This can be expanded on to explore sentiment using colour-coding to represent desirable/less desirable change.
- After completing the wheel, arranging impacts into a timeline can add further insights. This often serves as a prompt to push your thinking further into the long term by running another round of adding higher-order impacts. Also be aware that more complex changes such as new policies, shifts in consumer behaviours, or new technologies often necessitate deeper analysis and more rounds of futures wheeling to reach a useful depth of insights.

*Figure 10:* **THE FUTURES WHEEL**



Source: Glenn, J.C. (2009), "The Futures Wheel".

# Pace Layers

Pace layers, developed by Stewart Brand, is a framework for thinking about the different factors that drive change in complex systems, and how they evolve over time. It highlights how different 'layers' of a system change at different speeds. There are six layers from fastest to slowest, and these layers interact with each other, with the top layers moving faster, while the slower layers provide a stabilising force and drive longer-term change. The (original) layers are: Nature, Culture, Governance, Infrastructure, Commerce, and Fashion (see figure 11) but practitioners sometimes choose to change the labelling of the different layers.

**Nature:** The slowest and most foundational layer, encompassing the natural environment and ecosystems that change over very long timescales.

**Culture:** This layer includes societal values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices, evolving slowly over time.

**Governance:** Encompasses political structures and legal systems, regulations, shifts in policy, and new reforms to provide societal order.

**Infrastructure:** Comprises physical and organisational systems that enable a functioning society.

**Commerce:** Involves economic activities, markets, and competition, changing relatively rapidly to drive innovation and new business models.

**Fashion:** Represents trends in style, preferences, and consumer behaviour, which reflect currents in society. This layer changes rapidly, influenced by popular culture, social media, and short-term fads.

**“Pace layers is a framework for thinking about the different factors that drive change in complex systems, and how they evolve over time”**

**Source:** Brand, S. (2018), "Pace Layering: How Complex Systems Learn and Keep Learning"; California 100 & School of International Futures (2023), "Beyond Strategic Planning: A Foresight Toolkit for Decision Makers".

## Use Pace Layers to

- Think imaginatively about change and obtain a better understanding of how different components of a system interact and evolve over time.
- Grasp the dynamics of complex systems, and how change in one layer can bring about systemic change, whether rapid or slow.
- Help design systems, organisations, and strategies that are adaptable and resilient by balancing the stability of slower layers with the dynamism of faster layers.

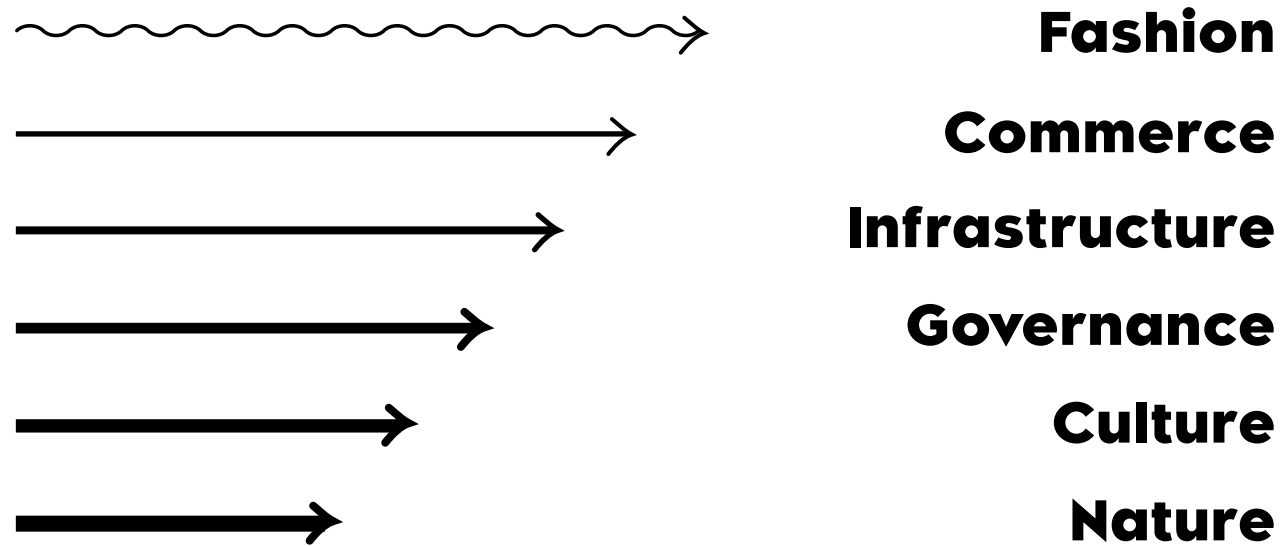
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## Key things to consider

- The simplest approach to Pace Layers is to brainstorm ideas about what is shaping your focal topic, working through the pace layers. Start with the top three layers (fashion, commerce, infrastructure) to get an understanding of what is currently influencing future change. Then repeat the exercise for the bottom three layers (governance, culture, nature), keeping the longer timeframes in mind.

- The brainstorming outcome across layers can ideally be reviewed with the following prompts: *“Which changes feel particularly relevant?”*, *“What could accelerate the pace of change in the stabilising bottom layers?”*, *“What could slow down the pace of change in the dynamic top layers?”*
- You can extend the approach by examining how the different elements in the different layers interact and influence each other, looking for both convergence and potential conflicts that could arise between fast and slow layers.
- It is important not to get too hung up on the specific layers. It is the process of exploring different paces of change that is most important.
- Be mindful of the unique characteristics and needs of the system you are investigating. Some layers may have different significance or pace in different contexts. Also understand that cultural and historical factors can significantly influence the pace and nature of change in different layers, especially in global or diverse environments.

*Figure 11:* **PACE LAYERS**



**Source:** Brand, S. (2018), "Pace Layering: How Complex Systems Learn and Keep Learning".

# Cross-Impact Analysis

**“By mapping the interdependencies, cross-impact analysis helps to understand how elements influence each other, rather than just examining them in isolation”**

Cross-impact analysis is used to explore the interactions between different drivers or events and assess their systemic impact on one another. By mapping the interdependencies, this method helps to understand how elements influence each other, rather than just examining them in isolation. This highlights the importance of considering how various drivers or events can affect each other, providing a more comprehensive understanding of potential futures.

The process involves identifying key drivers (often from a driver mapping exercise) and evaluating their interactions using a cross-impact matrix, where you assign qualitative or quantitative scores to gauge the strength and nature of these interactions (see figure 12). Once the drivers are plotted in the matrix with their impact scores on each other, the cumulative scores reveal which drivers exert influence across many others. These are the drivers with the most significant potential to shape the system as a whole. This process helps to prioritise drivers that have the most significant potential to shape future outcomes and develop scenarios that reflect various possible futures.

**Source:** Gordon, T.J. (2009), “Cross-Impact Analysis”. Part of Futures Research Methodology V3.0 by The Millennium Project.

