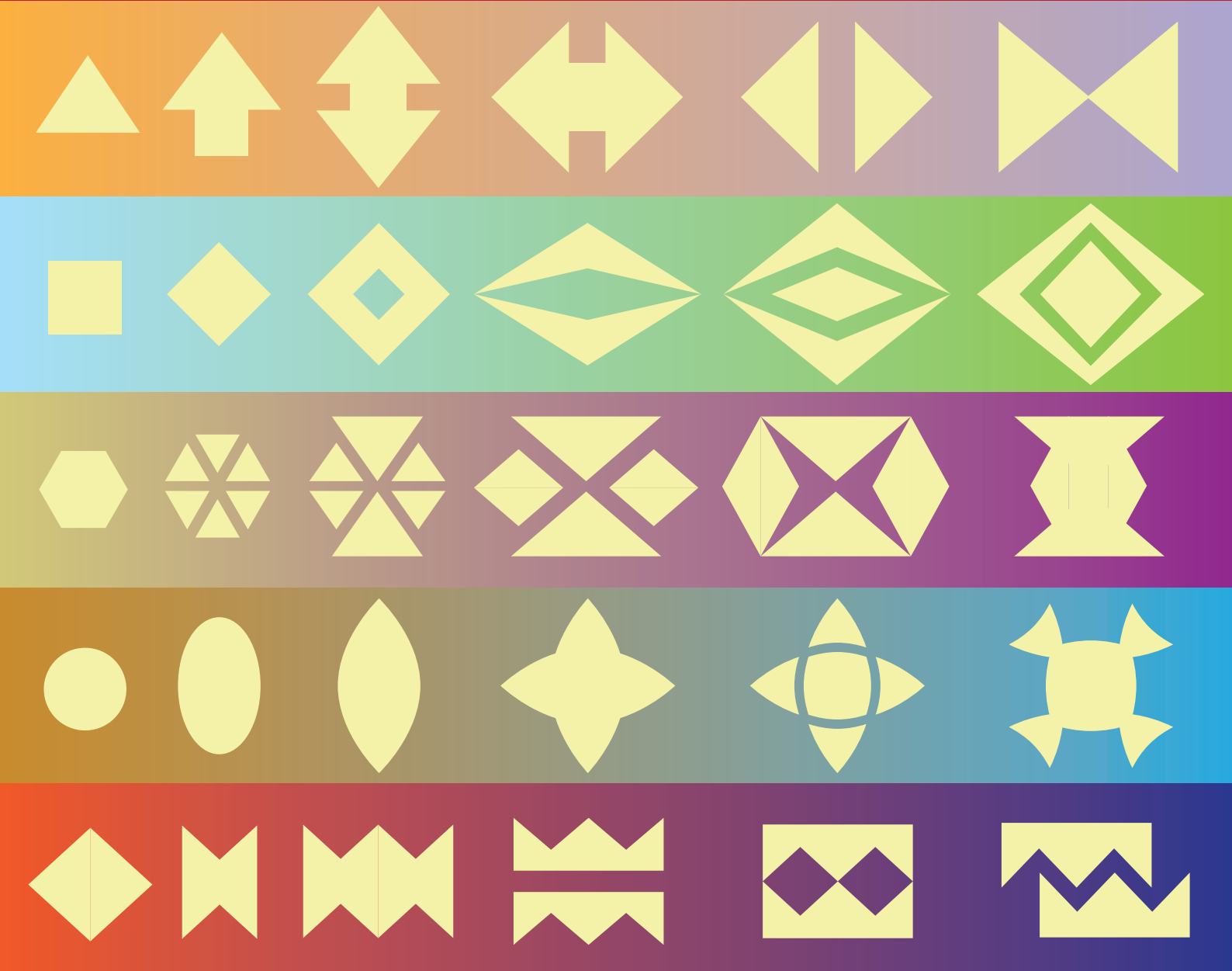


CHANSE

Futures of Digital Transformations:

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT



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with contributions from
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support from Fisayo
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Funded by
the European Union

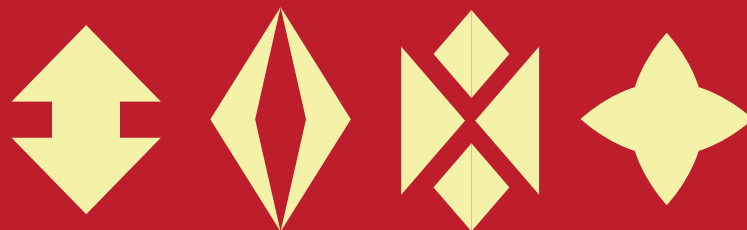


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Executive Summary and Purpose of the Document

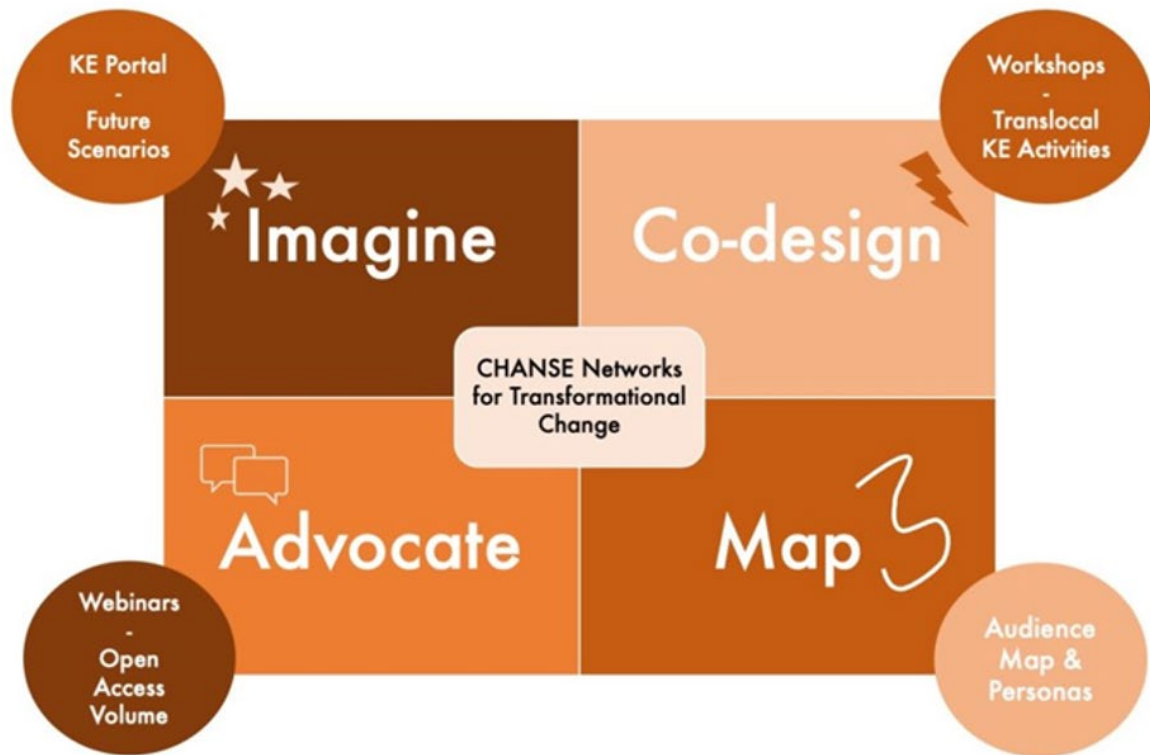
“Networks for Transformational Change” was the Knowledge Exchange Facilitation (KEF) Programme for the 26 Digital Transformations (DT) projects sponsored by the Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe (CHANSE). Among the multitude of initiatives to strengthen ties, promote equitable knowledge generation and harness the potential of Digital Transformations for good, the CHANSE-KEF team collaborated with foresight experts, CHANSE colleagues, funders, and others on workshops and scenario development, and critically reflected on the scenarios’ impact.

