

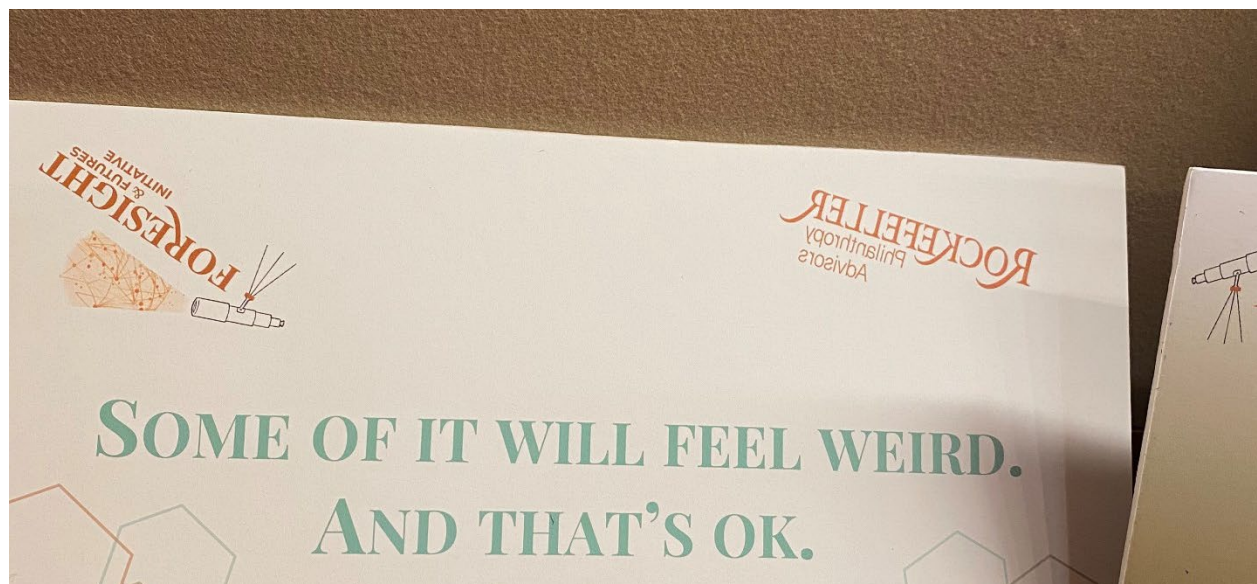


Foresight & Futures Initiative Beehive

May 15-17, 2024

Pocantico, N.Y.

Chronicle Report





About This Event

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) launched the Foresight & Futures Community of Practice to engage funders, philanthropic, and community leaders, as well as other partners in the ecosystem in a diverse applied knowledge development program through a convening platform, global network of peers, and experts.

After the inaugural meeting in January 2024 in Turin, Italy, we convened the second Foresight & Futures Initiative Beehive in Pocantico, N.Y., in May 2024.

Specifically, this second in-person workshop sought to continue our journey of emergent and applied learning, where we not only learn with each other but, also, from one another. At this workshop, we experimented with different approaches to foresight and futures, different perspectives, and different experiences and learning formats. Through a modular approach featuring five different workshops and additional creative activities, together we traveled in and out of different worlds, comfort zones, formats, content, and cognitive habits. This helped us shift mindsets, enable both learning and unlearning, boost imagination and creativity, and discover new frontiers and knowledge—all through the lens of futurism.

The workshop also helped us develop greater clarity of how to apply this futures lens to better address the challenges of not only tomorrow but of today; to anticipate what's coming next; and design adaptable, innovative, and equitable strategies. It helped us become not just forward-looking but futures-focused.

Our learning built on the signals-of-change work we started in Turin and deepened through our virtual sessions. We continued to explore how to not only spot signals of change, but to understand what they mean for “the what” and “the how” of our work. We leveraged our signals-of-change knowledge to experiment with a game-based instrument to help sharpen our long-view decision-making in turbulent times.

Looking forward to 2025, we hope this year's learnings will pave the way for the second part of our journey, when we will tackle the practical considerations of operationalizing our learnings, including board engagement; internal capabilities; structures; and resources that enable innovative, and futures-driven strategies. In the end, we'll understand how to right-size different foresight and futures frameworks for our organizations and needs, as well as how to embed or adopt them internally. Overall, this work will help create the world we live in 20 to 30 years from now.

This document chronicles the work we engaged in during the Beehive and the conclusions that emerged. The photos included here show the efforts and fruitful dialogues in which we engaged throughout our time together.

We're grateful to our brilliant facilitators for their time, wisdom, and creative energy. We'd also like to express our sincere appreciation to all participants who made this learning journey possible. We look forward to building on this work as a Community of Practice!



Participants

- Ada Williams Prince, philanthropic advisor (US)
- Alberto Anfossi, secretary general, Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy)
- Amber Rudell, vice president of strategic planning, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (US)
- Ana Marie Argilagos, president/CEO, Hispanics in Philanthropy, RPA Board Member (US)
- Anders Folmer Buhelt, academy director, Danish Social Innovation Academy (Denmark)
- Anisa Kamadoli Costa, president/Trustee, Rivian Foundation (US)
- Carola Carazzone, secretary general, Assifero (Italy)
- Cassie Robinson, associate director of emerging futures team, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (UK)
- Chris Cardona, managing director of discovery, exploration, and programs, MacArthur Foundation (US)
- Evans Okinyi, CEO, East Africa Philanthropy Network (Kenya)
- Henrik Mahncke, head of analysis and strategy, Realdania (Denmark)
- Hilda Vega, deputy vice president of philanthropic practice, Hispanics in Philanthropy (US)
- Peter Cafferkey, philanthropy/foundations market development lead, impact Europe (Germany)
- Lori A. Cox, vice president, California Wellness Foundation (US)
- Shubh Sharma, senior advisor, 360 Philanthropy, Porticus (The Netherlands)
- Silke Breimaier, senior manager of future issues and foundation development, Robert Bosch Foundation (Germany)
- Sine Egede, chief visionary officer, Bikubenfonden (Denmark)
- Silvia Ursu, Laudes Foundation (The Netherlands)
- Sophy Yem, senior program officer of philanthropy, Surdna (US)
- Victoria Dunning, senior program officer, Ford Foundation (US)

Facilitation team:

- Aarathi Krishnan, global intelligence futures and risk anticipation expert advisor (Australia/ Malaysia/US)
- Alisha Bhagat, futures lead, Forum for the Future (US)
- Angela Bermudo, co-founder, Common Futures (US/Portugal)
- Katindi Sivi, founder and executive director, LongView Consult (Kenya)
- Trista Harris, president, FutureGood (US)

RPA staff

- Caroline Suozzi, thought leadership and content manager (US)
- Greg Ratliff, senior vice president (US)
- Jared Misner, writer/editor (US)
- Latanya Mapp, president/CEO (US)
- Olga Tarasov, vice president, Inquiry & Insights (Germany)

Day 1: Wednesday, May 15, 2024

Welcome Dinner

Olga Tarasov, vice president, Inquiry & Insights at RPA, and Greg Ratliff, senior vice president at RPA, launched the Beehive by welcoming all facilitators and participants. Tarasov encouraged the Community of Practice to embrace vulnerability and acknowledged some of the coming work will feel weird, and that's OK.



