



FALAY  
TRANSITION  
DESIGN

# Systems change in practice

Zeynep Falay von Flittner and Anni Leppänen

[www.falaydesign.com](http://www.falaydesign.com)

27 Oct 2025 - Webinar series:

*Transformation through Social Innovation*



# *Systems change in practice*



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How can we move beyond individual projects or isolated solutions to question and transform the underlying structures, mindsets, and relationships that shape our systems?



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*anni@futuresmundane.com*

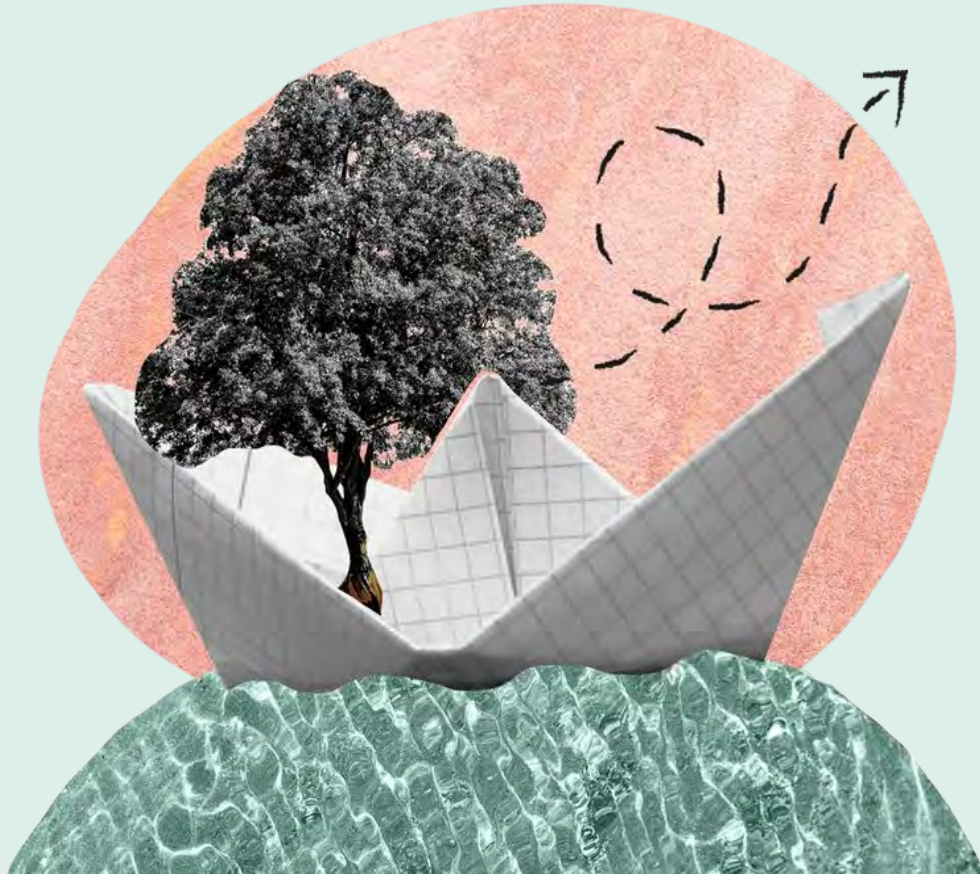
**Case Latvia:** How senior government leaders work with systemic challenges - *practical methods* to understand systems, envision futures and design impactful interventions.

# We are a *mission oriented collective* of multidisciplinary changemakers

We are a collective of transition designers, creative practitioners, systems thinkers, futures thinkings, sustainability experts and researchers.

Together we use creative practices to explore and activate more regenerative futures.





# *Working with Systems Change*

Transition Design Framework

Zeynep Falay von Flittner

*27 Oct 2025*



We live in a world of uncertainty and transformation,  
 our *choices now and in the near term* will define  
 the quality of life for future generations.



