

Artefact

Futures Literacy 101

Using foresight to fuel creativity
and design responsibly

Workshop + Toolkit



About us.

We're all about the future. A more responsible future, that is.

Artefact is a strategy + design firm dedicated to creating a more equitable and sustainable world.



Why foresight?

Accelerating pace of change and high level of uncertainty

Engaging complex problem spaces and existential threats

Assuming shared responsibility for preferable outcomes

Externalizing assumptions, more creative thinking, and informed decision making



Basic concepts.

There are no facts or data about the future. Futurists extrapolate from historical patterns and a broad analysis of emerging change.

We may forecast or envision potential outcomes, but do not make predictions. There are an infinite number of possible futures.

Change is systemic, and everything is connected; that's why we use a systems lens to understand the world.

Futures thinking is an ongoing activity; as conditions evolve we need to update our models.



The workshop.

This workshop introduces participants to a streamlined approach* to futures inquiry, intended to augment the work of design and innovation teams.

Modules in this toolkit include:

**Scanning for change
Exploring impacts (Futures Wheels)
Drafting scenarios
Identifying stakeholder impacts**

Advice for Teams

These activities can be completed in a half-day session, or extended as necessary, or to engage complex domains. A team lead should be responsible for completing the necessary pre-work, synthesizing outputs, and refining scenarios as needed.

In advance, the team should define a specific focal question or problem space to guide the activity.

Define the time horizon for the project (10, 20, or 30 years are common).

*Please note that this method is based on the work of others, including Jerome Glenn (Futures Wheels) and Wendy Shultz (Manoa Method of scenario building)



The future of...?

Problem Space Example

The Future of Grocery 10 years out

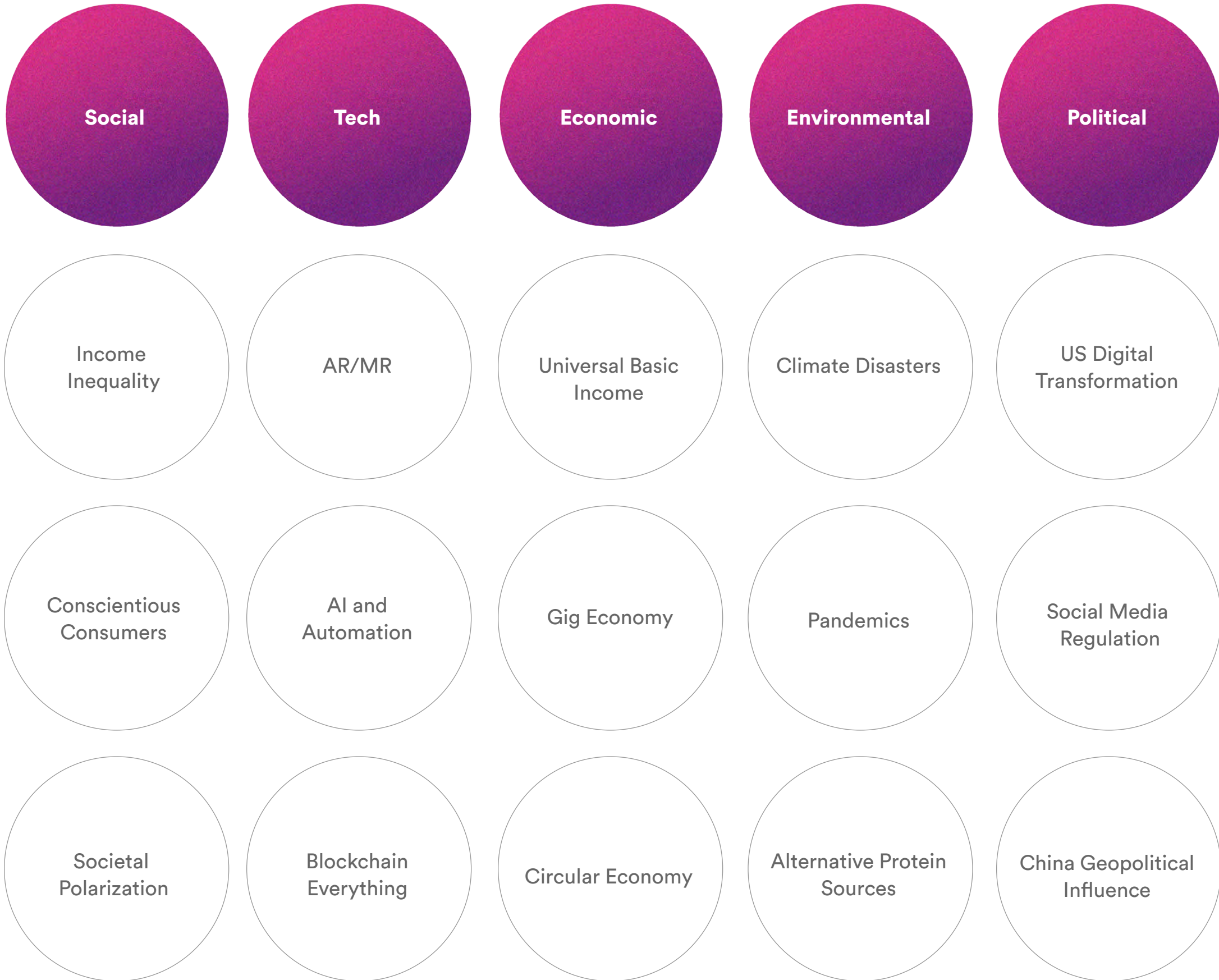
A national food retailer wants to identify service and business model innovation opportunities that can use emerging technologies to better serve customers and address issues like access to healthy and affordable food, while also positioning the firm for long-term success in an uncertain world. The innovation team wants to ensure that the future vision is both creative (challenging assumptions) and responsible (looking out for stakeholders).



