JUSTLABS GUIDE TO
FORESIGHT
IN THE SOCIAL CHANGE FIELD

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JustLabs

ABOUT JUSTLABS

JustLabs is a space for fresh thinking, innovation and out-of-the-box solutions for the social change field. It was established to serve as a field catalyst for accelerating change and deepening collective impact in social change.

JustLabs mission is to change the DNA of the human rights movement, giving it an expanded toolkit, using a methodology that incorporates multiple disciplines and fields—away from traditional panels, lectures, and one-way conversations that have come to dominate the way problems are approached in the human rights field.

JustLabs' distinctive trait is its "Swiss-army-knife" approach—we adopt the relevant tools depending on what the challenge calls for. Our logo—a paper clip—further symbolizes our approach: the icon symbolizes a simple, cheap solution to a daily practical difficulty (how to bind papers together). The paperclip also symbolizes coming together: Norwegians, the inventors of paperclips, wore them on their lapels during the Nazi occupation to symbolize the ties that bind them, in protest against the Nazi prohibition against wearing pin buttons with the image of the Norwegian king.

There are five core characteristics to our work, which are direct responses to the limitations of today's human rights work:

1 **Collaboration:** JustLabs is radically collaborative in three ways. First, instead of competing with or replicating the efforts of existing human rights actors (e.g., advocacy NGOs, funders, academic research centers, and so on), we operate as an intermediate organization that catalyzes collaborations across the field. Second, all our work is carried out in collaboration with other human rights actors. Third, the outcomes of our projects are public goods for the field, meant to be widely disseminated and freely available.

2 **Experimentation and learning:** To counter fragmentation and strategic stagnation, our projects incubate innovative solutions to human rights challenges and share them with the field at large. To that end, all of our initiatives proceed through three moments: ideation, experimentation, and dissemination and learning. These stages form part of a non-linear experimentation process or a cycle whereby with greater insight from our experimentation and learning, we go back to the drawing table to produce and test new, even more powerful ideas.

3 **Thinking long-term and galvanizing movements into action in the short term:** We encourage a long-term view of the challenge at hand, while accelerating solutions in the short term. Thus, we combine methods such as foresight/futures thinking (which encourages a long-term vision), and design thinking (which encourages rapid design, testing and improvement of solutions). As a result, we help the movement anticipate trends and move early and decisively to shape the contours of those trends.

4 **Bridging gaps and expanding the field:** By design, JustLabs' structure and composition seeks to bridge several gaps. Our staff and associates come from a wide range of disciplines and professions, including the social sciences, design, communications, neuroscience, digital technology, marketing, contemplative studies, ecology, law, journalism, and popular education. Our organization thus combines thematic expertise with creative, multi-disciplinary process skills. As an international operation, JustLabs is based in Bogotá, Colombia, and its staff and associates are from all regions of the world. We work not only with human rights organizations and issues, but also with other organizations and movements, so as to help bridge the gap with other social justice fields. And we prioritize projects that seek to expand human rights membership and audiences.

5 **Simple responses to complex challenges:** Complex problems are best tackled through simple solutions, as other catalyst organizations have demonstrated. Simple solutions are also more likely to be successfully disseminated across the field and be accessible to broader constituencies and audiences.

We employ methods where: we undertake the latest research on the problem at hand to make sure that our creative process is informed by data and rigorous analysis (research); the actors most impacted by a problem co-design the solution in a process of constant and practical testing and iteration (design thinking); strategic decisions for today are determined from an in-depth analysis of and insights from possible futures (foresight/futures thinking); conversations, especially difficult and complex ones that go to existential questions of one's work and life dedication, are enabled by authentic listening and expression drawn from mindfulness and other contemplative practices (contemplative practices); and, the learning and design of processes are rooted in the lived experiences of the communities and the actors we partner with (popular education).

Learn more about JustLabs at www.justlabs.org

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To say that these are uncertain times would be an understatement. The world in general—and social change work in particular—is experiencing an era of <u>volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA)</u> at an unprecedented level. This is not a fleeting moment but in fact the new normal. Crises are rarely bound by national frontiers, and the impact of a social, economic or public health event in one country can travel and be magnified elsewhere with such velocity that often leaves us unprepared.

In the social change field, there has been a general feeling of shock at the profound impact of the pandemic in our work and our communities—jobs lost or becoming uncertain, funding gone or radically reduced, and the attention of our partners and communities now turned elsewhere—that we find ourselves simply unable to function as usual. *Adapting to post-pandemic futures will require much more than becoming new experts in doing events online or working from home.* These are stop-gap measures. Thriving in this new normal will require much, much more than that.

> *Traditional strategic planning, which most NGOs and movements use, reinforces the cognitive bias of humans that makes us simply extrapolate into the future what we know of today and what we have experienced in the past.*

Before the pandemic, we were consumed by the sweeping effect of authoritarian populists on the ability to do activism across the world (what many would term as "closing" or "shrinking civic space"). At one point, we at JustLabs asked social change leaders around the world whether the social change field was in a moment of *crisis*, but while they recognized that the field is indeed facing a lot of challenges, this period is also an important moment of *transformation*. Now, along with the general feeling of despair across the world due to the pandemic, there is a growing recognition of the crucial role of new narratives to win hearts and minds of publics they have long taken for granted, and to uplift the latter's feeling of possibility about the future.

However, if these new narratives and other strategies are to become truly effective, they must be "future-proof"—that is, they can work effectively in whatever future will come to pass—so they do not become some new ideas that will have to be easily discarded when the next change comes. In fact, we can use our strategies in narratives and other areas to *bring about* the future we want.

Traditional strategic planning, which most NGOs and movements use, reinforces the cognitive bias of humans that makes us simply extrapolate into the future what we know of today and what we have experienced in the past. However, the future is rarely a simple projection of today's realities. With decades of hindsight, it is now clear how woefully inadequate the conventional, linear, one-future directed, and short-term strategic planning style is. Such traditional strategic planning process bets on one future, and when that future does not happen, organizations find themselves in a reactive mode; a state of perpetual crisis management that takes away any ability for calm, strategic action.

Instead of just being experts in "emergency response", the social change field needs to become adept at "gaming the future"—like in a video game, simulating the future and a new world as if we were living it today. In this way, we are forced to make adaptations *today* for the future, not when that future is already here and "shocking" us once more.

This JustLabs guide, written by and produced in collaboration with Krizna Gomez, is about providing the human rights and social change field with a crucial tool to achieve just that. If foresight became part of our DNA as a field, social change actors can have a much-needed sense of clarity and power about influencing the future. Foresight can radically move social change actors from being mere *spectators* to change, to being active *engineers* of systemic changes in our societies, thus rightfully earning us the name we have given to ourselves.

What is foresight and what does it allow us to do?

Foresight is the process of looking to the past and the present to envision and prepare for different futures, which then allow us to make strategic decisions today. Also called "futures thinking", "scenario planning", or "strategic foresight" (which is a combination of foresight and strategic management), it uses the three elements of time—looking back at the *past*, scanning what is happening in the *present*, and studying the *future.*

Foresight is not meant to be a mere intellectual exercise on imagining scenarios, but a way for these scenarios to empower us to take action and rework our strategy today to be able to fulfill our mission as an organization or as a group (or perhaps even cause us to rethink our mission).

As noted futurist Bob Johansen remarks, the key is to *be clear as to where you are going and be flexible as to how to get there.* With foresight, you will not come up with a static, straightjacket of a plan towards one future, but a set of adaptable skills and strategies for whatever sort of future happens.

Is foresight used to predict the future?

This method is not about predicting one future, but about looking at a number of possible futures. On the basis of these future**s** (plural, not singular), we can make strategic decisions today that will prepare us regardless of which one of them (or even none of them) comes to pass.

With foresight muscles, we can also learn to see certain trends that, by their *cyclic* nature (for example, the boom-and-bust cycle of economics) or their *linear* direction (for example, the continuous increase in computing power and the concomitant decrease in the cost of microprocessors in technology, also known as Moore's Law; the upward—albeit fluctuating in pace—trend of globalization; or the continuous growth of the world population), can be considered almost as certainties and thus call on us to act accordingly. While these cyclic and linear changes may seem self-evident, it is still remarkable how many organizations and groups fail to incorporate these into their strategic plans. Foresight will equip us with ways to be sensitive to both these known facts and also unknown futures.

> "*This method is not about predicting one future, but about looking at a number of possible futures.*"

There are also things that are neither cyclical nor linear, and are highly unpredictable in terms of their timing or exact form, but we do know that they *will* occur at some point, such as a pandemic or a wildfire season in an arid area. Foresight does not help us determine when or how they will occur, but we can undertake concrete steps to be resilient when they do take place. Foresight also allows us to think systematically about low-probability but high-impact events (e.g. terrorism event, war), called "wildcards", which, despite their uncertainty, should be key considerations for any discerning group.

What is the time horizon that my team should be covering for this process?

The Institute for the Future has found that their "sweet spot" in terms of future outlook is 10 years. In general, their formula is to look back twice as long as one wants to look forward. For example, if you want to look 10 years into the future, then you should look back into history from 20 years ago. That means a coverage of 30 years.

FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 2031

LOOKING BACK TO THE PAST: 2001

PRESENT-DAY: 2021

TEN YEARS INTO THE FUTURE: 2031

> *Looking 20 years out does not mean that you will come up with a 20-year strategic plan; you can always create a two- or five-year plan but one that is based on a longer future outlook.*

But at the end of the day, there is no hard and fast rule on this. It will all depend on the goals of your group. Are you looking to simply scan a broad array of possibilities that could open you up to rethinking your overall mission or strategy, or do you have a specific question to answer on which your strategic plan for the next five years rests? For the former, you can look 10 or 20 years out into the future, while for the latter, something less than 10 years could be more appropriate.

Keep in mind that the farther out you look, the wider your field of vision becomes, so it is advisable to err on the side of a broader lens especially if this is the first time you are doing this kind of exercise. Imagine it more as working out new muscles and thus simply getting comfortable in using them rather than targeting high-level accuracy.

Note that looking 20 years out does not mean that you will come up with a 20-year strategic plan; you can always create a two- or five-year plan but one that is based on a longer future outlook.

What does my team need to be able to do foresight?

▪ PEOPLE

1 A *diverse, multidisciplinary team*, where staff—programmatic, strategic and administrative—come together. Making this exclusive to only the leadership is a common mistake. The beauty of foresight is that for it to be reliable, it *must* be done in an inclusive manner.

It is also very helpful to gather insights from external resources—critical supportive peers, experts in the field, and even annoying objectors or those who just think differently from you. This is not the time for cheerleaders or groupthink; it is the time for a rich coming together of different perspectives.

2 From this big group, identify a *core team of three to five people* who will be in charge of designing and moving the process along, encouraging collaboration by and listening to different parts of the entire group, and liaising with the leadership. Think of this core team as the "movers and shakers" to ensure a meaningful and inclusive process.

3 An *external facilitator*. It is often helpful for an outsider who also understands your group well to run the coming-together events (whether virtual or in-person), to ensure that you do not let blindspots from too much familiarity in the context sacrifice the quality of the process. If you cannot find or do not have the resources to bring in this person, find the most dynamic "insider-outsider" in your group to play this role.

> *The beauty of foresight is that for it to be reliable, it must be done in an inclusive manner.*

▪ RESEARCH

Gather data and analyses (whether quantitative or qualitative), news on exciting developments, and proposals for ideas on two things:

1 **The narrow thematic or geographic focus (or focuses) of your group**

There is definitely no need to reinvent the wheel and launch a big research or literature review, unless you are looking into a topic that has sparse data.

2 **The broader environment where you operate in**

The preliminary research should also open your sensors to the outside environment. This could be the general social change field in your country or region, or if you are a global group, in places which normally do not receive your focus. It can also look at adjacent fields or disciplines, for example, the architecture field if you are a group working on climate; transportation and design if you work in humanitarian response in places with weak infrastructure; or the technology and journalism fields if you work on community mobilization.

And beyond adjacent fields, encourage everyone to pick up a magazine, listen to a podcast or read blogs on completely foreign topics, like design, medicine, business, food or well-being. This helps to start practicing your new muscles on seeing the future as a fusion of developments from every aspect of life, or what in foresight is called STEEP (social, technological, economic, environmental and political) areas, rather than a narrowly defined and isolated field.

> *Foresight demands that we go beyond our "siloed" way of seeing the world because no field ever evolves in isolation from the world.*

Foresight demands that we go beyond our "siloed" way of seeing the world because no field ever evolves in isolation from the world. The future of migration or women's rights, for example, is not only a product of what happens within the confines of what you do in your programming. What happens in a particular community in Bangladesh can have ripple effects on a campaign somewhere in Hungary. An engineer in New Delhi can alter the way we all live 10 years out, if her innovative idea kicks into the mainstream.

A RADICALLY OPEN AND CURIOUS MIND

As renowned futurist Jim Dator said, "any useful idea about the future should appear to be ridiculous", as it reveals possibilities that will be novel and challenging to us. It is also important to imbibe an attitude where no ideas are too precious and holding on to an idea longer than necessary is not the goal. The goal is not about one's view winning over others; it is about collaboratively and humbly looking into our long-held assumptions, honestly interrogating them, then creatively making strategic actions together.

ACTIVE SUPPORT BY THE LEADERSHIP

This ensures that the exercise does not become a mere intellectual undertaking, but one that translates into actual changes in operations, strategy, and vision of the organization. Foresight should not be just some new workshop that gets people excited but disappears soon after; it should be a sustained new way of working. It will also be the responsibility of the leadership to convince everyone how foresight connects and has important ramifications to their day-to-day work. If this is not done, it will be hard to sustain engagement by the whole group or organization.

Foresight should not be just some new workshop that gets people excited but disappears soon after; it should be a sustained new way of working.

What are the steps of a foresight process?

