Detailed schedule

9:30-10:30

5 min Welcome words & what is Sitra & what is agenda

15 min Warming up: Polak game & discussion

30 min How to approach the futures in times of uncertainty?

10 min Q & A

10.30-10.45 Break

10.45-12:00 Working with boundary conditions

15 min Identifying local boundary conditions to work with

45 min Working with boundary conditions

15 min Reflections

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-14:30 Testing the visions with megatrends & futures lens

30 min Working with megatrend cards

5 min Short intro to Power to define futures

35 min Working with futures lens

10 min Closing: reflections in a country groups: key take aways

10 min Closing together



How to approach futures?

Sanna Rekola
Sanna.rekola@sitra.fi

SITRA

Finnish Innovation Fund

- Founded in 1967 as a gift from the parliament to the 50-year-old Finland.
- **An independent future fund** but operates under the supervision of the parliament.
- A futurologist, visionary, developer, experimentalist, financier, partner, trainer, and networker.



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Actions for the future

Mission

Sitra accelerates well-being and economic growth of Finland within the limits of nature's carrying capacity.



Vision

We have boldly reformed the society.

Our impact

1 Sitra strengthens futures thinking in the society and enhances foresight capabilities in decision-making.

2 Sitra produces significant societal innovations and strengthens Finland's innovation capabilities.

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Working with futures!

1. Warming up with futures thinking
2. Introduction: How to approach futures in times of uncertainty

10:30 Break

3. Understanding context: Boundary conditions

12:00 Lunch

4. Understanding changes: Megatrends
5. Understanding power: Futures lens

Closing

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DON'T LOOK DOWN!
DON'T MESS WITH THE HAND
INFINITE GROWTH OR GO HOME
PRIVATE PROPERTY KEEP OUT!

1

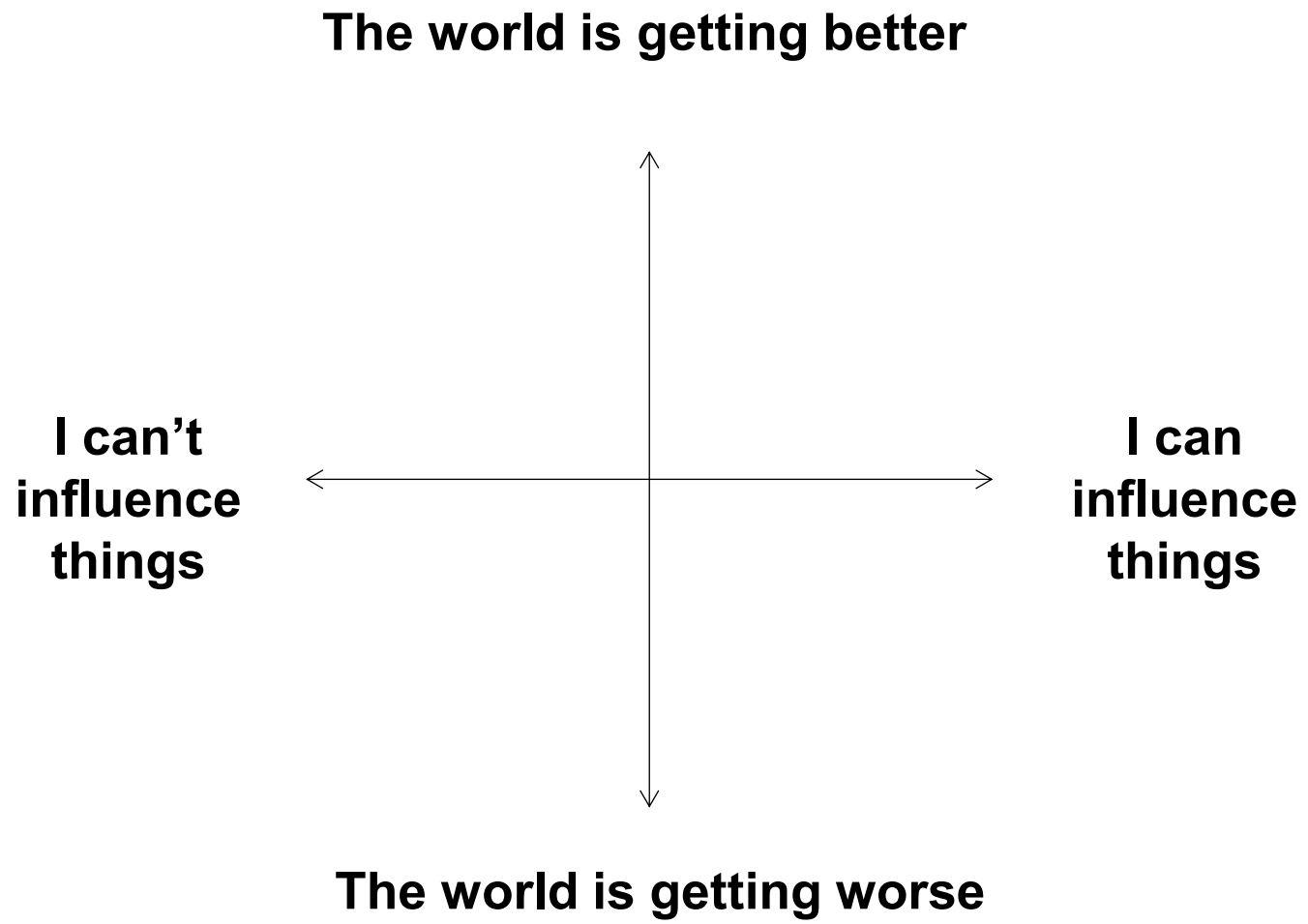
Warming up: Polak game

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Polak game

- Based on Fred Polak's book The Image of the Future

- Idea is to explore different assumptions about futures on a continuum



Modified from Polak (1973), Hayward & Candy (2017)

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What does the future look like?

The world is getting worse



The world is getting better

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How do I see my own agency in shaping futures?

I can't influence things



I can influence things

Regarding your country's education system, how do you see the level of current capabilities and resources?

Low  High

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Regarding your country's education system, what is the level of transformation required?

Incremental change is enough  **Transformational change is needed**

What kind of future thinker are you?

POWERFUL: You believe that world can get better. You are confident in your ability to act and create a better future.

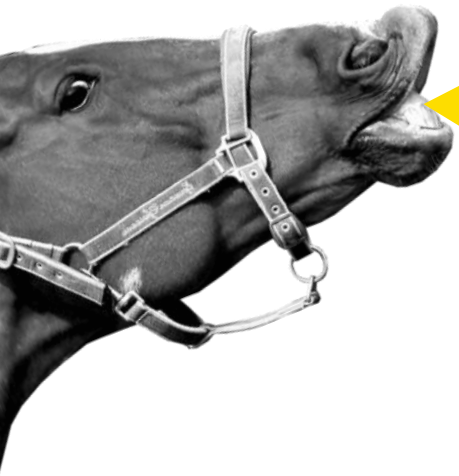
POWERLESS: You feel that things will get worse and there's nothing you can do about it.

PASSIVE: Though your vision of the future is positive, but you tend to be more of an observant than an active change agent. You expect those in power to make the call, you'll adapt and play along.

REALISTIC: Your vision of the future is not positive, but you still believe in your ability to influence the outcome. However, this duality creates some mixed feelings. You are not sure how much of a difference you can create, but you think it's worth trying.



How to approach futures in times of uncertainty?



VUCA

Volatile
Uncertain
Complex
Ambiguous

BANI

Brittle
Anxious
Non-linear
Incomprehensible



Postnormal times

"We are entering an era where ***complexity, chaos and contradictions*** *will become the dominant themes; and* ***uncertainty and ignorance*** *will increase drastically"*