Step 1: Horizon Scanning

- A holistic and systemic approach to monitoring change
- Adjacent to the problem space
- Considers both weak signals and known trends with high levels of uncertainty
- Uses STEEP or similar framework

What signals of change do you observe?



Advice for Teams

In preparation for the workshop, one or more team members should generate a broad set of 25-50 emerging changes, based on the STEEP framework or equivalent.

STEER is a helpful taxonomy to organize research activities, data collection, and observations/insights. It stands for "Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political."

Changes should be adjacent but not directly related to the problem space.

When possible, these changes should be backed up with evidence—for example a news article or an observation.

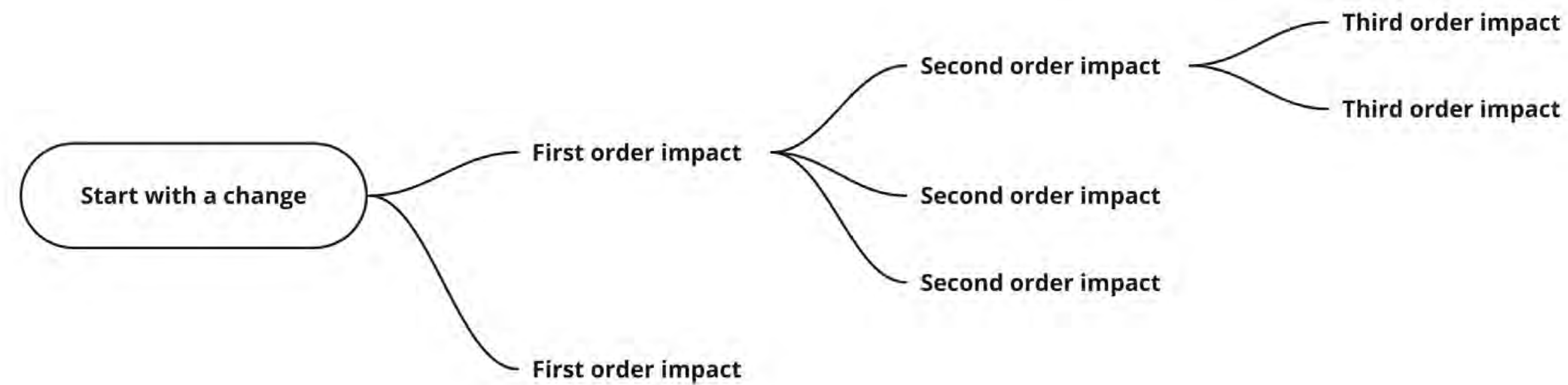
The team should begin by prioritizing a subset of changes to work with—typically 9-12 examples that represent a mix of positive and negative outcomes, and drawn from across the STEEP framework.

