United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

unitar United Nations Institute for Training and Research

cifal Jeju

UNDRR UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

MCR 2030 Making Cities Resilient

UN environment programme

CTCN UN Climate Technology Centre & Network

Online Workshop

Strengthening Whole-of-Society Capacities for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience: Inclusive Governance and Innovative Mechanisms

12 - 14 May 2026

14:30 - 18:00 Seoul, GMT+9
12:30 - 16:00 Bangkok, GMT+7
01:30 - 05:00 New York , GMT-5

Photo from : The Malaysian Reserve

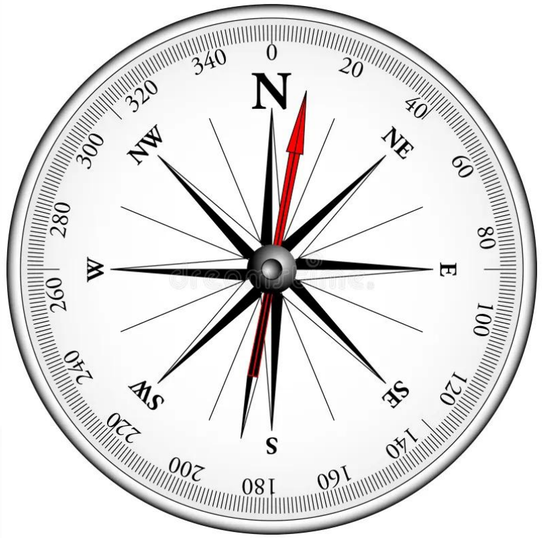
Joint Certificate Programme

Defining Strategic Foresight

"An empirical and scientifically based approach to understanding the future" (Lombardo, 2008).

"A field of inquiry that involves systematic and explicit thinking about alternative futures" (Bell, 2011).

"Futures studies is an art and a science with a strong emphasis on imagination and creativity in creating different possible futures. Its main purpose is to discover and master the complex chains of cause and effect through conceptualization, systemic approach, and feedback loops, ultimately providing innovation in the social and technological fields" (Motti, 2022).



The Futures Cone

The Future is NOT…

Predictable

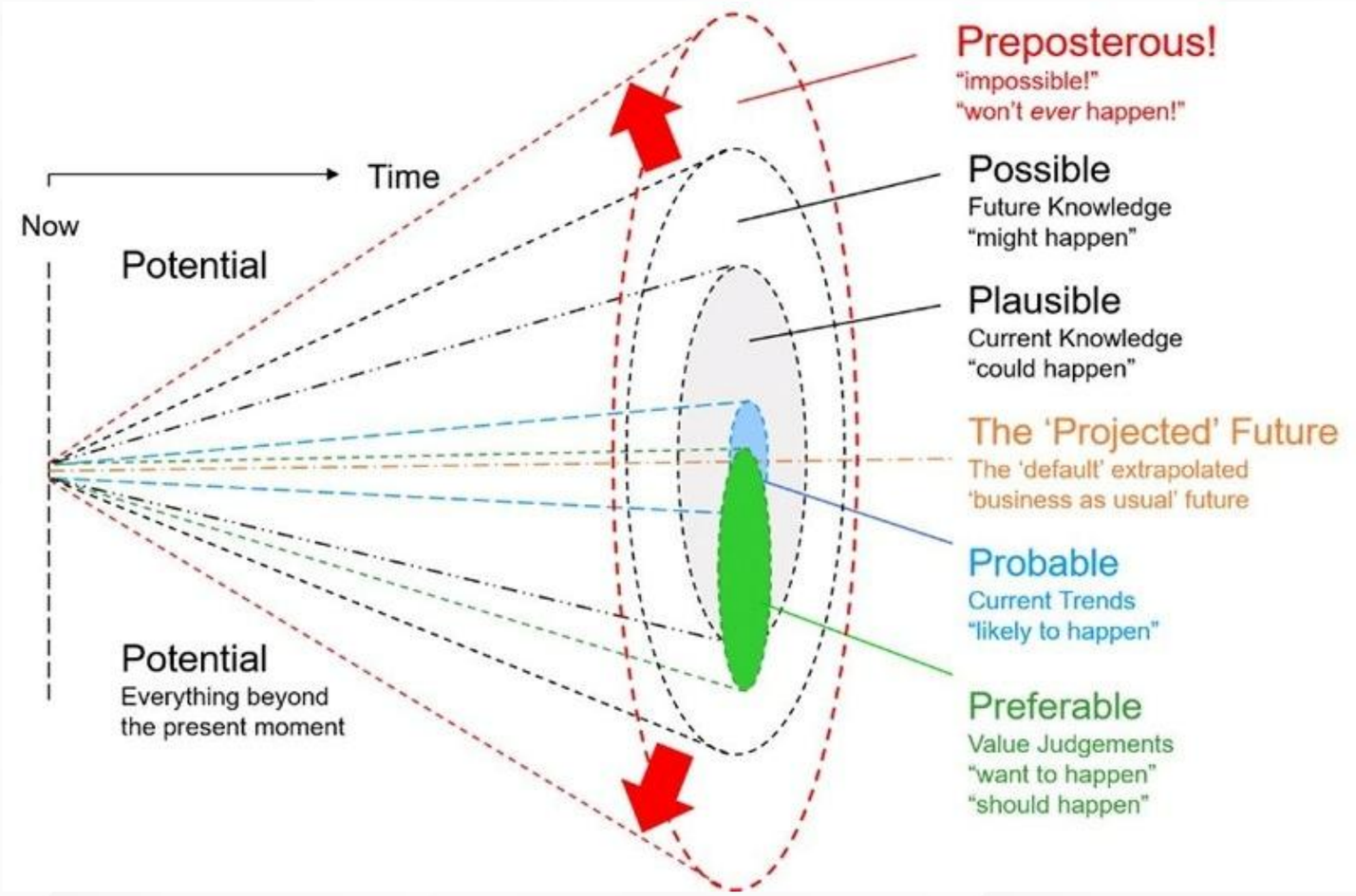
We can only create images and ideas of what events we will be facing in the future—through “many alternative futures”.

