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# Foresight Insight for the Transformational Imperative: Toward a Futures-Oriented Evaluation Practice

## Introduction: The Urgency of Transformation

The contemporary global landscape is increasingly defined by a complex interplay of crises, collectively referred to as a “polycrisis.” This convergence of climate breakdown, biodiversity collapse, widening inequalities, the failure of the neoliberal order, and deepening social fragmentation necessitates an urgent and profound response (UNEP, 2024; WEF, 2025). Evaluators, scholars and practitioners increasingly articulate this need to address the polycrisis as a call to meet the transformational imperative—one that demands systemic change and future-looking perspectives that move beyond incremental adjustments.

For the most part though, evaluation practice remains “evaluation-as-usual.” While meaningful discussions challenge the status quo, they often occur within echo chambers. These conversations are not merely insufficient, but actively detrimental in the face of compounding global crises. Therefore, this understanding demands a fundamental reorientation toward the purpose of evaluation, moving beyond traditional roles of retrospective accountability and learning to actively foster systemic transformations towards regenerative futures that support the flourishing of life (Buckton et al., 2024; Chaplowe & Hejnowicz, 2021). This reorientation signifies a radical paradigmatic shift, requiring evaluators to become reflexive practitioners with a vested interest in the outcomes (Patton, 2019).

One fundamental disconnect between the polycrisis and the prevailing evaluation paradigms is that while the polycrisis demands profound, systemic, and long-horizon change, conventional evaluation remains anchored mainly in retrospective accountability, short-term program cycles, and linear cause-and-effect logics. This inherent incompatibility means that conventional evaluation, by privileging incrementalism and overlooking emergence, risks

reinforcing the very dynamics it purports to assess. It also neglects the ethical and imaginative work required to envision and build fundamentally different futures. The core problem extends beyond a mere absence of specific tools, as it involves a deep-seated philosophical and methodological incompatibility between the urgent need for transformation and conventional evaluation paradigms. This situation underscores a solution requiring a fundamental re-conceptualization of evaluation's purpose and practice, rather than one that simply incorporates new techniques.

In response to this challenge, this article presents two arguments. The first is the core argument that evaluation must move beyond business-as-usual by integrating futures thinking and foresight methodologies as a paradigmatic shift. The secondary argument posits the need for a particular foresight methodology, one that incorporates participatory and inclusive engagement to support the transformative imperative. Our aim in this article is not to re-map the entire futures field or to offer a comprehensive typology of evaluation approaches. Rather, our arguments focus on how a particular strand of futures practice—Transformative Foresight (TF)—can deepen and radicalise transformation-focused evaluation in the context of the Three Horizons framework and the transformative imperative.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 situates the transformative imperative within contemporary evaluation debates, clarifying why futures thinking and foresight are needed as a paradigmatic reorientation rather than an optional add-on. Section 3 then introduces Transformative Foresight as one strand within a wider foresight ecosystem, outlining its epistemological underpinnings and links to systems and complexity thinking. Section 4 turns to three practice-based approaches—Trauma-Transformative, Queer, and Indigenous Foresight—drawing on cases from Kenya and New Zealand to show what difference a transformative

orientation makes in real evaluative settings. Section 5 synthesises cross-cutting lessons for evaluation practice and roles, offering concrete directions for how evaluators, commissioners, and communities can embed futures work in ways that respond more directly to the transformative imperative. Finally, Section 6 concludes with a forward-looking vision of evaluation as anticipatory, ecological, and justice-oriented—positioning evaluators as companions and co-creators of collective transformation.

### **Methodological Approach**

This is a conceptual and practice-oriented article. Rather than reporting a stand-alone empirical study, we develop an argument about how foresight can support the transformative imperative in evaluation, using three practice-based cases and existing data as illustrative anchors. We therefore draw on three strands of material: 1) a desk review of scholarship on the transformational turn in evaluation and complexity-aware practice; 2) existing empirical data and evaluation learning from Green String Network’s work with Kenyan youth; and (3) the authors’ applied research and practice with three TF approaches—Trauma-Transformative, Queer, and Indigenous. We treat these as situated lenses and cases that illustrate our conceptual claims, not as a comprehensive evaluation of any single program. We also adopted a principles-focused, developmental stance, with principles serving both as design constraints and evaluands, and iterative learning cycles enabling adaptation under uncertainty (Patton, 2019). The futures thinking and foresight components followed a plural, processual, situated “Aperture” orientation emphasizing values, reflexivity, and play to surface alternative futures and agency (Inayatullah & Sweeney, 2020; Sweeney, 2023). Finally, we used a collaborative writing process to triangulate literature, primary data, and practitioner experience. This methodology aligns rigor (in terms of

depth and reflexivity) with anticipatory practice and justice-oriented accountability.<sup>1</sup>

## **Foresight's Role in Transformation-Focused Evaluation**

### ***Transforming Validity, Rigor, and Evidence***

Before outlining foresight's crucial role for evaluators, it is essential to highlight why the transformative imperative compels evaluation stakeholders to revisit the foundational evaluation principles of validity, rigor, and evidence. These concepts, traditionally framed within positivist and technocratic paradigms, must be reimagined for the future if evaluation is to make meaningful contributions to systemic transformation.

Transformative approaches reject method-only validity. Mertens et al. (2013) reconceptualize validity to include social justice and cultural relevance so claims reflect marginalized epistemologies. Dean-Coffey et al. (2022) add that credible evidence must embrace multiple ways of knowing and explicitly serve equity. Validity encompasses ethical alignment across worldviews, not merely technical precision.

Rigor is depth, inclusiveness, and reflexivity—not rigid experimentalism. Van den Berg et al. (2021) argue that in an era of climate crisis and inequality, rigor requires systems and anticipatory thinking that can handle interdependence. Likewise, Chaplowe & Hejnowicz (2021) call for “outside-the-box” evaluation—encompassing plural perspectives, participatory processes, and learning for long-term systems change rather than short-term accountability.

Evidence must support transformational pathways, not only counterfactuals and donor

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<sup>1</sup> The authors used AI-supported tools in a limited capacity for, consistency checks reference formatting, and summarizing our previous research related to the mini-case studies. All substantive arguments, conceptual framing, empirical descriptions, and interpretations were drafted and revised by the authors. AI outputs were treated as suggestions and were manually reviewed, edited, or discarded.

reporting. Dazzo (2025) frames evidence as reclamation (community ownership of data and stories) and repair (addressing harms from extractive evaluation). If evidence for building preferred futures is generated *with* and *for* the very people whose futures are at stake, it shifts from being extractive to empowering—helping communities reclaim agency in shaping their own trajectories. Mikkolainen (2021) adds a futures-sensitive stance by positing that evidence should also anticipate emerging opportunities.