Angela Bermudo, co-founder of Common Futures, then led the Community of Practice in a land acknowledgment to honor the Lenape people, whose land the Pocantico Center sits on.



Remarks by Valerie Rockefeller, RPA board chair, followed. In her remarks, Rockefeller detailed the family history of the Pocantico Center and expressed appreciation at how the Pocantico Center is now more open to nonprofits for gathering space. Rockefeller continued to say the Rockefeller Brothers Fund has always adopted a long-term view,

especially regarding philanthropy. Rockefeller mentioned the family's long-time support for the Foresight & Futures Initiative because the world is facing dire, existential threats. Rockefeller concluded her remarks by acknowledging the privilege of working with RPA's new CEO, Latanya Mapp, who Rockefeller helped select.



In her welcoming remarks, Mapp spoke about the imperative to think about the present in addition to the future when we think about the world we want to create because the future is now. Mapp also spoke about the importance of involving younger generations in this ongoing discussion and planning. A future never just happens, Mapp said. We have to create it. We have always had to envision a better future; we have always had to create it. This time is no different. This is why the Foresight & Futures Initiative is so critical.



Alisha Bhagat, futures lead at Forum for the Future, then led the Community of Practice in an icebreaker, where she asked each table group to analyze a fictional dystopian world (examples included WALL-E, Dune, and The Handmaid's Tale, among others) and explain what philanthropy's doing in these different worlds.

In a group share following the individual table discussions, many tables expressed if our world did indeed reach this level of dystopia then philanthropy itself has failed.

Philanthropy's job is to stop these worlds from becoming a reality. What messaging could philanthropy support around saving the world if it's already ruined? Additional discussion points included the importance of involving younger generations in this work because they'll be the most affected by the future and most likely to suffer from the choices we make today.



Tarasov then explained the structure of the coming days: five different workshops in five different forms. The whole idea is to help us dream and color outside the lines and unleash our nonlinear thinking. Tarasov encouraged the Community of Practice to consider a few guiding questions. What approach feels right for me? What approach feels right for my organization? What do we need to do and what do we need to change to operationalize all of this?

All Community of Practice members received a Wreck This Journal notebook upon arrival, and Tarasov asked members to complete one activity in the journal and email it to her, explaining why this was the activity they chose to complete.



In closing her remarks, Tarasov left the Community of Practice with three overarching thoughts.

1. As philanthropists, what do we mean by risk? The risk of inaction is the real risk. The cost of inaction far exceeds any risk to our portfolios.
2. We must investigate the luxury of dreaming big. We can't live in a dystopia. We must imagine something better. But there are many communities that do live in subpar conditions and don't have the luxury of dreaming big. Philanthropy must enable, support, and facilitate the dreaming of others.
3. How do we see and view innovation? We often think of innovation as a shiny new object, and we invest heavily in it. But then, a few years later, there's a new innovation. The innovation itself is not always shiny. The process is tedious and boring. How do we encourage innovation when it's not shiny so it can become something exciting and serves the social good?

Day 2, Thursday, May 16, 2024

Welcome and Introduction

Ratliff and Tarasov provided brief opening remarks to the Community of Practice, framed the day, and reminded those gathered to embrace their collective vulnerability and to acknowledge feeling weird in moments is OK and part of the learning journey. Tarasov reminded Community of Practice members to use the provided workbooks to record their thoughts and to follow along with each of the five activities.

The Workbooks

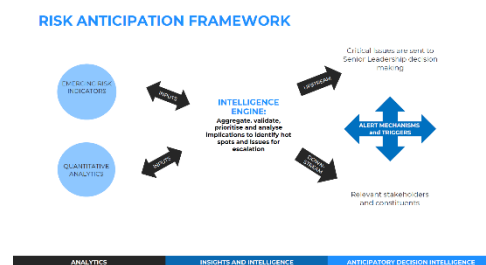
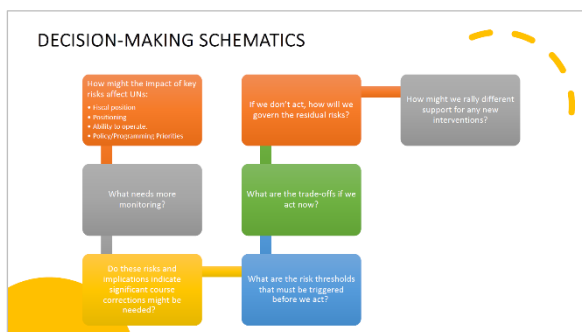
Each participant had a workbook in which to note his or her reflections, efforts, and discoveries both throughout and after the workshop as well as for sharing with colleagues inside their organizations and networks. A few sample pages are included below.

Under the Mugumo Tree Foresighting Using African Oral Traditions



Article compiled by Dr. Katindi Sivi

This article seeks to explore the nexus between African oral traditions and specifically African oral storytelling and foresight. The article starts by describing what African oral traditions are, when, where and how they were deployed as well as their importance in society. The article highlights a comparison and connection between African oral storytelling and foresight stories. It concludes



Workshop 1

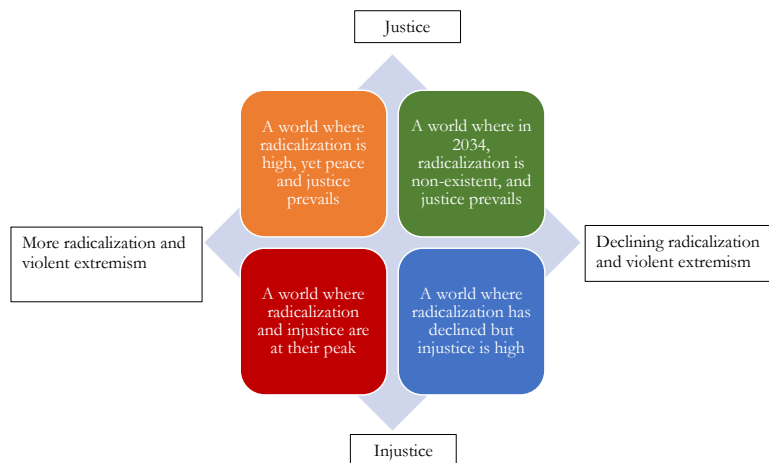
Storying Futures: Learning from African Oral Traditions to Imagine Better Tomorrows

with Dr. Katindi Sivi, LongView Foundation

This session featured immersive storytelling and role playing, moving us from traditional ways of doing foresight and projecting what we observe and know today into the futures. Like science fiction, storytelling moves people away from their current limitations and frees their minds to imagine different realities or possibilities.

The session began with Sivi leading the group in a traditional song and with a gift of a traditional Kenyan blanket to help embody the personas with which she was asking groups to identify. Sivi explained we use metaphors in foresight work because it helps us empathize with others and to “step into their shoes.” Oftentimes, we try and fix things, but we can’t understand where a community’s true needs are because we neglect to view the situations from their specific vantage points. That’s where we fail, and we must be more imaginative in our work. This activity encouraged that imagination going forward.

The Community of Practice was divided into four prearranged groups based on the following quadrant of possibilities.



