

From Imagined Futures to Everyday Agency Behavioural Futures and Sustainability Transitions

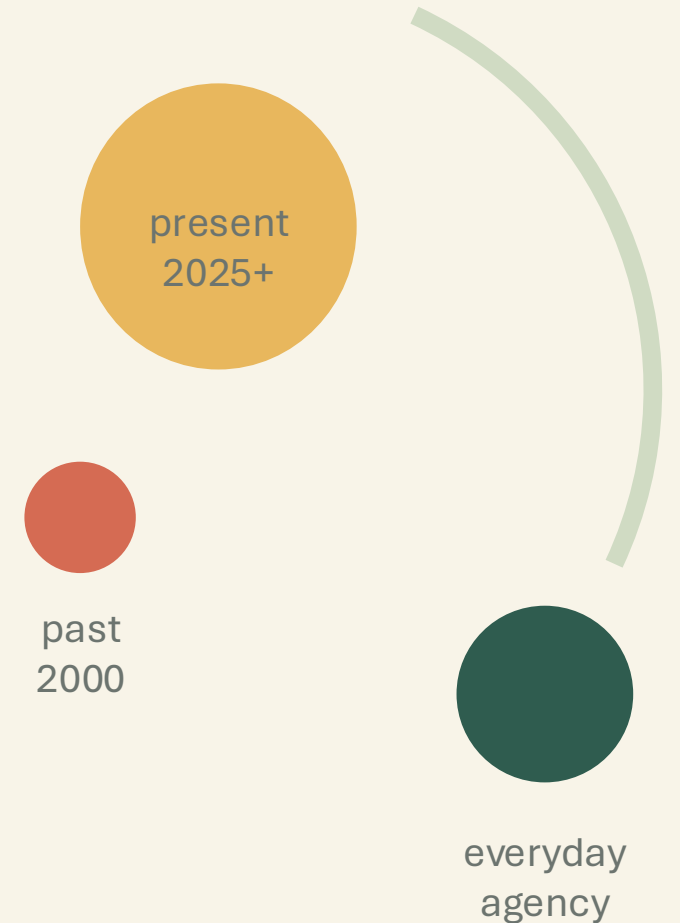
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Session 4, Track 3: Futures Literacy for Sustainable Transformation

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Sustainability, Temporality and Futures



The opening moment: intergenerational time

A lived example of sustainability as a long-horizon question

In 2000, children from around the world gathered in Eastbourne, UK to discuss the environmental future they would inherit



Children



Adults



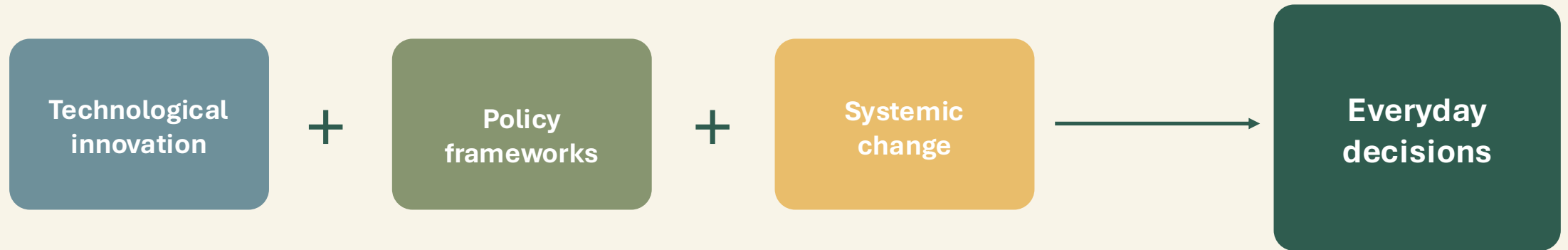
Decision contexts

25 years later, many of those children are entering roles where they can influence sustainability decisions

The futures we imagine are not abstract. They become questions of responsibility, capacity and action across time.