This reframing means evaluation cannot be neutral—it is inherently a value-laden act shaped by choices about whose knowledge, perspectives, and priorities are recognized. It either reproduces inequities or helps dismantle them. Advancing the transformative imperative requires inclusive validity, systemic/reflexive rigor, and anticipatory, liberatory evidence—generated with and for those whose futures are most at stake.

**Applied Foresight: Shifting Evaluation’s Paradigms**

Within this context, our first broader argument is that futures thinking and foresight should reorient evaluation not as a technical add-on, but as a paradigmatic shift. The transformative imperative must not only respond to current wicked problems, but also engage proactively with the uncertainties, opportunities, and disruptions that will shape the future.

Recent work has begun to explicitly argue for this foresight–evaluation interface, notably the 2024 *New Directions for Evaluation* special issue on “Bridging Foresight and Evaluation” (e.g., Thompson Coon et al., 2024). These contributions demonstrate that integrating foresight can deepen systems thinking, highlight interdependencies, and extend evaluative time horizons. Our article



Figure 1 - Popper's Foresight Diamond (adapted by UNDP, 2018)

builds on this by foregrounding TF by bringing three lenses—trauma-transformative, queer, and Indigenous—into dialogue with the transformative imperative and the Three Horizons framework.

Section 3 dives deeper into TF, but in short, it aligns with constructivist and transformative paradigms in evaluation. Knowledge is co-created, partial, situated, and oriented to justice rather than neutrality. Ontologically, it treats systems as dynamic, relational, and

emergent, which is why evaluators must work with futures as an active dimension of reality rather than a distant horizon.

### ***Overview of Futures Thinking and Foresight***

Futures thinking is an overarching systematic approach to exploring how change might unfold, enabling us to make better choices today. It is not forecasting nor trying to predict the future, but instead considers many plausible futures (possible, probable, problematic, preferable, etc.) and asks what signals, drivers, and uncertainties could shape them. Foresight emphasizes the organized practice of anticipating change to inform better decisions today. Think of it as applied futures thinking, whereby repeatable processes turn multiple plausible futures into insights, options, and near-term actions. Minkinen, et al., (2019) argue that foresight operates within complex networks and relies on varying foundational assumptions. To better understand these variations, they propose a typology of six frames—interpretive structures that guide foresight practitioners. These frames (predictive, planning, scenario-based, visionary, critical, and transformative) are categorized by the degree of perceived unpredictability and the extent of desired change. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of the transformative frame.

A wide range of futures and foresight tools enable practitioners to move from abstract ideas about the future toward practical pathways for transformation. Popper's Foresight Diamond (2008) provides an illustration of the range of these qualitative, mixed, and quantitative foresight tools (see Fig. 1). By weaving these tools into the transformation-focused evaluation, it can become not only adaptive but also anticipatory, expanding the capacity to navigate uncertainty.

While futures thinking and foresight can enrich evaluation by introducing anticipatory practices, traditional approaches often remain tethered to adaptation within existing systems and often emphasize prediction, stability, and risk management. To confront the transformative

imperative, evaluators can leverage mainstream futures thinking and foresight approaches and good deeper to generative, anticipatory, and system-reconfiguring practices exemplified by TF (Lynn, et al., 2024). We revisit this second argument in more detail in Section 3.

### **Transformative Foresight for the Transformational Imperative**

Our second argument is related to the first but is embedded within the foresight community and involves rethinking how knowledge about the future is created, valued, and acted upon. **We contend that while mainstream futures thinking and foresight offer a solid repertoire of methods that help organizations prepare for uncertainty and expand strategic awareness, they are often designed and implemented to refine existing systems rather than to reimagine them.** Though valuable in specific domains, this orientation toward prediction, competition, and risk management; narrows the horizon of possibility and constrains the emergence of creative, plural, and justice-oriented solutions (Sardar, 2010). In contexts where entrenched inequalities, ecological limits, and the polycrisis demand more than incremental adaptation, these approaches prove inadequate when considering the transformative imperative.

We argue that TF addresses this gap. TF shifts the focus from anticipating change within dominant paradigms to generating entirely new ways of knowing, relating, and acting (Sweeney, 2023). Grounded in participatory, relational, and inclusive processes, **TF reshapes how evaluation understands change, knowledge, and responsibility in contexts of polycrisis, thereby equipping evaluation to better anticipate and catalyze systemic transformation.** By integrating multiple perspectives and worldviews, encountering deeper narratives, and emphasizing agency and imagination, TF frames the future as plural and and relational, and provides the methodological, epistemological, and ontological foundation necessary to better align evaluation with the transformative imperative (Sweeney, 2023).

Our critique of mainstream foresight parallels the narrative around “evaluation-as-usual” approaches, which we elaborate on in more detail below. This is followed by a deeper introduction to TF, then an examination of how TF aligns with transformation-focused evaluation, and a concluding section with a practical application of TF within the Three Horizons Framework, a popular foresight tool.

### ***Historical Context of Transformative Foresight***

A significant aspect of TF involves critiquing the dominant role of “strategic foresight” and “scenario planning” in mainstream futures work. Emerging from American WW II operational planning, these approaches often prioritize competitive advantage and “winning over others” rather than fostering “creative, novel and inclusive solutions” (Sardar 2010, p. 180). This focus can inadvertently limit the transformative potential of futures studies. In contrast, Sweeney highlights another strand of futures practice originating in post-World War II Europe, which focused on societal reconstruction and the envisioning of desirable futures. This strand provided the foundational ideas for “critical futures studies” (Slaughter, 1998; Ramos, 2002), which emphasizes human agency and the capacity to shape the future, actively challenging underlying assumptions and power dynamics. TF aligns with this critical tradition that centers on collective intelligence and capability development rather than mere prediction.

Curry (2021) observes that this “dissenting strand” of futures studies largely disappeared from mainstream discourse and practice for a generation, precisely because of its discomfort with purely strategic insights. Sweeney explicitly aligns the “Aperture” framework (discussed below) with this “other strand,” echoing Nandy’s contention that explorations into the future must inherently be “statements of dissent from the existing ideas of normality, sanity and objectivity” (Nandy, 1996, 637). The current polycrisis necessitates transformative solutions that

fundamentally challenge the status quo, implying that the re-emergence of this critical, dissenting strand is not accidental but a necessary response to the inadequacy of conventional approaches.

This suggests that **the current global crises are compelling a re-evaluation of futures and foresight methodologies, steering the field back towards its critical and transformative roots.** In this context, “dissent” is not merely an academic posture, but a vital component for societal survival and evolution, particularly when dominant paradigms fail to address existential threats to the lives of individuals and communities.