Each group then crafted a story from one of the four below scenarios. The story required participants to put themselves in the shoes of the character as authentically as possible in order to make the audience empathize with the character’s struggles and feel invested in the outcome.

SCENARIO	A world where in 2034, radicalization is non-existent, justice prevails	A world where radicalization is high, yet peace and justice prevail	A world where radicalization and injustice are at their peak	A world where radicalization has declined but injustice is high
DEFINING CONDITIONS	The conditions are highly conducive to radicalization but they coexist with conditions of strong	A very conservative environment and values coexisting with highly changing norms.	Conditions of extreme inequalities, injustice and failed institutions.	Conditions of exclusion, selective application of the law and extreme biases.

	institutions and high government good will.			
PERSONAS				
Young Person	Orphaned African Muslim male youth, growing up in a very poor environment and is currently unemployed,	A non-binary individual disillusioned with societal norms and feeling disenfranchised by mainstream culture.	A well-educated Asian female youth who grew up in affluence. She is well educated and a critical thinker with high cultural integration.	A young female immigrant from a war-torn country who is socially isolated and discriminated against.
Family/Community Member	Good formal systems exists hand in hand with a large informal sector.	Most young people in the community are lone wolves and the community generally upholds very conservative values.	The larger community has experienced significant trauma or adversity, which may include experiences such as conflict, displacement, and deep personal loss.	Individualistic society with no community support.
Clergy	Clergy has a strong charismatic and persuasive demeanor that draws a lot of people to his/her deeply entrenched radical views and beliefs.	Does not ascribe to mainstream religions, acts as a spiritual guide and mentor. A peace activist, advocating for social justice, human rights, and interfaith dialogue as alternatives to radicalization. Embraces progressive interpretations of religious teachings, a bridge builder between communities	No clergy.	This clergy is a silent enabler who does not actively promote radicalization, but passively accepts and tolerates extremist views within their community. They also facilitate recruitment through logistical support.
Security/Law Enforcement	Friendly and very responsive law enforcement agencies, that prioritize trust building and cooperation with communities.	Law enforcement agencies employ rudimentary intelligence gathering and monitoring techniques.	Part of the radicalized group.	Law enforcement agencies use legal interventions, and sometimes use extrajudicial means based on their biases
Policymakers	Clear progressive laws, policies and preventative programs, as well as deradicalization programs being ran through multi-agency collaboration.	Policies are irrelevant and archaic.	Non-existent policies on radicalization.	Inadequate policies.
Funders	Funding from wealthy businesspeople to destabilize the country through radicalization, illegal arms trade, and funding militias.	Local philanthropy distributing the few resources they have to essential services only.	Young Caucasians from very wealthy backgrounds.	Mostly government funding which is often inadequate.

Sivi then sent each of the four groups to individual areas to plan their stories before presenting them.





When the groups returned to present their stories, a wide range of narratives emerged. In one narrative, in a world where radicalization and injustice are at their peak, the group devised a story in which one character has an opportunity to receive his visa to continue work on the green revolution, but bureaucracy prevents him from doing so immediately. He's forced to bribe the police, but he doesn't have the necessary funds. Instead, he resorts to asking a grantmaking organization for more funds, but the grantor requires even more forms to send any funds, hindering his ability to do his work.

Following the presentations, the group engaged in a lively discussion about how the activity made them feel. Although Sivi warned participants they would likely assume the role of someone unfamiliar or even contradict their position or belief system, many participants were surprised at how uncomfortable and different the roles they were asked to assume actually were.



One participant said she experienced a “crisis” trying to imagine a police state where “nice” police officers existed. Another participant, who said she grew up in a family of law enforcement officials, expressed the opposite and said this workshop made her

understand how difficult it must be for police officers to explain themselves as good people when a few rotten apples ruin that narrative for the majority.

As Sivi noted before the workshop, one participant said we can be more realistic with people only when we understand their viewpoints and have understood what it's like to be in their shoes. The group discussed what this overall learning meant for philanthropy and its grantees and how empathy plays – or should play – an enormous role.



However, not all scenarios presented were doom and gloom. In the “green” scenario, a world in which radicalization is nonexistent and justice prevails, one participant said it was strange for philanthropy and policymakers to be working together, as equals. How wonderful it would be if we could create a future that looked like this, this participant said.



Sivi asked the group to detail its moments of clarity and discussed what it learned from the workshop and the individual stories it created. One participant said time constraints are helpful when doing futurism work. The constraints help incorporate a deadline and a realistic timeframe into the discussions. Additionally, another participant said the ability to be more creative in the presentation helped her group embody the roles, move away from mere bullet points, and become more relatable.



Finally, Sivi asked the Community of Practice what decisions we need to make today to create the future we want to see. Participants said we must bring out the complexity of the everyday issues; these are people's lives. People must make decisions, and they're not just making decisions on paper. Considering this, and incorporating empathy in our decisions, will help us in our work in creating a better future. It is crucial we consider cultural aspects in our work or else they will fail.

Workshop 2

Risk Anticipation as a Form of Resilience

with Aarathi Krishnan, global intelligence futures and risk anticipation expert advisor

Risk anticipation and foresight is an emerging field that looks beyond current risk indicators to understand the broader global intelligence, political, economic, and social futures and stressors that might tip a country into crisis.

Krishnan discussed a thought-provoking presentation about the current state of our world and the risks we should anticipate now to form a resilient future.

The capability to anticipate risk, Krishnan said, is particularly important at a time where multiple countries are facing concurrent and emerging risks from debt default, heat inequality, agricultural vulnerability, and soaring cost of living crises. These stressors are occurring in a democratically decisive year as many countries head to the elections.

In Krishnan's presentation, she said no one in the year 2024 should ever say, "That took us by surprise." We are, she said, living in tomorrow's history lesson. Moreover, are we living in the now we imagined a decade ago?

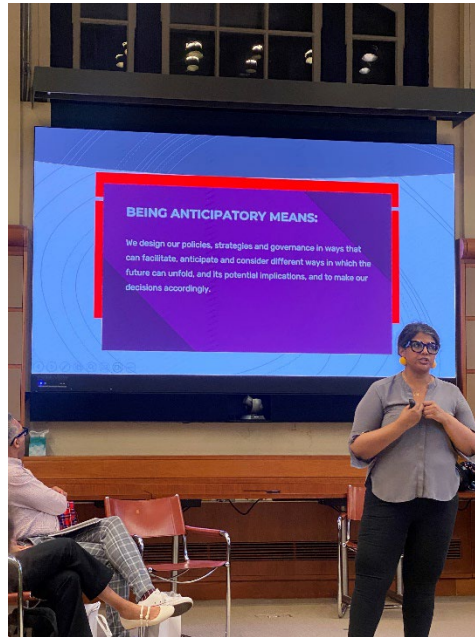


Krishnan introduced the Community of Practice to the concept of a "polycrisis," the idea that there's a confluence of things going awry concurrently. It's no longer enough to talk about climate change; it's not just economics. It's how they converge on one another.