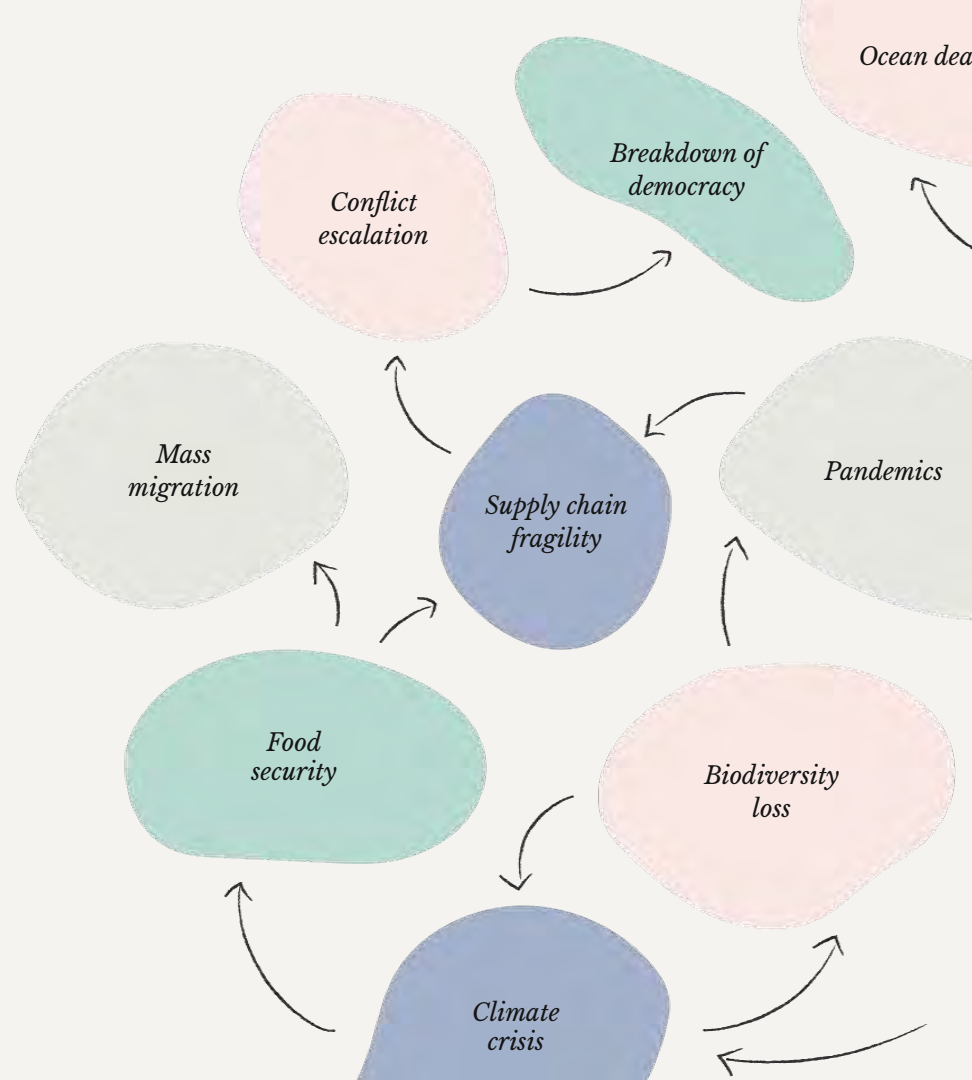
# Organizations Struggle to Step Up

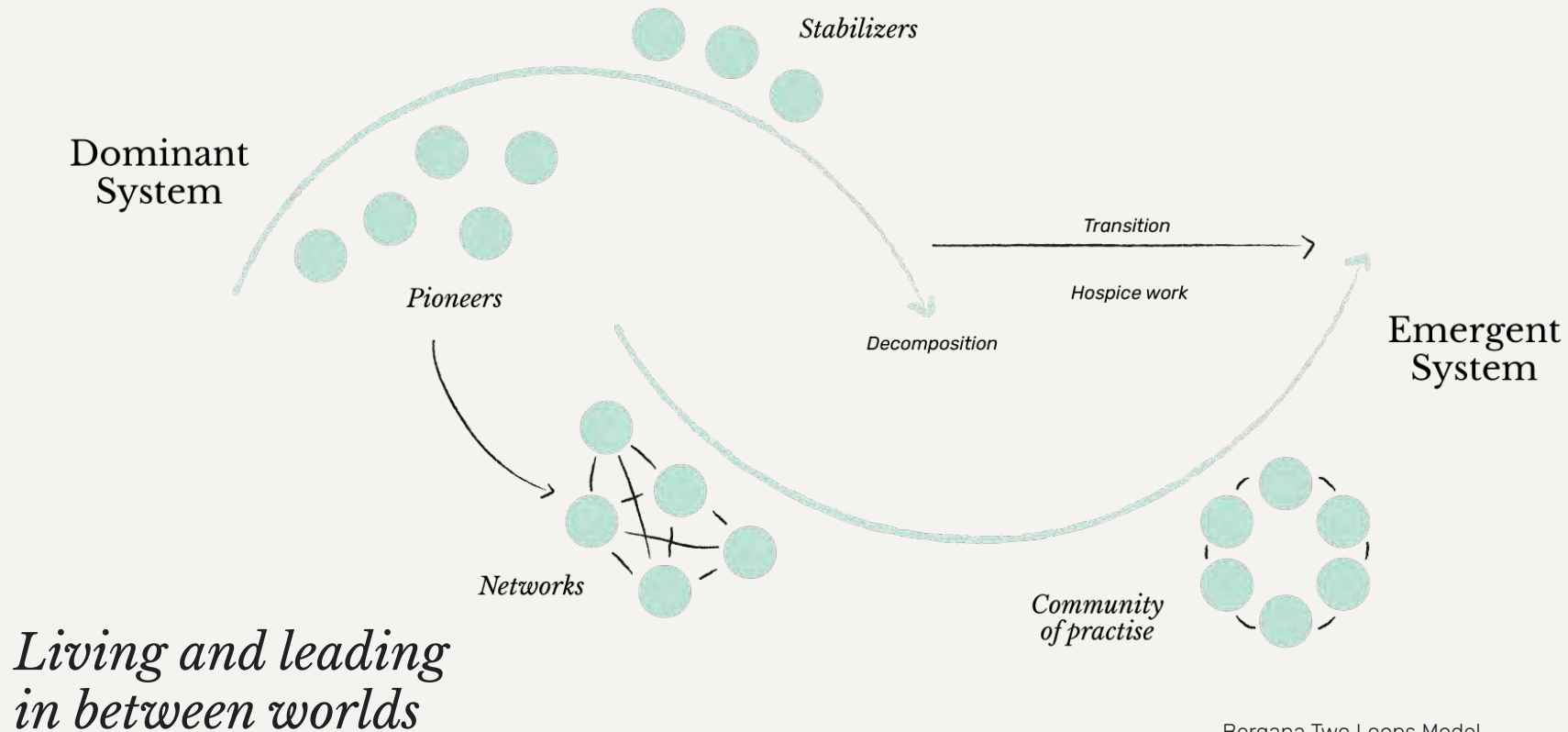
- *Silo organizational structures*
- *Short-term pressures*
- *Risk-averse, fear-driven decision making*
- *Extraction and efficiency*
- *Normalized externalization*
- *Policy lags. Society absorbs the fallout.*



Wicked problems are systemic, interlinked and embedded within each other.

