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

This guide for action can be used by policymakers at any level or in any form of government to identify how to redesign governance processes to respond to the Fridays for Future Movement in a way that is meaningful and impactful.

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With support from:

IASS
POTSDAM

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, governments at every level around the world 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 the climate crisis, 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, and governance 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.
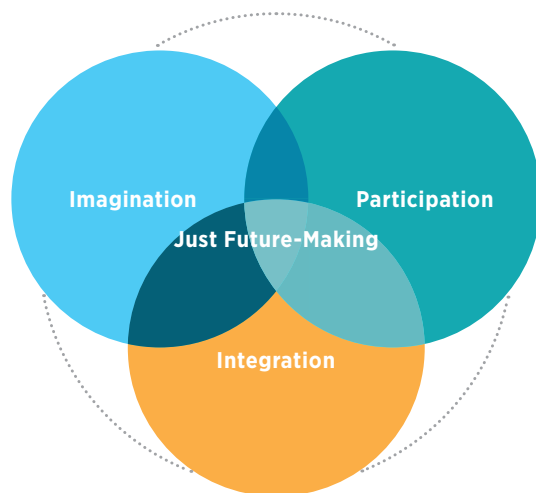
To respond to these demands, we need to more meaningfully consider the future, their future, in a way that we're not used to doing. What does it mean to take into account the well-being of future generations in how we deal with climate change? What is the role of and relationship to young people in this 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.[1]

This tool is designed to help governments at any level 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 legislation, but is designed instead to support solutions to the root cause of the challenge. Using this tool and seeing this process to the end is not an "easy way out", but there is no easy way out of the climate crisis.

There is also another version of the tool designed specifically for non-governmental bodies, such as NGO's, schools, universities and businesses. Further information and resources can be found on the IASS website.

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**

PROCESSES FOR JUST FUTURE-MAKING

Six methods for improved responses to incorporate fairness for future generations in the context of the climate crisis. Information about each method is spread over the next four pages, please follow the column and icon indicators.

Mechanism	Future impact integration & assessment tools	Participatory future-making processes	Specialised council within government with diverse representation	Deliberative citizen participation	Integration of concern for future generations into existing institutional remits and processes	Reform of metrics & indicators for progress
Short explanation	Integration and assessment tools can be developed and used in the legislative, policy-making, or budgeting process. They can either contribute to thorough scrutiny through the lens of future generations, or they can be designed to have veto-like powers, where approval from this process is necessary. The scrutiny process could also entail a participatory element in the form of some kind of citizen review.	As part of each new programme for government, the government leads a participatory national future-visioning design process, which brings together (and compensates) citizens in a way that is representative of the demographic distribution and diversity of society. Clear links between the programme and the vision need to be elaborated and firmly established.	A council that advises government, provides recommendations, and offers additional scrutiny for policymaking and the legislature. The council comprises representatives of key stakeholders, including young people, future generations (perhaps through an empty chair), diverse demographic groups, and cross-party elected representatives. The output of the council has a designated place and structure for consideration by government, parliament, and committees.	Deliberative citizen participation processes, ranging in scale from topic-focused mini-publics to national citizen assemblies, facilitate consensus building and longer-term thinking. Deliberation should processes result in binding proposals. They should represent the demographic distribution and include young people, future generations (perhaps through an empty chair), and diverse demographic groups.	Within each government department, and as the remit of each minister, the broad long-term aspects of their agenda must be reviewed. This is done through a designated responsible focal point and a coordination body. External assessments with experts and young people could also be integrated into the process.	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.
Theory of change	This mechanism constrains and incentivises policy processes and establishes new means of coordination and collaboration.	This mechanism expands the imaginative capacity of the government and citizens and brings the future into focus. It also offers a new means of making politics accountable to the people.	This mechanisms works to change the perspectives of policymakers and deepen understandings of the future.	This mechanism can help change the motivation of policymakers and also offer alternatives to short-termist pressure.	Through enhanced capacity and focus of policymakers and new coordination opportunities, this mechanism can focus on the future impacts of decisions.	This mechanism changes the motives of policymakers by reframing goals.
Resources required	Additional capacity to design or adapt tool for context. Internal capacity for regular use of the tool in each policy-making process. Collaboration and relationships with actor networks related to legislative process, and public consultation processes.	Additional capacity to facilitate the co-designed future vision. Internal capacity for programme integration and scrutiny/verification. Capacity for partnership or relationships with actors facilitating citizen participation processes, internally and externally.	Participation capacity across a number of groups and stakeholders. (Additional) staff and funding for operational support. Understanding of and connection to the broad constellation of stakeholders that might contribute to this process.	Additional capacity to facilitate the deliberation process. Resources to compensate citizens for their time input. Capacity for partnership or relationships with actors facilitating citizen participation processes, internally and externally.	Internal capacity of focal points and designated additional coordination capacity. Relationships of trust and mutual understanding with institutions, departments or actors who would be a part of this process.	Relationships of trust and mutual understanding with institutions, departments or actors who would be a part of this process.