Pre-determined

We can assess what could or might happen when we consider different options. There is not one future.

Unaffectable

We can affect and shape the future through values, actions, and decision at present.



Importance for Policy Making

*1. Today's policies and decisions have **consequences** for future and future generations.*

To enable sustainable transition, we need to understand present *and* future challenges, leverage opportunities and overcome barriers to change and transformation.

*2. The future is **uncertain**. Future uncertainties determine the effectiveness of today's strategies.*

To make informed, strategic, and just decisions that address both present and future challenges effectively, we need to understand and navigate the future.

*3. The future can be **influenced** and shaped by today's actions and decisions.*

To make effective and sustainable decisions that are robust against future uncertainties, we need to explore and account for future alternatives.

Navigate uncertainty and chart paths towards desired outcomes

Fostering strategic foresight capacity means cultivating structured methods that help navigating uncertainty, imagining better futures and develop policy pathways already today.

It is about nurturing proactive mindsets and exploring possible and desired futures in the face of an uncertain tomorrow.

Foresight is an approach for systematically thinking and acting in a long-term and anticipatory way under conditions of uncertainty

Foresight Methods

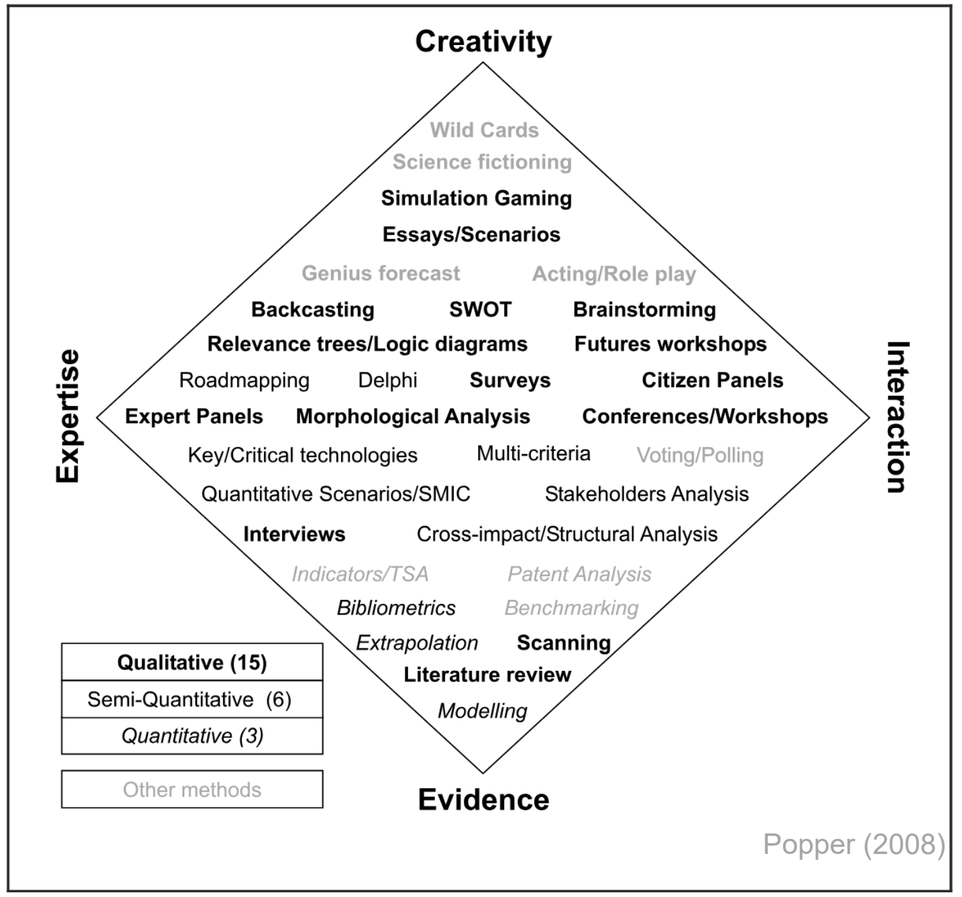
Expert-based and academic
- e.g. assessment of trends in temperature rise and extreme weather events