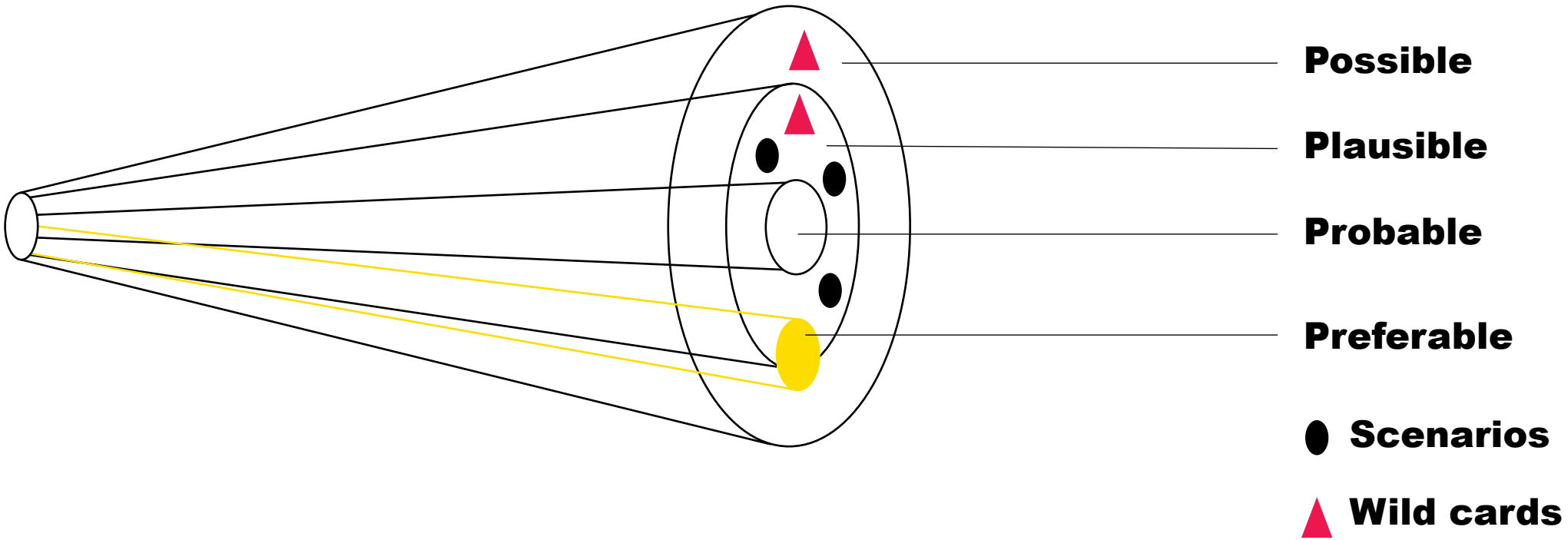
Sardar 2015, 2010





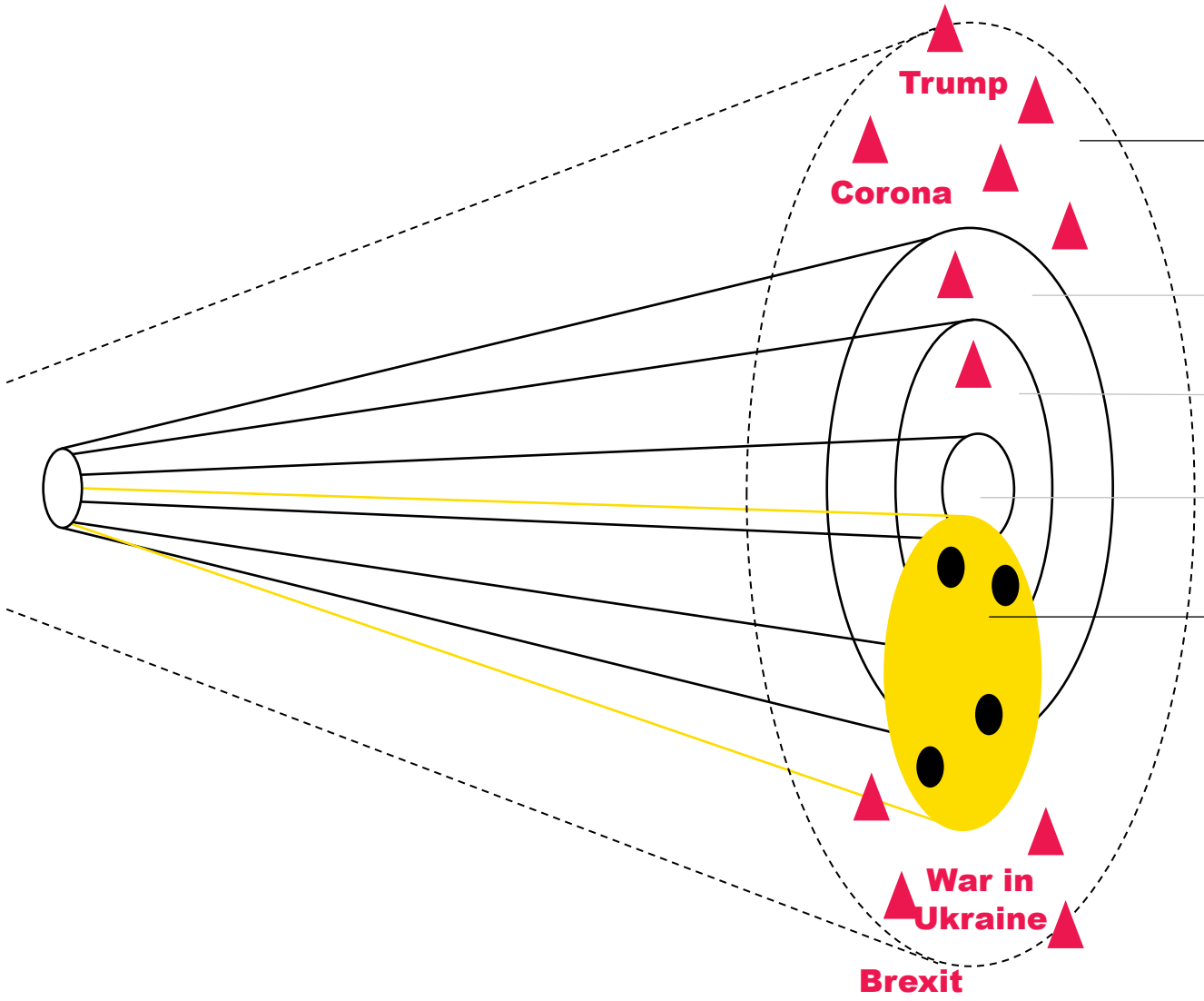
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Futures cone



Adapted from: Voros 2017

Our cone of futures is often too narrow



Impossible or implausible

Possible

Plausible

Probable

Preferable futures

● Descriptions of preferable futures

▲ Thinking the wild cards through

Adapted from: Voros 2017

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Futures thinking

Understanding current change,
identifying and challenging assumptions about futures,
imagining alternative futures and
reflecting it all back to present action.



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Foresight

A systematic process based on the methods and tools of the futures studies, aimed at managing the present with the help of futures knowledge (scenarios, trend reports, etc.).



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Foresight pays off

Future-prepared firms outperform the average by

+33% higher profitability

+200% higher growth

Rohrbeck & Kum 2018

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There are different ways to approach futures

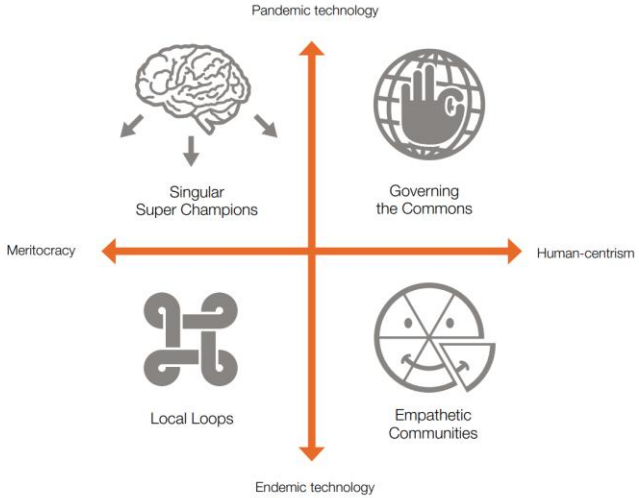
Plans and predictions

Assessing probabilities and preparing accordingly



Scenarios and visions

Exploring alternative futures and aiming for one preferred future



Narratives and transformation

Questioning, imagining and opening up novel paths



Unpredictability

Modified from Minkkinen et al. 2019

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What is the nature of the challenge that we work with?





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Systemic approach to foresight

A systemic approach to foresight explores how interconnected trends and systems shape future developments, helping us to understand complexity, anticipate impacts, and identify leverage points for change.



PESTE

P **Political**: policy programmes, regulation, directives, legislation, interests of different actors in power, etc.

E **Economic**: economic development and stability, competitiveness, purchasing power, employment, sectors, regional development, access to credit and investment, etc.

S **Social:** demographics, health, consumer behavior, people's attitudes, education, religions and worldviews, etc.

T **Technological**: development and availability of technology, new technologies and their introduction, etc.

E **Ecological**: nature and other physical environment: biodiversity, climate, use and availability of resources, built environment, infrastructure, etc.