### *Transforming Foresight for the Transformational Imperative*

TF is a foundational paradigm shift that enables evaluation to grapple with the inherently value-laden and subjective nature of transformative change, moving beyond a positivist ideal of neutrality to actively shape desired futures. Sweeney (2023) conceptualizes TF as an “Aperture”—a plural, processual, and situated practice that cultivates alternative ways of seeing, knowing, and becoming. This implies that TF fundamentally reconfigures the relationship to knowledge, reality, and purpose. It shifts evaluation from a detached, objective assessment to an engaged, value-laden process of co-creation. This ontological shift pertains to a change in the very nature of being and reality for both evaluators and those being evaluated. Meanwhile, the ethical shift relates to the values and moral commitments embedded within the evaluation process.

Sweeney also emphasizes that transformation is more akin to a “verb than a noun, plural rather than singular, and contextual rather than categorical” (2023). This perspective highlights the dynamic, multifaceted, and context-dependent nature of profound change. The “Aperture” framework therefore focuses on the deliberate curation, facilitation, and orchestration of shared spaces for learning and discovery, encompassing both the internal alignment of the facilitator and the external application of various approaches, methods, and tools.

At its core, TF is rooted in the understanding that transformation emerges from a deep, reciprocal engagement where “it is not that we are using the future, but the future is using us” (Inayatullah & Sweeney, 2020). This suggests a profound, mutually evolving relationship between individuals and the future. This conceptualization is explicitly linked to “play-based approaches” that foster genuine collaboration, learning, and discovery, capable of reorienting fundamental perceptions, including those of the future. In this sense, TF is not about rigid adherence to predetermined formulas, but rather about crafting “recipes” through experimentation and flexibility. The “playground” metaphor underscores that TF thrives on emergent properties, creativity, and a willingness to challenge established epistemologies (Colman, 2012). This implies that successful transformation—and for evaluation to meaningfully support it—requires a departure from rigid, pre-determined plans towards adaptive, iterative, and playful engagement with uncertainty (Chaplowe & Hejnowicz, 2021; Patton, 2019).

### ***Alignment with Systems Thinking, Complexity, and Emergence in Evaluation***

TF inherently aligns with systems thinking, complexity theory, and the recognition of emergence, thereby shifting evaluation beyond linear logic models toward dynamic, adaptive understandings. This perspective acknowledges that stakeholders constantly negotiate a dynamic reality, emphasizing a deep questioning of data, meaning, worldview, and metaphor to enable meaningful action (Milojević & Inayatullah, 2015).

According to Feukeu et al. (2021), a common limitation of mainstream foresight is its reluctance to question fundamental “tension points” and its tendency to be pressured into providing immediate “solutions or answers.” In contrast, Inayatullah (2020) explains that a transformational futures mindset aims to move “beyond strategy” by recognizing that solutions

are not pre-defined lists of actions but rather “emerge from ‘where the energy is’”—from passion and excitement for change. This indicates a fundamental shift from the evaluator as a problem-solver who provides definitive answers to an evaluator as a facilitator who creates the conditions for collective intelligence and emergent tailored solutions. Consequently, practical evaluation in complex, transformative contexts requires a fundamental redefinition of the evaluator’s role and mindset, moving from an “expert” who diagnoses and prescribes to a “midwife” who enables and nurtures collective agency and emergent pathways.

### ***Transformative Foresight and Three Horizons Framework***

Three Horizons (3H) Framework (see Fig. 2) is a futures and innovation framework that maps today’s dominant system or business as usual approach (H1), disruptive innovations (H2), and a long-term emerging future (H3) as overlapping “horizons” to structure dialogue about patterns of change, strategic options, and pathways for transition (Sharpe et al, 2016). In this frame, H2– denotes transitional innovations that mainly optimize or extend H1 logics (e.g., efficiency tweaks that reinforce the status quo), while H2+ signals innovations aligned with H3 values that actively prototype and bridge toward the desired future. By curating participatory, imaginative, and justice-oriented practices, TF empowers the H2+ and H3 spaces—enabling evaluators and stakeholders to nurture innovations that challenge dominant paradigms, redistribute power, and build coherence with regenerative, just, and decolonial futures.

Seen through 3H,  
 current evaluation systems  
 often sit squarely in H1 and  
 H2-. They are retrospective,  
 metric-driven, and oriented to  
 incremental improvement.  
 The three cases we discuss  
 later illustrate H2+  
 practices—small but

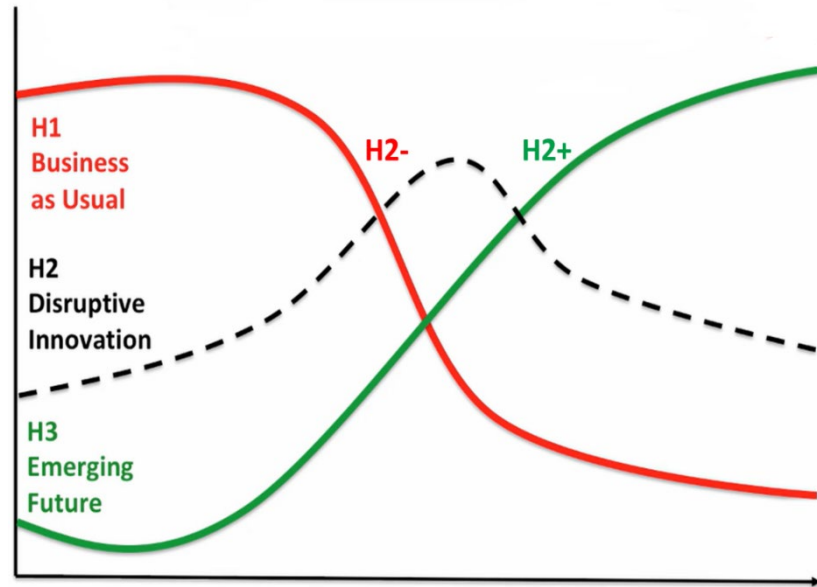


Figure 2 - Three Horizons Framework

significant evaluation experiments that embody H3 values (healing, decoloniality, queer world-building, intergenerational responsibility) inside H1 systems. Our argument is that TF provides evaluators with a repertoire for deliberately cultivating such H2+ niches and for judging whether apparent innovations are genuinely transformative or merely rebranding. TF can also help identify and nurture “seeds of the future” found in H3.

Drawing on the International Evaluation Academy’s (IEAc) work with the Three Horizons (3H) Framework (see **Box 1** below), TF equips evaluators to not only engage with emergent possibilities but also to assess dominant practices that constrain change (Kendrick, et al, 2026, this issue).

**Box 1: IEAc’s Ongoing Experience with the 3H Framework**

The IEAc is using the 3H Framework to explore how evaluation can evolve to meet the transformative imperative (Ofir et al., 2026, this issue). This work demonstrates how TF enables evaluators not only to engage with emergent possibilities but also to examine dominant practices that hinder change.

