

The role of futures literacy and anticipatory governance in proactive policymaking in 4IR



SADC-SAIIA

Co-Hosted
Expert Information-sharing
Webinar

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“FUTURES STUDIES IS AN ACADEMIC FIELD THAT IS
CONCERNED WITH UNDERSTANDING AND ANTICIPATING
CHANGE IN SOCIETY...
IN ORDER TO HELP OTHERS CONCEIVE
AND PURSUE MORE DESIRABLE FUTURES.”

Richard Lum



SAIIA Futures Programme

Traditional approaches to governance and policymaking and an overreliance on prediction and certainty in planning are inadequate for the great acceleration of change and scale of complexity in our post-normal times.

The Futures Programme builds African foresight and innovation capacity to anticipate and prepare for major political, economic, social, security, technological and environmental disruptors facing the SADC region by discovering new possibilities for systemic innovation and anticipatory governance; and by assisting policymakers, the business community and civil society to deal with strategic risks and leverage emerging opportunities for meeting development goals.

Core Themes of the Futures Programme

Foresight



Explores alternative African futures through futures-thinking methodologies that enable co-created strategic capacity, proactive policy insights and curated debate for transformative change. By anticipating the key emerging disruptors that will have a major impact on African states over a 10- to 30-year horizon, the programme aims to help improve long-term decision-making for policymakers, industry and civil society.

Systemic Innovation



Applies systems thinking to interdependent African problems emerging from developments in political, economic, social, security, technological and environmental contexts. It aims to help decision-makers take advantage of complex problems to change their thinking and actions to strengthen innovation, policy processes, governance and scale interventions for impact.

Anticipatory Governance



Develops capacity to mitigate uncertain African futures through building future-readiness in engagement, policymaking, funding and regulation practice over extended timeframes to create future-orientated innovative governance responses to better navigate emerging technologies and socio-economic developments.

It's a VUCA world

- **V**olatility reflects the speed and turbulence of change.
- **U**ncertainty means that outcomes, even from familiar actions, are less predictable.
- **C**omplexity indicates the vastness of interdependencies in globally connected economies and societies.
- **A**mbiguity conveys the multitude of options and potential outcomes resulting from them



Futures Literacy

FUTURES LITERACY IS A UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE **SKILL** THAT BUILDS ON THE INNATE HUMAN CAPACITY TO **IMAGINE AND ANTICIPATE** THE FUTURE, OFFERS A CLEAR, FIELD TESTED SOLUTION TO POVERTY-OF-THE-IMAGINATION.

Riel Miller, UNESCO

Futures Literacy

Futures Literacy significantly improves the capacity of people to:

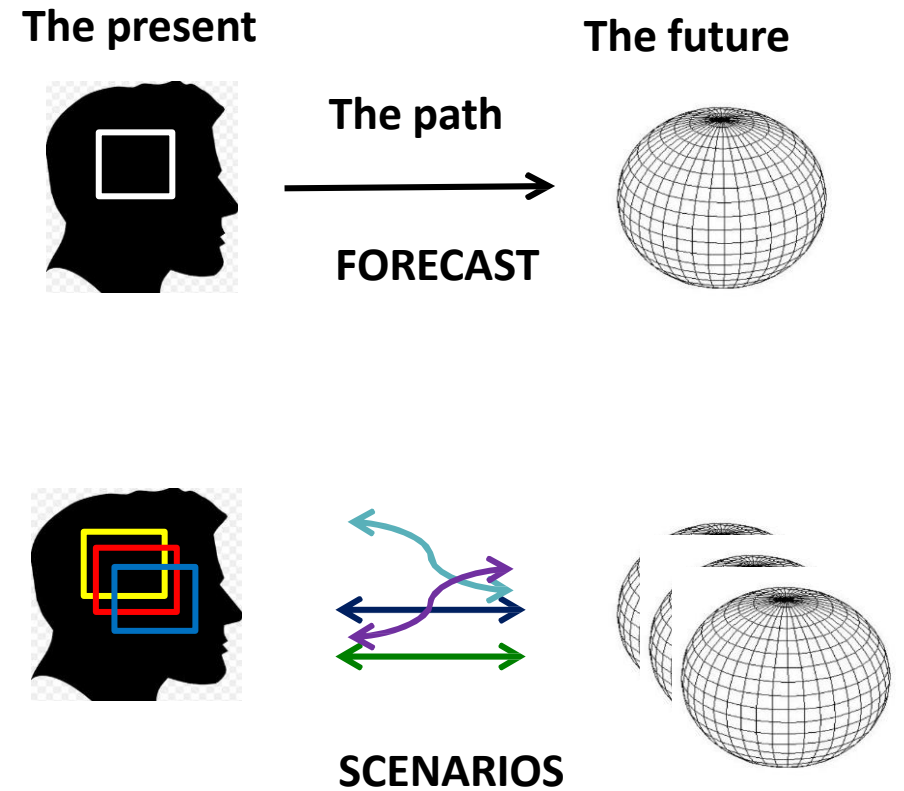
- understand their fears and hopes,
- better comprehend the changes taking place in the world,
- create their own images of the future, and
- discover new possibilities for innovation and resilience.