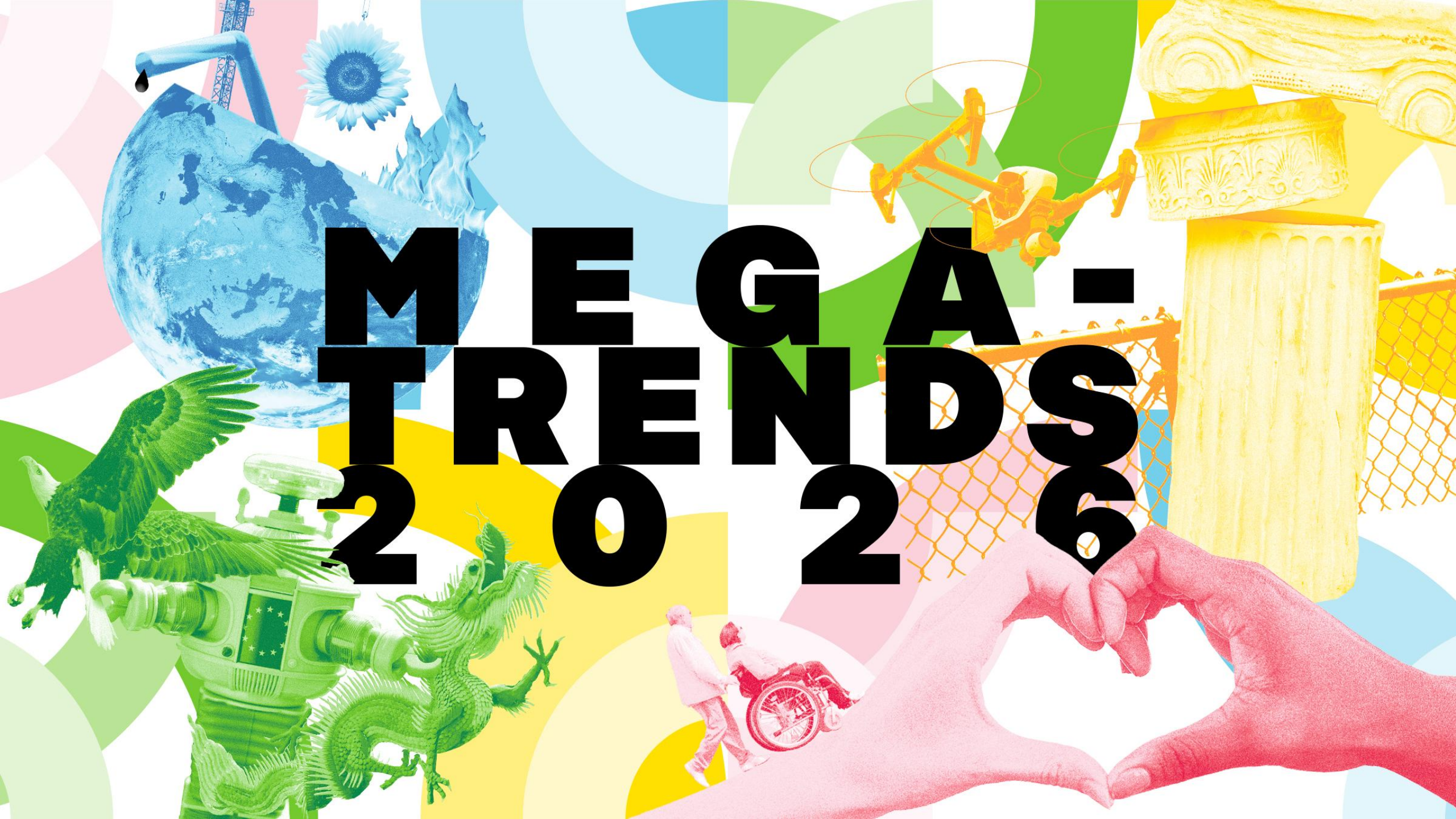
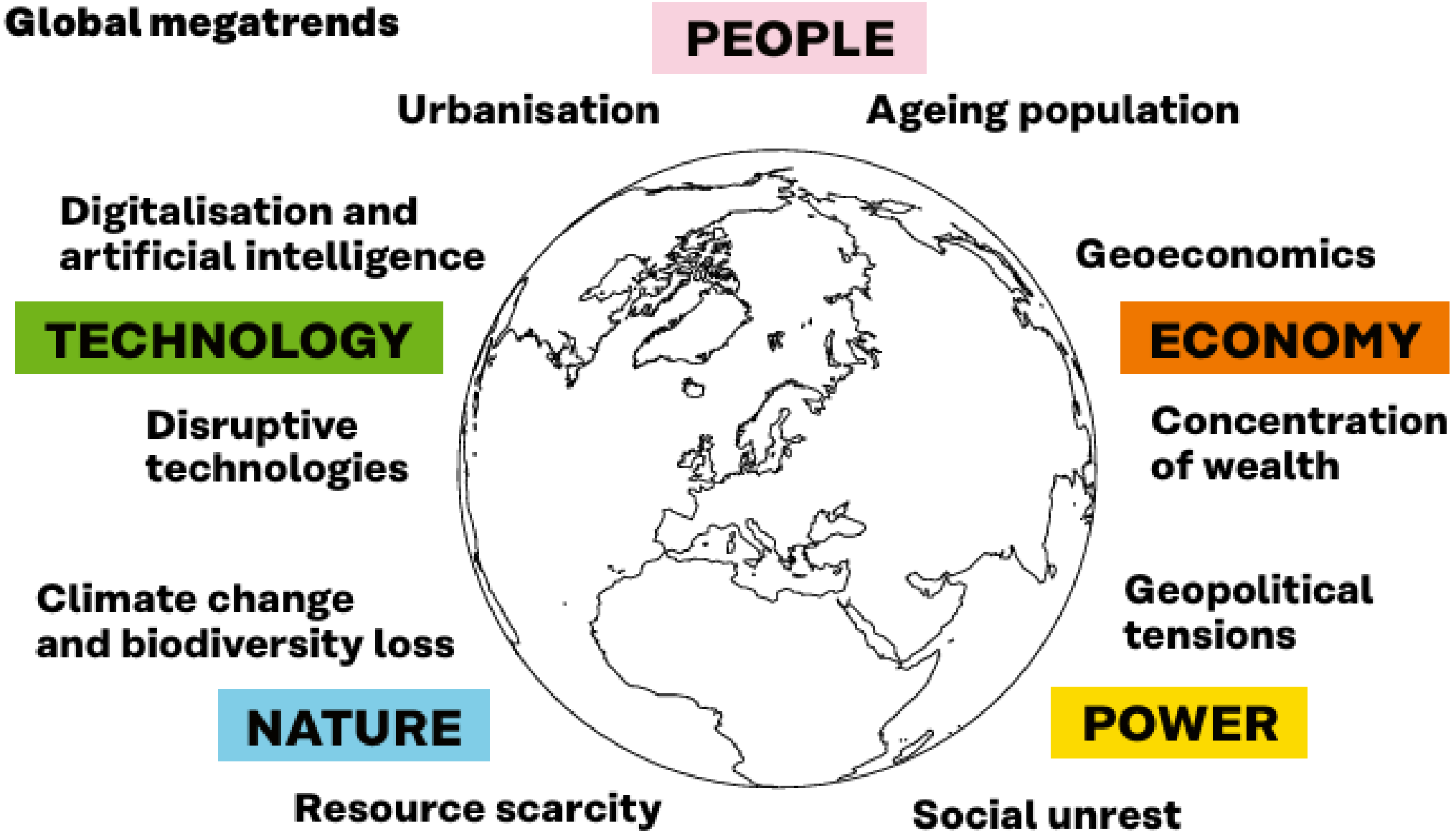
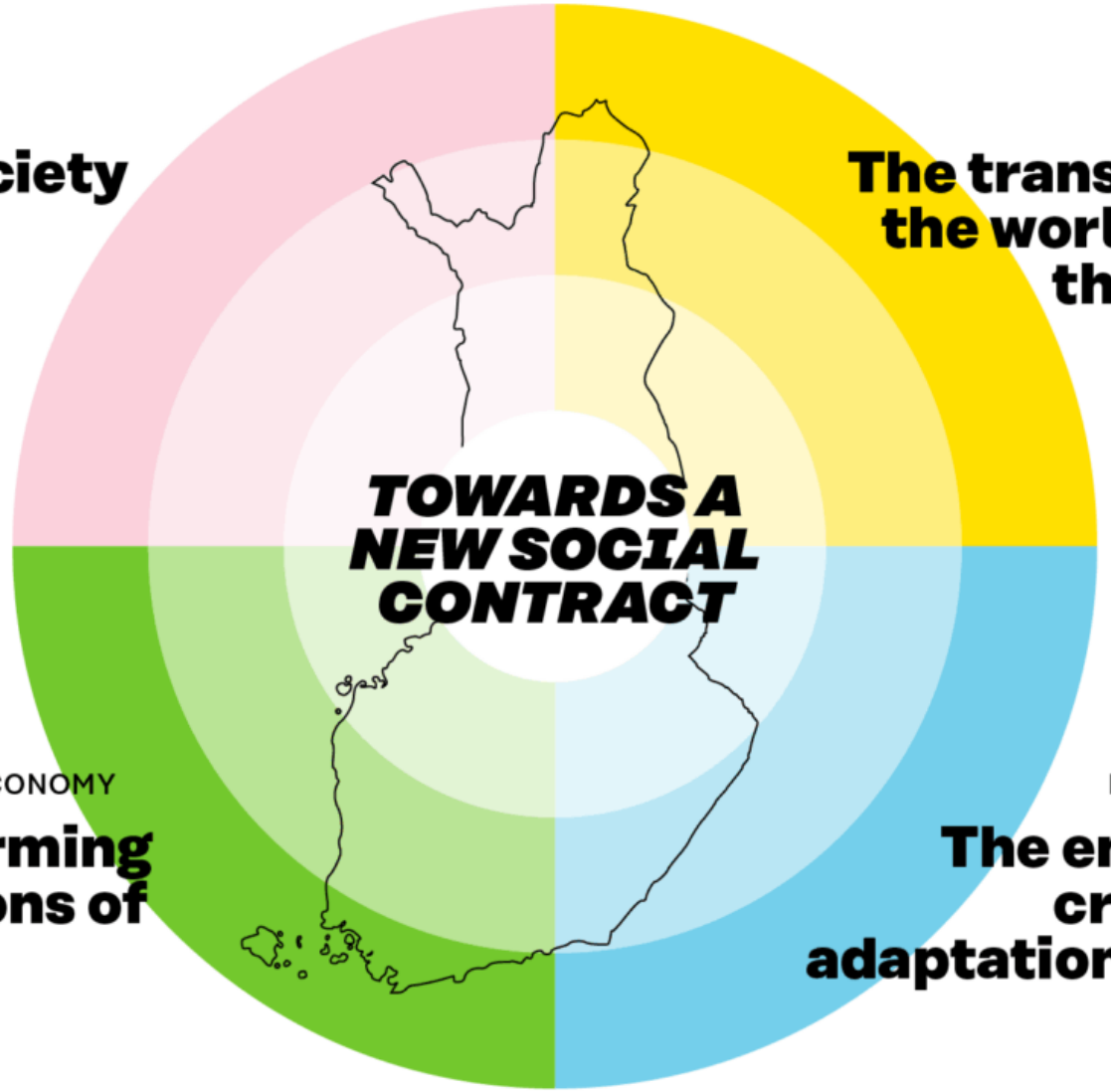

