

FUTURES FREQUENCY

Workshop facilitator's handbook

A workshop method for building
alternative futures

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Futures Frequency

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– A workshop method for
building alternative futures

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building alternative futures:

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Foreword

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with the practical tools to successfully plan and facilitate a Futures Frequency workshop.

Futures Frequency is a three-hour workshop that does not require previous experience of foresight thinking. The workshop can be used with groups of different sizes. Futures Frequency gets participants tuned into thinking about a future that is worth imagining and striving for. The method inspires people to think about the future from new perspectives and challenges them to identify ways to act towards a preferred future.

The method was developed at Sitra. A developer team of specialists in various fields outside the Sitra organisation provided valuable feedback and comments to support the development efforts along with the many participants of pilot workshops. The method is intended to be used and applied by anyone. More information on the thinking behind this method is provided in the publication *Vaikuta tulevaisuuteen* (“Influence the Future”), which is available in Finnish on the Sitra website.

Futures Frequency can be adapted to the needs of various kinds of groups. You can add depth to the method by including assessments of megatrends or weak signals, for example, or you can use other methods in the Futuremaker’s toolbox to expand on your group’s activities.

We hope that this handbook will be useful for everyone who wants to invite their colleagues, bosses, students, active members of an organisation – or any group – to get tuned into the Futures Frequency and start working towards a better tomorrow.

Imagining a better future is perhaps more important right now than it has ever been in human history. Thank you for your interest in engaging people to talk about the future.

Sincerely,

Jenna, Liisa, Mikko & Hannu-Pekka

Futures Frequency team

1. Background information on the Futures Frequency method

How it began

We have a saying at Sitra: “The future does not happen; it is made”. Our future is shaped by the decisions, choices and actions of today. What we don’t do is also important. More and more people and organisations are interested in future-oriented thinking, which helps us broaden our perspective beyond the present moment. But how can we create a stronger link between future-oriented thinking and action? What would be an easy way to develop these future-related skills?

Guided by these questions, we began to develop a method that would help broaden the dialogue about the future – by inspiring more people to think about different futures – and strengthen people’s agency and faith in the future. The starting point for our efforts was that we can only realise a future that we can imagine. However, imagining and realising the future is not enough. Before that, we need the courage to challenge that which already is: both the present time and our expectations of what’s to come.

In the preparatory stages of the project, we spent a lot of time thinking about the societal significance of faith in the future. International surveys indicate that people’s faith in the future is being put to the test, especially in the Western world. We live in turbulent times and both the future and the present feel more uncertain and nebulous than before. The major changes of our time are familiar to everyone: climate change, biodiversity loss and challenges associated with democracy. It’s no wonder that many people feel like their faith in the future is being tested! At the same time, countless people and organisations are working tirelessly to solve the challenges we face. In a time like this, building hopeful scenarios

about the future takes a lot more work than focusing on threats and worst-case scenarios.

The development of the Futures Frequency method was not a straightforward process from point A to point B. We developed several alternative versions of the method during 2020 and addressed questions regarding the nature of change-making and future-oriented thinking. Nevertheless, our collective efforts began to highlight certain key elements on which Futures Frequency is built:

- 1) Challenge preconceptions about the future
- 2) Imagine alternative futures and discuss them with others
- 3) Take action and influence the future

The development work was inspired by lessons from future studies and related methods, speculative design, transition design, the wisdom of various expert groups and, above all, feedback and ideas from several test groups, for which we are incredibly grateful. More information on the thinking behind the Futures Frequency method is provided in Sitra’s Finnish-language publications *Usko tulevaisuuteen* (“Faith in the future”) and *Vaikuta tulevaisuuteen* (“Influence the future”).

The aim of the method

The purpose of the Futures Frequency method is to increase participants’ ability to imagine different futures and act towards the realisation of a preferred future. The underlying aim is to popularise future-oriented thinking skills and strengthen people’s agency and faith in the future.

Futures Frequency serves as an introduction to future-oriented thinking and helps participants to perceive positive futures that

they want to work towards in practice. The aim is not to reach a unanimous view about what the future should look like. Rather, the aim is to encourage participants to think about various alternative and preferred futures and identify steps towards making them happen. The method helps build cohesion by facilitating dialogue between participants about the future.

Futures Frequency is suitable for groups in which participants do not know each other and represent different backgrounds. In mixed groups consisting of participants representing various backgrounds and organisations, the role of Futures Frequency is more focused on education and stimulating thought.

Futures Frequency is equally well suited for use by existing teams or employees representing the same organisation. In such contexts, Futures Frequency can be used as a tool for vision and strategy development, at the start of a project to establish a shared view of the current situation or for other purposes.

The underlying philosophy of Futures Frequency

- dialogue orientation and collective learning
- strengthening the agency of participants
- enabling self-driven learning and organisation
- ease of use
- spreadability (an open method available to anyone who wishes to use it)

Futures Frequency serves as an introduction to future-oriented thinking and helps participants to perceive positive futures that they want to work towards in practice.

After Futures Frequency, participants will have:

- built an understanding of how to engage in future-oriented thinking
- challenged their conceptions about the future and imagined preferred futures
- established a clearer picture of what kind of future they want to champion and how

A Futures Frequency workshop will have been successful if the participants' interest in future-oriented thinking has increased and they have identified ways to contribute to a better tomorrow.

Why and for whom?

Futures Frequency is a scripted and scheduled workshop method, but it can be applied and adapted according to the needs of each group. The materials can be used and applied by anyone. The method was developed particularly for groups that do not have previous experience of future-oriented thinking and foresight. With this in mind, special attention was paid so that the lecture sections are not too much of “a dive into the deep end” and to ensure that the workshop facilitator and participants do not require experience in implementing broad change processes in society.

Futures Frequency was developed for adults – especially those who work in specialist and development roles – but it also suits people in other roles and, in general, people who are interested in the future. However, if you are looking for a method that suits groups such as children, we have included examples of methods that are better suited to them at the end of the handbook. If your needs are related to the development of concrete solutions or experiments, Futures Frequency is not the best alternative in its basic format, although it can serve as a future-oriented introduction to the creation of more concrete plans.

Futures Frequency is best suited

- as a first step when the participants wish to familiarise themselves with future-oriented thinking and foresight
- as a way to learn more about how colleagues think and to build a stronger sense of community
- as part of an organisation's vision-building and strategy development
- as part of various types of training and education programmes
- as a tool to perceive new directions and alternatives
- as a tool to stimulate creativity and faith in the future.

Number of participants

The ideal group size is 8–20 participants. As small group discussions, group assignments and the sharing of insights are at the core of the Futures Frequency method, the size of the group affects the amount of time available. Groups of more than 20 participants are also possible, but in such cases, it is important to pay special attention to the workshop's scheduling and the size of the small groups. During the workshop, the group is divided into smaller groups for assignments and discussion. We do not recommend having more than five members in these small groups, as it may be difficult for everyone to be heard. The follow-up discussions after the assignments also take more time with larger groups, which may make it difficult to keep to the three-hour time frame planned for the workshop. Of course, the discussions between the entire group can be shortened, but that will affect the experience of the participants.

Using the method

Futures Frequency is designed to have an initial introduction followed by three parts (challenge, imagine and take action) along with introductory parts, individual assignments and small group assignments. However, there are circumstances in which following the exact steps outlined in this hand-

book is not the most appropriate course of action. For example, organising a three-hour workshop is not always possible, and sometimes alternative group assignments may be more useful or different examples are better suited to the circumstances. With this in mind, the method can be used and adapted according to the needs of the group and the context.

Examples of adapting the Futures Frequency method

- Futures Frequency can be divided into multiple sessions; for example, two workshops of 1.5 hours
- You can also incorporate different examples and stories into the facilitator's spoken parts depending on your group's context
- In the part that deals with challenging assumptions (part 1), you can incorporate assumptions about the future that suit the context of your group (photos, audio stories, news, etc.)
- In the part that deals with imagining (part 2), you can frame the assignments around a given theme
- In the part that deals with action (part 3), you can also adapt the assignment to the group's context – for example, by having the group come up with ideas on actions that their organisation or community could take.

If you create your own version of Futures Frequency, remember to cite the original version. Of course, using the assignments and materials presented in this handbook separately is also allowed, but please do not call your workshop Futures Frequency in that case. Other individual tools and methods are provided in the Futuremaker's toolbox on Sitra's website.

So where do we draw the line as far as adapting the Futures Frequency method? At the core of the method is linking future-oriented thinking with action in the present. With this in mind, Futures Frequency is not

Futures Frequency if it does not have the following three successive parts: 1) challenge, 2) imagine, 3) action. In the challenge part, the group needs to discuss some preconceptions about the future, in the imagine part they need to create some kind of vision, and in the action part, they need to link that vision to acting in the present.

Futures Frequency on a specific theme

One way to adapt the method is to choose a specific theme for your Futures Frequency workshop (for example, democracy, technology, equality, biodiversity). In that case, the idea would be to challenge assumptions about the future, imagine preferred futures and come up with ideas on actions around the selected theme. The facilitator's introductions to each part of the workshop can be related to the selected theme and the assignments need to be framed around the theme. In chapter 3, in the more detailed instructions for the Futures Frequency method, we highlight the parts where the selected theme should be taken into account.