### Use Cross-Impact Analysis to

- Identify the most significant drivers of a system (the ones that seem to have the most impact across the grid).
  - Explore interdependencies and strengthen the understanding that the future is shaped by interacting factors.
  - Paint a fuller and more consistent picture of potential futures, as valuable input into a scenario analysis.
- The first step of defining drivers or events to be included in the analysis is crucial to the success of the exercise. Any influences not included will, of course, be completely excluded from the analysis. However, the inclusion of events that are not pertinent can complicate the analysis unnecessarily.
  - Rather than assigning quantitative impact scores to drivers in the matrix, it is sometimes useful to take a more qualitative approach to how the elements could interact and the outcomes they may bring. This can give you fresh perspectives on how many factors may come together in complex ways to create surprising futures.

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### Key things to consider

- Cross-impact analysis is often used in combination with other foresight tools. It can be especially useful when crafting future scenarios to make sure that scenario structure and reasoning do not have built-in inconsistencies that will undermine the credibility of the scenario.

*Figure 12:* **CROSS-IMPACT MATRIX**

|                                                                                  | Driver #1 | Driver #2 | Driver #3 | Driver #4 | ...      | <b>ACTIVE IMPACT SUM</b><br>how strongly does a driver<br>impact all others? |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Driver #1                                                                        |           | <b>2</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>1</b>  | <b>3</b> | <b>6</b>                                                                     |
| Driver #2                                                                        |           |           |           |           |          |                                                                              |
| Driver #3                                                                        |           |           |           |           |          |                                                                              |
| Driver #4                                                                        |           |           |           |           |          |                                                                              |
| ...                                                                              |           |           |           |           |          |                                                                              |
| <b>PASSIVE IMPACT SUM</b><br>how strongly is a driver<br>impacted by all others? |           |           |           |           |          |                                                                              |

**3: Strong and direct impact**  
**2: Medium impact**  
**1: Limited impact**  
**0: No impact**

Source: Gordon, T.J. (2009), "Cross-Impact Analysis".

# ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

Challenging current assumptions and reframing perspectives

**Three Horizons**  
**Scenario Development**  
**Causal Layered Analysis**  
**The Seven Provocations**

# Three Horizons

You normally progress through the exploration of the different horizons in this order: H1 – H3 – H2. Without establishing H3 before H2, it becomes impossible to make the distinction between aspects in H2 that will contribute to sustaining H1 and those that will facilitate a transition to H3. This sequence will also help prevent ‘path-dependent’ thinking through the three horizons.

The Three Horizons framework, developed by Bill Sharpe, is useful to assess pathways of change, and how change can unfold over different time horizons. The framework assumes that change happens in waves in which a dominant form is eventually overtaken and displaced by another. Emerging change will challenge our current paradigm and assumptions, and over time today’s decisions, policies, and products will become obsolete. This is particularly useful for understanding societal transitions, where a status quo or dominant system declines, and a new system rises in its place.

**Horizon 1** (H1) is the dominant system at present. It represents the ‘business as usual’ in terms of developments and current assumptions that are important/manifested in the present and that define how we engage with the world. We rely on these systems being stable and reliable. But as the world changes, aspects of ‘business as usual’ begin to feel out of place, misaligned, or even obsolete. Eventually, H1 will be superseded by new systems, developments, and realisations that will grow in importance in the medium term – **Horizon 2** (H2). Exactly how H2 will develop may not be apparent yet. Some aspects will be absorbed into the H1 systems to improve them and to prolong their life while others will facilitate a transition from the present to **Horizon 3** (H3) that will bring transformational shifts and completely new paradigms from the present.

**“The Three Horizons framework is useful to assess pathways of change, and how change can unfold over different time horizons”**

Source: Sharpe, B. (2013), “The Three Horizons: The Patterning of Hope”.

### Use Three Horizons to

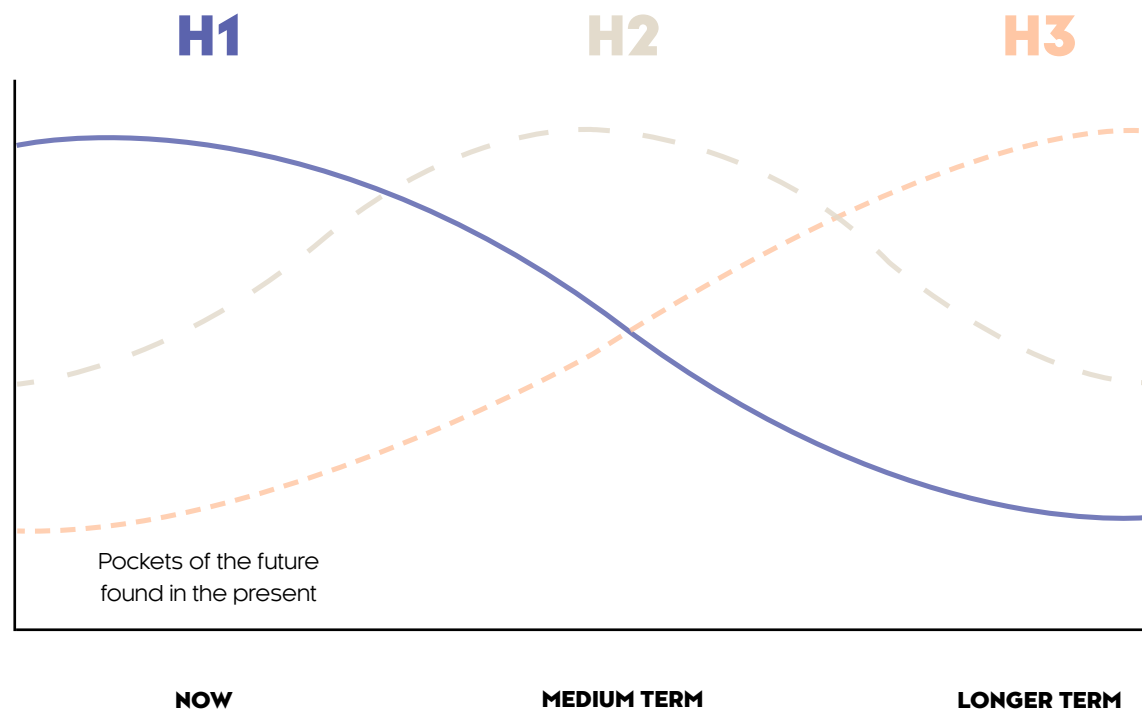
- Reveal current assumptions about the future and make them explicit, allowing us to reimagine how transformational shifts away from today may arrive.
  - Better assess potential pathways of change, and identify drivers that maintain the status quo and drivers that push towards transition.
  - Recognise how strategies aligned with the present will decline in changing and emerging conditions, and where current assumptions leave you vulnerable.
  - Highlight the value of thinking in different horizons at the same time.
- .....