As a result, Futures Literacy contributes directly to:

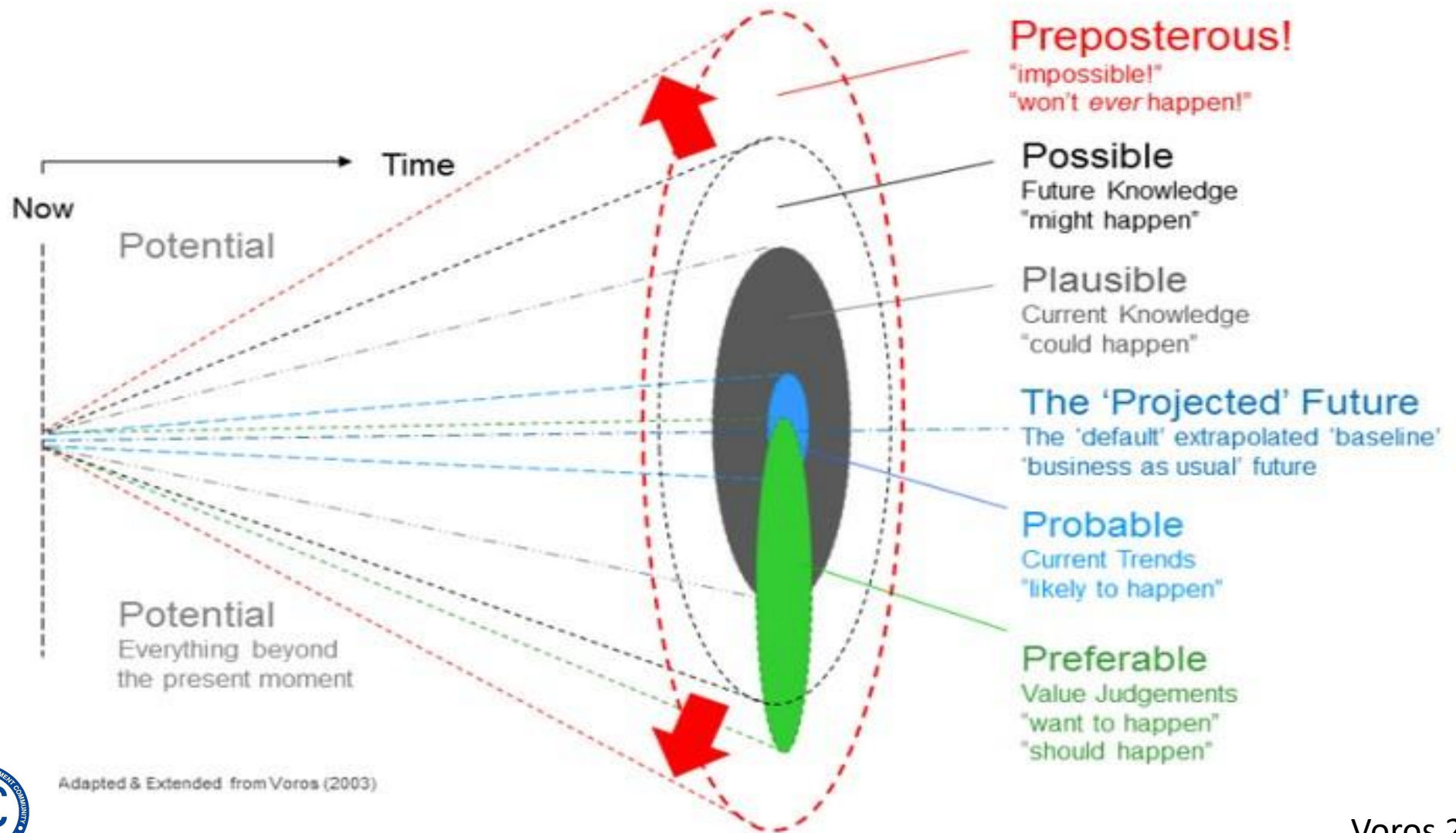
- discovering and implementing the innovations required to realize the Sustainable Development Goals;
- adopting strategies for mitigation, adaptation, and transformation in response to climate change;
- reducing risk through diversification in the face of shocks;
- inspiring hope and overcoming despair by combating ‘poverty-of-the-imagination’;
- detecting novelty and encouraging experimentation;
- incorporating diversity into perception and action.