Using this handbook

This handbook is structured sequentially. It starts with preparations, then covers the actual facilitating of a Futures Frequency workshop and finally provides tips on how to delve deeper into the topics covered. In chapter 3, you will find detailed instructions for facilitating a Futures Frequency workshop, including scripts for the facilitator's spoken parts. The scripts are illustrative. You can apply and adapt them to your preferences and your workshop. To support the workshop, we have prepared a PowerPoint presentation with pictures, texts and written

instructions for the assignments. You can download the presentation from www.futuresfrequency.fi. This handbook includes references to the numbered slides in the PowerPoint presentation.

Using the website

You can also run a workshop with the help of the Futures Frequency website at www.futuresfrequency.fi. The website includes short video lectures of all of the introductory parts of the workshop. The structure of the website reflects the different parts of the workshop (introduction, challenge, imagine, take action). If you organise your workshop online, you and your group can follow the instructions on the website. The videos can also be used in face-to-face workshops. Using the videos gives you the option of focusing solely on facilitating the group and making sure the workshop moves ahead on schedule. If you decide to use the video lectures, all of the assignments to be given to the participants are indicated in chapter 3 of this handbook.

The facilitator's role

Without a facilitator there is no Futures Frequency. The facilitator's role is twofold: introduce the participants to the topics of future-oriented thinking and change-making (content) and facilitate the assignment sections of the workshop. If you want to focus solely on facilitating the workshop, you can use the videos provided on the Futures Frequency website.

The facilitator helps the participants imagine different futures and come up with ideas on actions for realising a preferred future. In practice, the facilitator (or facilitators) takes care of the entire workshop, from the practical arrangements to providing background information on the subject matter and giving instructions for the assignments. You don't have to be a foresight or future studies professional to facilitate a Futures Frequency workshop. Previous facilitation

You don't have to be a foresight or future studies professional to facilitate a Futures Frequency workshop.

experience is an advantage, but it's not essential. Facilitating the workshop is easier – especially online – if you get someone to help you handle the technical aspects, like dividing the participants into small groups. But you can also facilitate the workshop by yourself.

At the end of this handbook, we provide a list of sources for learning more about facilitating.

As the facilitator, your tasks include:

- inviting the participants
- reserving the physical space or online environment and making other practical arrangements
- providing content and direction by giving background on the topics by delivering the spoken lecture parts or playing the videos

TIPS FOR FACILITATING

THERE IS NO SINGLE RIGHT WAY TO FACILITATE A FUTURES FREQUENCY WORKSHOP.

Just be yourself. It's always the best way to do things.

BE RESPECTFUL OF EVERYONE'S TIME BY STICKING TO THE SCHEDULE.

Familiarise yourself with the workshop process. The workshop proceeds quite swiftly. Emphasise to the participants that the key is to be active, not to get bogged down in the assignments.

A GOOD FACILITATOR IS BOTH FIRM AND GENTLE!

You will occasionally need to put a stop to vibrant discussions or long monologues. You're responsible for helping the group as a whole move forward.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO TAKE A BACK SEAT.

Help the group come up with thoughts and ideas, but let it wrestle with the challenges and come up with insights on its own.

TAKE A BREAK FROM THE FLOOD OF STIMULI WE ARE PRACTICALLY ALWAYS EXPOSED TO.

Switch off your phone, e-mail and other distractions for the duration of the workshop. Also encourage the participants to do the same.

RULES GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO LEAN ON.

You can suggest rules for the group to follow. When the rules are agreed on together, it's easy to stick to them. The rules of Futures Frequency are adapted from the constructive discussion rules of the Timeout tool. As thoughts about the future can often be rather personal, it is especially important to support a safe and inclusive atmosphere.

- **Listen** to the others, don't interrupt or start additional discussions.
- **Relate** what you say to what the others have said and use everyday language.
- **Be present** and **respect** others and an open atmosphere of generating ideas.
- **You don't have to agree on everything**, but take a constructive approach to others' opinion.
- **Move together towards the concrete**, take steps towards achieving change.

YOU CAN ADAPT FUTURES FREQUENCY METHOD.

Don't be afraid to adapt your workshop to your group's needs. Apply, cut and paste. Remember to make a reference to Sitra as the original author of Futures Frequency.

- making sure the workshop stays on schedule
- guiding the process by providing instructions on the assignments and discussions
- being part of the group in exploring the subject matter and coming up with insights
- ensuring a safe atmosphere where everyone has the opportunity to speak, be heard and feel appreciated as who they are

Your responsibilities also include:

- encouraging, inspiring and helping the group succeed – the world of tomorrow is not an easy subject matter
- letting participants take the floor in a balanced manner and putting a firm stop to the discussions to stay on schedule
- taking different kinds of participants into account and encouraging equal participation, as some people are more outspoken than others

Problem situations

The group gets stuck

Tip: First, make sure the group has understood the assignment. The participants don't always grasp the instructions the first time around. Encourage the group to move forward by emphasising that the workshop itself is an exercise. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Join in the group's discussion and ask questions that help the group approach the problem from new angles.

Conflict in a small group

Tip: In Futures Frequency, the participants' jobs and titles shouldn't matter. People should come together as equals for a constructive experience. Before starting work in small groups, emphasise the rules of discussion. You can also build a psychological

sense of security by instructing the participants to introduce themselves in the small groups; for example, by telling the others what was their future dream job as child. These techniques can help prevent conflicts from happening, but that possibility can't be eliminated entirely. If a conflict does arise, one option is to steer the discussion to the reasons for the conflict. This often highlights what is truly important about the issue at hand, which can be a valuable lesson. You can move forward with the workshop in spite of potential conflicts by emphasising that the groups make their choices for the purpose of the workshop assignments and their choices are not actually binding on anyone beyond the workshop.

Someone challenges the content during the workshop

Tip: You can explain that the content is based on a comprehensive development effort carried out by Sitra. Futures Frequency is built on previous foresight activities and it takes advantage of future studies as well as various methods and frameworks that are already in use.

The participants are unfocused

Tip: Early on in the workshop, you should point out that the work can be intensive and everyone needs to be respectful of each other's time. If a participant is unable to be present for the entire duration, it would be good to know that ahead of time to make sure it will not affect the work done in small groups. If someone shifts their attention to something else during the workshop in spite of this, you can politely remind them that it would be fair for everyone to focus on the workshop because everyone has decided to devote their time to it.

2. Before: how to plan a workshop

First read this handbook and familiarise yourself with the Futures Frequency materials.

Think about what you want to get out of the process and what your goals are. The method has many uses and you can apply it to suit many different goals. Also, decide whether you want to make subsequent use of the ideas produced during the workshop or whether the discussion and insights are the main purpose of the activity.

Decide whether you will organise a Futures Frequency workshop in its standard form or focus on a specific theme.

Practical considerations

Decide on the date of your Futures Frequency workshop and allocate three hours to it. Alternatively, you can organise Futures Frequency in two sessions of 1.5 hours.

Decide who will participate. The workshop is designed for 8–20 participants. If you intend to invite more people than that, think about what kinds of adjustments you need to make to how the workshop is scheduled and run.

Send out the invitations and decide on the preliminary assignment, if any. Set a date by which the participants should confirm their participation and complete the preliminary assignment, if any.

Face to face: Print out the templates from www.futuresfrequency.fi.

Online: Determine whether the participants have any special needs concerning accessibility that you need to consider ahead of time (are they familiar with the online collaboration platform, will anyone use screen reader software, will a participant's organisation's firewall configuration prevent their participation?)

