

# The Pluriversal Chronicles

## A large-scale online participatory futures game

*Cultivating collective imagination and shared capacity in service of equitable, inclusive, pluriversal futures.*

 [Access the Beta version here](https://pluriversalfuturesgame.framer.website/)

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Participatory Futures Platform | Design Futures Fall 2024

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# Preparing for pluriversal futures through games

The Pluriversal Chronicles is a multi-player game inspired by the Columbian anthropologist and scholar Arturo Escobar's critical work on development, sustainability, and the intersection of culture, politics and ecology that argues for alternative, localized, and pluralistic approaches to societal progress.

The game invites us to explore how we might harness our collective imaginations and commit our shared capacities and resources towards equitable, inclusive, pluriversal futures.

It asks us to examine our existing mindsets and heartsets, to challenge the official narratives we may be constrained by and to begin from a posture of inclusion, positivity and plural human-centered progress.

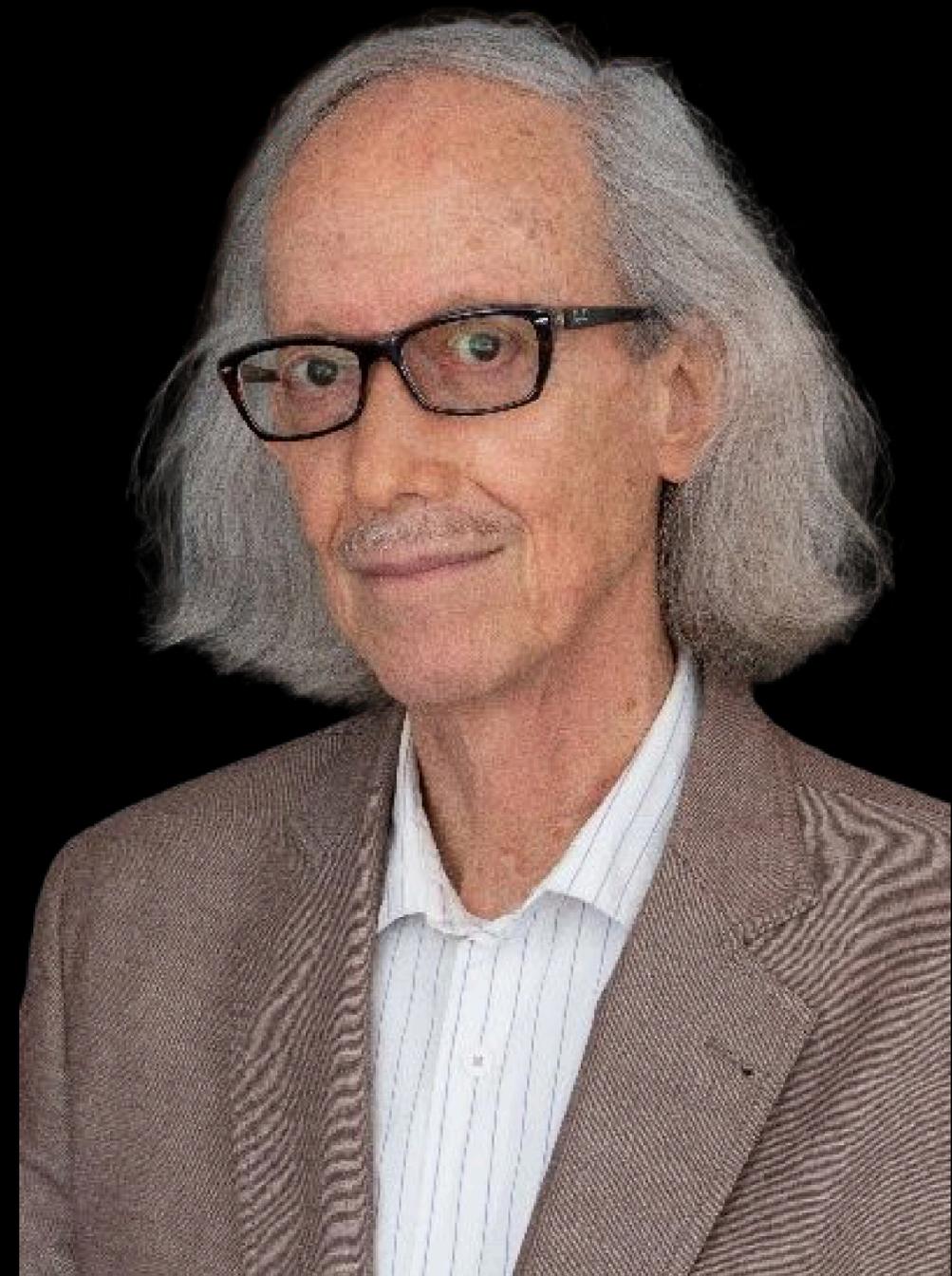
# About Arturo Escobar

Arturo Escobar is a prominent Colombian-American anthropologist and activist-researcher who has made significant contributions to the fields of political ecology, development anthropology, and ontological design.