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Timeline	Six-month lead time for development. Investment time during **each** scrutiny process. Should continue to be an on-going part of the process.	Eight months for participatory visioning process. Timing needs to be planned around programme for government development planning. Related to each new programme for government.	Consistent lifespan to extend beyond election cycles.	Deliberation processes could either be around one issue, with a shorter timeline of three months, or carried out by a more permanent body with a formalised relationship with parliament.	Consistent lifespan of this mechanism. It will require regular time commitments from focal points and coordinator.	Participatory process and future vision for design of new metrics should take six months, with a further twelve months for the process of embedding and reframing goals.
Anticipated outcomes	Enhanced understanding of scale and breadth of decisions impacting the future. Extending the time horizon that is considered in the policymaking and scrutiny process. Changing understanding of success.	Participation and deliberation processes contribute to civic engagement. The programme for government considers and purposefully connects to the future and reflects the future people want.	Scrutiny and recommendation process intentionally brings perspectives about the future into policymaking and deliberation with intention.	Deliberated consensus offers proposals for initiatives, policies or approaches that give greater consideration to the future, and these are adopted by government.	Future ramifications are included in processes. Coordination facilitates improved policy coherence and a more holistic approach government-wide.	Changing the narrative and tone of policymakers and elected representatives about the values and goals of society.
Measuring success	Evidence of scrutiny process, extent of use, case studies.	Programme for government is aligned with and assessed against contribution to this future vision.	Cases of adoption of recommendations.	The processes are completed and recommendations are adopted. Recommendations improve relationship with the future.	Process is habitual and enshrined in day-to-day functioning. A longer-term view is clear in the output of each department.	New metrics around future goals are met. Public narratives around goals and values have changed.
Constraints and risks	This process requires buy-in of participants of political processes, and steps need to be taken from the beginning to ensure this is the case before changing processes formally.	The result of the process needs to be bought into, otherwise it lacks authority or power.	This mechanism normally has little official power or authority and so it needs to be designed in a way to ensure influence over decision-making processes.	Ensure adequate level of diversity in participation for deliberation process. Need to be mindful of power imbalances in society and how this might impact on deliberative processes.	Competing time pressures. That the process becomes box-ticking only.	Values and norms don't change as quickly as metrics. Need top-level commitment.
How does this support realising justice?[3]	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 and representation of the future in decision-making	Through participation in future-making and decision-making	Through recognition of future concerns across all areas	By distributing and recognising impacts (positive and negative) over time
Examples of similar	Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool developed and used by Scottish Parliament	The Slovenian Government led a participatory process to develop a Vision for Slovenia in 2050.	The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development brings together ministry representatives and civil society.	Civic Councils and Civic Engagement Forums fed into the German Federal Ministry for the Environment's Integrated Environmental Programme 2030.	Slovakia's Government Council for Agenda 2030 coordinates all ministries and designated focal points.	The Scottish Government has rewritten their National Performance Framework in line with the SDGs.
Further reading	Hege, E. & Brimont, L. (2018): Integrating SDGs into national budgetary processes. IDDRI study	Hajer, M. (2017): Inaugural Lecture: The Power of Imagination. Caney, S. (2016). Political institutions for the future: A five-fold package.	Niestroy et al. (2019): Europe's approach to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: good practices and the way forward.	Green Alliance (2019): Power to the People. Gonzalez-Ricoy & Gosseries (2016): Institutions for Future Generations.	OECD (2018): Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.	Welsh Government (2019): Voluntary National Review.