MEGA-
TRENDS
2026

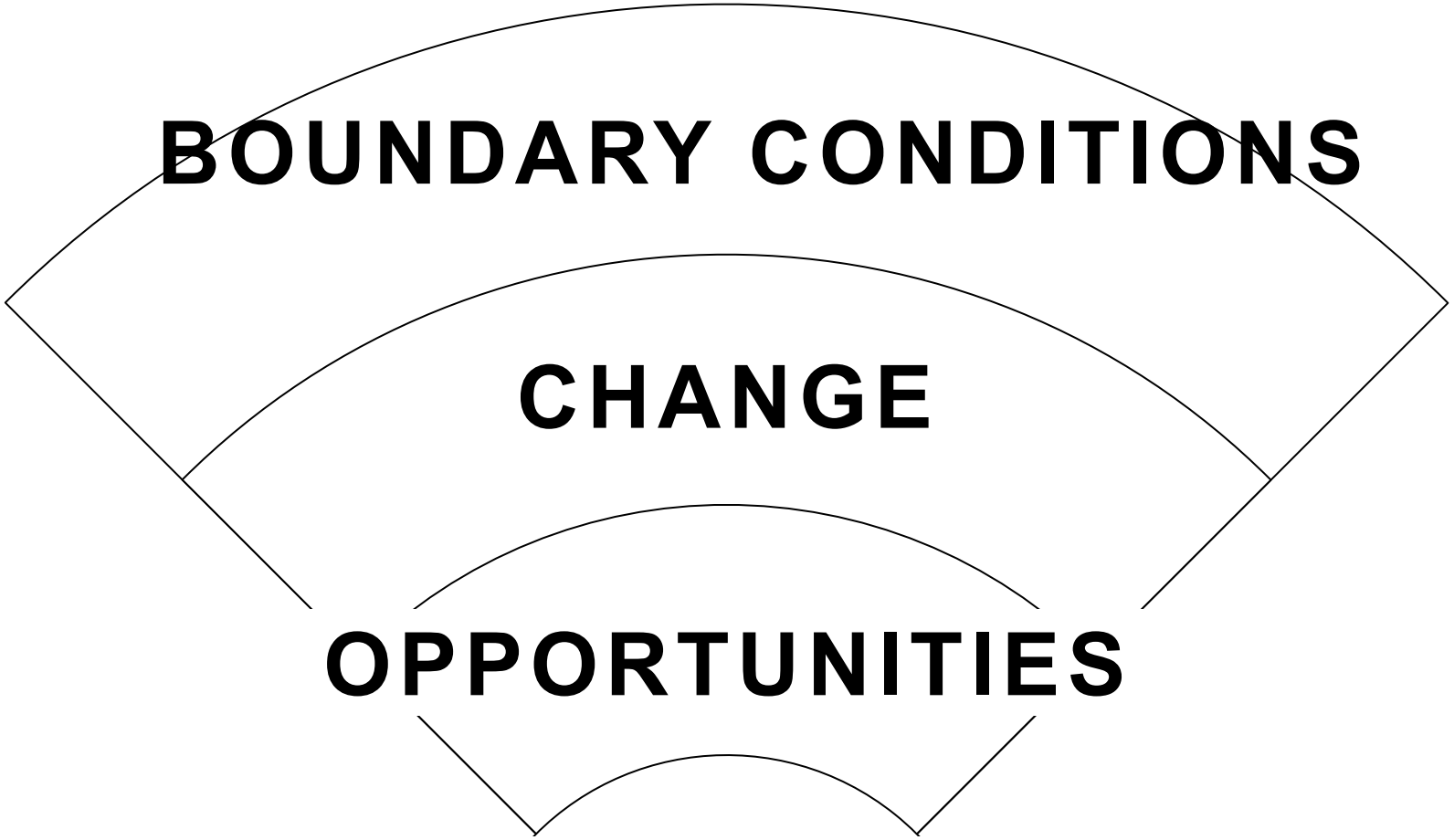
Figure 1. Global megatrends



Megatrends from Finland’s perspective



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BOUNDARY CONDITIONS
CHANGE
OPPORTUNITIES



BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

Population structure and skill

CHANGE

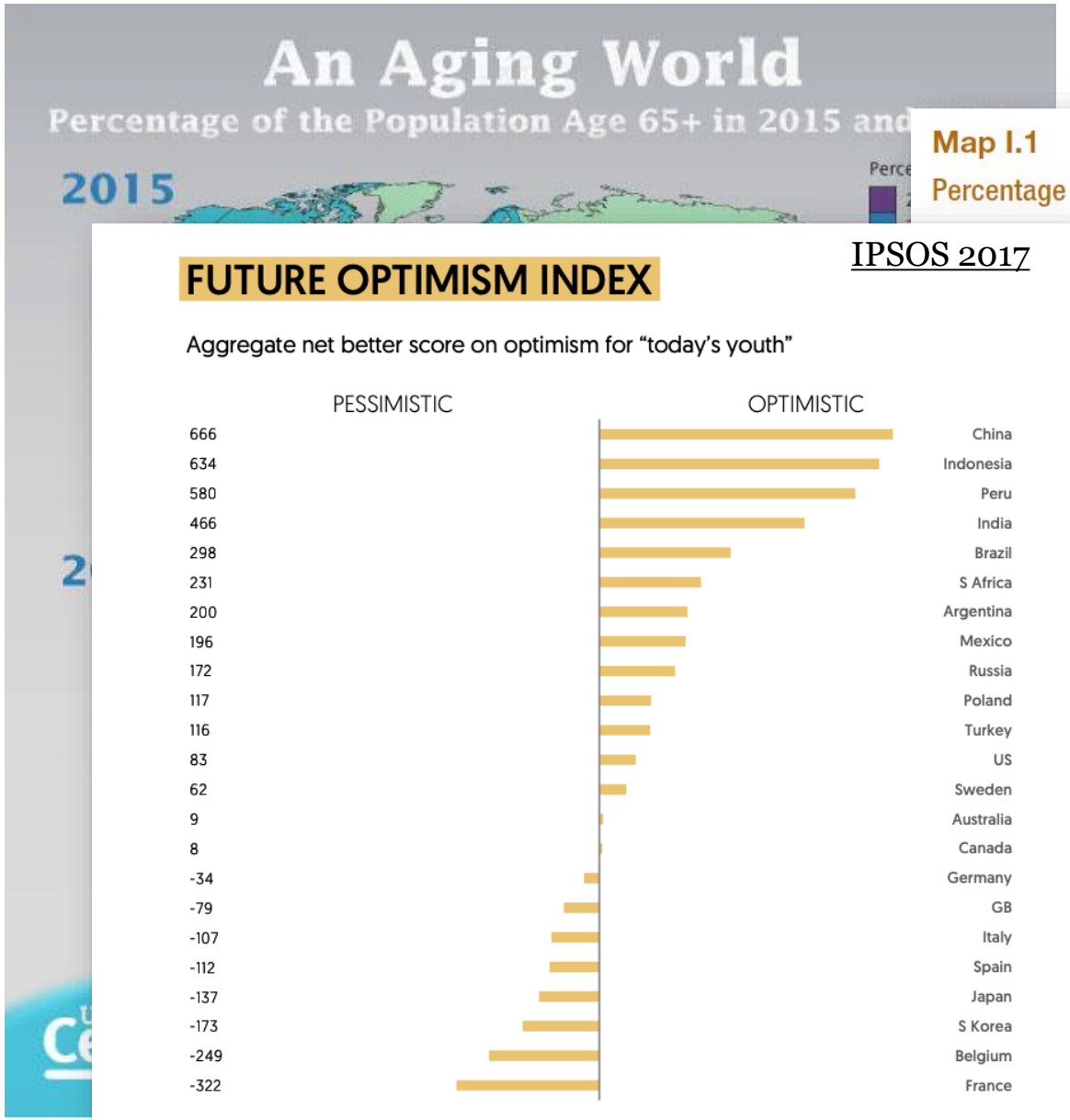
Confidence in the future is under strain in aging societies

OPPORTUNITIES

Building a long-lived and diverse society

Towards a society of longevity

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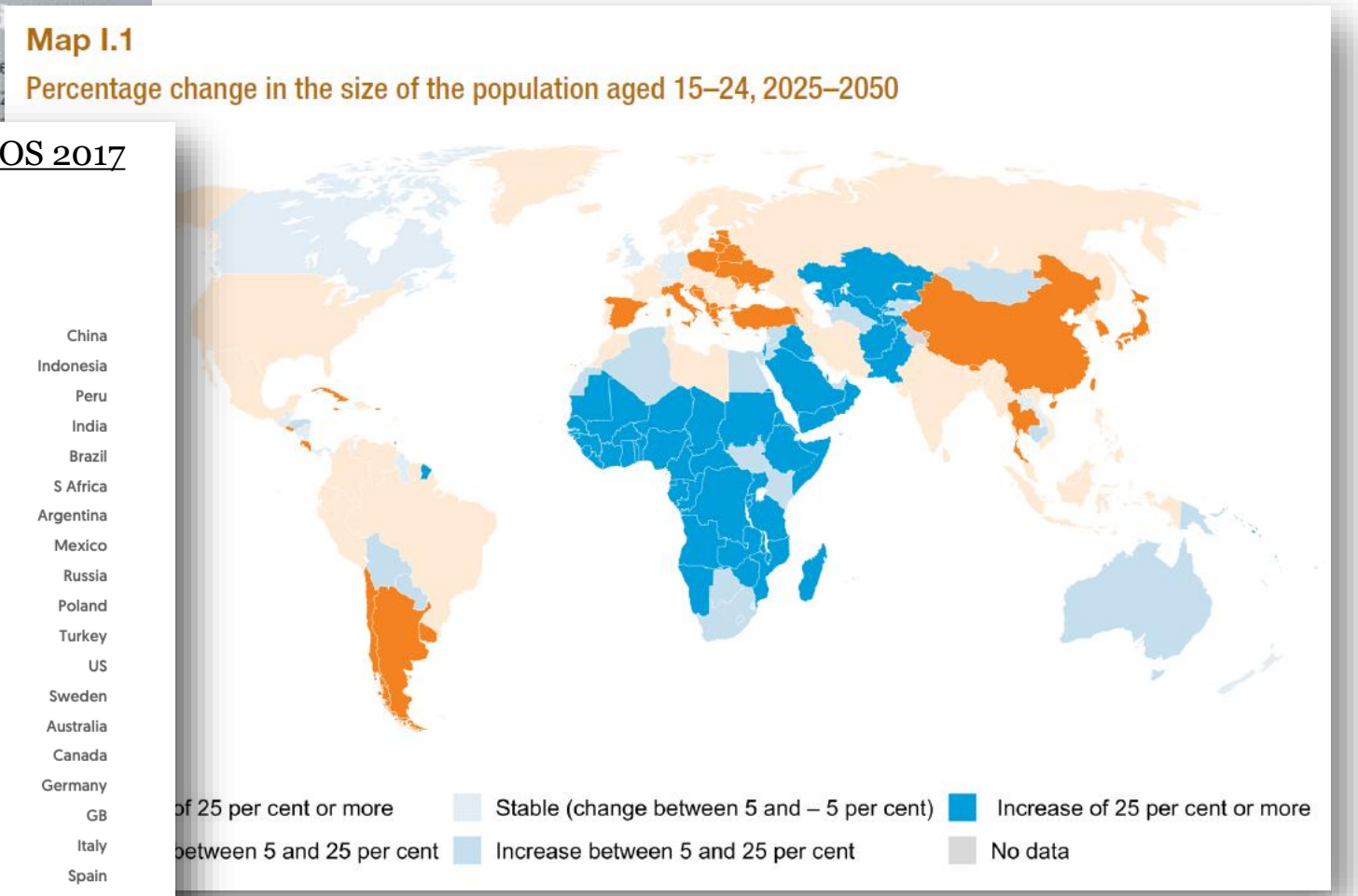


IPSOS 2017

FUTURE OPTIMISM INDEX

Aggregate net better score on optimism for "today's youth"

Ipsos Global Trends Survey, 18,180 adults across 23 countries, online, 12 Sep – 11 Oct 2016



Source: [World Population Highlights 2026 DESA Publications]

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BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

