

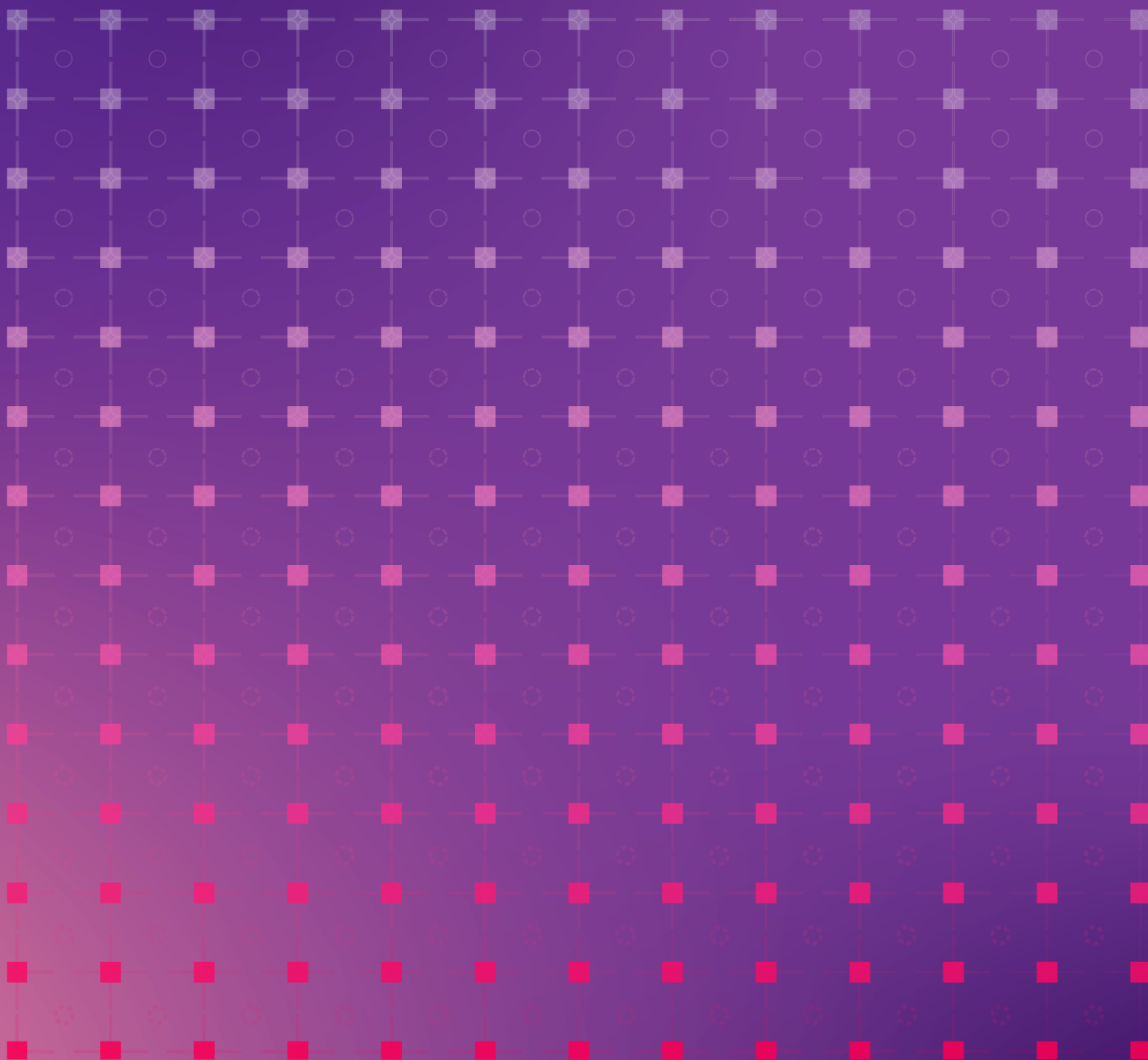
Creative Technology Futures

Policy Foresight Methodology Toolkit

A **ForesightLab** methods guide

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This toolkit functions as a complementary resource to the *Creative Technology Futures: Policy pathways to 2035 and beyond* report.

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Introduction

This toolkit provides a practical guide to applying the foresight and futures methodologies developed as part of the Creative Technology Futures project. It has been developed as a transferable methodology that can be used by policymakers, regional and local authorities, and innovation organisations that are seeking to explore long-term trajectories and design interventions for the Creative Industries and creative technologies.

It will outline how the method was applied for this specific project – with reusable templates and worksheets that can be adapted for different contexts.

Creative Technology Futures set out to explore and develop future scenarios and visions of the UK's creative technology landscape in 2035 and beyond, and to identify long-term and impactful policy interventions that could enable desired futures. Recognising the limitations of short-term policymaking in the context of rapid technological and cultural change, the research applied this foresight-led methodology to enable long-term, anticipatory policy thinking.