To ground the idea of a polycrisis in a real-world example, Krishnan examined Pakistan. The country of Pakistan, she said, has a high cost of living. Pakistan just experienced an inordinately hot summer, but, she said, inside spaces are also very hot because many Pakistanis can't turn on the fan or air conditioning because the cost of electricity is so high because of the energy shortage caused by the war in Ukraine. This is causing fatal outcomes for many Pakistanis. In addition to these crises, a devastating typhoon struck the country, its prime minister was ousted, and the country teetered on the verge of a debt default. These crises cannot be viewed independently of one another. They converge, they build off one another, and they reinforce each other.

How do we find our way out of these intersecting crises? Good governance. The investments we make today lock in policies for tomorrow, Krishnan told the Community of Practice. But when we discuss "good governance," does that mean just for today or for the future too? It's our role as leaders to be anticipatory, and that means making policies that incorporate the future.



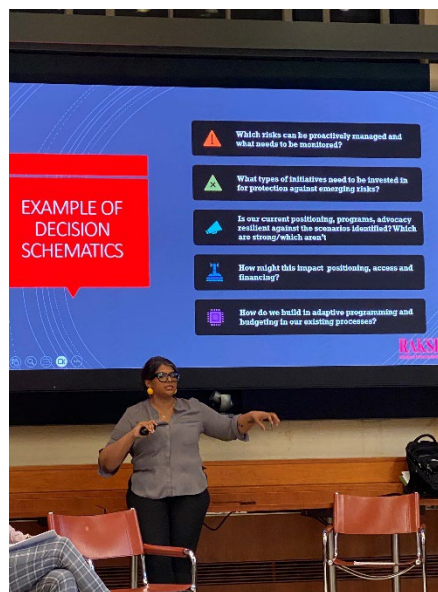
But how can we make decisions about the future when we don't yet know what the future looks like? Krishnan said governments and policymakers must begin engaging in “policy dynamism,” a concept that stresses the need for a dynamic view on policy that adjusts to the current state. This is also called anticipatory policymaking. Part of the difficulty in persuading lawmakers to engage in policy dynamism is you're asking people to invest in a future that *may not occur*. So is that investment a waste of money? What we end up doing, Krishnan said, is involuntarily or voluntarily saying, “That's too hard and whatever happens down the road happens.” Luckily, there are several indicators of an impending civil collapse or crisis, which Krishnan labeled as tipping points. These are:

1. Fiscal stability of state
2. Transparency of government and public institutions
3. Degree of trust between state and citizens

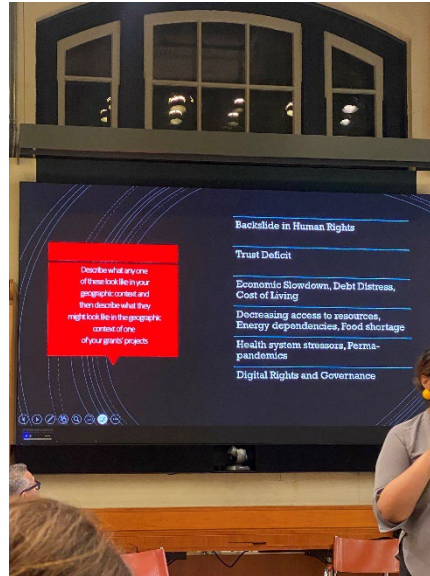


At its essence, Krishnan said, risk is a perception process. But, as she returned to the Pakistan example, she asked the Community of Practice to consider whose risk perception we're assuming. Is it the affluent white men in foundation boardrooms who are worlds away from its grantees? Or is it the low-income Pakistani family experiencing both a fertilizer shortage and a deadly heat wave? The risk perceptions for these groups are divergent.

All this gets overwhelming. We're living in uncertainty, and we're being asked to make decisions we haven't had to make before. We're being asked to make decisions on things we don't have all the data on and merely hoping we don't do harm. This often results in decision paralysis, which benefits no one. Krishnan then discussed the importance of decision schematics, guiding questions that can help reduce this paralysis.

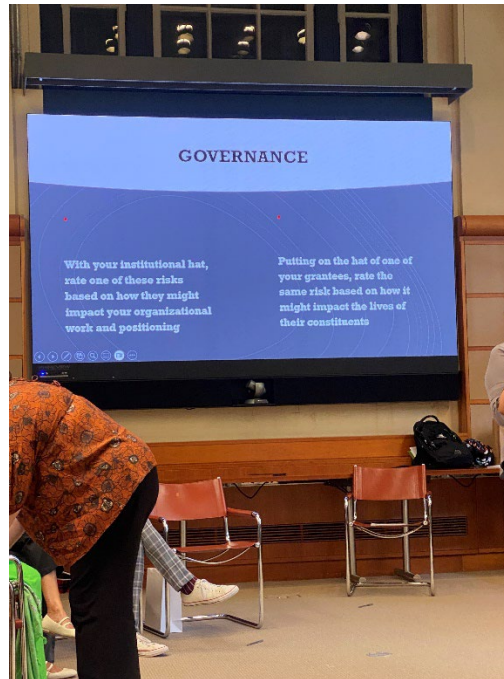


Krishnan then asked the Community of Practice to describe what a crisis might look like from one's own geographic area and context of privilege versus what it might look like from a grantee's geographic area and context of privilege. How does extreme heat, for example, affect an employee of RPA versus one of its grantees? And from that, which risks does your organization prioritize if they escalate?



In the discussion that followed, several participants expressed the COVID-19 pandemic and its risks affected populations very differently. The need for social distancing to avoid the virus, while possible to some degree in affluent spaces, just wasn't possible in poor migrant communities where space and distance from others is a luxury. One participant noted the problem devolved into balancing equality. No matter what decision you made, someone benefited and someone did not. Everything we do is political. Someone is always going to benefit. Someone is always going to suffer. This disconnect and this dysfunction forces some organizations to internalize a trust deficit.

Another participant provided the example of a communist society. If one authoritarian leader provides food for a family as opposed to a capitalist leader where everyone fends for themselves, maybe that person wouldn't mind society removing a few freedoms. This discussion then transitioned into a discussion of younger generations and their views on the "social good." Young people question the authenticity of what we've historically considered our promise to one another. They oftentimes want the promise today, and if we're not willing to grant it, there's likely another, more nefarious group willing to do so. This could include terrorist organizations, the participant noted.



The discussion then flowed into acknowledging the presence of a power dynamic. To what extent are we willing and honest to say the relationship between grantee and grantor is, at its core, a power relationship? If we don't do that we will continue to erode that trust.

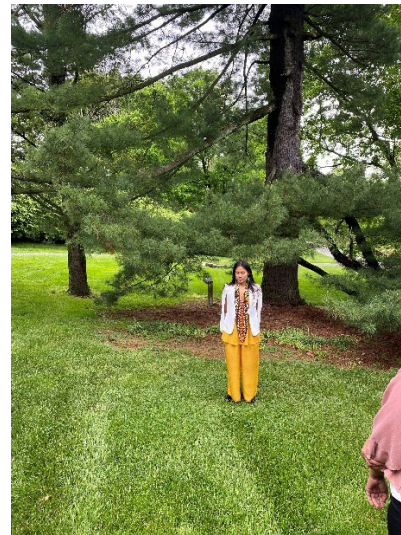
The discussion concluded with talk about "alert mechanisms," items, articles, or indicators that a society is approaching a tipping point. The alert mechanism doesn't usually value qualitative metrics. As a society, we don't always value data that come in different forms because we must be certain. We must have the qualitative data before we act. And sometimes that just isn't possible.

