A LEARNING CIRCLE · FULL CURRICULUM · COHORT ZERO

Technology, Society & Strategic Foresight

A 12 to 18 month, postgraduate-level learning circle in systems, power and futures, convened from Beirut.

Convened by Walid Abu Saifan

A peer learning circle · not an accredited degree

PURPOSE

From strong intuition to formalised, transferable capability

THE GAP

Experienced practitioners sense feedback loops, institutional power and unintended effects, but often cannot name the method or defend the reasoning.

THE AIM

Use systems thinking, philosophy of technology, STS, political economy, participation and foresight, independently and together, on real problems.

THE TEST

Not knowing the vocabulary, but producing inspectable work that frames hard problems, reads power and decides under uncertainty.

Who joins the circle: senior practitioners at the intersection of technology, institutions and communities, with about three protected hours a week.

THE CORE QUESTION, RETURNED TO IN EVERY MODULE

“Can participation genuinely create agency if structural economic, political or epistemic dependency remains intact?”

The question connects the programme to development practice: it tests every lens against the realities of dependency, power and local agency.

AT A GLANCE

A part-time learning circle built around evidence

12 to 18
months, part time

~3 h
per week; a light week of 60 to 90 minutes counts

175 to 215
total hours, about a tenth of a taught master's

10
modules, each with one inspectable output

3
flagship outputs held to master's standard

18
competencies, plus 8 meta-skills

ARCHITECTURE

Critical lenses first, then futures, then practice

PHASE 1 · LENSES

Modules 1 to 4

Systems · Philosophy of technology · STS · Power and political economy

→

PHASE 2 · FUTURES

Modules 5 and 6

Framing, scanning and drivers · Scenarios, preferred futures and backcasting

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PHASE 3 · PRACTICE

Modules 7 to 9

Product and portfolio strategy · Participatory design and PAR · AI governance

→

PHASE 4 · INTEGRATION

Module 10

Applied Strategy Lab: every lens on one real strategic question

Foresight comes after the critical tools, so futures methods are interrogated rather than adopted. From Module 3, each module is also applied to a live case from the learner's own professional work.

PHASE 1 · LENSES

Modules 1 and 2

01

Working paper

Systems Thinking, Complexity & Transition Design

Boundaries and perspectives, stocks and flows, feedback, delays, emergence, leverage points, just transitions.

Anchors: Open University, Systems Thinking in Practice · Meadows · Ulrich, Critical Systems Heuristics · Irwin and Escobar

Output: system map and Systems & Transition Brief — 18 to 20 h

02

Flagship

Philosophy of Technology & Human Agency

What world a technology produces; mediation, values, dependence and autonomy.

Anchors: Winner · Feenberg · Ihde · Verbeek · Heidegger · Ellul · Yuk Hui on cosmotechnics

Output: Philosophy of Technology Essay, 2,000 to 3,000 words — 18 to 22 h + revision

PHASE 1 · LENSES

Modules 3 and 4

03

Working paper

Science, Technology & Society

Co-production, social construction, expertise, standards, classification, infrastructure and users. The live case begins here.

Anchors: Pinch and Bijker · Jasanoff · Latour · Suchman · Global South STS

Output: Applied STS Case Analysis on the live case — 16 to 20 h

04

Working paper

Technology, Power, Political Economy & Justice

Who defines the problem, owns the infrastructure, controls data, captures value and carries risk.

Anchors: Fanon · Freire · Mahdi Amel · Samir Amin · post-development, platforms and development finance

Output: Technology, Power & Justice Brief — 16 to 20 h

PHASE 2 · FUTURES

Modules 5 and 6

05

Working paper

Strategic Foresight: Framing, Scanning & Drivers

Framing a foresight question, horizon scanning, weak signals, drivers and critical uncertainties. Draws on a signal log kept since Week 1.

Anchors: a formal foresight framework · Inayatullah, Causal Layered Analysis

Output: Foresight Framing & Scan Pack — 18 to 24 h

06

Flagship

Scenarios, Preferred Futures & Backcasting

Coherent scenarios; plausible, probable and preferred futures; robust moves, hedges, experiments and indicators.

Key question: who holds the power to define a desirable future?

Output: Scenario & Strategic Options Portfolio — 18 to 22 h + revision

PHASE 3 · PRACTICE

Modules 7 and 8

07

Working paper

Discovery, Product / Service & Portfolio Strategy

Turning ambiguous needs into explicit choices: what to build, adapt, partner on, test, pause, stop or scale.

Approach: problem framing, assumption mapping, evidence thresholds and stop rules

Output: Product / Service Strategy Case — 16 to 20 h

08

Working paper

Participatory Design, PAR & Local Agency

Consultation, participation, co-design and shared decision-making: who shapes the inquiry and owns the capability afterwards.

Anchors: Freire · Sakakini · Fals Borda · participatory design

Output: Participatory Agency Case Review — 16 to 20 h

PHASE 3 AND 4 · PRACTICE AND INTEGRATION

Modules 9 and 10

09

Working paper

AI, Emerging Technology & Sociotechnical Governance

AI as data, infrastructure, labour, procurement and institutions. Ethics principles are not governance mechanisms.

Anchors: UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI · governance frameworks · a reflexive look at the programme's own AI use

Output: AI Sociotechnical Governance Brief — 14 to 18 h

10

Flagship

Integration, Evidence & Applied Strategy Lab

All lenses on one substantial strategic question: evidence quality, theory of change, contribution and evaluation ethics.