A series of national, regional and devolved workshops were hosted with partners across the UK, with participants spanning UK and Devolved Government Departments, Local and Combined Authorities, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and other significant bodies working across creative technology policy, innovation and R&D. The project identified four central high impact themes across the insight and scenarios developed during the workshops, including: creative education; AI; growth; and international collaboration.

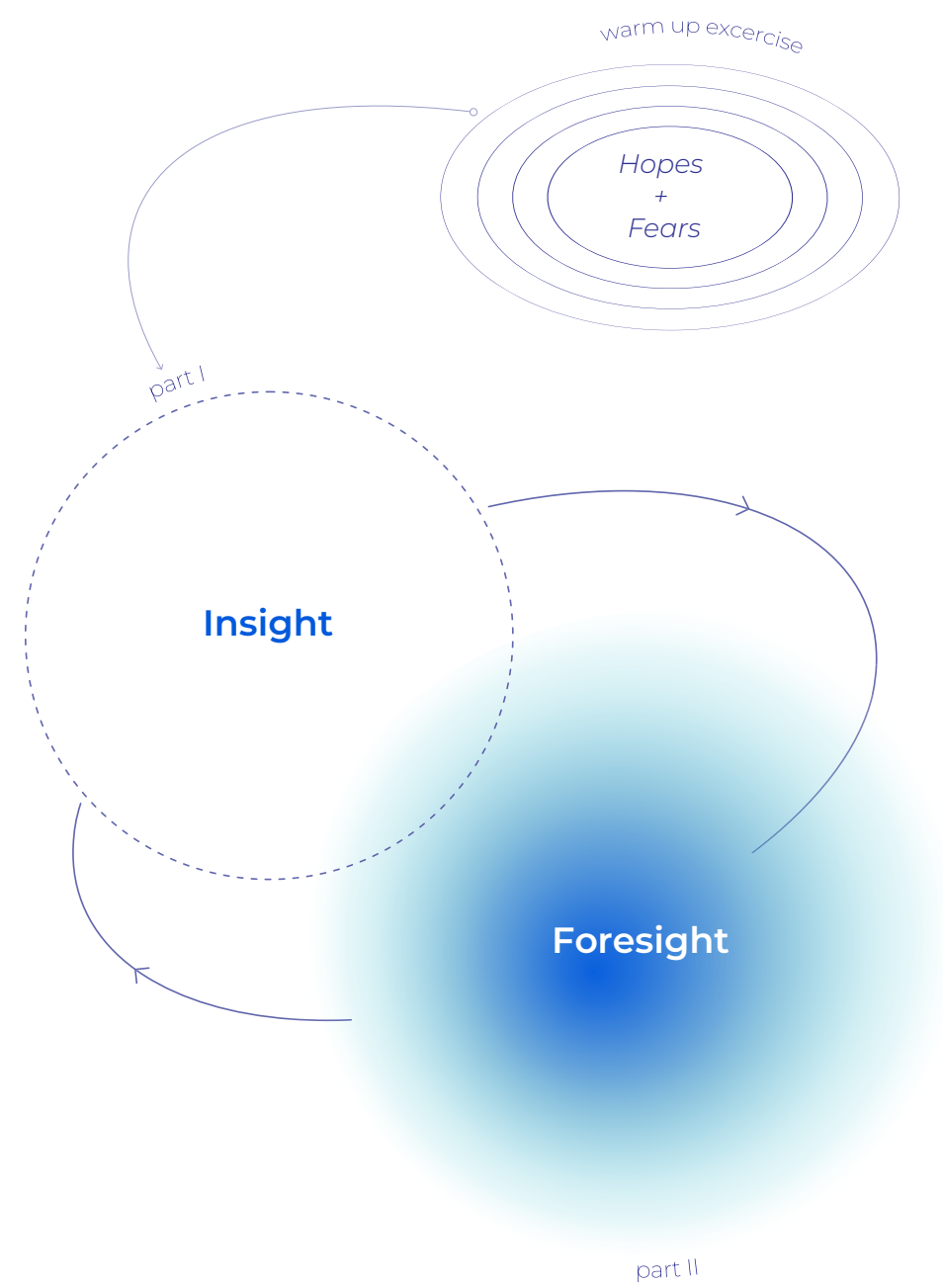
To find out more, please refer to the [*Policy Pathways to 2035 and beyond*](#) report.

Policy Foresight workshops

The policy foresight workshop series was designed to cater for groups of between 6 and 20 participants, and requires around 2-3 hours of time with breaks.