### Key things to consider

- The Three Horizons exercise should ideally be highly collaborative and include diverse perspectives. This is key to revealing current assumptions and making them explicit, better allowing us to reimagine how we might arrive at a Horizon 3 future that represents transformational shifts from today.
- Remember to debrief the key takeaways from the exercise, with a specific focus on the most interesting and intriguing Horizon 3 futures and the most relevant ‘transitions’ in Horizon 2.

- The three horizons should not just be seen as abstract representations of change, but as three qualitatively different orientations to the future in the present. There is no fixed definition of what ‘near- to mid- to long term’ means and all three horizons are always present. For example, early manifestations of H3 – pockets of the future – are already visible in the present.
- A powerful feature of the framework is the built-in distinction between aspects that are maintaining or improving on the status quo versus those that are pushing towards transformation. This helps organisations think about change that has the potential for deep transformation. The displacement of horizons may be gradual, but in times of rapid change they can be quite abrupt as different tipping points may occur.

*Figure 13:* **THE THREE HORIZONS FRAMEWORK**



Source: Sharpe, B. (2013), "The Three Horizons: The Patterning of Hope".

# Scenario Development

Scenario development is one of the main concepts and most widely used methods in foresight. Both public and private sector organisations have implemented scenarios for a wide array of functions to support better longer-term strategic anticipation.

Scenario planning offers a structured approach that describes a plausible set of future conditions that are different to the present. Scenarios are always developed as a set, together mapping out a broad outcome space that allows different futures to be contrasted with one another and with the present, helping to break away from a deterministic view of the future. This allows organisations to consider alternative outcomes representing novel perspectives and contexts – as well as discontinuities – that may be difficult to grasp in the present. It is a process that involves both analysis and storytelling to craft credible and engaging images of the future that provoke decision-makers to think differently.

Scenarios enable this by always adopting an ‘outside-in’ approach, focusing on potential changes in an organisation’s external environment – including outcomes ‘beyond the numbers’ that might otherwise be overlooked. This, in turn, influences the organisation’s strategic environment and consequently strategic decisions. In this way, scenarios provide a common outset and a basis for a well-informed discussion of future possibilities and challenges, enabling organisations to widen their strategic perspective and approach the future with curiosity, readiness, and vision.

There are different scenario development methods, two of which are described below. Both these approaches can vary in their level of detail and the resources required, depending on how extensively the process is scoped.

## 2 x 2 Scenarios

This approach is often used to build scenarios with a ‘decision focus’ and strategic relevance. It starts from identifying critical uncertainties in relation to the future in focus and then leverages these uncertainties to craft alternative futures. It is arguably the most extensive approach to scenario building and generally implies a step-by-step process that takes you through research, driver mapping, and uncertainties assessment over a series of participatory workshops.

To start building the actual scenarios, there is initially a need to identify critical uncertainties (see Uncertainties Assessment) that are combined as two axes of uncertainty in a 2 x 2 matrix (see figure 14). You should decide on an axis combination that will create the most interesting or valuable scenario matrix. As a rule, the two axes must be independent of each other, so that they don’t collapse. Four ‘scenario-spaces’ emerge from combining the two axes of uncertainty, and each ‘scenario-space’ is then elaborated into complete narratives that consider relevant drivers and highlight key characteristics to make them relevant for decision-making. You should make sure events and characteristics in the scenarios are plausible and logically consistent. Also make sure that the four scenarios are structurally or qualitatively different.

### Driver-Based Scenarios

Rather than organising scenarios around critical uncertainties and a 2 x 2 matrix, the driver-based approach anchors each scenario in a different core driver. You select a core driver, or a small cluster of drivers, to serve as a scenario's anchor – the thing that dominates and gives the world its character – and then build outward, working through how everything else behaves in the scenario given that driver's prominence. Which drivers can carry a world is a judgement made as part of the process, taking into account what is relevant to the project at hand.

Contrast between the scenarios therefore comes from *which driver dominates*. This makes the set considerably more flexible, as driver-based scenarios are each constructed on their own terms and are not structurally locked to one another in a matrix.

There are a few reasons to pursue this alternative approach. Most simply, it can move directly from driver mapping to scenario development, without requiring an uncertainties assessment first. It also avoids a common weakness of the 2 x 2, which sometimes invites 'lazy' axis polarity definition – crossing axes that are unidirectional, such as fast/slow or high/low polarities – leaving you with four relatively uninteresting and 'flat' scenarios, with little room for world-building or for properly exploring the focal issue.

Alongside the scenario anchors, you identify a set of tension fields. These are further drivers, or central dimensions, each expressed as a spectrum, or slider, between plausible opposing directions of development. Determined by how the scenario unfolds around its anchor, each scenario then sits at a different point on each slider (see figure 14). Because the same tension fields run across every scenario, you can read the whole set at a glance and see how each dimension plays out differently from one future to the next.

**“Scenarios allow organisations to consider alternative outcomes representing novel perspectives and contexts that may be difficult to grasp in the present”**

Source: Glenn, J.C. & The Futures Group International (2009), "Scenarios".  
Part of Futures Research Methodology V3.0 by The Millennium Project.

## Use Scenario Development to

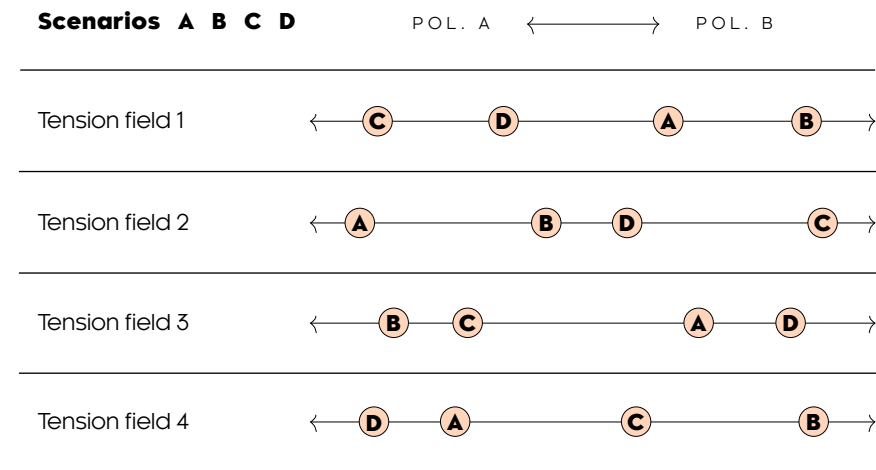
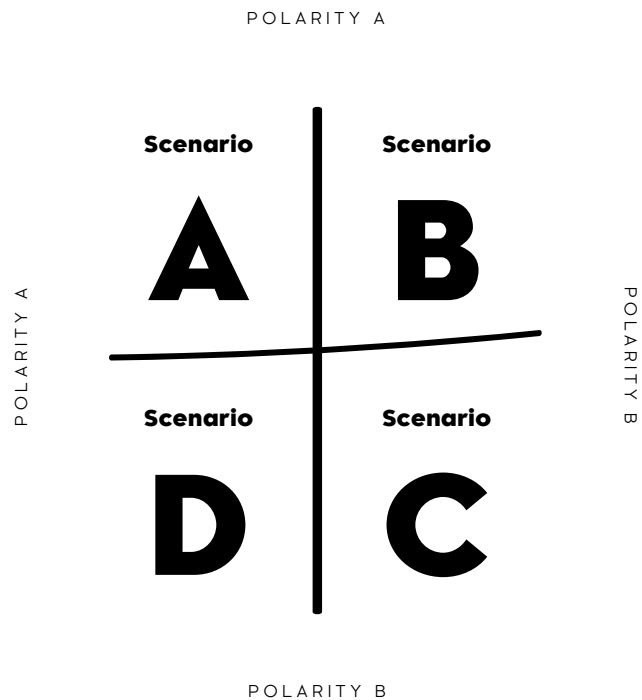
- Provoke decision-makers to think differently about alternative future outcomes that may be difficult to grasp in the present.
  - Create a basis for stress-testing strategies against plausible futures, and guide and inform organisations about the threats and opportunities those futures hold.
  - Facilitate futures-oriented conversation that builds shared understanding and stimulates strategic thinking about the future.
- .....