Finland's geographical and political position

CHANGE

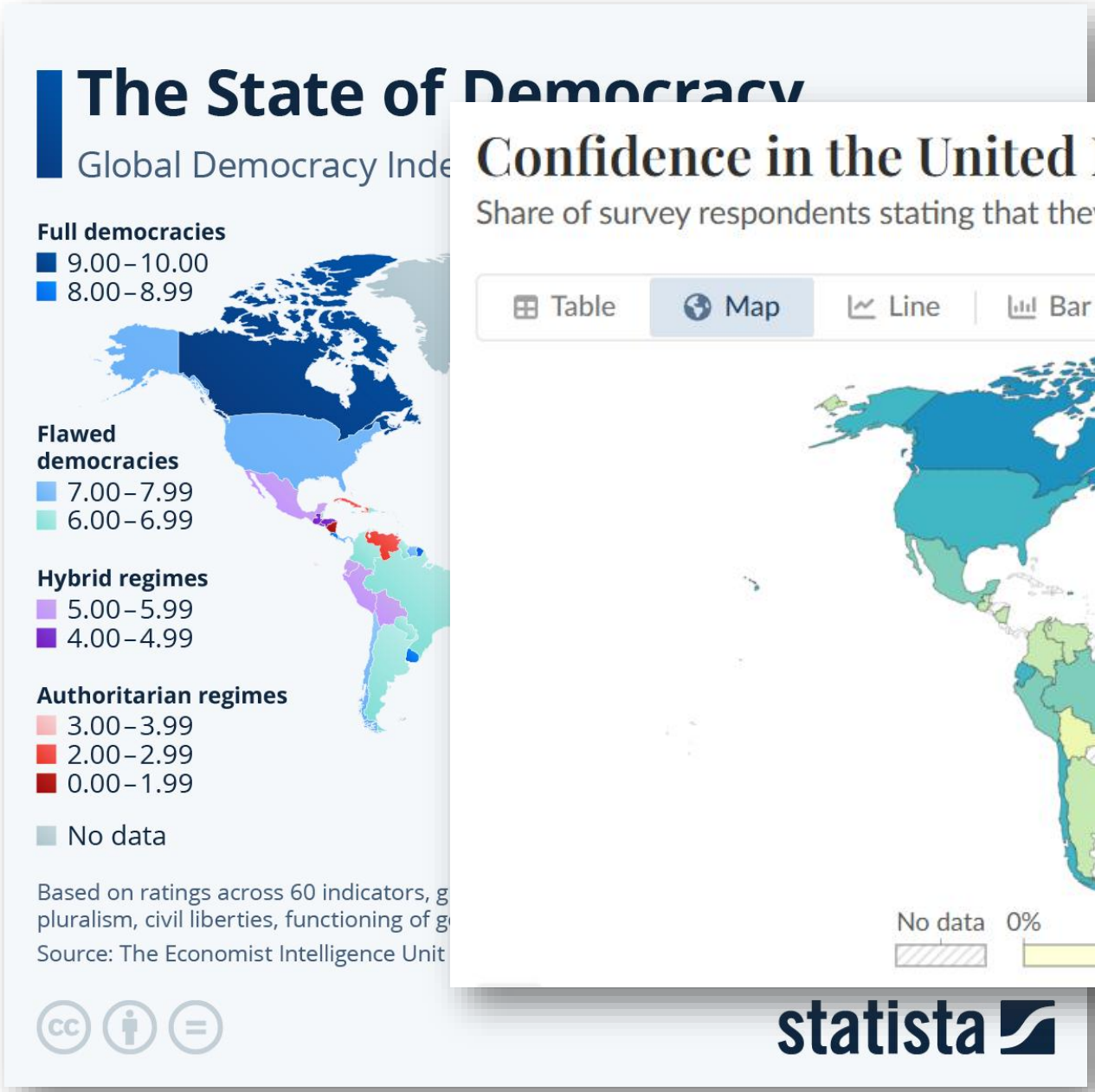
Democracy is under pressure on multiple fronts

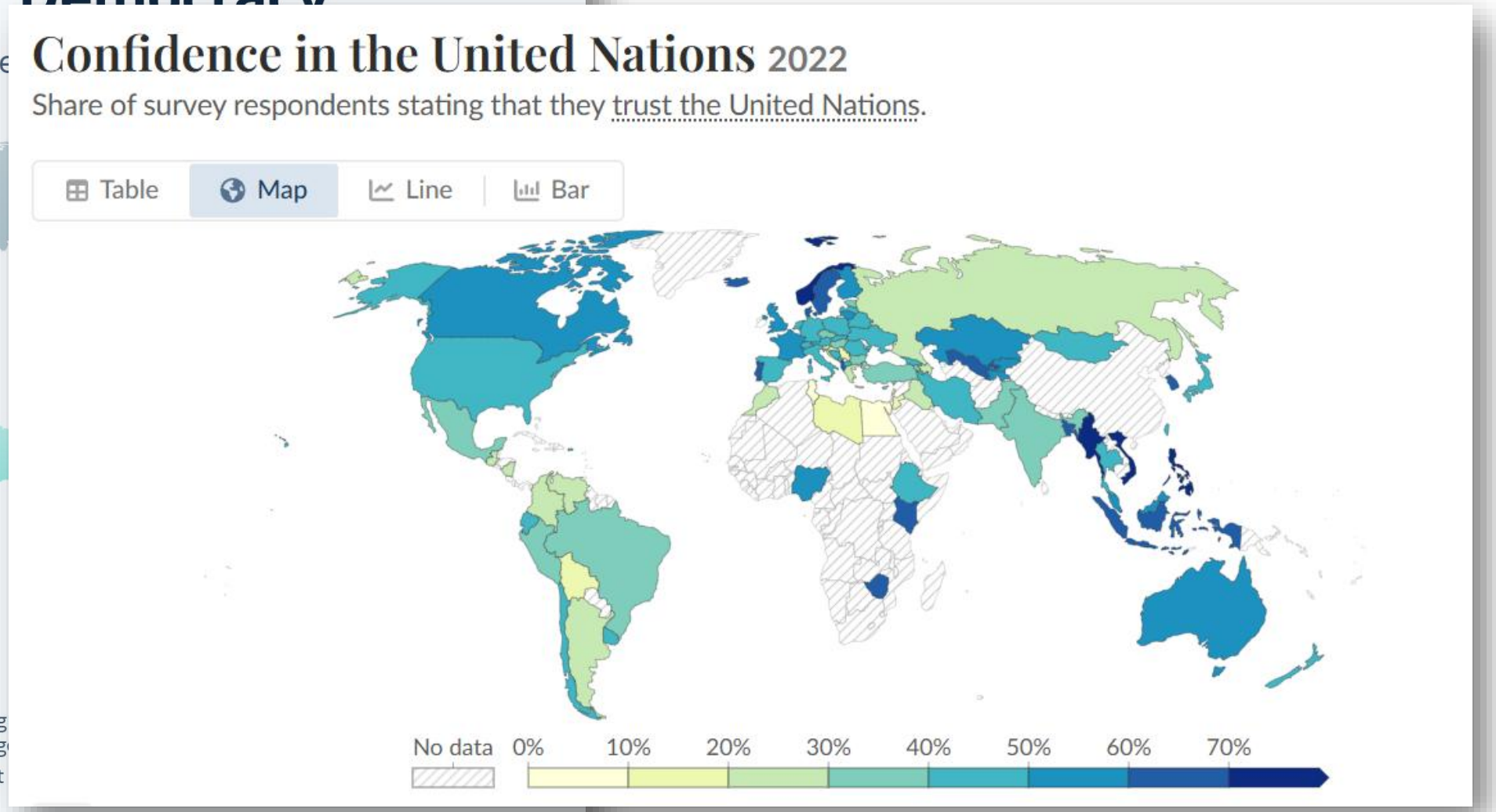
OPPORTUNITIES

Committing to renewing democracy

The transformation of the world order tests the strength of democracy

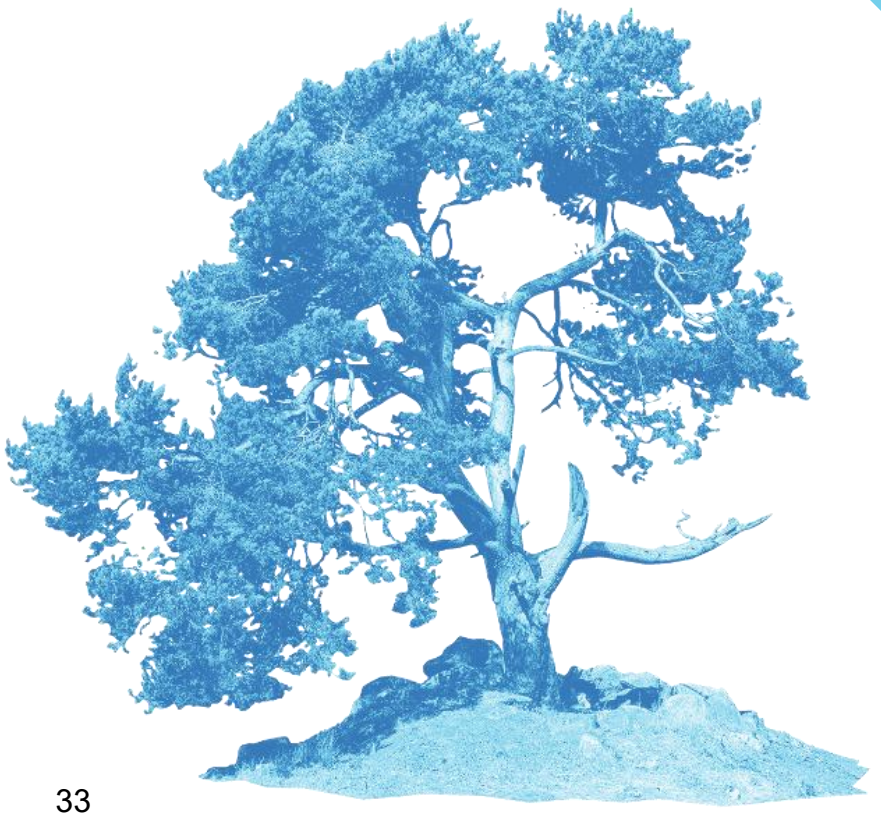
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My World In Data, Confidence in the United Nations, 2022

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BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

Planetary boundaries and resource availability

CHANGE

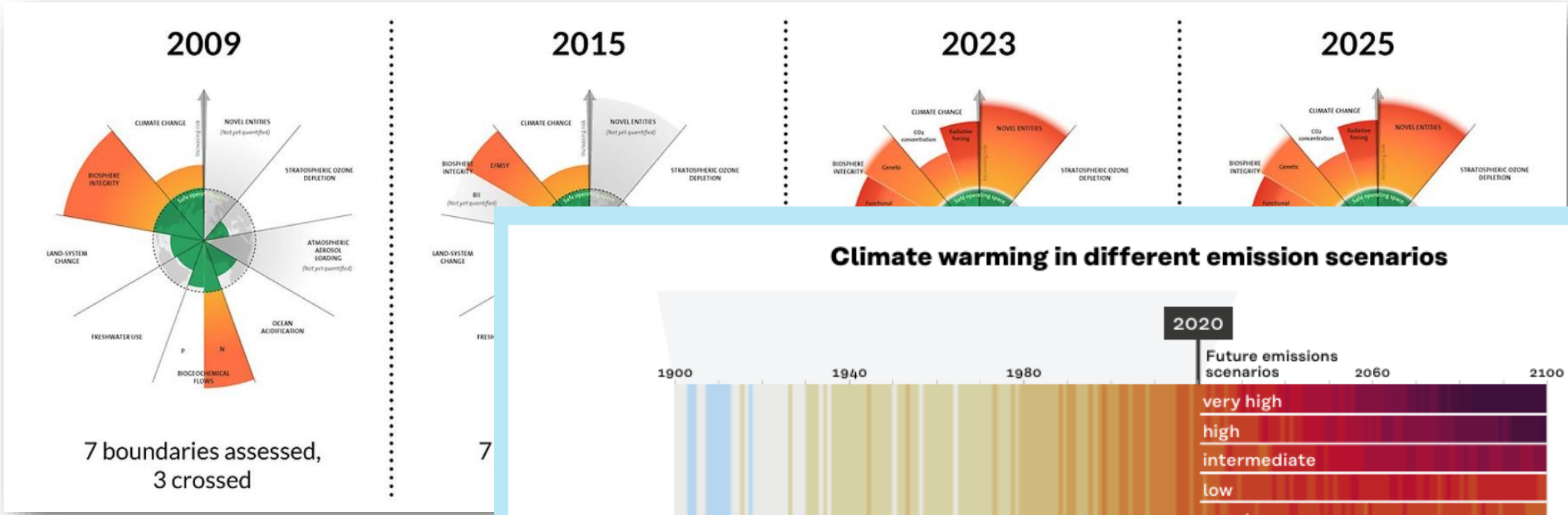
Tensions around the sustainability transition are growing

