

Active Futures Thinking



TOOL TYPE: FUTURES WORKOUT

RUN TIME: 60-90 MINUTES; PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Blend of methods adapted to support intergenerational equity.

Inspired by the work of:

Katie King & Julia Rose West;

Sohail Inayatullah;

Sirkka Heinonen & Juho Ruotsalainen.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

1-5 people

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Virtual:

- Internet connections;
- Virtual collaboration board;
- Online calling platform.

In-Person:

- Markers;
- Sticky notes;
- Printouts of the templates;
- Projector.

KNOWN APPLICATIONS

Personal Development;
Team Building;
Mini-workshop.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Dominant future images (e.g. sci-fi movies; fancy tech; archetypical collapse, decay, vs. utopias; hyped megatrends; etc.) are too often the sources used for imagining the future. This tool is a set of three exercises which can be used individually or in a group to actively engage your own futures thinking and relate to your own concerns and images of the future.

HOW IT SUPPORTS INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY

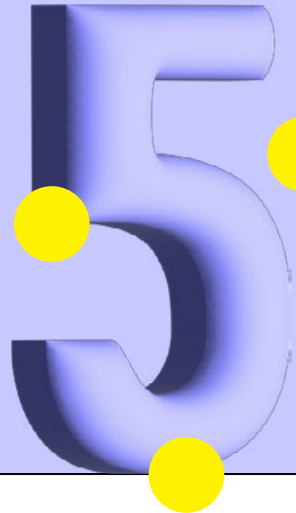
The tool facilitates imagination of longer-term changes and future potentials. It fosters self-awareness about individual and collective anticipatory patterns. It also can support intercultural awareness with respect to different conceptions of time and how they affect worldviews and values systems vis a vis current and future generations.

CONCISE INSTRUCTIONS

Use the worksheets under Resources to complete the following exercises:

- a) Mapping Past - Present - Future
- b) Patterns of Futures Change
- c) Futures Window

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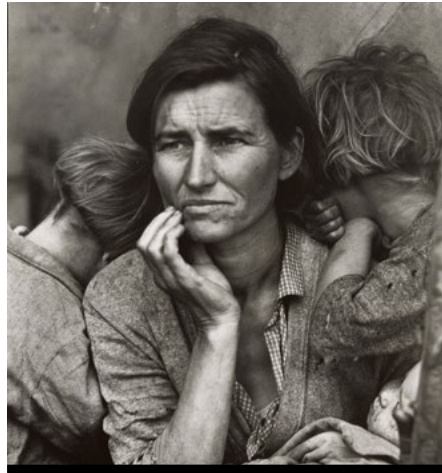
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STEP 1 - MAPPING PAST PRESENT FUTURE

Instructions: See the images below and reflect on how much intergenerational relations have changed over the years. What has changed more? What is the same?



"Sadie Pfeiffer, Spinner in Cotton Mill"
© Lewis W. Hine, /J. Paul Getty Museum



"Copy print of Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California"
© Dorothea Lange, /J. Paul Getty Museum



© CHIPPPIX / Shutterstock.com



"Gracie Clark, Spinner, With Her Family,
Hunsville, Alabama"
© Lewis W. Hine, /J. Paul Getty Museum

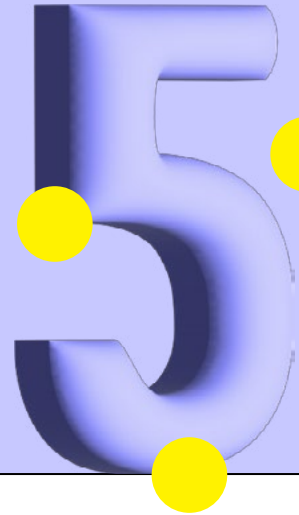


"Street Refreshment Stalls"
© Felice Beato, /J. Paul Getty Museum



© Lilie Graphie / Shutterstock.com

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STEP 1 - MAPPING PAST PRESENT FUTURE

Instructions: Think of changes in intergenerational relations over the last 200 years that connect to social, political, cultural, economical technological, environmental developments.