1 Identify the building blocks of alternative futures

2 Construct alternative futures

0 Prework

YOU ARE
HERE

4 Make plans and act
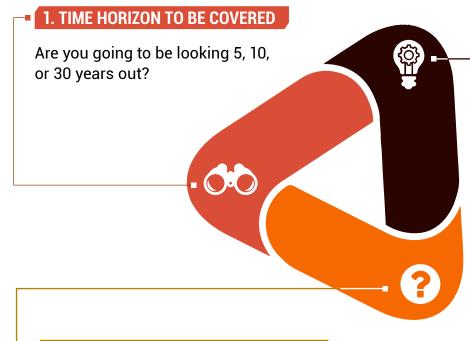
3 Draw out strategic insights from the alternative futures

O PREWORK

n this stage, it is important for the facilitator, the leadership of your group, and the core team to determine what the specific goal and desired outcomes of the foresight process is. Having clarity on this at the very beginning will ensure that the rest of the process becomes meaningful, participants feel anchored, and potential questions on the process are averted or aptly responded to.

Some of the parameters that will need to be identified are:

▪ Figure 1. Parameters to be Decided in a Foresight Process

1. TIME HORIZON TO BE COVERED

Are you going to be looking 5, 10, or 30 years out?

3. SPECIFIC OUTCOMES WANTED

Do you want to walk away with a revised strategic plan or a new one? Do you want a calendar of activities for the next two years, or a white paper perhaps on a new direction to be considered by your Board? Do you want a new strategic communications plan, a new funding model, or a list of new human resources needs for the next five years?

2. FOCAL QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED

Are you looking for a new organizational model to increase public constituency in the next seven years? Are you wanting to go broader and scope the horizon for innovations in the field that you can adopt while sticking to your general mission? Are you seeking to redefine your identity as a social change organization based on the most crucial issues of the next fifteen years in your geographical coverage?

1. IDENTIFY THE BUILDING BLOCKS
OF ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

This stage consists of getting clarity on the "building blocks" that you will then assemble together to write forecasts or scenarios of alternative futures.

These building blocks are: a) events; b) trends; c) deep drivers of change; d) weak signals of change; e) stabilities; and, f) wildcards. These concepts are defined in the subsequent subsections below, but here is a table to quickly glance the differences among them:

Table 1. Building Blocks of Forecasts (1)

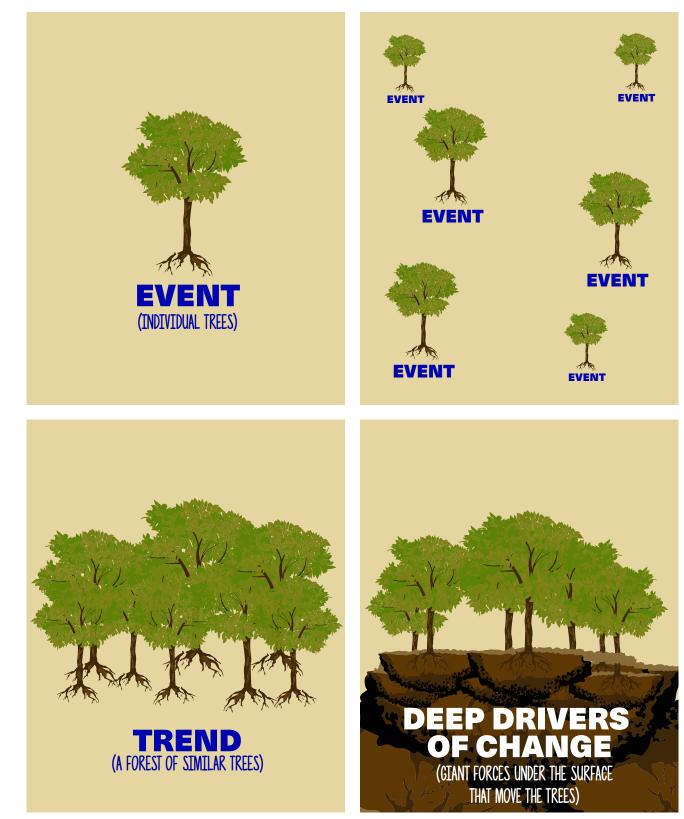| BUILDING BLOCK	WHAT IT IS	EXAMPLES
Event	The individual occurrences you see around you. A news article represents an event that just took place.	▪ '2016: Trump elected to power' ▪ 'Viktor Orbán of Hungary wins re-election' ▪ 'Narendra Modi wins election'
Trend	When events of similar nature repeat themselves at a certain frequency over a sustained period of time, that they show a general tendency, this represents a trend. There is a threshold of repetition, continuity, and pervasiveness over a period that could be a few months or years.	The above events taken together show a trend of the "coming to power of authoritarian populist leaders in functioning democracies".
Deep driver of change	Big, historical, structural and systemic causes of change that have existed for several years or even decades and that we barely see. If trends are what are obvious on the surface, deep drivers of change are the sub-surface and giant forces that produce those trends. They have been there much longer than trends and will most likely persist long into the future and will produce other new trends.	A possible deep driver of change for the trend above on the rise of authoritarian populist leaders is the "decline in institutional trust by the public" (which made them turn to unconventional personalities for leadership). This decline in institutional trust is not a new phenomenon but has steadily been increasing for the last decades and is expected to continue long into the future, with a myriad of surface-level trends as their effect.

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BUILDING BLOCK	WHAT IT IS	EXAMPLES
Weak signal of change	Small, local innovations, events, product launches, or new research that are still in the fringes and that most people barely notice. They are not trends because they are not widespread yet, but if they scale and become mainstream, they can change reality in a very significant way. Imagine reading a one-paragraph news article in the obscure corner of page 17 of your newspaper. It is almost hidden, weak and often missed, but it could signal important change for the future.	In his campaign in 2014, Narendra Modi used a hologram to be able to reach countless Indians at the same time. At that time, no other leader had used hologram technology for election campaigning, and at that time, this was a weak signal of how leaders in the future could reach vast spreads of voters in big countries like India—if scaled, this could change how campaigning or even direct democracy or leadership could look like in a fundamental way. This practice has not yet become mainstream (so it meets the requirement of being in the "fringe" still), although it was used in 2019 by Indonesian leader Jokowi to campaign in one of the largest countries in the world. *(*Note however that a good 'weak signal of change' should be from the last year or so. The example above is of a weak signal at that time, but it is already dated today.)*
Wildcard	Low-probability but high-impact event	Natural disasters (tsunamis), terrorism
Stability	Things that will remain the same (e.g. cultures, traditions, deeply ingrained beliefs or ways of society) and that will blunt or lessen the impact of change. They are the opposite of trends or weak signals of change, but are equally important in determining the pace of change overall.	■ Traditional customs or prejudices (that support conservative ideas by authoritarian populists and thus slow the pace of a progressive change such as the legalization of same-sex marriage) ■ Corporate power (which, through lobbying, supports authoritarian populists to prevent the adoption of climate-friendly policies) ■ Human psychological bias (that makes shocking news more memorable than good news) ■ Deep social inequalities (that make polarization on economic issues possible)

To zoom in on the distinction among events, trends and deep drivers of change, see this "trees-forest-soil" visualization:

■ **Figure 2. Relationship Between Events, Trends and Deep Drivers**

EVENT
(INDIVIDUAL TREES)

EVENT
EVENT
EVENT
EVENT
EVENT
EVENT

TREND
(A FOREST OF SIMILAR TREES)

DEEP DRIVERS
OF CHANGE
(GIANT FORCES UNDER THE SURFACE
THAT MOVE THE TREES)

The STEEP framework

As mentioned above, it is essential to look at all aspects of reality, and the most commonly used framework to do this is STEEP (social, technological, economic, environmental and political). As social change workers, we often pay most attention to or are best plugged into political or social news, but excluding other areas from our line of vision can leave a gaping hole in one's forecasts and make them simply unreliable. In the subsequent sections, as each type of building block is discussed, examples under each category will be given.

> *As social change workers, we often pay most attention to political or social news, but excluding other areas from our line of vision can leave a gaping hole in one's forecasts and make them simply unreliable.*

Activity #1 - Harvesting events

🗓️ **Duration:** 15 Minutes	👥 **Breakout Group Size:** Ideally no more than 5	🛠️ **Materials:** Post-its, a marker for every individual

Explanation and examples

Events are found in news items in the newspapers: individual events or occurrences. Examples of events would be: the election of Donald Trump in the United States in 2016, the re-election of Viktor Orbán in Hungary in 2018, and the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018.

Steps

1 Ask your team to write the most notable events that they have been reading in newspapers or hearing from friends in the last six months.

2 People should come up with as many events as they can within the time given, making sure that the events span the five areas of STEEP. Constantly remind them to broaden their field of vision and think hard about areas they particularly find unfamiliar.

3 Tell participants to write only one event per post-it. Then ask them to put up the post-its on the wall. There is no need to organize them in any manner at this stage yet.

Activity #2 - Spotting trends

🗓 **Duration:**	👥 **Breakout Group Size:**	⚒ **Materials:**
30 Minutes to one hour	Ideally no more than 5	Large post-its, thick markers, one white board per breakout group or alternatively a print-out of Worksheet 1 (see Annex) on a flip chart

Explanation and examples

A trend is "a general tendency or direction of a development or change over time". Imagine a sufficient accumulation of "events", as when individual news items repeat themselves in different contexts, form or time, and reach a certain threshold, in a way that is enough to make them part of a "general tendency."

Clustered together, the events of the electoral victories of Bolsonaro, Trump, and Orbán (especially given that they happened within short succession of each other and not decades apart), show a trend of the "coming to power of authoritarian populists in democracies".

An example of trends using STEEP are as follows:

Table 2. Examples of STEEP Trends

SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	POLITICAL
People especially in urban areas and developed countries entering "life stages" later (e.g. starting a family, entering and leaving the workforce)	Increasing use of wearables for tracking health of individuals	Creation of a new mentorship economy whereby the growing freelance workforce receive mentorship through social media or networking apps	Greater involvement/leadership of non-institutionally-affiliated youth in climate activism, e.g. Greta Thunberg and the climate school strikes	Passage of more net neutrality laws
More people starting to define their lives beyond material possession but by more holistic concepts such as well-being, purposeful living, greater relevance to social change	Greater demand for ethical and transparent actions by big technology companies, especially when it comes to privacy issues and information harvesting/dissemination	Consumers demanding more of brands to be transparent and for corporations to exert their influence for positive social impact	A broader, more integral concept of growth (beyond the capitalist "growth at all costs") driving choices by more people	Rise of authoritarian populist leaders in democracies

To help you in coming up with diverse trends, see **this list of types of trends and their examples:**

A. By their thematic/disciplinary sphere (STEEP)

- Social
- Technological
- Environmental
- Economic
- Political

B. By their nature

- *Political developments*, e.g. coming to power of authoritarian populists in democracies

- *Policy issues*, e.g. increase in the legalization of marijuana
- *New technologies*, e.g. more use of augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) in communications
- *Emerging ideas or concepts*, e.g. ubiquity of 'design thinking' beyond the design world; more companies redesigning their business model to integrate 'environmental sustainability'

C. By their trajectory

- *Cyclical trend*, e.g. occurrence of the seasons of the year (although climate change is changing how they manifest themselves); recession and recovery of economies (so we can be certain that after a bust, there will be economic recovery again)
- *Linear trend*, e.g. continuing march of globalization (even though the pandemic has currently slowed its pace); increase in the world population; decrease in the number of wars fought globally
- *Non-linear/cyclical* trends ('others') - These are the remaining 90% of trends which people spot most easily, but which do not have certainty of their pattern of persistence like cyclical and linear trends.
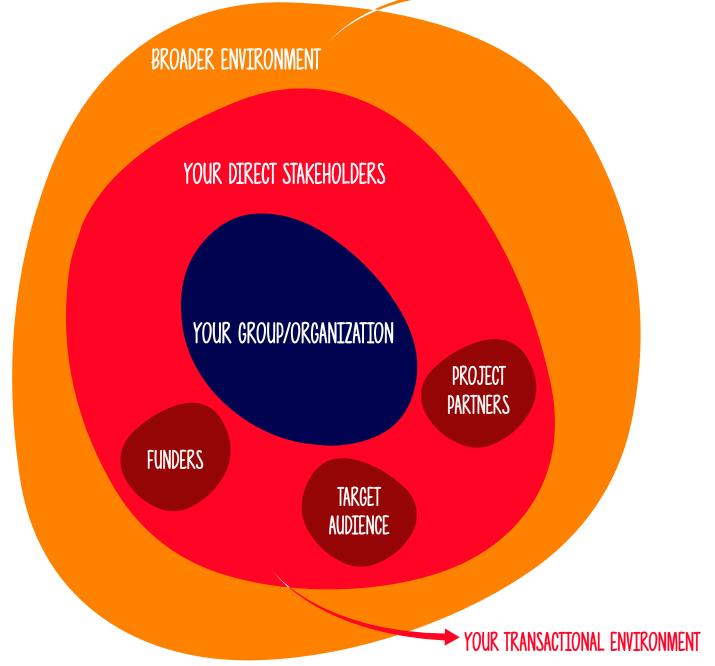
D. By their relationship to your group's context

- Internal to your group/organization
- External to your group/organization
  External trends are found either in: i) the immediate environment/field of your organization or group where your direct stakeholders are (called the *"transactional environment"*, like the human rights field); and, ii) the larger world (called the *"contextual environment"*, or beyond the human rights field).

These internal and external environments can be visualized as three concentric circles, as adapted from "4 Steps to the Future: A Quick and Clean Guide to Creating Foresight":

▪ Figure 3. Types of "Environmental" Trends

YOUR CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT

BROADER ENVIRONMENT

YOUR DIRECT STAKEHOLDERS

YOUR GROUP/ORGANIZATION

PROJECT PARTNERS

FUNDERS

TARGET AUDIENCE

YOUR TRANSACTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

To get some inspiration on what trends could be like, see this general scanning of trends in The WIRED World in 2019 and 5 Trends for 2019 by Trend Watching. You can also read this excellent look at trends in journalism, media, and technology in the Future Today Institute's 2019 report.