The purpose of developing CHANSE future explorations is two-fold. Firstly, we aim to empower CHANSE researchers, especially those at an early stage in their careers, to engage in interdisciplinary, out-of-the-box dialogue, to imagine and potentially realise different futures. Secondly, we hope that our reflections would serve as provocations and inspiration to CHANSE and other policy and research agencies when formulating future funding calls and approaches around Digital Transformations. Such work, when expanded, has the potential to shape the course of transformative digital research and innovation across Europe.

In this document, we outline our approach and process regarding future explorations. After this Summary (1), we give a background of our CHANSE-KEF journey (2), as well as an introduction to foresight and futures methodologies (3). We then offer an overview of the activities and results of our foresight engagement (4): from our scenarios development workshops (4.1) led by Fisayo Oyewale, connected to the CHANSE Mid-term conference in Bucharest, Romania (2024), to our five futures scenarios (4.2), and from our consultation (4.3) and an online round table facilitated by Bianca Dragomir, to reflections derived from this (4.4). We conclude with some final reflections (5), as well as useful resources (6).

Along this journey, a wealth of insights from the foresight experts and CHANSE colleagues suggests probable digital futures, but also those that might be possible and desirable. Despite constraints in time, budget and resources, this work has proven a very fruitful endeavour. It not only captures experts’ hopes and anxieties, but it also gives us a glimpse into how beneficial these explorations would be - for funders, researchers, societies - on a larger scale and in the long term in relation to the reconfiguration of social connections, performative identities, the planning of infrastructure, the ethics of tech governance, and the desire for digital equity and education for good.

“Networks for Transformational Change”: The CHANSE Knowledge Exchange Facilitators’ work 2023-2026



Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe (CHANSE) is a joint initiative of 27 research funding organisations from 24 countries. The CHANSE Knowledge Exchange Facilitator (CHANSE-KEF) programme, ‘Networks for Transformational Change’, brought together CHANSE researchers, external participants, funders and policy makers across 26 European projects on Digital Transformations (DT) over the course of three years.

The CHANSE-KEF team aimed to do knowledge exchange (KE) differently. This is because we recognise that KE is highly under-theorised, often stereotyped and largely still analogue in its concepts which are then digitised. Inspired by efforts to advance democratic innovation and radical transitions, and guided by design justice methodologies, we strengthened the cohesion of the CHANSE programme in four main approaches: we collaboratively mapped existing audiences and activities across CHANSE; co-designed new initiatives borne of the intersections between projects; publicly advocated for evidence-based policy changes; imagined new theorisations and practices of KE and DT. Overall, we succeeded in our aim to create playful, imaginative, equitable and safe online and hybrid spaces where collaborative design, charting, exploration and advisory work could be realised. Our work reached at least 2,000 people, and has seen more than 13,000 hits online.

Within the constellation of our initiatives, activities and networking, we looked to the futures of knowledge exchange and digital transformations and made them a central part of our efforts. We therefore pursued relevant explorations and collaborations, given the unique position, authority and insights of the CHANSE networks – ultimately, their power to shape these futures. The present document is based on the work of more than a half-dozen CHANSE projects and insights from 30+ Early Career Researchers (ECRs). The following are just some aspects of our overall work that directly informed our Futures explorations, as outlined in the next sections.

- We published an extensive audience report (Simandiraki-Grimshaw et al. 2024), based on 1,700+ question responses and online consultations with 63 ECRs and Knowledge Exchange Fellows from 24 CHANSE projects. The report’s recommendations provide guidance for centering audiences and climate at the core of future KE investment.
- We brought together and trained ECRs. At the second CHANSE conference (2024), we hosted an ECR-specific, futures-oriented networking event (see below), with some attendees reporting that it had changed their perspective in “profound” ways. We also established a cross-project ECR network with HERA Crisis KEF in 2026 (for more information, please contact the HERA Crisis team).
- We provided 5 CHANSE projects and the CREI cross-project initiative (see below) with the opportunity to offer their insights for DT and KE in the form of short videos.
- We funded and supported a cross-project initiative, Community Research Ethics Initiative (CREI), and released a report and recommendations on rethinking research ethics in digital times (Edelman et al. 2026). Our support included working with CREI to co-facilitate an ethics networking event at the final CHANSE conference (2025) and an ethics in research report launch (2026), bringing together more than 100 participants (researchers, policy makers etc.).
- We authored two policy briefs, one on supporting Early Career Researchers (Nienhaus et al. 2026) and one on nurturing collaboration across the social sciences and humanities (within and beyond the academy, Perry et al. 2026). They have been praised by policymakers and by academics from CHANSE and by externals for their potential to support wider systemic change.
- We are editing the first open access book to critically conceptualise the intersections of DT and KE, the first of its kind. This will include dedicated sections on the Futures of DT.