The transition gap

Sustainability transitions are systemic — but they are enacted behaviourally



The missing question is not only “what future do we prefer?” but “what behavioural conditions make that future actionable?”

Awareness of future risk does not automatically produce action nor a sense of perceived agency

The core question of the paper

What enables individuals to translate awareness of future risks into meaningful everyday action?

futures
literacy

behavioural
insights

everyday
agency

sustainability
transitions

Using EAST as the presentation logic

A behavioural lens for communicating the argument



Easy

Make futures actionable



Attractive

Make agency meaningful



Social

Make transition collective



Timely

Make action feel situated
in time

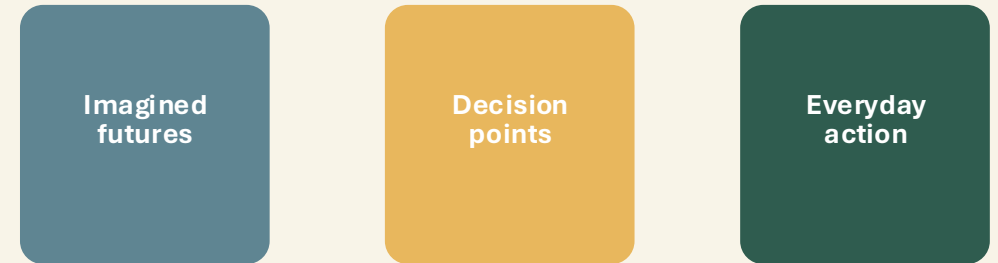
EAST* is not only a behavioural intervention checklist here — it also structures how the paper moves from abstract futures to usable agency

**EAST framework originates from the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), learn more www.bi.team*

E — Easy: make futures actionable

Reducing the distance between imagined futures and daily choices

- Turn future narratives into **concrete decision moments**
- **Surface assumptions** that quietly guide choices
- **Translate sustainability** into small, observable behaviours



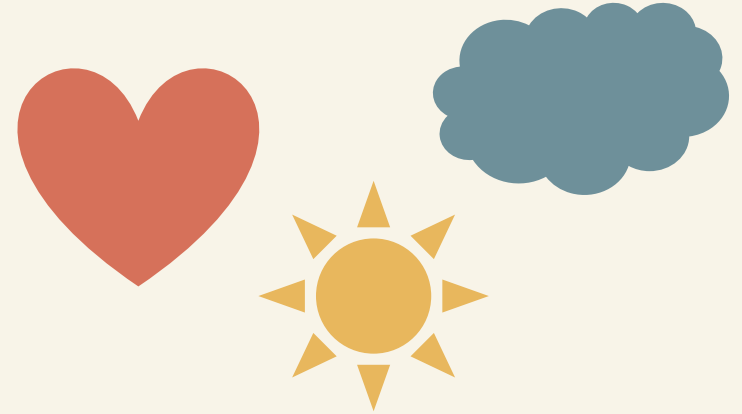
Design implication: people are more likely to act when future-oriented reflection is converted into clear next steps and specific contexts



— Attractive: make agency meaningful

People act on futures that feel relevant, emotionally legible and personally connected

- Future risks can feel **abstract or distant**
- **Emotion and meaning** shape attention and motivation
- **Agency** = sense of being capable to act



feelings → attention → interpretation →
action potential

The “Futures We Feel” project becomes an example of how futures work can collect not only “signals” but also felt relations to future change and states of agency

— Social: make transition collective

Agency grows through shared reflection, communities and visible participation

- **Sustainability decisions are socially patterned**
- Norms and shared narratives shape **what feels possible**
- Communities such as **Teach the Future** and **Futures Finland** support collective futures practice from youth to adulthood



Helping to teach futures-thinking skills to students and educators around the world and to inspire them to influence their futures.