Social

Political

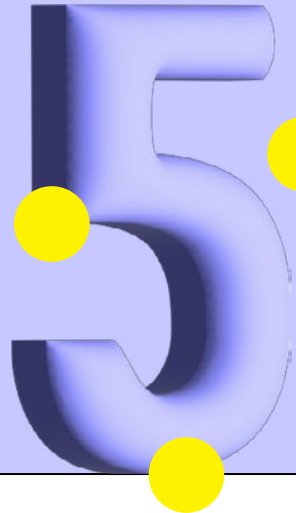
Technological

Cultural

Environmental

Economical

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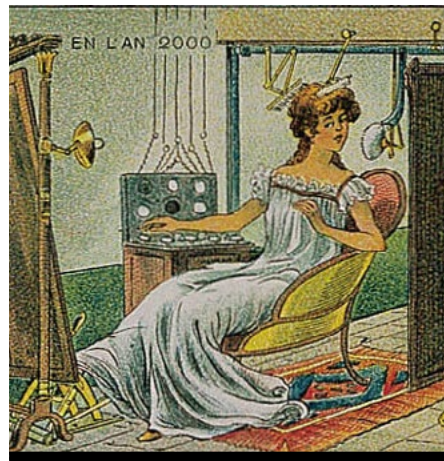
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STEP 1 - MAPPING PAST PRESENT FUTURE

Instructions: See some retro imaginaries below and reflect on past people anticipatory assumptions. What did they expect? What visions did they have about the future? Did their imaginaries affect their descendants, and if yes, how? What hopes, fears, aspirations can you infer looking at these retro imaginaries? How different are their imaginaries from our own?



"A musical farce comedy, The air ship" (1898)
 © J. M. Gaites/Library of Congress



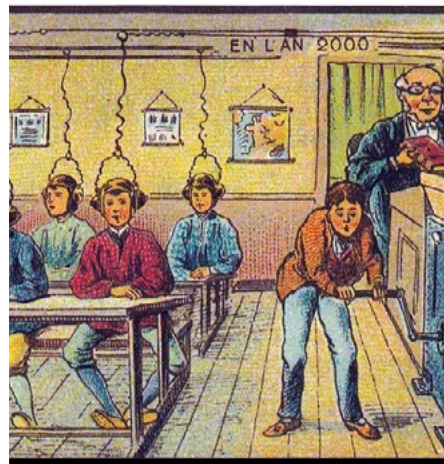
"En l'an 2000 : Madame a sa toilette" (1910)
 © Villemard/Bibliothèque Nationale de France Gallica



"Leaving the Opera in 2000" (1902)
 © A. Robida/Library of Congress



"En l'an 2000 : The Rural Postman (1910)
 © Jean-marc Côté et al./Bibliothèque Nationale de France Gallica



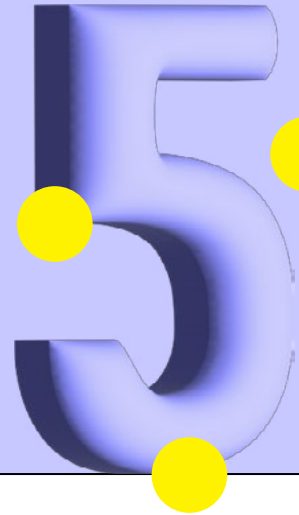
"En l'an 2000 : A l'école" (1910)
 © Jean-marc Côté et al./Bibliothèque Nationale de France Gallica



"Simultaneous Visions" (1912)
 © Umberto Boccioni/Wikiart

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STEP 1 - MAPPING PAST PRESENT FUTURE

Instructions: Create your own timeline on how intergenerational relations have changed and might change in the future.

- Put in the timeline important moments that have led and may lead change.
- What continuities and discontinuities do you identify?

Past

Present

Future

Difficult to imagine futures?

Tips:

- Think of potential changes in society, politics, economy, technology, culture, environment, etc.
- Experiment with different conceptions of time
- Use as inspiration: the Futures Window

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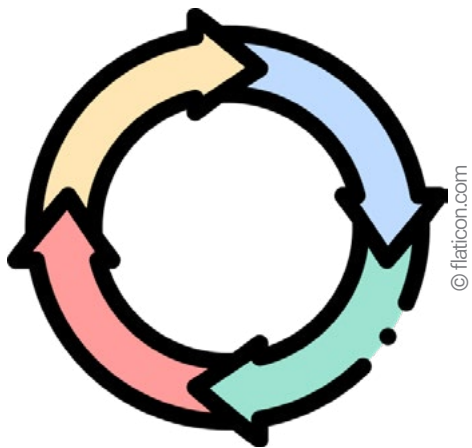
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STEP 2 - REFLECTING ON PATTERNS OF CHANGE

Instructions: What if you explore different conceptions of time beyond linear (e.g. cyclical, pendulum, spiral)?

- How do you conceive time?
- How does the society you live in perceive it?

