

---

# THE FUTURING TOOL: A TOOLKIT FOR RESPONDING TO THE DEMANDS OF THE FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE MOVEMENT

---

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

This guide for action can be used by decision-makers at any level or in any form of organisation or business to identify how to respond to the Fridays for Future Movement in a way that is meaningful, responsive and impactful.

---

Developed by: Elizabeth Dirth  
With support from:

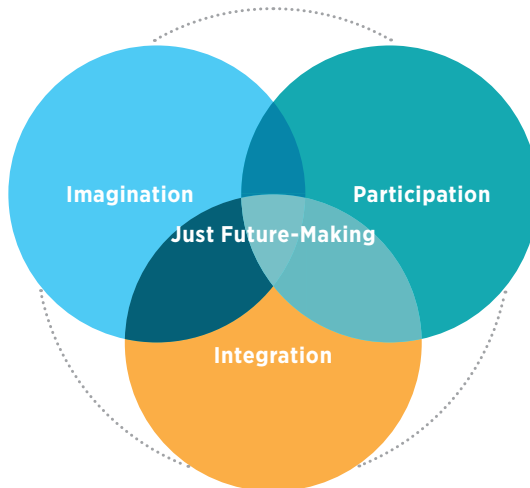


# FOREWORD

At the time of the release of this tool, it has been just over a year since the first day of the very first school strike for climate. The Fridays for Future movement that sprung up in its wake has spread to over 1,000 cities around the world, with growing numbers of young people attending the weekly protest marches. As the movement enters its second year, everywhere around the world people are faced with an important question: How should we respond?

For a long time we kept a cognitive distance between ourselves and the reality of climate change, seeing it as a problem that lay in the future. But the current movement of young people is bringing it into the present and throwing up challenges that cut to the very core of our social, economic and political systems. Responding to this movement is not only about climate action, but also about engaging appropriately with young people and interacting with the future. There is a need for change not just in policies, but also in processes, institutions, governance and organisational culture.

We have an incredible opportunity to transform how we deal with climate change, but there is a real risk that responses to this movement will remain insufficient, superficial, patronising, and tokenistic. Thus far, we have been failing to connect the dots between the imperatives of climate science, a proliferation of new policies, instruments and initiatives, and the practices and processes of inclusive and just future-making. It's time for this to change. Instead of just press releases and podiums for young people, we need to be talking about meaningful participation and engagement, and openly addressing injustices in the process.



---

To respond to these demands, we need to more meaningfully consider the future, their future, in a way that we're not used to doing. What does it mean to take into account the well-being of future generations in how we deal with climate change? What is the role of and relationship to young people in this process?

This tool brings together three core ideas – participation, integration and imagination – as the foundation underlying what follows. These ideas are essential to just future-making, and are elaborated in an accompanying policy brief<sup>1</sup>.

Following on from the tool designed specifically for government, this tool offers help to wider society and a range of diverse non-governmental organisations to formulate a more meaningful response to these questions, the Fridays for Future movement, and the climate crisis generally. It is, fundamentally, about transforming governance processes. The tool is not prescriptive regarding any specific policy or process, but is designed instead to support solutions to the root cause of the challenge.

The tool was originally designed with government policymakers in mind, but this adapted version was developed with a much broader readership in mind. After all, everyone has a role to play in strengthening our collective response to the climate crisis. This version is relevant for any organisation interested in answering these questions and engaging with the climate crisis and the future in a just and effective way.

---

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT?

Using this toolkit, you can review a number of options for responding and identify those most appropriate and relevant to your context. The following pages will guide you through the following processes:

- 1 reviewing the table of response options
- 2 using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to assess selected options in terms of their suitability for your context
- 3 identifying the way forward and planning next steps

In this way, you will narrow your selection down to a process or practice that can support and enhance your response to the climate crisis by incorporating the concerns of young people and future generations.