Workshop 3

Kapára: Expanding Minds Through the Lens of Indigenous Futurism

With Angela Bermudo, co-founder, Future Horizon

Bermudo began the afternoon session by asking the Community of Practice to join her outside to commune with nature. She asked how many members of the group had yet to be outside today, and several participants raised their hands. Bermudo said that was the point of beginning this way – to intentionally set aside time in nature. Bermudo led the Community of Practice in singing a traditional song, and the group returned inside afterward.



Upon returning inside, Bermudo asked the Community of Practice how many present were familiar with the term “participatory foresighting.” While many in the room indicated they were familiar, several did not, which Bermudo said surprised her. Participatory foresighting refers to the practice of looking to and planning for the future with the inclusion of diverse stakeholders and citizens.

Participatory foresighting, Bermudo said, is often seen as idealistic by many because of the challenges that are included when trying to engage citizens at that granular level. Policymakers, she said, feel things must be prepared and perfect before showing it to citizens, which results in many excluded voices.

She described participatory foresighting as creating an understory, the area beneath the tree cover. In a metaphor, she likened this process to a bottom-up approach with the grassroots movement (bottom) bringing opinions to policymakers (top) and, simultaneously, with a top-down approach with policymakers engaging the grassroots communities.

Bermudo then compared policymaking to storytelling, as the laws and policies we make tell a larger story of the community we want to create. Participatory foresighting has the

potential to break and recover from the old stories we tell ourselves about working together and taking a community approach to define the future.

This workshop, she said, would not be about looking to inform the inevitable but, rather, to look at what's possible through the lens of three indigenous communities: one from Mexico, one from The Philippines, and one from Brazil.



The Community of Practice then traveled between three rooms to watch three videos that featured each of the three indigenous communities. The videos, specifically crafted so they were vibrantly colored to depict a world of possibilities, touched on topics like motherhood and child care, seeding the future, environmental protection and regenerative agriculture, preserving indigenous cultures, and water and land conservation.

After viewing all three videos, Community of Practice members gathered a specific artifact related to the culture's video that impacted them the most. Items included necklaces, earrings, and other adornments. Once participants had reconvened, Bermudo said, the group could look around and see who else chosen an artifact from a specific culture and realize who specifically was similarly impacted by a culture's story.

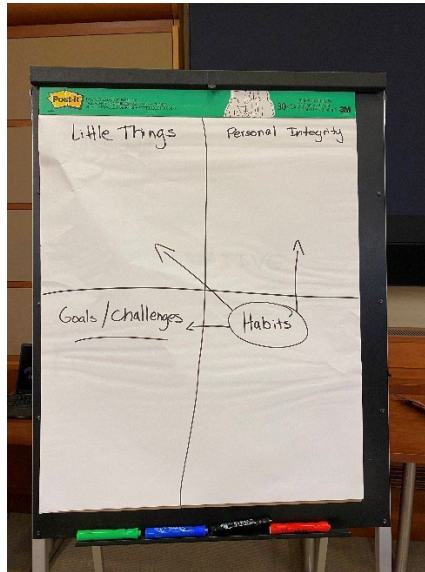


Community of Practice members then shared overall and collective thoughts about the videos. One participant noted the importance that all three videos were narrated and told by women, a fact Bermudo said she was glad participants noticed. Another participant noted the futures these cultures were seeking didn't seem so outlandish; they were looking for basic human needs: land, water, and food. Why, then, does imagining an indigenous-led future seem so hard? Indeed, one participant noted when we think and talk about indigenous cultures, we often think of the past and not the future. Why is that?

Another participant asked what all of these videos and, thus, cultures might look like without the detrimental effects of colonization. There's no future without the past. Because of colonization, this participant asked, how much knowledge have we erased?

In this workshop, the Community of Practice tried to explore what it would be like if we included indigenous cultures and leaders in vision planning. Traditionally, in foresighting, we try to move away from the past, but when engaging with these cultural concepts, the past has to exist in the present *and* the future for it to work. There's no such thing as completely moving away from that.

Bermudo then asked the Community of Practice to plot a quadrant in their workbooks with a square devoted each to: little things that give you joy, actions you can take to ensure your personal integrity, some of your biggest challenges and goals, and habits you can adopt to ensure the success of the other three quadrants.



After completing that activity, Bermudo asked the Community of Practice members to then compile their “Massive Transformative Purpose.” Members wrote what they think it is in one sentence and then rewrote it from the lens of what is big, audacious, and aspirational. Next, participants wrote it from the lens of what’s transformative about their purpose and why?



MASSIVE
TRANSFORMATIVE
PURPOSE

Bermudo asked participants who chose artifacts from the same indigenous culture to gather together to answer these questions as a group in one collective story.



One of the three groups collectively wrote a story that allowed for many different on-ramps to this future society and many different types of futurism. This group created a narrative where society supports implementing each other's visions and encourages disagreements and creative support. Additionally, this group expressed the need for investment in its own futurism and learning from the impacts of climate change and our carbon footprints. Most importantly, this group stressed there's no ideal future. Rather, there's a multiverse of possibilities.



The second group created a story based on the ingredients a successful and thriving culture would need, including joy, dance, creativity, a collective sense of connection, and community. This group discussed the importance of consuming less and taking only what it needed. Accessing this future, said one participant of the group, requires "decolonizing the mind." The group would live symbiotically with nature, and empathy is a deep part of this world. The group also had a long conversation about child care and the best models for it.



The third and final group used John Lennon’s “Imagine” as a framing device. The entire Community of Practice sang along. The future this group “imagined” prioritized a connection with nature, harmony, hope, wisdom, love, and care for generations to come.

Following the group presentations, Bermudo gathered the group back and explained this workshop was a model in participatory foresighting. The group, collectively, took the following actions before crafting their shared visions of the future:

1. Listen. Be open to possible futures to emerge. There’s a barrier that emerges trying to immediately solve without getting the insights first.
2. Asking oneself, if you are here, why are you here? We must ask ourselves, if we’re engaging in foresights, why? If we don’t have that moment to ask ourselves that question, how can we expect ourselves to have that future?
3. Working together to write that shared future. Highly divergent and conflicting perspectives makes this process difficult. (Bermudo asked everyone present to say whether or not this step was easy. No one raised his or her hand.)
4. Being able to share visions. We made space and time here, but there are competing narratives about what the future looks like and how it can be created. There aren’t enough diverse voices in the decision-making rooms, so you might have an image of what the future looks like, but it might not match the mainstream and, therefore, you’re less likely to share it.



Bermudo closed the workshop by noting objects have power. She told the Community of Practice members they could keep the artifacts they chose in hopes they would serve as a conversation piece and a reminder to consider diverse voices.

Workshop 4

From Imagination to Reality: Building a Better Future

With Trista Harris, president, FutureGood

When faced with a pandemic and racial reckoning, the world shifted, changing long-held policies, social norms, and giving practices that had been thought of as immovable. How do we take that same spirit of change into the future?