As the author of *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*, Escobar explores design's potential in contributing to cultural and ecological transitions, drawing inspiration from the political struggles of indigenous, Afrodescendant, peasant, and marginalised urban groups in Latin America.

Escobar introduces concepts like autonomous design and political ontology, advocating for a pluriversal approach that recognises and fosters the coexistence of multiple worlds.

He emphasises the importance of cultural and political autonomy within design, particularly in the context of communities defending their territories and ways of life.



# What is a Pluriverse?

“A world where many worlds fit”

Arturo Escobar's concept of the "pluriverse" is a powerful idea that challenges the dominant Western worldview and proposes a more inclusive and diverse understanding of reality.

This concept emphasizes the coexistence of multiple realities, worldviews, and ways of being that go beyond the limitations of Western modernity.

The pluriverse emphasizes autonomy and the right of different worlds to exist and flourish. It encourages the discovery and imagination of various forms of planetarization where human beings can coexist with other beings, enriching each other.

The pluriverse encompasses the existence of many worlds that are somehow interconnected. These worlds include:

- The human world
- The natural world
- The spiritual world

In this vision, these worlds coexist in time and space, forming a whole living being that is constantly emerging.



# What are Pluriversal Futures?

Pluriversal futures encompass the idea of multiple, diverse potential pathways for societies, cultures, and the planet to evolve and transition. A principle characteristic of pluriversal futures is that communities maintain their own collective agency in what their potential futures may be and how they work towards those possibilities.

Pluriversal futures are important because they:

- **Counter the "defuturing"** caused by modern design rooted in patriarchal capitalist modernity, which systematically suppresses nonmodern worlds and hinders our capacity to imagine alternative futures. By recognising that the planet is singular but the world is plural, pluriversal futures aim to sustain the pluriverse.
- **Enable transition away from the unsustainable "One-World World" (OWW)** by valuing diverse ontologies and realities. Transition initiatives and grassroots struggles can pave the way for pluriversal futures by developing solutions that originate from long-term thinking, are lifestyle-oriented and place-based, and acknowledge the importance of the natural world.
- **Promote cosmopolitan localism and reconnection with the nonhuman world**, fostering a new sense of place and enabling the reinvention of community through various activities. Transition visions inherent in pluriversal futures emphasise the crucial imperative of reconnecting with each other and with the nonhuman world.