Steps

1 After harvesting events, ask each group to come together around the wall to cluster similar events, then ask them to name the trend that such events point to. Make sure that they write each trend in a new post-it that is bigger than the "events" post-it so they can easily be distinguished.

2 In clustering the trends, ask them to place the post-its under one or more of the columns of STEEP (social, technological, environmental, economic and political). You can draw this table on a white board, with one white board per breakout group, or print Worksheet 1 in the Annex on a flip chart, one for every breakout group. (See Worksheet 1 in the Annex).

3 Afterwards, ask the team to step back and look at the list, and to come up with trends that do not come out of any of the events they have previously written on the post-its but that they think are crucial to be considered given the concerns of the organization or group.

4 Engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Which trends were easiest to come up with?
- Which of the ones mentioned (including those by the other breakout groups) surprised you?
- Which trends are similar organizations or groups as yours already heavily focusing on? Which ones receive little attention?
- If you were to select three to five trends that you think the group should devote its energy to in the next three years, which ones are they?

Activity #3 - Uncovering deep drivers of change

Duration:
1 hour

Breakout Group Size:
Ideally no more than 5

Materials:
Large post-its, thick markers, one white board per breakout group or alternatively a print-out of Worksheet 2 (see Annex) on a flip chart

Explanation and examples

While trends may last for a few months or a few years, deep drivers of change are large, structural forces that underlie and manifest themselves in different trends. Deep drivers of change have persisted for a long time, and unlike trends, are expected to continue for years or decades to come. To refresh yourself on the distinction between trends and deep drivers, see Figure 2 above.

> *Deep drivers of change have persisted for a long time, and unlike trends, are expected to continue for years or decades to come.*

For example, we can say that a deep driver of change that has produced the trend of the rise of authoritarian populist leaders is the "continuing decline of institutional trust by the public" in many places around the world. This decline in trust in institutions could be argued to have created a playground that is ripe for the rise of anti-establishment figures who eschew traditional political discourses and champion themselves as "anti-elite". The trend of the rise of authoritarian populist leaders in democracies is not certain to continue long into the future (we may be facing a different type of leader or manner of governance in a number of years), but we can be quite certain that the deep driver of the decline in institutional trust has been there for decades and will continue long into the future.

Using the STEEP framework again, more examples of deep drivers of change are listed in the next page.

▪ Table 3. Examples of STEEP Deep Drivers of Change

Title of the future being examined: Future of human rights in 2030	
DEEP DRIVER OF CHANGE*	**EXPECTED IMPACT ON THE FUTURE****
SOCIAL	
More fluid conception of gender by the younger generations (beyond the binary "male-female" dichotomy)	This could trigger deeper cultural shifts for greater acceptance and respect for the rights of LGBTI populations.
TECHNOLOGICAL	
Use of artificial intelligence to manage more and more aspects of life	Legal and policy frameworks will have to be adapted to the rapidly increasing developments on the AI technology front to ensure that regulation becomes meaningful and effective.
ECONOMIC	
Growing freelance work force ("gig economy")	Social welfare for the protection of workers will have to be reimagined and updated, e.g. unemployment benefits when there is not necessarily an "employment" relationship.
ENVIRONMENTAL	
Impacts of climate change manifesting themselves more strongly year after year	Consumer preferences will lead to the market dominance of sustainable raw materials and climate friendly agricultural practices, forcing the current agro-industrial complex to either make fundamental transformations in their practices and technology or go out of business.
POLITICAL	
Declining trust in institutions by the public	Political mobilization moves out of traditional institutions like NGOs, and leaderless and sudden mass mobilizations become more frequent. Institutions will have to reform or even be reimagined completely, with likely resistance by traditional power holders.

*Some of these examples are taken from the foresight practitioner's training by the Institute for the Future.
**The scope of "future" here depends on the time horizon your group chose for your foresight process.

Steps

1 Ask each breakout group to write down as many deep drivers of change that they can come up with, ensuring that they fill each column of the STEEP table (see Worksheet 2 in the Annex).

2 After the first round, examine each breakout group's table and if necessary, give them time to fill columns of the STEEP table that they did not focus on, so they are encouraged to really think in a diverse and broad way (most people tend to focus on the social and political realms).

3 Have the breakout groups position their tables of deep drivers next to each other, like in a gallery. Then invite everyone to walk around and read the different tables in the gallery.

4 After they are done reading all the tables, engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Which driver/s do you feel have had the most impact on the main programs or goals of your group?
- Which sectors of society reinforce which drivers?
- Is your group contributing to the reinforcement or weakening of a certain deep driver? Which one/s?
- If you were to select the top three to five drivers that you think your group should actively monitor or affect in the next ten years, which ones are they?

The growth in the gig economy around the world is expected to continue for many more years and is thus considered a deep driver of change.

Activity #4 - Scanning for weak signals of change

Duration:
45 minutes
to 1 hour

Breakout Group Size:
Ideally no more than 5

Materials:
Worksheet 3 (see Annex), post-its, markers, a big wall or white board to put up signals of change

Explanation and examples

Weak signals of change are concrete, specific events, stories, innovations, or news that are at the peripheries, which make the observer get a sensation that that signal, if scaled/mainstreamed, can take us in an entirely different direction in the future. In short, unlike trends which are already mainstream or have reached a certain level of repetition to be recognizable by many, weak signals of change have not reached that threshold yet, but if they do, they can radically transform our reality or the future.

Learning how to identify weak signals of change helps build the muscle of being able to see the precursors of significant change well before they become apparent to everyone. This is a departure from how we are wired where we focus only on predominant trends that we read all the time in the news or that we deal with in our daily work. Being able to appreciate what is both in the mainstream (trends) and in the fringes (weak signals of change) is the hallmark of an organization that is ahead of the curve, being able to stay one step ahead of everyone else because they have anticipated change before it amounts to anything, or being able to deliberately scale a signal because it will help deliver the future that they want.

WEAK SIGNAL OF CHANGE

Here is a useful checklist by the Institute for the Future on what a signal of change is:

- ☑ It should be compelling and makes your head shake in awe or wonder, because it breaks out of your current model of thinking or the way things work now.
- ☑ It could spark a redefinition of boundaries.
- ☑ It has the potential to spread virally.
- ☑ It could shift worldviews for a significant group of people.
- ☑ It could point to a shift in identity.
- ☑ It could challenge traditional authority.

In the table below, you will see what a signal of change is and what it is not, as well as find some examples under each.

▪ Table 4. Weak Signal of Change

WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT IS *NOT*
A specific example; a specific event or an anecdote (e.g. election of leader X in country Y in year Z)	Not a broad phenomenon or trend (e.g. election of populist leaders across the world)
A new product that is being launched or notable and previously unheard of use of a technology (e.g. Narendra Modi appearing simultaneously in different political rallies across India during the election campaigns of 2014 using augmented reality/virtual reality [AR/VR] technology)	Not a broad technological area (e.g. augmented reality/virtual reality [AR/VR] technology)
Not yet commonly seen occurrence (e.g. French law bans disposal of unsold goods, including luxury clothing and electronics, requiring them instead to be redistributed, reused or recycled)	Not a trend, which is already a general tendency (e.g. governments banning plastic bag use in supermarkets)
Ideally occurring in the last several months or the past year	Not something from years ago
Existing fact/reality (e.g. SpaceX's Falcon Heavy launched its first ever commercial mission)	Not predictions about the future (e.g. colonization of Mars by human beings)

For a detailed guide on how to scan for weak signals of change, see MaRS' article.

For some examples of weak signals of change, see The Futures Centre's curation on areas such as climate, sustainability, technology, health, and economy.

> *Being able to appreciate what is both in the mainstream (trends) and in the fringes (weak signals of change) is the hallmark of an organization that is ahead of the curve.*

just-style
Apparel Sourcing Strategy

France bans disposal, destruction of unsold clothing in "world-first"

By Hannah Abdulla | 3 February 2020

France will ban clothing brands and retailers from destroying unsold and returned items under new legislation passed by the government last week.

A weak signal of change: French law bans disposal of unsold goods, including luxury clothing and electronics, requiring them instead to be redistributed, reused or recycled. Source: www.just-style.com

1 Ideally, this is an activity that you can ask participants to do individually and at least a week before the actual group convenes. This gives them time to really absorb the explanation on what weak signals of change are and to warm them up in thinking differently. You can use Worksheet 3 (see Annex) which contains the explanation above as well as some examples, plus as a blank form which they can fill out in completing their individual assignment.

2 As indicated in Worksheet 3, ask them to come up with two to three signals under the specific futures topic that you have decided to focus on as a group (e.g. "future of human rights"; "future of humanitarian aid in Ethiopia", "future of corporate accountability").

3 You can ask them to upload their weak signals of change in a shared folder by a given date, which would be made accessible to everyone in the group. Then after that date and prior to the workshop, ask everyone to read the weak signals of change that their colleagues came up with.

4 During the actual convening/workshop, ask people to write down one-line summaries of their weak signals of change in post-its, with one signal per post-it.

5 Ask everyone to stand up around one wall or virtual board and put up their signals.

6 You and perhaps others who can assist you will cluster similar signals and label each cluster with their common topic.

7 Have everyone examine the newly clustered/organized board. Engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Did anything surprise you?
- What makes you excited about which signals?
- Which ones worry you?
- Which ones do you think are more relevant to your work?
- Which signals do you think you all need to mainstream to bring you closer to your organizational vision?

SpaceX's Falcon Heavy, the world's most powerful rocket, launched its first ever commercial mission. This signals a potential transformation in humanity's space flight capabilities, including broader access for wealthy private individuals and companies. Source: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-space-exploration-spacex-idUSKCN1RN32J

Activity #5 - Recognizing stabilities

Duration: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Breakout Group Size: Ideally no more than 5

Materials: Big post-its, thick markers, a big wall or white board to put up stabilities identified by the groups

Explanation and examples

When people think about the future, the focus is often on things that will change, but we know that there will be things that will remain the same (cultures, traditions, deeply ingrained beliefs or ways of society, etc.). Identifying these things called 'stabilities', along with the changes, will be key in coming up with holistic scenarios of the future.

Stabilities are a tool to understand the past, and to consider not only things that will produce change, but those that will blunt, negate, or even expedite the capacity to produce change by other phenomena. The fact is that the future will not only consist of what will be different from now, but also a lot of what will be constant.

IStock

Common stability-enforcing things, according to futurist Richard Lum in his short and excellent guide on foresight book "Four Steps to the Future", could be: a) rules, customs and traditions; b) physical or logistical constraints; c) patterns of behavior; and, d) powerful stakeholders or incumbents in the community.

Table 5. Examples of Stabilities

TYPES OF STABILITIES	EXAMPLES
Rules, customs and traditions	Perceived "home-maker" role of women in the community versus a trend of growing gainful employment of women heads of families
Physical or logistical constraints	■ Limited technological infrastructure in a country that otherwise wants to adopt an ambitious nationwide free access to broadband internet ■ Technical standards by existing laws that make it difficult to scale an innovation ■ Bad network of roads that impact how fast a new idea on supply system of goods could deploy
Patterns of behavior	The negativity bias of people where we highlight in our minds negative bits of information more than positive ones
Powerful stakeholders or incumbents in the community	■ Community groups who mobilize to block a new mining project in their locale ■ Industry groups who lobby their lawmakers to prevent laws that will lessen their profit margins

For more examples of stabilities, see "key constants" in this report.

Steps

1 Ask each breakout group to jointly come up with a list of stabilities that are relevant in their context, using the examples in Table 5 to inspire them. Encourage them to come up with other types of stabilities beyond what is in Table 5. Ask them to write one stability per post-it. Make sure to use big post-its that are easily readable from afar during a plenary session.

2 Have each breakout group share in plenary the stabilities they came up with. As each representative does so, another member of their breakout group can put the relevant post-its up on the board in front of the plenary.

3 While each breakout group shares, as the facilitator, you can simultaneously cluster similar stabilities. Once all the breakout groups have shared and you are finished clustering the stabilities into common topics, read these clusters out loud to everyone.

4 Have everyone examine the newly clustered/organized board. Engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Which stabilities have you been experiencing or seeing as most relevant to your work?
- Which stabilities work for your organization's mission and which should you harness?
- Which stabilities make your work harder?

Activity #6 - Wildcards!

📅 **Duration:** 30 minutes to 1 hour	👥 **Breakout Group Size:** Ideally no more than 5	✏️ **Materials:** Big post-its, thick markers, a big wall or white board

Explanation and examples

Wildcards are low-probability but high-impact events, such as natural disasters (tsunamis, earthquakes), human-caused events (terrorist attacks, wars, a widespread shift in paradigm or worldview such as the predominance of capitalism), or consequences of the latter action (global economic collapse).

For examples of wildcards (including a rating of which of them have materialized), see this list by iKnow Community.

Example of a wildcard: The eruption of a volcano in Iceland in 2010 caused an unprecedented shutdown of most air traffic in Europe for a week, affecting around 10 million passengers and costing between 1.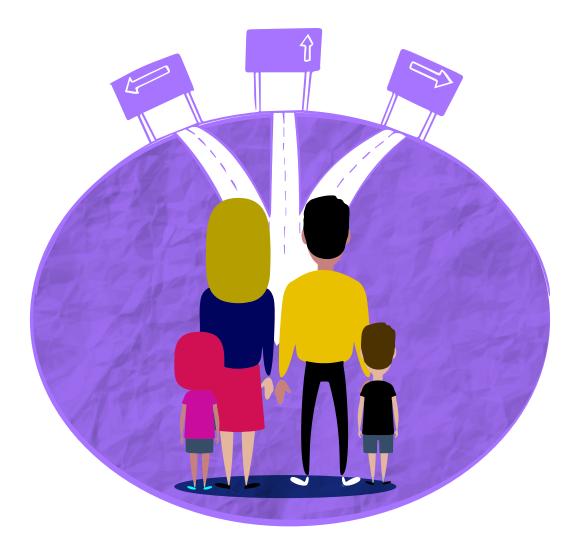5 to 2.5 billion euros. Source: https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2011/04/2010s-volcano-induced-air-travel-shutdown-was-justified

Steps

1 Ask each breakout group to jointly come up with a list of wildcards, trying to think of at least one under each area of STEEP (social, technological, economic, environmental, political). Ask them to write one wildcard per post-it. Make sure to use big post-its that are easily readable from afar during a plenary session.