## Key things to consider

- Scenarios are not predictions of the future. They are not meant to be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Rather, their function is to challenge assumptions and explore alternative ways that the future may develop. Explorative scenarios can have a richness that quantitative methods can’t capture, which also helps to stimulate creativity and to break from the conventional wisdom around present and short-term problems.
- Crafting credible and useful scenarios is difficult. A good scenario is not just an abstract analysis of trends. Rather, it tells a believable story set in the future. Using a ‘behind-the-scenes’ scenario grid to map out key variables and elements across all scenarios helps ensure consistency. Additionally, following general guidelines can support the writing of quality scenario narratives (see figure 15).

- To make a scenario ‘come alive’, it can be helpful to think about what different personas might be doing in the future. *How are they living? What do they value? How are they impacted in this scenario?*
- For scenarios to be used effectively in a decision-making process, stakeholders must be convinced of the soundness, relevance, and value of the process. This hinges on the foundations on which scenarios are built, the structures that they use, and the reasoning they employ, which must stand up to critical examination.
- The articulation and presentation of scenarios depend greatly upon the intended users. Some scenarios stay at the level of broad generalities without much supporting analysis, which may make them less operational and less useful for decision-making, while they may still provide the general public with inspiration on potential futures. Other scenarios that are presented in much more technical and formalised ways may offer deeper insights for decision-making but can be challenging for ordinary readers to assimilate.
- In a decision-making context, experience suggests that when stakeholders evaluate scenarios that are too extreme or implausible, they often become more confident in their original assumptions about the future. On the other hand, scenarios that are not challenging enough are easily dismissed as pointless. Both situations can lead to distrust in the foresight process. Finding the right balance is crucial for scenarios to have an impact on decision-making.

*Figure 14:* **SCENARIO MATRIX & TENSION FIELD SLIDERS**



**Source:** Glenn, J.C. & The Futures Group International (2009), "Scenarios".  
Part of Futures Research Methodology V3.0 by The Millennium Project.

## *Figure 15:* HOW TO BUILD A GOOD SCENARIO

|                           |                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Story</b>              | A vivid description for engaging stakeholders. We need to 'experience' the futures, so they should also involve emotion, not just logic                  |
| <b>Plausibility</b>       | Future characteristics and events must be plausible, meaning that they must fall within the limits of what might conceivably happen                      |
| <b>Consistency</b>        | Must be logically consistent. If the scenario has built-in inconsistencies, it will undermine the credibility of the scenario                            |
| <b>Differentiation</b>    | Must be structurally or qualitatively different. Scenarios should not be so close to one another that they simply become variations of the same scenario |
| <b>Memorable</b>          | Should be easy to remember. It helps to have catchy and descriptive titles                                                                               |
| <b>Challenging</b>        | Must challenge organisations' perceived wisdom about the future                                                                                          |
| <b>Decision relevance</b> | Should provide insights useful to decision-makers                                                                                                        |

# Causal Layered Analysis

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), developed by Sohail Inayatullah, is a comprehensive foresight method designed to uncover and analyse the deeper dimensions of complex issues. This tiered approach works down from immediate surface-level trends through deeper layers of systemic causes, cultural values, and worldview dimensions that influence change.

The main utility of CLA lies in supporting individuals and organisations in revealing the internalised assumptions they use to make sense of and assign meaning to specific changes. Ultimately, it can help create narratives that facilitate change. It also addresses the risk of foresight work being too superficial and overly focused on surface trends by providing a more profound understanding of the underlying factors influencing change.

The original CLA framework consists of four levels, but CIFS often uses a simplified version with three layers, as described below:

**Observable issues:** The immediate, observable trends and day-to-day realities.

**Structures & systems:** The structures, systemic factors, and historical (social, economic, cultural) facts that support the observed realities.

**Mental models & worldviews:** The deepest layer of mindsets, values, and cultural and ideological aspects that shape our worldviews and perceptions, and influence how issues are framed and understood.

**“Causal Layered Analysis is a comprehensive foresight method designed to uncover and analyse the deeper dimensions of complex issues”**

Source: Inayatullah, S. (2019), “Causal Layered Analysis: A Four-Level Approach to Alternative Futures”.