Exploratory and creative
- e.g. envisioning long-term and systemic transformation of societal norms and values across economic, technological and social dimensions

Stakeholder-led and interaction based
- e.g. scenario workshop series on systems and cross-impact analysis of climate change, resource extraction and food systems in near- and long-term.

Quantitative based
- e.g. integrated assessment modelling of drought, heat and wind projections on agricultural production and land-use

Mixed-methods
- Combining factual data, imaginative exploration, diverse viewpoints, and measurable outcomes.



Exploring Change

Horizon scanning

Identify emerging changes that could have a big impact on a country or a specific sector.

Three Horizons

Identify drivers of change to understand societal transitions.

Futures wheel

Explore direct and indirect consequences of trends, events, and emerging issues.

CASE: UNEP – Signals of Change and Critical Shifts

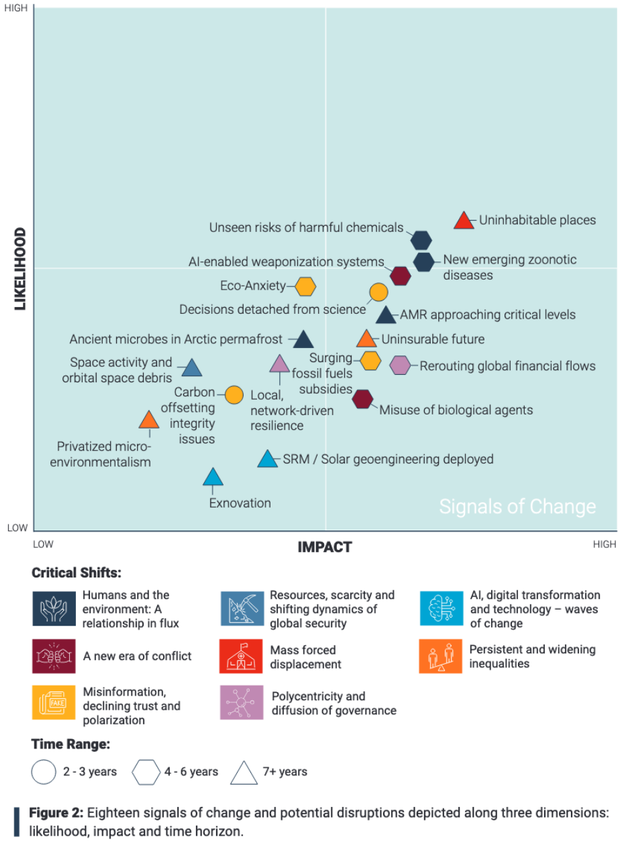
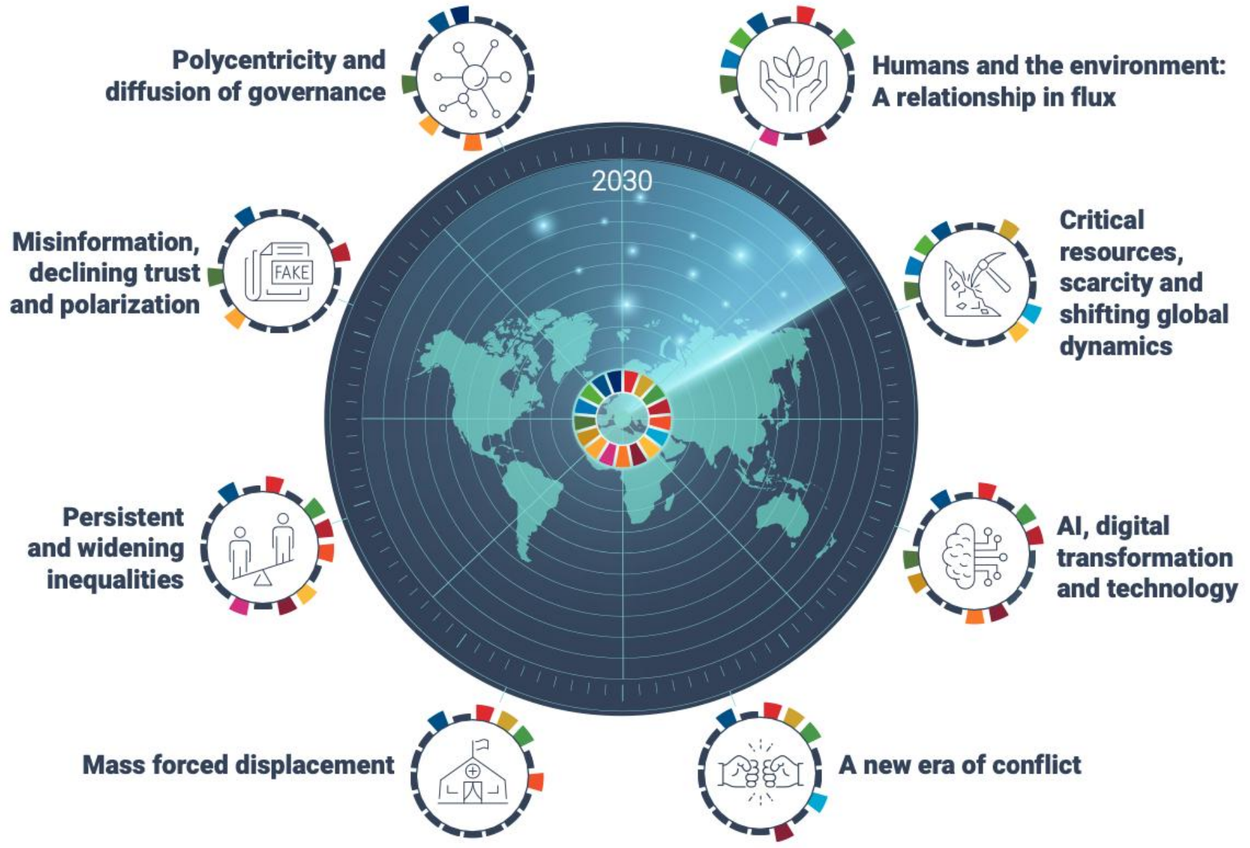
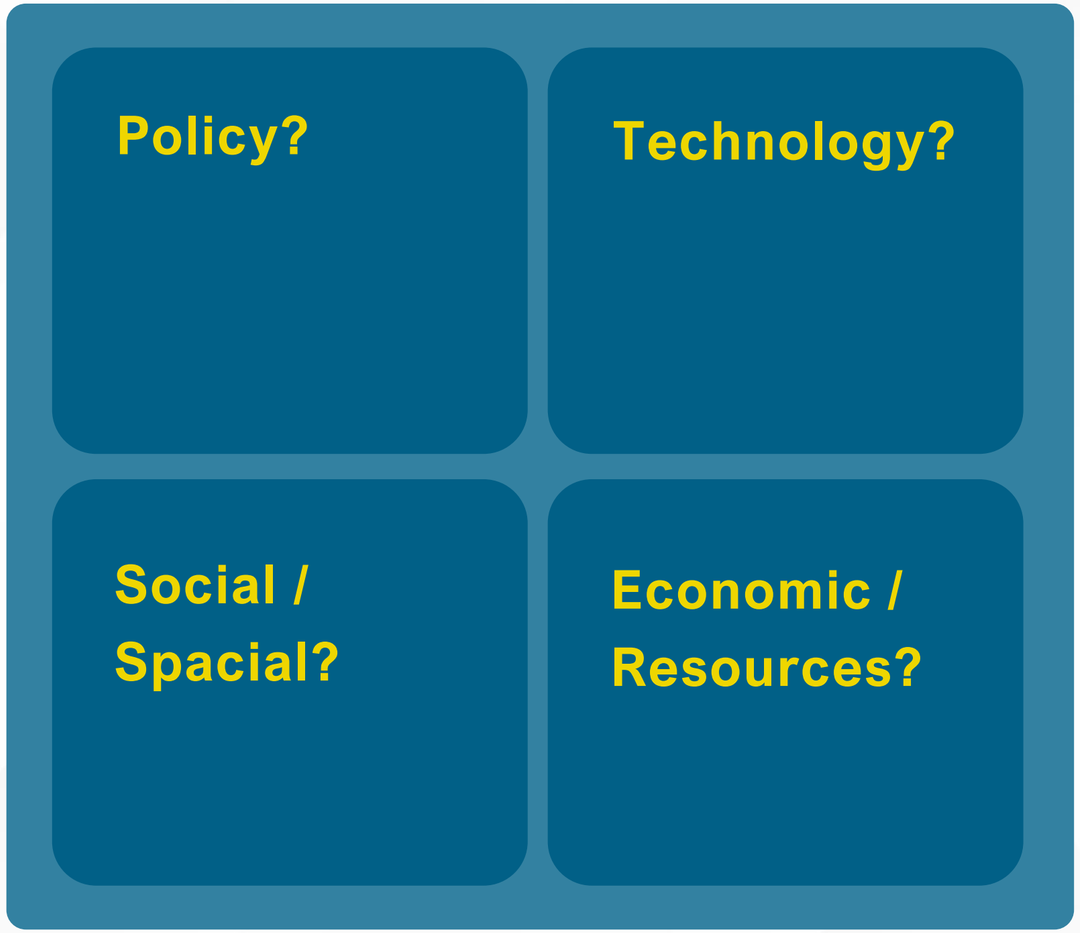