Developing Foresight and Future Methodologies for CHANSE

Foresight can be broadly understood as **a systematic and participatory approach to exploring possible futures** in order to **inform present-day reflection and action**. Within this understanding, the CHANSE-KEF programme approached foresight as a space for experimentation and exploration, rather than as a set of fully-fledged foresight processes. Conducted under significant time constraints and embedded within broader workshop dynamics, the activities described in this section should be understood as fast-paced engagements with foresight methods, inevitably limited in their depth, iteration, and long-term strategic anchoring. Nevertheless, these explorations created valuable openings for participants to engage with futures thinking and to reflect more critically on the assumptions, dynamics, and imaginaries shaping DT.

Three foresight-oriented explorations were undertaken:

- 1 A face-to-face **Futures Networking workshop** and facilitator training, to map tensions between the “weight of the past”, the “push of the present”, and the “pull of the future” using the Futures Triangle.
- 2 The development of **5 scenarios** around alternative digital futures, and critical feedback on those.
- 3 An online round table using **Causal Layered Analysis** (CLA) to unpack a complex issue within DT across multiple layers of analysis, from surface-level manifestations to systemic structures, worldviews, and deeper metaphors or cultural narratives.

Beyond their substantive outputs, these exercises also generated process-related benefits by encouraging participants to move beyond immediate problem-solving. They could additionally engage with uncertainty, surface implicit assumptions, and collectively imagine alternative pathways. In the following pages, we describe each exploration in turn, before offering some final reflections.

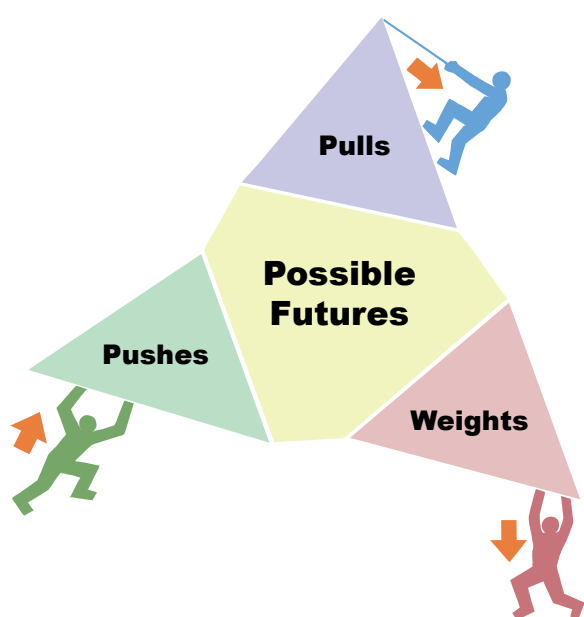


Collaborative Work Towards Conceivable Futures

4.1 Scenarios development workshops (2024)

One of the tenets of our CHANSE-KEF work was to explore how we can reconceptualise KE and DT together, and what their entangled future(s) might look like. Following our audience mapping activities, we took an opportunity at the CHANSE Mid-term conference (18-19 September 2024 in Bucharest, Romania) to harness researcher, funder and community insights and future visualisations. Together we aimed to create scenarios which would eventually lead to reflections for future researchers and policy makers.

The CHANSE-KEF team commissioned a foresight specialist, Fisayo Oyewale, to design and run a workshop targeted at Early Career Researchers (ECRs) as part of the CHANSE Mid-term conference. She based our explorations on the Futures Triangle developed by futurist Sohail Inayatullah (2008; 2023) (Figs. 1 and 2).



The pull of the future refers to images, aspirations, visions, or preferred futures that attract actors toward particular directions.

The push of the present captures current drivers of change, trends, and pressures already shaping the system.

The weight of the past refers to historical legacies, institutional inertia, cultural assumptions, habits, and structures that resist transformation.

Fig. 1: A rendition of Inayatullah's Futures Triangle. Image credit: Ian Kirkpatrick

The method is typically visualised as a triangle, with the issue under analysis placed at the centre and the three forces positioned at each vertex. Participants identify and discuss the factors operating within each dimension, allowing them to explore how futures are simultaneously enabled, constrained, and imagined. Inayatullah describes the method as a way to "map three competing factors" shaping change processes (Inayatullah 2023: 1).



*Fig. 2: Fisayo Oyewale delivering the futures workshop on 19 September 2024.
Photo credit: CHANSE-KEF team.*

56 people registered for the conference workshop, primarily ECRs, as well as some CHANSE cooperation partners and external invited guests. Oyewale also trained six peer-facilitators (three volunteers and the three members of the CHANSE-KEF team) to support delivery of the event. The peer-facilitators enabled greater small-group facilitation and discussion to emerge during application of the Futures Triangle (Fig. 3). Those who volunteered to act as peer-facilitators received one additional training workshop and a follow-up session from Oyewale. The former took place in the run up to the conference. Here peer-facilitators experienced the workshop themselves as participants, before being provided with a facilitator's guide and further guidelines on how to enable small-group interaction during the workshop. The follow-up session, after the conference (Fig. 4), was designed to reflect on the overall workshop and its debates.

During the conference, Oyewale and the peer-facilitators aimed to foster interdisciplinary dialogue between participants (33 people attended, representing at least 15 projects). There was an introductory plenary at the beginning of the workshop, when Oyewale explained foresight approaches and the conduct of the workshop. She then facilitated an icebreaker task (Fig. 2). This was followed by small-group engagements in break-out rooms. Under the peer-facilitators' guidance, participants ideated the future of DT in 2050, using multicoloured sticky notes to articulate ideas and reflections during semi-structured discussion of current conditions, challenges and mitigations towards their envisioned futures (Fig. 3). During the final plenary, all groups reconvened to present their results. The workshop was overwhelmingly well received, with the diversity of people and opinions, as well as the usefulness of the Futures Triangle, being popular takeaways.