Harris began by expressing we live in a time of war and climate change. These are “interesting times.” It’s a particularly difficult time to work in the social sector. Harris said she hears from many within the sector who tell her this is the hardest work of their careers, and that they’re working on all these converging problems with fewer staff and resources. Many organizations have simply been “powering through” since 2020.

“It feels like the world is getting worse as we try to make it better,” Harris said.



This is why it’s especially important for organizations to invest in futurism. Of course, Harris said, it’s a fool’s errand to think we know what the world will look like in five years. We must plan for a multitude of options.

As an example, Harris said, most organizations that received funds from MacKenzie Scott didn’t plan for that large and sudden influx of capital. A lot of these organizations now feel stuck, paralyzed by a lack of planning. Harris said if our grantees use the tools of futurism, they’ll be able to move forward during difficult times rather than be stuck in paralysis mode. All the successes from organizations come because they envisioned a future that had these things rather than pushing *against* something. The philanthropic sector has a responsibility to give people a vision of what’s possible.



Harris then introduced the Community of Practice to the concept of “backcasting,” a planning method that involves imagining a desirable future and then working backward to identify the steps needed to achieve it. Backcasting requires organizations to not allow the constraints of time or money to play a part. We must start at a completely utopian future we want to create and then plan backward from there.



“We need to create space where people can radically imagine the future,” Harris said. “One reason this is difficult is because we’re constantly in fight-or-flight mode. We need to have space where we’re bored, where we’re not overstimulated.”

This space – boredom – is where our creativity can most flourish. It’s why, Harris said, we oftentimes have creative ideas in the shower. For many of us and our organizations, Harris estimated, we spend 95% of the time reacting to things, and only 5% of the time making something magical because we’re thinking of the future and what can be possible. This is because, she posited, futurism is a muscle we haven’t used since childhood. As we get older, we don’t talk about these things, and we don’t imagine what we want “to be when we grow up.”

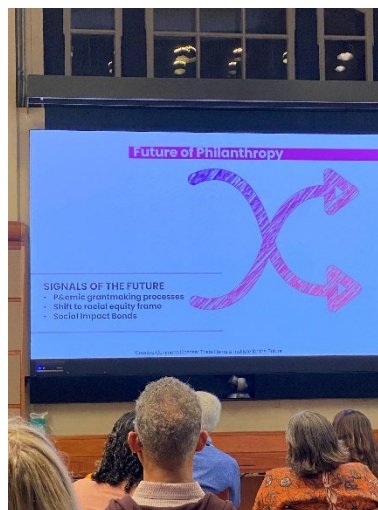
Community of Practice members then broke into pairs to discuss what the impact of individual participants' work looks like in 30 years.

Before speaking about the future of philanthropy, Harris spoke to the Community of Practice about how philanthropy has traditionally operated, including six main focus areas:

1. Top-down governance
2. Deliberate processes
3. Small scale
4. Explicit metrics with no room for qualitative metrics
5. Slow, incremental impact
6. Slow pace of change

These are all things many organizations are doing that can prevent us from achieving our shared vision of a future. We need to stop doing these things. Instead, Harris presented three signals of the future:

1. Pandemic grantmaking process
2. A broad shift to including a racial-equity lens in all work
3. The adoption of social impact bonds

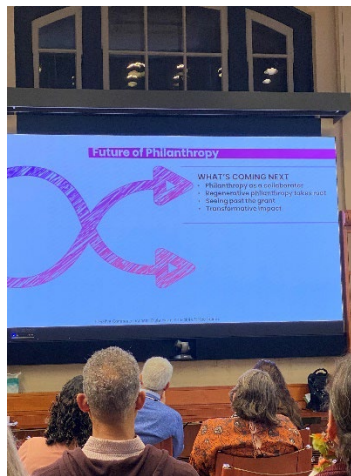


Within six weeks of the pandemic, grantmaking organizations learned a new way to make grants. Suddenly, everything was possible. Previously, grantmaking organizations would have told grantees change might come in five to 10 years. Now, organizations have learned, we have the capability to do things better and faster. Organizations have also learned that not only must they have a racial equity focus in some capacity but, rather, they must do everything and conduct everything through a racial-equity lens regardless if the activity or process, on its face value, might imply some element of racial equity. Finally, the widespread adoption of social impact bonds, a type of bond that pays only upon certain social outcomes being reached. These types of bonds flourished following the pandemic and the low interest rates that followed. Social impact bonds bring together government, service providers, and investors and funders to accomplish clearly defined outcomes that benefit a social good. Funders provide the initial capital,

and the government agrees to make payments to the program only when outcomes are achieved.

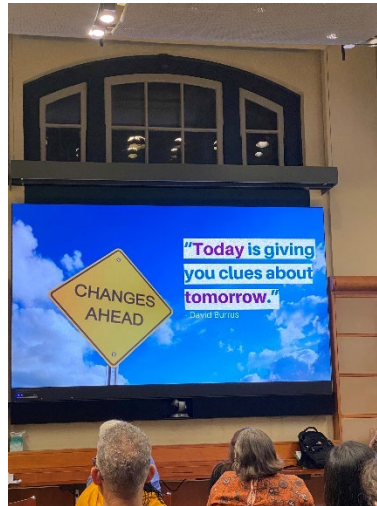
These signals of the future help us predict what's on the horizon for philanthropy, which Harris summarized into four main themes:

1. Philanthropy as a collaborator
2. The rise of regenerative philanthropy
3. Seeing past the grant
4. Transformative impact



Regenerative philanthropy is the idea that everyone is better off whether or not they're funded. It's a new approach grounded in one-on-one relationships with communities. Harris also said philanthropy as a sector is moving to "see past the grant." By this, she meant the philanthropic sector's poised to move past merely having endowments that invest in "bad" things like prisons and firearms and toward actively funding mitigation and harm reduction. It's an active decision rather than a passive one. Lastly, Harris predicted human resources departments will begin to interrogate their hiring practices and move toward a future where foundations are 100% mission-based.

Harris then asked the group to share the trends it has noticed in philanthropy and where the sector's headed. Community of Practice members shared they noticed more organizations were shifting toward a limited liability corporation model with less regulation. Another participant noted the rise of donor-advised funds.

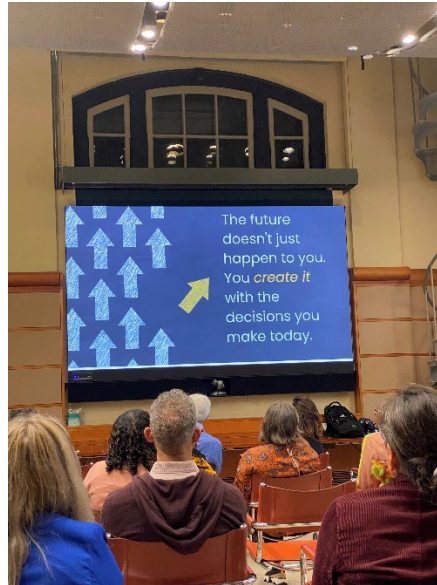


The group then discussed how there are huge disagreements on what “transformative” means for an organization. One participant noted it’s important to ensure we’re thinking of ways to make the current system obsolete, which is difficult to do when so many people making those decisions have a stake in it.