OPPORTUNITIES

The circular economy and reinforcing natural capital

The environmental crisis demands adaptation and renewal

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[Planetary boundaries - Stockholm Resilience C]

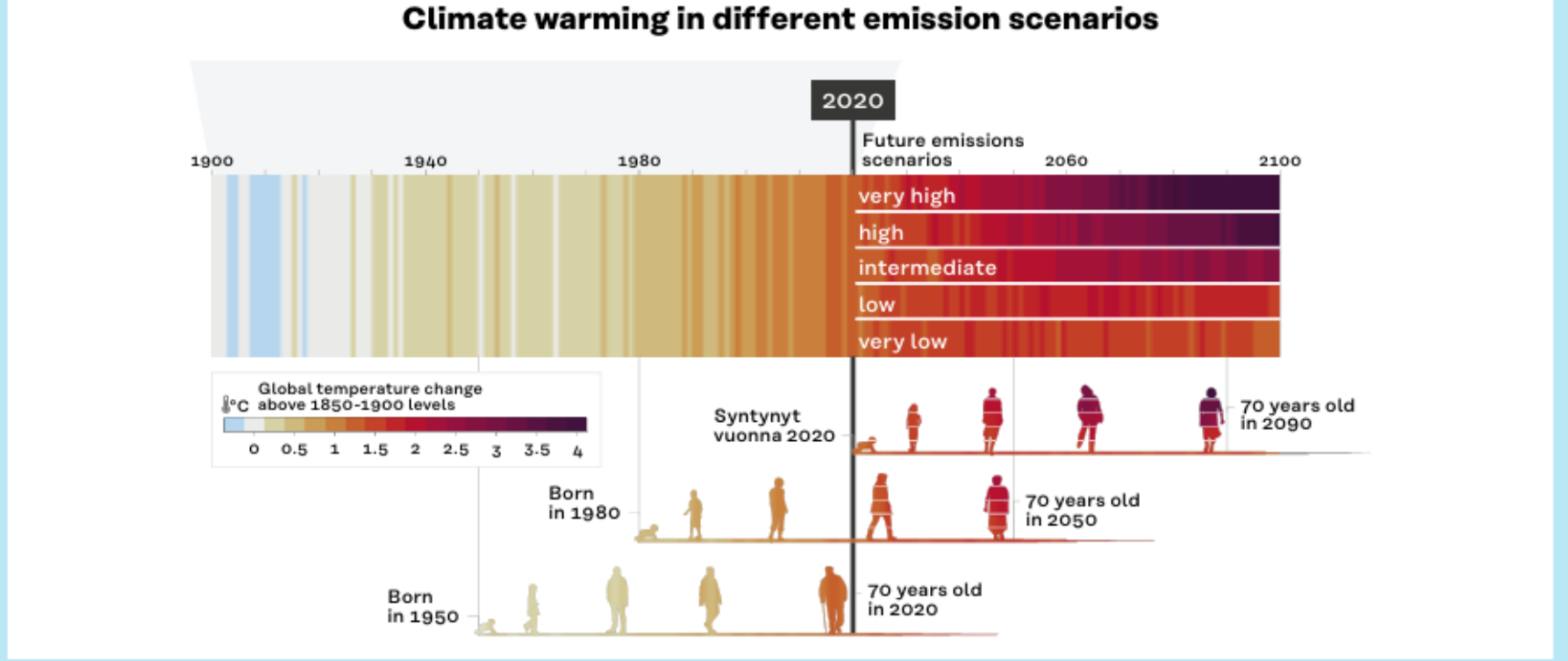


Figure 10. The climate has already warmed by more than one degree, and the living conditions of current and future generations depend on climate action. Source: IPCC 2023.

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BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

Geoeconomics, technological development and economic prospects

CHANGE

Articifial intelligence is reshaping institutions of knowledge

OPPORTUNITIES

Responsible use of applied AI

Artificial intelligence is transforming the foundations of society

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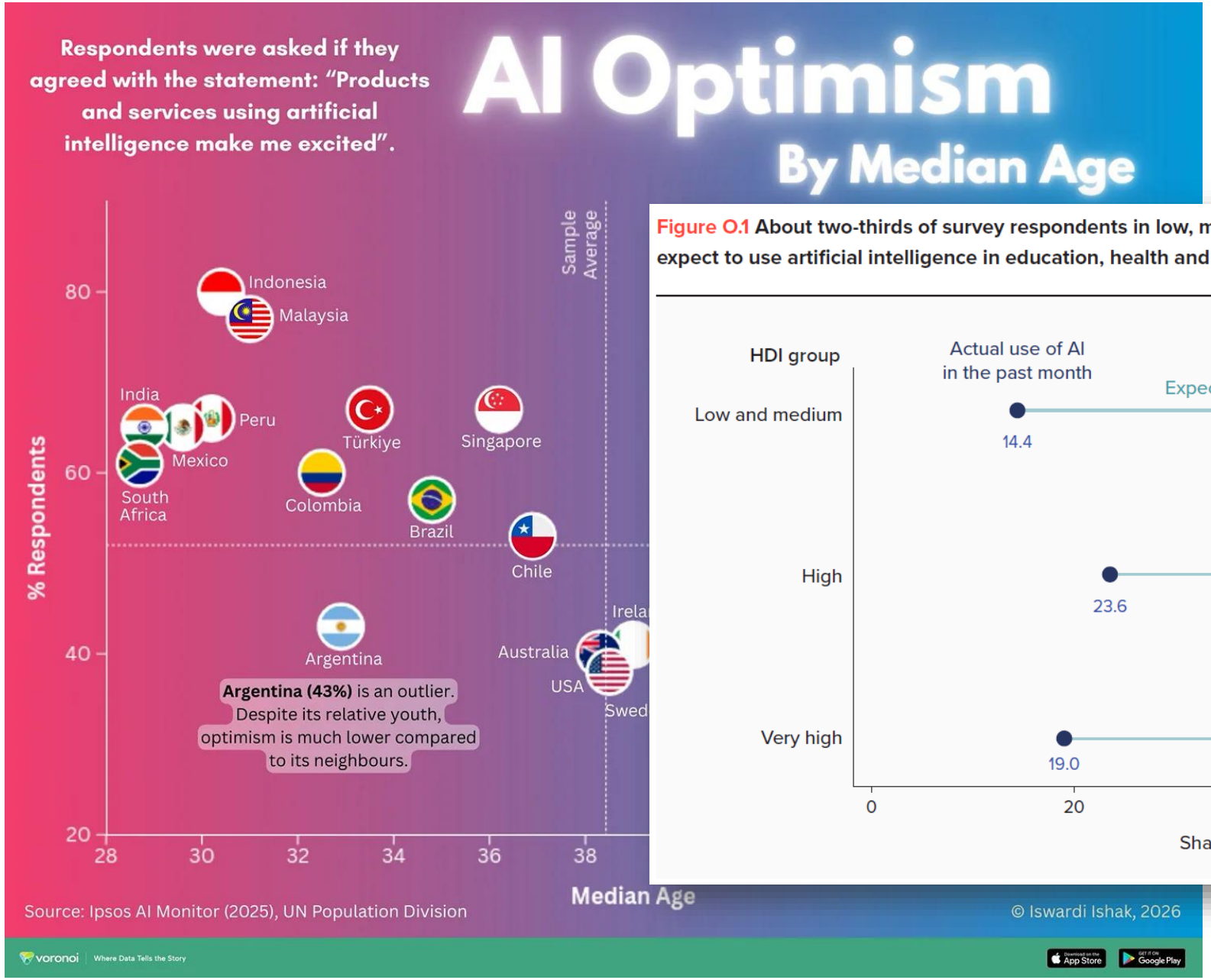


Figure O.1 About two-thirds of survey respondents in low, medium and high Human Development Index (HDI) countries expect to use artificial intelligence in education, health and work within one year

Source: Human Development Report UNDP 2025

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Megatrends call us to vision better futures

- Things won’t stay the same, the future is different from now
- There are many changes, but also room to act and influence the future
- We need visions, that guide us to act towards the future we want to see
- A good vision
  - Is built on an **understanding of the changes** affecting us
  - Takes into account the **boundary conditions**, that limit our action



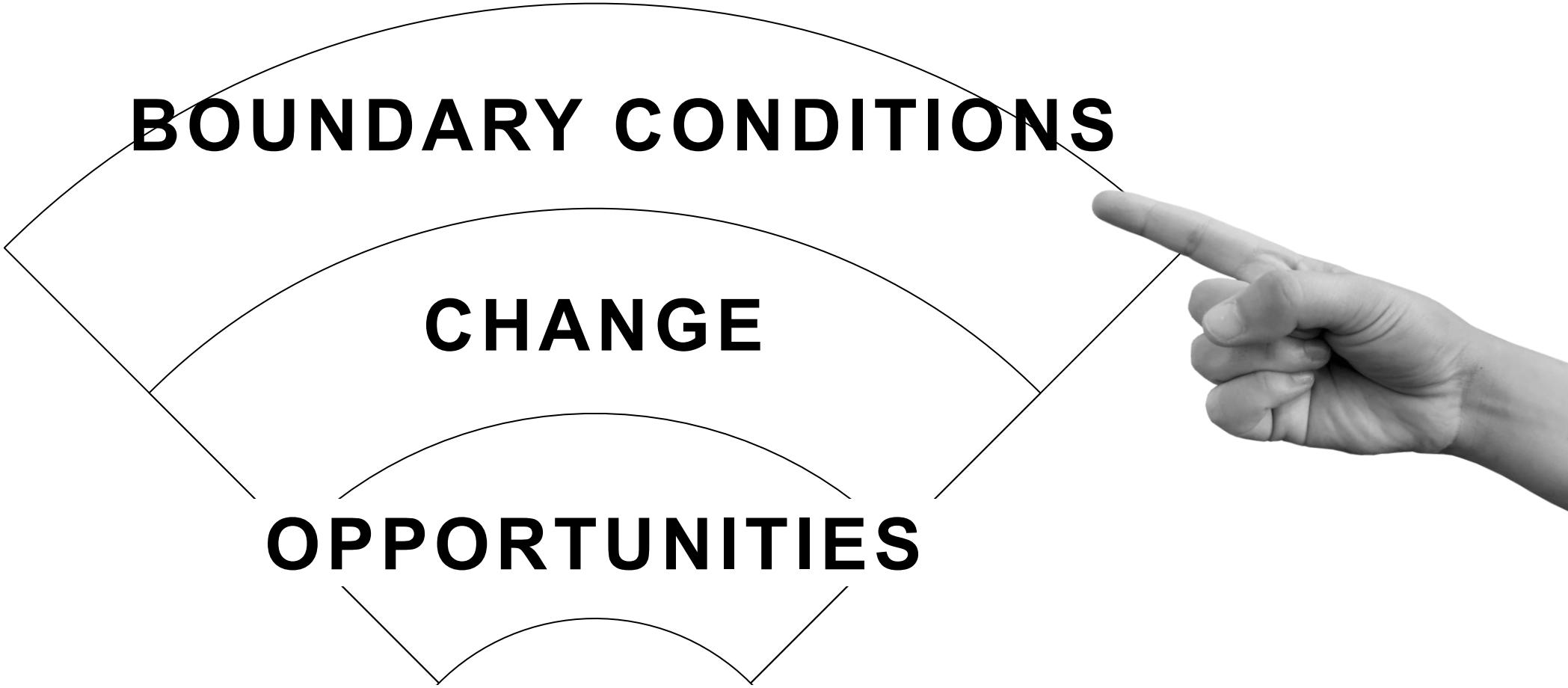
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Q&A

