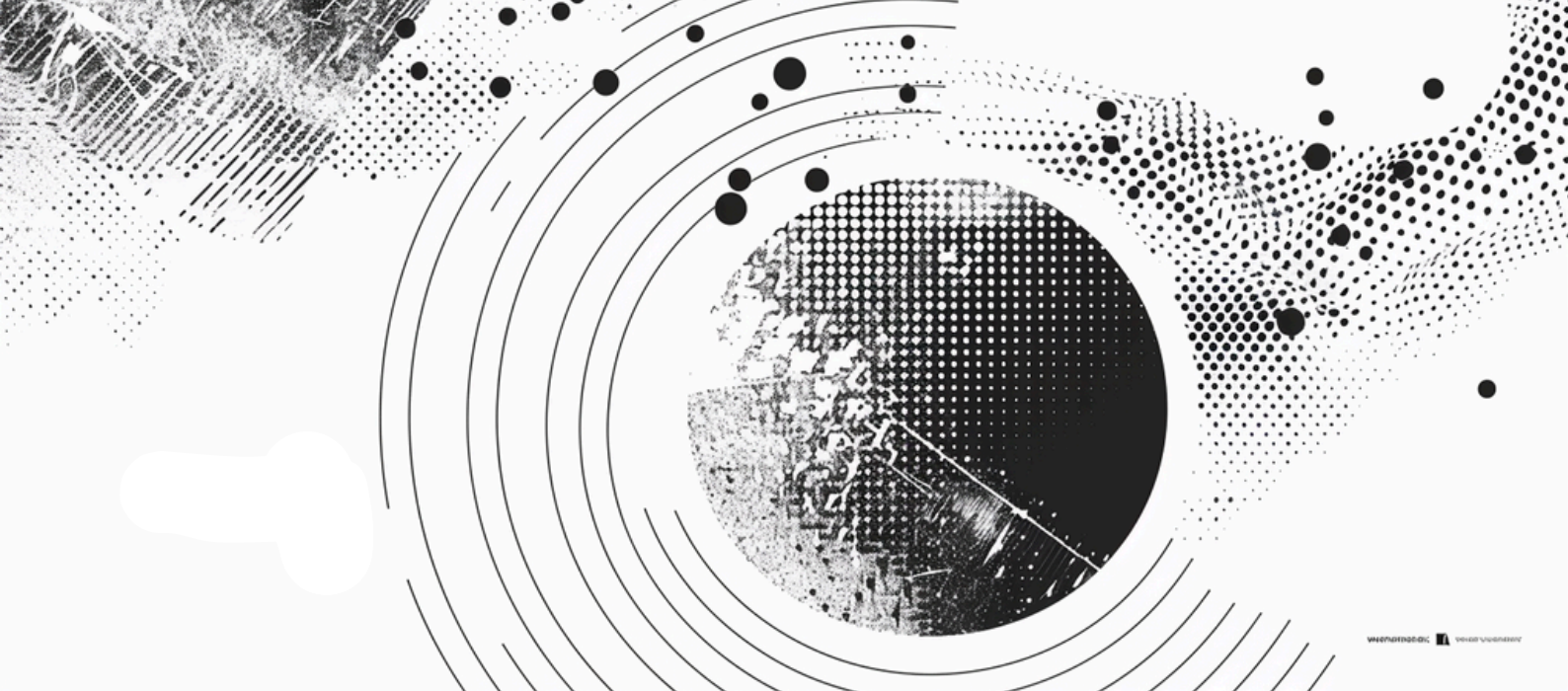




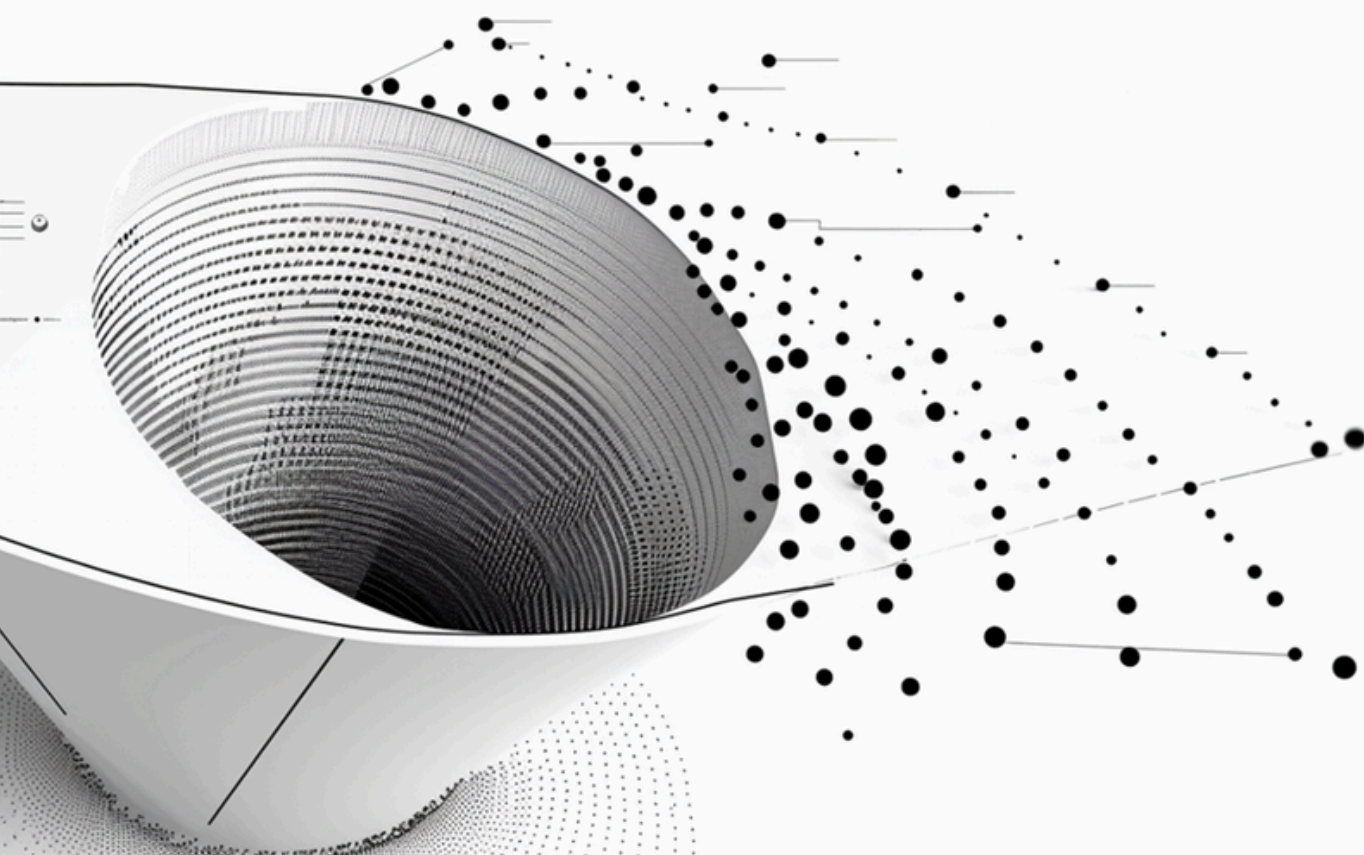
WIRTSCHAFTS UNIVERSITÄT

Can Futures Literacy be taught?

 Technische Hochschule
Ingolstadt
Bayerisches Foresight-Institut

SHOTS - Reflections from 12 Futures
Literacy Labs

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At the Bavarian Foresight-Institute, we approach Futures Literacy during our Labs in four different phases:

Starting off with *revealing* probable and desirable futures, we then *experiment* with these assumptions when creatively drafting alternative futures. Coming back from this journey, we invite participants to *rethink* the present again in order to find possible ways to *act* accordingly to the new findings drawn from the future expeditions.

01.