More diverse inputs will lead to more creative outcomes.



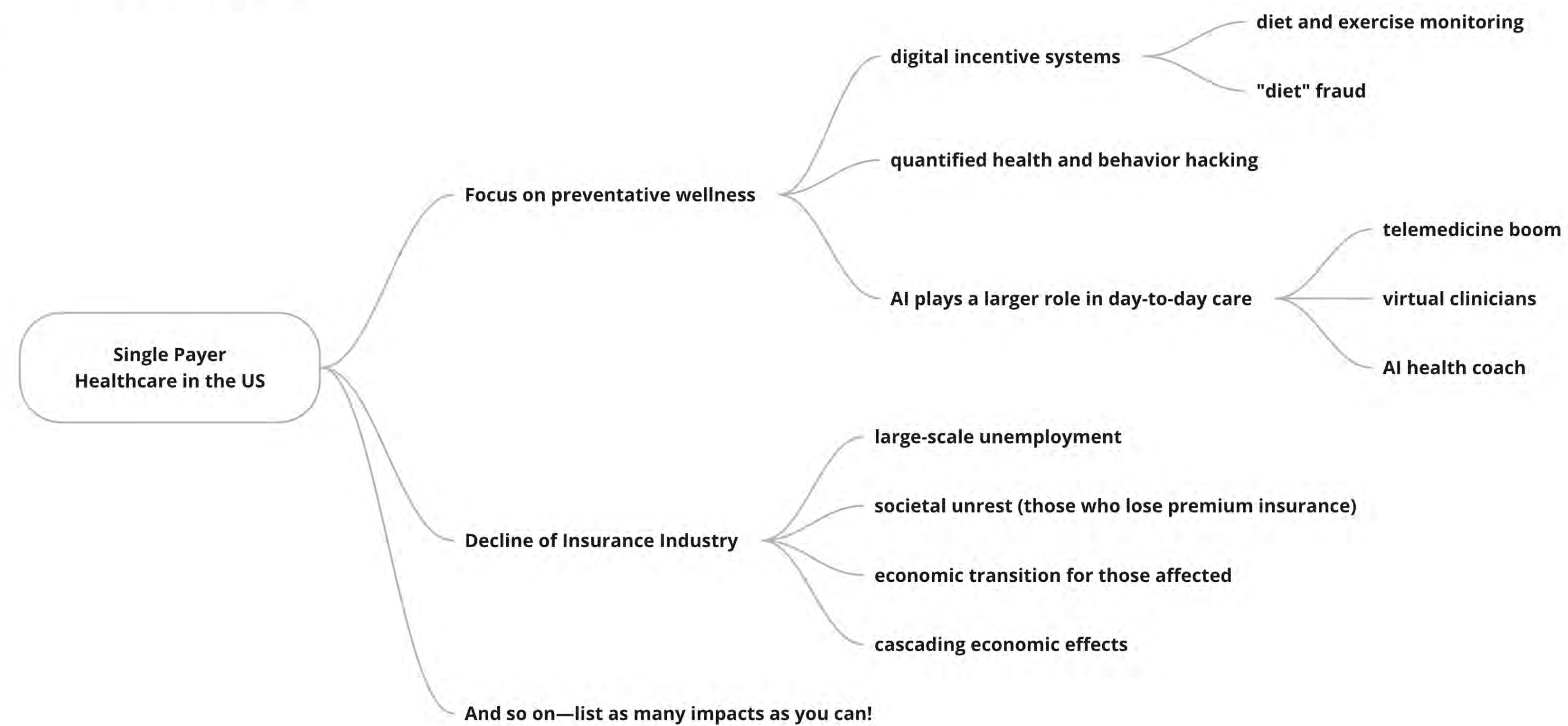
Step 2: Futures Wheels

- A quick exploration of change, turbulence, and potential impacts
- Makes participant assumptions explicit, inspires discourse and alignment
- Inspires creative thinking and surfaces externalities
- Fun!



How it works

Beginning with a single change as if it has occurred, explore a wide range of potential impacts, both positive and negative.



Advice for Teams

Futures wheels may be done in Miro, or on large sheets of paper; small group collaboration works best. Larger teams can be split into smaller groups, each working on unique changes.