2 Have each breakout group share in plenary the wildcards they came up with. As each representative does so, another member of their breakout group can put up the relevant post-its on the board in front of the plenary.

3 As each breakout group shares, as the facilitator, you can simultaneously cluster similar wildcards. Once all the breakout groups have shared, spend a few minutes clustering the wildcards into common topics. Afterwards, read these clusters out loud to everyone.

4 Have everyone examine the newly clustered/organized board. Engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Is your group prepared in case one of these wildcards happens? Which wildcard is that?
- Select three wildcards. If these three were to happen, what capabilities should your group start gaining now to be ready for them? Beyond capabilities, what broader changes in the way you work should you consider undertaking to be able to thrive in case these wildcards happen?

2. CONSTRUCT
ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

In this stage, participants turn the facts about the present and the past (the "building blocks") into future scenarios (in the form of "forecasts"), by first seeing how these building blocks may interact and produce possible futures.

Here, participants also learn to communicate these future scenarios and visions through tools such as "front pages of the future". In foresight, it is important that the whole organization or group have a common understanding of the visions that may impact their work. For this to happen, communicating scenarios and visions are key.

Activity #7 - 2x2 Matrix

📅 Duration:
30 - 45
minutes

👥 Breakout Group Size:
Ideally no more than 5

🛠 Materials:
A few thick markers for writing on a flipchart or white board, one flipchart or white board per breakout group, Worksheet 4 (see Annex)

Explanation and examples

A 2x2 matrix allows for people to imagine different scenarios of the future based on the interaction of two key variables (from the "building blocks" in Stage 2 of this Guide). These variables are called "critical uncertainties". They are things that are not certain to happen, and are considered critical because their occurrence and their interaction with one another will have a significant impact on the internal realities or operating environment, and thus the strategy, of the group or organization.

For example, a critical uncertainty for an environmental organization working in the Arctic region will be whether or not the US government will grant exploration rights to certain corporations to be able to mine there or not. But that may not necessarily be a critical uncertainty for the five-year deployment strategy of a group of citizen journalists in Senegal who are covering technology issues in Western Africa (although of course it can be argued that the fate of the Arctic environment affects all of humanity).

■ Figure 4. Example of 2x2 Matrix

Leadership by Gen-Z in climate activism

Scenario 1

Top carbon-emitting companies close down due to public pressure and make reparations to those most affected by climate change.

Scenario 2

Gen-Z rallies the four other older generations through underground means to change consumer behavior around top carbon-emitting companies, but no direct reparations are made to those most affected by the latter's actions.

Significant increase in number of court cases filed against carbon majors

Very few cases filed against carbon majors

Scenario 3

Top carbon-emitting companies increase further their lobbying budgets to use parliaments to limit the power of courts with respect to climate cases.

Scenario 4

Governments disengage from the Paris Accord commitments and world temperature increase breaches the 1.5-degree Celsius limit.

Complete disengagement by Gen-Z in climate activism

Steps

1 Ask each breakout group to identify two building blocks—they can be trends, deep drivers of change, weak signals of change, or stabilities—that stand out for them because they feel that these are key factors ("critical uncertainties") that should be considered in their strategy. In selecting the two "critical uncertainties", they can mix a stability with a weak signal of change, or a deep driver with a trend, and so on. They can be creative with the combinations.

2 Once the two "critical uncertainties'' have been identified, write a short statement of a forecast of the future based on the interaction of the relevant sides of the variable. The forecast here is a simple, pithy summary of the future, consisting of no more than two to three lines.

3 Once they are done, ask each breakout group to show the rest of the plenary their 2x2 Matrix. Engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Why did you choose those two critical uncertainties? What do they mean for your organization or group?
- Examine all four scenarios in your breakout group's 2x2 Matrix. What are common capabilities that you think the organization/group should acquire to be ready for or even thrive in these scenarios?
- Which of the four scenarios in your 2x2 Matrix is something that you want to actively bring about? Why? What does the group need to do to bring that about?
- Looking at the 2x2 Matrix of *all* the breakout groups, what are the common themes? What are the biggest differences? What do these similarities mean for the current strategy of the organization/group?

Source: Flickr- Peg Hunter (YouthClimateStrike)

Activity #8 - Front page from the Future

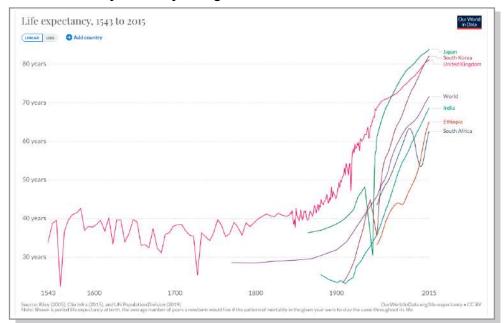| 📇 **Duration:** 45 minutes to 1.5 hours	👥 **Breakout Group Size:** Ideally no more than 5	🛠 **Materials:** Blank flipchart or white board (or alternatively, a printout of Worksheet 5 in the Annex), a few thick markers

Explanation and examples

The four types of future scenarios according to Jim Dator are: *transformation, constraint, growth and collapse*. They are as follows:

A. Scenario of *growth*

A scenario of growth is one where current trends and conditions, such as the prevalence of a capitalist system in society or the fast pace of technological innovation with respect to data accumulation and loss of privacy, continue. Examples of these scenarios could involve trends like Moore's Law, the ongoing increase in life expectancy of populations around the world due to medical breakthroughs or better access to health services, or the growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country. The rates in such growth may vary, but what is important is that the trajectory is consistent and the discrepancies over time are not dramatic or disruptive. Current trends simply reproduce themselves to create a fundamentally similarly designed future.

Life expectancy of human beings has continued to rise over decades and is not expected to change fundamentally. A forecast of growth, which uses this as a key variable, could then tackle the reasonable impacts of this on society, such as the expanding pressures on old-age health services, the social and cultural effects of the interaction of more generations in a given home or community, and the reexamination of current social welfare systems in countries with lesser younger people and more retiring-age members. Photo source: https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy

B. **Scenario of *transformation***

In this scenario, society reorganizes itself to solve its major ills. This is a "dream world", at least with respect to a key variable you are interested in, and the solving of this key critical problem (or problems) produces effects in the various areas of life. Examples could be scenarios based on the reversal of climate change, solving the lack of access to clean water in many poor parts of the world, or the discovery of a vaccine that prevents all kinds of flu (a medical aim that has been in the works even before the coronavirus pandemic). How would the world look like—in technology, fashion, education, and economy—if these problems were solved?

c. Scenario of *constraint*

A scenario of constraint is one where a key organizing ideology or principle rearranges society. It is like introducing an "artificial" rule that alters the direction of reality in a given context in a profound way. An example cited by the Institute for the Future is China's one child policy that changed the course of China's destiny.

China's one child policy was a "constraining" policy that, in a scenario of constraint, changed the course of China's destiny—from its demography, growth trajectory, collective trauma in society, and its political and economic clout on the rest of the world today. Source: "One Child Nation" - Amazon Prime

D. Scenario of *collapse*

As the name suggests, this type of scenario is one where society collapses due to the occurence (or failure to materialize) of a key high-impact factor. This is the opposite of a scenario of transformation. A good example would be a world with run-away climate change, which causes the disappearance of low-lying areas, the prevalence of famines, war over scarce resources or land, and a rise in the number of climate refugees.

Never Offline.

Apple implants now mandatory in India

Nestle buys UNICEF: Final deal details are kept under wraps

Nestlé

School shootings persist; Emma Gonzales makes last-ditch plea to the UN

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tegua Island submerged: Succumbs to climate change

The final Torres Strait islands has become the latest island to dissapear with populations moving and migrating to other mainland territories.

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Chaos hits Japan following massive cyber attack

Hospitals, electricity grids, banking sector shut down; Attacker unknown; Operation Cyber Godzilla

For a detailed explanation of the above four types of scenario, see the article of Jim Dator.

In coming up with the above scenarios, it is important to remind the participants of the three criteria of good scenarios:

a) plausible (no aliens or flying saucers);

b) internally consistent (no two facts within the same scenario contradict each other, like talking about walking down the streets of Manila but also talking about Manila being eaten up completely by the rising seas); and,

c) provocative (if it does not raise important questions for strategic thinking by the organization or group, then it is a mere esoteric exercise).

Steps

1 Once the participants are clear on the four types of scenarios and the three criteria, divide the plenary into breakout groups, and each breakout group will be assigned one of the four scenario types (e.g. If there are four groups, one will work on a scenario of transformation, another on collapse, and so on. If there are eight groups, two groups can work under each type, but they will still work separate from each other).

2 Based on the assigned type of scenario, each group will work on envisioning the world in 10 years (or 20, 30 years, depending on the timeline you have selected) by constructing the front page of a newspaper they choose. This newspaper can either be an existing one or something that they invent; some of our lab participants even came up with non-traditional forms, claiming that news will be virtually accessed through AR/VR or social media instead of a newspaper.

3 Ask them to put news items with titles, photos, cartoons, and even advertisements, all of which represent the different aspects of the world that day (a news item on the economy, another on politics, on fashion, technology, and so on). Make sure that these cover all the categories of STEEP (social, technological, environmental, economic, and political), instead of them focusing only on politics or economy.

The breakout groups can use either a blank flipchart or a whiteboard to draw their newspaper, or you can also give them a printout of a newspaper template which is found in Worksheet 5 (see Annex).

4 Once each breakout group is finished, ask them to display their front pages next to each other like in a gallery. Invite everyone to walk around and read all the front pages. If there is time, it will be ideal if each group can read out and share their front page in plenary, instead of everyone just viewing for themselves in a gallery.

5 The plenary will now vote for the front page that they feel embodies the issues that the entire organization/group should focus its work on in the coming years. If there is more than one scenario per type, then the plenary votes for a winning front page per type. If there is only one front page per scenario type, then everyone will vote for only one front page, regardless of type, from among everything in the gallery.

6 Engage everyone in a plenary discussion where a few people give a short explanation for why they voted for one or the other. Once a good number of people have shared, you can dig deeper as a group using the following **debrief questions:**

- Which of these futures have your group directly or indirectly contributed to?
- Which future is the preferred future of your organization? Why?
- What does making that preferred future happen mean for your staffing, leadership structure, resource allocation, focus areas? (This is meant to be an initial surfacing of ideas; more time will be dedicated to answering these questions in the next stage.)

3. DRAW OUT STRATEGIC INSIGHTS
FROM THE ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

This is the stage whereby participants turn the scenarios of the future into actionable insights that have practical effects on the work and strategy of the group/organization. What are the implications of each of these scenarios to you? What choices will need to be made in the strategy and the way the organization works if these are the futures it needs to prepare for or want to actively bring about? This is where the organization can identify opportunities that it can leverage and actively shape, as well as threats that it can avoid or lessen the impact of.

In the end, a foresight process is not about the accuracy of the scenarios about the future (again, it is not mainly about predicting the future), but the "a-ha" moments of insights that move your group to take action so it can be resilient and relevant regardless of what future comes to pass.

Activity #9 - Futures Wheel

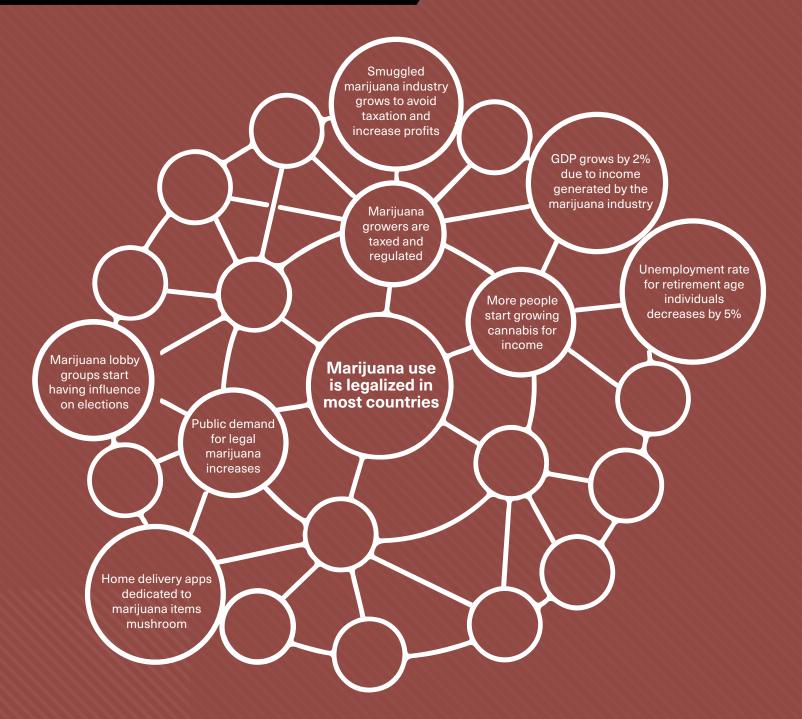|	**Duration:** 45 minutes to 1.5 hours		**Breakout Group Size:** Ideally no more than 5		**Materials:** Big post-its, thick markers, a white board to draw on

Explanation and examples

A Futures Wheel allows people to go into the details of the effects of a specific trend, deep driver of change, weak signal of change or forecast. A Futures Wheel allows us to imagine the interaction of seemingly disparate or localized effects through different or even overlapping directions, as opposed to neatly following a causal chain of events in a straight line. Often, consequences produce further effects, in a messy but exciting way, if they fuse or relate with others.