- **Horizon 1 (H1):** Prevailing paradigms of evaluation, narrowly focused on accountability, metrics, and short-termism, which often perpetuate the very systems contributing to the polycrisis.
- **Horizon 2- (H2-):** Reformist initiatives that appear innovative, but risk reinforcing H1 logics, especially when framed by managerialism or growth models.
- **Horizon 2+ (H2+):** Innovations that genuinely seed conditions for H3, enabling deeper systemic transformation.

TF, as applied through 3H, acts both as critique and catalyst. It exposes how H1 and H2 practices can obscure underlying values, reproduce inequalities, or suppress radical imagination. At the same time, it helps identify and amplify H2+ pathways that foster participatory, imaginative, and justice-oriented approaches as envisioned for H3. The IEAc's experience suggests that horizon-thinking deepens the temporal range and normative clarity of evaluation, repositioning it as a vessel for systemic transition rather than a brake on transformation.

### **Three TF Approaches to Inform Transformation-Focused Evaluation**

While conceptualizations of TF provide the theoretical foundation, its practical implications come into focus when explored through three subtypes—Trauma-Transformative, Queer, and Indigenous—that embody TF in distinct ways. These three subtypes offer different, yet complementary contributions that deepen and radicalize transformation-focused evaluation. Each approach is elaborated in the following three subsections. Together, they support transformative evaluation as an ethical, decolonial, and healing practice—capable of holding complexity, restoring agency, and co-creating regenerative futures.

#### ***Trauma-Transformative Foresight: Healing Futures Unconsciousness and Unlocking Agency***

Trauma-Transformative Foresight (TTF) integrates trauma healing with futures thinking. It involves the movement from unresolved trauma to greater futures consciousness via healing-centered approaches that radically transform how individuals, communities, and institutions believe, thereby enabling them to reconcile the past, re-engage with the present, and reimagine

the future (Lichty 2025). Systemically, it recognizes structural violence, colonial legacies, and collective trauma as significant barriers to imagining futures. Conceptually, it demonstrates how trauma wires the brain toward constraint and repeating the past, while healing allows for new imaginative capacity, or futures consciousness. TTF posits that without healing, we recycle used futures, and that trauma healing creates new neural pathways for imagining, with wisdom serving as a unifier.

This approach is based on neurobiological understandings that past and future thinking are processed in the same brain regions (Campbell et al., 2017; D'Argembeau, 2012; Mullally & Maguire, 2014; Schacter & Addis, 2007). Unresolved trauma can severely constrain an individual's ability to envision alternative futures, while healing processes can catalyze agency, optimism, and systems thinking. This means that the brain uses past memories as reference points for imagining the future, making envisioning positive futures often inaccessible for trauma victims (Rhemann, 2019). As Cozolino (2010, 16) states, "Our brain embodies the environment that shapes it...our neural architecture is the tangible expression of our learning history," highlighting how a safe and secure social environment fosters growth and imagination, while a trauma-affected brain impacted by adverse environments is wired toward constraint and a repetitive past and subsequent disempowered future.

The concept of "futures unconsciousness" describes a state where unresolved personal, historical, or intergenerational trauma can trap individuals or communities. This negative cognitive state is characterized by disempowerment, self-protection, risk aversion, closed loop thinking, and being "time trapped," which severely limit engagement with possible futures. In this state, individuals may unconsciously adopt "used futures"—images or ideas about the future created by others for different contexts—which blinds them to more empowering and authentic

visions for their own future (Inayatullah, 1998, 2006, 2008, 2020; Ramos, 2016). This is a critical barrier to realising the “Triple Dividend” of adolescent health and well-being, which envisions long-term benefits in health, productivity, and intergenerational well-being (World Health Organization, 2018; Patton et al., 2016). Lichty (2022) argues that if populations remain caught in multiple forms of trauma, they will not achieve the Triple Dividend and will instead replicate these “used futures.”

Addressing trauma is a fundamental prerequisite for unlocking collective imaginative capacity and enabling societies to move beyond cycles of stagnation and duplicating the past. Social progress and the achievement of transformative goals are deeply intertwined with the collective psychological well-being of a population. **Evaluation must consequently consider healing and trauma-informed approaches not as tangential, but as central to fostering the “futures consciousness” necessary for genuine, regenerative change.** The case presented in **Box 2** demonstrates how TTF was operationalized among marginalized youth in Kenya.

### **Box 2: Healing-Centred, Youth-Driven Trauma-Transformative Foresight through the Kumekucha Quest**

The Kumekucha Quest (KQ) program in Kenya illustrates how TTF can expand evaluative attention from past performance to futures consciousness among marginalised youth. Implemented by Green String Network as a 12-week, youth-led initiative in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kwale Counties, KQ combines healing-centred mental health support with participatory futures work for young people aged 18–24. The case offers a concrete example of how trauma healing and foresight can be woven together in an evaluation design to address the transformative imperative in contexts marked by structural violence and intergenerational harm (Waibochi et al., 2023).

Within KQ, foresight was introduced not as a stand-alone workshop but as an integrated strand in a broader healing process. Facilitators used tools such as Causal Layered Analysis and the Futures Triangle after initial trust-building and trauma-healing sessions, inviting participants to surface dominant narratives about their lives, explore alternative storylines, and prototype more empowering images of the future. Evaluation data collection—surveys, focus groups, and visual and narrative artefacts—was timed to capture shifts in how participants spoke about time, agency, and possibility as they moved through the program (Lichty, 2022).

This evaluation design made visible changes that conventional outcome monitoring would likely miss, i.e., shifts in agency beliefs, openness to alternatives, systems perception, time perspective, and the emergent dimension of “wisdom” as a form of ethical, relational discernment. Framing these shifts as indicators of futures consciousness foregrounded healing as a prerequisite for transformative change, rather than a peripheral psychosocial benefit. For the TI, the KQ case suggests that evaluation can act as a scaffold for collective recovery and re-imagination, positioning foresight not only as a planning technique but as a means of repairing the conditions under which communities are able—or unable—to envision and inhabit regenerative futures (Lichty, 2025).

In 3H terms, KQ can be read as an H2+ niche that disrupts deficit-based, individualizing H1 logics of youth mental health programming by prototyping healing-centred, futures-literate community spaces aligned with H3 commitments to intergenerational flourishing. Rather than assessing interventions solely on past performance, TTF foregrounds transformation as both a process and outcome, suggesting that futures-oriented, healing-based evaluation approaches can reconfigure relationships, systems, and possibilities.