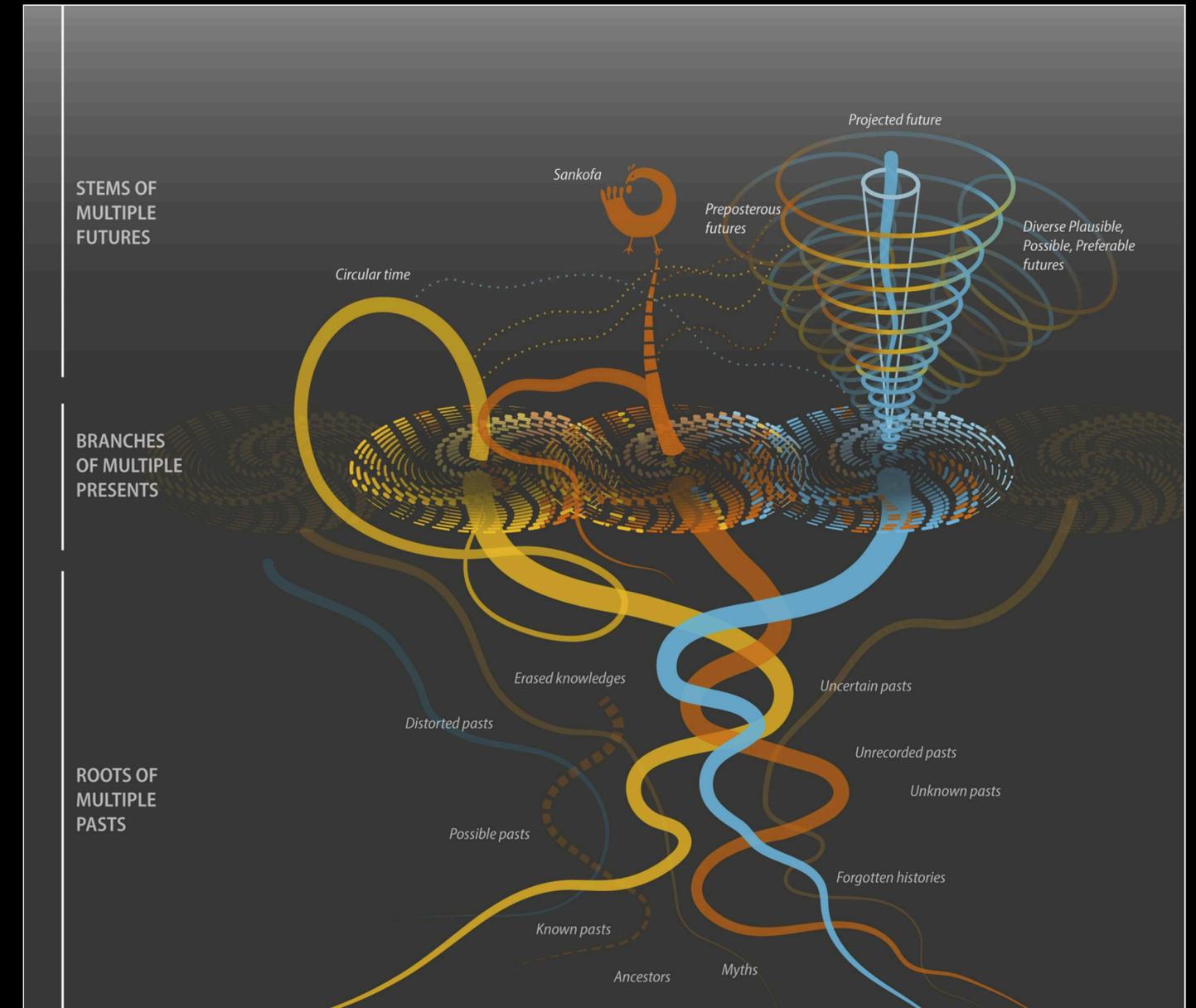


# Why is pluriversal futuring so hard (for now)?

Concepts enabling pluriversal futures require people, communities, and societies to move away from a singular, dominant models of development or progress. Changing worldviews that have enabled past success for communities with power requires helping people challenge concepts that have been defining and comforting.

Currently prevailing economic, political, and technological systems that need to be challenged embody:

- **Paradigms of dominance:** Worldviews that are currently socially dominant focus on “what” potential solutions may be and narrow attention to only those options that offer potential “wins” over other possibilities. Ways of knowing and being that center co-existence, plurality, and relationality are necessary to not defuture non-dominant possibilities.
- **Agency as a concept only for individual:** Centering the individual as the means and ends for meaningful existences disempowers the ability to act on problems and issues that are greater than the self. Collective agency and relational world-building enables collective action at greater scales.
- **Reductive ways of knowing and being:** Conventional scientific and knowledge systems drive an elemental understanding that provides perceptions of simplicity and control. Our realities and the boundaries of our current understanding are demanding an appreciation of sense-making starting with complexity and systems, then working within and between to understand dynamics and appropriate responses.



# Practicing pluriversality through play

Pluriversal futures will need people to be able to think, live, and create their own meaningful realities in co-existence and in relation with others doing the same.

The Pluriversal Chronicles aims to help people implicitly exercise and explore different worldviews through:

- **Collective creativity through free play:** Intentional unstructured-ness and omission of rigid rules to encourage collaborative sense-making through ambiguity and complex contexts.
- **Emotional safety in exploring socially challenging concepts and ideas:** Fun enables developing shared experiences of polarized topics and issues that are likely involved with challenged chosen and exploring relationality.
- **Practicing without polarization:** Play enables individuals to engage subject matters and other people with a learner's mind and an empathetic heart without needing to formally engage in those modes of thinking and being.

## Game Intentions + Principles

A Large Scale Participatory Futures Game



Principles

### Hearts & Minds

It asks us to examine our existing mindsets and heartsets, to challenge the official narratives we may be constrained by and to begin from a posture of inclusion, positivity and plural human-centered progress.



Game Play

### Collective Imagination

The game invites us to explore how we might harness our collective imaginations and commit our shared capacities and resources towards equitable, inclusive, pluriversal futures.