More importantly, it forces a team to think beyond immediate consequences and track how a development could manifest itself much further down the road (the second-order or even third-order impacts). This allows for an organization or group to make strategic actions that are meant to address or scale consequences which may take time to materialize and which depend on first-order effects to first come true.

> *A Futures Wheel allows us to imagine the interaction of seemingly disparate or localized effects through different or even overlapping directions, as opposed to neatly following a causal chain of events in a straight line.*

An example of a futures wheel is as follows:

Figure 5. Example of a Futures Wheel

Steps

1 Ask each breakout group to identify one trend or weak signal of change that they find needs further exploration because it can have important ramifications for the organization/group. They should write that trend or weak signal of change in the center circle as in Figure 5 above.

2 From that central trend or signal of change, ask them to imagine its immediate effects if it were to become a reality. You can decide what timeline this can cover (within the next one to three years, for example). Ask them to broaden their thinking across all areas of STEEP (social, technological, environmental, economic and political). They should write each impact in one of the circles closest to the central circle. These are the first-order impacts.

3 From there, the groups can write what second-order impacts of these first-order effects, interacting with one another, could be. The interconnections can be diverse, and their Futures Wheel might be messy as they connect one seemingly unrelated first-order impact with another.

4 They can then proceed to write further impacts (second- and third-degree, and so on) as first-order impacts interact with one or more second-order impacts, and so on. They can be creative as to the different lines of relationship that they draw across the various effects they have on their Futures Wheel.

5 When all the breakout groups are done, ask them to present their Futures Wheels. Then engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- How did you feel as you followed the progression of impacts across your Futures Wheel?
- What surprised you? What did not surprise you?
- How do you think the impacts farther out in the Wheel will affect the context of the organization/group?
- What does this mean for the group's strategy? Are there new fields or angles of work that need to be explored?

Activity #10 - Cross-impact Matrix

(Adapted from the [Institute for the Future](#)'s Foresight Toolkit)

Duration: 45 minutes to 1.5 hours

Breakout Group Size: Ideally no more than 5

Materials: Big post-its, thick markers, a white board to draw on or a printout of Worksheet 6 (see Annex)

Explanation and examples

This is another useful activity in coming up with insights based on the future scenarios. Here, the groups will see how the scenario plays out in different areas, whether they be sectors of society (e.g. education, politics, information economy, consumer culture, architecture and design); areas of interest in your field (e.g. fundraising, attracting new talent, branding of the organization, level of public support, access to key government institutions); your target audiences (e.g. Gen-Z, women farmers, judicial institutions, media, informal laborers, multilateral institutions, 9-12 year-old school children); teams within the organization (e.g. executive office, human resources, administration and finance, programs) or the broader areas of STEEP (social, technological, environmental, economic, and political).

In the next page is an example of a Cross-Impact Matrix, using the four scenarios from the 2x2 Matrix in Figure 4 above. Note that for the Cross-Impact Matrix, they can also use the forecasts they came up with under Activity #8: 'Front Page from the Future', focusing on the main headline of their newspaper.

▪ Table 6. Example of Cross-Impact Matrix (1)

SCENARIOS	AREAS OF INTEREST			
	Area 1: *Pop culture*	**Area 2:** *Social movements*	**Area 3:** *Journalism*	**Area 4:** *Education*
Scenario 1: Top carbon-emitting companies close down due to public pressure and make reparations to those most affected by climate change.	More composers and artists sing about the lives of communities most affected by climate change, and the importance of corporate accountability. Top billboard hits for three years in a row are "social conscience" songs that tackle sensitive issues.	Grassroots movements that have helped shore up public opinion against the top carbon-emitting companies receive more resources and membership applications. Funders require social movements they want to support to incorporate as legal entities to be able to receive funding. Those who refuse to formalize their existence raise significant resources through crowdsourcing platforms.	Because of the increase in the number of cases filed against carbon-emitting companies, more and more journalists learn how to do court reporting. Journalists and lawyers partner up to raise the public profile of litigation against corporations.	More law students choose a concentration on climate litigation in their curriculum. The first climate justice-focused law school opens in Africa.
Scenario 2: Gen-Z rallies the four older generations through underground means to change consumer behavior around top carbon-emitting companies, but no direct reparations are made to those most affected by the latter's actions.	Many Gen-Z activists become more familiar with the cultural icons and mediums (such as songs and movies) that older generations had in their youth, to be able to find a common language to tackle issues of climate justice and corporate accountability. Streaming of Michael Jackson's 'Heal the World' reaches an all-time high.	Social movements, led by Gen-Z activists, become more multigenerational.	TikTok becomes the most popular source of news for Gen-Z, while it also sees an increase in app features and content more geared towards older generations, as part of a collaboration between the makers of TikTok and student climate activists who want to engage older generations in climate justice activism.	Free online courses, designed and delivered by youth activists, on how to mobilize one's community increase their popularity among the Gen-Z and younger.

▪ Table 6. Example of Cross-Impact Matrix (2)

SCENARIOS	AREAS OF INTEREST			
	Area 1: *Pop culture*	Area 2: *Social movements*	Area 3: *Journalism*	Area 4: *Education*
Scenario 3: Top carbon-emitting companies increase their lobbying budgets to use parliaments to limit the power of courts with respect to climate cases.	Movie celebrities and opinion makers receive higher annual income due to the increase in the number of contracts with companies which use celebrities to speak about the importance of fossil fuels to economic prosperity.	More simultaneous climate strikes are organized in front of parliaments every Friday across the world, to counter the weight of corporate lobbying. Some leaders of social movements enter mainstream politics upon reaching the age of majority, and their social movements increase their electoral campaigning capabilities.	Rightwing media companies receive substantial advertising contracts with top carbon-emitting companies regarding the benefits of "green coal".	Top carbon-emitting companies significantly increase their donations to law schools, specifically through funding of faculty positions that focus on the positive impacts of business on society.
Scenario 4: Governments withdraw from the Paris Accord and world temperature increase breaches the 1.5-degree Celsius limit.	Movie filming in a lot of locations is cancelled regularly due to extreme weather. Moviemakers signed by Netflix are required to have a backup plan where they can produce their films combining footage shot at the homes of their actors.	Grassroots movements demand free access to commercial flights of Crew Dragon spacecraft by SpaceX to Mars, hoping to include a perspective from socially disadvantaged sectors on the feasibility studies on living on Mars.	There is an increase in the number of 'citizen reporters', who are non-professionally trained civilians who report from their communities using their smartphones, about fires, hurricanes, typhoons and earthquakes. This increase is partly due to the heightened sense of activism and civic duty by communities who feel they have been left to fend for themselves, and the sheer inability of the professional crew of news media to catch up with the ever-growing number of natural disasters happening around the globe.	Due to flooding, grade schools across Europe shift fully to virtual instruction, managed by parents of students at home.

Virtual instruction for schools may become the norm when natural disasters cause prolonged closure of physical schools. - Getty Images

Steps

1. Have every breakout group draw the table in Worksheet 6 (see Annex) or give them a printout on a flipchart.

2. They should write out four scenarios on the first vertical column. These four scenarios could be the ones from their 2x2 Matrix in Activity #7 or the headline from each of the four front pages of the future in Activity #8.

3. In the heading of the succeeding vertical columns, they then identify four diverse areas that are relevant for the group's context. Encourage them to broaden their imagination of what is "relevant" here beyond the most obvious ones, because something happening in a seemingly unrelated field can actually have important effects on their work. See the examples of what these areas could be in the previous section "Explanation and Examples".

4 In the intersection of each scenario and area, they will then write a potential impact of the interaction of these two things within the time frame you all have chosen to focus on. They may also decide that they want to examine a short-term set of impacts in a foresight process that is otherwise long-range (so, for example, impacts in the next five years for a foresight process on the future of reporting on social media in 2040), or the long-term impacts in a foresight process that is otherwise not looking too long into the future (for example, impacts in the next ten years in a foresight process that looks at the future of communications in 2025). Encourage them to be creative and daring, writing impacts that are not the usual ones they would normally come up with.

5 Ask the breakout groups to share their tables to the plenary. Then engage them in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions** as guide:

- Why did your breakout group choose those areas?
- What common areas can be found across the different breakout groups' tables? Which areas are outliers from the rest?
- If the group/organization is to adapt to some of the common impacts across the tables, what changes will need to be made in the different aspects of the work and of the overall strategy? Will a certain program need to increase size? Should the closing down of some programs be considered to be able to channel resources to emerging issues? Is there something about the narratives and communications strategy that needs to change? Should the hiring policies change?

Activity #11 - Different futures, Common questions

Duration:
1 to 2 hours

Breakout Group Size:
This is a plenary activity, so there will be no breakout groups

Materials:
White board marker for the facilitator (perhaps in different colors to help organize strands of thought), a white board to draw on or a printout of Worksheet 7 (see Annex)

Explanation and examples

As an alternative or addition to the Cross-Impact Matrix in Activity #10, this activity can be used to help the whole group or organization synthesize the practical effects of the scenarios on its strategy. Here, everyone will come together to identify and analyze common themes found across the different scenarios.

The aim of this activity is to draw out what key considerations for resiliency or strategic maneuvering the organization should have that can be useful in whatever scenario becomes a reality. This is the main goal of foresight. It is not about predicting which scenario comes to pass, but to identify key strategic insights to prepare one for whatever scenario happens.

> *It is not about predicting which scenario comes to pass, but to identify key strategic insights to prepare one for whatever scenario happens.*

An example for this is as follows:

▪ Table 7. Example of Different Futures, Common Questions

SCENARIOS	COMMON THEME	RESULTING STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP
Operations of our advocacy team in China are closed down due to government restrictions. *China closes down all its coal plants and leads the world in renewable energy investments by 2040.* *70% of offices in the world move to co-working spaces that are designed for future pandemic readiness.* *Half of current labor market is laid off because of automation; retraining of labor force in technology increases by fivefold.*	▪ Importance of china in climate action, but no predicted change in negative government treatment of activists and advocacy groups. ▪ Extreme mobility in labor, whether location or skills or jobs themselves ▪ Sharing economy continues to increase. ▪ Collaboration becomes the foundation of productivity. ▪ Greater awareness of the impact of health on the economy and quality of life of people in general.	▪ Should we increase or decrease the number of staff in China? Can they work on China-related issues but from outside China or in an unconventional office set up? ▪ How do we change the physical set up of our shared space to further enhance collaboration not only internally but also with our partners? ▪ Where can we divert part of the funds we got for purchasing or renting an office, which can increase our resilience in case the government tries to shut us down?

Steps

1 Recap the scenarios generated from Activity #8. On the left side of the table in Worksheet 7 (see Annex), list the title or summary of the scenarios generated from the prior activities.

2 Ask the group to reflect on what common themes run through the different scenarios (not necessarily in all of the scenarios), and list them in the middle column of the table.

3 Finally, ask them what these common themes mean for the group/organization in a very real and practical way. For example, what does it mean for which thematic issues receive the most resources or staffing? Are there emerging thematic issues that should become new areas of work for the group? How should the group's geographical presence evolve given these common themes? Do the themes raise serious questions for the operational and business model of the group? On which public issues should the group become more visible?

4 After filling in the last column, engage everyone in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- How are you feeling? (This is an important time to check in on the feelings of everyone, because it is normally in this stage of drawing practical insights for the group that fears, confusion, and discomfort can arise.)
- What things excite you? What causes you concern or even anxiety?
- Is the group ready to tackle these strategic questions? Which ones? How?
- Which strategic questions do you think should receive top priority for the group, meaning starting next week, and into the next three years? Which can be relegated to the bottom of the priority list?

"Should the growing influence of China in international politics, norm-making, aid and culture be a common theme for consideration in our strategy, regardless of what scenario materializes in the future?"

Activity #12 - Our Preferred Future

🗓 **Duration:**	👥 **Breakout Group Size:**	⚒ **Materials:**
1 to 3 hours	This is a plenary activity, so there will be no breakout groups	White board marker for the facilitator (perhaps in different colors to help organize strands of thought), a white board to draw on

> *Foresight is not just about looking at what futures can happen to us, but more importantly, what future we want to make happen.*

Explanation and examples

Foresight is not just about looking at what futures can happen to us, but more importantly, what future we want to make happen. While the four types of futures in Activity #11 indicate the probable futures that may happen, this activity allows the organization or group to articulate what future it wants to bring about. This is where the normative act of forecasting happens, with the plenary coming together to envision the future they desire, called the "preferred future", and on which the subsequent practical actions for the group will be based.

Pinterest

Steps

1 Ask the plenary to review the different scenarios or forecasts they generated in the past activities. Ask them which scenario or combination of elements from various scenarios they want to make happen as a group, given the group's mission.

2 Then ask them to come around a big white board or wall and articulate the details of that preferred future using a story. The story should have a catchy title, and should contain details that make the story sound like "a day in the life of" account. They can use these as guide questions:

- Who is the protagonist in the story?
- What year and where is it set?
- How does she and the people around her live their daily lives?
- What main problems do they encounter, and what problems have been solved from the past?
- What social activities occupy them?
- What major systems issues do they encounter? What are their day-to-day concerns and how do they manifest in their day?
- How is their environment?
- What are the delightful things in her days?
- What role does your organization play, whether directly or indirectly, in this person's life?

Have them answer these questions in the form of a narrative, giving details such as the name of the protagonist, her age, how she lives, how her home looks like and how her surroundings feel. The aim is for the story to transport the reader and make the reader feel what it is like to live in that future. In the next page you'll see an example.