Phrase each change as if it has occurred. Then, explore the impacts of each change: complete at least three wheels for each scenario you intend to generate (e.g., if you want to explore 3-4 scenarios, you will need 9-12 unique futures wheels to draw from).

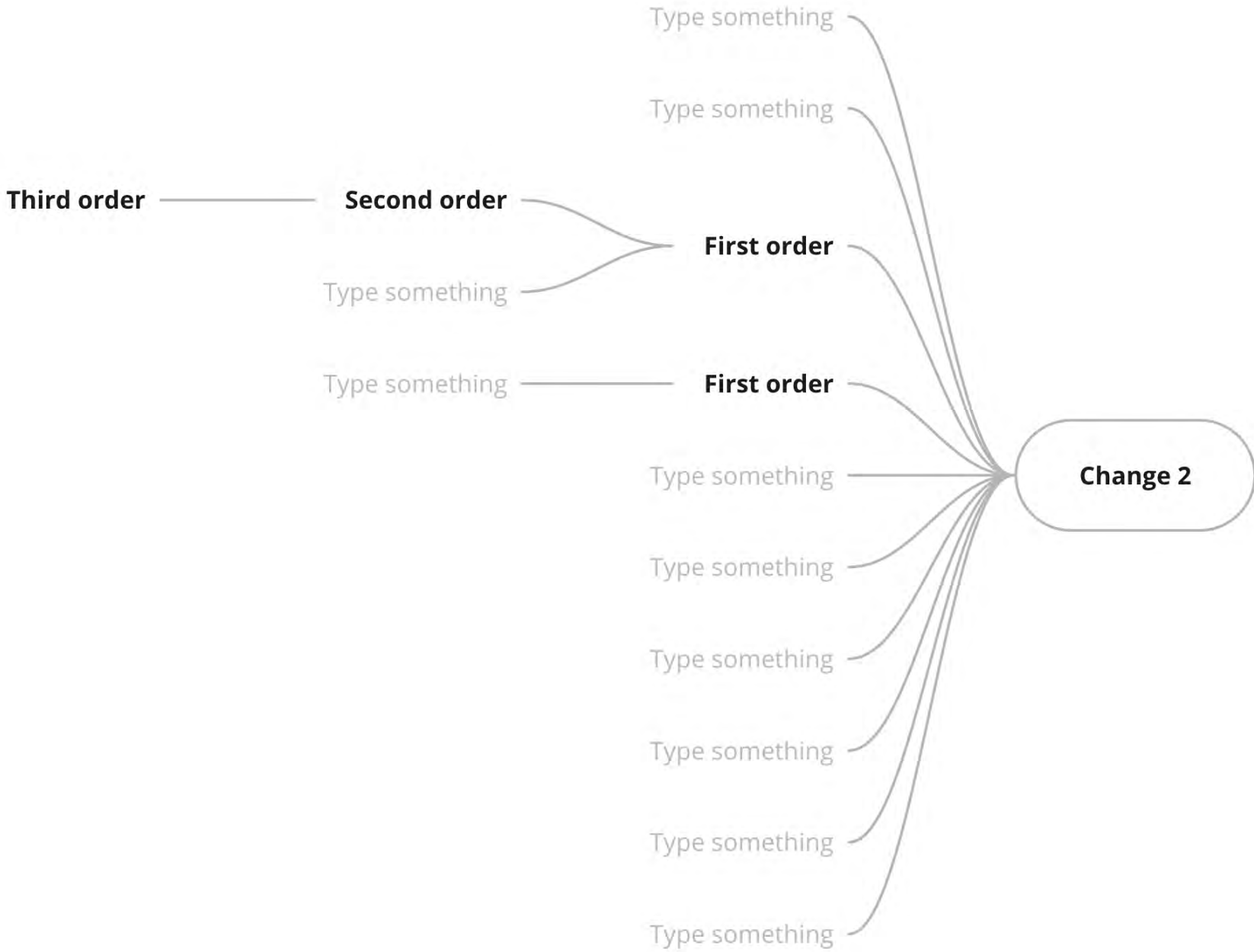
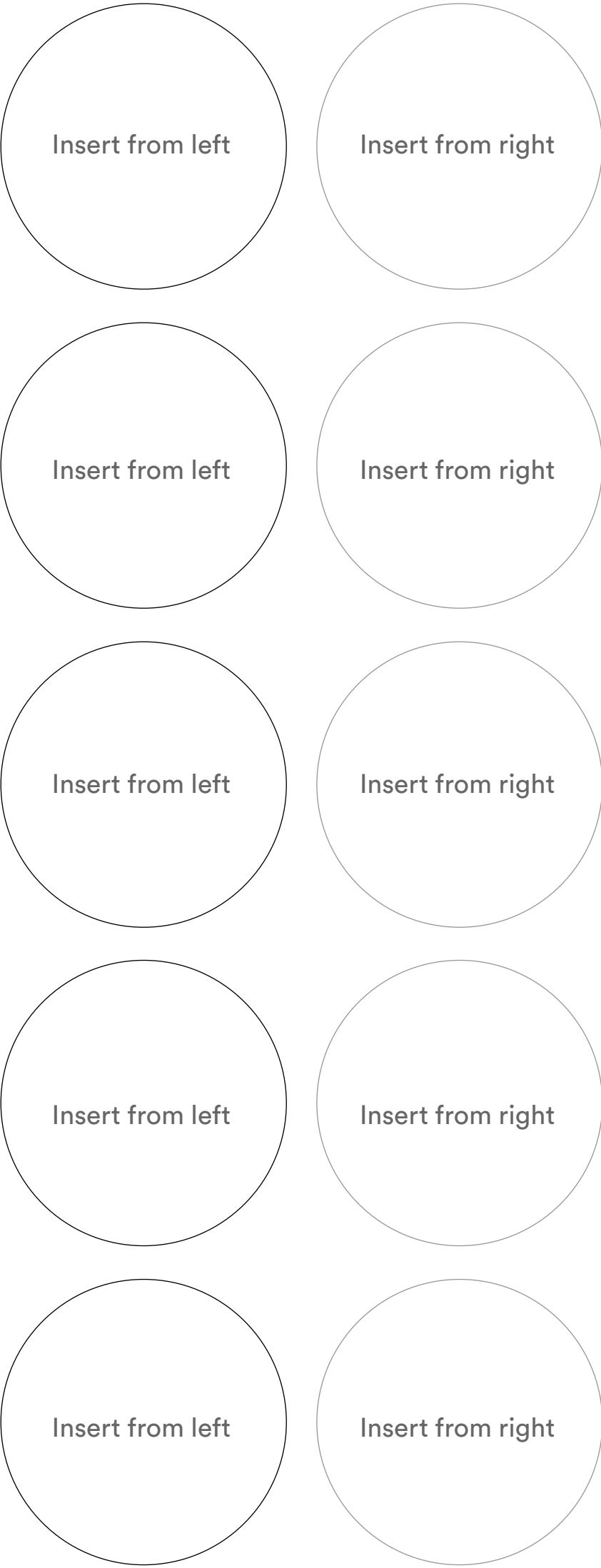