Includes: executive brief, systems map, foresight, power analysis, options and recommendation

Output: Applied Strategy Capstone — 24 to 30 h + revision

INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS

A pluriversal canon, one swap per module

Module	Core anchors	Beyond the Global North
1 Systems	Meadows, Open University STiP, Ulrich	Arturo Escobar
2 Philosophy of tech	Winner, Feenberg, Ihde, Verbeek, Heidegger	Yuk Hui
3 STS	Pinch and Bijker, Jasanoff, Latour, Suchman	Global South STS readings
4 Political economy	Fanon, Freire	Mahdi Amel or Samir Amin
5 and 6 Foresight	A formal foresight framework	Sohail Inayatullah
7 Strategy	Discovery and portfolio methods	Chosen at module start
8 Participation	Freire, participatory design	Orlando Fals Borda, Khalil Sakakini
9 AI governance	UNESCO Recommendation, governance frameworks	Chosen at module start
10 Capstone	Evidence and evaluation literature	Chosen at module start

Cross-cutting foundations: Freire, Fanon, Sakakini and Mahdi Amel. New thinkers replace existing readings rather than add to them, so the load does not grow.

METHOD

A weekly rhythm and three sources of critique

90 min · Learn
One strong reading or course unit

60 min · Apply
Mapping, live case, signal log

30 min
Written note

AI TUTOR

Explainer and Socratic challenger, contracted never to fabricate sources and to separate theory, evidence and speculation.

THE CIRCLE

Members read and argue with each other's major outputs. Flagship judgement rests with people, not the AI.

PUBLISHED RUBRICS

Quality is defined before any output is judged, which counters the drift of AI critique toward approval.

ASSESSMENT

Five rubric dimensions, two standards

EACH MAJOR OUTPUT IS SCORED ON

1. **Conceptual precision:** concepts used accurately
2. **Theoretical engagement:** positions contested, not summarised
3. **Application:** theory changes how the case is read
4. **Power and positionality:** whose boundary and epistemology
5. **Argument and evidence:** claims proportionate, uncertainty stated

Scale: insufficient, developing, proficient, master's standard.

Flagship · 3 outputs

Master's standard on at least four dimensions, judged by circle peers, with an extra revision fortnight.

Working paper · 7 outputs

Proficient on all five dimensions: rigorous and critiqued, not polished for publication.

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

18 competencies in six clusters

FORESIGHT · 5

Framing · horizon scanning · drivers and critical uncertainties · scenario building · backcasting and options

SYSTEMS · 3

Mapping and boundary setting · feedback, dynamics and leverage · complexity and adaptive strategy

POWER AND KNOWLEDGE · 2

Political economy and institutional analysis · epistemic power and decolonial analysis

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY · 3

Philosophy of technology · STS and co-production · ethics, values and mediation

PARTICIPATION · 2

Dialogue and local agency · participatory intervention and service design

STRATEGY · 3

Discovery and framing · product and service prioritisation · portfolio and experimentation

Each has a starting level, a target (1 to 4) and named evidence; a rating moves only with work to show. Eight meta-skills track how learning happens, from metacognition to critical AI collaboration.

FIRST 90 DAYS · 13 WEEKS · ABOUT 39 HOURS

Systems first, then the first flagship

WEEKS 1 TO 6 · MODULE 1
See the system · boundaries · feedback · complexity · leverage · produce the brief

WEEKS 7 TO 12 · MODULE 2
Not neutral · critical theory · mediation · plurality · argument · first full draft

WEEK 13
Bridge into STS

WEEK 1
Start the weekly signal log

BY WEEK 4
Recruit critical friends

BY WEEK 5
Publish the rubrics

WEEK 13
Choose the live case

Checkpoints at weeks 6, 12 and 13 ask what changed, what evidence exists, and what the AI tutor missed.

CREDENTIALS AND COST

Evidence over certificates

FOUR TESTS FOR ANY PAID COURSE

Is the learning needed? Is the provider credible? Does it produce evidence beyond the certificate? Is the value proportionate?

BUDGET

A soft ceiling of about USD 250 a month on average. Core materials are free or low cost: open courses, free essays, a few e-books.

SIGNATURE CREDENTIAL

Foresight training, chosen after comparing University of Houston, UNESCO Futures Literacy and Metafuture.

Also in view: the Open University's free Mastering Systems Thinking in Practice badge. STS and political economy carry no paid credential by design. Fees and dates are reverified before any enrolment.

HOW THE CIRCLE RUNS

Open files, a shared companion, a Freirean game

TSF JOURNEY

A mobile learning companion: weekly question, guide and library, notes, signals and review cards. Quests and praxis badges reward acts of thinking, never hours.

SHARED DASHBOARD

Progress, competencies, signals and dialogue logs in one sheet the circle and the AI tutor can both read.

PORTABLE RECORD

Charter, syllabus, ledger and handoff notes in plain files. The files are the source of truth; any AI is replaceable.

No streaks, no leaderboards, no penalties. Paths from Seeker to Gardener describe how members grow and never rank them.

STATUS · NOVEMBER 2026

Cohort zero is the first circle

IN PLACE

- Design frozen at version 2 with a decision log
- Syllabus and competency framework
- Week 1 guide and resources
- TSF Journey and the shared dashboard

NEXT

- Invite the first members of cohort zero
- Agree the circle rhythm and format
- Begin Week 1: See the System
- Publish rubrics by Week 5

If the method holds, the circle opens to others as a set of open, self-governing learning circles, with AI as facilitator rather than teacher.