### Use Causal Layered Analysis to

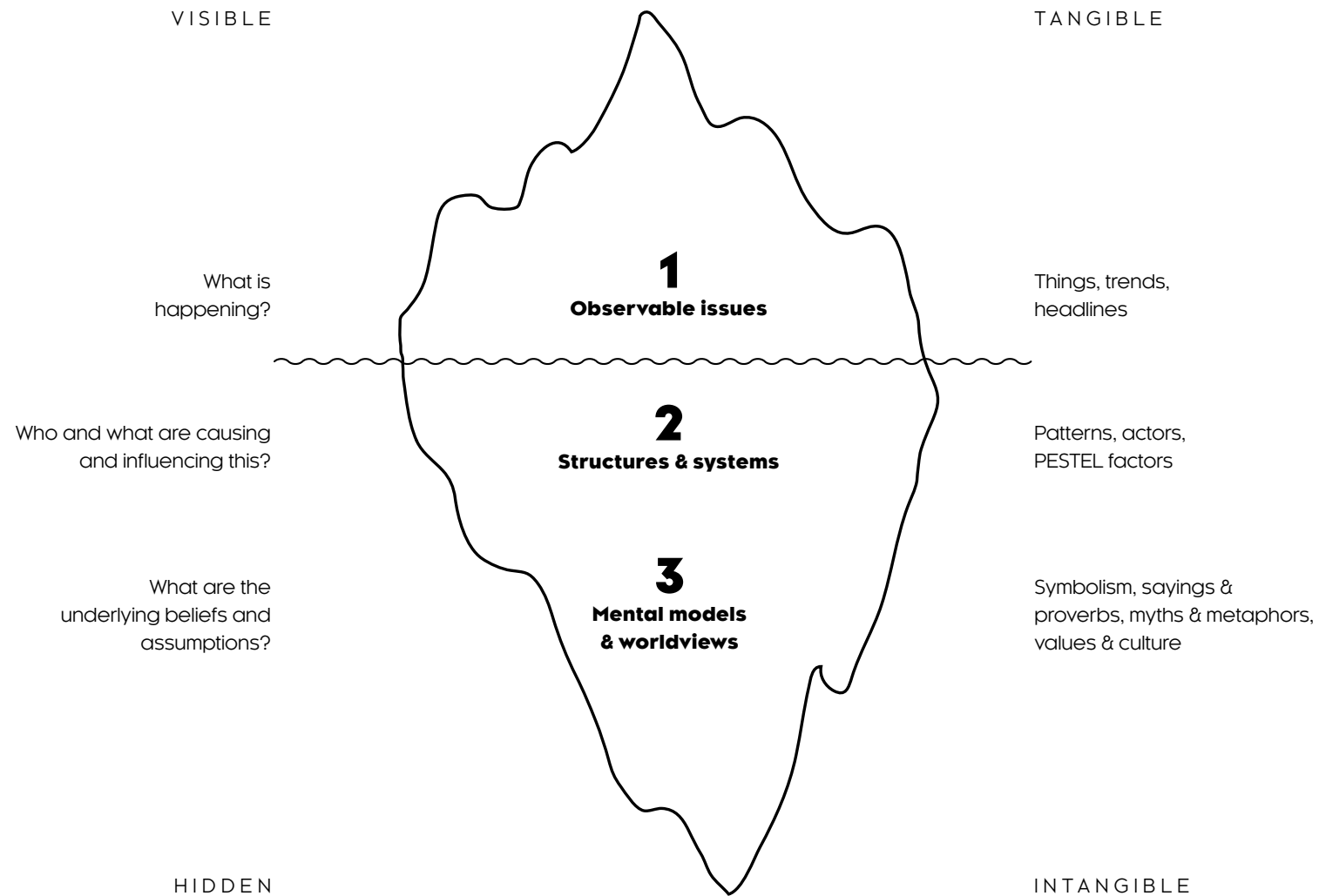
- Get a deeper understanding of a particular issue or challenge by uncovering the systemic causes beneath it.
- Generate new narratives that challenge current realities.
- Map competing views of the future by recognising the different world-views and perspectives of various stakeholders, ultimately supporting more transformative strategies.

- Causal Layered Analysis is a versatile tool that can be staged in various ways. These include mapping the present to prevent worldview blindness, enhancing a visioning process by outlining how things can be moved towards a desired future, and unpacking an issue across different stakeholder views or worldviews.

### Key things to consider

- When working with Causal Layered Analysis, be aware that it is a relatively complex method that requires confidence in divergent thinking and exploring beyond the obvious and observable. It is also difficult to do well without a diversity of perspectives present.
- The Causal Layered Analysis exercise essentially has two phases: 1) Exploring the focal issue from the top-down starting with immediate trends and moving down through the deeper layers. 2) Working your way back up from the deepest worldview layer to create new, alternative narratives that challenge current realities (see figure 16). Hence, the ultimate goal of CLA is not just to analyse, but to create new narratives that facilitate change.

*Figure 16:* **CAUSAL LAYERED ANALYSIS**



**Source:** CIFS based on: Inayatullah, S. (2019), "Causal Layered Analysis: A Four-Level Approach to Alternative Futures".

# The Seven Provocations

The Seven Provocations, first developed in-house at CIFS, uses structured provocation to surface the assumptions underpinning a current view of the future, confront them, and explore what follows if the future behaves differently. The assumptions it targets are the embedded beliefs that underpin an organisation's understanding of how the future will behave, and ultimately its future strategic outlook. These are assumptions that often go unexamined in strategic thinking, and, left unchallenged, they can create a confirmation pathway towards a flawed or overly deterministic view of the future.

The method is simple and accessible by design. While provocation is embedded in many traditional foresight methods, the Seven Provocations is particularly valuable in contexts where those methods may prove too abstract, complex, or demanding.

It works in three steps. First, an assumption audit surfaces the assumptions central to your understanding of how the future will unfold, making explicit the external conditions that need to hold true for a current outlook to be 'on point'. Then you reframe those assumptions through the lens of one or more of the seven provocations. Finally, you play out the implications if the provoked version of the future were to unfold.

Each of the seven provocations takes a different angle, depending on the nature of the assumption you are seeking to challenge.

## Provocations that challenge assumptions about direction, continuity, and inevitability:

**The Flip:** *What if an assumption you hold turns out to be misaligned, or even in direct opposition, to how the future eventually unfolds?*

**The Discontinuity:** *What if defining features of current reality or dominant 'ways of doing' are rendered obsolete in the future?*

**The Resistant:** *What if a development or change you strongly expect to happen is delayed or stopped by the weight of present structures or habits?*

## Provocations that challenge assumptions about timing and pace:

**The Overcorrection:** *What if an emerging change that appears transformative today levels off or becomes less transformative in the long term?*

**The Undercorrection:** *What if a change that seems marginal or easy to dismiss today becomes far more transformative in the longer run than initially assumed?*

## Provocations that challenge emotionally and morally loaded assumptions:

**The Uncomfortable Truth:** *Which uncomfortable or inconvenient 'truths' about the future are being consciously or subconsciously avoided?*

**The Value Lock-in:** *As we lock in on a transformation towards a system or paradigm seen as more desirable, what embedded constraints, exclusions, or dependencies might shape that preferred future in limiting ways?*

Source: Østergaard, S.F. (2025), "The Seven Provocations". Part of Using the Future by the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies.

### Use the Seven Provocations to

- Surface the assumptions underpinning an organisation's current outlook on the future, and by extension the strategic decisions, business models, and policies that stem from it.
- Work through what would follow, strategically, if a foundational assumption does not hold and the future behaves differently from what is expected.
- Bring provocation into a strategic conversation on the future where more demanding foresight methods would be too abstract, complex, or resource-heavy.

.....

### Key things to consider

- Some assumptions are explicit and widely shared across organisations or industries, while others are more implicit and specific to a particular context. By asking people to articulate why they believe something to be true, their assumptions become embedded in the answers. The facilitator's role is then to listen critically, identify those assumptions – both explicit and implicit – and make them discussable.