INTRODUCTION

The Promise of Futures Literacy

For almost three years, we have been facilitating Futures Literacy Labs with students, migrants, seniors, volunteers, scientists, and business representatives in the Ingolstadt region. The underlying assumption seems straightforward: futures literacy can be fostered through participatory workshops. Yet our experiences raise a more fundamental question. What if futures literacy is not a transferable skill in the conventional sense? What if it is always shaped by the social, cultural, demographic, and economic realities in which people imagine their futures? This SHOT reflects on lessons learned from twelve Futures Literacy Labs and discusses what they reveal about the opportunities and limitations of futures literacy as a transformative practice.

What do we get from Futures Literacy?

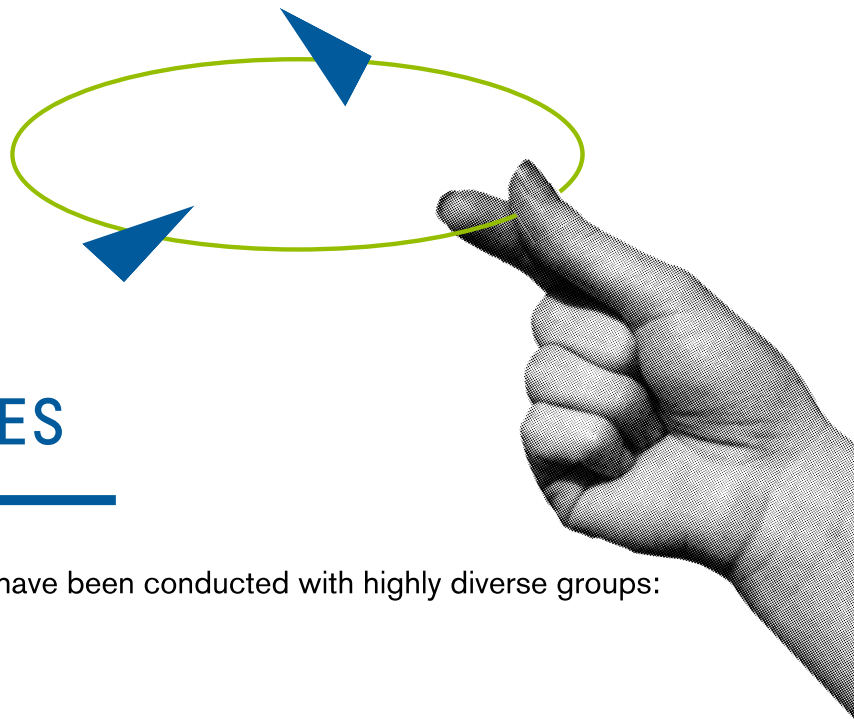
UNESCO describes futures literacy as an essential capability for navigating uncertainty and complexity. Rather than predicting the future, futures literacy enables people to recognize assumptions, imagine alternatives, and develop agency in the face of change.

This promise has become increasingly relevant in regions undergoing profound transformation. In the Ingolstadt area, long shaped by the automotive industry, climate change, digitalization, demographic ageing, and economic restructuring are creating new uncertainties and new demands for collective imagination.

Within the knowledge transfer project People in Motion, researchers from the Technical University of Ingolstadt and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt have therefore experimented with Futures Literacy Labs as a means of strengthening future-oriented thinking across society.

02.

12 LABS, 12 FUTURES



Since 2023, twelve Futures Literacy Labs have been conducted with highly diverse groups:

- secondary school students
- university students
- migrant women
- senior citizens
- volunteers
- scientists
- business representatives
- local policymakers

Topics ranged from mobility and education to healthcare, social cohesion, inclusion, and voluntary work.

While the methodological framework remained relatively stable—combining scenario building, speculative storytelling, LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, collaging, and collective reflection—the outcomes varied considerably. Each group brought different assumptions, hopes, fears, and temporal horizons into the process.

One observation stood out repeatedly: there is no such thing as a universal future. Every future is socially situated.



03.

OBSERVATIONS & PROBLEMS

A recurring assumption in futures education is that younger generations are naturally more future-oriented. Our observations challenge this view.

Many adolescents found it surprisingly difficult to imagine futures beyond dominant narratives already circulating in media and social networks. Their visions often remained close to established expectations.