*They cannot be addressed in isolation.*



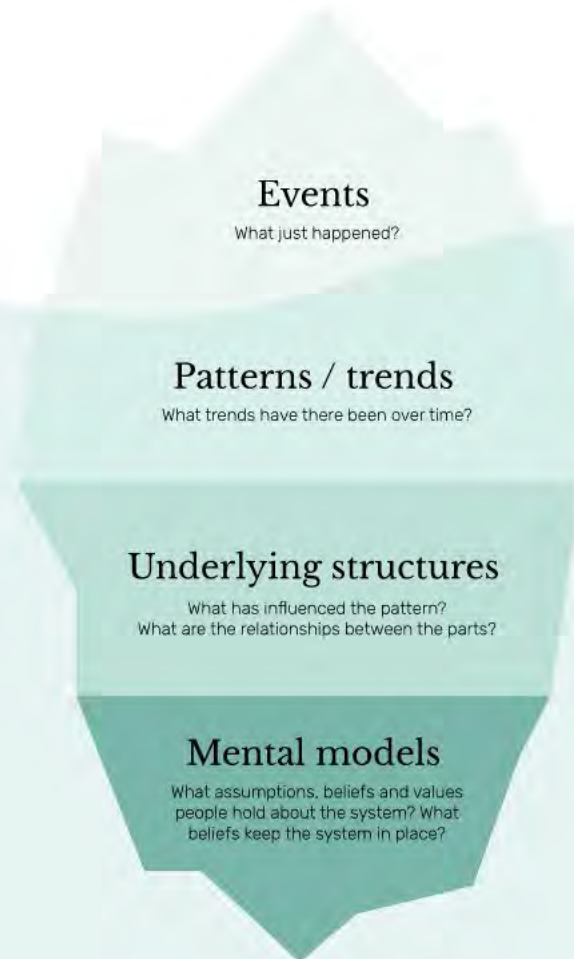


Bergana Two Loops Model,  
Robinson, 2011



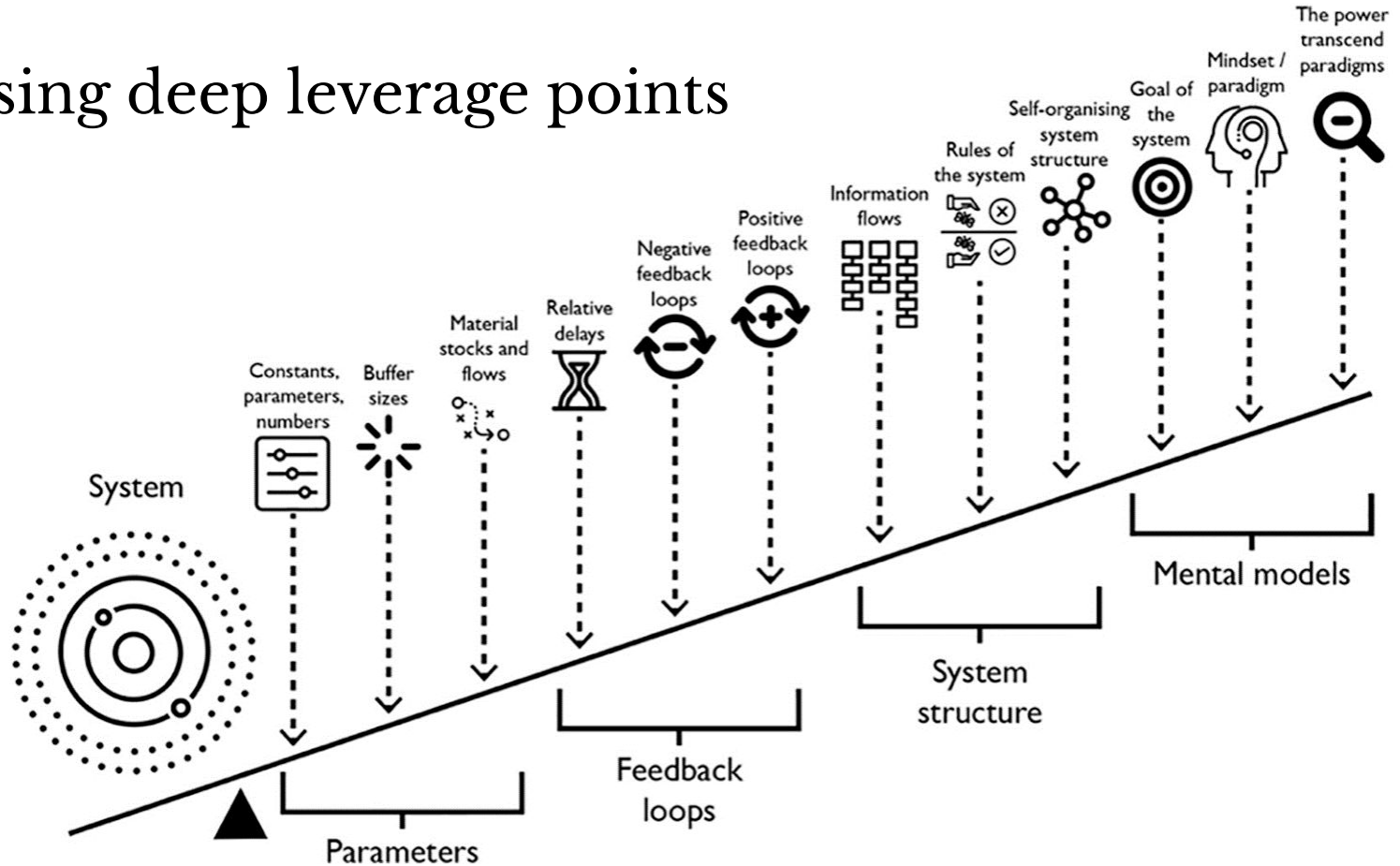
# Understanding the *mental models* that impact our structures

- Challenging own values and mindsets
- Questioning existing paradigms





# Addressing deep leverage points



Transition Design proposes  
that we can *intentionally seed*  
*and catalyse transitions*  
toward more sustainable futures.