www.teachthefuture.org



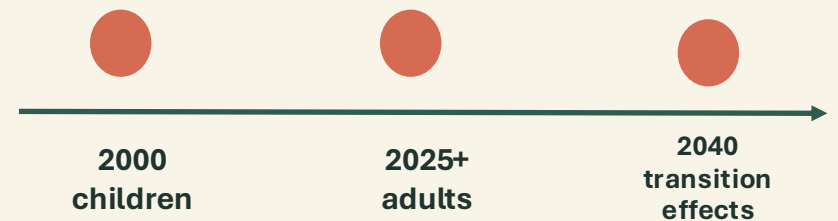
A platform and network for foresight professionals that brings together foresight practitioners and enthusiasts to share up-to-date information about futures studies and to develop futures thinking and its awareness.

www.futuresfinland.com

T — Timely: make action situated in time

The right intervention depends on where people are in a temporal story

- **Intergenerational responsibility** changes **how time is felt**
- Futures work can **identify moments** when assumptions become visible
- Behavioural prompts work best **when connected to current decisions**, not abstract futures only



Timeliness connects long horizons to present leverage points

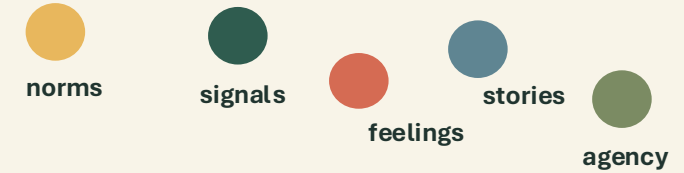
A behavioural futures perspective

How imagined futures become everyday agency



Behavioural futures examines the conditions through which future expectations are translated, blocked or redirected in everyday life

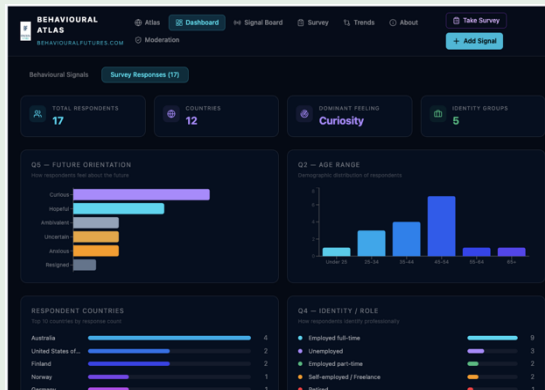
Practice examples: new additions



Where The Futures We Feel and The Behavioural Atlas fit in the paper

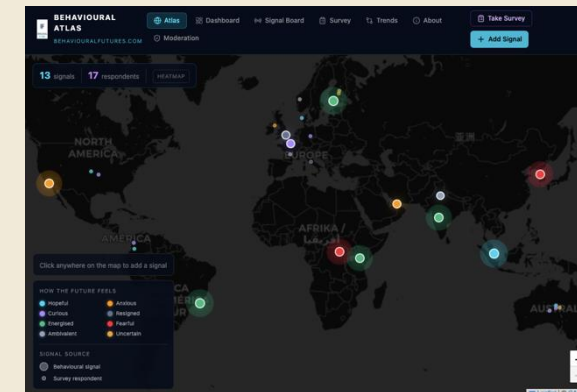
The Futures We Feel

- **Global crowdsourced research project**
- Collects how people sense, feel and describe emerging futures
- Affective entry point into agency and sustainability imagination



The Behavioural Atlas

- **Emerging repository of signals and behavioural observations**
- Connects individual responses into collective sensemaking
- Makes patterns visible across contexts and communities



Contribution

What the paper adds to the conference conversation?

A behavioural futures lens for sustainability transitions

- Links **futures literacy** with **behavioural insights**
- Explains **why** imagined futures do not automatically become action
- Shows **how reflective and collaborative practices** can strengthen everyday agency
- **Extends sustainability transition thinking** toward lived, intergenerational decision environments

not only
systems
change people

but people acting
within systems change
people and systems

Sustainability transitions are built not only through large systems, but through the quiet accumulation of everyday choices — made possible, or impossible, by the environments around us.

Thank you

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