Team: Trees

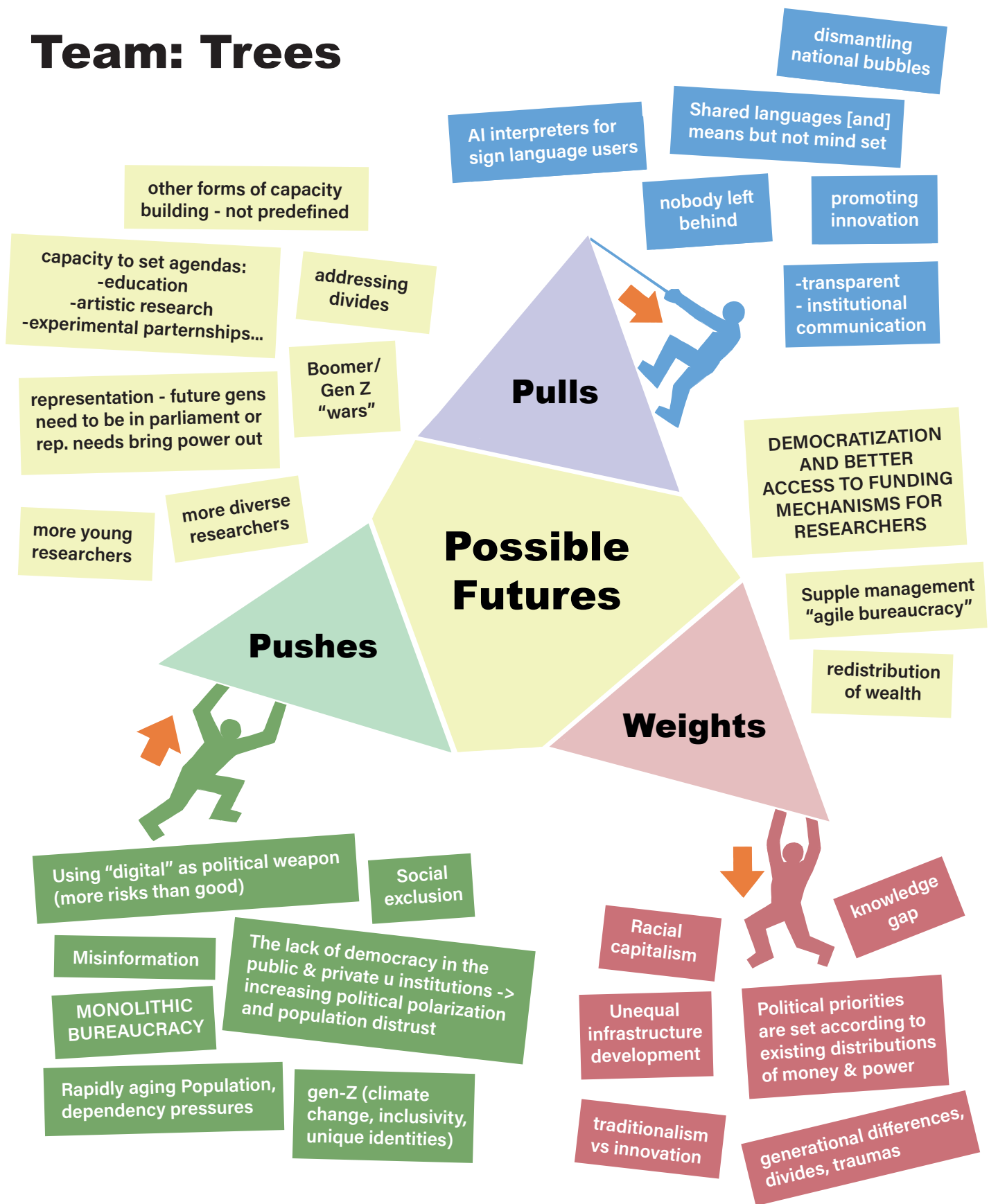


Fig 3: Resulting foresight input from one group of participants at Oyewale's foresight workshop. Team names were chosen to reflect natural elements and to be neutral, as much as possible: Trees, Stars, Microscopic Life, Sea Creatures. Image credit: Ian Kirkpatrick.