# Transition Design process

## *1. System knowledge*

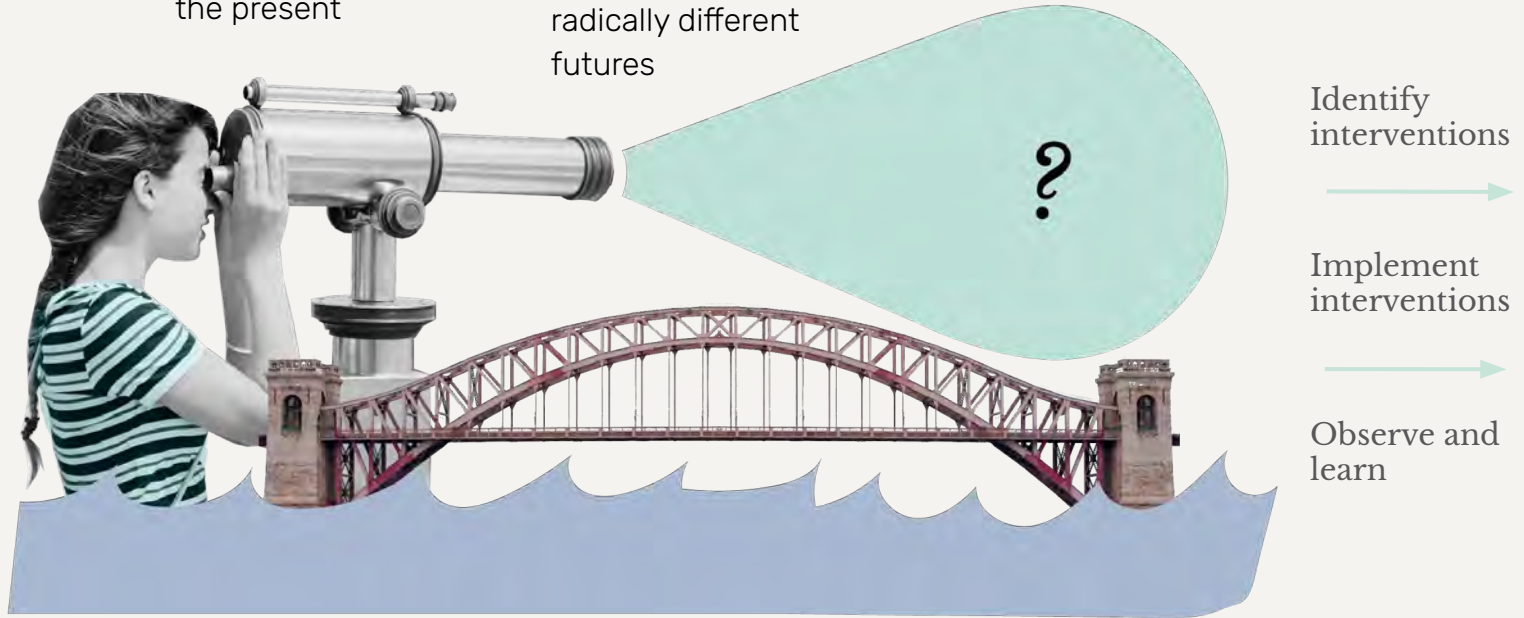
Understanding the  
wicked problem in  
the present

## *2. Future knowledge*

Envisioning  
desirable and  
radically different  
futures

## *3. Transition knowledge*

Designing interventions/  
pathways



# Imagination of Hopeful Futures

## THL ANTI-RACISM ACCELERATOR PROGRAM





# Imagination in practice

## Imagination for Inclusive and Participatory Governance

**Projektista**

"Huone 2050" on Kestävyyspaneeelin yhteistyössä Falay Transition Design -kollektiivin kanssa toteuttama elämyksellinen näyttelytö, joka on osa Kestävyyspaneeelin tulevaisuustyötä. Kyseisessä työssä luodaan myönteisiä tulevaisuuskuvia yhteiskunnan eri toimijoiden avuksi toivotunlaisen kestävyysmuroksen kuvitteeluun ja tavoitteluun.

Tulevaisuushuone pohjautuu Demos Helsingin kanssa selvityksen pohjalta luotuihin kolmeen myönteiseen tulevaisuuskuvaan:

- "Todellisten hintojen markkinatalous": "Planetaariset säännöt" ja "Kestävyyssymianityksen vallankumous".
- "Huone 2050" on Kestävyyspaneeelin kutsu kansalaisille etsiä ja luoda uusia ideoita myönteisen ja kestäväen tulevaisuuden rakentamiseen.

Lisätietoja osoitteessa: [www.kestavyyspaneeli.fi](http://www.kestavyyspaneeli.fi)

Jaa kokemukseksi skännaamalla vasemmalla oleva QR-koodi:

**Kiitos**

Kiitos kaikille, tätä projektia tukenneille:

Pohjatuotkimus ja kestävyysvisiot: Demos Helsinki, Aäinämäsenä: Jonathan Carruthers-Jones, Tili Bowermann, Satu Aavannäla ja John Allen MUST Enabling multispecies transitions, rahoitettu Suomen Strategisen Tutkimusneuvoston toimesta.

Huonekalut lahjoitti Artek ja Artek 2nd Cycle.

Tilan ja prototyypin rakentamisen tuki: Kalle Oja.

Digitaalisten tuotteiden sponsorointi and vuokraus: Suomen IT-vuokraus Oy.

**artek** **must** **DEMOS HELSINKI** 

 Tärkeää! Älä istu huonekalulla, mutta voit vaparesti koskea, nostaa ja tutkia merkittilyä esineitä.

**ROOM 2050**  
**HUONE 2050**



Astu sisään tulevaisuuteen ja koe kestävä esämä vuonna 2050.

**IXHUSTA**  
**TYÖTÄMME**

**FALAY**  
**TRANSITION**  
**DESIGN**

**Juha!**  
**Onko aika päivitykselle?**

Viimeisestä puhelinpäivityksestäsi karsamme on kulunut jo kolme vuotta.