Accompanying this toolkit is a policy brief that elaborates on the process and the information presented here. For more tailored support in this process, please contact the author. Further resources on the frameworks used here can be found at: **<https://www.iass-potsdam.de/en/output/publications>**

<sup>1</sup>This policy brief, *Processes for Just Future-Making: Recommendations for Responding to the Demands of the Fridays for Future Movement*, can be found at <https://www.iass-potsdam.de/en/output/publications>

# PROCESSES FOR JUST FUTURE-MAKING

Five methods for improved responses to incorporate fairness for future generations in the context of the climate crisis.



Mechanism	Future impact assessment tools	Participatory future-making processes
<b>Short explanation</b>	Future impact assessment tools can be developed and used in any part of organisational decision-making, whether this is in planning, budgeting or policymaking. They offer the opportunity to critique activities or decisions through the lens of future generations. The scrutiny process should also entail a participatory element in the form of some kind of stakeholder review.	Include participatory future-visioning design processes as part of the strategic planning process. This process should be imaginative and deliberative to engage creativity, build new ideas and establish consensus. This should bring together internal and external stakeholders and should be representative of the demographic distribution and diversity of your stakeholders, service-users or beneficiaries. Clear links between the vision and new strategic developments should be elaborated and firmly established.
<b>Theory of change</b>	This mechanism constrains and incentivises decision-making.	This mechanism expands the imaginative capacity of your organisation and participants and brings the future into focus in a creative and open way.
<b>Resources required</b>	Additional capacity to design or adapt tool for context. Internal capacity for regular use of the tool in each policymaking process.	Additional capacity to facilitate the co-designed future vision. Resources to compensate participants for their time or input.



<b>Future advisory council</b>	<b>Board-level representation of future</b>	<b>Reform of metrics &amp; indicators for progress</b>
<p>A council that advises government, provides recommendations, and offers additional scrutiny for strategic decisions and planning processes. The council comprises key stakeholders, including young people, future generations (perhaps through an empty chair), and diverse demographic groups. The council has a designated place within the organisational structure for input and influence.</p>	<p>Allocate a number of board positions to young people as designated future representatives. Depending on the size of the board, this should possibly be multiple representatives (Aiming towards 10 – 20% representation). Future representatives should have full equality with other board members, participate equally in decision-making, and carry the responsibility that they seek to represent the interests of the long term.</p>	<p>Indicators and metrics dictate how we understand success and shape what we work with. Indicators can be changed to include long-term progress indicators and long-term aspects of societal development. Short-term metrics could be removed. Long-term vision indicators could be developed as part of a future-visioning process. New indicators could be developed using one of the other processes in this table.</p>
<p>This mechanisms works to expand the perspective of the organisation and scrutinise or restrain decisions by considering and highlighting their impact on the future.</p>	<p>Future representatives can both constrain decisions through their voting power or influence the direction of the board as a whole.</p>	<p>This mechanism changes the motives of the organisation by reframing and recalibrating goals.</p>
<p>Participation capacity across a number of groups and stakeholders. Possible additional staff and/or funding for operational support.</p>	<p>Training and development for new future representatives.</p>	<p>Additional capacity for processes of developing or revising indicators.</p>



Mechanism	Future impact assessment tools	Participatory future-making processes
<b>Timeline</b>	Four-month lead time for development of assessment. Smaller investment time during each scrutiny process.	Six months for participatory visioning process. Timing needs to be planned around each strategic planning opportunity.
<b>Anticipated outcomes</b>	Enhanced understanding of scale and breadth of decisions impacting the future. Extending the time horizon that is considered in the strategic development and planning process.	Visioning exercises can expand imaginative capacity and reconnect with core values to engage with the future and give longer-term direction. Participation and deliberation processes contribute to civic engagement.
<b>Measuring success</b>	Evidence of scrutiny process, extent of use, case studies.	Strategic plans are aligned with and assessed against contribution to this future vision.
<b>Constraints and risks</b>	Requires buy-in of organisation and commitment to transfer and communicate conclusions across levels of organisational planning.	The result of the process needs to be bought into, otherwise it lacks authority or power. Adequate level of diversity in participation for deliberation process
<b>How does this support realising justice?<sup>3</sup></b>	Through recognition of impact on the future and potential for more equal distribution of climate change impacts over time	By imagining what a good life (capability to have a good life) in the future looks like in a participatory way. Through participation in future-making and decision-making
<b>Examples of similar from government</b>	Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool developed and used by Scottish Parliament	Play the Future workshops in Utrecht, NL where serious games allowed people to engage with the future.
<b>Further reading</b>	Niestroy et al. (2019): Europe's approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: good practices and the way forward.	Hajer, M. (2017): Inaugural Lecture: The Power of Imagination. Caney, S. (2016). Green Alliance (2019): Power to the People.