Miracle baby, citizen justice and permanent floods: Is this the good life?

In 2030, Maria steps out of her house, wearing her 10-inch heels so she can wade through the floods that have become part of her daily life since Typhoon Meri swept through her province last month. She was heading to the city hall, to register the birth of her baby, who was born five months premature but who survived, thanks to the latest technology introduced by E.Musk BioTech, the biggest multinational in the world.

At the City Hall, she identifies herself by scanning her eyes at the entrance, where the police officer, a 75-year old former retiree (and a beneficiary of the Go-Back-To-Work program for retired persons without pension), agreed to let her in.

As she went through the line, she could hear the loud protests by young girls demanding that they be given a free hour of social media time at school, claiming that it is now the only way to get factual news directly from their friends--the only source of information they trust, after all news media have either closed down or been bought by the government. While waiting, Maria decides to pop by the court room next door, to check the schedule for her jury duty in an online election rigging case. This will be her fifth jury duty in two years. Her husband has had seven in the last year alone.

3 Encourage the plenary to also come up with drawings and visual depictions of the story. If the group is up for it, they may even decide to act the story out in a role play.

4 After the preferred future is laid out, engage everyone in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- Did this choice of preferred future, or some aspects of it, surprise you? Why or why not?
- Is this preferred future the same as the group's current official vision (as in the Mission stated in the website, if you have one)?
- What does this preferred future mean for the group's vision?
- What changes in the structure, process, programmatic priorities, audience, communication strategy, staffing, etc. will have to be considered to bring this vision to life?

4. MAKE PLANS AND ACT

T his last stage is the part that comes closest to the traditional strategic planning process. Given what your group has gleaned are possible futures and the "preferred" future, as well some key practical insights based on these futures, this is the stage to identify and get concrete about actions. What revisions to your current strategic plan (if you have one) should be made? What should be further reinforced? Are there certain concrete and more granular-level initiatives that the group or organization should consider in the short- and medium-term? In short, how do the insights from probable futures and the organization's preferred future translate into concrete steps moving forward?

Activity #13: What Would X do?

(Adapted from the Luma Institute's *Innovating for People: Human-Centered Design Planning Cards*)

🗓 **Duration:**	👥 **Breakout Group Size:**	🛠 **Materials:**
45 minutes to 1 hour	Ideally no more than 5 persons	A few thick markers, factsheets or news item/video about the actors to be considered (see below for explanation)

Explanation and examples

In the previous stage of drawing out strategic insights, the group gained preliminary ideas on what they think they should do to meet and change the future. However, despite how novel the future scenarios and even the insights they came up with were, it is possible they might just revert to their usual way of doing things now that they are being asked to think about concrete actions.

In this activity, they will be asked to reexamine their assumptions and dig deeper into their motivations for their choice of direction, by putting themselves in the shoes of other groups or organizations—some of which they might admire, while others they may consider as competitors or even detractors.

The goal of this activity is to approach problem-solving using the lens of other actors who come from a very different discipline but are effective in their own field (even if one may disagree with their methods or end goals). The groups will select the actor or the facilitator can randomly assign one to them. They will then fully immerse themselves in that actor's world—their culture, practices, and procedures—using a factsheet about that other actor that the facilitator will provide. Alternatively, if there is no time or research capability to write factsheets about these other actors, the facilitator can find an article or news item about these actors that will be shared to the breakout groups.

In coming up with actors to look at, you may want to consider the following types: 1) the group's number one competitor, ; 2) the group's biggest detractor; 3) an influential actor in the public opinion ecosystem that the group inhabits; 4) a funding entity that supports or could potentially be attracted to support the group; 5) the head of government where the group operates or whose policies have the most impact on the group's mission; 6) a top technology company whose innovations affect a lot of people; 7) a pop culture actor; and, 8) a religious group that has mass following.

Will your strategy change if you experienced the world as someone else?

Steps

1 Based on the discussions in Activity #11, as a plenary select the top strategic question for the group that requires concrete actions as a response. Some sample questions are:

- "How do we revise our approach to communications for the next five years given our desire to be closer to grassroots communities?"
- "How do we target this new audience that we have long avoided?"
- "How do we broaden our following among rural farmworkers in the South of the country?"
- "How do we become more tech-savvy in our constituency-building efforts?"

2 Whether by yourself or with the help of colleagues, identify the different actors who will represent 'X' in this activity. Then build a one to three-page page factsheet on each actor, trying to include details such as its governance and operational structure, values, mission, staffing, geographical presence, communications tactics, unique skills and fields of expertise, constituency, accountability policies, well-known works, recognitions, and internal culture. The idea is to give as much information as possible to the groups to allow them to imagine how it is to be that actor.

If you do not have the time or research support to put together a factsheet about each actor, simply find a news item, feature article or video that talks about the actor and print or show it to each breakout group.

3 Assign each breakout group or ask them to select one of the actors.

4 Give them the factsheet for the actor they have chosen or been given, and give them 10 minutes to read through it.

5 For the next 20 minutes, each breakout group should discuss their answer to the question chosen in Step 1 of this activity, but this time approaching it not as themselves but as the actor they have chosen or been assigned. Encourage the groups to really try their best to think and feel like actor X, and be as creative and detailed in their plan of action as possible.

They can outline their set of actions in the form of an action plan, a timeline of activities, a short paragraph describing a series of steps or an overall strategy. Ask them to write down their plan of action on their white boards.

6 Ask each group to share their action points to the plenary.

7 Engage everyone in a plenary discussion using the following **debrief questions:**

- How did putting yourself in the shoes of another actor make you feel about the work that you do as an individual in this group/organization?
- What unique skills or tactics of the actor assigned to you did you find most effective (even if you do not find it morally admirable or something you would adopt yourself)? How does that compare with the skills of your group/organization?
- If you were to adopt those skills or tactics to the group's work, what changes in your current strategy do you imagine would need to be done and in what time frame?
- What aspects or tactics of the actor assigned to you or that you heard from the others that you are sure you do not want to replicate in the group/organization? Why?

Activity #14 - Round Robin

(Adapted from the Luma Institute's *Innovating for People: Human-Centered Design Planning Cards)*

📅 **Duration:**
45 minutes
to 1 hour

👥 **Breakout Group Size:**
Ideally no more than
5 persons

🛠️ **Materials:**
One clean sheet of paper (A4 or
something similar) per person, 1
ballpen per person
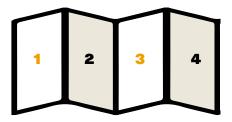
Explanation and examples

Most of the activities for brainstorming on concrete ideas will be in group-level discussions. While this is encouraged for ensuring cross-pollination of ideas within each breakout group, effective production of ideas should allow for individual thinking first so as to break groupthink. This is what this Round Robin exercise will try to accomplish, while generating helpful feedback quickly from other members of each breakout group.

> *Effective production of ideas should allow for individual thinking first so as to break groupthink.*

Steps

1. Either decided by plenary discussion or solely by the facilitator based on the past discussions of the group, come up with one "challenge question" that will be answered for this activity. Examples of challenge questions are:

- What new activity should our group/organization undertake in the next three years to be able to engage the new audience of _____ as part of the amplification of our constituency?
- What traditional events should we scrap starting this year and what can we replace them with to be able to reach our preferred future?
- Who should we be reaching out to as a new target audience for our community mobilization work in the next five years?

2. Once you have identified the challenge question, ask everyone to sit in a circle with their breakout group. Tell them to clear their tables and leave only one pen and one sheet of paper per person. Also, it is important to tell them that *during this entire exercise*, *there will be no talking or group discussion*, and that during this activity, everyone will move as one—where no one can move on to the next stage unless everyone else is finished with the previous stage. So they need to keep up and not hold the group back!

3 Then each individual should fold this blank piece of paper into four equal, vertical columns, as in this image:

4 Give them these instructions, *one at a time, waiting until everyone is finished before giving the next instruction:*

A. Write in the leftmost column of your sheet of paper, and with as much detail as you can, your proposed concrete response to the challenge question. This should be concrete enough to go to the level of an activity, event, or initiative (e.g. launch a new innovation team within our strategy unit, hold multi-day hackathons in three provinces we have not worked in), and not at the level of broad strategy or general programmatic direction (e.g. engage new partners, increase public participation in our program design, raise funds). You have three minutes to come up with your idea.
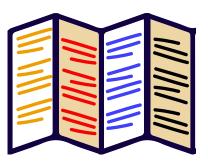

B. Once you are done writing your idea, hand your paper to the person to your right. (Everyone should be doing this at the same time.)
C. On the piece of paper you received, in the second column from the left: write why this idea will *fail* (no matter how great the idea is, it is bound to have a weakness). You have three minutes for this.

D. (Then once everyone is done) Pass the sheet of paper you are holding to the person to your right.

E. Read the paper that you received. In the third column of that sheet, write how, given the criticisms and the weaknesses pointed out in the second column by the person before you, you will *save* the idea. You have three minutes for this.

SAVE THE IDEA!

F. Then once everyone is done, pass the paper to your right.

G. Read the paper that you received. In the final column, write something that was *fresh, exciting or cool,* and thus worth holding on to, from all the things written in the prior columns. If you find nothing that is fresh, exciting or cool, then do not write anything (and that could be the most important insight you can give!).

H. Return the paper to the original owner. Upon receiving your sheet of paper, read what others wrote about your idea.

I. Now, each person will share what happened to their paper to the rest of their breakout group, with one minute allotted per person. This is the moment of harvesting all the individual ideas and the feedback on those ideas for the group's benefit.

A group of activists and creatives from Eurasia working with a Kyrgyz human rights NGO

5 Ask each breakout group to share in plenary the two most exciting ideas they harvested from their breakout group's Round Robin.

6 Engage everyone in a plenary discussion using these **debrief questions**:

■ Which idea that you heard from the other groups:
- *is fresh?*
- *is bold?*
- *is innovative?*
- *stirs excitement in you?*
- *is not so new for the group?*
- *is new territory for the group?*
- *is most expensive to implement?*
- *is cheapest to implement?*
- *already has in-house capabilities to implement?*

■ What top five ideas should be seriously considered by the group for implementation in the next three years? Why? (As facilitator, you can write these priorities down on the white board and even ask them to vote on them, emphasizing of course that this is by no means a binding vote but simply a means to get the "pulse of the people".)

Activity #15 - Organizational Priorities for the Future

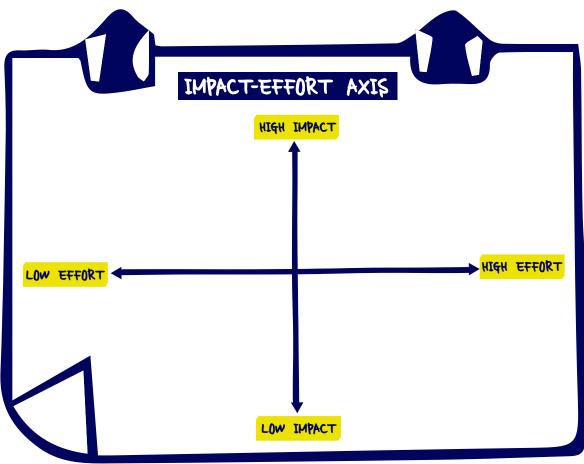(Adapted from the Institute for the Future's Foresight Toolkit)

📅 **Duration:**	👥 **Breakout Group Size:**	🛠 **Materials:**
3 to 5 hours	This is a plenary session, so there will be no breakout groups.	A marker per individual, post-its, a big white board where the axis below is pre-drawn, different colors of white board markers

Explanation and examples

This is the moment when the organization comes together in plenary to look at what actions it could undertake to arrive at its preferred future, and prioritize them based on their potential impact vis-a-vis the needed investment in time, partnership demands, resources, and people. The concrete ideas generated from the Round Robin exercise in Activity #14 can also inspire or directly be transferred to this activity.

IMPACT-EFFORT AXIS

HIGH IMPACT

LOW EFFORT ← → HIGH EFFORT

LOW IMPACT

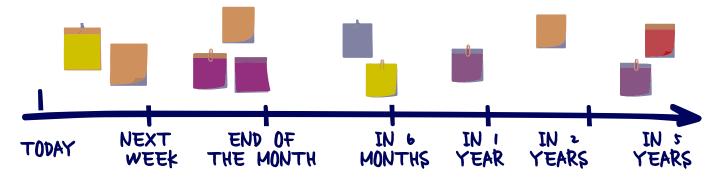Adapted from the Institute for the Future's Foresight Toolkit

Steps

1 In their breakout groups, ask everyone to come up with ideas of concrete actions that the group can do to get to the preferred future identified in Activity #12. These ideas can be in the form of projects, broader initiatives, campaigns, internal structural changes, fundraising events, restrategizing, hiring of certain personnel, partnering with a new group or network, research or baseline studies to test a policy idea—the list goes on! They should write one idea per post-it, and try to come up with as many ideas as possible.

2 The breakout groups will then curate the ideas and share to the plenary their top three to five ideas.

3 After reading them out, the breakout group will be asked by the facilitator to go to the plenary white board and plot these top priority post-its on the impact-effort axis below, deciding where each idea lies depending on how much potential impact and effort they may have or entail.

4 As they do this, others in the plenary may offer contrasting ideas on the timing or impact of said activity and thus their placement in the axis. The divergence in view should be hashed out in plenary and as a facilitator, you should use this to further surface opinions of members on other important issues such as impressions of internal readiness, feasibility, desirability of the action, congruence of the activity with the current strategy, how much reworking or even overhaul of the strategy will need to be done to enable the said activity, and so on.

5 After all the groups have read out and plotted their post-its on the plenary white board, the facilitator will read out to the plenary the summary of the ideas (including some clustered or similar ideas, and the most repeated or outlier ones).