Intentions

### Intention of play mechanism

Game play mechanisms will help players practice and become familiar with empathy, relationality, and design thinking without needing to get deep into technical solutioning. By creating interesting constructs of characters for game play, players exercise self and inter-relational reflection that is foundational for pluriversal existence.



Intentions

### Intention of cards

Players construct unique worldviews as composites of different ways of being, knowing, doing, and creation. The cards represent characteristics of identity, values, culture, and behaviours framed in unconventional but familiar terms. This approach helps players construct relatable worldviews that do not get stuck in mainstream and potentially polarizing tropes.



Game Play

### The Set up

The game is purposefully starting with a successful scenario. Players choose a challenge based on the groups interest and purpose, and state a one-sentence description of it using this structure:



Principles

### Empathetic

Integrate compassionate understanding and genuine concern for others in how you think, feel and act.



Principles

### Improvisational

Start with "Yes, and..." mindset. Include and build on all contributions. Make simple offers that add something tangible to the story.



Principles

### Flexibility

Players can choose the game's duration, depending on their needs, size and nature of the group.

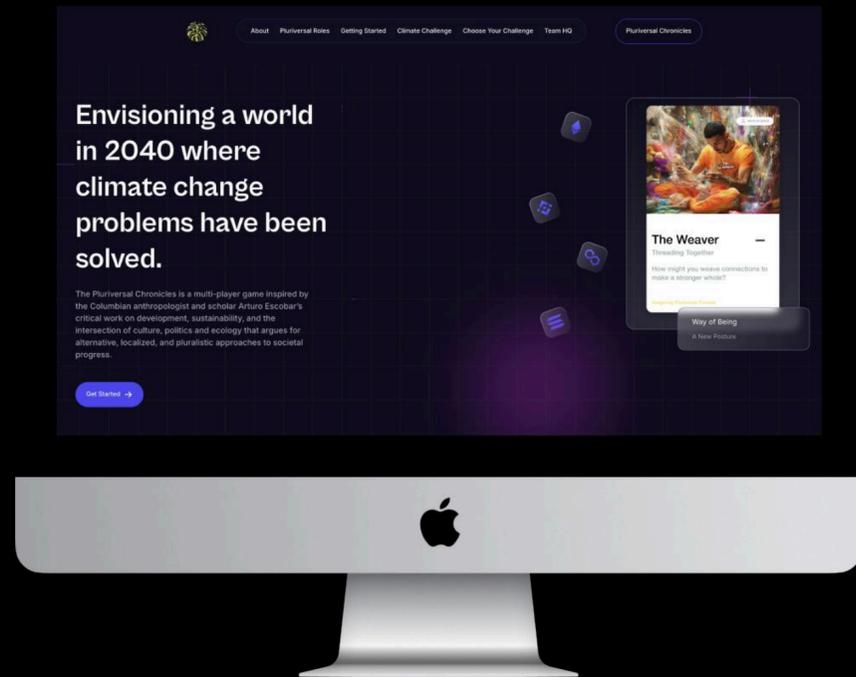


Principles

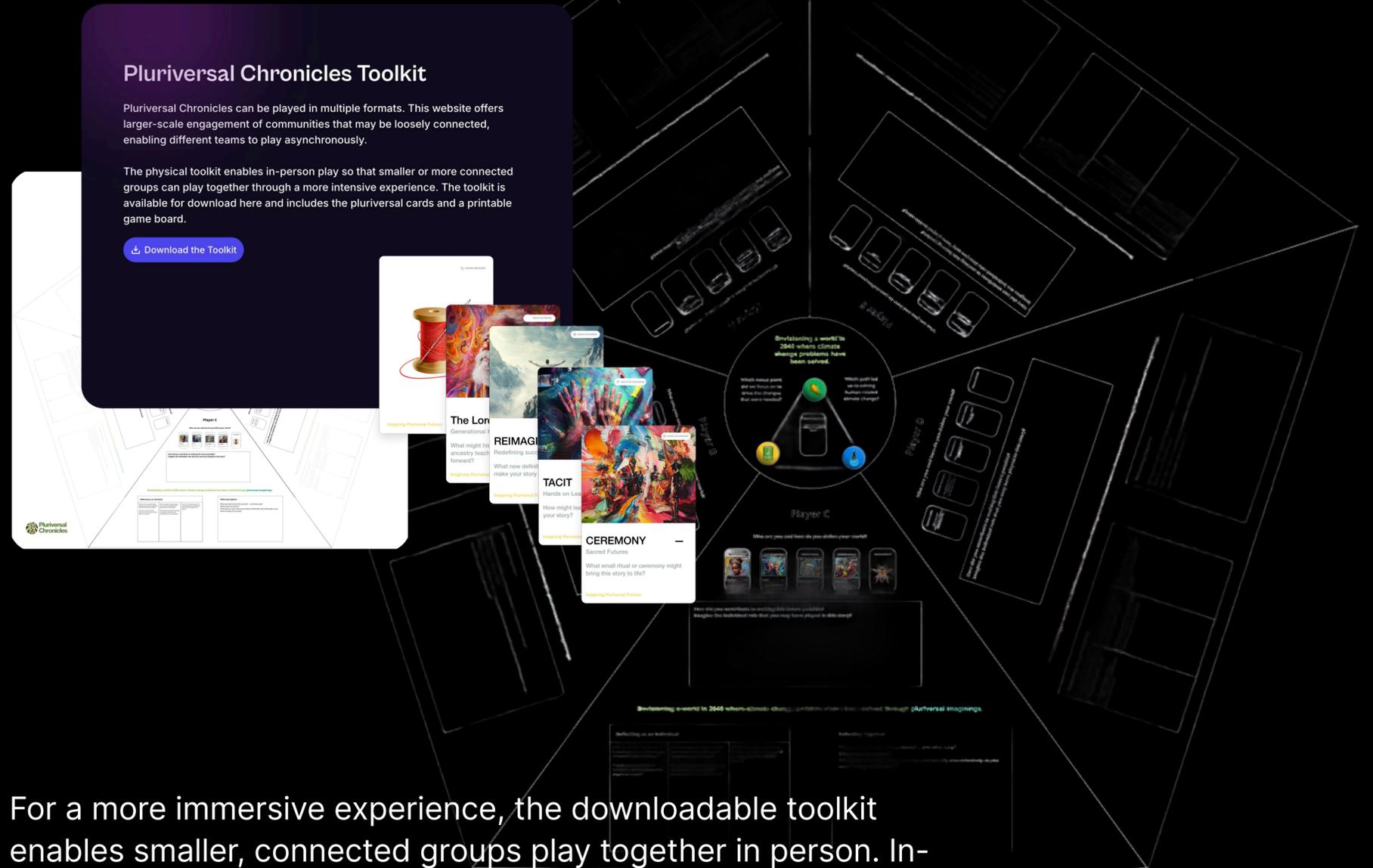
### Optimism

Players begin with a transformation scenario in which a systemic challenge has been successfully solved for through various interventions.

# Ways to play: Multiple Modalities



The website enables large-scale community participation, allowing dispersed teams to participate at their own pace and play asynchronously. The collection of stories over time may help community members surface collective interests, priorities, and worldviews that may emerge as patterns among submissions.