### ***Queer Foresight: Disrupting Normative Temporalities and Imagining Plural Worlds***

Queer Foresight (QF) represents a theoretical and political framework dedicated to imagining and enacting worlds beyond a present that is often hostile and normative (Muñoz, 2009). Informed by queer theory in general, QF focuses less on sexuality per se and more on alternative relationships with time, norms, and community. This approach is born from the necessity of survival and world-building for those whose very existence challenges dominant and biased social structures and temporalities (Halberstam, 2005). QF involves disrupting heteronormative scripts, challenging reproductive futurism, and imagining plural, non-normative futures; and critiques heteropatriarchal power and exposes the marginalisation of non-heteronormative lives in planning and policy. Its worldview embraces queer time and fluid identities, and uses joy, dissent, and pleasure as modes of world-building. QF imagines futures as utopian horizons, disruptive glitches, or intimate spaces beyond normative order—worlds that value ambiguity, opacity, and the refusal to be fully legible. This also resonates with themes in feminist theory, which likewise interrogate power, challenge normative assumptions, and foreground alternative ways of knowing and being.

QF borrows from queer theory's critique of normative conceptions of time. This critique unfolds through a contrast between "reproductive futurism" (Edelman, 2004) and "queer temporality" (Halberstam, 2005). Reproductive futurism is identified as a pervasive social narrative that organizes all politics around the symbolic "child," for whom a future must be secured, predicated on repetition and the reproduction of the social order "without difference." Within this logic, queerness, due to its non-normative relationship to reproduction, is positioned negatively as antithetical to the future. In contrast, queer temporality refers to how queer lives and experiences often fail to align with heteronormative "temporal logics" and their prescribed

life-course milestones (e.g., courtship, marriage, parenthood). This disjunction from linear, reproductive time is not viewed as a deficit but as a productive space that “opens up queer relationships to time and space,” fostering alternative modes of living, relating, and building communities untethered to nuclear family or reproductive imperatives (Esteve & Reher, 2024; Stacey, 1996; and Therborn, 2004).

Queer theory also challenges formal equality under the law, instead of challenging the legitimacy, naturalness, and intrinsic value of institutions themselves. Formal equality under the law (e.g., access to marriage, military service, anti-discrimination statutes) asks for admission into existing institutions. Queer theory argues that many of those institutions are themselves organized around hierarchies (gender, race, class, ability, nation, family, property), and simply gaining entry can stabilize the very norms that marginalize people—producing a narrow “good queer” who conforms to heteronormative, cisnormative, and classed expectations while leaving others (trans people, sex workers, migrants, etc.) exposed. Crucially, this critique is explicitly intersectional and decolonial, examining how LGBTQI+ rights and visibility can be co-opted by state and corporate power through “pinkwashing” and “homonationalism” to mask or justify broader injustices like racism and anti-Blackness (Butler, 2006; Rao, 2020; and Warner, 1999). This perspective maintains that queer liberation is inextricably linked to broader struggles against capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy (Mertens et al., 2013). Leveraging queer theory, QF is thus a praxis of world-building, an active process of imagining, constructing, and working towards a future through utopian performativity (Muñoz, 2009).

QF’s orientation toward the “not yet here” implies that the process of striving for it must necessarily involve experimentation and learning; and views failure as a radical aesthetic and political strategy, a refusal of capitalist notions of value and propriety (Muñoz, 2009). This

provides a profound theoretical justification for embracing “failure” in evaluation, reframing it as a generative act of resistance against normative, success-oriented logics. In practice, this means that the common “lessons learned” sections of evaluations can shift from cataloging shortcomings against pre-determined outcomes toward surfacing insights that foster adaptive learning and experimentation. In doing so, evaluation moves beyond compliance-driven measurement to become a space for genuine reflection, iteration, and the pursuit of radically imagined futures. The following case featured in **Box 3** demonstrates the application of QF with Kenya’s LGBTQI+ community.

### **Box 3: Futures Workshops with Nairobi’s Queer Community**

Futures workshops conducted with Nairobi’s queer community illuminate the transformative potential of QF in advancing the transformative imperative. These participatory workshops, grounded in trauma-informed methods and Integral Futures framework (Slaughter, 1998), exemplify how queer world-building, resilience, and epistemic justice can reshape evaluation practices themselves. Drawing on Muñoz’s (2009) concept of utopian performativity—where alternative realities are rehearsed into being—these workshops become acts of political imagination, resistance, and survival. In contexts where queer life is criminalized and erased, imagining the future is not a luxury but a radical act.

The workshops provided a safe space for young gay and bisexual men in Nairobi to integrate trauma-healing, futures literacy, and communal agency, enabling them to move from personal despair to collective visioning (Lichty & Kamunya, 2023). Participants disaggregated concepts of agency, creatively reconstructed their futures, and engaged in speculative storytelling as both a form of healing and a means of resistance. This process highlighted the capacity for QF to repair colonial and carceral harm, making evaluation itself a site of reparation and reclamation

(Dazzo, 2025). Crucially, these practices also generated tangible evaluative outputs: locally grounded scenarios, emergent indicators of well-being, and “organic futurists”, to borrow Gramsci’s (1971) concept of organic intellectuals.

QF suggests evaluation is not a technocratic audit but a relational, embodied, speculative practice that honors affect, complexity, and queer temporalities. Resisting linearity, reproductive futurism, and heteronormative development, QF guided workshop participants in pursuing life-affirming futures. Practically, this means measuring affective outcomes (such as hope, belonging, and resilience) alongside traditional metrics; embedding iterative, community-owned scenarios into evaluation cycles; and recognizing queer archives, performances, and oral histories as valid forms of evidence. This shifts transformation-focused evaluation from inclusion to liberation, asking *how* futures are made, *for whom*, and *with whose knowledge*. Fusing critique with care and imagination, QF helps evaluators co-produce futures rather than merely document the past—meeting the transformative imperative for systemic, regenerative change.

### ***Indigenous Foresight: Centering Ancestral Knowledge, Relationality, and Seven Generations***

#### ***Thinking***

Indigenous Foresight (IF) offers distinctive perspectives rooted in experiences of colonization, unique knowledges, worldviews, and temporal understandings (Phichonsatcha et al., 2024). IF involves revitalizing ancestral knowledge, focusing on land, kinship, and cycles, and emphasizing seven-generation thinking (Cheok et al., 2025). Systemically, it counters colonial structures, rebuilds communal sovereignty, and focuses on epistemic and ontological repair. IF’s worldview encompasses relational ontologies, where humans, land, and spirits are intertwined, with time viewed as cyclical and responsibility extending to both ancestors and future generations. IF speaks metaphorically of “walking backwards into the future guided by

ancestors,” with land as memory and cyclical renewal prioritized over linear growth. IF thinking is about reconnecting and re-rooting, while heading forward into the 21st century with sophisticated Indigenous and local knowledge on ecosystems and land governance (SwedBio, 2021). It emphasizes sustaining resilience to shocks and disruptive events, based on restoring the relationship with nature.

