



APF

~ Summary Report ~

2024 Dubai Future Forum Learning Days Workshop Results

Unconventional Futures:

How Can Practitioners Explore Non-Traditional Approaches to Foresight?

Workshop Recap

This immersive workshop invites futurists and foresight practitioners to delve into unconventional and non-formal approaches that tap into our innate human capacity for futures thinking. In the spirit of expanding the horizons of foresight practice, this workshop is designed to immerse participants in the rich landscape of non-traditional and non-formal approaches to futures thinking. Recognizing that the capacity to envision the future is an innate human trait, the workshop aimed to harness this natural ability through methods that are creative, inclusive, and experiential. We utilized a specially crafted Play:Do:Collect format in three segments that served as a catalyst for interactive group activities and exposed participants to non-traditional methods of foresight. The workshop began with a mind and body centering warm up in an attempt to calibrate participants to the same starting place. Each segment built on the last leading to a story about the Dubai Future Forum of 2044 and distilling the story down to key attributes that could be used for a short “elevator pitch” promoting the event.

Number of Participants: 37 spread across 7 tables

Focus Topic of Workshop: The Dubai Future Forum in the year 2044

SEGMENT 1: EMBODIED FUTURES - A day in the life of a DFF 2044 attendee

SEGMENT 2: SENSORY FUTURES - The sensory and emotional experiences of DFF2044

SEGMENT 3: NARRATIVE FUTURES - An “elevator pitch” for DFF 2044



Segment 3 Examples:

Elevator Pitch Highlights from Two Group Tables

Question: Why Come to the Dubai Future Forum 2044?

Group Table Example 1:

- We will onboard you and offboard you so that you get the best personalised experience you can have
- You will learn by doing; you will experience different possible futures
- You will connect and reconnect
- You will leave with your own plan of what you can do which connects with everyone
- It will be fun
- And finally, the outputs of the conference will influence and inform global public policy

Group Table Example 2:

- Seamless experience
- Personalized experience
- Broad subjects, people, opportunities
- Humans + more than humans
- Taste, smell, feel what is to be
- Multiplanetary with Mars representation
- Helps you to be in tune with yourself
- Facilitating you to build new connections, and mentoring opportunities, cocreation
- Personal AIs safely engage in diverse
- Build community even after gathering

Anonymous Participant Feedback - Compiled Survey Responses:

What are your top three takeaways from this workshop?

Creativity and Imagination: Embracing limitless thinking, generating new ideas, and using tools like storytelling and sensory prompts to inspire innovation and explore future possibilities.

Collaboration and Diversity: Highlighting the power of collective thinking, diverse perspectives, and emotional connections to create richer, more inclusive visions of the future.

Practicality and Action: Balancing creativity with actionable steps, focusing on implementation, and aligning with real-world needs to make futures thinking impactful and meaningful.

How did it feel?

Positive and Enjoyable: Many described the experience as fun, engaging, exciting, and light. Words like amazing, enriching, good, inspiring, and energetic convey a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction.

Collaborative and Inclusive: Participants frequently mentioned feeling welcomed, connected, included, and safe. They appreciated the empathy, imagination, and collaboration fostered during the experience.

Inspirational and Reflective: Several responses highlight a sense of inspiration, empowerment, and motivation. The workshop was described as thought-provoking, stimulating, and reflective, personally and professionally.

Challenging and Uncomfortable (in a positive way): Some noted feelings of discomfort, describing the experience as weird, introspective, confusing, or challenging in a good way. This discomfort often led to growth, learning, and a deeper understanding.

Creative and Explorative: Words like imaginative, curiosity-provoking, explorative, and generative suggest the process encouraged participants to think in new and creative ways.

Overall, the experience was seen as a mix of fun, connection, inspiration, and learning, with some moments of challenge leading to growth and introspection.

What was the easiest or hardest for you?

The easiest parts of the session were connecting and collaborating with colleagues in a safe, supportive environment, engaging in discussions, and sharing ideas. Participants found brainstorming, generating draft ideas, imagining personal futures, and activities like worldbuilding and storytelling to be natural and enjoyable. Additionally, many appreciated the opportunity to learn from others, expand on shared perspectives, and immerse themselves in the workshop's fluid and inclusive atmosphere.

The hardest parts of the session centered around challenges with creativity, communication, and focus. Participants struggled with tasks like imagining the worst, articulating or expanding on ideas, and incorporating unfamiliar sensory elements (e.g., smell or sound). Some found it difficult to balance diverse perspectives, deal with silence during discussions, or align with varying levels of concreteness in co-creation. Others mentioned practical challenges, such as fatigue, cultural or language barriers, and the absence of tactile or stimulating experiences. Overall, the hardest aspects involved pushing boundaries of imagination, navigating group dynamics, and maintaining focus in unfamiliar or abstract tasks.

How do you feel this experience might influence your approach to futures thinking or foresight in your work?

Incorporating Imagination and Creativity: Many expressed a desire to embrace unconventional approaches, use imagination more freely, and explore broader possibilities in their foresight practices.

Integrating Sensory and Experiential Techniques: Participants were inspired to include sensory elements, such as prompts or immersive experiences, to engage stakeholders and create more dynamic and impactful foresight activities.

Action and Application: Several mentioned a stronger focus on taking actionable steps, engaging others in futures thinking, and adapting the methods for workshops, organizational processes, or educational settings.

Overall, the experience encouraged creativity, practical application, and the integration of new methods to enhance futures thinking.

Are there any additional tools, methods, or resources you would like to see in unconventional futures workshops?

Sensory and Experiential Approaches: Incorporating more sensory prompts (touch, movement, sound, taste), immersive experiences, role-playing, worldbuilding, and embodied activities to engage participants in a more tangible and impactful way.

Emerging Technologies and Visual Aids: Leveraging tools like AI for mind-mapping, categorizing inputs, or creating artifacts; using AR/VR; providing visual aids or provocative artifacts; and integrating science fiction to stimulate imagination and creativity.

Frameworks, Signals, and Collaboration: Including methodologies like design thinking, persona design, open space technology (OST), and wildcard scenarios; offering signals, trends, or decks of cards for inspiration; and fostering meta-conversations to share experiences and insights.