Scenarios

- Impact and 'unknowability'
- Alternative futures
- Options



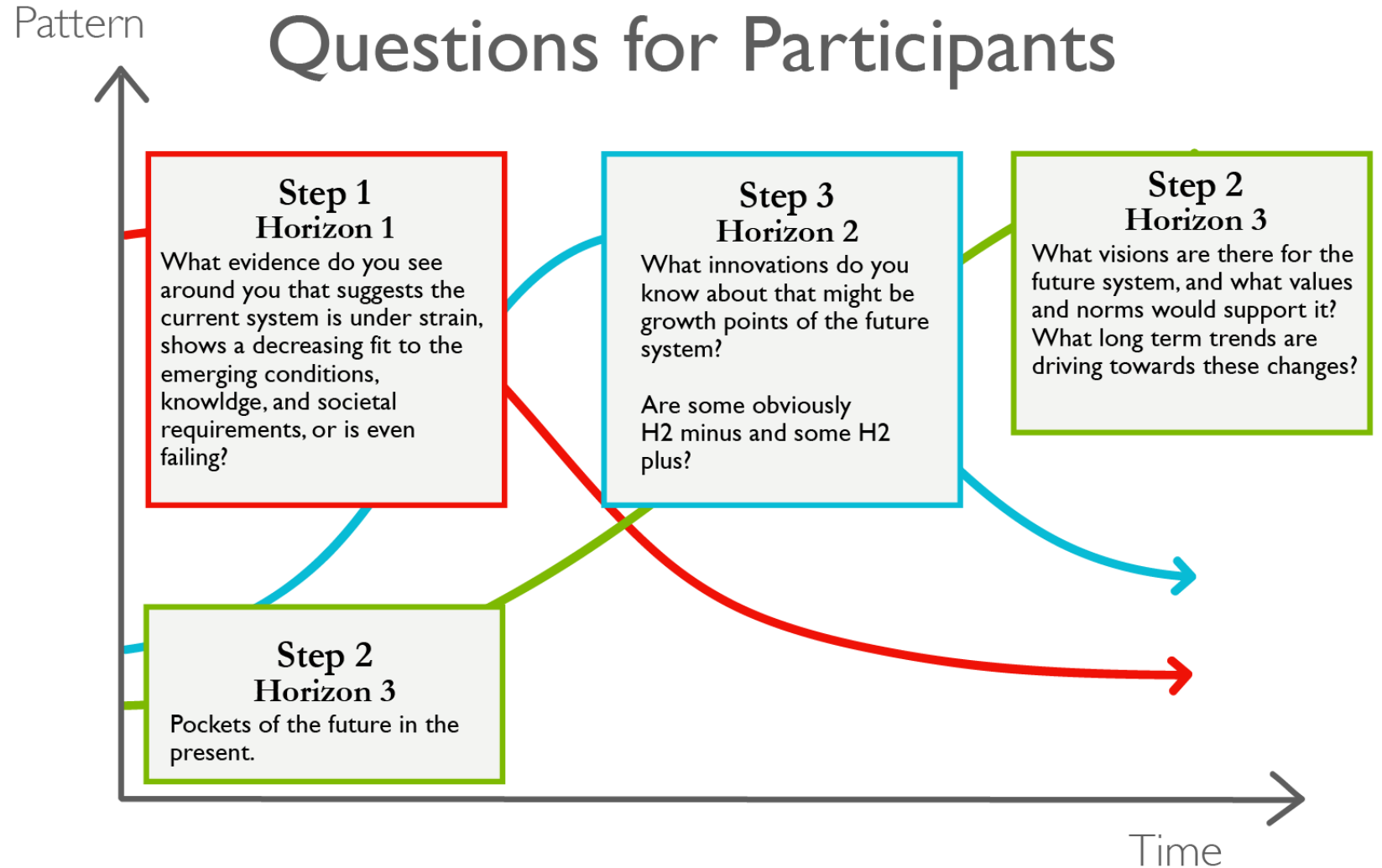
Multiple Futures



Three Horizons

- to create futures that imaginatively captures the values and ideals of all stakeholders and ensures the successful implementation of systemic innovations