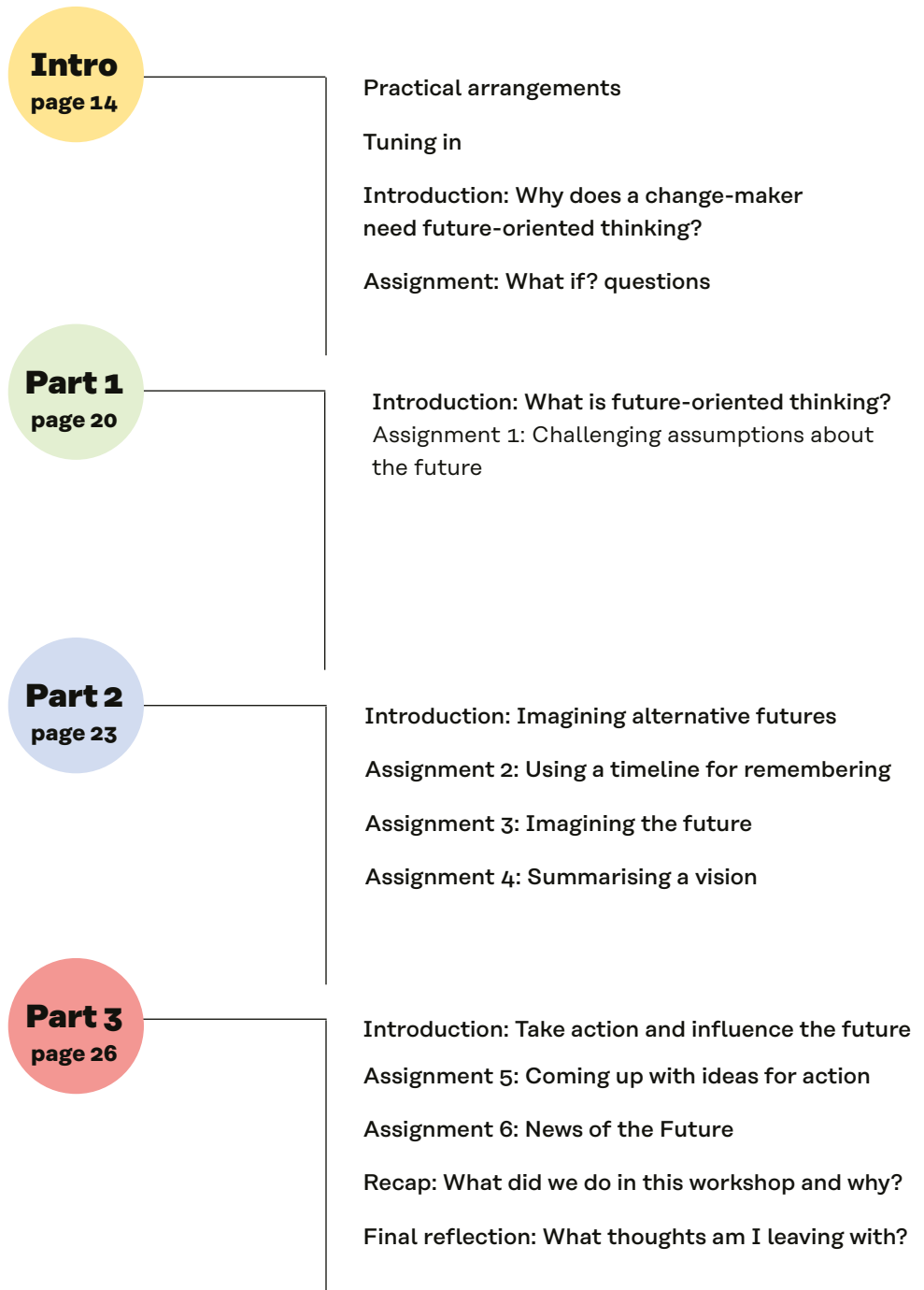
Online: Create and prepare the workshop template to be shared with the participants. You can use the template linked at www.futuresfrequency.fi as an example. The template is created on Miro.

Online: Consider having two facilitators if possible. Having two facilitators makes the workshop easier to manage. One of the facilitators can assume the role of technical assistant and be responsible for dividing the group into small groups, for example.

Workshop structure

Futures Frequency has an introduction and three parts and its progress is shown on the next page. There is an introduction to each part. The scripts for the introductions are provided in the next chapter of this handbook. You can also find video versions of the introductions at www.futuresfrequency.fi.

Schedule: You can facilitate a Futures Frequency workshop in one three-hour session, in two sessions of 1.5 hours on different days or one part at a time.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

INVITATION TEMPLATE

Interested in future-oriented thinking? What about influencing the future? Have you ever thought about how to better link the two?

Welcome to a Futures Frequency workshop (+ date and place)

Futures Frequency gets workshop participants tuned into thinking about a future that is worth imagining and striving for. Futures Frequency not only inspires people to think about the future from new perspectives; it also challenges people to identify ways to shape tomorrow into what you want it to be. The workshop takes three hours, including 1–2 breaks. Participating in the workshop does not require any prior knowledge or experience.

What is Futures Frequency?

The purpose of the Futures Frequency method is to improve people's ability to imagine different futures, to take action towards the realisation of a preferred future and generally inspire more discussion about possible futures. The underlying idea behind this workshop method is that if we are to achieve a successful transition to a sustainable society, we need to involve a broader group of change-makers – both people and organisations. The method was developed at Sitra.

Sign up!

This Futures Frequency workshop will be held ____ (insert more detailed instructions on how to sign up, including a link to the online event if you are organising a virtual workshop and, if you decide to use a preliminary assignment, include the assignment and the deadline for its submission).

Inviting participants

When you invite participants to your Futures Frequency workshop, the invitation should include the following information:

- What is Futures Frequency
- How to sign up and participate
- Date, time, place and the duration of the workshop

Preliminary assignment

The preliminary assignment is not essential, but it can serve as an orientation for the participants and strengthen their commitment to the upcoming workshop. The preliminary assignment could concern megatrends and exploring weak signals. If you have defined a specific theme for your Futures Frequency workshop, the preliminary assignment can be based on an article about that topic.

Online: You should instruct the participants to familiarise themselves with the online collaboration platform to be used by sending them a link to the platform ahead of time.

This ensures that the participants can access the platform and the actual workshop time is not wasted on signing up for the service. Ask the participants to write their name and a brief

greeting on the online collaboration platform ahead of time.

Preliminary assignment A

Familiarise yourself with megatrends

A megatrend is a general direction of development that is known to impact society over the long term. Dive deeper into the topic on our Megatrends 2020 webpage.

<https://www.sitra.fi/en/topics/megatrends/>.

Preliminary assignment B

Explore weak signals

A weak signal is the first symptom of change. It may grow into a trend or it may remain as a weak signal. It makes sense to complement your understanding of megatrends by exploring weak signals. They can be surprising, even laughable, but they may become important phenomena over time. Dive deeper into the topic on our Weak signals webpage <https://www.sitra.fi/en/topics/weak-signals/>.

In-person: the space, the materials and technology

The space

The amount of space you need depends on the size of the group. The space you use influences the atmosphere of the workshop and the extent to which the participants get stimulated by and deeply involved in the process. Say you organise a Futures Frequency workshop for your colleagues and you want to emphasise genuine attention and presence, inspire creative thinking and bold ideas, the familiar conference room used for weekly meetings might not be the best choice. A less familiar space often prompts people to think in new ways, so don't be afraid to make bold choices about the space you use for your workshop.

Materials

- Pens and Post-it notes
- Printed templates, preferably on A3 sheets
- Prepare one template for each small group

Technology

For face-to-face workshops, you need a display and a computer to run the PPT presentation.

Online: platform, tools and technology

Online workshops should be run on software that includes screen sharing and makes it possible to divide the participants into separate small groups (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams). You'll also need an online platform that enables everyone to enter information in the same document at the same time (such as Miro, Mural, Google Docs). This is needed especially for the small group assignments. Examples of templates for use on online platforms are available at www.futuresfrequency.fi.

You may need to allocate some time at the beginning of the workshop to instructing on the use of the various software and platforms if they are not familiar to all of the participants. Links and assignment instructions should be entered in the chat window of the online meeting tool you use.

During small group assignments, some groups will work faster than others. Since you can't directly monitor the groups' progress online, you can tell the groups that they can

return from the small group workspace to the shared workspace sooner if they complete the assignment before the allotted time runs out.

Tips for facilitating an online workshop

- When you schedule a workshop, allow enough time for the participants to learn how to use the technical platform you've chosen. Send a link to the platform to the participants ahead of time so they can familiarise themselves with it.
- You'll need two platforms to facilitate the workshop: one for communication and one for documenting the work done by the groups. You can use Zoom and Miro for these purposes, for example.
- In addition to speaking, you should also use screen sharing to show the participants where to find what they need and how it all works.
- Start by explaining the etiquette rules of an online workshop: microphones should be muted when the participant is not speaking, enabling video creates an atmosphere that is conducive to team-work, the chat window is free for everyone to use and the participants should close other browser windows and e-mail clients.
- Focus on how you issue the instructions for the assignments: in addition to speaking, you should communicate the instructions via the chat window and the platform used.
- People usually take more time to warm up to the task in an online workshop, so you need to be tolerant of silence when you ask questions and give the participants time to respond.
- Give the participants time to complete their tasks. Don't speak during the time they are working on assignments.
- If you have two facilitators, one can visit the small groups to monitor their progress and respond to any questions they might have.

Planning your work

Futures Frequency is scheduled for you and you have access to a complete set of materials

and scripts for the spoken parts. Nevertheless, you should allocate enough time for familiarising yourself with everything (1–3 hours depending on how much experience you have as a facilitator). You may want to take a closer look at the topics covered in the spoken parts or go over the assignment instructions a few times. If you facilitate your workshop together with someone else, agree on the division of tasks ahead of time.

The workshop has an intro and three parts. There is an introduction to each part. The content of the introductions is provided in the next chapter of this handbook. You can deliver the introductory parts in your own words. If you use the PPT presentation in your work-

shop, the slide numbers are indicated next to each spoken part. The introductions are also available as video lectures at www.futuresfrequency.fi. If you prefer, you can play the video at the start of each part of the workshop and focus solely on facilitating the assignments.

The workshop includes a lot of small group work. The ideal size for the small groups is 3–4 members. We do not recommend having groups of more than five members. The participants stay in the same small groups throughout the workshop.

The table below is an indicative schedule for the workshop.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULING

INTRO: WHY DOES A CHANGE-MAKER NEED FUTURE-ORIENTED THINKING?

Intro

3 min Welcome and introduction to the workshop

10 min Going around the group: What do you think when you hear the word “future”?