Foresight Workshop Facilitators' Debrief - Feedback

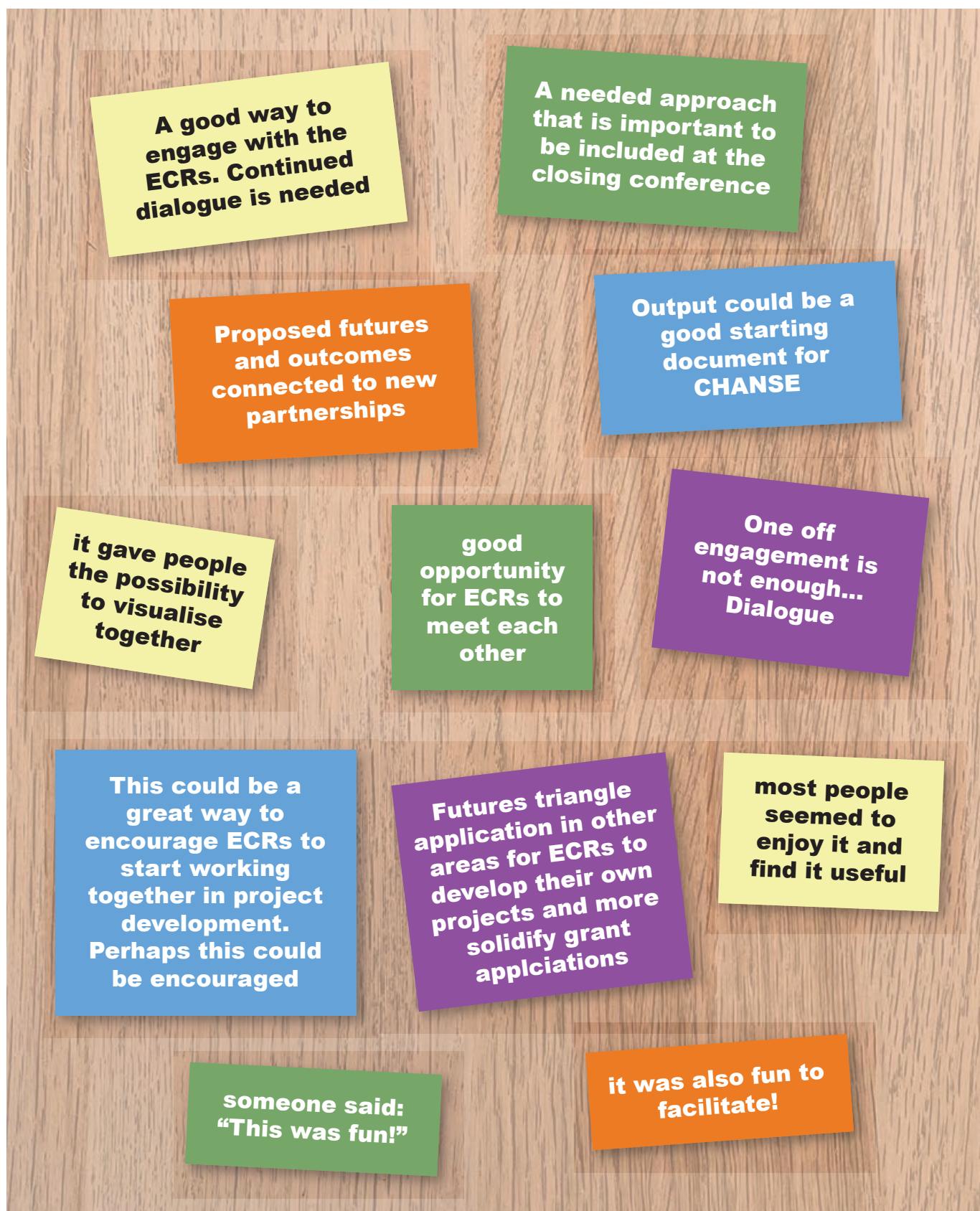


Fig 4: Feedback from peer facilitators on their experiences of the foresight event.
Image credit: Ian Kirkpatrick.

4.2 Five Future Scenarios (2025)

The next step in our Futures journey was to synthesise our colleagues' work into desirable scenarios for digital futures. By doing so, we aimed to give voice to researchers across CHANSE and to provide inspiration for future research directions and funding calls.

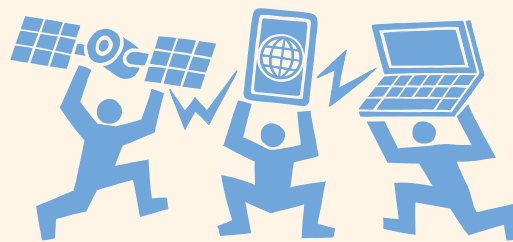
The scenarios were generated through specific steps:

- A** we transcribed and categorised all contributions (i.e. input, written and verbal) across the Futures Triangle's 'pushes', 'pulls' and 'weights';
- B** we identified five emerging themes across all these materials;
- C** we synthesised participants' ideas per theme and created a set of five possible scenarios for the year 2050. On the advice of Oyewale, the scenarios featured fictional characters to humanise them for readers.

Each scenario came with a variety of desirable achievements, provocations and reflections, in order to generate conversation and to highlight priorities for concerted investment according to the views of our respondents.

We include all the scenarios in this section, as they were developed in early 2025. Collectively, they revolve around wider social agency for technology, adequate international infrastructure, social and technological attitudes, and education. Readers are invited to consider whether these resonate with their personal and professional expertise, insights and experience. Importantly, we encourage reflection on what kinds of systems, structures, policies and cultural norms would be needed to achieve these realities.

SCENARIO 1



TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PEOPLE

In this future, human-centred technology dominates. Mundane, daily tasks have been automated, and we see improvements to digital wellbeing (and to wellbeing through the digital) around the world.

2050: At 20.00 in Tokyo, Japan, Hiroko, a psychologist, is getting ready for her 11.30 morning talk in Paris, France. Her personal everyday tasks (e.g. food preparation, housework) are automated and customised to her needs, leaving her time to sleep, exercise, spend time with her loved ones, work and prepare for her presentation. She teleports to a wellbeing technology meeting, where she presents on the merits of creating (and separating) digital and physical-only spaces, and therefore advocates for technology that augments but does not consume its users. She outlines how she and her colleagues have been able to co-create wellbeing technology policy and to design a series of interventions, based on consultation and research with diverse people that they have interviewed around the globe. In fact, with teleportation, it's easy for people to connect face to face for business and leisure, without necessarily using planes, screens or social media as much as they used to.

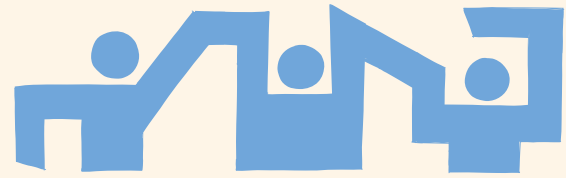
Desirable milestones to achieve this scenario:

Transport: It's easier for people to travel with zero carbon emissions, as there is no need to fly in planes: people use teleportation.

Work: Human-centred technology at work means that workers, by law, have the right to negotiate the design of any technology that affects them.

Wellbeing: Digital wellbeing is improved, in part, owing to less use of social media. Spaces are divided into digital and physical-only and can be personalised. People can go to parks/rooms that ban digital items.

SCENARIO 2



EVOLVING ATTITUDES TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In this scenario, after a surge of nationalism, global social backlash leads to more inclusive digital transformations. We see greater equality in rights and access to resources, more diversity in research and researchers, and prioritisation of grassroots innovation.

2050: After a surge of nationalism fueled by political, economic and technological wars, global social backlash against bias and nationalism followed. This now means that Bashar, based near Bordeaux, France (but whose grandparents were Syrian immigrants, still living in Toulon), can make decisions with Yiannis, based near Solingen, Germany, andENZOKUHLE, based near Pretoria, South Africa. All three are apple farmers and have free access to their local teleconferencing, teleportation and digital drafting facilities, and have been trained for free by a local digital literacy scheme. During a virtual coffee, logging in from their smartwatches with automatic translation, they discuss their harvest needs and shipments (Bashar and Yiannis can follow ENZOKUHLE's advice from the current season, when their harvest time comes) and how they will team up with some prototype developers in Frankfurt to make a new type of harvester which will bring down overheads. Bashar teleports to his grandparents' house one weekend a month and to his great aunt in Syria once a year and gets their feedback too.

Desirable milestones to achieve this scenario:

Grass roots change: Digital Transformations are a bottom-up approach by diverse researchers. Technology facilitates the partnering of those in need.

