

Building a Collective Vision for Economic Justice in Oregon

RE:Conference 2022

Cynthia Carmina Gomez, Director of Community
& Civic Impact, gomezc@pdx.edu

Agenda

- Thinking Like a Futurist
- Future Me Activity
- Headline from the Future
- Report out



Futures and Foresight work is an emerging social science and practice that is being used by communities, governments, and transgovernmental entities (like the UN) to boost collective imagination, agility, and intelligence to cultivate a greater sense of agency, vision, and hope about the future.



YOU ARE A FUTURIS

You create a world where all community members are able to reach their full human potential.

Your culturally responsive practices save lives.

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Five Principles for Thinking Like a Futurist
by Institute for the Future

“Thinking about the future allows us to imagine what kind of future we want to live in and how we can get there.”



**MAKING THE
FUTURE WITH
FORESIGHT**



Five Principles for Thinking Like a Futurist

- Forget about predictions
- Focus on signals
- Look back to see forward
- Uncover patterns
- Create a community



#1: Forget about Predictions

Predictions focus on one particular event

Futurists look at the interconnection between technologies and society and economics and organizations.

One way to think about this is to look at the difference between waves and tides. Waves are what we see on the surface. They are fleeting events, they come and go, appear and disappear.

But there is something bigger underneath that is causing these waves. Underneath the waves is the tide, causing all kinds of disturbances of which waves are just one sign.

Our work involves trying to understand those tides, the deeper forces underneath the waves.

Futures Thinking Is about Readiness

So, if no one can predict the future, why think about it?

Because doing so helps you to inoculate yourself and our community.

In the medical field, inoculating yourself prevents you from falling ill.

In futures thinking, if you have considered a whole range of possibilities, you are inoculating yourself against wicked problems.

If one of these possibilities comes about, you are better prepared.



Futures Thinking Is about Seeing New Possibilities

Thinking about the future is also about imagining.

It's about transforming how we think.

It's about creating a map to the future and looking for the big areas of opportunity.



The future doesn't just happen to us.

We have agency in imagining and creating the kind of future we want to live in, and we can take actions to get us there.



Our future selves are strangers to us. This is not just a poetic metaphor, it is a neurological fact. Actively imagining our future selves can make the future feel more urgent, prime our brains to pay closer attention to it, and motivates us to actively shape the future today.

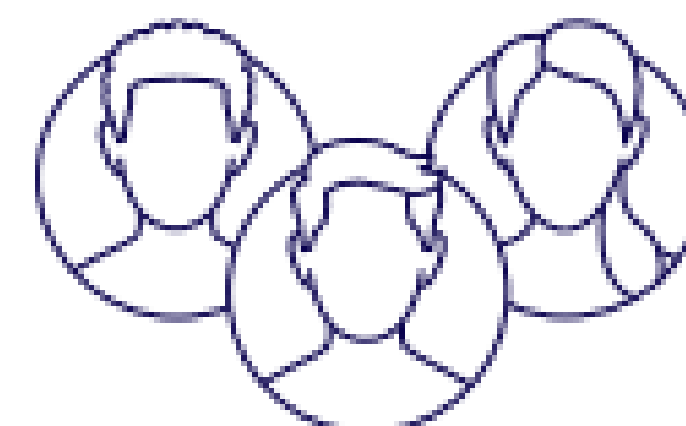
Future Me Activity

It is 2032...

1.2 | FIND FUTURE ME

FUTURE DATE:

YOUR AGE:



Can you imagine one way you might be physically different at this age?

Can you imagine one way your family life might be different? Who might you live with? How have your daily habits changed?

Can you imagine one way you might be a better or stronger version of yourself? Is there a new skill you've learned or improved, or a habit you've changed? Perhaps you've survived or lived through something that will have made you wiser or more resilient?

When we think about the future, a ten-year horizon is our "sweet spot."

Why?

Ten years is a safe place. People don't bring a lot of turf issues when thinking that far out, and they can agree on a desirable future to consider and to prepare for.