- The provocations can be used individually or in combination. While some provocations may overlap and some implications will repeat, each offers a distinct lens to reframe what is currently taken for granted about the future. When selecting which provocations to use, it is helpful to consider the nature of the assumptions you are seeking to challenge.
- The Value Lock-in is the most philosophically layered of the seven and may be less operationally relevant at an organisational level than the others. But it is also the one that provokes the deepest layer of assumptions.
- The template (see figure 17) provides a practical structure for working through one provocation at a time. You can use it repeatedly to test different assumptions, or to apply several provocations to the same one. Remember to capture additional reflections on whether the provocation exposes something worth exploring further.

*Figure 17:* THE SEVEN PROVOCATIONS TEMPLATE

| PROVOCATION USED: _____                                                                                    |                                                                                          |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Assumption to challenge</b><br>State an assumption/ expectation/belief about how the future will unfold | <b>Reframed assumption</b><br>Rewrite the assumption through the lens of the provocation | <b>Potential (strategic) implications</b><br>List key implications if this provoked version of the future were to unfold | <b>Additional reflections</b><br>Consider how central this assumption is to your current outlook, and whether this provocation exposes something worth exploring further |

Source: Østergaard, S.F. (2025), "The Seven Provocations". Part of Using the Future by the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies.

# STRATEGIC INSIGHTS & ACTION

Stress-testing and rethinking strategy

**Backcasting**  
**Wind-Tunnelling**  
**Signposting**  
**Visioning (Preferred Future)**

# Backcasting

**“Backcasting involves creating a timeline in reverse, starting from a future scenario and working backwards to identify the key steps, events, and actions that will make it happen”**

Backcasting is an effective method for linking the future back to the present, helping to assess the conditions, changes, and events that logically connect a given future to the present. Unlike traditional planning, backcasting starts in the future and works backwards. If you have already identified alternative futures – or a preferred future – for instance through a scenario development process, backcasting can be used to pinpoint the factors and events that will make these scenarios come true, as well as which strategies will influence them.

Backcasting involves creating a timeline in reverse, starting from a future scenario and working backwards to identify the key steps, events, and actions that will make it happen. This helps connect future change to the present, overcoming the ‘present bias’ that often limits our planning. One particular focus of backcasting is to identify what lies within the control of the organisation, and can therefore be managed, and what lies outside its control and therefore needs to be monitored.

Alternatively, backcasting can be used to determine what series of events could lead to a given undesirable scenario, and what steps could be taken to avoid such a scenario or mitigate its consequences.

**Source:** California 100 & School of International Futures (2023), “Beyond Strategic Planning: A Foresight Toolkit for Decision Makers”.

## Use Backcasting to

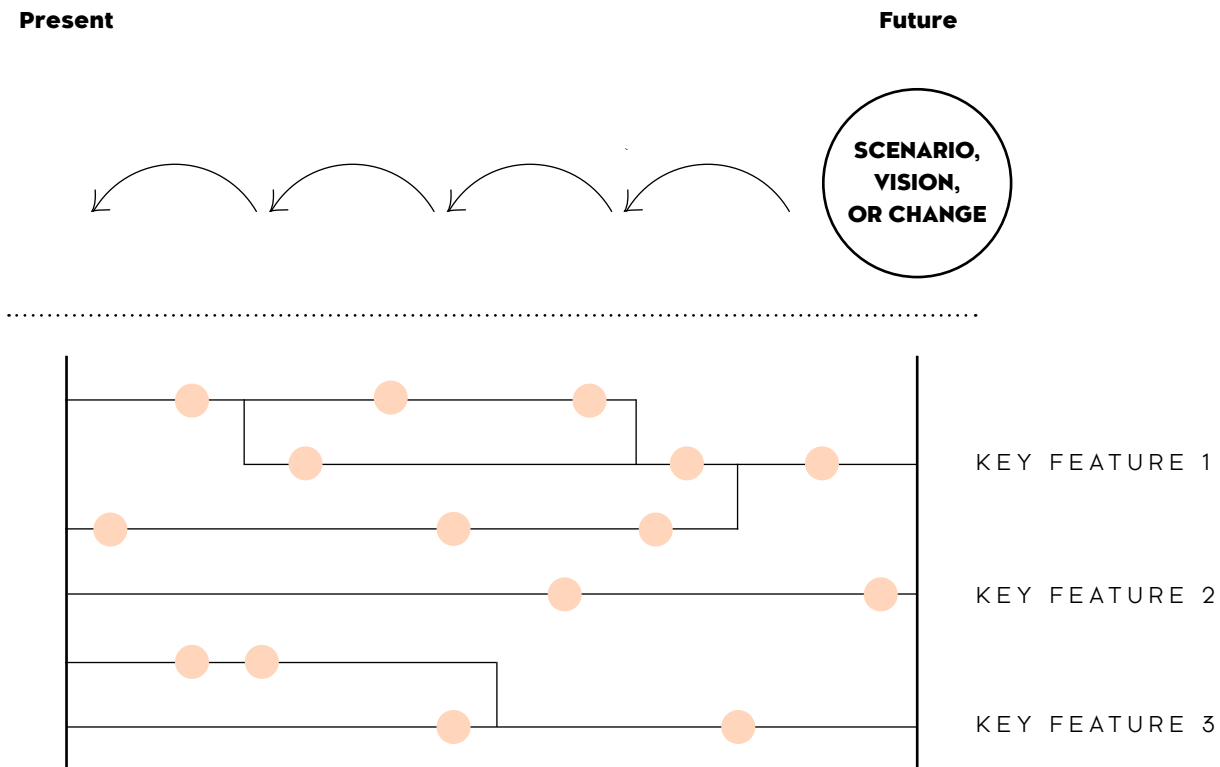
- Connect a given future to the present, identify what needs to be done to deliver it, and test the feasibility of the actions and approaches needed to get there.
  - Identify which future factors and events lie within the organisation's control and which lie outside its control.
  - Establish pathways of change to help identify new initiatives and interventions to enhance desirable changes or mitigate undesirable events.
- .....

## Key things to consider

- You can backcast from a scenario, vision, or any other description of future change. A good way to set up your backcast is to outline four or five key features of the future scenario, vision, or change. You can either work on one feature at a time, or you can work across these as you step back towards the present. This helps identify patterns and determine whether any specific factors or events are particularly critical (see figure 18).

- Different 'entries' on your backcasting timeline can help you explore various types of factors or events. Try to look for both external factors and events from outside your control and concrete actions you have taken that will have either direct or indirect implications. Consider including relevant (fictional) future data points or even adding descriptive 'news headlines from the future' along your backcasting timeline.
- After completing your backcast, take time to review your thinking by playing your backcast forward. Check that it makes sense and that it is feasible and coherent. Questioning the cause and effect of each step can help identify missing factors that are critical.
- Try to explore the actual consequences of your backcasting outcome. *What events and changes can you or your organisation influence and what do you need to do to deliver these aspects?* Also consider if and how you can influence aspects outside your control. *Who or what has control, and what can you do to influence that?*

*Figure 18:* **BACKCASTING**



**Source:** California 100 & School of International Futures (2023), "Beyond Strategic Planning: A Foresight Toolkit for Decision Makers".

