

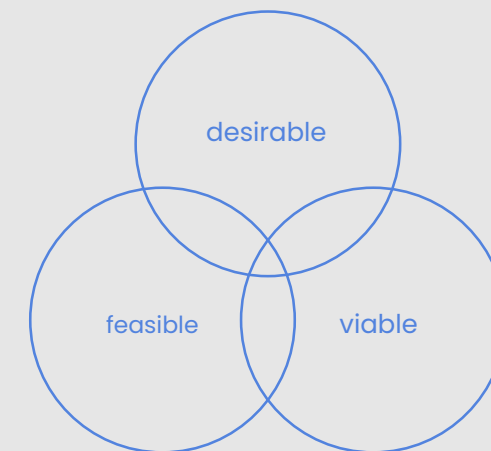
FUTURES DESIGN

Futures design

The **future** is not defined; it is always plural, impossible to predict, and can be influenced by our decisions. This has always been the case, but today we live in a context of changeable, complex, interconnected, and uncertain growth. In these circumstances, organisations in general, and Public Administration, in particular, must remain open to change, be adaptable to the world they are part of and gain vision and flexibility.

Futures design is a discipline that combines strategic design and collaborative design to help build medium and long-term strategies. By creating scenarios and lines of action, this framework allows us to outline both desirable and undesirable futures, which are useful when making decisions. Far from utopias and dystopias, the futures design seeks to create a balance between what is feasible, desirable, and viable.

The **tools** presented below are a combination of methods, such as those used by the Government of Great Britain since 2017 within the framework of the New Urban Agenda 2030. These methods will not only serve as a guide for making strategic decisions, but also provide a framework for becoming familiar with what UNESCO calls "future literacy", a necessary skill that organisations and people must develop to thrive in a world that faces increasingly uncertain futures.



To analyse

To frame

To project

To imagine

**Identify
elements
and forces of
change in the
present that
will affect the
future.**

Mapping key elements of change (SEPEM)

Recommended time 30'

What is it

The first step in imagining the future of an organisation or territory is to identify what external and contextual **elements of change can influence**. This exercise is based on the central dimensions of the New Urban Agenda and pays attention to those elements that influence, both positively and negatively, the different SEPEM areas (Social, Economic, Political, Environmental and Management).

What for

Mapping elements of change aims to identify the main **“ingredients”** to build the future in the next phases. In this exercise, it is important to consider both global and local elements of change. Some will be easy to identify and others won't be. Therefore, we must make an effort to look beyond our own borders.

Instructions

1 Identify the elements of change that may influence the future in each of the dimensions (SEPEM) described in the columns of the worksheet. Both the contextual elements and those of the organisation itself must be taken into account. An example of an external game changer could be the consequences of the Ukraine war on local economies.

It is key to group redundant ideas and simplify their writing as much as possible, either in a single word or, at most, with an adjective (e.g.: changing 'heavy bureaucratic processes' to 'bureaucracy', or 'heavy bureaucracy').

2 Individually, select 5 elements of change from the same or different columns.

Social	Economic	Political	Physical environment	Environment
Example Racism, feminism, environmentalism, aging, change in lifestyles, health and well-being.	Example Inflation, growth, degrowth, social and solidarity economy, work automation.	Example Tax increases, increased participatory democracy, political stability, resurgence of independence movements, rise of the extreme right.	Example City densification, green corridors, public space, gentrification, self-managed spaces.	Example Environmental movements, energy transition, rising temperatures, geoengineering, denialist movements.



To analyse

To frame

To project

To imagine

**Define the
scope in
which we
want to
envision the
future.**

Framing the scope

Recommended time 30'

What is it

Once the elements of change have been mapped, by framing the scope we can understand what may affect us in the medium and long term, allowing us to prepare and focus. This phase is necessary in order to build future scenarios that are sufficiently detailed to help us make decisions in the present.