<sup>3</sup>An elaboration of what is understood to be justice in each of these explanations can be found online at



<b>Future advisory council</b>	<b>Board-level representation of future</b>	<b>Reform of metrics &amp; indicators for progress</b>
<p>Council members should be able to make a commitment duration of the would at least extend longer than the duration of the strategic plan.</p>	<p>Expectation of minimum commitment beyond strategy timelines to ensure embedding and impact.</p>	<p>Participatory process and future vision for design of new metrics should take three months, with a further four months for the process of embedding and reframing goals.</p>
<p>Process intentionally brings perspectives about the future into planning and decision-making.</p>	<p>Future ramifications are included in discussions at board level. Mutual learning process between experienced and less experienced board members.</p>	<p>Changing the orientation and long-term direction of travel. Changing the narrative and tone about long-term values and goals. Changing understanding of success.</p>
<p>Examples of adoption of recommendations, deliberation or influence.</p>	<p>Qualitative reflections from board on the impact of this change.</p>	<p>New metrics around future goals are met. Public narratives around goals and values have changed.</p>
<p>Should be designed in a way to ensure some amount of power or influence from this body.</p>	<p>Enshrined hierarchical culture prevails and new board members are not given responsibility, respect and trust.</p>	<p>Values and norms don't change very quickly and embedding this may take time.</p>
<p>Through broadening participation and representation of the future in decision-making.</p>	<p>Through participation of the future through representation.</p>	<p>By distributing and recognising impacts (positive and negative) over time.</p>
<p>Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development brings together ministry representatives and civil society.</p>	<p>A number of NGOs have taken steps to do this, such as Young Scot, or the 2050 Climate Group. Further examples can be found with Young Trustee.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has rewritten its National Performance Framework in line with the SDGs.</p>
<p>Gonzalez-Ricoy &amp; Gosseries (2016): Institutions for Future Generations.</p>	<p>OECD (2018): Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.</p>	<p>Welsh Government (2019): Voluntary National Review.</p>

## IDENTIFYING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

First, take the time to reflect on the three questions below:

**OUTCOME:** What do you hope to achieve? .....

**OBJECTIVE:** What specific aspects of your current processes do you think need to be different and how? .....

**BARRIERS:** What is the biggest barrier to long-term thinking and fairness for future generations in your context? .....

Next, it's time to consider which of the processes of just future-making work best for you. Take one of the context. Go through as many as you need, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats other aspects.

INTERNAL	<b>HELPFUL</b>
	<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This works well in my context because it interacts positively with...</li><li>• Its design is appropriate for addressing the challenge we have of...</li><li>• Advantages ...</li></ul> <p>e.g.: X approach complements and adds to the strategic development process that already exists.</p>
EXTERNAL	<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This option leverages...</li><li>• This will be meaningful to people because ...</li><li>• This will be meaningful to our stakeholders or beneficiaries because...</li></ul> <p>e.g.: X approach would also help us to re-engage citizens with our work in a positive way.</p>





Four sets of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

options in the table on pages 6 to 9 and use the framework below to test its applicability to your of this option. To start, answer the guiding questions below directly, and then move on to identify

**HARMFUL**

**Weakness**

- This doesn't work in my context because it interacts negatively with...
- It may not tackle....
- Disadvantages...

e.g.: X approach requires skills that we don't have and would need to find resources or ways to develop.