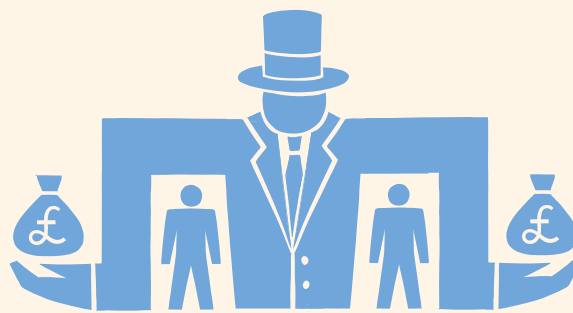
Intergenerational connections: All people maintain connections across at least three generations (connections do not need to be genetic or familial) and digital technologies are central to nurturing these relationships.

Fairness and equity: Through activism, there are online spaces which are fair and secure, and knowledge equity is the norm. "Thinking-with" spaces are key to collaboration and to reducing social inequalities.

Equality: No-one is left behind (digitally, socially) - humans are global citizens with equal rights and digital fragmentation does not exist. All people are able to access all forms of hardware/software for free.

4.2.3

SCENARIO 3



MONEY AND POWER

In this scenario, wealth and technology are habitually redistributed. There is economic development, but not necessarily capitalism – and research into technology is democratically funded.

2050: Sofia is a tech entrepreneur from Lithuania, whose small team specialises in the design and implementation of technologies that a) discourage and prevent misinformation, and b) calculate equitable living income. Her funding is internationally crowdsourced from a combination of regulated private and governmental sources, and is part of a bigger funding pot which prioritises and apportions investment to Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) globally, to reduce the possibility of social manipulation and to promote digital multivocality. She also pays lower taxes, because what she does is classed as a public service. Today, she is working on an AI algorithm that automatically calculates equitable income and technological adjustments for this fiscal year across three European countries - and she will send these adjustments to the relevant Work and Pensions Departments.

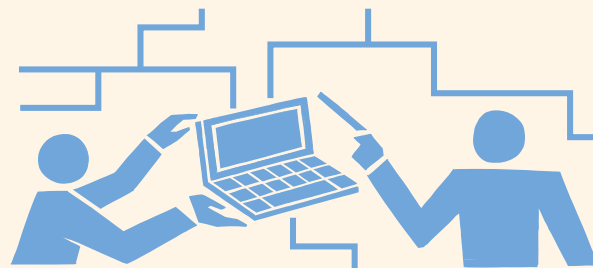
Desirable milestones to achieve this scenario:

Businesses: Research funding is invested in busting digital conglomerates, and in their place a large range of smaller businesses comes to dominate the technology industry.

Wealth adjustments: The falling cost of workplace technology and taxes for transnational companies lead to equitable wealth redistribution, with the technology industry directly funding universal basic income to all Europeans.

Digital control and research: Private companies' enabling of misinformation is counterbalanced by public funding of both development of technology and research on it, across disciplines, as well as increased infrastructure to protect whistle-blowers.

SCENARIO 4



GUIDANCE, REGULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In this scenario, robust guidance, regulation and infrastructure around digital technologies ensures common (and diversity-informed) frameworks of understanding and practice. These safeguard against abuses of people, climate, services and facilities.

2050: Chiara, who maintains a solar panel farm near Udine, Italy, votes in her regional elections, the latter heavily focused on climate action. She has been part of local initiatives that policymaker Enzo has consulted, in order for him to then legislate ethically on climate targets, AI, social media regulation and infrastructure. Chiara and Enzo, specifically, have spearheaded the drafting of legal guidance for safe and replicable solar infrastructure. Chiara hopes that Enzo can see this through in his second term: he is seeking re-election as one of many international representatives of a global body on digital innovation, who include governmental, industry, NGO and academic partners. This body coordinates supra-national infrastructure, from building projects (e.g. irrigation, schools, etc.) and equitable and factual communications (e.g. fact-checking) to rapid deployment of resources (e.g. vaccines, food surplus logistics, solar-generated electricity).

Desirable milestones to achieve this scenario:

Civil structures: International organisations think collectively and not at national level, e.g. UN, EU, in order to regain control of social media regulation. Social media platforms are in the hands of bodies composed of mixed and equitable groups of government, charity and industry representatives, NGOs, and academics.

Infrastructure: After geopolitical and geoeconomic conflict, there has been a breakthrough in achieving a systemic approach to climate action. Across the globe, individuals, communities and workplaces adhere to targets and reap personal and financial benefits from doing so.

Guidance: There is transparent, ethical governance around AI across the globe.

4.2.5

SCENARIO 5



KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION FOR GOOD

In this scenario, all people can access education about and training in digital skills, hence they have developed less fear and more awareness of technology's benefits and risks. Technological research and development are done by diverse groups, guided by compassion and care.

2050: Alejandro used to make a living from fishing in Alicante, Spain, and had been at a loss as to where to start with technology, apart from using a mobile phone and internet. They had to take early retirement due to mobility problems and began using an augmentative exoskeleton. Curious as to how it worked and how they could improve it, they decided to take advantage of online and face-to-face life-long learning classes in their area to enhance their digital skills. In the process, Alejandro discovered their aptitude for helping university and industry researchers dealing with mobility around the world to develop more customisable disability augmentation technology, therefore making design more human-centred. Alejandro now teaches part-time online, to cohorts of researchers, artists and other interested people, about the practical opportunities and limitations of mobility technology, as well as its impact on day-to-day life for people and the planet.

Desirable milestones to achieve this scenario:

Education: All people have access to life-long education and training regarding digital skills, leading to exceptional rates of technical literacy across all demographics.

Multivocal Research and Development: New platforms and technologies are continuously being developed through active, funded, experimental collaboration between publics, researchers, artists, businesses and experts in fields ranging from health and economy to politics, environmental and earth science, etc. No project can be funded if it is not fundamentally interdisciplinary, helping to break down barriers between subjects of expertise.

Innovation and the human: Knowledge communities, including young researchers and philosophical groups, sit at the core of digital development, and all innovation is based on compassion and care for both humans and more-than-humans.

4.3 Report Consultation (2025-2026)

A preliminary report which included these scenarios was circulated among CHANSE members in early 2025 and subsequently reviewed by Bianca Dragomir in 2026. The feedback was constructive, mainly pertaining to the scope of this initiative, compared to the in-depth, systematic and long-term version that foresight usually entails.