Figure 2: Eighteen signals of change and potential disruptions depicted along three dimensions: likelihood, impact and time horizon.



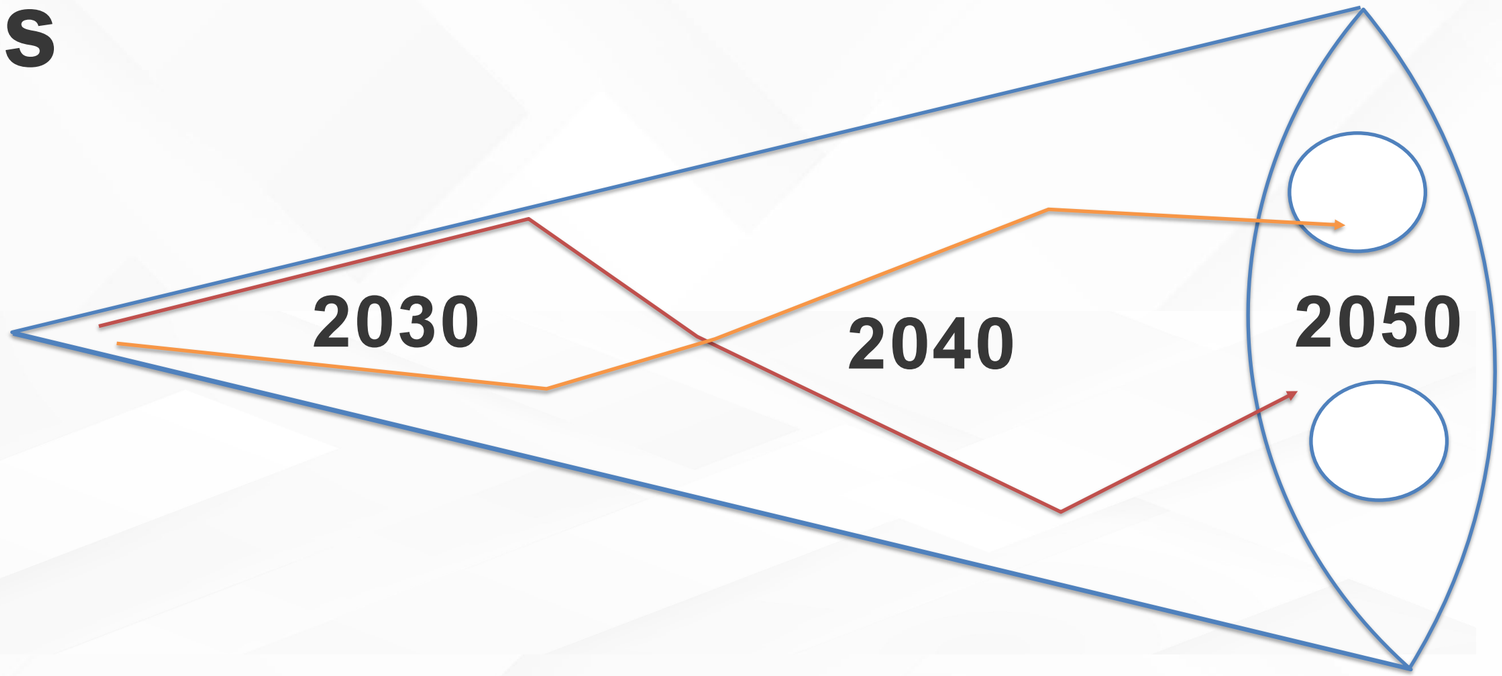
Drivers of Change

What are the emerging drivers of change that could/will have significant impact on climate action in your country/public institution?



Future Scenarios

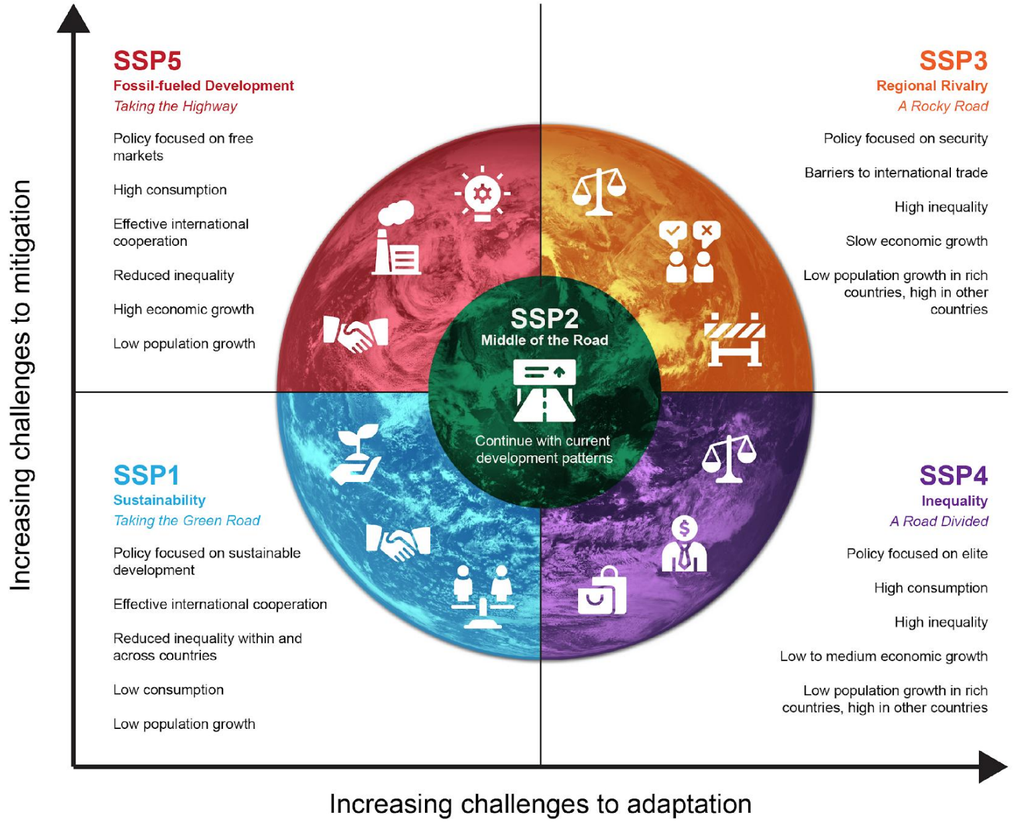
Can you imagine a Future in which the driver / trend accelerated?



Scenario Planning

Engage in understanding of how the future may evolve based on a set of driving forces and their future conditions.

CASE: IPCC Scenarios



Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs)

Central to this scenario framework are the SSPs, which describe a range of plausible future conditions—from trajectories marked by strong global cooperation and equity to those characterized by fragmentation, inequality, and limited technological progress.

By combining these SSPs with different Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) or forcing levels, researchers create a scenario “matrix” that captures not only the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, but also the social, economic, and political contexts that drive them.

Backcasting - to formulate a response

Backcasting is a foresight methodology specifically used to facilitate strategic long-term planning and policy processes.

It starts with defining shared visions of one or multiple desirable futures and then works backward to identify the steps, policies, and actions needed to achieve that future.

Backcasting focuses on envisioning a goal and exploring how to get there.