AllonBoard

THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

Work Package 3

AI CIVIC FORESIGHT LAB

Methodological Framework and Implementation Approach

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TRACES DREAMS

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1. Introduction and purpose of the report

This document presents the methodological approach underpinning WP3, the AI Civic Foresight Lab, implemented within the AllonBoard project. It explains the rationale, references, design, and learning process of the activity, as well as its expected value in supporting democratic participation among youth and migrants.

WP3 builds on previous project activities, in particular WP2, and introduces a forward-looking dimension to civic engagement. While earlier work packages focus on understanding democratic processes and participation mechanisms, WP3 equips participants with tools to explore the long-term impacts of policy decisions.

This report focuses specifically on the methodology and implementation logic of the activity. The Forecasting Starter Kit developed within WP3 is provided as a separate output.

2. WP3 in the logic of AllonBoard

WP3 is conceived as a **continuation and deepening** of the participatory approach initiated in earlier work packages, particularly **WP2**, the Civic Digital Twin Simulation.

In WP2, participants engage in simulated decision-making processes, taking on roles within European and local governance structures. This allows them to understand how policies are discussed, negotiated, and adopted. It strengthens civic literacy by making institutional processes accessible and experiential.

WP3 builds on this foundation by shifting the focus from decision-making to consequence analysis. Participants are no longer primarily asked to negotiate positions, but to explore how policy choices may influence long-term outcomes across interconnected systems.

This progression establishes a clear methodological pathway within the project:

- Understanding how democratic processes function,
- Engaging in simulated decision-making
- Advancing towards anticipating the effects of those decisions over time.

Through this approach, the consortium ensures coherence across activities and reinforces a shared objective: enabling participants to move from passive understanding to active, informed, and forward-looking civic engagement.

3. Rationale for the methodological approach

The design of WP3 responds to the increasing complexity of policy challenges faced across Europe. Issues such as **climate transition**, **migration**, and **rural development** are characterised by long-term dynamics, interdependencies, and uncertainty. In this context, effective democratic participation requires not only understanding institutions, but also the **ability to anticipate how decisions unfold over time**.

WP3 addresses this need by combining three complementary methodological pillars.

1. The first pillar is **policy foresight**. This approach supports participants in exploring possible futures, rather than predicting outcomes. It encourages reflection on how present decisions may influence long-term developments and highlights the role of uncertainty in policymaking. This perspective aligns with European practices that promote anticipatory governance and forward-looking policy design.

2. The second pillar is **systems thinking**, inspired notably by the work of Donella Meadows. This perspective helps participants understand that social, environmental, and economic challenges are interconnected. By mapping relationships between variables, identifying feedback loops, and recognising unintended consequences, participants develop a more nuanced understanding of policy impacts.

3. The third pillar is the use of **AI-supported tools** as facilitation instruments. AI is used to generate hypotheses, suggest connections, and stimulate discussion, but not to provide definitive answers. A strong emphasis is placed on critical engagement, ensuring that participants interpret, question, and refine AI-generated outputs.

These elements are combined within a **participatory and inclusive format**. The methodology is designed to be accessible regardless of participants' prior experience, using visual tools, guided facilitation, and collaborative group work. This ensures that complex concepts such as foresight and systems thinking can be approached in a practical and intuitive manner.

4. Methodological references and inspiration

The methodological design of WP3 draws on a selected set of references in policy foresight, systems thinking, and youth engagement. These references have been used as practical foundations to shape an activity that is accessible, policy-oriented, and suitable for participatory use.

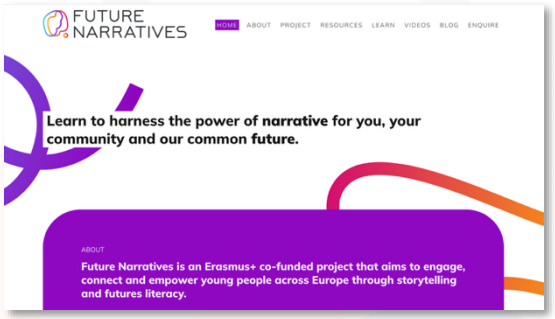


A key reference is the **Youth4Foresight Toolkit**, published by the European Commission in **January 2025**. The toolkit presents foresight as a structured approach to exploring multiple possible futures and supporting young people in contributing to policy discussions. It emphasises the development of futures-thinking skills, the importance of structured engagement processes, and the need to connect foresight activities to concrete outcomes and recommendations.

WP3 aligns with this approach by adopting a structured yet accessible foresight methodology, while adapting it to a more focused and time-bound format. In particular, the activity translates broader foresight journeys into a concise, policy-oriented lab centred on specific thematic challenges relevant to the project.