While the scenarios presented above offer a rich and largely optimistic exploration of possible digital futures, it is important to recognise the limitations inherent in how they were developed through a relatively open and time-constrained process. The scenarios themselves converge around shared normative directions, emphasising equity, accessibility, and human-centred design. As such, they leave less room for exploring tensions, trade-offs, or less desirable yet plausible trajectories of KE and DT combined. In addition, certain assumptions, such as widespread access to advanced technologies, high levels of global coordination and effective redistribution mechanisms, are assumed rather than critically examined, which constrains their analytical depth.

But we want to emphasise that we designed with optimism in mind, rather than all forms of scenario, as we recognise that some of the bibliography on techno-skepticism demands that we also imbue joy and hope in order to conceive positive change. Therefore, these scenarios make explicit the kinds of futures that are considered desirable by the contributors. Their value, therefore, lies less in their internal coherence or predictive strength, and more in their ability to showcase collective aspirations and underlying value orientations. In this sense, they function as reflective artefacts and as a starting point for more systematic foresight and policy development processes, providing a basis for dialogue, helping to identify what is prioritised, what is taken for granted, and what remains underexplored in current imaginaries of KE+DT. From a policy perspective, while such scenario sketches do not lend themselves directly to concrete recommendations, they still play a useful role in informing strategic thinking. Our work and intentions with these scenarios are also paralleled in other initiatives, which have similarly sought to provide challenges for reflection, discussion and action. As an example, the short Infrastructure Futures for Digital Cultural Heritage project followed a similar trajectory to ours. It developed scenarios through engagement and co-design with diverse stakeholders, which pertained to future infrastructure for the Gallery, Library, Archive, and Museum (GLAM) sector (see Ross et al. 2024a; 2024b). Overall, like our endeavours, this project aimed "to understand current priorities, concerns, and hopes by imagining future possibilities through speculative design" (Ross et al. 2024b: 1).

4.4 The Futures of Digital Transformations Round Table (2026)

Given our limited resources, but also stemming from our desire to harness and showcase the potential of this commonwealth of CHANSE ideas, we collaborated with Bianca Dragomir (Institutul de Prospectiva), who had presented at the CHANSE Mid-term Conference during a plenary session on Influencing Policy. Bianca's work with us included consultation, the co-shaping and facilitation of a round table: The Futures of Digital Transformations (see below), valuable contributions to this document and to our forthcoming edited volume (Perry et al. forthcoming).

The interactive round table took place online in March 2026. Its purpose was to bring together CHANSE and other DT researchers and their perspectives, in order to explore key dimensions of DT, moving from critical reflection on the present to imagining desirable alternative futures (and their mitigation). It therefore explored in depth some additional scenarios derived from the insights of CHANSE projects after they had concluded, with the added benefit of research results overview.

Methodology

The online round table was structured in two main phases. The first part consisted of a series of presentations by six CHANSE projects engaging with different facets of DT, ranging from emergency communication and platform (gig) work to family life, public values in algorithmic futures, and digitally-mediated perceptions of time and fragile environments. These presentations highlighted diverse empirical and conceptual perspectives, while also surfacing a set of recurring themes and concerns related to the societal implications of DT.

Building on this, the second phase of the round table introduced a facilitated foresight exercise using Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), a futures studies method also developed by Sohail Inayatullah (1998; 2009) as a way to deepen the analysis of complex issues and open space for alternative futures. This method is sympathetic to the aim of the online round table: to move beyond individual project insights and collectively explore the deeper tensions underpinning DT. Framed by the rationale of "staying with the trouble" - a term borrowed from Donna Haraway (2016), interpreted here as attending to the frictions where aspirations meet their distortions - and diving beneath the surface through the CLA, participants were invited to engage with a curated set of cross-cutting tensions and select one to focus on (e.g. digital hyperconnectedness versus sense of isolation, autonomy versus precarity of platform-work, data-driven decision-making versus marginalisation of unquantifiable values).

Inayatullah describes Causal Layered Analysis as a method concerned “with opening up the present and past to create alternative futures” (Inayatullah 1998: 815). The method draws strongly on poststructuralist theory, especially the idea that social realities are shaped through discourse, power, and culturally embedded narratives. CLA is structured around four interconnected layers:

Litany

The surface level of public discourse: headlines, simplified representations of a problem. This is the most visible and often unquestioned layer. It tends to describe issues in a reactive, often emotional way (e.g. *democracy is declining* or *AI will replace jobs, loneliness is on the rise*).

Systemic / Social Causes

The structural layer, where social, economic, technological, political, or institutional causes are examined. This level asks how systems, policies, infrastructures, and power relations generate or sustain the issues observed at the litany level (e.g. the design of social media platforms, education systems).

Worldviews / Beliefs

This layer explores the deeper assumptions, ideologies, epistemologies, and cultural frames that legitimize the structures above. Competing worldviews shape what is considered “normal,” “rational,” or “desirable” (e.g. *productivity defines worth*).

Myth / Metaphor

The deepest layer concerns collective stories, archetypes, symbols, and emotional imaginaries. These often operate implicitly but profoundly influence identities and shape our unconscious understanding of reality (e.g. *life is a race*).

The CLA exercise unfolded by unpacking the selected tension - digital hyperconnectedness and sense of isolation - across multiple layers of analysis, from surface-level manifestations to systemic structures, worldviews, and deeper metaphors or cultural narratives. In a second step, participants were invited to engage these layers more creatively, identifying potential shifts in narratives, values and practices that could serve as seeds for more desirable futures.

This process enabled participants to move beyond disciplinary perspectives and engage in a shared reflection on how digital transformations are experienced, framed, and imagined.

Insights from the CLA exercise

Participants contributed observations across the different CLA layers, which were captured on a shared Miro board and subsequently clustered into coherent themes. The insights presented below synthesise these inputs by tracing connections across layers, highlighting how lived experiences are shaped by structural dynamics and reinforced by prevailing worldviews (selected participant contributions are included in brackets and italics as illustrative examples).

Thinning of social connection



Interaction is abundant, yet experienced as shallow and disconnected ("superficial relations"; "everyone is shouting into the abyss"), as devices and platform structures incentivise quantity over quality ("mobile phones in our hands"; "many meaningless relationships are maintained"; "people are consumers first"), reinforcing a worldview where connection becomes lightweight and instrumental ("light and mindless connection is fun").