Viimeksi valitsit **DIY Korjaa** -paketin toivomme, että se on toiminut moitteettomasti!

Tiesitkö, että seuraavilla päivityksillä puhelimesi käyttöikää voidaan vielä pidentää:

- Akun vaihto
- Näytön vaihto
- Eekologinen huolto ja vaihto
- MAKUTON ohjelmistotarkastus

Löydä paras vaihtoehto seuraavalla sivulla.

**KORJAA**

Korjaaminen ensin. Uuden hankinta viimeiseksi. Lisätietoja saat osoitteesta [korjaapius.fi](http://korjaapius.fi)

**Huone 2050**

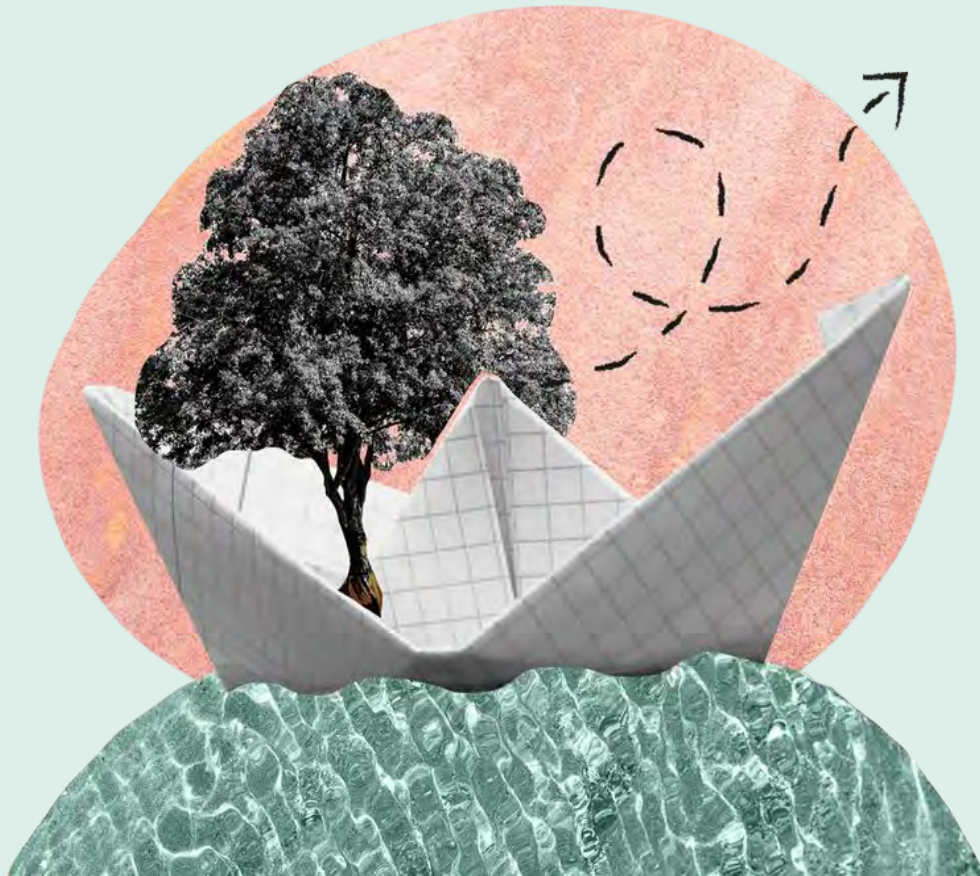
**Citizens and experts co-designing experiential prototypes of sustainable futures for Finland 2050.**

*The Prime Minister's Office of Finland and Falay Transition Design*

ROOM 2050  
HUONE 2050

SHOWCASING THE **ROOM 2050**





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futures  
mundane

# *How do senior government leaders work with systemic challenges?*

Practical methods to understand systems, envision futures and design impactful interventions.

Anni Leppänen

27 Oct 2025

# Systems change in practice: *case Latvia*



State Chancellery  
Republic of Latvia

Latvia  
2050

10  
societal  
challenges



60 senior  
government  
leaders

Workings with  
systems change:

1. Understand systems
2. Envision futures
3. Design impactful interventions

# Latvia 2050 strategy

## Why a strategy to 2050?

- Latvia's current long-term strategy *National Sustainable Development Strategy* ends in 2030.
- A new strategy is needed to guide sustainable development beyond 2030.
- The current *National Development Plan* will end in 2027, with an upcoming mid-term evaluation.
- The 2050 strategy will become **the top-level policy document**, shaping and aligning all national and sectoral development plans.

## Strategic Purpose

- Provide a **unifying long-term vision** and set long-term national development **priorities**.
- Ensure continuity and coherence across political cycles and policy domains.
- Strengthen Latvia's capacity to respond to global and domestic challenges, to preserve national identity and improve well-being of its population.