The methodology is also informed by the European Commission's **broader strategic foresight agenda**, which promotes the integration of anticipatory thinking into policymaking and highlights the importance of preparing for long-term societal challenges. This reinforces the positioning of WP3 within a wider European policy context that values forward-looking governance.

In addition, WP3 builds on methodological insights from the **Future Narratives** project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU, and developed and coordinated by Traces&Dreams, focused on the use of futures thinking and narrative-based approaches in participatory contexts. This experience informs several key design choices in WP3. In particular, it reinforces:



- the importance of **framing futures as plural and open**, rather than fixed or predictive,
- the use of **narrative and scenario-building techniques** to help participants engage with complex and abstract issues,
- and the need to create **accessible entry points** that allow diverse participants to contribute meaningfully to future-oriented discussions.

These elements are reflected in WP3 through the emphasis on exploring alternative policy outcomes, encouraging participants to articulate different possible trajectories, and supporting collective reflection on the implications of these futures for decision-making.

Finally, the methodology is grounded in systems thinking, notably inspired by the work of **Donella Meadows**. This perspective supports the understanding of policy challenges as interconnected systems, where relationships, feedback loops, and unintended consequences must be considered. It underpins the analytical dimension of the activity and strengthens participants' capacity to engage with complexity.

Taken together, these references ensure that WP3 is both aligned with recognised European foresight practices and enriched by applied experience in participatory, narrative-based, and future-oriented methodologies.

5. Design of the WP3 activity

The AI Civic Foresight Lab is designed as a two-day online activity combining introduction, practice, and reflection.

The first part of the lab focuses on introducing participants to the key concepts of policy foresight and systems thinking. Through plenary sessions and guided examples, participants are familiarised with the methodology and the tools they will use.

The second part is centred on practical application. Participants work in small groups, each focusing on a specific policy theme such as migration, digital inclusion, or rural development. Within these groups, they identify key variables, explore relationships between them, and develop simplified models to understand how different factors influence outcomes over time.

The final part of the activity is dedicated to reflection and exchange. Participants review the models developed by different groups, discuss insights, and reflect on how the exercise relates to real-world policy challenges.

The overall structure ensures a balance between guidance and autonomy, allowing participants to progressively build confidence while actively engaging with the methodology.

6. Tools and facilitation model

The implementation of WP3 is based on a combination of accessible digital tools and a light coordination model that prioritises participant autonomy, interaction, and practical engagement.

The activity is delivered online through a video-conferencing platform, combining plenary moments with breakout room discussions. Participants are organised into small groups, a deliberate methodological choice aimed at enhancing the quality of exchanges. Working in smaller settings allows participants to **actively contribute**, facilitates more **balanced participation**, and creates the **conditions for timely and meaningful discussion** within the limited duration of the activity.

Within these groups, participants collaboratively explore specific policy challenges and develop simplified foresight models. The methodology does not rely on dedicated facilitators assigned to each group. Instead, AllonBoard partners join selected groups when needed to s**upport the discussion, help unblock situations, and take notes for documentation purposes**. This flexible approach encourages participants to take ownership of the process while ensuring that support is available where necessary.

A central tool used in the activity is **Loopy**, an open-source, web-based platform designed to visualise systems through interactive causal loop diagrams. Loopy

enables participants to **map relationships between variables, explore feedback loops, and simulate how changes in one element can influence broader outcomes over time**. Its intuitive and visual interface makes it particularly suitable for participants with no prior experience in systems thinking, lowering the barrier to engaging with complex concepts. The tool is grounded in a philosophy of making systems thinking accessible through simple, playful, and exploratory interaction, which aligns closely with the objectives of WP3.