# Wind-Tunnelling

**“Wind-tunnelling helps organisations understand which aspects of their strategy are resilient and which are vulnerable across different future contexts”**

Wind-tunnelling is an approach used to stress-test strategies or policies against a set of scenarios to evaluate how well they hold up under varying future conditions. It involves assessing the performance of different strategic options and objectives when facing given scenarios, considering the emerging issues and different future conditions that each scenario presents.

The exercise helps organisations understand which aspects of their strategy are resilient and which are vulnerable across different future contexts. It also helps identify specific aspects that may become important if a certain scenario begins to unfold.

The outcome of a wind-tunnelling exercise is typically a matrix that assesses the effectiveness of strategic options and objectives across a range of scenarios (see figure 19). For each option, you assess whether it works and will have a positive impact, needs adaptation to be more effective, or whether it has no impact or may even lead to negative outcomes.

**Source:** Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (2020), “Using the Future”; UK Government Office for Science (2024), “The Futures Toolkit”.

## Use Wind-Tunnelling to

- Explore how different future conditions might impact current strategies, identify the most resilient aspects, and become aware of weak spots.
- Evaluate strategic options and objectives against a range of plausible futures to see which perform well across them.
- Build a portfolio of options suited to different external conditions with the goal of balancing the need to define a clear strategy with the need to maintain a high level of strategic agility in uncertain conditions.

## Key things to consider

- Strategic actions or options that yield benefits in all or most scenarios are considered robust. These should be pursued as no-regret moves if resources allow. Actions that work disproportionately well in specific scenarios can serve as contingency plans to be adopted in suitable circumstances or modified to make them more robust across scenarios. Additionally, high-risk, high-reward 'big bets' could lead to significant breakthroughs or catastrophic failures depending on how the future unfolds. Taken together, these categories help you build a portfolio of actions that balances immediate needs with the potential need for quick pivots as the future unfolds.

- Wind-tunnelling can also be used the other way around. Rather than testing what you already have, you put existing strategies to one side and use each future as a resource for imagination. *What solutions does this future point to? What different or altogether new strategies does it suggest?*
- A variation of stress-testing worth trying is the pre-mortem. You start by establishing a strategy, priority, or project, and then imagine it has failed in a given future. You then work backwards, speculating and debating the causes of that failure, to ultimately identify actions that would make the strategy more adaptive and resilient. Run the pre-mortem inside each scenario in turn, so the same strategy meets failure under different future conditions. The causes will differ from one scenario to the next, and comparing them shows not just whether a strategy is vulnerable but how it breaks in each world.
- The true value of wind-tunnelling comes from thinking through the consequences of an uncertain future and asking the question "*What if this future happens?*" Engaging a diverse set of stakeholders ensures a broader range of perspectives and helps identify strategic blind spots.

*Figure 19:* WIND-TUNNELLING MATRIX

|                  | SCENARIO A                                                                        | SCENARIO B                                                                        | SCENARIO C                                                                         | SCENARIO D                                                                          |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Option #1</b> |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Option #2</b> |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Option #3</b> |  |  |  |  |
| ...              |  |  |  |  |

 **Positive impact**  
in the specific scenario
  **Needs adaptation**  
in the specific scenario
  **Negative impact/counter-productive**  
in the specific scenario

# Signposting

Signposting is a structured approach to monitoring change in the external environment by identifying and tracking specific developments that indicate how key drivers are evolving, or whether future scenarios are beginning to unfold. Where most foresight tools help you explore what could happen, signposting helps you notice what is actually happening, and when it might be time to respond.

Signposting builds directly on previous foresight work, often Driver Mapping or Scenario Development, and is set up accordingly. Progressing from Driver Mapping, signposting monitors how key drivers evolve over time. Progressing from Scenario Development, signposts are tied to the critical uncertainties or key characteristics within each scenario, so that developments can be tracked to assess whether a particular scenario, or aspects of it, is starting to take shape.

The value of signposting lies in timing. Foresight work widens the range of futures an organisation is prepared for, but it cannot say which one is arriving. The signposts should be defined as observable indicators that give early indication of which way things are moving, while triggers are specific thresholds or events that, once reached, signal that action or adjustment is needed. Together, they translate abstract scenarios into measurable realities, and a reached threshold becomes the prompt to revisit a strategic priority, activate a contingency plan, or shift resources.

**“Where most foresight tools help you explore what could happen, signposting helps you notice what is actually happening, and when it might be time to respond”**

**Source:** CIFS based on: Schwartz, P. (1991), “The Art of the Long View. Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World”.

## Use Signposting to

- Assess whether a particular scenario is beginning to play out, or whether a key driver is accelerating, decelerating, or transforming.
  - Establish when to act, by defining in advance what would signal that a strategic adjustment is needed.
  - Keep foresight work alive after a project ends, translating scenarios into something that can be checked against reality and discussed over time.
- .....

## Key things to consider

- A good signpost is specific and observable, rather than a vague direction of development. It has to be something from which you can actually derive a shift in the relevant driver or scenario. Avoid indicators like ‘regulatory changes’ and focus on something you could point at and agree had happened, such as ‘new privacy protection legislation being announced in three or more major jurisdictions’. That said, a signpost does not have to be a number. Some developments can be measured and supported by data, while others are only partially quantifiable and better understood through examples and observation.

- Keep the list focused. A handful of well-chosen signposts is more effective than a long list that dilutes attention and becomes impossible to maintain. For each one, decide what specifically will be monitored, how often it will be reviewed, and what would count as a significant development.
- Review and refine the signposts periodically. Because they are derived from a particular reading of drivers and scenarios, they go stale when that reading changes. Remove those that have become irrelevant and add new ones as strategic priorities shift, new intelligence emerges, or the underlying foresight work is revisited.
- Be cautious of confirmation bias. It is easy to notice the developments that confirm what you already believe, or hope, and to overlook equally valid signals pointing the other way. Aim for balanced evaluation by deliberately looking for evidence of outcomes you would rather not see.

Figure 20: SIGNPOSTING TEMPLATE

CLEARLY DEFINED WHEN SETTING UP

REVISITED AT EACH REVIEW

| Signpost<br>(The observable development clearly described) | Driver / Scenario<br>(What this signpost tells you about) | Threshold / Trigger<br>(What counts as significant) | Observations<br>(What has been seen) | Status / Interpretation<br>(What it indicates) | Action<br>(What it prompts) |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                                            |                                                           |                                                     |                                      |                                                |                             |
|                                                            |                                                           |                                                     |                                      |                                                |                             |
|                                                            |                                                           |                                                     |                                      |                                                |                             |
|                                                            |                                                           |                                                     |                                      |                                                |                             |

Source: CIFS based on: Schwartz, P. (1991), "The Art of the Long View. Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World".