4 min Working methods, testing the online collaboration platform and the structure of the workshop

5 min The Boulding story and the “What if” questions

5 min “What if” questions (everyone together at the same time)

CHALLENGE PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Part 1

7 min Introduction to future-oriented thinking

2 min Instructions for the “Challenging assumptions about the future” assignment

10 min Assignment 1: Challenging assumptions about the future (in small groups)

IMAGINE A DESIRED FUTURE

5 min Introduction to the “imagining” part

5 min Assignment 2: Using a timeline for remembering (everyone together at the same time)

2 min Instructions for imagining

7 min Assignment 3: Imagining the future (individually)

10 min Break

2 min Instructions for group discussion

20 min Assignment 4: Group discussion on different preferred futures and summarising a vision (in small groups)

TAKE ACTION AND INFLUENCE THE FUTURE

10 min Introduction to the “take action” part

2 min Instructions for the “Coming up with action ideas” and “News of the Future” assignments

25 min Assignments 5 & 6: Coming up with action ideas & write a headline for News of the Future (in small groups)

15–20 min The small groups present their work

13 min Recap: what did we do in this workshop and why?

10 min Insights

3. During: workshop stages step by step

This chapter covers the Futures Frequency script step by step. The goals, materials and duration of each part is presented first. That is followed by an explanation of how to facilitate each part in practice and which spoken parts go with it.

Intro: Why does a change maker need future-oriented thinking?

General information

This is the start of the Futures Frequency workshop and an introduction to the subject matter.

Goals

The participants will be introduced to the workshop's subject matter, goals and schedule as well as the other participants. They will get acquainted with the facilitator and feel welcome. They will also get tuned into the futures frequency, meaning that they understand what future-oriented thinking means in practice. The participants will also start to get familiar with the way the other participants think.

Materials / Platform

PPT slides 2–13 or video lecture 1. For the assignments, you need pens and Post-it notes (face-to-face workshops) or a collaboration platform (online workshops).

Duration

About 30 minutes.

Welcome everyone to the workshop, introduce yourself and explain why you have invited the participants to come together. You can discuss your interest in the subject matter or explain why you believe it is necessary to meet to discuss this topic. Introduce the participants to the workshop's subject matter (future-oriented thinking and change-making) and explain that the workshop will take about three hours with 1–2 breaks (depending on how you have decided to schedule the breaks).

The future / Slide 2

Spoken part

- Futures Frequency is a three-hour workshop for everyone interested in influencing the future.
- The method was developed at Sitra. A developer team of experts in various fields have provided sparring support in the development of the method. The purpose of Futures Frequency is to increase people's ability to imagine different futures and willingness to act towards realising a preferred future.

- The materials for the Futures Frequency method are freely distributed and available for anyone to use. The workshop does not require any prior experience of future-oriented thinking. These are the principles of Futures Frequency:
 - The goal is to popularise future-oriented thinking – which is often seen as abstract – to enable more and more organisations and people to make use of it.
 - Future-oriented thinking is not an exercise that is removed from reality. It is an important part of our actions in the present.
 - Contributing to the future is a skill that can be developed.
 - From the perspective of democracy and participation, the question of whose voices are heard in discussions about the future is not insignificant.

Why?

- The future does not happen; it is made.
- The underlying idea is that achieving a successful transition to a sustainable society requires more people and organisations to have the ability and the desire to act to promote a more sustainable society.
- This workshop is about improving competencies related to influencing the future.
- We will also come up with ideas on actions that move us towards our vision, but the concrete implementation, plans and experiments associated with those actions will take place outside of this workshop.
- During this workshop:
 - you will learn the basics of future-oriented thinking, including solution-oriented thinking, challenging assumptions and imagining
 - you will become aware of your own and other people's assumptions about the future
 - you will identify factors in the present that will influence the future
 - you will engage in dialogue about the future and link vision creation to action in the present
 - you will recognise your own agency as a change-maker

How?

- The workshop consists of brief lecture-style sections, discussions, individual assignments and group assignments.

If the participants are not acquainted with each other and the workshop is held face to face, prepare name tags. If you conduct the workshop online, remind everyone to check that their profile includes their name. If there are more than 10 participants, brief introductions can be done in the small groups or the chat window. If you wish, you can also tell the participants that their roles outside the workshop do not matter today and they needn't discuss their jobs. This can promote a more free generation of ideas and create a sense of a "safe space".

Ask everyone to give a one-word answer to what they think of when they hear the word "future". This is intended to keep the round of responses short while giving everyone the chance to speak. If the group is large, you can ask the participants to write down their thoughts on Post-it notes or the chat window if the workshop is online. The goal is to emphasise that people's ideas about the future are different and are also dependent on the situation. Getting tuned to the right frequency also helps you establish an understanding of the thoughts the participants come to the workshop with and, later, compare that to the feeling at the end of the workshop.

AN ADVOCATE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Sophie Howe, took up her post in 2016. The Commissioner's work is guided by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. More information: www.futuregenerations.wales.

The future / Slide 3

Spoken part

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “future”?

Provide additional background on the workshop's time perspective and the idea that the goal is to identify each individual's potential to be a change-maker.

Time perspective / Slide 4

Spoken part

- The word “future” can refer to tomorrow or a hundred years from now.
- Today, we set our sights on 2050, or about 30 years into the future. That gives us a long enough time frame to feel untethered by the restrictions of the present day as we think about the future.
- If this time perspective feels challenging, we already have examples of people taking action with an eye to the well-being of future generations.
 - The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales is tasked with promoting the interests of generations that haven't even been born yet.

Cynicism / Slide 5

Spoken part

- Some of us may be familiar with a sense of cynicism with regard to how much impact one person can have.
- The anthropologist **Margaret Mead** once said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

The 3.5 per cent rule

- There are many examples in human history of how the actions of a small group of people have created a snowball effect with transformative consequences – both good and bad.
- One example is the “3.5 per cent rule”, which is based on studies of the power of non-violent civil movements to achieve change. The main observation has been that when about 3.5 per cent of the population becomes active and participates in a movement, the movement will accomplish its goals and achieve significant political change.

Cover the practical considerations. If the workshop is conducted online, explain what platforms will be used (the participants can practice the use of the online collaboration platform by having everyone type their name in a shared work template, and then you can share a link to that document in the chat window and share your screen).

THE 3.5 PER CENT RULE

For more information, you can read the following BBC article, for example:

The '3.5% rule': How a small minority can change the world (2019). Or read this book: Chenoweth, E. & Stephan, M. J. (2011): *Why Civil Resistance Works. The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* Columbia University Press, New York.

About the working methods / Slides 6, 7 & 8

Spoken part

- You'll be divided into small groups and you will work in these groups during the workshop.
- The workshop proceeds quite swiftly. The key is to keep working and not get stuck on any of the assignments.
- During the Futures Frequency, we will apply the following rules (adapted from the constructive discussion rules of the Timeout tool). As our thoughts about the future can be quite personal, it is especially important to create a safe space for this work.
 - **Listen** to others, do not interrupt or start side discussions.
 - **Join in** the discussion and use everyday language.

- **Be active and respect** others and an open atmosphere of coming up with ideas.
- **You don't have to agree on everything**, but take a constructive approach to other's opinions.
- **Move together towards the concrete**, take steps towards achieving change.

Structure / Slide 9

Spoken part

- First, we will get you tuned to the right frequency with a brief lecture section.
- Then, we will challenge our assumptions about the future. This is especially important because our assumptions about the future guide our thinking, decisions and actions.
- Then, we will imagine. It's difficult to realise a future that we can't imagine. There is a big need for images of preferred futures.
- Lastly, we will take our first steps towards our preferred future, and that is where our journey truly begins.
- Don't worry if you can't remember this structure. We'll make sure you stay on board for the entire ride.

The following story about the peace activist Elise Boulding serves as an introduction to our first assignment.

A story about future-oriented thinking and being a change maker /

Slide 10

Spoken part

- We'll start with the story of an impressive woman. It's a story that touches on future-oriented thinking as well as being a change maker.
- The Norwegian-born sociologist **Elise Boulding** took part in a peace movement conference after World War II. In a panel discussion at the conference, she asked disarmament experts what a world without weapons would look like and how it would function. None of the experts had a good answer.
- Boulding realised that the peace movement was working on peace without knowing what a peaceful world would look like: **"They didn't know what they were working for. It would just be a world with no weapons and no war. But what kind of society would it be? What kind of institutions?"**
- Boulding began to hold workshops to imagine a world without weapons. The participants were asked to travel 30 years into the future in their minds and describe what a world without weapons would actually look like. Following a group discussion, the participants were asked to "think back to the future", or draw a timeline backwards to the present, to describe how the world they imagined had been achieved. Finally, the participants were asked to decide what they would do, starting right then, to help that process along.
- This had a significant impact on the participants and their thinking. Challenging and listening provide the foundation for imagining futures, but they alone are not enough for achieving change. To achieve change, you also need to prepare concrete plans, apply yourself and inspire other people to get involved – in other words, do all the time-consuming things that it takes to get the work done.
- Today, our aim is to do all of the things that Elise and many other change makers have done: challenge assumptions about the future, imagine a better tomorrow and take concrete action.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ELISE BOULDING'S THOUGHTS!