**Threats**

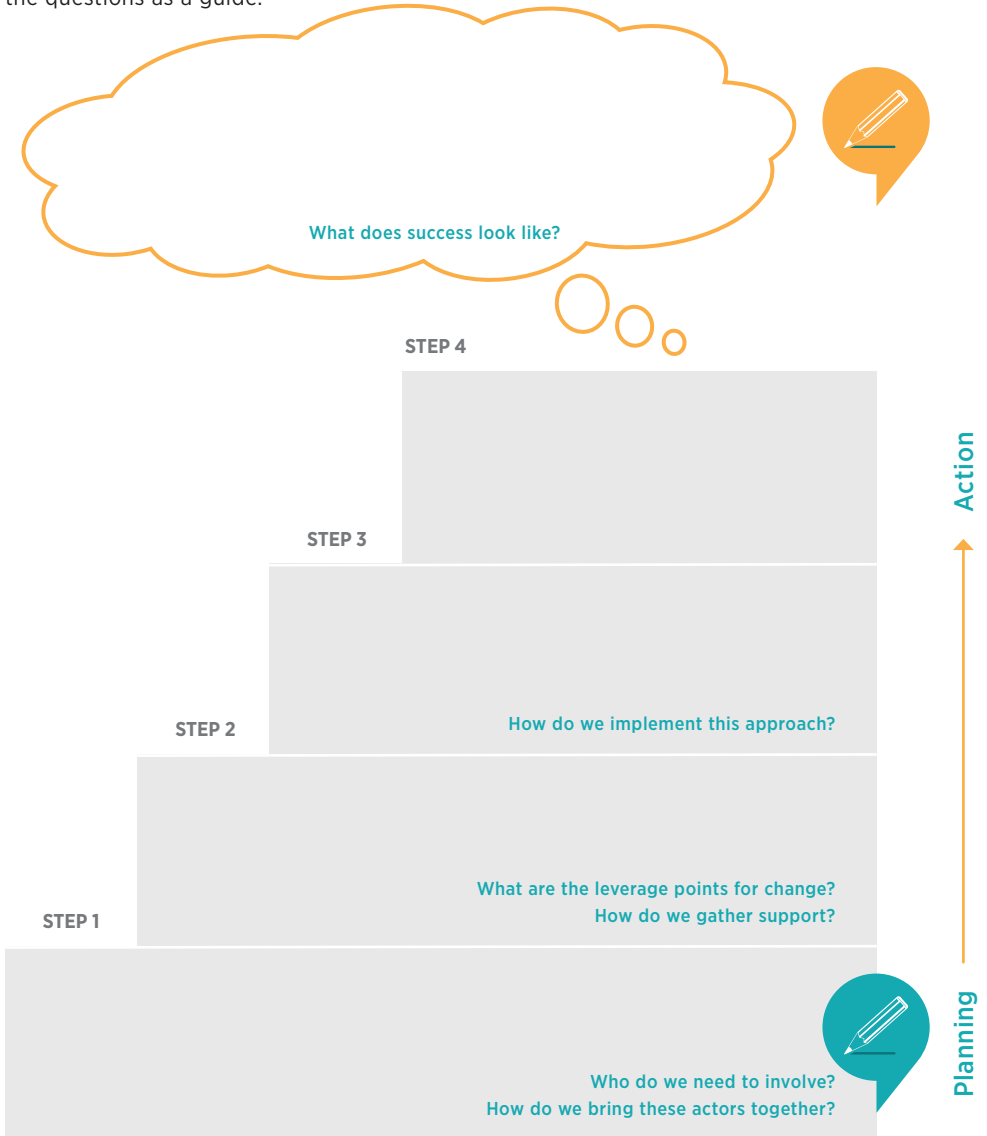
- This option conflicts with...
- The current situation of ...

... would stand in the way of its success.

e.g.: Because this was done badly in the past, X approach may be perceived as being a failure or a negative thing from the start.