6 Go through each post-it on the axis, and ask the plenary for ideas on the first concrete step that needs to be done, as well as the time frame for that: Is it in the next two weeks? Next month? Next three to six months? Next year? Afterwards, ask who they think should be involved. Write that first step, the timing, and persons/sections involved on another post-it that you will attach to the relevant "action" post-it.

7 After all of this is done, move the sets of post-its and plot them on a timeline. The plenary can collectively decide what dates or time indication to write on the timeline.

TODAY   NEXT WEEK   END OF THE MONTH   IN 6 MONTHS   IN 1 YEAR   IN 2 YEARS   IN 5 YEARS

8 Now the group has a detailed, concrete action plan to take with them. Engage them in a plenary discussion using the following debrief questions:

- How are you feeling about this timeline right now?
- How do you imagine the organization/group looking like once most of these ideas are implemented? Describe it vividly, as if you are inside that group or organization, five years from now. How does it feel being in there? What do you see around you?
- As the group embarks on trying out some of these ideas, what words of wisdom do you want the group to be reminded of all the time, especially when the going gets tougher than usual?

9 As they go off with a sense of accomplishment, excitement, uncertainty or hope (or all of the above), remember to leave them feeling inspired and confident that they are capable of getting to their preferred future!
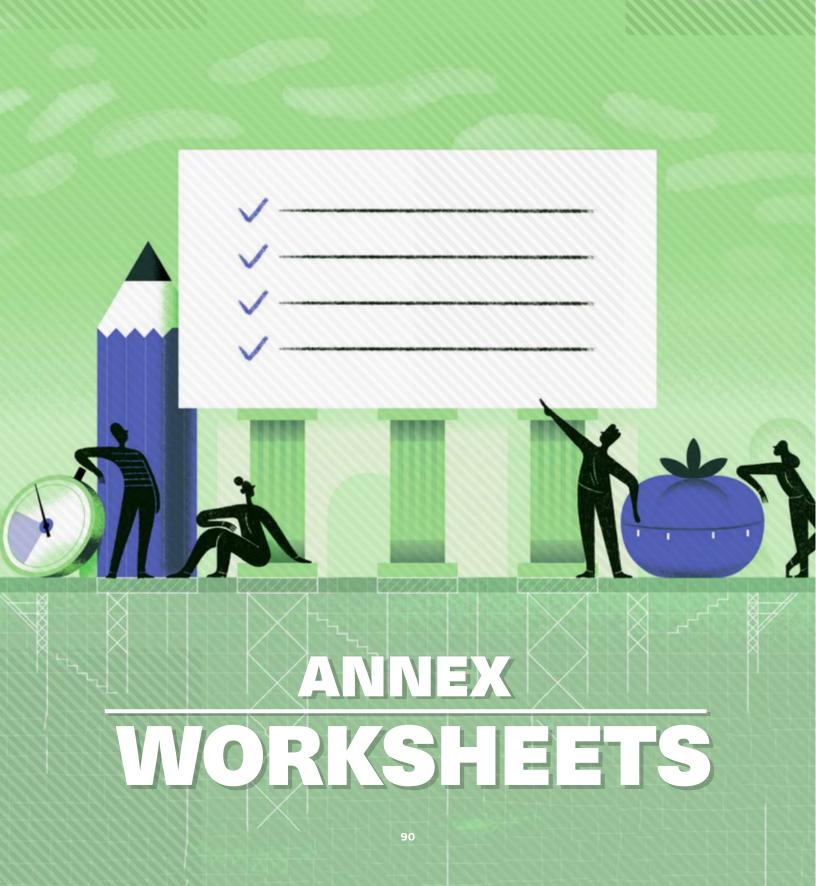
SUGGESTED READINGS

Sugested readings

1 Krizna Gomez, *"Of Crystal Balls, Pandemics and Resilience: Why Foresight Should be in the DNA of the Social Change Field"*

2 For a detailed guide on other foresight activities that you can explore, see this *Strategic Foresight Toolkit* by Save the Children and the School of International Futures.

3 Marina Gorbis, *"The Future is the Way of Life"*

4 Alvin Toffler, *"The Future as a Way of Life"*

5 Marina Gorbis, *"Five Principles for Thinking like a Futurist"*

6 James Dator, *"Alternative Futures at the Manoa School"*

7 Richard Lum, *"Four Steps to the Future"*

8 Maree Conway, *Foresight-infused Strategy: A How-To Guide for Using Foresight in Practice*

9 Anna Roumiantseva, *"The Fourth Way: Design Thinking Meets Futures Thinking"*

10 Andy Hines and Peter Bishop, *Thinking about the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight*

11 For an example of a foresight process, see this project on the *future of health.*

12 See *'Civic Space 2040'*, a futurist initiative by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law that explores future trends that will impact the space for doing civil society work.

ANNEX
WORKSHEETS

TREND SPOTTING

SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	POLITICAL
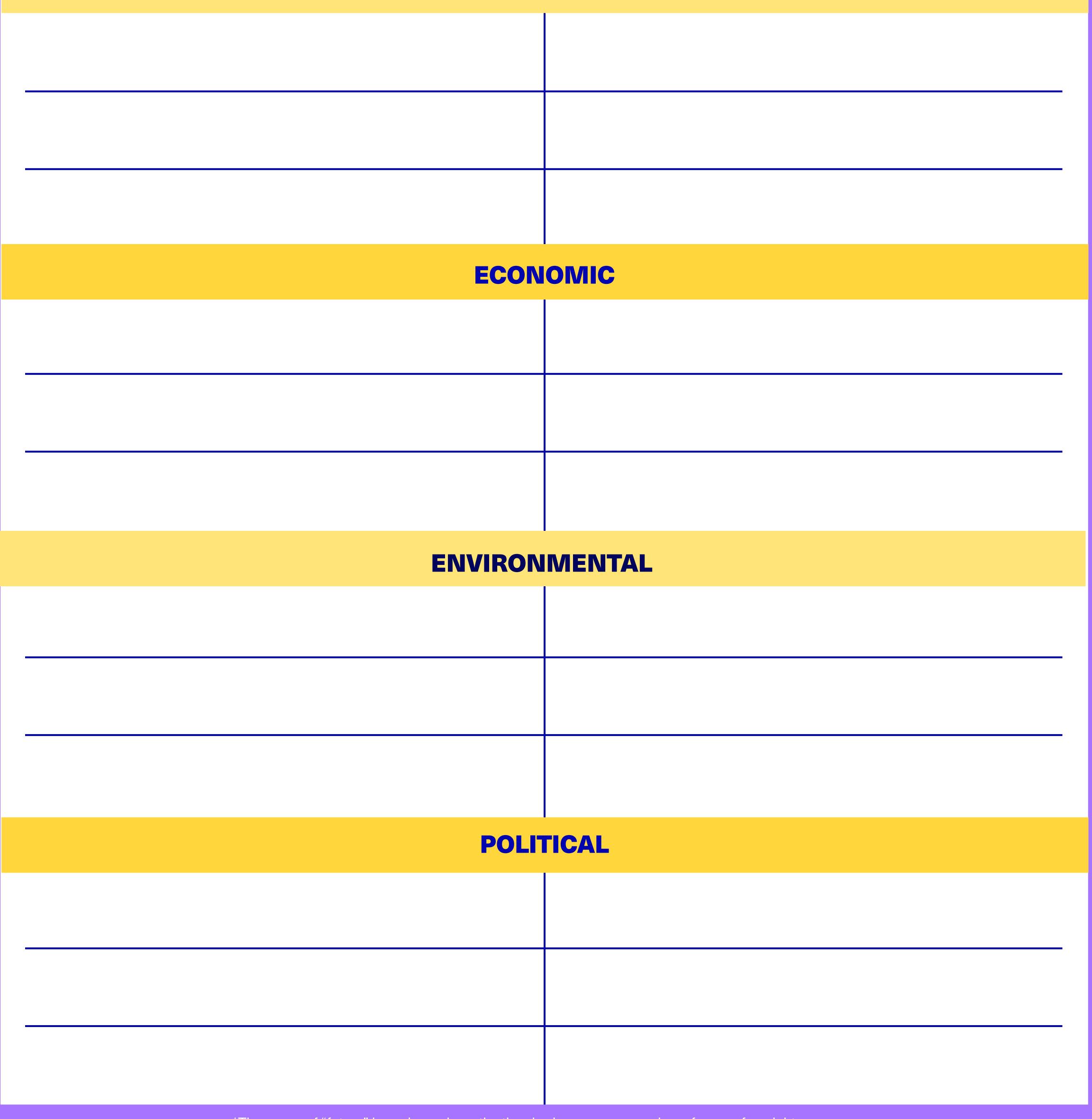
DEEP DRIVERS OF CHANGE

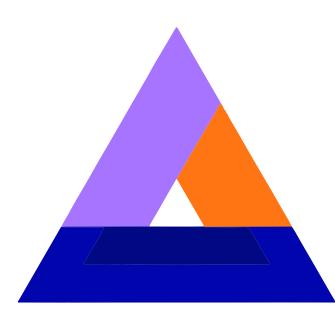| DEEP DRIVER OF CHANGE	EXPECTED IMPACT ON THE FUTURE*
SOCIAL	
TECHNOLOGICAL	
ECONOMIC	
ENVIRONMENTAL	
POLITICAL	

*The scope of "future" here depends on the time horizon your group chose for your foresight process.

ASSIGNMENT ON WEAK SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Adapted from the Foresight Toolkit of the Institute for the Future. www.iftf.org

Signals of Change

Signals of Change are concrete, specific events, stories, innovations, or news that are at the peripheries/sidelines, which make the observer get a sensation that a signal, if scaled/mainstreamed, can take us in an entirely different direction in the future. Learning how to identify signals of change helps build the muscle of being able to see the precursors of significant change well before they become obvious.

Weak Signals of Change

Being able to appreciate what is both in the mainstream and in the fringes is the hallmark of an organization that is ahead of the curve, being able to stay one step ahead of everyone else because they have anticipated change before it even becomes anything, or being able to deliberately scale a signal because it will help deliver the future that they want.

> Collect 2-3 "signals of change" related to the future of _____ (the topic you decided to focus on as a group).

? How to identify a good signal

According to the Institute for the Future, weak signals of change as used in foresight need to meet certain criteria:
- **SPECIFIC** - a product, anecdote, event, business startup or data point
- **CURRENT** - within the last 18 months or so
- **COMPELLING** - gives you a quick sense of awe, fear, or constructive confusion.

They should be events or developments that are **NOT yet mainstream.** They are **in the fringes or peripheries**, but if they scale or become mainstream, their impact can change reality in such a fundamental manner. So you cannot cite as a signal something that is already obvious, common or already a trend. Scan for what is often unseen

What signals are *not*

Signals are not trends.

- "Coming to power of populist leaders" or "wave of authoritarianism" are not signals. They are trends, which are a combination of many specific events. "Independent candidates elected in otherwise party-dominated country X", which is a specific event, is a signal.

- "Crushing of media freedom" is not a signal. It's a trend.

- "'Magic' Modi uses hologram to address dozens of rallies at once" (a specific event, which isn't part of a known trend) is.

Signals are not forecasts.

- Signals have to actually exist in the world today. They cannot be projections of possibilities in the future.

ASSIGNMENT ON WEAK SIGNALS OF CHANGE

Adapted from the Foresight Toolkit of the Institute for the Future. www.iftf.org

Assignment

1 Write a title of your weak signal of change that captures its essence and draws interest to it.

2 Describe what the weak signal of change is using a couple of lines.

3 State why this weak signal of change is deserving of attention: What implications can it have if it becomes more commonplace? Why is it important to pay attention to it now?

4 Cite sources as applicable.

Example on the future of human rights

TITLE: Right-wing Hungarian media buys up media outlets outside of Hungary

WHAT:

Hungarians with links to the country's pro-government media have embarked on a mass buy-up of news outlets in Macedonia, part of what appears to be a concerted push into the Balkans by media companies loyal to right-wing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

WHY IT DESERVES ATTENTION:

Hungarians with links to the country's pro-government media have embarked on a mass buy-up of news outlets in Macedonia, part of what appears to be a concerted push into the Balkans by media companies loyal to right-wing Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.
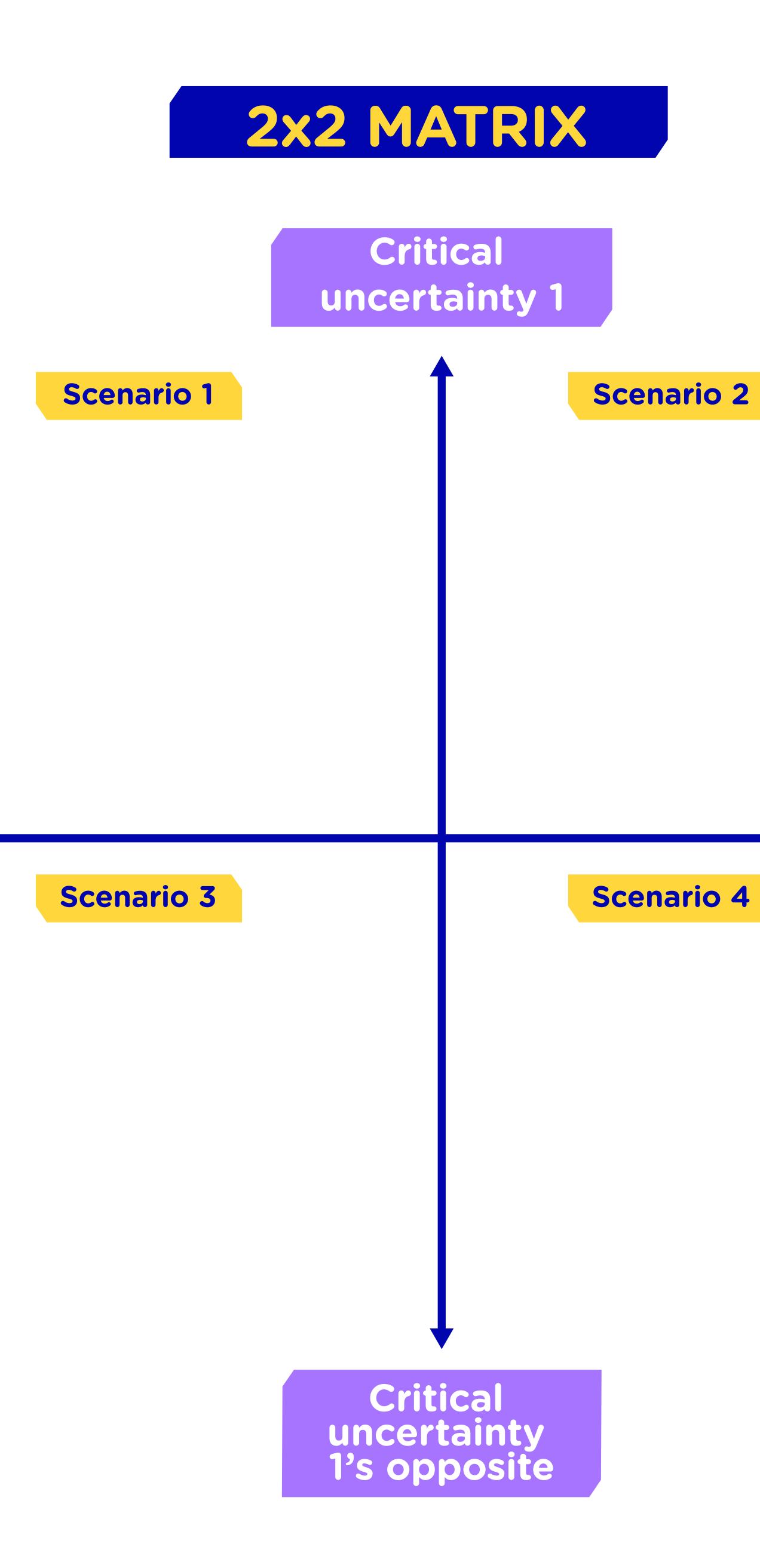
SOURCE:

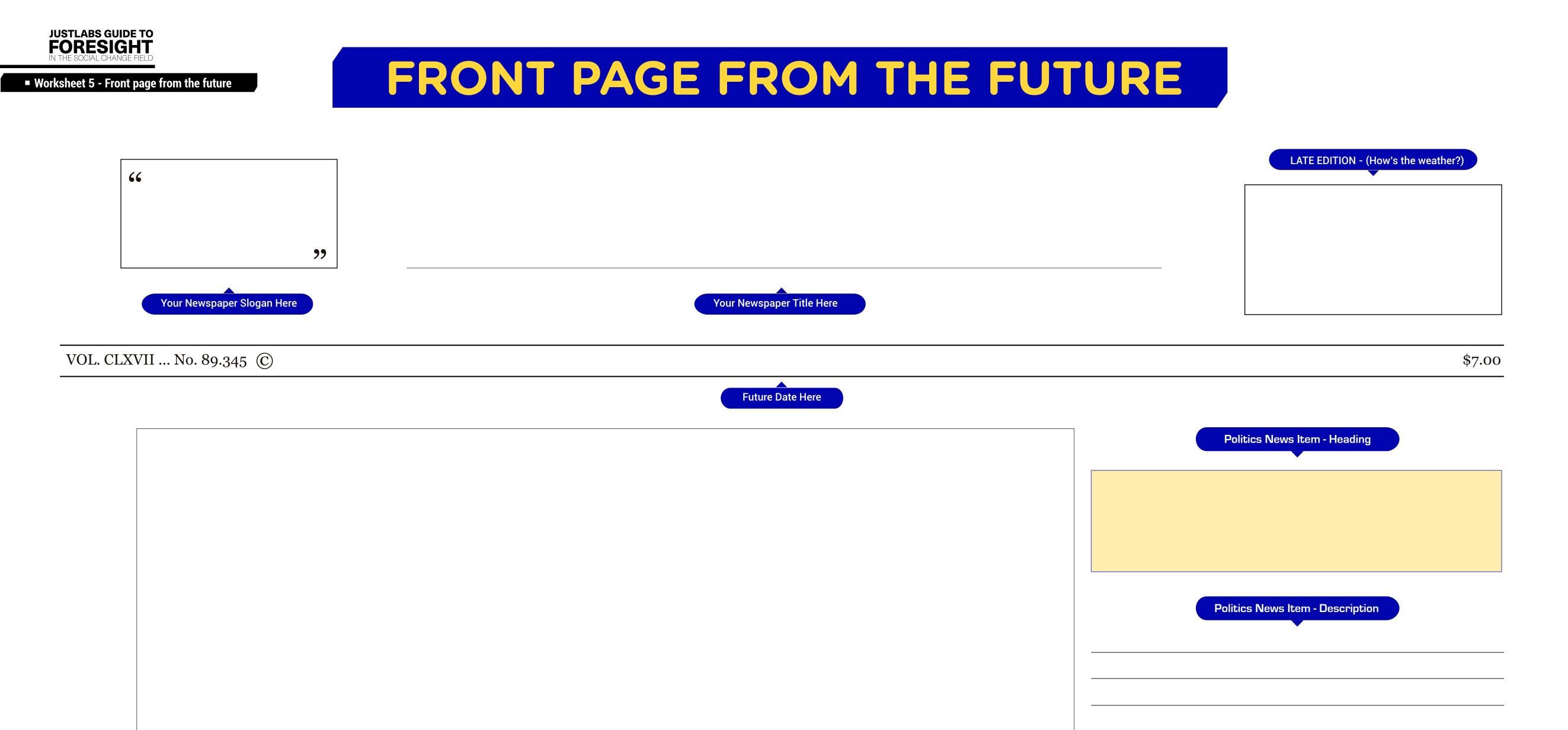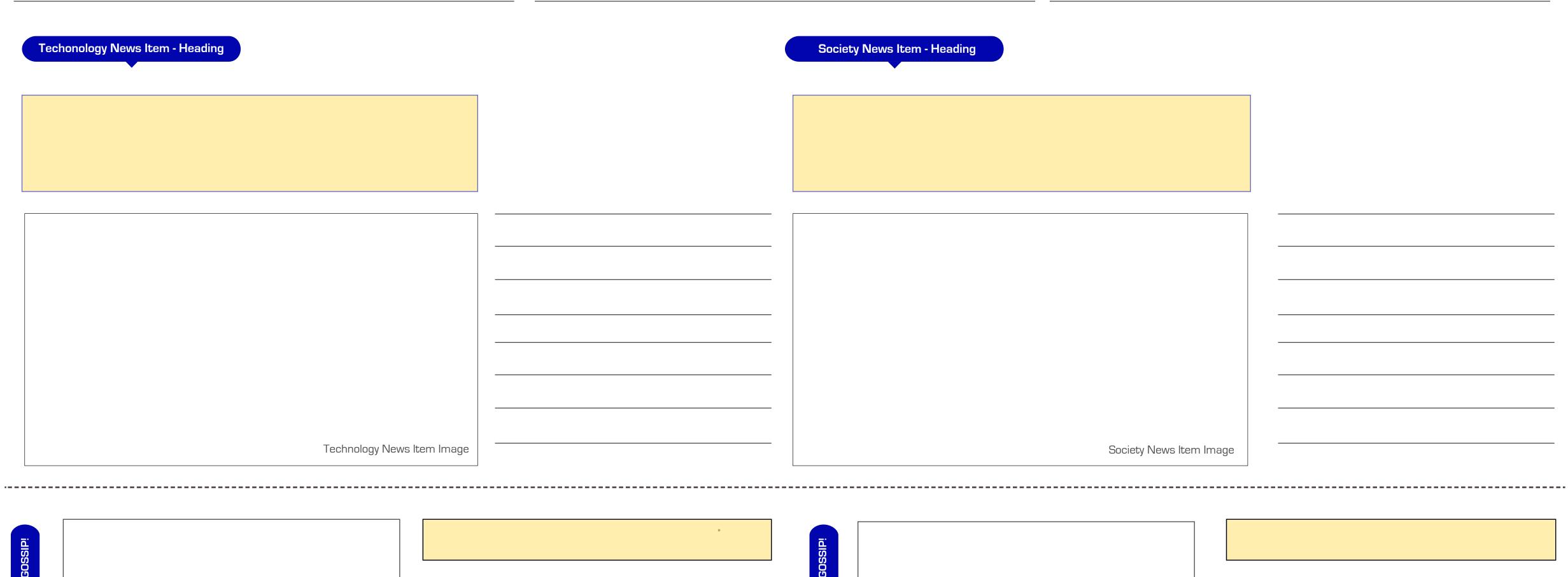https://www.occrp.org/en/spooksandspin/right-wing-hungarian-media-moves-into-the-balkans

2x2 MATRIX

Critical uncertainty 1

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Critical uncertainty 2

Critical uncertainty 2's opposite

Scenario 3

Scenario 4

Critical uncertainty 1's opposite

FRONT PAGE FROM THE FUTURE

" "

Your Newspaper Slogan Here

Your Newspaper Title Here

LATE EDITION - (How's the weather?)

VOL. CLXVII ... No. 89.345 © $7.00

Future Date Here

Politics News Item Image

Politics News Item - Heading

Politics News Item - Description
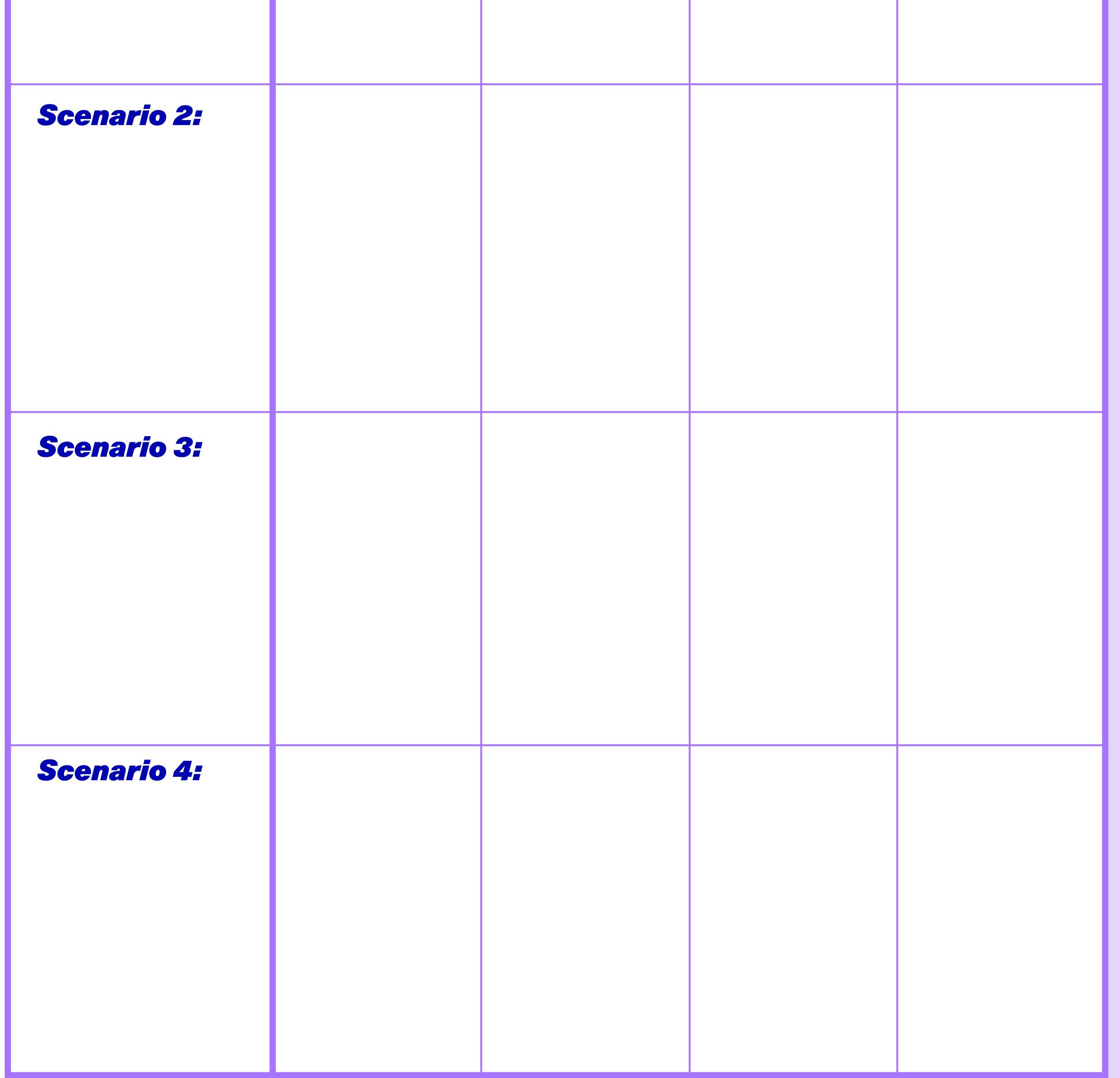
World News Item - Heading

World News Item Image

Economy News Item - Heading

Economy News Item Image

Culture News Item - Heading

Culture News Item Image

Techonology News Item - Heading

Technology News Item Image

Society News Item - Heading

Society News Item Image

BREAKING NEWS!! GOSSIP!

Breaking News Item Image

BREAKING NEWS!! GOSSIP!

Breaking News Item Image

CROSS-IMPACT MATRIX

SCENARIOS	AREAS OF INTEREST			
	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Scenario 1:				
Scenario 2:				
Scenario 3:				
Scenario 4:				

DIFFERENT FUTURES, COMMON QUESTIONS

	COMMON THEMES	RESULTING STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

■ SCENARIO 1

■ SCENARIO 2

SCENARIO 3

■ SCENARIO 4