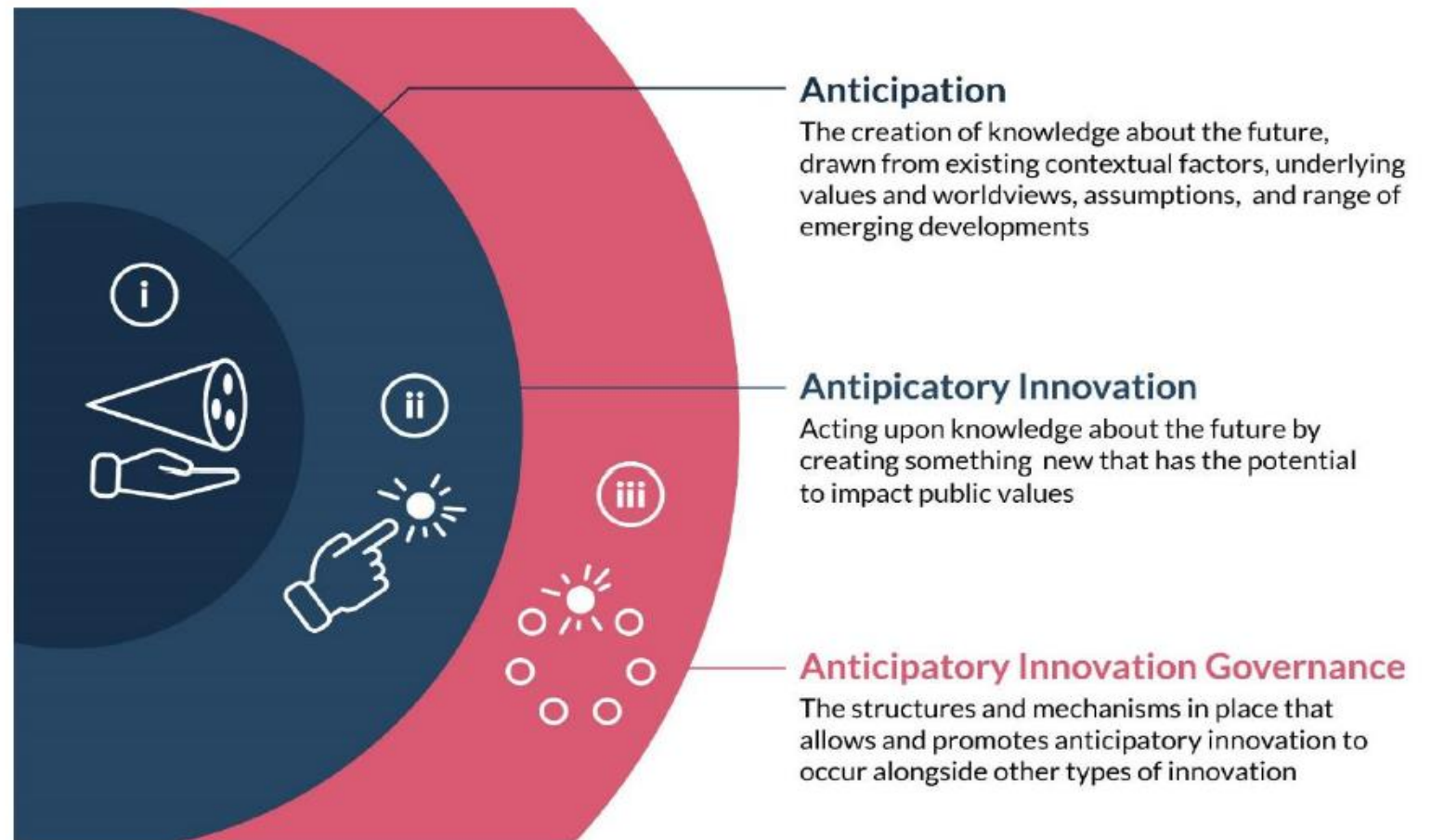
Three Horizons Questions for Participants



Anticipatory Governance Training

- **1-day workshop with key stakeholders and project beneficiaries to actively explore options with a particular aim of spurring on systemic innovations connected to uncertain futures in the hopes of shaping the future of governance through futures-informed innovative practice.**

Anticipatory governance is the process of acting on a variety of inputs to manage emerging knowledge-based technologies and socio-economic developments while such management is still possible (Guston, 2014). This may involve inputs from a variety of governance functions (foresight, engagement, policymaking, funding, regulation etc.) in a coordinated manner.



Source: OECD.

OECD OPSI

How can foresight add value to policy making

- **Better anticipation:** to identify and prepare sooner for new opportunities and challenges that could emerge in the future
- **Policy innovation:** to spur new thinking about the best policies to address these opportunities and challenges
- **Future-proofing:** to stress-test existing or proposed strategies against a range of future scenarios

Main take aways for policy making

Main take aways:

In times of rapid change and uncertainty, responsible policy must take multiple future possibilities into account. Strategic foresight offers the means to do that.

- All governments need to do more in order to build greater anticipatory capacity.
- Institutionalising the use of strategic foresight requires considering demand, capacity, institutions, embeddedness, and feedback.
- SAIIA offers support to governments building their foresight capacity through advice, interventions, studies, and networking.

Concluding Remarks and Close

“Futures work is rarely about accurate prediction. It is almost always about staging a useful intervention which encourages discussion of the most challenging aspects of the present...

The best futures projects take on difficult subjects of today, cast them forward, then reflect them back upon the present in order to make them discussable, now.”

Noah Raford



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Thank you!