- An interview with Elise Boulding from 2003: <https://www.beyondintractability.org/audioplayer/boulding-e-3-future-studies2>;
 - Boulding, E. (2002). A journey into the future: Imagining a nonviolent world. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 9(1), 51–56;
 - Boulding, E. (1976). A disarmed world: Problems in imagining the future. *J. Soc. & Soc. Welfare*, 4, 656.
-

THEME-FOCUSED FUTURES FREQUENCY**On the importance of asking questions / Slide 12**

If your Futures Frequency workshop focusses on a specific theme (e.g. technology, competence), you can replace this part with a story that matches your theme. The story you choose should involve challenging assumptions or thinking long-term.

After the story, guide the group to start the assignment that gets them tuned into future-oriented thinking.

On the importance of asking questions / Slides 11 & 12**Spoken part**

- Let's return to Elise's story for a moment. Elise had the courage to ask a difficult question. While the question itself did not change the world, it broadened the views of those who worked in the peace movement on what the future could be – and it inspired them to work even harder, and with greater commitment, towards that preferred future.
- Here are a few examples of questions that someone must have thought about:
- What if everyone could get a loan – even the poor? Muhammad Yunus, the man who pioneered the concept of microcredit, had to ask this question.
- What if countries that were previously at war with each other were to create a community? Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, had to ask this question.
- What if there were no waste?
- What if all children around the world were able to go to school?

THEME-FOCUSED FUTURES FREQUENCY**It's time to ask questions / Slide 13**

You can change these example questions to match your theme.

Everyone gets to come up with one or more “What if?” questions that would take you towards a preferred future and that forces you to rethink something. The question can be related to any theme. If your workshop is conducted face-to-face, the questions can be written on one large shared sheet of paper, a flip chart, a whiteboard, etc. In online workshops, use the online collaboration platform here.

It's time to ask questions / Slide 13

Spoken part

- What could you challenge or think differently about?
- There is no pressure to know the answers, only the freedom to ask!

In discussing, the key is to highlight why the assignment was done. You don't have to discuss every question asked by the participants. You can simply read them and encourage the participants to hold on to the spirit of asking questions.

- The purpose of this assignment was to show that change starts from having the courage to challenge assumptions and ask “what if?” questions.

PART 1: Challenge preconceptions about the future

General information

This part summarises what future-oriented thinking is and focuses on discussing and challenging various assumptions about the future.

Goals

The goal is to realise that we are often prisoners of our preconceptions when we think about the future. Our thoughts about the future also guide our actions in the present. That is why challenging assumptions about the future is an important skill.

Materials / Platform

PPT slides 14–19 or video lecture 2. There are 10 short audio drama pieces depicting different assumptions about the future at www.futuresfrequency.fi. Alternatively, you can also make use of visual scenarios about the future or news clippings.

Duration

20 minutes

First, the participants are introduced to what future-oriented thinking is and what kinds of frameworks we can use to approach it.

Future-oriented thinking / Slide 14

Spoken part

- We just engaged in future-oriented thinking in practice by asking “What if?” questions.
- If we had to summarise future-oriented thinking in three points, this is what they would look like.
- **1) There are many possible futures.** We should think about the future in plural. There is no single track that we are on. Rather, the future is shaped by our actions and decisions in the present. The future is also shaped by the things we don’t do.
- **2) We can influence the future** because the future does not just happen by itself.
- **3) We are responsible for thinking long-term.** This is particularly important with regard to future generations. We can’t simply focus on the present. We have a duty to act to create a future that is better – not worse – than the present.

Cone of possibilities / Slide 15

Spoken part

- We can think of the future as a cone of possibilities, with many different potential futures emerging from the present moment.
- This means that there are multiple futures. We can characterise some of them as probable, some as plausible and others as possible.
- It’s interesting to consider what we consider to be preferred futures, meaning what is the direction we would like to move towards. This is why we create scenarios, for example. They are one way we try to make the uncertainty about the future more visible and manageable.
- Wild cards are surprising events that we need to try to take into consideration, but anticipating them can be very difficult.

INTERESTED IN THE “DYSTOPIA BOOM”?

• Wired magazine article: *The Real Reason Dystopian Fiction Is Roaring Back* (2017).

• Darkening visions: Dystopian fiction in contemporary Finnish literature (research project): <https://www.tuni.fi/en/research/darkening-visions-dystopian-fiction-contemporary-finnish-literature-2015-2019>.

The cone of possibilities is often too narrow / Slide 16**Spoken part**

- However, the traditional model of the cone of possibilities is not best suited to our present moment, which is characterised by complexity and vagueness.
- Our cone of possibilities – which represents the way we think about the future – is too narrow. The range of possibilities we consider plausible and probable is much too small.
- That’s why we are surprised when something unexpected happens (Brexit, Covid-19, etc.).
- This makes it necessary for us to expand our thinking about the future and to envisage impossible or implausible futures. What this means is that we should challenge our assumptions and expand our thinking about the future.
- It’s also important to think about what actually is desirable in the future. There is no shortage of threats in our time, but there is a shortage of inspiring and hopeful future scenarios.
- This has been referred to as the “dystopia boom” in research and journalism.

In the next part, the participants will take a deeper dive into challenging assumptions in their first small group assignment. Short audio drama pieces (2-3 minutes each) that serve as the foundation for these discussions are available on the Sitra website. In a face-to-face workshop, each group can listen to one of the audio drama pieces together via a phone. If your workshop is conducted online, you can send each group a link to an audio drama piece in their chat window. They will then listen to it individually before discussing it in their small group. The idea is to have a small group discussion and the groups can also take notes if they wish to do so.

Challenge / Slide 17**Spoken part**

- In the first group assignment of this workshop we get to challenge assumptions.
- Our thoughts about the future guide our actions in the present.
- If we fail to challenge old perspectives and assumptions, we may end up in a future that does not reflect our values.

Assumptions of the future / Slide 18**Spoken part**

- The power of our assumptions about the future lies in the way they influence our ideas – and consequently our actions – in the present.
- The picture represents how a French artist in 1901 imagined a school classroom would look in the year 2000.
- All of the pupils in the classroom are boys. The pupils are wearing headsets of some kind, while one of them cranks a machine of knowledge through which the content of books poured in by the teacher is transferred into the pupils’ heads. The picture is quite technology-focused, as our scenarios and assumptions about the future often are.
- It’s also interesting to note what is assumed to stay the same: for example, the pupils are seated in neat rows and the teacher is on an elevated platform. While today’s classrooms don’t look exactly like this, ideas and views like this have influenced the way schools have been developed.

ASSUMPTIONS AND SCENARIOS ABOUT THE FUTURE

You can use the following articles to find more information on this topic:

- Dator, J (2009): Alternative Futures at the Manoa School, *Journal of Futures Studies*, November 2009, 14(2): 1–18;
 - Boschetti, F & Price, J. & Walker, I (2016): Myths of the future and scenario archetypes *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* Volume 111, October 2016, 76–85.
-

In the first group activity, it is best to the participants to focus on the familiarity of the story as well as identifying and challenging its underlying assumptions rather than focusing on whether the story is probable or believable.

Challenge assumptions about the future / Slide 19

Spoken part / Assignment 1

- Next, your group will take a closer look at an assumption about the future and challenge it. Assumptions are based on common stereotypical views about possible futures.
- Listen to one short audio drama piece and discuss the following questions in your small group for 10 minutes:
 - 1) Do you recognise this kind of assumption about the future? Does it match your view of the future?
 - 2) Challenge: what assumptions is this based on?
- So, what should we challenge? We all have assumptions about the future. We should be aware of these assumptions, as they influence our actions in the present.

The small group discussions should be reviewed in a way that links the assignment to each participant's thinking. The goal is for the participants to recognise their own assumptions about the future and how those assumptions influence their thinking. Ask the participants to share which of their own assumptions about the future they became aware of during the assignment. In an online workshop, you can ask the participants to share these thoughts in the chat window. Remind the participants to mention what assumption about the future their group discussed to give the others context for their comments.

- In this assignment, your group focused on challenging a single assumption about the future. All other assumptions or arguments about the future should also be challenged.
- Link this with your own thinking: what kinds of assumptions do you make about the future?
- Question for the group (in the chat window): what assumptions of your own did you become aware of during this assignment?

PART 2: Imagine a preferred future

In this part of the workshop, we look forward and imagine preferred futures. It's difficult to realise a future that we can't even envisage.

Goals

The aim is to imagine different futures and discuss them with others.

Materials / Platform

PPT slides 20–26 or video lecture 3. For face-to-face workshops, vision templates and pens. For online workshops, a template to type the vision in.

Duration

50 minutes

Start by explaining why imagining is important and what it is about. This introduction is also intended to encourage the participants to have a curious attitude towards imagining.