Harris stressed futurism isn’t just for Magic 8 Balls. Rather, it’s something everyone can do. What 2020 taught us is that we have a responsibility to understand what’s coming next. Philanthropy exists to change the future. Every time we fund something, we might not think of it that way, but it’s all futurism. Harris recommended Community of Practice members create spaces in Slack/Teams where people can see the conversation about futurism and participate in the conversation, attend talks outside of philanthropy and pay attention to trends outside the industry.

Before taking questions from the Community of Practice, Harris predicted the four most important trends for philanthropic funding.

1. **Disruption is the norm.** We must stop asking, “When are things going back to normal?” There is no normal anymore. When the pandemic happened, so many organizations were unsure what to do or who to fund. If your organization is mission-aligned, you already know.
2. **Future of education.** The American education system has largely been resistant to change. There remains the same structure – sitting and listening, being told what’s happening – that’s been in place for too long. We need to learn how to harness technologies to work together and how to be a part of global culture. The pandemic has showed us there are a lot of different ways to do education.
3. **Artificial Intelligence as a partner.** Organizations need to be able to partner with AI. AI does not create anything new; it takes ideas and explains them. We must use these tools to harness creativity to create anew. The Industrial Revolution reduced workweek hours, and AI has the potential to do the same. AI should never make decisions. People should make decisions.
4. **Future of democracy.** Our population is too large for the form of democracy we have. Hyperlocal will be the future of what democracy looks like. Additionally, every foundation should scenario-plan around the presidential election.



A lively question-and-answer session followed Harris' presentation. One participant agreed with Harris that if an organization does futurism work without an equity lens, all it's doing is exacerbating current inequities. Harris noted there's been a marked increase in futurism after the pandemic because organizational plans got "blown up." Our old model of reacting doesn't work. We can't possibly react fast enough to all the things that are happening, and when we do, it's reacting to a shiny new tool. Harris also noted it's important for an organization to have an in-house strategic plan. Strategy is not something someone should come in and show you, she said. We must exercise that strategy muscle inside our organization.

One participant took issue with Harris' idea that democracy isn't working. Politics and power shape how we view the world, this participant said. "Democracy isn't working" is a very North American way of thinking, she said. If the United States had a functioning system of government, would we need this convoluted sense of philanthropy? It's not that democracy isn't working. It's that we must ask for whom it's working.

Day Two Reflections

Following Harris' presentation, the Community of Practice members gathered to reflect on the day, and participants shared a range of thoughts. One member said this work takes time. There's constant pressure on people to get money out the door. How do we shift the way we work to be more intentional about the future?

Another participant said she appreciated the range of methodologies presented during the day, saying they were different and contrasted and, yet, spoke to one another. We had a "buffet" of things to savor and how they mix together, the participant noted.

One Community of Practice member said "being in the middle of nowhere" in Pocantico, N.Y., allowed for the group to get to know one another more. Another group member pondered aloud, "Why do I think I don't have time to spend the time on this investment?" A different participant noted how difficult this work is. "It's the same feeling I feel after being creative with my daughters all day. To work with these tools, we need mental space," she said. At the same time, another participant noted how much of a privilege it is to have days like this where we can take this all in and learn.

A group member said he noticed he got annoyed by things he didn't agree with, and he said it's been interesting to explore more about why something sparked that emotion. Conversely, another group member reflected on Bermudo's workshop and said the video of the indigenous culture in The Philippines made her think of her Cambodian heritage. "I felt seen; I felt herd. Representation matters," she said.

One participant from Italy pondered whether in constructing a new office space if it might be a good idea to create a space just for futurism thinking, which elicited many nods of agreement. Another participant noted she sometimes feels like an outsider when she comes to a community of practice, but, she said, here, "I felt like home."

Finally, one participant asked the group, "How do we build more of these Communities of Practice from the Global South?" He implored the room to look around at the group and clearly see it needs to bring more skills from those regions of the globe. If we want to reposition the sector, he said, we must build more practitioners from the Global South.

Futuring Through Making: A Cocktail Hour Design Sprint

with

Grace Mervin, artist, designer, strategist, and futurist
Cassandra Esteve, designer and participatory researcher

Before breaking for dinner, Community of Practice members engaged in an interactive and fun activity. While we talk about the future on a global scale, it often manifests in the way we live our everyday lives through the objects that surround us and the way we relate to them. This session, which was co-facilitated by two recent graduates of the Parsons School of Design's transdisciplinary design program, was intended to serve as a worldbuilding "design sprint" to prototype speculative physical objects from an emerging future. The sprint was structured around a short scenario inspired by the day's sessions to serve as a larger guiding concept for the objects created.

The design sprint was based on the following prompt. “We’re in the year 2039. Supply chains are increasingly unreliable due to regional conflicts, unpredictable weather, and shifting availability of resources. This makes it difficult to find things that were once abundant, forcing people to adjust to the demands of this new reality. The materials accessible to this future are mainly found, grown in nature, or left behind by previous generations. The world isn’t without its tensions, but overall, people have learned to adapt and to flourish despite the circumstances.”



Community of Practice members then took the next 45 to 60 minutes to stretch their creative imaginations and invent an object from the materials they'd been given: balloons, wrapping paper, chunks of metal, playing cards, and other societal detritus.

Items the group “invented” included a porch swing prototype, a member’s only club, a device that woke people up with sound in the absence of coffee, and a water purifier.



Day 3: Friday, May 17, 2024

Workshop 5

Playing with the Future: Using a Game to Sharpen Anticipatory Decision- Making in Turbulent Times

with

Alisha Bhagat, futures lead, Forum for the Future
Stephanie Stavropoulos, educator and game designer
Caroline Suozzi, RPA
Olga Tarasov, RPA

In this final session, Community of Practice members had the opportunity to play a still-in-development game designed specifically for the Beehive called Seeds of the Future. In this game, players take on the role of a decision-maker and planner, trying to create a flourishing society. Players must make tough strategic choices and won't be able to prioritize everything. In addition to playing the game, Community of Practice members had the opportunity to contribute to the content of the game by creating new game cards, generating signals of change, and iterating the game design. Collectively, the goal of the game was not just to create a useful tool for the Foresight & Futures Community of Practice but, rather, for the wider sector and partners.

Seeds of Change Overview

In Seeds of Change, players embody the role of a steward to shape the world of today and plant the seeds of the future. The goal is to create a flourishing society and be the player at the end of the game with the highest level of “resilience.”

To gain resilience, players select components of their society – technologies, legislation, behaviors, and other structural changes they think are necessary or worthwhile for developing a just future. In the game, societies are based on five pillars – social, technological, environmental, economic, and political. Resilience in this game is measured by “resilience seeds.” The steward each player chooses designates what resilience seeds will be available to begin. Each of a player's societal components produces its own types of resilience seeds, which are then used to build even more components of a player's society. These added components provide a buffer against risky “events” and help prepare for the future.



Each component card has implementation requirements (on the front of the card, in the bottom middle section) and production (along the left-hand side of the card). Implementation requirements are the combination of resilience seeds players must allocate in order to implement the component into their society. This is a one-time cost. Production is the set of resilience seeds that the component will contribute to players' society on an ongoing basis. These repopulate during the production phase of each era. To begin, each player draws six component cards.