Break



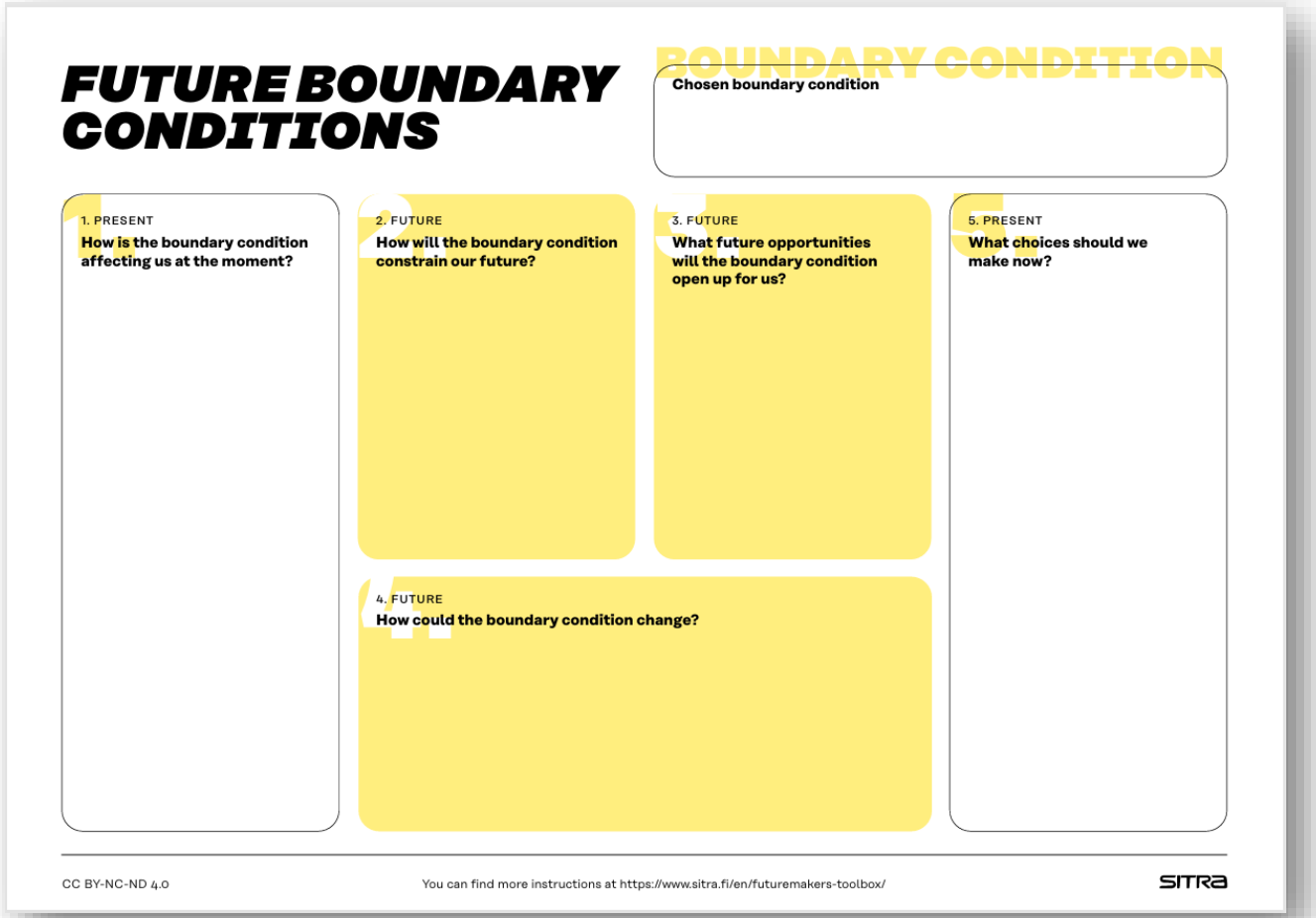
Understanding context: boundary conditions


BOUNDARY CONDITIONS
CHANGE
OPPORTUNITIES

Working with boundary conditions

1. Choose one boundary condition that you want to reflect.
2. Work with the worksheet step by step. Concentrate on your vision.
3. Repeat with another boundary condition.

Time: 45 minutes



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FUTURE BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

BOUNDARY CONDITION

Chosen boundary condition

1

1. PRESENT

How is the boundary condition affecting us at the moment?

2

2. FUTURE

How will the boundary condition constrain our future?

3

3. FUTURE

What future opportunities will the boundary condition open up for us?

4

4. FUTURE

How could the boundary condition change?

5

5. PRESENT

What choices should we make now?

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

You can find more instructions at https://www.sitra.fi/en/futuremakers-toolbox/

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Thoughts and reflections

Lunch

4

Understanding changes: testing the visions with megatrends

Testing your vision with megatrends

1. Choose three trend cards that you find most relevant to your vision, start with one
2. Reflect the impact of the trend by working with the worksheet step by step
3. Concentrate on your vision and anchor initiative
4. If time, repeat with another trend card.

Time: 30 minutes



GETTING TO GRIPS WITH A TREND The trend's impact on what we do

TREND
Choose from the trend cards

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TREND TO US
Mark on the scale:

insignificant — significant

IMPACTS ON US
What opportunities and threats does the trend pose to our activities?

CHANGES IN SOCIETY
How does the trend show itself and how does it affect everything around you?

NOW	5 YEARS	20 YEARS

THIS IS HOW WE ACT
How do you respond to and prepare yourself for the changes caused by the trend? Think of three actions that you can take now.

OUR STRENGTHS IN RELATION TO THE CHOSEN TREND

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Thoughts and reflections

5 Understanding power: working with futures lens

Depictions of futures shape our action



Images and visions of futures frame what is possible and guide our actions

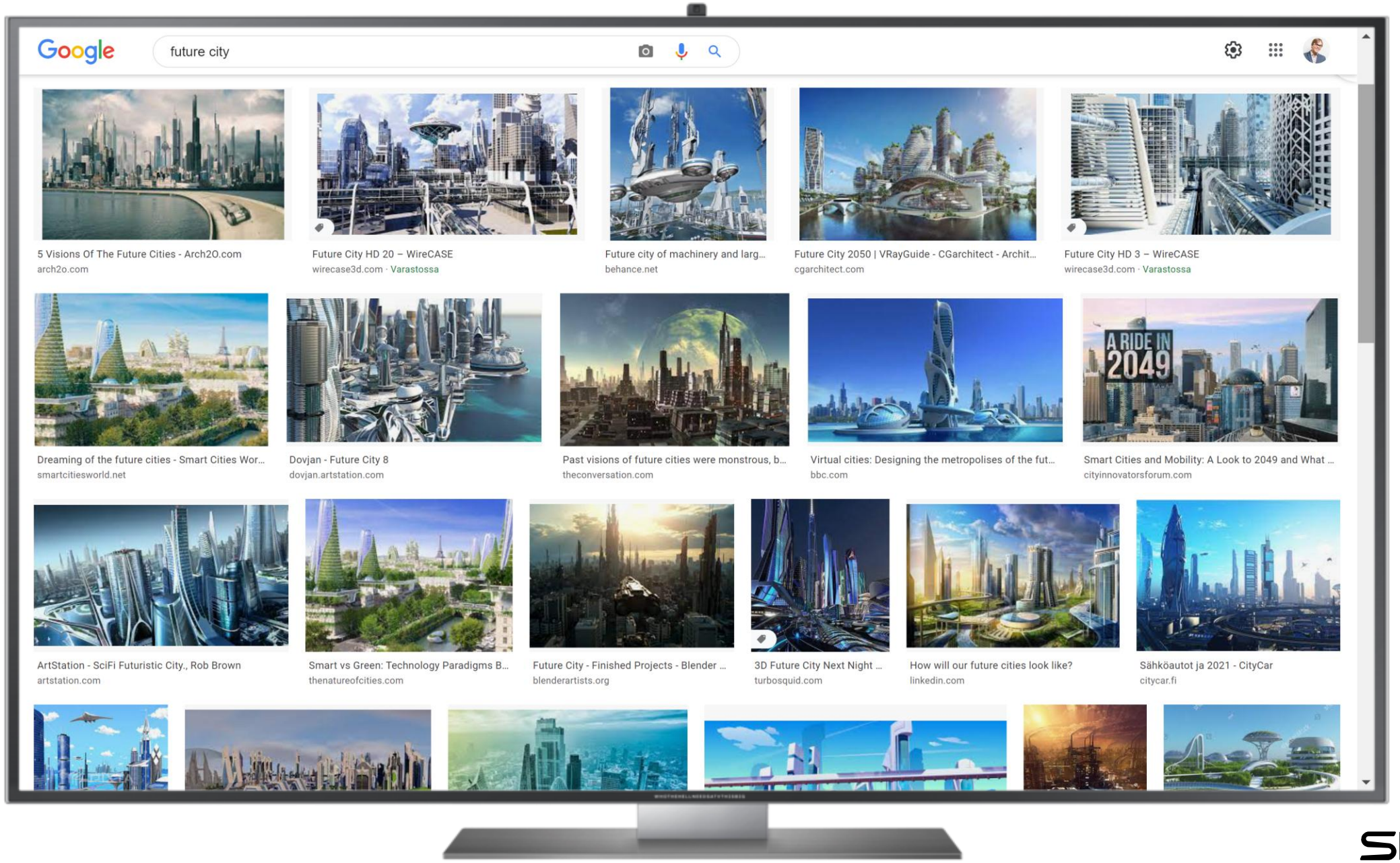


Decisions and actions in the present determine what the future will shape out to be



Power to define futures

The power to define futures is the power to influence what is seen as possible or desirable in the future.