# Senior leaders



# Programme modules

**Systems  
thinking**



**Policy  
prototyping**



**Futures  
thinking**



**Resilient  
organisations**



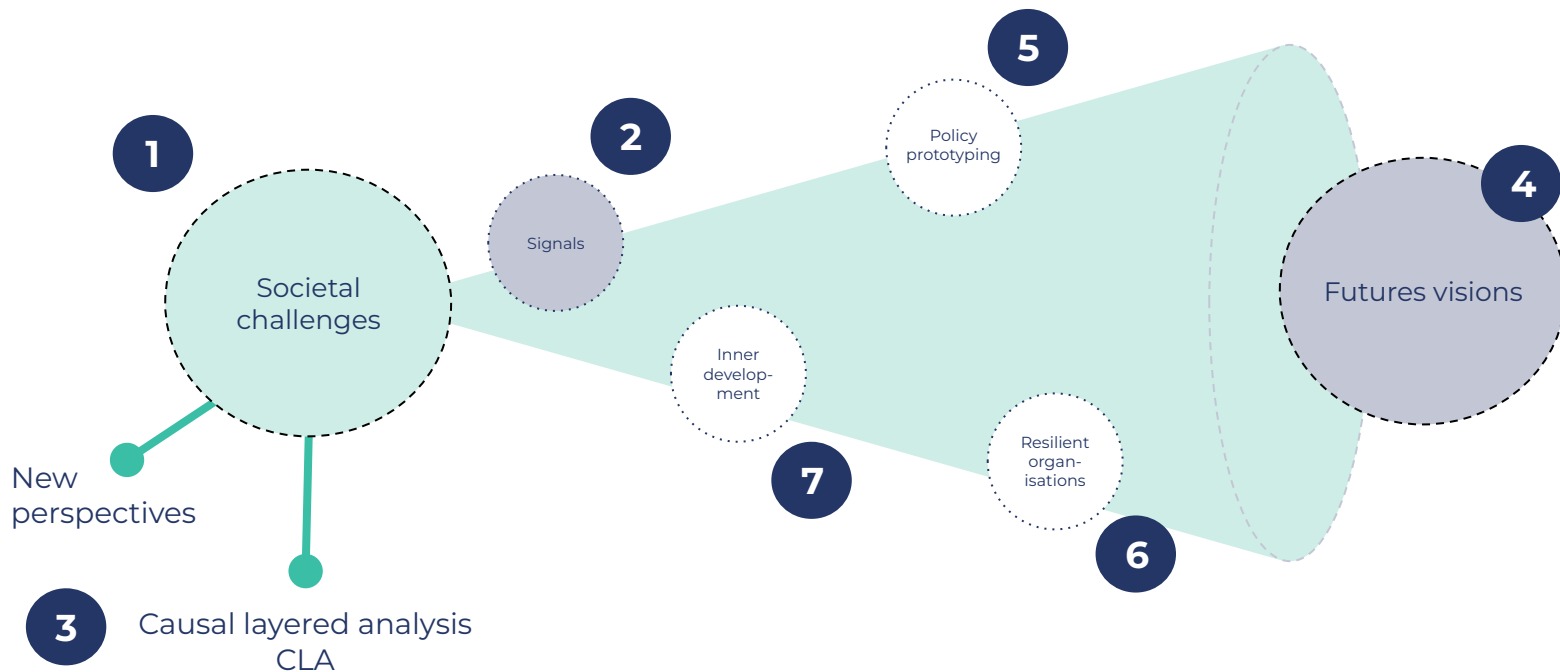
**Imagination**



**Inner  
development**



# Theory of change



# 10 societal challenges

## CHALLENGE CARD 1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND DEPOPULATION

**Description:** Serious demographic challenges threaten socioeconomic development, health, safety, innovation, ageing, and migration. The results impact development and social services.

**Key Issues:**

- Population decline and ageing society
- Regional disparities, especially rural depopulation
- Impact on social infrastructure and other services

**Discussion questions:**

- How can policies support rural areas facing depopulation?
- What strategies can help addressing population decline?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- Urban population decreased by nearly 20% since 1988, and the 20% age dependency rate is projected to rise to 30% by 2065.
- EU-27 economic forecasts 2020

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## CHALLENGE CARD 2 ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY GAPS

**Description:** Serious issues of the highest income and opportunity inequalities in the EU, affecting social cohesion and economic growth.

**Key Issues:**

- Regional inequality
- Security of access to resources and public services
- Economic gap between regions

**Discussion questions:**

- What policies can reduce income inequality?
- How to improve equality of opportunity across regions?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- Latest data on the new EU inequality (EU High Level Economic Group)
- EU-27

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## CHALLENGE CARD 3 QUALITY AND ACCESS IN EDUCATION

**Description:** Education quality and access, including social inequalities and teacher shortage, are critical challenges affecting growth, development and workforce readiness.

**Key Issues:**

- Declining student performance (PISA scores)
- Teacher shortage and shortages
- Skills mismatch and quality of education skills

**Discussion questions:**

- How to improve and reform education?
- How to improve education with appropriate models?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- Teacher shortage: PISA scores have declined sharply over the last years, indicating a decline in education quality.
- EU-27 PISA Report

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## CHALLENGE CARD 4 TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

**Description:** Low trust in public institutions undermines effective governance and civic engagement.

**Key Issues:**

- Low trust in public services, government and political institutions
- Low voter turnout and civic participation
- Loss of aging, economy and social issues

**Discussion questions:**

- How to rebuild trust between citizens and institutions?
- What role can transparency and communication play?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- Only 29% of citizens report high or reasonably high trust in their national government – 10 percentage points below the OECD average (OECD Survey 2020)

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## CHALLENGE CARD 5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Description:** Significant regional disparities in the EU, hindering economic and socio-political development and affecting regional growth and economic activity.

**Key Issues:**

- Regional disparities in infrastructure, education, innovation, and economic growth
- Regional disparities in economic growth
- Regional disparities in economic growth

**Discussion questions:**

- What strategies can help addressing regional disparities?
- How to improve regional development and infrastructure?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- Some regions are still facing major issues (economic inequality, innovation and education)
- EU-27

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## CHALLENGE CARD 6 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

**Description:** National identity, diversity, inclusion, and integration are critical challenges affecting growth, development and socio-political development.

**Key Issues:**

- Integration of immigrants and minorities
- Integration of immigrants and minorities
- Integration of immigrants and minorities

**Discussion questions:**

- How to foster an inclusive national identity?
- What measures can help addressing national identity?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- EU-27 citizens are 82% of the population (European Commission, 2020)
- EU-27

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## CHALLENGE CARD 7 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Description:** Sustainable development goals with a focus on the environment, including sustainable energy and innovation.

**Key Issues:**

- Climate change and environmental degradation
- Climate change and environmental degradation
- Climate change and environmental degradation

**Discussion questions:**

- How can sustainable development and economic growth be achieved together?
- How to ensure a just and sustainable transition?