The game is played in four rounds and an epilogue. Each round includes the following phases:

1. **Drafting** - from the hand of six cards, players select one component they wish to support as a foundational building block of their society. Then, pass the remaining cards to the player seated to their right. This cycle will continue until each player has five components drafted. Players will then lay their cards on the table in front of them.
2. **Allocation** – players choose how to distribute their available resilience seeds to implement the components they deem most urgent. Any components they don't implement remain in front of them to complete later if desired.
3. **Production** - implemented components produce resilience seeds for the next era. These will go into a player's "bank," as they will be needed in order to assess how well a society withstands events. In each era, stewards will also produce resilience seeds.
4. **Resilience Check** - consult the Resilience Table to determine which of a player's societal pillars are resilient enough to potential upcoming world events. To do this, count only what's in a player's seed bank - not what's on any partially completed components. If a player has at least the number of resilience seeds listed of each type of pillar, that pillar is resilient to events in the current era.
5. **Events** - players draw cards to play as either global or individual events (noted on the card). For a global event, read the card aloud, assessing impact as per whether each society passes or fails their resilience checks. If the event is societal, the impacted society is determined by rolling one six-sided die and counting clockwise around the circle from the player who read the event aloud.



When the final event is played and resolved, the era has ended, and the world transitions into another round (era). The game will consist of playing through four eras of time. Just as in our world, the game eras will be characterized by events both small and large, impacting different societies on different scales.

Once the four eras are complete, and a winner is declared, players enter the epilogue phase of the game. All of the players will work together to tell a story of the world they created. Together, players complete the epilogue template to describe the events that happened to lead them to the world of 2075.

[illegible]

After about an hour of playing the thrilling game, Community of Practice members rejoined the group to share the worlds they had created together. Below is a sampling of the worlds created.

World 1 – Waterlandia

Waterlandia is a completely submerged world. Cities are replicated under the massive ocean. This setting obviously requires highly advanced technology, which the society has developed. Integral components of how Waterlandia developed included the support of democracy, a plant-based food system, the redistribution of wealth, a robust public health system, and biodiversity conservation.

The history of Waterlandia was shaped by several major events, including a global recession, armed conflict, a nuclear attack, finding a cure for cancer and climate refugees inundating cities.



World 2 – Eden

Eden is a world characterized by the prevalence of its biodomes. In Eden, whose capital is Bubblemania, half of the land is reserved for biodiversity and half the land is reserved for rebuilding society. Eden has prospered thanks to a strong local government system, progressive taxes, renewable energy, and a plant-based food system. Eden's history came about through a series of world events, including a mass extinction, which led to progressive taxes to finance renewable energy in advance of a net-climate-zero pledge.



World 3 – Explodium

At its core, Explodium is a world created by the outbreak of nuclear war. There is scarcity everywhere – of water, of electricity, and all other necessities. Explodium consists of decentralized colonies and minimalist societies. Because of this scarcity, members of this society display a high degree of resilience and a strong interest in renewable energy and shared knowledge. Explodium was shaped by supply chain pirates, a climate deal that preceded a global recession, an international armed conflict, and, finally, nuclear attack.



Following the Epilogue phase, Community of Practice members shared critiques (both positive and negative) of the game. A sample of these are presented below:

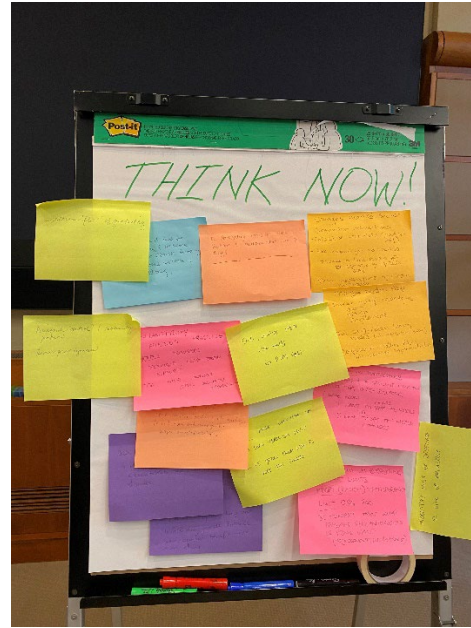
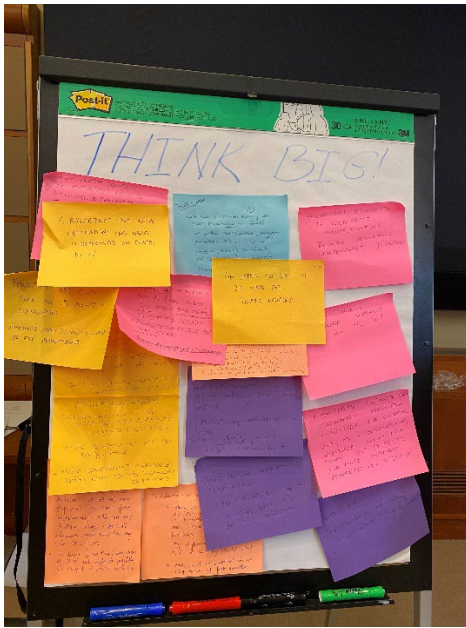
1. One player said he was trying to build his world around what his specific steward would like to have. He soon realized he would need to diversify his portfolio, and he began losing sight of the steward role.
2. Similarly embodying the specific steward role, one player mentioned playing the role as a trader actually made the game more fun. Adopting this role forced the player to think about the coherence of each component.
3. One player brought back the idea of backcasting in revising the game. Could the game start, instead, from an ideal future state and players must deal with the challenges that come their way?
4. Overall, most players expressed the game was fun to play.



Closing Conversation

In closing the Beehive, Community of Practice members wrote thoughts on two Post-It Notes: one where they “dreamt big” and imagined the world in 2035 and one where they “thought now” and described what attributes or capabilities a society needs to continue on that trajectory. A sample of the responses are included below.

1. Dream big: Global North philanthropy is smaller, more democratized, and focused on strengthening governments. Philanthropy doesn’t have to fill these gaps anymore.
2. Dream big: There will be an upper age limit of 25 on all boards of directors.
3. Dream big: Civil society is more globally connected, and there’s more investments in youth movements.
4. Think now: Philanthropy must fund for complexity, equity, and resilience with multiyear flexible funding.
5. Think now: Philanthropy funding moves toward flexible, long-term core support to have a bolder civil society.



Finally, Community of Practice members shared feedback with the event organizers. A sample of this feedback is included below.

1. One participant said the topics were very strategic, but we need to dive deeper into the issues. Time is too short to not do so.
2. Another participant said she loved the non-western perspectives, saying it's very rare and she appreciated it.
3. A Community of Practice member asked for more time to chat, reflect, and process on the workshops with more unscheduled time.
4. One person asked a blunt question: Where do we now get into the space of making commitments?
5. Overall, many participants said day two was too long.
6. Most Community of Practice members expressed gratitude for the event and for being given the time to explore, use their imaginations and be creative.

Thank you!