Imagining / Slide 20

Spoken part

- We now move on to the second part of the workshop: imagining.
- Challenging assumptions cleared space for imagining.
- Without imagining preferred futures, it's difficult for us to make the commitment to the desired changes and take action that helps us achieve the desired outcome.
- Whenever the world has been changed, someone must have been able to imagine what a better transport system, better education or a world with fewer weapons would look like.
- In his well-known book *Sapiens*, **Yuval Noah Harari** has stated that as far as we know, only Homo sapiens can talk about things we have never seen, touched or smelled.
- Imagination is a human superpower that separates us from the other animals.
- The same areas of our brain are activated when we think back to the past and imagine the future. This suggests that imagining the future is related to our ability to remember.
- Scientists saw the first indications of this when they treated patients suffering from memory loss. When a patient had lost the ability to remember the past, it seemed that they had also their ability to imagine the future.

Additional information that you can use if you wish:

- Scientists are still trying to determine how different parts of the brain are involved in processes related to memory and imagination. It is largely a matter of building scenes and sceneries in the mind. Anyone can recall facts but often when we consciously think back we remember exact scenes or sceneries from the past. For example, people have the ability to recall sounds and smells and feel the emotions they felt in a given situation.
- Similarly, when we imagine the future we try to identify with a possible scene or situation. Ideally, imagining enables us to create a mental picture that can be as detailed as a memory.

ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN REMEMBERING AND IMAGINING FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE, FOR

EXAMPLE: Schacter, Daniel L., Donna Rose Addis, Demis Hassabis, Victoria C. Martin, R. Nathan Spreng and Karl K. Szpunar. 2012. "The Future of Memory: Remembering, Imagining, and the Brain." *Neuron* 76 (4) (November): 677–694.

Since imagining is closely related to our ability to remember, the next assignment is intended to activate the participants to engage in future-oriented thinking through remembering. Another purpose is to establish a long-term view and understand how we got to where we are. In a face-to-face workshop, you can use a whiteboard or flip chart to draw a timeline (from 1920 to the present, for example). In an online workshop, you can draw a similar timeline in the online collaboration platform. This assignment should be divided into two parts. First, ask the participants to think about the past issues or events that made the present the way it is. They can add their ideas on the timeline using Post-it notes. Then, ask the participants to think about which issues in the present will influence the future? Leave space for Post-it notes at the end of the timeline for this purpose.

Thinking back / Slide 21

Spoken part

- Let's take a moment to look into the past: what happened in the 1900s and 2000s that made the world the way it is now? The purpose of this assignment is to not only activate our brain for future-oriented thinking but also to help us take a long-term view.

Timeline / Slide 22

Spoken part / Assignment 2

- A look into the past: **What issues and factors have influenced the present?**
- Looking to the future: **What present-day issues will influence the future?**

As everyone has worked on the same timeline, you don't necessarily need to have a separate discussion here. You can read out a few of the ideas added on the timeline. The main thing is to emphasise what this assignment helped us recognise.

- The assignment made us see that the world has changed before.
- The idea was to broaden our thinking about the surprising and unbelievable things that have happened in the past to make our society the way it is today.
- Using the timeline to highlight issues we recognise in the present gives us some idea of what types of issues or phenomena will influence the future.
- In addition to the issues we have identified, there are many impossible and incredible things that we cannot anticipate or identify now.

After the timeline assignment, we turn our eyes to the future. The next assignment is for the participants to individually imagine a preferred future. They have seven minutes to do this. Try to calm down the atmosphere and help the participants turn their focus inward by, for example, rolling their shoulders and closing their eyes for a moment. You can also put on some music. In a face-to-face workshop, the participants should write down their thoughts on paper. In an online workshop, you can choose your preferred way of having the participants take these notes. Instruct the participants to write down their visions of a preferred future in this form: "I want to strengthen **what** so that, in 2050, **what would be different / what will have happened / what the world would be like**". Pay special attention to encouraging the participants, as consciously imagining the future is not familiar to many people. You can also point out that their ideas will not be shared in the group as a whole, only in the small groups.

HOW REALISTIC IS THIS EXAMPLE VISION?

It is a completely realistic vision. According to current calculations, the carbon footprint of Finns should be reduced by at least 80% if we want to achieve the Paris Agreement climate warming target of 1.5 degrees or less. For more information, read Sitra's [article on 1.5-degree lifestyles and how they can be achieved \(2019\)](#).

Imagining the future / Slides 23, 24 & 25

Spoken part / Assignment 3

- In the next assignment, we will travel into the future and imagine preferred futures.
- Sometimes even a brief exercise can drive your thinking forward. It's also particularly enlightening to find out what others think.
- The goal is to use imagining as a way to enhance solution-oriented thinking.
- Keeping in mind the two things we worked on in the previous assignments – challenging assumptions and thinking long-term from the past to the present – what might a preferred future look like and what would you like to strengthen to make it possible for the world to move in that direction? First choose the theme you want to address in your vision.
- Write your vision about the future in this form: “I want to strengthen **what** so that, in 2050, **what would be different / what will have happened / what the world would be like**”.
- While imagination is a human superpower, it's not easy. We are accustomed to rational thinking, which can make it difficult to let the imagination fly. But that's what you should do!
- Let's imagine the year 2050. Try to be as concrete as possible. That will make the next stages of the workshop easier. More detailed instructions are provided on the slide.

After this individual exercise, it might be a good time to take a break for 10–15 minutes. If your workshop is conducted online, urge the participants to get up and move around for a little while.

The participants will continue to work in small groups. Instruct the groups to first share their thoughts about preferred futures and then vote (for example by giving everyone three votes to allocate as they wish) for which vision they want to work on further. The aim is to have the small groups arrive at a vision that is as concrete as possible. They will work on this vision until the end of the workshop. The participants are given 20 minutes to do this.

Common direction / Slide 26

Spoken part / Assignment 4

- We will now move on to the stage where you, in your groups, should find a common direction that you will work on for the remainder of this workshop.
- Summarising a shared vision is not easy, so you should take this as an exercise.
- First share your visions about the future and then take a vote. When you've made your choice, try to shape that vision into a specific statement: “In 2050, who/what/where + verb + what”.
- Avoid creating a compromise of a vision that combines everyone's wishes.
- Here is one example of a vision related to reducing the carbon footprint of ordinary people: “In 2050, the carbon footprint of each Finn will be 80% smaller than now.”

PART 3: Act and influence the future

General information

In this part of the workshop, we link future-oriented thinking with action.

Goals

The aim is to recognise that influencing the future is something that happens in the present and to come up with ideas on actions that would take us towards the preferred future.

Materials / Platform

PPT slides 27–38 or video lectures 4 and 5. For face-to-face workshops, the templates for the action part, pens and Post-it notes. For online workshops, the online collaboration platform and the template for group assignments.

Duration

1h 20 min

In the final part of the workshop, you will help the participants apply future-oriented thinking at the practical level and focus on influencing the future. Introduce the participants to this topic by sharing a story of one way to exercise influence (you can also use a different story depending on your group's context).

Take action / Slide 27

Spoken part

- In the final part of this workshop, we will focus on action: how can I and the organisation I represent become a change-maker?
- Anyone can be a change-maker. But creating change requires future-oriented thinking: the ability to paint a picture of a preferable future and how to achieve it.

The story of a meme that influenced people's paradigms / Slide 28

Spoken part

- Let me start with a story about one way to influence things.
- One tweet won't change the world, but successful influence through social media can achieve a lot.
- **Saara Särmä**, a researcher in international relations, got tired of seeing all-male panels. She started collecting photos on her Tumblr page of panel discussions with only male participants. She quickly put together a large collection.
- Eventually, Särmä decided to use humour to gain more visibility for the issue. This led to the "All Male Panel" meme, where actor David Hasselhoff, a symbol of masculinity, gives the thumbs-up to organisers who have put together an all male panel.
- Of course, Särmä wasn't the first to pay attention to this issue, but it was only through the meme she created that the issue became a viral phenomenon covered by various international media.
- A meme uses humour, novelty value, simplicity and overlap with many people's daily experiences. It only takes a moment to understand and share it. It also comes with a fairly simple call to action: an all-male panel is rarely an inevitable option, but rather an easy unconscious choice.

THE SPHERES OF TRANSFORMATION

This classification is based on the spheres of social transformation, Laininen (2018), O'Brien & Sygna (2013), Sharma (2007). For more information on this topic, see e.g. Gaps in our Bildung (2019) published by Sitra's Bildung+ project.

- All-male panels have been congratulated more than 2,000 times on Särnä's Tumblr page and new posts are added on her social media every day.

In the last small group assignment, the participants will come up with ideas on actions that help turn their chosen vision into reality. Before the assignment is given, discuss how change-making can be approached from this threefold perspective, for example: 1) behaviour, 2) structures and 3) paradigms. Give examples for each of these to make the idea easier for the participants to grasp. If you have selected a specific theme for your workshop, use examples related to that theme.

Different levels of change-making / Slides 29 & 30

Spoken part

- Actions that drive change should be approached from different perspectives. Today, we will use three questions to help us think about influencing the future.
- When we think about the path towards our chosen vision, we can ask the following questions:

1) How should our behaviour or actions change? Could a new service, technology or invention have the desired effect on people's behaviour? For example, various plant protein products can make it easier for some people to transition to a more plant-based diet. The gender calculator created by the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat is an example of a technology service that enables us to determine how equally the voices of women and men are heard in journalism.