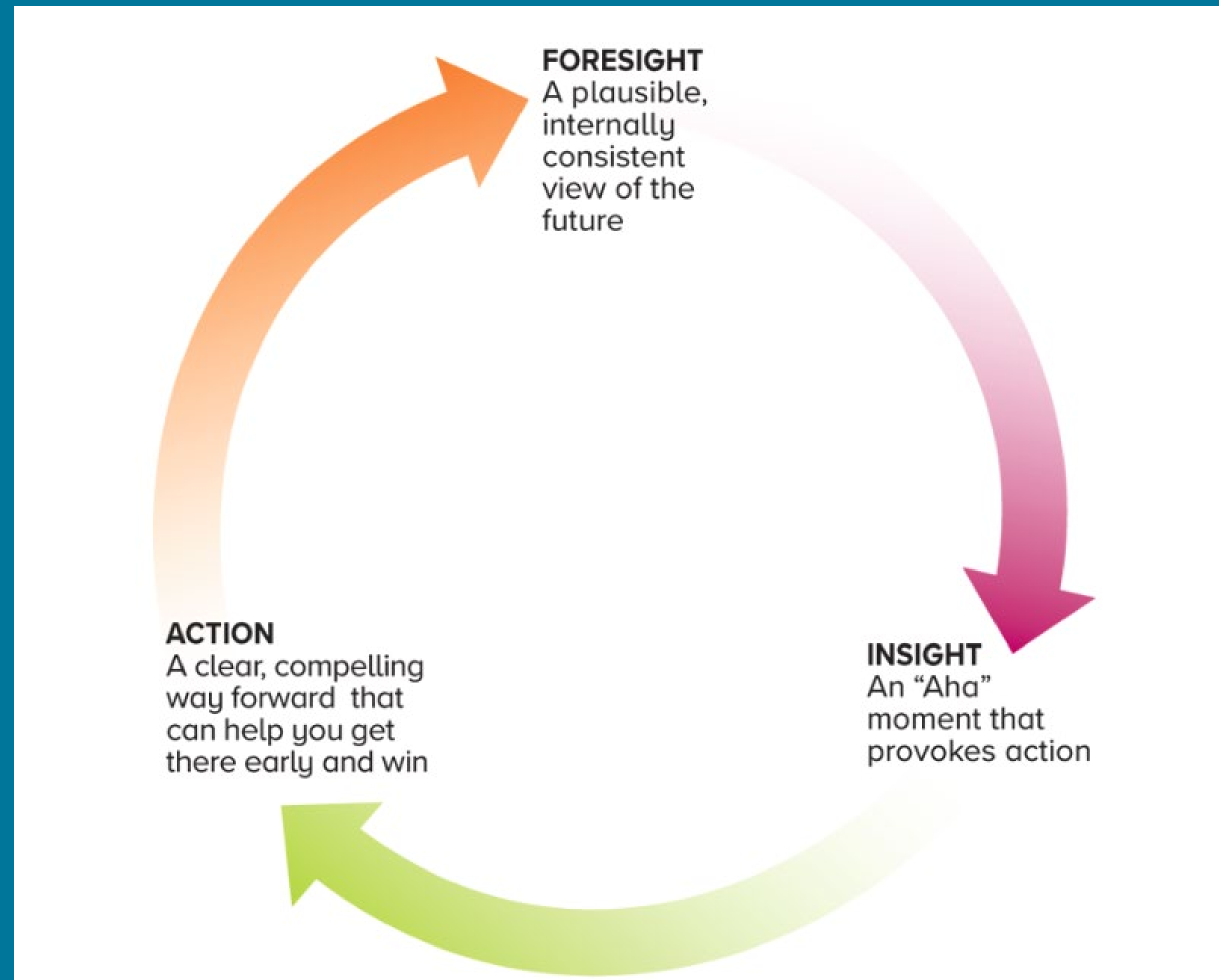


Foresight to Insight to Action

Foresight: A plausible, internally consistent view of the future

Insight: An “aha” moment that provokes action

Action: A clear compelling way forward



Ultimately the goal is to use this foresight and the resulting insight as a way to determine the action to take

Although the foresight is usually five to ten years out, the action may be needed today or six months from now

What do we need to do today or tomorrow to either prepare for that future or to shape it in a more desirable direction

#2: Focus on signals

There is no data about the future; all the data we have is about the past.

Signals of the future are all around us today.

Often these are things or developments that are on the margins.

They are the kind of things that grab your attention and make you ask: "Why is this happening? What is going on here?"

A signal can be anything.

- a technology
- an application
- a product/service/experience
- an anecdote or personal observation
- a research project or prototype
- a news story
- or even simply a piece of data that shows something different

Example of old signal: Online Reputation Systems

eBay: Strangers began to trade with each other. You trusted somebody you'd never met to sell you something, and you agreed to pay them!

Online reputation has become a kind of currency.

So, this signal, this notion of reputation markets, changed the whole industry, allowing new transactions in which strangers came together.