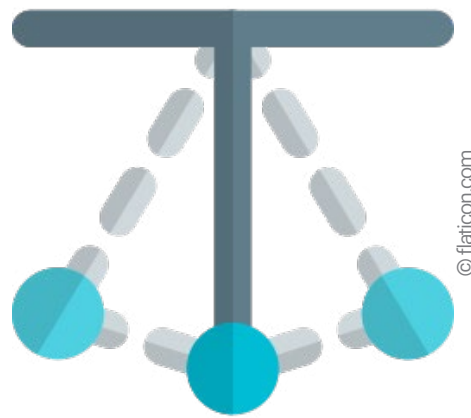
Capture personal or group discussions on sticky notes.



the future could be

cyclical

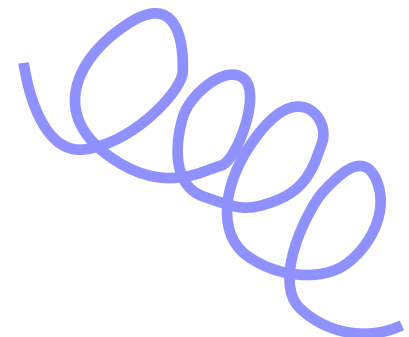
Think of time as a cycle with ups and downs reflecting cycles of natural lives: spring-summer-fall-winter or birth-growth-maturity-death



the future could be

a pendulum

Societies and organisations swing back and forth between two extremes (e.g. modernity v.s. traditionalism; enlightenment v.s. obscurantism / dark ages)



the future could be

a spiral

With linear parts oriented towards progress, and some cyclical parts

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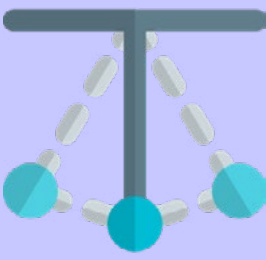
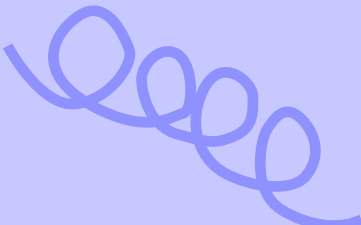
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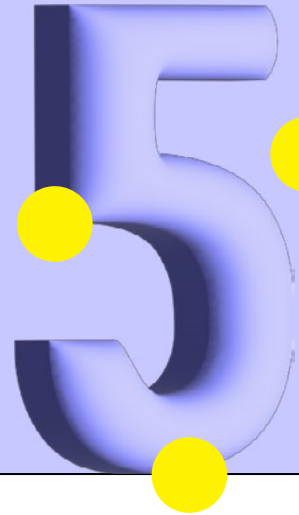
Instructions: Assuming that the future can be linear, cyclical, pendulum or spiral, what futures of intergenerational relations can you imagine? Describe them.

The future is...

Ideas...

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STEP 3 - FUTURES WINDOW

Instructions: Look out the Futures Window on Intergenerational Equity and imagine how intergenerational relations will be understood 100 years from now. Time travelling can be facilitated by responding to the following prompt - feel free to add yours!

Imagine you wake up in 100 years from now:

- What do you see around you? What can you see outside a window?
- Who is with you? What's on the news?
- How does it smell? How does it feel?



Note: Imagining how different a future can be is not always easy, neither does it come natural to many people. Sometimes we need a creative prompt for our imagination to be triggered. While Futures Window in its original version (Heinonen et al.) calls for crowd sourcing of images, visuals and videos (check Futures Window here), we took the liberty to create a futures window on intergenerational equity as a handy creative prompt to spark your imagination (images on next page).

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STEP 3 - FUTURES WINDOW

All the images and visuals depicted are generated through the AI powered tool, DALL-E-2. You can try to generate your own AI futures images by providing different prompts.



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EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **Practice imagining futures** from a variety of starting points.
- **Activation of long-term futures thinking.** Many people tend to think of the future as a mere extrapolation of the present.
- **Conceiving a diverse range of potential changes,** discontinuities and developments.
- **Self-awareness** in relation to individual and collective anticipation patterns.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

- [“Futures Studies: Theories and Methods.”](#) In There’s a Future: Visions for a Better World, 37–63. Spain: BBVA Open Mind. Inayatullah, Sohail. 2012.
- Futures Thinking Playbook. Teach the Future. King, Katie & West, Julia Rose. 2018. <https://library.teachthefuture.org/product/futures-thinking-playbook/>
- “Futures Clinique — Method for Promoting Futures Learning and Provoking Radical Futures.” European Journal of Futures Research 1 (1): 7. Heinonen, Sirikka, and Juho Ruotsalainen. 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40309-013-0007-4>.

FEEDBACK

Help grow this collection. Give us your feedback.