Each workshop was divided into three sections:

- Hopes and fears
- Insight
- Foresight



Hopes and fears

This exercise is used as an icebreaker at the beginning of the foresight work to surface future possibilities, challenges and priorities. It enacts a broad framing that forms the basis of the later scenario-building activity.

“Generating the future unfolds in this manner: humans – possibly the only species capable of vividly imagining a time that has never existed – draw cues from the past and present and construct the future as a realm of possibilities both positive and negative.”¹

Participants are asked to capture on post-it notes on a board, or via a digital board like Miro or Menti:

Hopes: What hopes do you have for the future?
What positive changes or outcomes would you like to see? What does 2035 look like?

Fears: What are the biggest long-term challenges, threats or negative developments that might arise? What are your concerns for what might happen in 2035 and beyond?

The outputs of this activity can be clustered into emerging themes that indicate shared priorities, tensions and provide the foundation for later scenario development.

¹ [How fear of the future can help build a better one | World Economic Forum](#)

Initial discussion

This facilitated discussion section is used to ground the workshop in present realities before moving into futures exploration and design. To initiate in-depth workshop discussion and identify emerging priorities (national, regional and devolved), a series of questions, shared with the participants in advance, are used to initiate dialogue on the priorities of the present – before thinking about long-term directions and ambitions.

The discussion questions below are framed around the Creative Industries and technology priorities in the project context, but can be readily adapted for different sectors/areas of focus:

Current sector and technology priorities:

What are the current or planned strategic priority areas for the Creative Industries and subsectors you work across (in regional/devolved context)?

Where does technology and technology adoption sit within these areas?

Delivering on devolution:

To what extent does UK-wide and national Creative Industries policy map onto a local context?

How might national policymaking better adapt to regional and devolved environments?

The future:

What are your hopes and fears about the sector in (name of place) going forwards?

What does “future growth” look like? And what might hinder it?

Emerging themes should be clustered in real time during the insight discussion by a member of the facilitation team on a whiteboard.

The outcome is a set of current priorities and challenges that will inform set the baseline prior to the foresight and scenario design.

Foresight and scenario building

This is the main exercise within the methodology, enabling participants to explore possible futures and the pathways that might lead to them. While the first and second parts of workshops focus on certainties (commitments made locally; strategic priorities; established plans), the third – main – part is underpinned by uncertainty; workshop participants are asked to think about a ten-year horizon taking them to 2035.

Provided with prompts and materials, participants should be split into smaller groups of around 3-6 people. Each group is then assigned one of the below tasks focussed on a particular thematic area:

A. *roadmapping towards a dystopian future*

or

B. *backcasting from a utopian future.*

These activities can build out of the hopes and fears elicited in the first exercise: the dystopian exercise focusses on identifying potential points of emergence or events that might unfold over time to lead to an undesired future; the utopian exercise begins with the design of a desired future, working backwards to determine what needed to happen to get to that future.

Combining both of these trajectories enables the identification of the steps and pathways that are likely to be most high impact in the next 10 years.

For these activities, participants were provided with the following materials:

- a worksheet (captured below), which offered narrative prompts to support future scenario design and development,
- a timeline to 2035, which provided space for creating policy interventions leading to future scenario

2035 SCENARIO DESIGN

Scenario title:

Draw a picture that captures a snapshot of the world

Describe the world in one sentence:

Use the prompts below to guide your thinking

In 2035, the UK has prioritised

On the global stage, the UK is now

A new National Government strategy related to

has been published.

Concurrently, a local/regional strategy focussed on

has been developed.

The people/companies/organisations benefitting most from these strategies are

The people/companies/organisations missing out are

Local ecosystems are

The local creative technology landscape feels

Growth has

Communities are

Infrastructure is

Public services are

Environmental impact has

Now

White Paper: Fully incentivized data collection / observatory skills

New government strategy: Skills system that is agile, co-funded by government / industry

Learner / workforce who are flexible / adaptable, multidisciplinary and debt-free

Report on Labour market activity: - no skills gap - no unemployment

2035

Worksheet used to support participant reflection and future scenario design through structured narrative prompts.

Example workshop timeline produced during a workshop, showing possible policy interventions and outcomes shaping a desired future for skills, education and talent by 2035