Google
future city
5 Visions Of The Future Cities - Arch2O.com
arch2o.com
Future City HD 20 – WireCASE
wirecase3d.com · Varastossa
Future city of machinery and larg...
behance.net
Future City 2050 | VRayGuide - CGarchitect - Archit...
cgarchitect.com
Future City HD 3 – WireCASE
wirecase3d.com · Varastossa
Dreaming of the future cities - Smart Cities Wor...
smartcitiesworld.net
Dovjan - Future City 8
dovjan.artstation.com
Past visions of future cities were monstrous, b...
theconversation.com
Virtual cities: Designing the metropolises of the fut...
bbc.com
A RIDE IN 2049
Smart Cities and Mobility: A Look to 2049 and What ...
cityinnovatorsforum.com
ArtStation - SciFi Futuristic City., Rob Brown
artstation.com
Smart vs Green: Technology Paradigms B...
thenatureofcities.com
Future City - Finished Projects - Blender ...
blenderartists.org
3D Future City Next Night ...
turbosquid.com
How will our future cities look like?
linkedin.com
Sähköautot ja 2021 - CityCar
citycar.fi

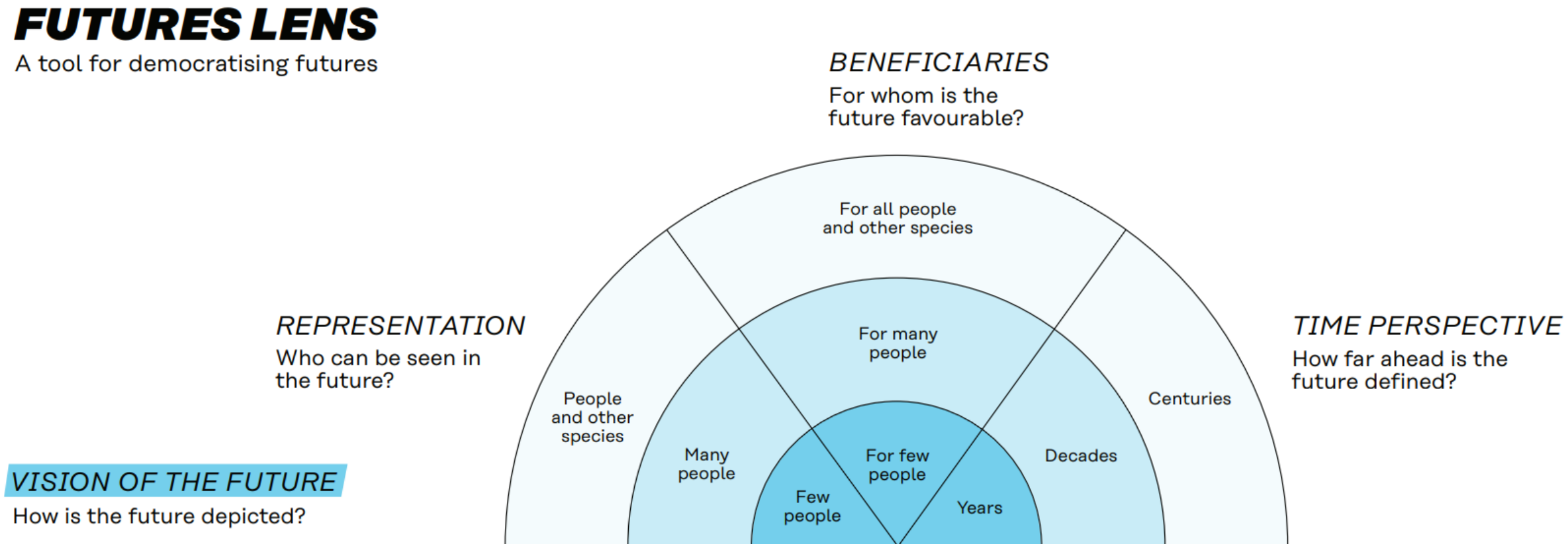
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Kuva: UN Women/Ruby Taylor, https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2020/2/illustration-equiterra-gender-equality-utopia

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Whose futures are we talking about?

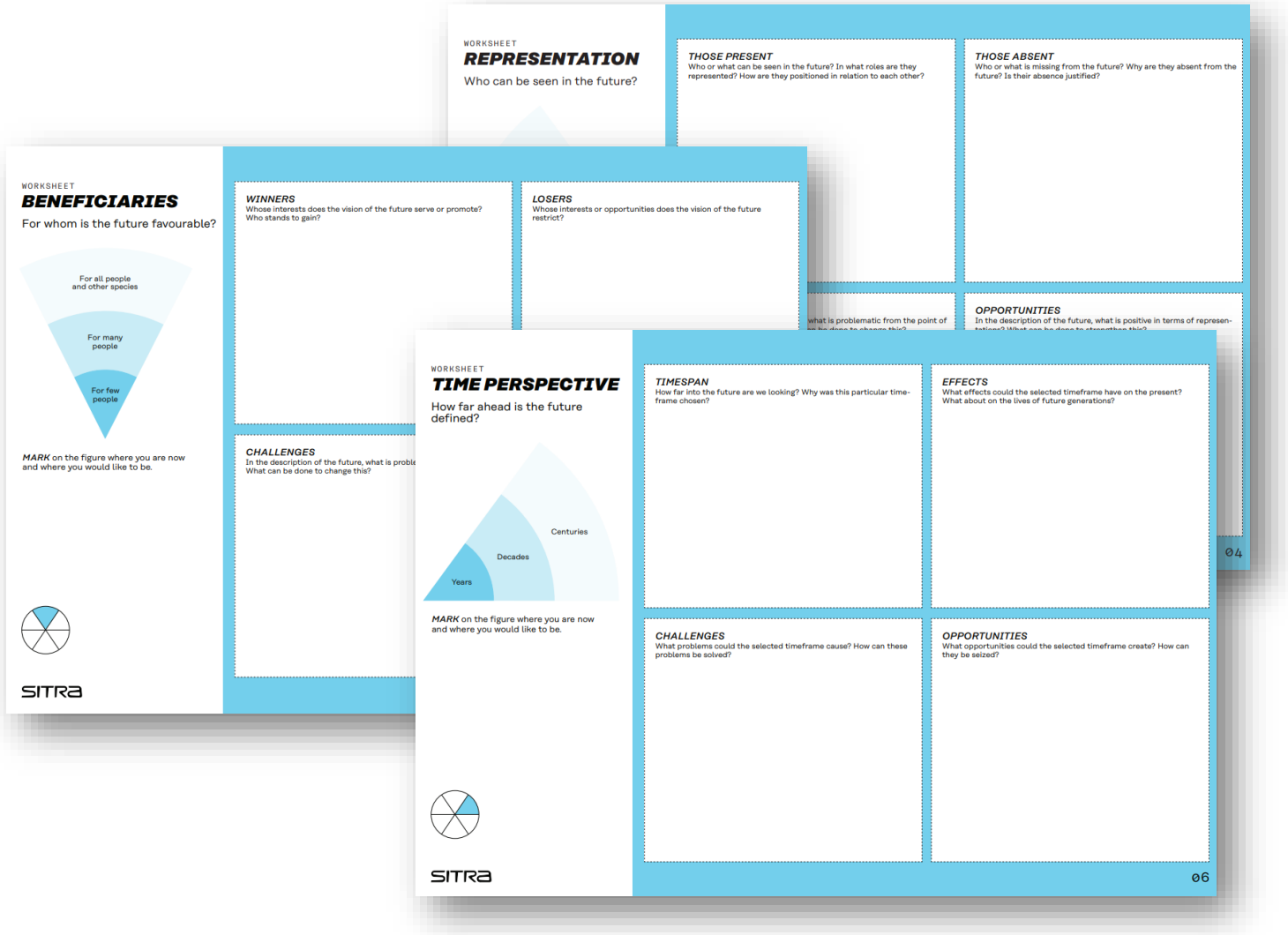


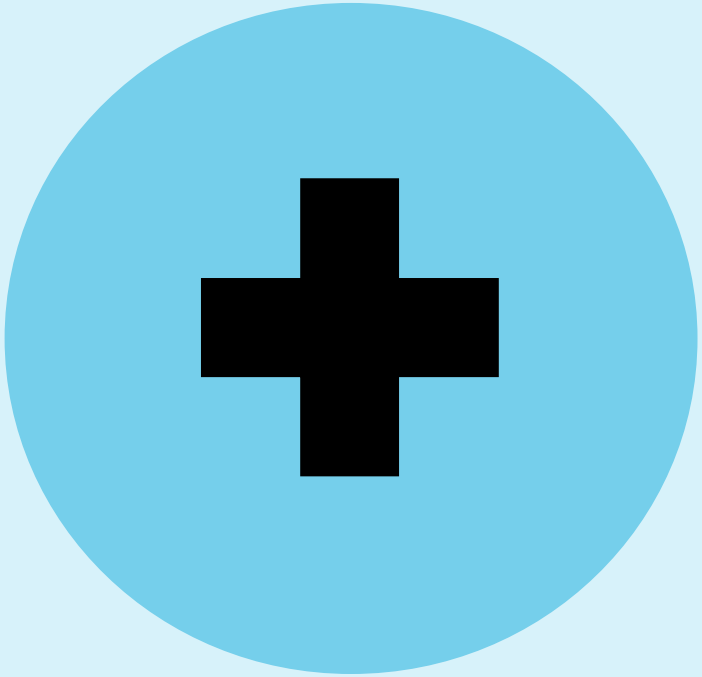
[Futures Lens – a tool for democratising futures - Sitra]

Testing your vision with Futures lens

1. Think about the representation, beneficiaries and time perspective of your vision.
2. Discuss and fill out the worksheets.
3. Concentrate on questions that you find the most relevant to you.

Time: 30 minutes





Bringing it all together

What was done?

1 How to approach futures in times of uncertainty?

2 Understanding context: Boundary conditions

3 Understanding changes: Megatrends

4 Understanding power: Futures lens



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What are the most important take aways?

Have a short discussion in the group:

- **What are the most important take aways from the session?**
- What did you learn regarding your vision, if something?
- Is there something that requires rethinking – or does the vision feel even stronger?
- Is there something you are more aware of now or something you need to keep in mind in the future?

Time: 10 minutes




ACTIONS
FOR THE
FUTURE