What for

Framing the scope of work (mobility, work, etc.) will allow us to **gain a better understanding** of how the elements of change may affect our organisation, territory, or action. This is a preliminary step towards imagining different possible futures.

Instructions

- 1** Take into account the **most voted elements** of the SEPTEM analysis. You may consider other elements if deemed appropriate.
- 2** Combine different elements of change identified in the SEPTEM to define the **scope of work** on which to focus the futures design (e.g. migration, work and sustainability).

Elements of change

Take into account the **most voted elements** of the SEPEM analysis.
You may consider other elements if deemed appropriate.

Economic

Social

Others

Environment

Political

Physical Environment

Description of the scope of work

Description of the scope of work

Combine different elements of change identified in the SEPEM analysis to define the scope of work on which to focus the design of futures (e.g. migration, work and sustainability).

To analyse

To frame

To project

To imagine

**Place the
elements
of change
in possible
future
scenarios.**

Snapshot 20...

Recommended time 60'

What is it

We have many possible futures and therefore we must be prepared for all of them. By addressing expectations, desires, and fears, Snapshot 20... is a tool through which we can approach the different future scenarios with more detail and empathy. We propose three different future scenarios: a probable future (the one most likely to happen), a desirable future, and a future to avoid.

What for

This exercise helps to go deeper into the three future scenarios. This way, we can **identify elements** that we haven't recognised before and carry out an empathy exercise. This will allow us to shed light on potentialities, challenges, and opportunities that have not appeared before.

Instructions

- 1 Complete the worksheet in **groups** (1 group per scenario).
- 2 Identify the elements of the SEPEM analysis that will be useful to you in thinking about the evolution of the future in which you will work (probable, desirable and to avoid). Remember to focus on the previously chosen area of work.
- 3 Describe in a paragraph the general characteristics of the future you are working on.
- 4 Describe five positive and five negative consequences for this future.

Scenario _____

1

Title and subtitle

2

Describe the main characteristics

(Social, Economic, Political, Physical environment, Environment)

3

Positive and negative elements

Positive elements

Negative elements



To analyse

To frame

To project

To imagine

To delve
deeper
into the
three future
scenarios.

Backcasting

Recommended time 60'