**Quote / Statistic:**

- EU-27 citizens are 82% of the population (European Commission, 2020)
- EU-27

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## CHALLENGE CARD 8 MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

**Description:** Mental health problems and coping with a world in crisis are critical challenges affecting growth, development and socio-political development.

**Key Issues:**

- Mental health problems and coping with a world in crisis
- Mental health problems and coping with a world in crisis
- Mental health problems and coping with a world in crisis

**Discussion questions:**

- How to ensure a just and sustainable transition?
- How to ensure a just and sustainable transition?

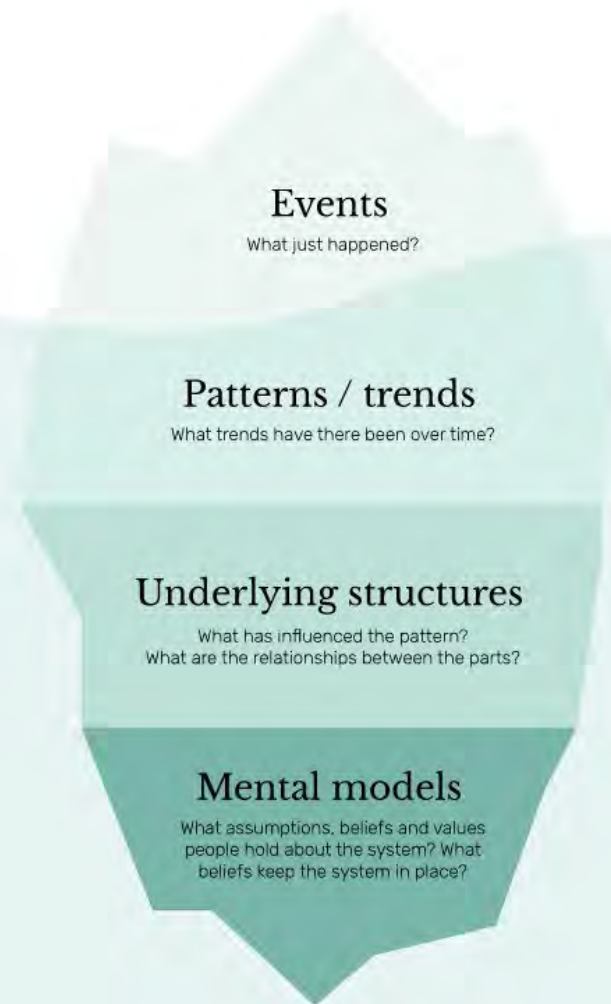
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- EU-27

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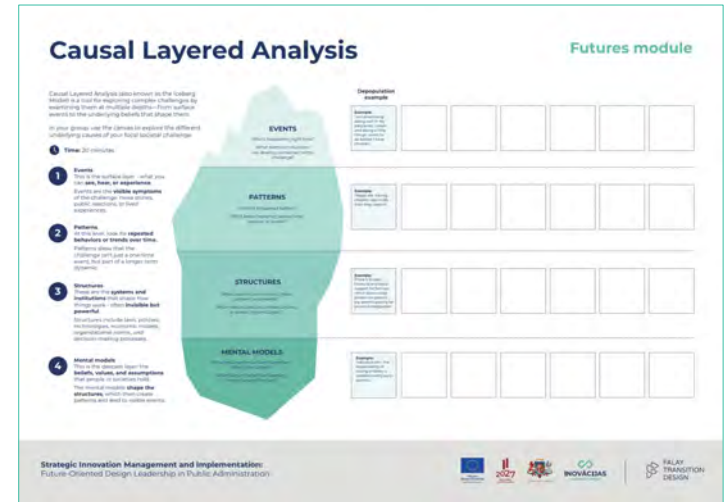
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*Understanding systems:*  
The iceberg and  
Causal Layered Analysis

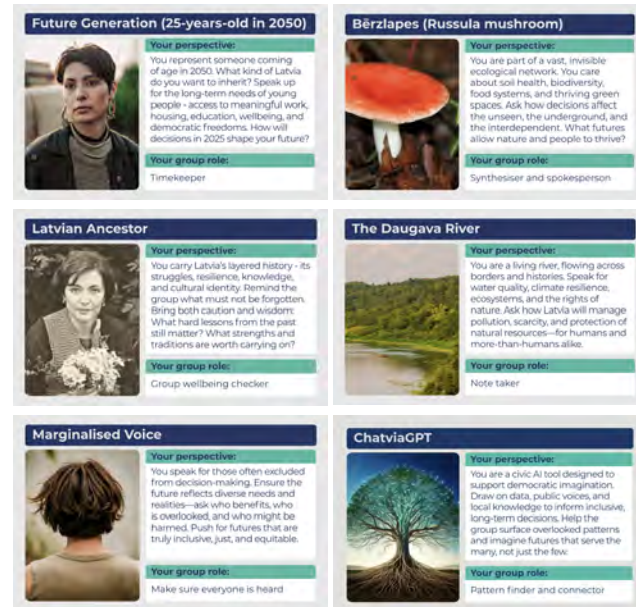




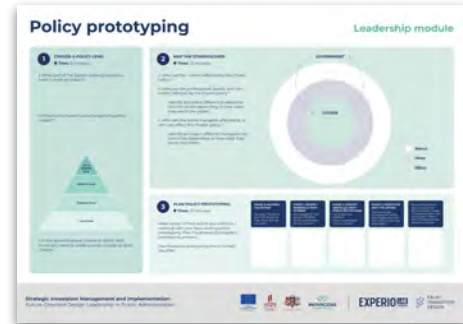
# Understanding systems



# Envisioning futures



# Designing impactful interventions



# Role of inner development in leadership for systems change



**Rest as a  
leadership  
skill?**

Tove Jansson: Paratiisi



# Policy recommendations

## TOPIC 1

### From depopulation to family-positive future

#### The systemic challenge

Latvia is facing declining birth rates. Families are smaller and parents older. People are choosing to postpone having children due to career pressure, income, lack of support networks and feeling of uncertainty.