Example of new signal:
A world infused with media

A video billboard in Sweden placed at a bus stop. If somebody at the bus stop starts smoking, the billboard plays a video of a person choking.

What used to be on our phones, laptops and desktops of this information, all of this content is moving into the real world

If you are a futurist, you will get into the practice of looking for signals all the time.

Curiosity and the ability to sense signals, while sharing with others, is very important.

Sensing Organizations:

People in organizations who look for signals and get together to share their observations.

They collect and interpret the signals and work together to decide what to do next.

#3 Look back to see forward

We don't repeat our history completely, but we do repeat patterns.

The invention of the printing press created concerns about fake information, propaganda and lies.

Sound familiar?

Those concerns are very similar to our current debates and worries about fake news, computational propaganda, bots and how they skew our public opinion.

Changing our fundamental information, communications, and infrastructure changes our society in very dramatic ways.

New media tools alter who has the voice, who has the platform, and who has the ability to shape opinion.

Transformation in the media leads to social transformations, to scientific revolution, and even to wars - both back in 1400s and today.

We are in the process
of trying to figure this
out...again.

#4 *Uncover patterns*

In any period of large transformation—
which many agree we are going through
now—we are simultaneously living along
two curves:



The first curve is the descending curve:
This is the curve we've lived on for a long time. We have rules, we have regulations, we have usage patterns, we know how to live this way.

But that way of doing things is slowly declining.

At the same time, a new way of doing things is emerging: an ascending curve.

The emerging curve tells us something about a new way of doing things.

The declining curve, the curve on which we've existed for a long time, is the curve of institutional production.

It is a system in which most resources are concentrated in large formal organizations, whether corporations, news organizations, or colleges/universities.

But this way of doing things is on the decline.

We're moving from institutional production to a citizen-created world.

In this way of doing things, a platform engages large numbers of people to create something that no formal organization could, with no or very little formal structure.

The best example is Wikipedia.

Today, the Wikipedia Foundation has about 300 staff and contractors, but the online encyclopedia has millions of contributors and billions of users from all around the world.

It's new way of doing things.

When you're an immigrant, you must learn a new language, a new culture, a new way of doing things.

These are exactly the attitudes and skills we need to bring to thinking about and shaping our future.

We must be open to learning a new language, a new culture, a new way of doing things.

We are experts at this!

#5 Create a community

Thinking about the future is a collaborative and highly communal affair. It requires a diversity of views.

When we think about anything, from higher education to work to climate justice, we need to include people who bring different perspectives on the topic.

We need young people and elders.



The more you practice futures thinking, the better you get

Futures thinking is not about predicting the future; rather, it is about engaging people in thinking deeply about complex issues, imagining new possibilities, connecting signals into larger patterns, connecting the past with the present and the future, and making better choices today.

Futures thinking skills are essential for everyone to learn in order to better navigate their own lives and to make better decisions in the face of so many transformations in our basic technologies and organizational structures.

Between climate change, media disruption, and the rise of automation and machine intelligence, many people are feeling like they are victims rather than makers of the future.

How can we elevate and recognize futures thinking a way of life not just for the privileged but for everyone?



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HEADLINE FROM THE FUTURE



Create a Dream Headline set in 2

Write the first paragraph of the story:

- Who is involved?
- What is happening?
- How are our communities impacted?
- What practices and policies exist?
- Why is this important to community wealth and wellbeing? -building

EXAMPLE

DREAM HEADLINE:

Oregon public higher education institutions now free for all students.

Story's First Paragraph:

In a huge shift in state allocations and federal funding, Oregon's public higher education institutions will be free of costs for all students starting in 2033. Students will also receive stipends to pay for housing, food, transportation, materials, and childcare. Intel has also committed to giving every student in the state a computer. There is no limit to the number of credits students must take to qualify for the benefit. In addition, all students will be offered paid community-based internships ensuring they are able to both earn money to support their studies, give back to the community, and secure valuable realworld skills.

Resist the urge to list current issues

Instead use today's challenges

***DREAM** up an alternative futu*

WHEN WE DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE WE SHOULD ASK...

How does it support climate justice?

How does it enable racial justice, equity and democracy?

How is it helped or hindered by artificial intelligence; is it ethical technology?



Table Activities

*Using the prompt at your task
create a headline and your
story's first paragraph*

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Report Out

*What do we need to do now
to either prepare for that
future or to shape it in a more
desirable direction?*

*Turn to someone next to you
and share an affirmation.*

*“By attending this conference, you are showing
your care for the community.”*

Thank You!

¡Gracias!



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