From an African perspective, *Ukama* and *Ubuntu* are Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) centered on deep relationality. *Ukama* is a Shona ethic linking humans, ancestors, and the natural world through kinship and ecological reciprocity (Murove, 2009). It posits that: I am because they were and they will be because I am. The Zulu philosophy of *Ubuntu* frames responsibility and climate action through interdependence, reciprocity, and collective care (Terblanché-Greeff, 2019). Indigenous worldviews place land and spiritual ecologies at the core—everything is interwoven and existence outside these relations is unimaginable (Mbah, Bailey, & Shingruf, 2024).

From the Americas, an ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) philosophy dictates that decisions made today should ensure a sustainable world seven generations into the future, applying not only to natural resources but also to relationships (LaDuke, 1999; Park et al., 2023; Whyte, 2018). This principle promotes intergenerational healing, growth, and flourishing (Kimmerer, 2013). These IKS from around the world stress responsibility in human–nature relations, values, spirituality, and connectedness, whereby land holds generational memory (SwedBio, 2021). Time is cyclical—past, present, and future co-exist, challenging Western linear temporalities (Raciti, 2024). Building on this foundation, Feukeu (2024) asserts that these indigenous epistemologies must be moved from the margins to the center of the discipline, positioning them not as mere cultural alternatives but as essential pillars of a pluriversal future.

IF actively counters colonial structures and seeks epistemic and ontological repair. It promotes justice by decolonizing evaluation, challenging the epistemic violence of normative frameworks (Buckton et al., 2024; Bledsoe et al., 2022). Evaluation has historically been subjected to Western models of development which undermine respectful relationships (Mbah et al., 2024; Vásquez-Fernández et al., 2021). However, from an IF approach, evaluation can become a relational, place-based, multi-worldview practice. This involves collaboration, trusting and reciprocal relationships, flexibility, relational data, and reflexivity, moving beyond Western models of development (Fish et al., 2023). For evaluation to truly be transformative and just, it must undergo a process of epistemic decolonization. This means not merely including Indigenous perspectives, but fundamentally questioning and dismantling the Western, linear, and often extractive knowledge frameworks that have historically dominated evaluation, thereby creating space for relational ontologies and diverse ways of knowing as foundational. The following case in **Box 4** illustrates how IF was used in New Zealand.

#### **Box 4: The Kaupapa Māori Approach to Commissioning for *Pae Ora* (Healthy Futures)**

A compelling example of Indigenous foresight shaping evaluation and policy is found in Aotearoa/New Zealand's commissioning of Kaupapa Māori mental health services. In response to persistent health inequities affecting Māori, the Ministry of Health initiated a future-focused process grounded in *Pae Ora* (Healthy Futures) and led by Māori communities themselves. Through 17 hui (gatherings) involving over 700 participants—service providers, *whānau* (extended family), and *tangata whaiora* (wellness seeker)—Māori co-designed services rooted in their own worldviews (Ministry of Health, 2023).

The commissioning and evaluation process was intentionally decolonised. Applicants could submit proposals via video and in *te reo Māori* (Maori language), centring *mātauranga*

*Māori* (Māori knowledge) and oral traditions. The process was designed to be mana-enhancing, creating two streams: *Tuākana* (older sibling) for established providers and *Tēina* (younger sibling) for emerging ones, the latter receiving direct support—an alternative to exclusionary competitive tenders.

The outcomes were transformative: 27 new Kaupapa Māori services were funded, creating 164 full-time Māori health jobs. The process also fostered cultural understanding among non-Māori Ministry staff and informed the national implementation of the *Pae Ora* Act. This foresight-driven, culturally grounded model is also influencing other national reforms, including shifts in child welfare practices and school-based initiatives to improve Māori student well-being (Education Review Office, 2018; Macfarlane et al, 2007; Pohatu, 2017). It illustrates how IF and decolonised evaluation can generate systemic and sustainable transformation.

Across the three cases, TF shifts evaluation by recentering whose knowledge counts, what counts as evidence, and what evaluators are for. Youth in trauma-affected communities, queer communities resisting heteronormative futures, and Indigenous nations designing for seven generations move to the centre of evaluative judgement. Stories, rituals, speculative scenarios and affective outcomes (hope, belonging, safety, futures consciousness) become core evidence rather than soft “add-ons.” In this configuration, evaluators cease to be neutral auditors and instead act as companions and midwives of transformation, curating H2+ niches that embody H3 values inside still-dominant H1 systems. TF only serves the transformative imperative when it is embedded in healing, world-building and decolonial practice—not when it is bolted on as a technical method.

To meet the transformative imperative, evaluators can inform their practices by: 1) treating trauma healing, safety and dignity as foundational design conditions; (2) legitimising

queer, Indigenous and other marginalised ways of knowing as valid evidence; 3) co-creating criteria, indicators and scenarios with those whose futures are most at stake; and 4) being willing to reshape institutional processes (procurement, proposal formats, funding rules, participation norms) so that futures work aligns with liberation rather than mere inclusion.

By doing so, TF shifts evaluation practice in three ways. First, it redefines whose knowledge counts and who is at the center of evaluation—youth in trauma-affected communities, queer communities resisting heteronormative futures, and Indigenous nations designing for seven generations. Second, it reframes evidence and validity: stories, rituals, speculative scenarios, and affective outcomes (e.g., hope, belonging, futures consciousness) become central, not peripheral. Third, it repositions evaluators from neutral auditors to companions and midwives of transformation, curating H2+ niches that embody H3 values inside H1 systems.

### **Reimagining Evaluation Practice Through Transformative Foresight Approaches**

Building on the conceptual and applied insights developed in the preceding sections and case studies, this section examines how TF can be embedded within broader evaluation practices to reimagine its purpose, processes, and participants. TF signals a paradigmatic reorientation of how evaluation anticipates, learns, and acts amid uncertainty. Through this lens, evaluation becomes an anticipatory and co-creative practice that strengthens collective capacity to navigate transformation. The following subsections consider, first, the competencies required for such practice and, second, how TF can operationalize transformation-focused evaluation principles.

#### ***Comparative Analysis of Evaluation Understandings and Transformative Mandates***

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) is a foundational futures thinking tool that unpacks complexity across four layers: 1) Litany and Headlines, 2) Systemic and Structural Causes, 3)

Worldview and Discourse, and 4) Myths and Metaphors (Inayatullah, 2004). By surfacing hidden assumptions, narratives, and power dynamics, CLA enables evaluators to move beyond surface symptoms toward deeper paradigmatic shifts. This tool is used practically below to demonstrate the contrasts between prevailing, technocratic approaches and more transformative orientations to evaluation. **Table 1** compares three perspectives: (1) conventional understandings of evaluation, (2) Transformative Foresight, including TTF, QF, and IF approaches, and (3) TI. This comparative analysis demonstrates how the TF lenses (2) can assist in narrowing the gap between conventional approaches (1) to evaluation and the TI (3).

**Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Evaluation Paradigms and Transformative Mandates**

CLA Layer	1. Conventional Evaluation Understandings	2. Transformative Foresight (Queer, Indigenous, Trauma-Transformative)	3. Transformational Imperative
Litany & Headlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on measuring outputs, key performance indicators, donor accountability, retrospective performance</li> <li>Short program cycles</li> <li>Fear of failure</li> <li>Technocratic audits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlights uncertainty, urgency of polycrisis</li> <li>Uses tools like 3 Horizons, CLA, foresight labs, and participatory workshops that surface plural futures</li> <li>Disruption of heteronormative scripts</li> <li>Centering trauma healing and Indigenous land-based wisdom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calls for systemic change aligned with Sustainable Development Goals, equity, and climate goals</li> <li>Urgent need to shift from incremental fixes to systemic transformation</li> <li>“Business-as-usual” risks planetary collapse</li> </ul>
Systemic & Structural Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driven by donor funding cycles, short-termism, linear logic models, managerialism, metrics fixation</li> <li>Reinforces colonial and neoliberal structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reorients systems toward complexity, emergence, anticipatory governance</li> <li>Critiques structural violence, heteropatriarchy, and colonial epistemologies</li> <li>Emphasizes intergenerational accountability and relational sovereignty</li> <li>Links trauma to futures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Root causes are neoliberal growth logics, capitalistic extractivism, colonial power dynamics</li> <li>Institutional inertia</li> <li>Systemic inequities</li> <li>Absence of long-term anticipatory capacity</li> </ul>

CLA Layer	1. Conventional Evaluation Understandings	2. Transformative Foresight (Queer, Indigenous, Trauma-Transformative)	3. Transformational Imperative
		unconsciousness	
Worldview & Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rooted in Enlightenment logics, i.e., rationalism, objectivity, and linear progress</li> <li>• Evaluation as neutral assessments detached from values</li> <li>• Privileging Western epistemologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worldviews grounded in plurality, justice, and relationality: Queer temporality (non-linear, disruptive), Indigenous relational ontologies (ancestral responsibility, cyclical time), Trauma-Transformative (healing as prerequisite for futures imagination)</li> <li>• Evaluation as value-laden, ethical practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformative imperative as ethical and political project</li> <li>• Evaluation should surface and uphold values, guide systemic transition, and co-create regenerative futures</li> <li>• Evaluation as moral compass</li> </ul>
Myths & Metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation as rearview mirror</li> <li>• Programs as machines to optimise</li> <li>• Future as fixed timeline</li> <li>• “Failure” as deficit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Futures as queer utopias, glitches, or safe spaces</li> <li>• “Walking backwards into the future guided by ancestors”</li> <li>• “Without healing we recycle used futures”</li> <li>• Aperture/playground metaphors for openness and plural becoming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation as a butterfly metamorphosis</li> <li>• Systems as gardens to be tended</li> <li>• Evaluation as companion/midwife to societal change</li> <li>• Future as moral compass and collective caravan</li> </ul>

### *Evaluation Competencies and Transformative Foresight*

Integrating TF into evaluation practice requires a fundamental rethinking of evaluation competencies, epistemologies, and the meaning of rigor for not only the evaluators who conduct them, but also the commissioners, managers, and users of evaluations. These stakeholders must now cultivate new capacities to facilitate plural futures, practice ethical reflexivity, and embrace adaptive, iterative learning. As **Table 1** demonstrates, this involves recognizing and interrogating normative assumptions, while creating space for marginalized perspectives to shape futures discourse. This aligns with the evaluation competencies for the transformative imperative

elaborated in the accompanying articles in this issue, which similarly emphasize futures orientation, ethical reflexivity, and engagement with plural epistemologies (e.g., Chaplowe et al., 2026).

Chaplowe and Hejnowicz (2021) describe this shift as “evaluating outside the box,” where evaluator competencies must extend beyond methodological expertise to include facilitation of emergence, ethical reflexivity, and the ability to engage plural epistemologies. TF requires evaluators to hold space for uncertainty, navigate tensions between short- and long-term horizons, and help stakeholders surface alternative narratives of change. Competence thus involves not only technical acumen, but also the relational and imaginative capacity to support communities in co-creating futures.

From a foresight perspective, Sweeney (2023) frames the futurist as a facilitator of “transmutation,” not an expert, but one who elicits collective intelligence and supports emergent, diverse possibilities. This resonates with the evolving role of evaluators as “companions, not technicians,” or co-learners embedded within transformation rather than detached auditors of change. Success, therefore, hinges on redefining the evaluator’s identity—from external authority to relational participant whose primary role is enabling collective agency, shared accountability, and emergent solutions.

Beyond the level of individual competencies, TF contributes to the construction of future-fit systems. Rather than evaluation operating as a discrete, retrospective function, foresight embeds it within living systems of knowledge creation, anticipation, and decision-making. By aligning iterative visioning, participatory processes, and systemic learning, evaluators help rewire institutional logics, thus shifting from fragmented programmatic responses toward coherent infrastructures of transformation. In this sense, evaluation becomes a co-architect of

regenerative and future-ready ecosystems capable of navigating complexity and sustaining long-term well-being.

***Transformative Foresight and Transformation-Focused Evaluation Principles***

The Twelve Principles of Transformation-Focused Evaluation, as framed by Buckton et al. (2024), are organized around three clusters of principles: Complexity, Power, and Purpose. Together, they provide a normative compass for guiding evaluation in times of systemic upheaval. Notably, foresight itself is identified as one of the principles under the Complexity cluster, underscoring its centrality to transformation-focused evaluation. Yet principles alone risk remaining aspirational if they are not grounded in practices that help evaluators navigate uncertainty, plural worldviews, and the lived experience of transformation. Here, TF offers both conceptual aperture and practical tools for operationalizing these principles.

**Table 2** synthesizes how TF and the three complementary TF subtypes contribute to the three clusters. It thus serves as a bridge between principle and practice to convey how collectively, these approaches not only extend the scope of evaluation but also radicalize its commitments—embedding evaluation as a practice of systemic accompaniment, ethical reflexivity, and regenerative design.

