How to identify change drivers

After scanning for weak signals and developing insights to describe changes affecting the system, project participants will be ready for the next step: identifying the underlying sources of those changes, known as change drivers. The activities below are two ways to generate ideas about sources of change. Where time permits, it is beneficial to explore various change drivers before finalizing which drivers could best serve the study. However, it is not practical to consider 30 change drivers in a scenario exercise or a report, so to reduce an unwieldy number of change drivers, see the tip sheet on How to evaluate change drivers.

When identifying change drivers, remind the group of the features of a change driver:

- A change driver is a succinct statement about what is changing now, with some implied direction.
    - Where possible, avoid the vague word "changing." Use more descriptive verbs such as "rising," "falling," "diversifying," or "aging" to ensure everyone is clear on what the change driver means. (e.g. digitization of the economy, growing inequality, Russia pivoting to Asia)
- There must be some evidence to support its existence;
- It could plausibly disrupt the system under study;
- The consequences could reasonably occur within the time period of interest (e.g. 10–15 years); and
- Awareness of the change driver is low among policy makers—or if they are aware, the consequences haven't been factored into current strategy or policy.

The following activities are two examples of how to identify change drivers for a foresight study:

1. Horizons' approach: Review insights to look for sources of change

At Horizons, we review insights to identify change drivers. The key question is: What is driving the change mentioned in this insight? An efficient way to explore this question is to create an insight gallery, similar to the weak signal gallery discussed in module 3. Participants reflect on thematically grouped insights, recording their observations and suggesting possible change drivers, either verbally or in written format. Participants can also be asked to note any connec-

tions they see across insights as a way of identifying underlying changes that could be common drivers.

2. A shortcut: Simple brainstorming activity

We realize that others outside Horizons may be interested in bringing a little foresight into their work but may not have time to write and refine weak signals and insights as we do. A shortcut is to simply ask scanners what they have found, focusing on the sources of change. Ask a community of scanners to reflect on what they've read (and heard through interviews) and to identify the change drivers that they consider to be most significant for the system under study. This could involve email responses, collaborative wikis or other electronic forms and/or a round-table discussion where participants can hear and build on each other's ideas.

Encourage breadth in the choice of change drivers. For example, if the system falls within the social domain, consider using the STEEG (social, technological, economic, environmental and governance) lens to check whether there are change drivers in other domains that could influence the system. If participants have difficulty identifying a broad range of change drivers, ask the group to continue scanning, looking further out beyond their system.

When participants suggest new and/or contentious change drivers, ask them to provide evidence of the change. In particular, if other participants are not convinced the change is happening, it may be necessary to return to scanning to confirm the change is occurring (and that it's not simply a perception of one participant).

Then what? Explore to understand the change drivers

The facilitator can expect that some change drivers identified in these discussions will not be very new. For example, aging population and the rise of information and communication technologies are well-known mega change drivers that are frequently mentioned in reports. As these developments have been around for a while, it will likely be easy to understand their consequences for the system under study. Other change drivers will be relatively new to the group and may require a little research to learn more about the change (e.g. through focused scanning and expert interviews) and discussion to explore the plausible impacts (e.g. by drawing a cascade diagram).

As a result of such explorations, the group may decide that the most important change (for the system) is not the change driver that was initially identified, but a related change that is further downstream. In other cases, the group may find the change driver does not lead to sufficiently surprising and/or disruptive change. While it may seem like a loss of time to drop a change driver, the systematic sifting of content to determine what the study should include is

an important part of the process. The tip sheet on how to evaluate change drivers summarizes change driver exercises that can be used to ensure the final set of change drivers are meaningful for building scenarios.