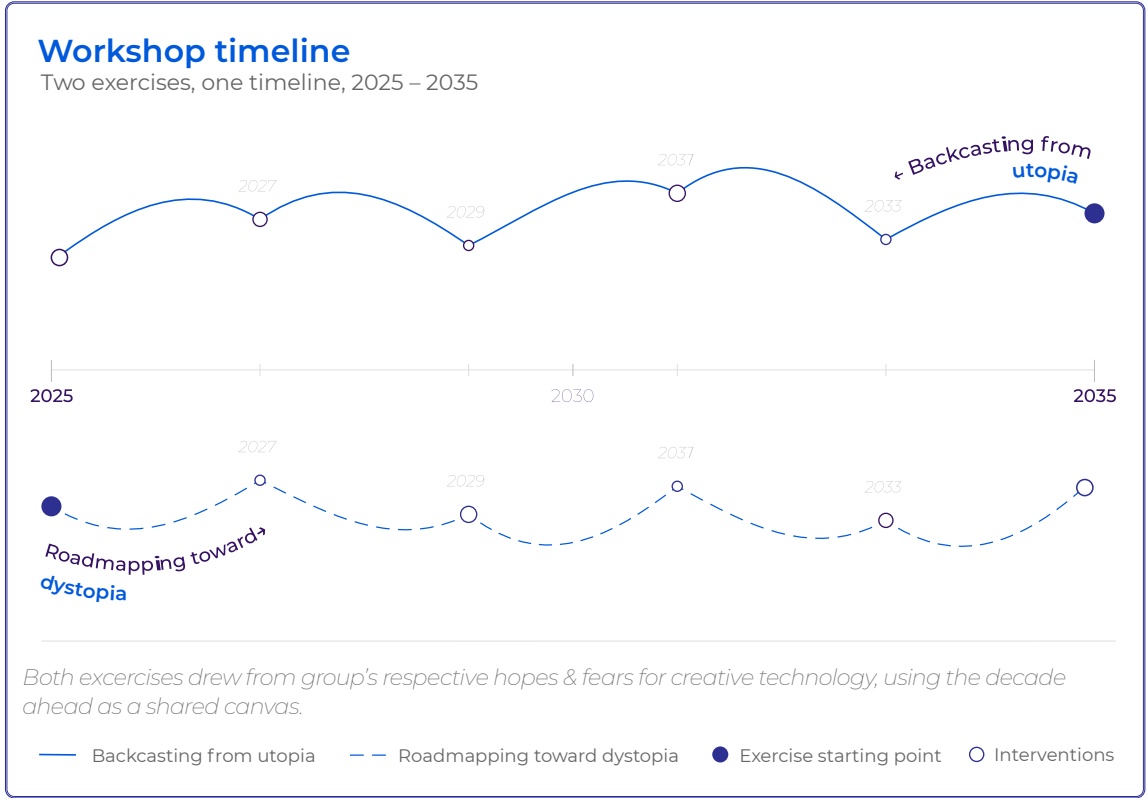
The worksheet provides participants with a series of narrative prompts to think through the future of the UK’s creative technology ecosystem in detail. Enabling in-depth thinking about futures, the prompts included the way the UK would be perceived internationally, the key beneficiaries of the imagined future, as well as those missing out. The worksheet also includes cues that related specifically to, and inspired by, Government mission areas. The aim is to align the Government’s main missions and determinants of success to 2035, with visions of how the creative technology ecosystem might change. This enables new modes of thinking with direct alignment to the 5 Government missions:

Growth mission: kickstarting economic growth	→ what growth means, and what it looks like, in the particular context of creative technology – and the kinds of growth participants would like to see/avoid.
Communities mission: breakdown barriers to opportunity	→ thinking of the public benefits of a thriving creative technology ecosystem and the ways R&D would translate into perceived and tangible benefits across the UK.
Infrastructure mission: safer streets	→ the kinds of infrastructure investments that would enable the future ecosystem – what kinds of technologies might be prioritised, and how it would change.
Public services mission: build an NHS fit for the future	→ the spillover benefits and impacts: would there be links between public service delivery and the future creative technology ecosystem?
Environmental Impact mission: make Britain a clean energy superpower	→ seeing the development of the ecosystem through the lens of sustainability and the wider impacts of any of the imagined investments.

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After co-designing a narrative around the imagined future, participants should be invited to create a timeline of policy interventions by either roadmapping to, or backcasting from, 2035. This activity enables participants to align the present and the future, taking into consideration the potential steps and actions likely to lead to their visions of the future. Participants should be encouraged to reflect on how policy decisions shape the future and associated outcomes, different trade offs and long-term implications.



Following the group foresight activity, participants are invited to present their scenarios back to the wider group, with a facilitated discussion to compare futures, explore patterns and decipher areas of high long-term impact.

Analysis

Following the workshops, facilitators should collate all scenarios, timelines and notes from the sessions and look for consistent mentions, patterns across workshops, and common interventions.

The findings can be used to identify high, impact themes, potential policy levers and future trajectories. Across areas of high impact, structural tensions can be visualised using the utopian and dystopian timelines; these tensions highlight critical policy decision points. For examples, please see the Creative Technology Futures report (Chapter 3).

The combination of structured discussion, creative scenario building and co-design, and analysis, provides a practical framework for exploring uncertainty and informing long-term policy design.

For further information, or to collaborate with the team, please email v.r.williams@lboro.ac.uk.

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