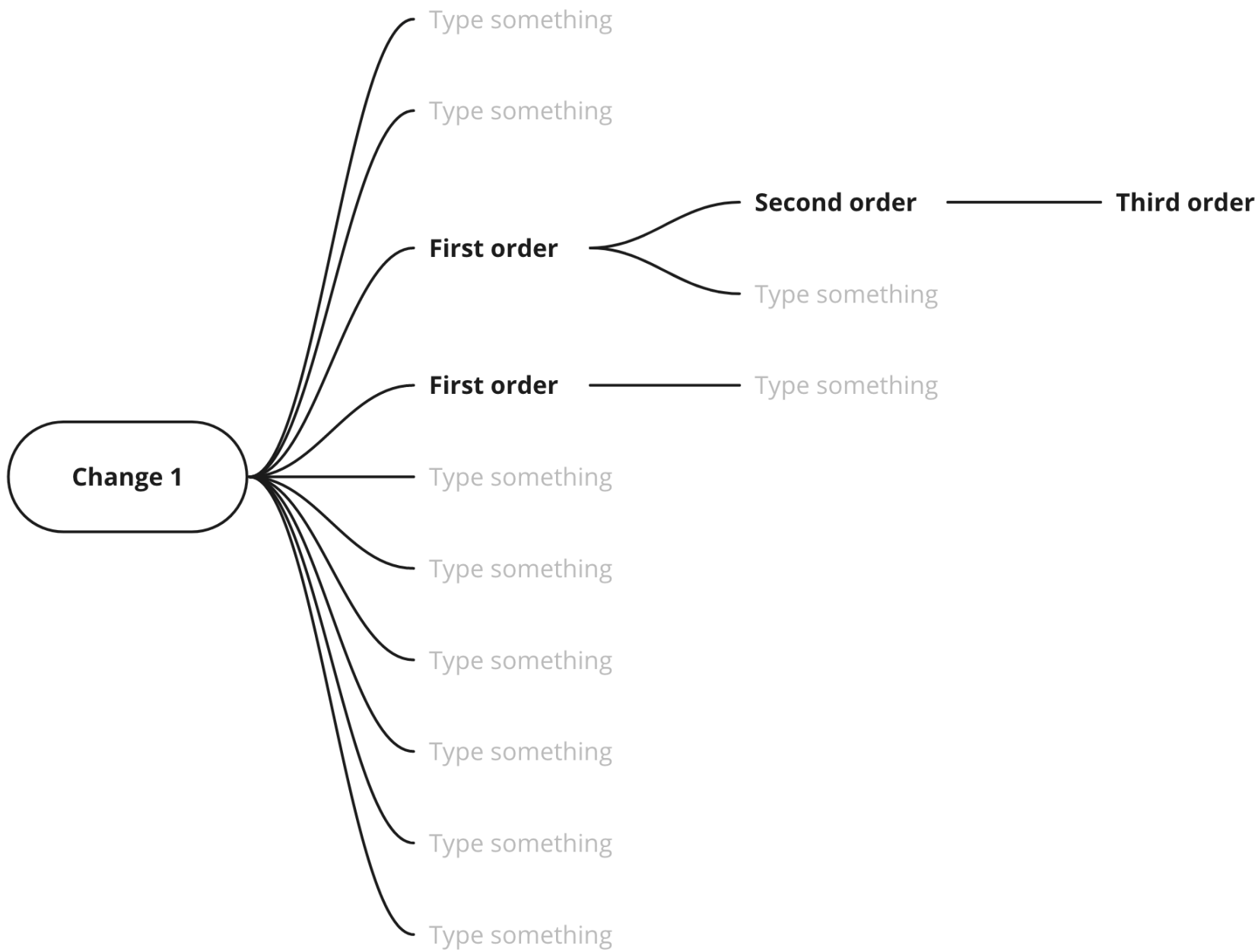
Look across three futures wheels, and note meaningful or interesting connections between second and third-order impacts.