**Table 2: Transformative Foresight’s Contributions to the 12 Transformation-Focused Evaluation Principles**

Complexity Cluster	Power Cluster	Purpose Cluster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TF encourages non-linear, emergent, and collective transformation</li> <li>• TTF ensures psychological and intergenerational healing as a foundation.</li> <li>• IF grounds transformation in place-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TF legitimizes intuitive, artistic, and narrative ways of knowing</li> <li>• TTF restores embodied and communal knowledge</li> <li>• QF elevates affective and performative epistemologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability extends beyond funders to include kinship-based trust, reparative responsibility, and obligations to land and future generations.</li> <li>• Contribution is measured in expanded futures</li> </ul>

<p>based, ancestral, and ecological continuity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QF expands its scope through radical imagination, challenging normative timelines and systems.</li> <li>• Together, they situate change in lived context, integrate systemic mapping that includes trauma ecosystems and spiritual-ecological systems, and embed values such as reciprocity, openness, and play.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IF centers oral traditions, ceremony, and worldview sovereignty.</li> <li>• Applied to equity, they shift inclusion toward liberation, healing justice, and epistemic justice.</li> <li>• Reflection becomes an intergenerational, political, and healing act, while action is framed as adaptive co-creation, cultural performance, and sacred responsibility.</li> </ul>	<p>consciousness, empathy, cultural shifts, intergenerational healing, and ecological balance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to possibility is cultivated through speculative experimentation (TF), healing-induced imagination (TTF), radical queer futurity (QF), and ancestral storytelling (IF).</li> </ul>
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**Embedding Foresight-Driven Evaluation Practice for Justice, Imagination, and Ecology**

We argue TF is a particularly powerful way of enacting a paradigmatic shift to meet the transformative imperative. TF does not replace other foresight methods and tools (i.e., Futures Wheels, CLA, scenario planning, or horizon scanning). Rather, it reframes how such methods are used—emphasising participatory and justice-oriented practices instead of purely strategic or predictive exercises. In contexts of climate breakdown, systemic inequality, and civilizational fragility, business-as-usual evaluation reinforces the very logic that sustains the polycrisis. The three TF subtypes discussed earlier illustrate how foresight can uncover the hidden assumptions of conventional evaluation and open pathways for repair, imagination, and regeneration.

Together, they extend evaluation’s purpose from auditing the past to co-creating futures in which justice, ecological balance, and plural flourishing are possible.

At the same time, TF is not a panacea. Its intensive, participatory, and reflexive nature can be resource- and time-intensive, and it requires facilitation skills that many evaluation and

foresight teams are still developing. In highly constrained political contexts, overtly transformative framings can be co-opted or punished. TF can also risk becoming a “performative radicalism” if aesthetic experimentation is not coupled with institutional follow-through. We therefore treat TF not as a universal solution, but as a situated orientation whose appropriateness, risks, and benefits must be iteratively and consistently (re)negotiated within the geographical, communal, and/or psychological contexts.

### ***Why Transformative Foresight is Foundational***

Throughout this article, we have seen that evaluation cannot remain a technocratic exercise of measurement. To meet the transformative imperative, it must become anticipatory, reparative, and relational. Sections 3 reframed validity, rigor, and evidence around transformative foresight’s focus on equity, cultural relevance, and futures-sensitivity. Section 4 highlighted how diverse foresight practices expand imaginative capacity, challenge normative assumptions, and re-anchor accountability in intergenerational responsibility. Section 5 then underscored the competencies and principles needed for evaluators to act not as detached auditors but as companions in systemic transition.

Taken together, these insights converge on a new orientation, whereby justice is the lens through which evaluation confronts structural violence; imagination becomes a form of evidence that legitimizes plural and affective ways of knowing; and ecological interdependence develops as a foundation for accountability that extends across generations and species.

In this frame, accountability is reframed as reciprocity, rigor as relational integrity, and evidence as anticipatory imagination. Evaluation thus becomes a site where communities and institutions co-create transformative pathways—restoring agency, repairing harm, and rehearsing futures beyond short-term program cycles. Reconceived through TF, evaluation is not a rearview

mirror but a living aperture for systemic regeneration, capable of holding open plural and improbable futures while anchoring responsibility to past and future kin.

***Embedding Transformative Foresight: Propositions for Funders, Evaluators, and Communities***

Embedding TF and its three related approaches into evaluation requires various commitments from funders, evaluators, and communities.

- **For funders:** this means moving away from rigid logframes and short-term cycles that privilege predictability over emergence. Resources must be structured to accommodate processes of healing and repair, recognizing that trust-building and safety are essential foundations before measurable outputs can emerge. Funders are also challenged to value experimentation, ambiguity, and non-linear pathways of change, acknowledging that what appears illegible or unconventional may itself signal transformative potential. Funding modalities should be restructured around long-term, relational accountability, aligning with community timeframes, ecological responsibilities, and kinship-based systems of trust.
- **For evaluators:** TF demands a profound reorientation of professional practice. Evaluative processes must embed psychosocial safety and collective repair, where methodologies become not only technical procedures, but also vehicles of intergenerational responsibility. Validity must be reframed to embrace opacity, plurality, and futures that resist neat prediction or categorical certainty. Evaluators should co-design criteria with communities, privileging oral traditions, ceremony, and embodied knowledge as equally valid forms of evidence. In this way, evaluators serve to cultivate ethical reflexivity and situate themselves as facilitators of relational integrity, rather than

external arbiters of truth. Only in this way can evaluation be done *with* people, not *to* them.

- **For communities:** it is critical to embed these approaches to transform evaluation from an external audit into a space of agency, imagination, and resilience. Evaluation can serve as a means of collective healing, strengthening resilience, and enhancing futures consciousness as individuals narrate, reconcile, and transform their lived experiences. From this, communities are empowered to envision futures beyond restrictive futures undergirded by dominant paradigms. At the same time, evaluation can be grounded in self-determined worldviews, ensuring that accountability flows not only upward to donors but also outward and inward—to the land, ancestors, and future generations.

Taken together, these propositions situate TF in evaluation as a field of plural accountability and imaginative practice. They invite funders to resource transformation differently, evaluators to practice with greater humility and reflexivity, and communities to claim evaluation as a proactive tool of reflection, agency, and repair. Embedding these lenses reshapes the very purpose of evaluation, aligning it with systemic healing, cultural sovereignty, and the collective work of imagining just and regenerative futures.

We end with a call to action. The transformative imperative is clear—unless evaluation radically reorients, it will perpetuate the crises it seeks to address. To avert collapse and enable regenerative futures, evaluators, funders, and communities must together embrace TF as foundational rather than peripheral. This is both ethical and existential work. Evaluation’s task, then, is to accompany societies in navigating the polycrisis with courage, imagination, and ecological humility—becoming a practice of co-creation and repair. To stand aside is to collude with breakdown. To act is to make evaluation a companion in the collective journey toward just,

plural, and flourishing futures.

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