Fragmentation of shared realities and trust



Experiences of confusion and distrust ("what to trust?"; "echo chambers"; "radicalised loneliness leads to crazy") are rooted in algorithmic filtering and fragmented information environments ("algorithms feed you the same kind of stuff"; "platforms create tribal conditions"; "reliable sources [are] more difficult to find"), and are reinforced by a need to remain constantly updated and aligned ("I need to be up to date"; "fear to remain marginal").

Overload and loss of reflective space



A lived sense of overload (“no uninterrupted time”; “too many demands on my time”; “we get so much so fast - no time to think”) is shaped by always-on infrastructures that compress attention and time (“mobile phones in our hands”), and sustained by a cultural preference for speed and immediacy (“all needs to happen fast”; “no striving”), reducing the capacity for reflection and intentional action.

Performative identities



Perceived inauthenticity in relationships (“online isn’t real”; “I don’t really know my Facebook friends”) is driven by platform logics that commodify interaction and standardise users, privileging visibility and engagement over relational depth (“commercial nature of social media”; “we engage as interchangeable users”), reinforcing worldviews where self-worth is externally validated and identity is shaped under conditions of competition and self-prioritisation (“likes are the measure of self-worth”; “I have to project who I am”; “my self comes first”; “world is a jungle”; “vulnerability is a social risk”).

At the metaphorical level, participants articulated two images that encapsulate the deeper dynamics observed across the analysis. The first—“the selfie” or “a mirror, rather than a person”—points to a mode of identity centred on projection and external validation, echoing the performative and visibility-driven logics identified in the systems and worldviews layers. It has to be clarified here that this metaphor of the selfie was not used to diminish pleasurable, collegial, friendly or other uses in real life for genuine connection, but rather to discuss fake performativity and the projection of an inauthentic (and often shielded from reality) image. The second—“hiding at the center of the herd”—captures a more defensive orientation, where individuals seek safety in conformity and minimise exposure, reflecting the pressures of competition, social risk, and fear of marginalisation. Taken together, these metaphors highlight a tension between the drive to be seen and the need to remain protected, which participants felt underlies the erosion of authenticity, trust, and meaningful connection.

The second phase of the CLA exercise focused on **imagining alternative, preferable futures**. Due to time constraints, this phase remained exploratory. Participants articulated a new metaphor and brainstormed alternative worldviews, opening a space for reframing the tension beyond dominant narratives. This is significant in light of Inayatullah’s argument that transformative change often requires engagement at the level of myth and metaphor.

At this point, the CLA exercise yielded insights which used a metaphor of “constellations: concentric levels of friendship”, suggesting a shift toward a more intentional, layered, and relational understanding of social life. Unlike the imagery of the (fake) “selfie” or the “herd,” which evoke projection, conformity, and social defensiveness, the constellation metaphor implies differentiation, orientation, and meaningful proximity. Relationships are not imagined as being uniformly distributed across an endless network, but as being structured through varying degrees of trust, reciprocity, and emotional closeness.

This metaphor also points towards alternative worldviews that value relational depth over constant connectivity, and interdependence over self-optimisation. Emerging within participants’ reflections were ideas around the legitimacy of boundaries and selective connection (“less can be more real”), the importance of spaces for vulnerability and reflection (“I’m not perfect, but these are the areas I want to improve”, “honest picture of oneself”), and a rebalancing between individual autonomy and meaningful belonging. Implicit in these perspectives is a shift from seeing social interaction primarily through the lenses of visibility, performance, and speed, towards a view of connection as something cultivated, contextual, and sustained over time.

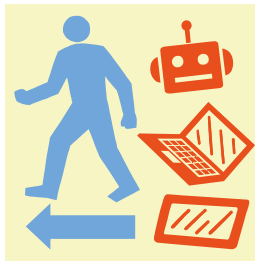
Overall, engagement with foresight in order to explore the dynamics and integration of knowledge exchange in combination with digital transformations, and to envisage possible alternative futures, is an enlightening and, we hope, empowering endeavour, in the context and diversity of CHANSE projects and experts. Following the progression through different workshops, contributed insights and co-creation of scenarios, we can offer some final reflections here. We intend and hope for these to inform and inspire directions of future research, policy, practice and infrastructure: what is it that resonates with, or challenges, the user, researcher, policy maker or infrastructure designer the most?



The importance of the human in envisaging, planning and fighting for desirable futures. Throughout the debates and possible futures scenarios, the position, role, authenticity, and social dimensions of the human emerge as crucial. It is fundamental that we do not lose sight of humanity in transformations of digital infrastructure and governance, whether social connection, creativity or intellectual work are concerned.



A desire for equity of design, access, power and decision-making. Despite the fact that digital transformations can give people unprecedented power to connect and co-create, technological and underlying social inequity forces people into positions of powerlessness and inauthentic performance while their futures are designed for them without them. A near-consensus of what is undesirable includes e.g. conglomerates, monetised performance, being human subsumed by technology; and mitigations might include e.g. grass-roots digital transformations. This is why we (CHANSE-KEF) feel that it is imperative, now more than ever, to harness the joint possibilities of knowledge exchange in combination with digital transformations. For example, knowledge exchange should develop together with, and shape, our digital futures, instead of being an afterthought when digital transformations have already been implemented by limited consortia. In this way, digital futures can be co-created for all rather than some.



A recognition that technologies do and should have limitations. In planning for our digital futures, we should also plan for times, spaces and reasons to disconnect completely from technology as a necessary part of our human wellbeing and equity. We also feel it is important that a technoskeptical approach should be nurtured in DT practice and research (after The DISCO Network 2025).



A drive for international collaboration. Technology should truly enable us, with the above caveats, to resolve transnational problems and thrive as humanity. The overwhelming drive, implicit or explicit throughout our explorations over the last three years, is that humanity should work across social, cultural, political, technological and infrastructural divides, if we want to achieve the futures we desire and feel we deserve.

Ultimately, we (CHANSE-KEF) feel that the foresight work that we have been able to do, co-design and collaborate on has two key benefits. The first is giving (and benefitting from) the opportunity for researchers and stakeholders, who are directly involved in and shaping Digital Transformations, to come together on an international and cross-project and cross-disciplinary scale, and drawing on their expertise to ideate what the futures of DT could and should be. The second, which aligns to our overall purpose as a team and programme, is that this foresight journey demonstrates the potential and blueprint, for funders, researchers and societies, to truly co-create knowledge about and with Digital Transformations on a larger scale, towards equitable and desirable futures.

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