2) What changes are needed with regard to structures? Society may guide people's behaviour and actions through laws and regulations, for example. What is the tax policy? Does it support the use of fossil fuels or encourage investments in clean energy? Or, to build on the previously mentioned theme of all-male panels: how do gender quotas affect gender equality?

3) How should our thinking and beliefs change? The most significant – and also the slowest – change takes place at the level of values, ideals, worldviews and paradigms. For example, what is our relationship with nature? Do we see it as having intrinsic value or as a resource for people to use? Or what we think about gender equality? The previously mentioned meme about all-male panels is a good example of influencing paradigms. What kind of action influences people's paradigms?

The participants will complete a two-part assignment. First, they will use the previously mentioned threefold perspective to come up with ideas on what action should be taken for the group's chosen vision to become a reality. The group should come up with ideas on actions specifically from the perspective of what is possible for their organisation or community. You should encourage the participants to focus on generating ideas by reminding them that they won't need to develop an actual plan of implementation. In the second part of the assignment, the small group will give concrete form to its vision as a headline from "Future News": what kind of news headline would be a sign that the vision is becoming a reality? The participants will have a total of 25 minutes for this two-part assignment. As the facilitator, you should visit the small groups to keep track of their progress and make sure the groups stay on schedule.

What action needs to be taken in the present for your vision to become a reality? / Slide 31

Spoken part / Assignments 5 & 6

How is this done in practice? 15 min

- Take the role of a change-maker.
- Think of ideas for **3 actions that would take you towards turning your vision into a reality** and write them down in Miro
 - An action that influence people's behaviour or practices?
 - An action that influence structures (legislation, taxation etc.)?
 - An action that influence people's thinking?
- Come up with ideas from your group's perspective: what could you do?
- This is a challenging exercise, so you can simply create ideas rather than thinking about how to implement them.

What would the journey towards your chosen vision look and sound like?

How is this done in practice? 10 min

- You're employed by the news desk of Future News and you need to draft a front page from the year 2048.
- Write a front page headline that describes the world on the path towards your vision. Optionally, you can also include smaller news articles on the same page.

Instruct the small groups to present their vision, actions and the news headline from 2048. Emphasise that the presentations need to be brief (for example, use a three-minute rule to keep the presentations short). If there are only a few small groups, you should have enough time for each group to deliver a short presentation. If there are more than four groups, ask a couple of groups to offer to share their work. If you conduct the workshop online, use screen sharing to show the online collaboration platform view to everyone during the presentations. Thank the participants for their presentations and encourage all of them to take a look at each other's work. Remind them that the path to the future is not linear and does not happen in a vacuum. The paths created by the small groups are examples of different futures, each of which can influence one another.

Finally, recap what was done during the workshop and why. The purpose of this recap is to link the theory and stories covered during the workshop with the assignments and improve the participants' capacity to participate in these types of exercises in the future.

Recap / Slide 32

Spoken part

A short recap of what we've done during this workshop **and why**

- Influencing the future can be examined through three recurring steps:
 - 1) **We challenged assumptions about the future** (What if? questions and short audio drama pieces)
 - When we think about the future, we are often prisoners of our assumptions. That is why challenging them is so important.
 - Here, you can also reflect on whether the assumption about the future your group discussed influenced your thinking during the workshop.
 - 2) **We imagined preferred futures** (Timeline and visions of a better future)
 - Preferred futures are possible. The world has been changed before and it takes imagination, which is why we focused on imagination at this stage.

3) **We came up with ideas on actions to influence the future** (Actions to realise the vision and making the change concrete by creating a newspaper headline)

- The purpose of the process we went through in this workshop was to get you to link your future-oriented thinking to practice. To recognise that influencing the future is something that happens in the present.

The matrix is a framework for mentally structuring the workshop activities and for the participants to think about where they would place themselves. The purpose is to gain insights about how the participants' attitude towards future-oriented thinking and their own agency as a change-maker has – or hasn't – changed during the workshop. This part leads the participants to the final assignment, which focusses on reflecting on their thoughts during the workshop.

Matrix / Slide 33

Spoken part

- The lessons learned in this workshop can also be illustrated by using a matrix.
- Our attitude towards the future and our perceptions of our own agency have a significant impact on whether we ultimately decide to actively influence the future.
- A person's socioeconomic position can also influence their view of the future and their own agency as a change-maker (+ culture, religion, political views, personality, temperament, etc.).
- The matrix is based on the ideas of the Dutch sociologist and futurist **Fred Polak**.
- The motivation to be a change-maker can emerge from believing that the world is moving in a bad direction (problems) or from believing that the future will be better (opportunities). Both are OK. The real question is whether you believe you are able to influence things.
- (Elise Boulding, who was mentioned previously, translated Polak's book from Dutch to English. Polak's book inspired Boulding to organise peace movement workshops to imagine a future without weapons.)

Influencing the future / Slide 34

Spoken part

The idea of this workshop was to give you a stronger capacity to influence the future.

- Everyone can find their own way to exercise influence. Not everyone needs to be an activist in the traditional sense of the word.

Japanese proverb / Slide 35

You should wrap up the workshop by giving the participants time to reflect. Give the group a few minutes to think about what thoughts they will leave with today. Alternatively, you can focus this moment of reflection on the participants' agency as a change-maker. In that case, the question can be "What action will I take next?". In a face-to-face workshop, the participants can write their thoughts on Post-it notes and post them on a wall. In an online workshop, you can ask the participants to enter their ideas in the chat window. You can read their ideas out loud, but try not to judge them. After the final moment of reflection, you can mention additional recommended reading materials to those who are interested and, of course, thank everyone for participating in Futures Frequency.

"THE POLAK GAME"

For more on Fred Polak's ideas, take a look at Polak, F. (1973): The Image of the Future. The matrix known as The Polak Game was developed by Stuart Candy and Peter Hayward. For more information, refer to the article Candy, S. & Hayward, P. (2017): The Polak Game, or: Where do you stand? December 2017, Journal of Futures Studies 22(2):5–14.

Wrap-up: What thoughts am I leaving with today? / Slide 36**Spoken part**

- Today, you've had the opportunity to engage in a lot of discussion and teamwork. I hope this process gave you plenty of new ideas and insights.
- What thoughts are you leaving with today? It can be a single word, one sentence, half an idea, an appeal to yourself or others – anything that is on your mind.
- Take a few minutes to write down your thoughts in the chat window or a Post-it note and post it on the wall.

More tools for those who are interested / Slide 37**Spoken part**

- If you want to continue to work with influencing the future, take a look at the other easy-to-adopt methods in the Futuremaker's toolbox.
- The future needs its makers! Thanks for being involved.

If you wish, you can collect feedback on the workshop either orally or by means of a feedback form.

Thanks and ending the workshop / Slide 38

What next after Futures Frequency?

Congratulations for getting your participants tuned to the Futures Frequency! We hope you had a successful and inspiring workshop. Don't worry if it didn't go completely smoothly. Workshops are like that. No matter how much you plan and prepare, there will always be surprises. The most important thing is that your group got together and you spent time consciously thinking about alternative futures and how to turn them into reality. As the facilitator, you can encourage the groups to share their visions and actions on social media using the hashtag #futuresfrequency.

Futures Frequency is a good first step towards future-oriented work. If you want to continue to work with influencing the future, take a look at the Futuremaker's toolbox on the Sitra website. There you'll find more easy-to-use methods.

Want more? These are some of our sources of inspiration:

- Futures Day materials: <https://tulevaisuuspaiva.fi/in-english/>
- Thing from the Future (Situations Lab): <http://situationlab.org/project/the-thing-from-the-future/>
- New Metaphors (Imaginaires Lab): <https://newmetaphors.com/>
- Transition Design, e.g. <https://transitiondesignseminarcmu.net/>
- Coursera: IFTF course: <https://www.coursera.org/specializations/futures-thinking> (paid)
- Become a Futurist course: <https://www.metafutureschool.org/p/become-a-futurist> (paid)
- Development, Impact & You toolkit: <https://diytoolkit.org/>
- How to make a difference (book): <https://www.adlibris.com/fi/kirja/how-to-make-a-difference-9781788401463>

Materials for children

- Futures School (children) tulevaisuuskoulu.fi/in-english/
- Teach the Future (children) <https://www.teachthefuture.org/>
- Futures Guidance: <https://tulevaisuusohjaus.fi/english/>

Want to learn more about facilitating? Here's a few reading recommendations:

- Sam Kaner: Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, 2014, John Wiley Sons Inc
- Priya Parker: The Art of Hosting: How we meet and why it matters? 2018, Riverhead Books
- Roger M. Schwarz: The Skilled Facilitator, 2016, John Wiley Sons Inc