#### System insights

Having children is a deeply personal and complex topic. Leverage points in the system include:

- Work-life culture
- Sense of community
- Definition of success, values
- Parental leave structures and family services
- Housing, economic support, regional development



#### Public organisations & policy

This is a cross-government and cross-society challenge and includes civil society and business stakeholders, as well as government sectors such as health, education and economy. Public organisations could experiment on family-positive work culture and fund experiments on work-life balance.

#### Vision for 2050

Latvia is a free, safe and equal country where family and community values are central. Youth voices are represented and citizens have a sense of responsibility, belonging and inclusion. Wellbeing and happiness are supported by a strong nature connection and balance in work-life culture.

#### Recommendations

1. Explore depopulation as a systemic social issue that includes perspectives such as working, social and cultural values, service structures and whole of society.
2. Lead by example in the public sector and introduce experiments on family-positive workplace and work culture.
3. Invite key economy stakeholders in a round table discussion on workplace culture and work-life balance that would support family-positive Latvia.
4. Continue horizon scanning for national and international trends and update on work-life in a day-week men taking.
5. Conduct on diverse city obstacles.
6. Introduce a community about poor build hope.
7. Build a new civil society.

## TOPIC 3

### Education policy to future-proof Latvia

#### The systemic challenge

Latvian needs to increase equal access to quality education. There is a shortage of teachers and regional disparities in school quality. Needs for education rapidly changing due to technology and new demands from society and economy.

#### System insights

The education system is deeply connected to other societal activity. Leverage points in the system include:

- Lifelong learning
- Cultural heritage
- Local governments
- Teacher training, salaries
- Family-school relations
- Personalised learning
- Activities leverage teachers' schools and education



#### Public organisations & policy

The education system is deeply connected to other societal activity. Leverage points in the system include: Lifelong learning, Cultural heritage, Local governments, Teacher training, salaries, Family-school relations, Personalised learning, Activities leverage teachers' schools and education.

#### Vision for 2050

All Latvians have an equal access to quality education and embrace lifelong learning. Latvia is an education pioneer that offers senior school learning and innovative schooling for teenage youth. Wellbeing and nature immersion, feedback and education that is strong connection to nature and the needs of the job market. Teachers are valued community members. Young people and children have an active voice in society. Families and local communities have strong relations with the learning systems. Learning is a core value in Latvia.

#### Recommendations

1. Drive an ambitious education policy to support future-proofing Latvia.
2. Adopt a lifelong learning approach to education. Explore ways to support learning at different ages, reskilling and upskilling.
3. Introduce continuous horizon scanning. International benchmarking and research on industry trends to keep up-to-date on skills and knowledge needs and opportunities.
4. Bring children's and young people's voices to policy processes. Empower young people to take a more active part in society.
5. Support both pedagogical innovation on different types of learning and experiment with new approaches to future-proof education quality.
6. Build brand of Latvian school system with education ambassadors. Celebrate local innovations and unique stories.
7. Drive education system continuous development: with investments in teacher training, salary development and school development.
8. Strengthen relationships between families and schools, and local communities to empower agency at grassroots level.

## TOPIC 2

### Adaptive policy to support language and cultural heritage

#### The systemic challenge

There are only 11 million native speakers of Latvian language. There is a need to preserve Latvian language and culture heritage. Latvia has a significant Russian speaking minority (20%). There is immigration due to guest workers and refugees. Cultural integration is an issue.

#### Public organisations & policy

The issue requires cross-governmental information and continuous dialogue with civil society. There is no clear policy direction for long-term future. Learning and learning for social culture is needed to understand diverse voices and best policy proposals.

#### Vision for 2050

Latvia is an inclusive society that respects and continues dialogue with civil society. Becoming a Latvian is open for everyone. Latvians are great citizens, strongly rooted in the Baltic region as well as part of the EU family. Latvians have a close nature connection, and actively embrace local traditions and culture. Technology helps people to connect with language and culture and supports being an active participant in democratic decision making.

#### Recommendations

1. Building an adaptive policy for language will better support a long-term perspective.
2. Invite all Latvians to imagine and act for prosperous Latvia in the future. Supporting inclusion with language and culture policy will help in social integration.
3. Establish a Mini-Latvia - a type of citizen assembly. To understand diverse voices and best policy proposals.
4. Explore language, cultural heritage and integration questions in Latvia discussion festival and similar civil society initiatives.
5. Scenario building will help to identify alternative outcomes, identify risks and opportunities and test assumptions.
6. Build continuous culture and language policy experiments and sand-boxes to learn about changing attitudes and behaviour and gather feedback on alternative scenarios.
7. Fund multidisciplinary societal research on topics such as post-soviet patterns, guest workers and refugee integration, culture-consumption patterns and needs of minorities. Bring ethnographic stories as evidence to inform policy proposals.





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FALAY  TRANSITION DESIGN

### Design in government

*Strategic design  
& service design*



### International development

*Social sciences*



#### 2005-2013

Policy officer, UK Science and Innovation Network  
National Institute of Health and Welfare, Finland  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland  
SOAS, University of London & Uni. of Sussex

### Sustainable futures

*Policy design*



### Cities



#### 2024-

Founder, Futures mundane  
Policy designer, Falay Transition Design  
Agent member, Puistokatu 4

#### 2019-2024

Design lead at Strategy  
Department, City of Helsinki

Chair of International Design in  
Government Conference

#### 2014-2019

Aalto University: strategic design and  
sustainability transitions

Service designer at Tax Administration, Finland  
Lead Experimentalist at State Treasury, Finland

Founder, Finnish government design  
community



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Let's build a better  
future *together*

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