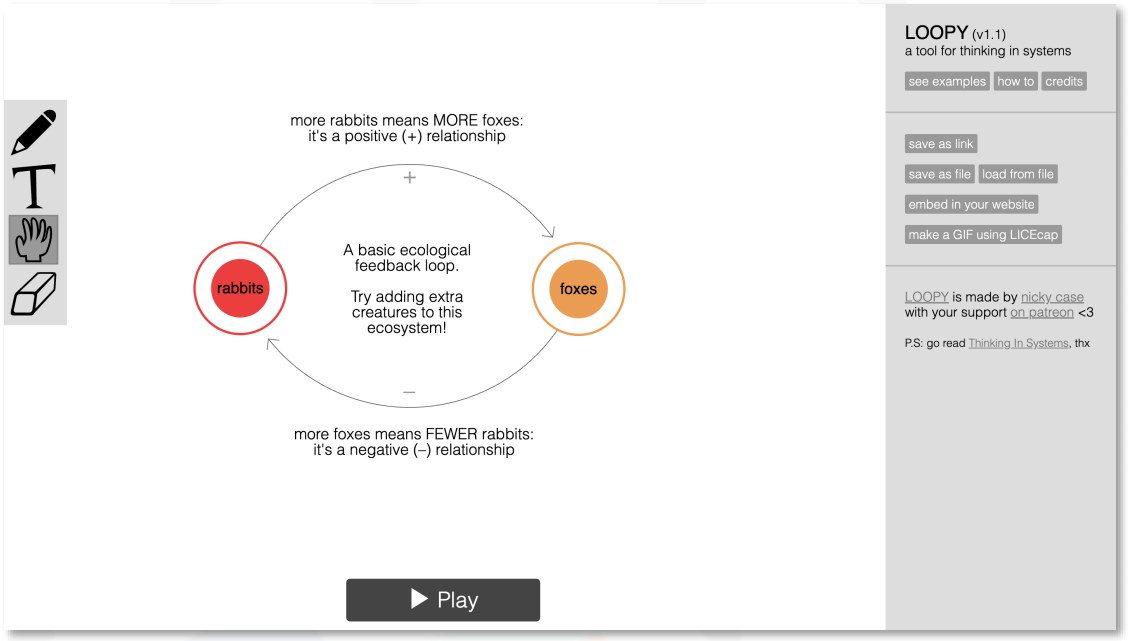


Figure 1. Loopy diagram example.

In parallel, **ChatGPT** is used as an AI-supported tool to stimulate reflection and expand the scope of discussion. Participants may use it to generate ideas, identify additional variables, or explore alternative perspectives related to their models. Its use is framed critically, with participants encouraged to question outputs, assess their relevance, and integrate them selectively into their reasoning.

The overall implementation model combines:

- Small-group work to maximise interaction and quality of exchange.
- Accessible and open-source tools to support understanding of complex systems.
- Targeted and flexible support from project partners.
- Strong emphasis on participant-driven exploration and critical thinking.

This approach ensures that the methodology remains practical, inclusive, and replicable across different contexts, including those with limited resources or prior experience in foresight or digital tools.

7. Participant pathway and learning process

The methodology is designed as a step-by-step learning journey.

Participants begin by identifying a policy issue relevant to their group. They then define key variables that influence this issue, such as economic conditions, social factors, or policy interventions.

Through guided discussion and the use of modelling tools, participants explore how these variables interact. They identify relationships, test assumptions, and consider how changes may produce different outcomes over time.

AI-supported inputs are used to broaden perspectives and introduce additional considerations, but always within a framework of critical reflection.

Finally, participants interpret their models and reflect on what they reveal about policy choices, trade-offs, and long-term implications. This process encourages a shift from linear thinking to a more systemic and anticipatory perspective.

8. Expected outputs and methodological value

WP3 generates both immediate and longer-term value, combining participant learning with the development of a practical and transferable methodology.

At participant level, the activity strengthens the ability to think critically about policy impacts, to understand complexity, and to engage with future-oriented challenges. It complements the learning achieved in WP2 by adding an anticipatory dimension to civic participation, enabling participants to move beyond understanding decision-making processes towards analysing their long-term implications.

At methodological level, WP3 is designed from the outset as a replicable and scalable approach. A central component of this is the development of a **Forecasting Starter Kit**, conceived as a practical, user-friendly resource that enables the activity to be reproduced in different contexts. The Starter Kit will be produced as a structured PDF document providing:

- A clear, step-by-step explanation of the activity.
- Guidance on how to organise and facilitate the session.
- Indications on group organisation, timing, and roles.
- Necessary materials to implement the methodology independently.

By translating the methodology into an operational format, the Starter Kit ensures that the AI Civic Foresight Lab can be easily adapted and applied by schools, youth organisations, municipalities, and NGOs across Europe, including in contexts with limited resources or prior experience.

In addition, the insights, models, and reflections generated during the activity feed into the broader **AllonBoard Civic Innovation Toolkit**, contributing to the consolidation of project-level knowledge and reinforcing the coherence between work packages.

Together with WP2, the work package supports a transition from understanding democratic processes to engaging with them in a more informed and forward-looking way. It reinforces the project's objective of empowering participants as active contributors to democratic life, while ensuring that the methodology developed

within WP3 remains accessible, transferable, and sustainable beyond the duration of the project.

9. Monitoring and methodological feedback

The implementation of WP3 includes a light but structured monitoring component, aimed at capturing feedback on both the activity and the methodology.

Participant input is collected through simple and accessible tools, such as live polls and short feedback exchanges during the session. This allows participants to express their level of understanding, engagement, and perceived usefulness of the activity.

In parallel, observations from AllonBoard partners, including notes taken during group discussions and reflections shared during the Experience Forum, contribute to identifying strengths, challenges, and potential areas for improvement.

This feedback is not treated as a formal evaluation exercise, but as a practical mechanism to refine the methodology and inform the development of the Forecasting Starter Kit. It ensures that the final toolkit reflects real user experience and remains applicable in diverse contexts.