By contrast, many senior participants generated remarkably diverse and nuanced future images. Their long-term life experiences seemed to provide a richer repertoire for imagining alternative trajectories.

This observation raises an intriguing question:

Does futures literacy necessarily increase with education and youthfulness, or might it also emerge from accumulated life experience?

The answer remains open. Yet it suggests that futures literacy should not be understood solely as an educational intervention but also as a socially embedded practice shaped by biography and experience.

The measurement problem

A second challenge concerns evaluation.

How do we know whether a Futures Literacy Lab actually increases futures literacy?

Existing frameworks such as the Futures Literacy Framework, anticipation theory, or standardized survey instruments offer valuable conceptual foundations. However, they often prove difficult to apply in practice.

Questionnaires frequently failed to capture the richness of workshop experiences. Visual artefacts, stories, conversations, and interactions generated large amounts of qualitative material that resisted straightforward quantification.

The question therefore remains:

Can futures literacy be measured as a competence at all, or should it instead be understood as a situated and relational capacity that becomes visible only in practice?

This challenge may represent one of the most important methodological questions for future research.



04.

OUTLOOK: FROM WORKSHOPS TO PUBLIC FUTURES

Perhaps the most important lesson from the project is that futures literacy does not emerge in isolation.

Successful labs depended on local networks, trusted intermediaries, community organizations, and institutional partnerships. The transfer of futures literacy proved to be as much a question of social infrastructure as of workshop methodology.

In other words:

Futures literacy is not simply taught. It is cultivated within ecosystems that enable people to imagine, discuss, and experiment with futures together.

For universities engaging in regional transformation processes, this insight may be particularly relevant. Their role is not only to provide knowledge but also to create spaces in which futures can be collectively explored.



What's next?

The next step for the project is therefore not primarily another workshop.

Instead, we are exploring how the futures developed in these labs can enter public space through exhibitions, storytelling formats, and immersive theatre. If futures literacy is about expanding collective imagination, then the challenge is not merely to create future images—but to make them socially visible.

The future, after all, begins to matter when it becomes something people can experience together.

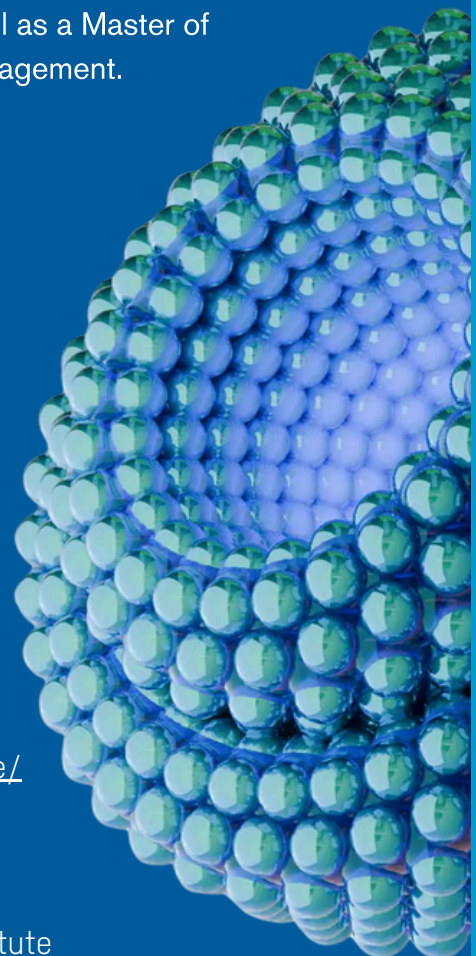


ABOUT THE BAVARIAN FORESIGHT- INSTITUTE

The Bavarian Foresight-Institute specializes in technology-driven foresight research, exploring emerging technologies as well as their economic and social interdependencies. As part of the **Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt (THI)**, we bridge academic research with practical applications.

Our application-oriented research informs policy makers as well as consulting projects, contributes to scientific publications, and is shared with a broad variety of stakeholders from industry and society through dedicated exchange forums.

Further, we are committed to developing the next generation of foresight scholars and practitioners by offering PhD positions as well as a Master of Science program in Global Foresight and Technology Management.



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