

SHAPING WHAT'S NEXT

Exploring Probable, Possible, and Preferable Futures

For Individuals

Use this as a personal reflection exercise — journaling, peer dialogue, or structured check-ins. Set aside at least 15–30 minutes.

Pro Tip: Do this with a trusted peer. They will surface blind spots you might not see on your own.

How do my current mindsets and assumptions reflect the probable future?

Which of the futures reflected in the matrix feels most probable for my work and context, and why?

What assumptions am I making about the future that may need to be challenged?



What would I need to unlearn or embrace to move toward the preferable future?

How might my skills, relationships, or leadership style need to evolve to thrive in a preferable future?

Where do I see opportunities for my own leadership and influence?

Where do I see opportunities to experiment and learn, even if only in small ways?

How am I contributing to harmful patterns (e.g., tokenism, silos, extractive experimentation), and what's within my control to change?

For Organizations

Best used as part of strategy development or review exercises (e.g., alongside SWOT, Theory of Change, or risk analysis). Recommended as a half-day team session.

Pro Tip: Rotate facilitation roles. Don't let only senior staff run the exercise — different perspectives surface different assumptions.

Which parts of our current strategy assume the system will stay the same?

Which quadrant(s) do we see ourselves operating in most often — and what does that say about our current approach?





What adaptations will help us thrive in different future scenarios?

How resilient is our strategy if the probable futures play out in ways that constrain or harm?

Where can we shift resources, power, or decision-making toward the preferable futures?

How can we create space for experimentation and learning without drifting into tokenism?

How do our internal mindsets, incentives, and practices either enable or block experimentation and adaptation?



How do we balance what is worth conserving with what must change?

In what ways do we need to redefine our role (e.g., as enablers, connectors, advocates) to remain relevant and impactful?

What partnerships or alliances could strengthen our ability to shape possible futures into preferable ones?

For the Ecosystem / Sector

Use in multi-stakeholder dialogues (INGOs, CSOs, governments, funders, media). Works best in workshop formats with breakout groups.

Pro Tip: Invite funders and government into the conversation only after local actors have shaped the baseline insights.

Where are we seeing early signals of possible futures taking shape?

What systemic patterns do we see repeated across the quadrants and what do they reveal about where change is most urgently needed?

What role should INGOs, governments, donors, local communities, and philanthropy play in enabling (not controlling) change?

How do the choices of governments, funders, INGOs, and local actors interact to either reinforce or disrupt harmful futures?

How do we strengthen ripple effects across movements, sectors, and geographies?

- *What would it take to align diverse actors around a shared preferable vision?*
- *Where are the leverage points where collective action could make the biggest shift toward preferable futures?*
- *What would shared accountability for a preferable future look like — and how can we track progress?*
- *How can we use narratives, storytelling, and cross-sector collaboration to move from possible to preferable futures?*