[3]An elaboration of what is understood to be justice in each of these explanations can be found online at   https://dirthelizabeth.wordpress.com/just-future-making/defining-justice

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? ....
....
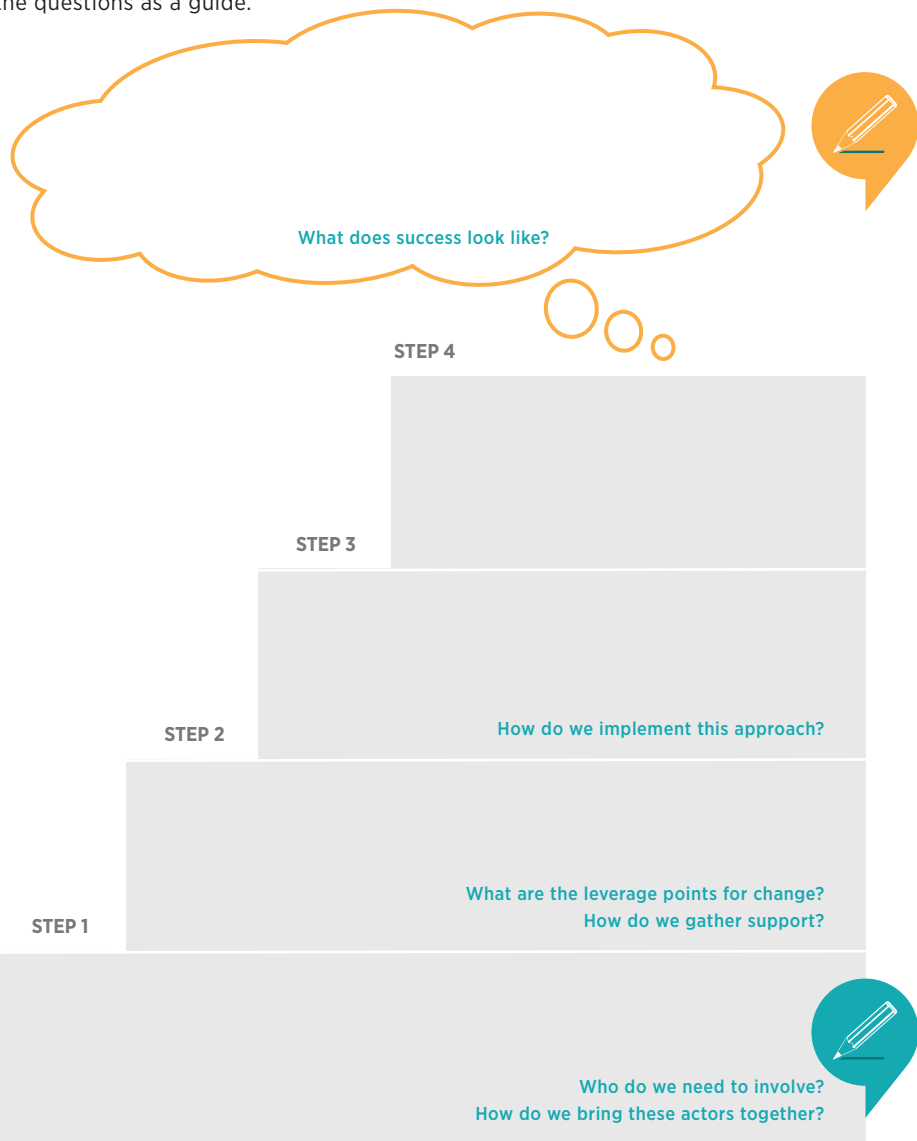
Next, it's time to consider which of the processes of just future-making work best for you. Take one of the options in the table on pages 6 to 9 and use the framework below to test its applicability to your context. Go through as many as you need, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of this option. To start, answer the guiding questions below directly, and then move on to identify other aspects.

	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL	**Strengths** • This works well in my context because it interacts positively with… • Its design is appropriate to addressing the challenge we have of… • Advantages… e.g.: X approach complements and adds to the scrutiny process that already exists in our legislative process.	**Weakness** • This doesn't work in my context because it interacts negatively with… • It may not tackle…. • Disadvantages… e.g.: In all aspects, the approach requires skills that we don't have and would need to find resources or ways to develop.
EXTERNAL	**Opportunities** • This option leverages… • This will be meaningful to people because… • This will be meaningful to elected representatives because… e.g.: X approach would also help us to re-engage citizens with government and politics in a positive way.	**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.

What does success look like?

STEP 4

STEP 3

How do we implement this approach?

STEP 2

Action

What are the leverage points for change?
How do we gather support?

STEP 1

Planning

Who do we need to involve?
How do we bring these actors together?

HOW HAVE THESE SIX 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 six 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:
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