# Visioning (Preferred Future)

Visioning as a foresight tool is a powerful participatory approach that empowers individuals and organisations to imagine a preferred future and commit to achieving it. It is a method for identifying, developing, and enriching a compelling, preferred future, often as a step in creating a transformative strategy. This process emphasises the importance of collaboratively and deliberately envisioning the future, as it is often challenging to realise a future that we cannot clearly imagine. It helps move the conversation away from what we expect will happen – the conventional expectation of the future – towards making aspirational and transformational futures more tangible. In doing so, it deepens participants' understanding of their aspirations, fostering a sense of agency and a stronger commitment to shaping the desired outcome (see figure 21).

In foresight, visioning is sometimes referred to as 'incasting' because it involves exploring a particular preferred scenario in depth and mapping out the pathway to that preferred future. This contrasts with the visioning approach used in conventional strategic planning to focus on a 'vision statement'. A visioning exercise should build on preceding foresight work and can be a valuable next step after a futures wheel, scenario development, or other exercises that help you think about alternative possibilities or change. Using visioning in conjunction with backcasting is especially helpful in exploring possible paths towards your preferred future, making it more actionable to get there.

**“Visioning as a foresight tool is a powerful participatory approach that empowers individuals and organisations to imagine a preferred future and commit to achieving it”**

Source: UN Global Pulse (2023), "Vision Building"; Sibbet, D. (n.d.), "5 Bold Steps Vision Canvas".

## Use Visioning to

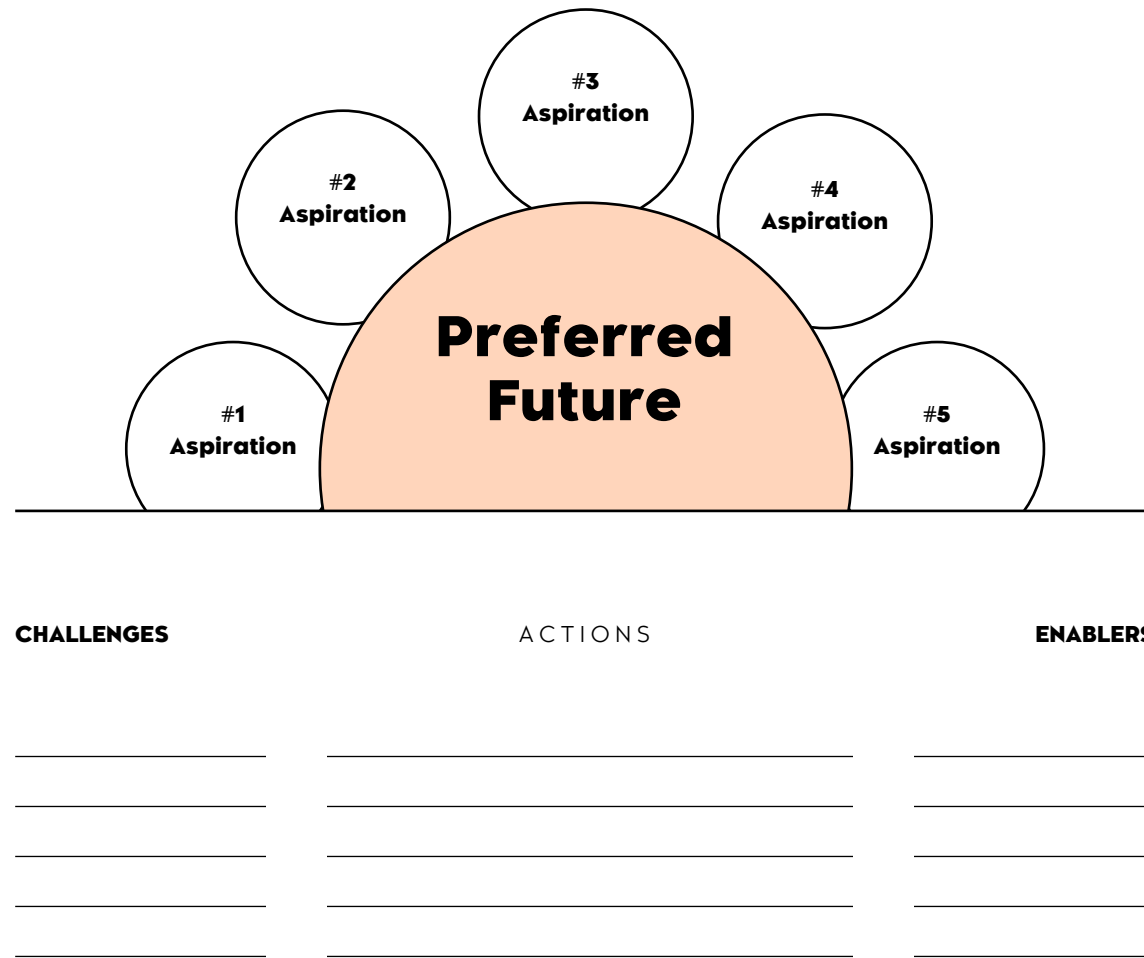
- Align stakeholders on a shared vision of a preferred future.
- Outline actionable steps needed to reach a preferred future.
- Connect individual and collective aspirations, fostering a sense of agency and a stronger commitment to shaping desired outcomes.

.....

## Key things to consider

- The purpose of visioning in foresight is always to create a shared vision co-owned by stakeholders. Elaborating and enriching a vision for a preferred future is one of the most effective mechanisms for engaging a team, organisation, or community and getting them excited to push forward into new territory. Including diverse perspectives, experiences, and values in the process also helps challenge dominant narratives and reduce the risk of perpetuating past problems.
- There are different approaches to visioning. Some are more analytical while others are more unconstrained and experimental. For all approaches, it's essential to include a set of visioning questions that can help inspire and guide participants' thinking and help them adopt the visioning mindset, as well as a canvas to help capture output in a structured way.
- The visioning canvas (see figure 21) offers a useful framework for initially uncovering stakeholders' hopes and aspirations for a preferred future, serving as a foundation before defining what that future might look like. The process involves explicitly identifying challenges that may hinder progress, and enablers that can support reaching the desired future. Finally, it outlines concrete and attainable actions necessary to achieve this vision. Part of this exercise may even be to define audacious goals, to complement the articulation of the preferred future.
- As part of defining actionable steps to deliver the preferred future, a useful prompt is *"Who or what will be the winners and losers in this change?"* Answering this requires a collective understanding of the current reality you are looking to transition from, which should be part of any visioning exercise.

*Figure 21:* **VISIONING CANVAS**



**Source:** Sibbet, D. (n.d.), "5 Bold Steps Vision Canvas".

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