## HOW DO I TAKE THIS FORWARD?

Gather together some colleagues to discuss the most appropriate option(s), as selected above. If it's possible, set aside two to three hours for a group discussion. Begin this process with an imaginative discussion: If we put this into practice and it was successful, what would it look like? Use the steps below to make a plan using the questions as a guide.



---

## HOW HAVE THESE FIVE OPTIONS BEEN DEVELOPED?

What lies behind this toolkit is seven years of work exploring and consolidating ideas about how we can address climate change in a way that is fair for the future. This includes five years spent founding and running a youth climate organisation, three years researching this topic, and two years supporting local governments with their climate change strategies. To formulate these five options, I started by gathering over 100 different examples of processes and practices from around the world that attempt to bring the future into the present in how we address climate change. I conducted interviews with the practitioners and experts involved in these cases to find out what worked and what didn't, as well as organising a number of related workshops with a diverse range of participants. I immersed myself in the political theory of citizen participation and representing the future, critical discussions about climate justice, and new and imaginative ideas about 'futuring'. And most importantly, I asked young people, again and again, what processes they would like to see emerge, and how they felt they could constructively engage in them. This has been the real focus of my time over the last five years: talking to young people about how we can address climate change in a way that is inclusive and just for them.

---

## WHAT MAKES THEM MEANINGFUL?

Each of these options links to three core ideas. First, they **pursue justice for future generations**. Justice for future generations does not always mean an increase in the representation of young people in our systems; including young people is only one of many ways in which we can bring the future into governance. What is important is that all the options increase accountability to the future, attention on the future, and justice for future generations. What is fair and just for whom is a difficult question which can be understood in a range of different ways. The way that each option pursues justice is explicit in the framework and in the additional reading online. Second, they are all **innovations** based on existing governance systems, processes or practices. For a long time, we've approached climate change and the future as if it can sit outside of everything else. Born of this was the idea that we need specialised institutions and agencies to raise awareness and deliver work. In this way, we created our own silo. We dug a canyon and made no plans for a bridge. This tool tries to help you build a bridge. Meaningful responses are not a one-size-fits-all institutional blueprint; they are embedded, integrated and contextualised. Third, they are all participatory and **inclusive** processes. For such a complex and all-encompassing challenge, not only can we not afford to leave anyone out, but governance can also benefit from the way that participation and inclusion enhances deliberation, builds consensus, and facilitates engagement in civic life. By following this process, you can take the next step to explore how to do just that.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Dirth is currently a fellow at the IASS, where she developed this tool. She is also an independent consultant for her company, Just Future-Making. Previously, she worked as a researcher and lecturer for the Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development at Utrecht University and was the founding managing editor of a new open access journal, Earth System Governance, and coordinator of the Planetary Justice Taskforce of the Earth System Governance project. Before moving into research, Elizabeth spent five years working on capacity building for sustainable development and climate change with local government, the public sector more generally, and community organisations in Scotland. Elizabeth is also a co-founder and former chair of the 2050 Climate Group. During this time she led the organisation's rapid development into an internationally recognised and award-winning NGO in under three years of operation.

---

## CONTACT THE AUTHOR

Would you like further support in using the tool, or facilitation through the process?

The use of this tool can be accompanied by tailored advice and delivery support.

Please get in touch with the author to discuss this:

Email: [Elizabeth.Dirth@iass-potsdam.de](mailto:Elizabeth.Dirth@iass-potsdam.de)

Website: [dirthelizabeth.wordpress.com](http://dirthelizabeth.wordpress.com)

---

## CONTACT THE SUPPORTING INSTITUTE

Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) e. V.

Berliner Straße 130

14467 Potsdam

Tel: +49 (0) 331-28822-300

Fax: +49 (0) 331-28822-310

Email: [media@iass-potsdam.de](mailto:media@iass-potsdam.de)

[www.iass-potsdam.de](http://www.iass-potsdam.de)

ViSP:

Prof. Dr Ortwin Renn,

Managing Scientific Director

DOI: 10.2312/iass.2019.049

Published November 2019



SPONSORED BY THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research