Appendix 1: Slides



2



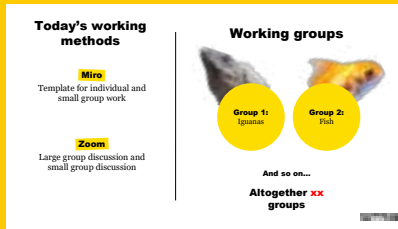
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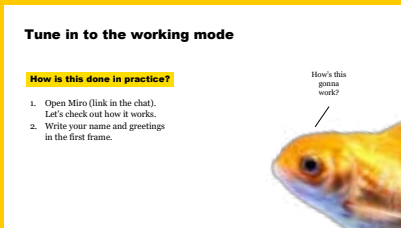
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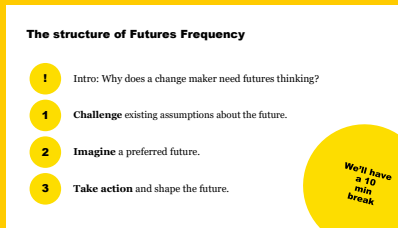
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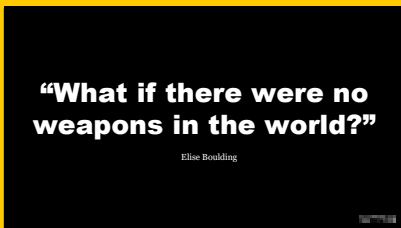
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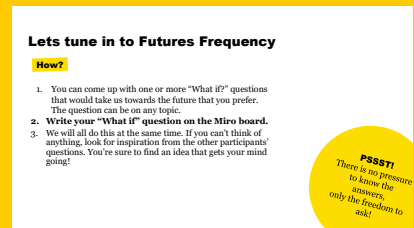
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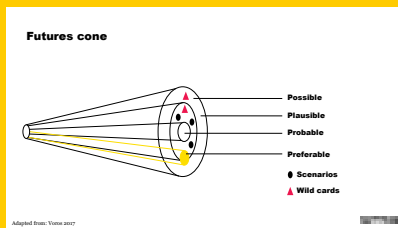
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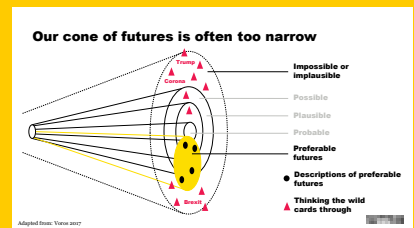
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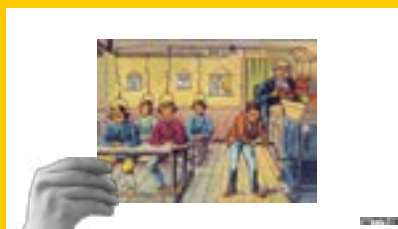
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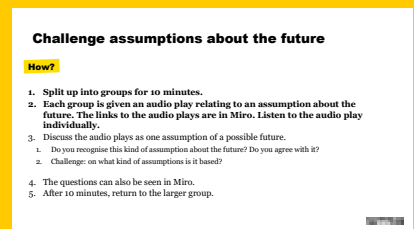
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19

1

1 Imagine a preferred future

2 Why? Because it's difficult to realise a future that we can't envisage.

3

20

Let's look back for a moment

21

How have things changed earlier?

How?

- Let's use Miro and do this together at the same time.
- Put Post-its on the timeline
 - Looking back: What has influenced the way the present moment is?
 - Looking forwards: What things are now shaping the future?

22

How will we proceed?

- Visualise individually
- Share and discuss
- Find a common direction
- Work in that direction
- Ideate actions

23

Imagine a preferred future

How?

- You'll work independently for about 7 minutes.
- Use pen and paper or start a blink document.
- Choose a theme for your preferred future. Think what is positive in the present moment that you wish to strengthen to make a better future?
- Explain how the future would be better and for whom? Be specific.

I wish to strengthen what, so that in 2050 what will be different/ what has happened / what will the world be like.

24

Break

10 min

25

Let's share our ideas about the future in small groups and find a common direction

How?

- Split up into small groups for 20 minutes.
- Write / copy your vision statement in Miro
- Discuss: What is common? What is different? From who's point of view are the visions preferable?
- Remember: Listen. Be kind. Accept different views and respect them.
- Choose a vision by voting; each one of you have three votes (red dot).
- In Miro, write a concise vision based on the preferred future you've chosen. Express the vision like this:

"In 2050 what/what's/where + verb + what"
 (ex: "In 2050, the carbon footprint of each film will be 80% smaller than now.")

After this session we will return to the bigger group.

26

1

1

2

3

Take action and shape the future.

Why? Because the only way to change the world is to take action.

27

A story of a meme that influenced people's way of thinking

Researcher Saara Särmi's David Hasselhoff meme made "all-male panels" an international viral phenomenon.

28

Spheres of transformation

Adapted from Leadership models of Wren & Leggat (2002)

29

Today's actions shape the future

VISION

30

Towards a preferred future

What actions do we need to make your vision happen?

How? 15 min

- Now you'll be the changemakers
- Ideate 3 actions towards your preferred future and document them in Miro
 - An action that influence people's behaviour or practices.
 - An action that influence structures (legislation, taxation etc.).
 - An action that influence people's thinking.

What would the journey towards your chosen vision be like?

How? 10 min

- You will spend a moment working in the editorial team of Future Nexus. Create the front page in zamp!
- Create a headline that describes the world on the path towards your vision. If you have time, you can add other news as well.

31

Recap: what did we just do?

- We challenged assumptions about the future.
- We imagined preferred futures.
- We ideated actions to shape the future.

32

The world is getting better.

I can't influence things.

I can influence things.

The world is getting worse.

Sources: Fred Pink

33

Shaping the future

Futures thinking

Change making

34

"Vision without action is daydream, action without vision is nightmare."

Japanese proverb

35

What's my takeaway?

36

Where can I find more tools to shape the future?

Future Makers Tool Box

<https://www.sitra.fi/en/projects/toolbox-for-people-shaping-the-future/>

37

THANK YOU!

38

Appendix 2: Alternative stories for Futures Frequency

The Futures Frequency workshop materials include stories that make the link between future-oriented thinking and change-making more concrete. The introduction of the workshop features the story of the sociologist and peace activist Elise Boulding, while part 1 features the view of a French artist about what a school classroom might look like in the year 2000. Part 3 features the story of the all-male panel. Below you'll find two alternative stories that you can choose to use in your workshop.

The Mont Fleur scenarios

- In 1991, a group of South African leaders from diverse backgrounds decided to develop scenarios on the country's future. Nelson Mandela had just been freed and negotiations on ending apartheid were under way. A diverse group of people representing both the government and the opposition met at the Mont Fleur Conference Venue to challenge the existing social situation and imagine the future with the help of a scenario method made famous by the oil company Shell.
- The outcome was four scenarios that helped create a common foundation and language for the dialogue about the future of South Africa. They were not action plans. Instead, they depicted various alternative future paths and helped illustrate cause-and-effect relationships. Nevertheless, they had a significant impact because they changed the thinking of many key stakeholders regarding the consequences of various actions, built an increased understanding of different perspectives and supported co-operation through shared comparisons (Segal 2007). Further factors behind its success included the participatory nature of the process and the engagement of various stakeholders. As the process was separate from the official negotiations, it was also easier for the participants to imagine the future more openly.

A river in New Zealand was granted legal personhood

- The thinking of the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand differs significantly from the traditional Western assumption that people have control over nature and ownership of natural resources. This conflict forced legal experts and policy-makers in New Zealand to consider which paradigm is correct. Could things be different? The underlying issue behind

the dispute was the Whanganui, a river that the Māori people feel a deep spiritual connection to: they consider it to be a forefather and they even have a saying that goes “I am the River, the River is me”.

- Activities such as gravel extraction, dredging and water regulation had diminished the ecological state of the river and the ability of the Māori people to earn a livelihood by fishing. New Zealand granted legal personhood to the river in 2017. The river was assigned two officer-guardians, one representing the state and one representing the Māori communities. The officer-guardians can, for example, take legal action on the river’s behalf without having to show that any persons suffered adverse impacts from the activity in question. The broader significance of the Whanganui case relates to the tensions in the relationship between nature and humans: is nature a resource or does it have intrinsic value? For example, can we imagine a world in which nature itself has rights? Can we apply different but parallel views of the world to our interpretation of law?

About the authors

Liisa Poussa is part of Sitra's Foresight and Insight team, which produces foresight information about the future and supports Finnish society with the interpretation and use of information. She is excited about popularising future-oriented thinking and developing methods that support that goal.

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Mikko Dufva is Sitra's future expert. In his work, he examines future trends, the tensions between these trends and mental images connected with the future. He also strives to identify issues that are not obvious but are nevertheless significant with regard to the future. Mikko has extensive experience in foresight and a doctorate in Science (Technology) on the creation of futures knowledge and systemic foresight.

Tools and materials

FACILITATOR'S SUPPORT MATERIALS:

Futures Frequency and videos to support facilitating

www.futuresfrequency.fi

Futuremaker's toolbox

<https://www.sitra.fi/en/projects/toolbox-for-people-shaping-the-future/>

The logo for 'Futures Frequency' features the words 'FUTURES' and 'FREQUENCY' in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is overlaid with several thin, black, hand-drawn wavy lines that resemble a sound wave or a frequency spectrum.

Futures Frequency is a workshop method for building alternative futures.

The logo for 'Futuremaker's Toolbox' features the words 'FUTUREMAKER'S', 'TOOL', and '-BOX' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the text are several thin, black, hand-drawn wavy lines. To the left of the lines are four small black triangles pointing right, and to the right is a yellow circle with a black triangle pointing right, resembling a play button.

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