What is it

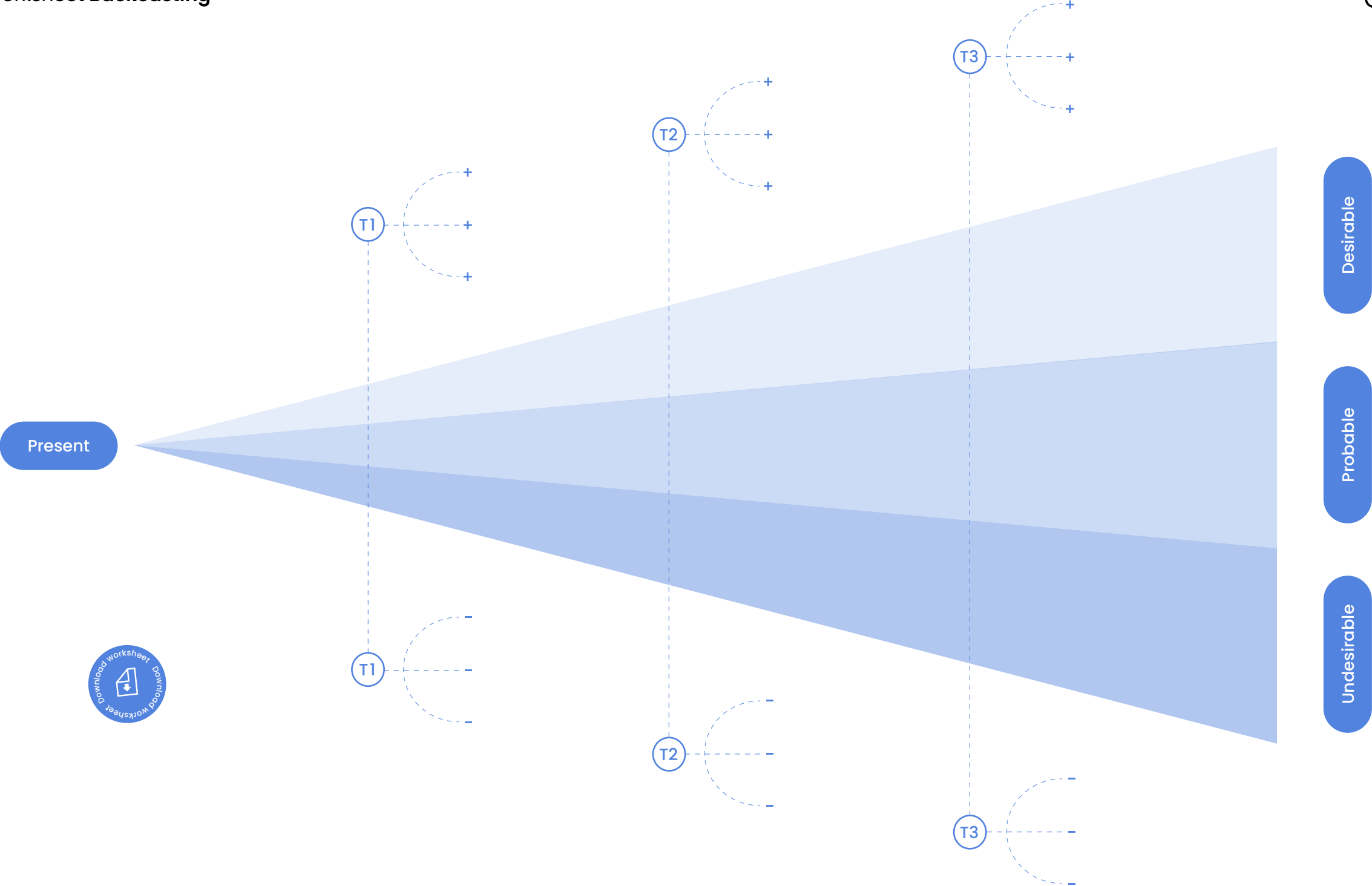
Once the three future scenarios have been defined in more detail within a specific area, we will do an exercise that consists of **imagining the events that led to each of these projected futures**. Starting from the futures we have envisioned, we will work our way backward step by step until we reach the present.

What for

Backcasting helps us **build a story that allows us to understand** how the futures we have imagined were reached. This way, we can understand what kinds of events can happen and what actions we can take to either prevent them (if they are negative) or encourage them (if they are positive). In the strategic field, it can help us manage uncertainty more effectively and make better decisions in the medium and long term.

Instructions

- 1 Based on the descriptions of the three futures, **identify specific events**, both internal to your organisation and in the context, that have shaped the future.
- 2 **Jump from the future to the present** (from right to left), identifying between 1 and 5 events for each year or timeframe (Q1, Q2, etc.) indicated on the worksheet. Keep in mind both positive or desirable events (at the top of the chart) and negative events (at the bottom of the chart).
- 3 Finally, **identify one or more actions** that you could take in the near future to make desirable futures possible or to avoid future events that you consider negative. Choose one that is realistic and make a commitment to carry it out.



1

Definition

We invite you to make a feasible, realistic, and conscious commitment within time frame 1 [T1].

You can use this worksheet for the number of commitments you want to work on, individually or as a team.

I, as a _____ ,

role

undertake to _____

before _____ .

date

Download worksheet

Download worksheet

2

Follow-up

	State of the situation	Has it been achieved?	If not, why?
1		☐ Yes ☐ No	
2		☐ Yes ☐ No	
3		☐ Yes ☐ No	

3

Achievement

Commitment reached

_____ / _____ / _____

To think about alliances, you can fill out worksheet E1.1 of Method 4>17