What are the implications of various changes interacting across the STEEP dimensions? In what ways do they create even greater changes?



Worksheet: Futures Wheels

Access these worksheets: https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_luIGIs/



After completing at least two futures wheels, explore potential connections between the changes. What outcomes are most likely to interact with each other?

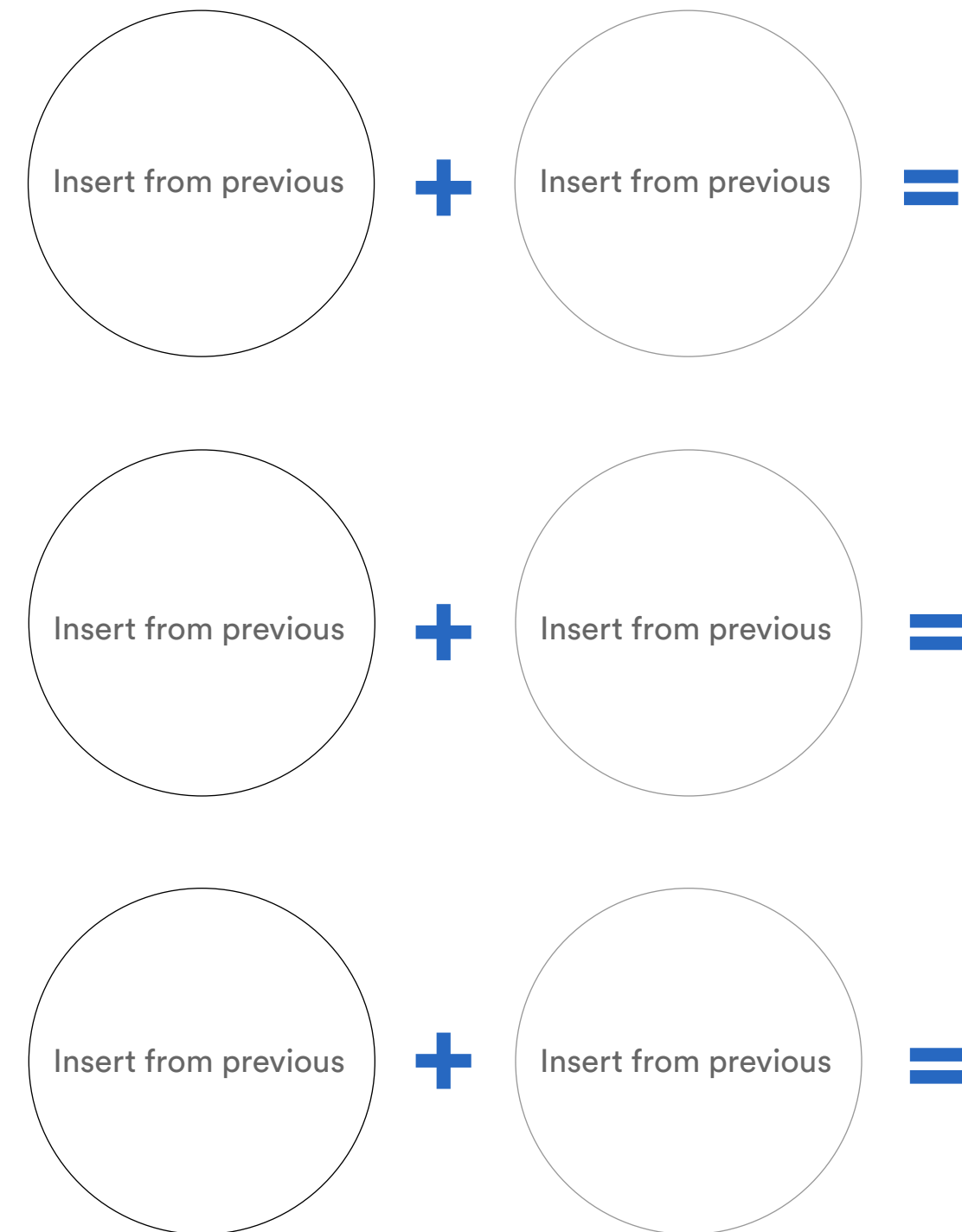


Step 3: Scenario Building

- Scenarios are brief stories about the future
- Scenarios connect a holistic picture of change to the specific problem space
- Provide a common reference for a team

1. Interactions

Transcribe the most interesting pairs from the previous worksheet.



2. Building Blocks

How does daily life change, in terms of your problem space?

Building Block 1: The future is...

Building Block 2: The future is...

Building Block 2: The future is...

3. Draft Scenario

How do these changes come together, in a single future?

Now think of the whole picture, and write a short description of this future.

A story of decline or abundance?
Who wins/loses?
What is unexpected?

Advice for Teams

Most teams find it useful to create 3-4 scenarios. You will need 3-6 unique building blocks per scenario; consider how the scenarios might differ based on unique ingredients.

Make rough drafts of each scenario, using the building blocks and adding additional details as necessary. What is daily life like in each scenario? Who is impacted, both positively and negatively?

How do these capture the envelope of potential futures? What is missing? Go back to the futures wheels if necessary, and add more detail.

Tip: scenarios are best written by one person, with input from a broader team—often after the workshop. It may take several iterations to get these right.

Consult other scenario examples online, and model your approach after the outputs that will be most useful for the team.

Scenarios should be mutually exclusive.



Step 4: Stakeholder Impacts

Potential stakeholders are people, organizations, society, and the environment.

1. Stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders in the system?

Who...

Who...

Who...

2. Impacts

How is each impacted by this future?

How...

How...

How...

3. Externalities

How might we amplify benefits and/or minimize harm?

How might we...

How might we...

How might we...

Advice for Teams

It may be helpful to create a quick stakeholder map, using the broad categories as a guide (people, organizations, society, environment).

Account for as many stakeholders as needed.

Be specific—for example, different people will be impacted in different ways in each future.



These materials are available in Miro: https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_luIGIs/

For more design thinking tools visit: <https://www.artefactgroup.com/work/#tools>

**Connect with us to learn more about strategic foresight and futures thinking:
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