For a more immersive experience, the downloadable toolkit enables smaller, connected groups play together in person. In-person gameplay enables real-time interactions that likely provide a richer exploration of the different emergent worldviews and narratives. This toolkit, which includes pluriversal cards and a printable game board, is available for download on the site.

# Principles of Play

## **Optimistic**

Players begin with a transformation scenario in which a systemic challenge has been successfully brought into balance through various interventions and capabilities.

## **Empathetic**

Integrate compassionate understanding and genuine concern for others in how you think, feel and act.

## **Flexible**

Players can choose the game's duration, depending on their needs, size and nature of the group.

## **Improvisational**

Apply a Yes, And .. mindset and build on all contributions. Make simple offers that add something tangible to the Pluriversal futures stories.

# How To Play: Step One

- **Step One: Set Your Challenge**

- The game logic begins with envisioning an endpoint in the future that the players would consider successful based on their interest and purpose
- The team can print a gameboard, or play online
- In either case, have paper and writing tools on hand and when you're ready:
- State a one-sentence description of this successful pluriverse by using it in a mad-lib structure:
- Envision a world in [date] when [choose your challenge] has had a positive outcome for the largest number of people

## **What makes a good challenge?**

A good challenge for this ideation game is a complex, multi-faceted challenge for which there is no one definitive way to solve it. It has neither a right or wrong. A challenge that requires new ontologies, epistemologies and worldviews to work with fruitfully. In short – growth.

By allowing players to choose their own challenge, we hope that the game might have broader appeal beyond the foresight community.

# How To Play: Step Two

- **Step Two: Build A Character and Individual Story**

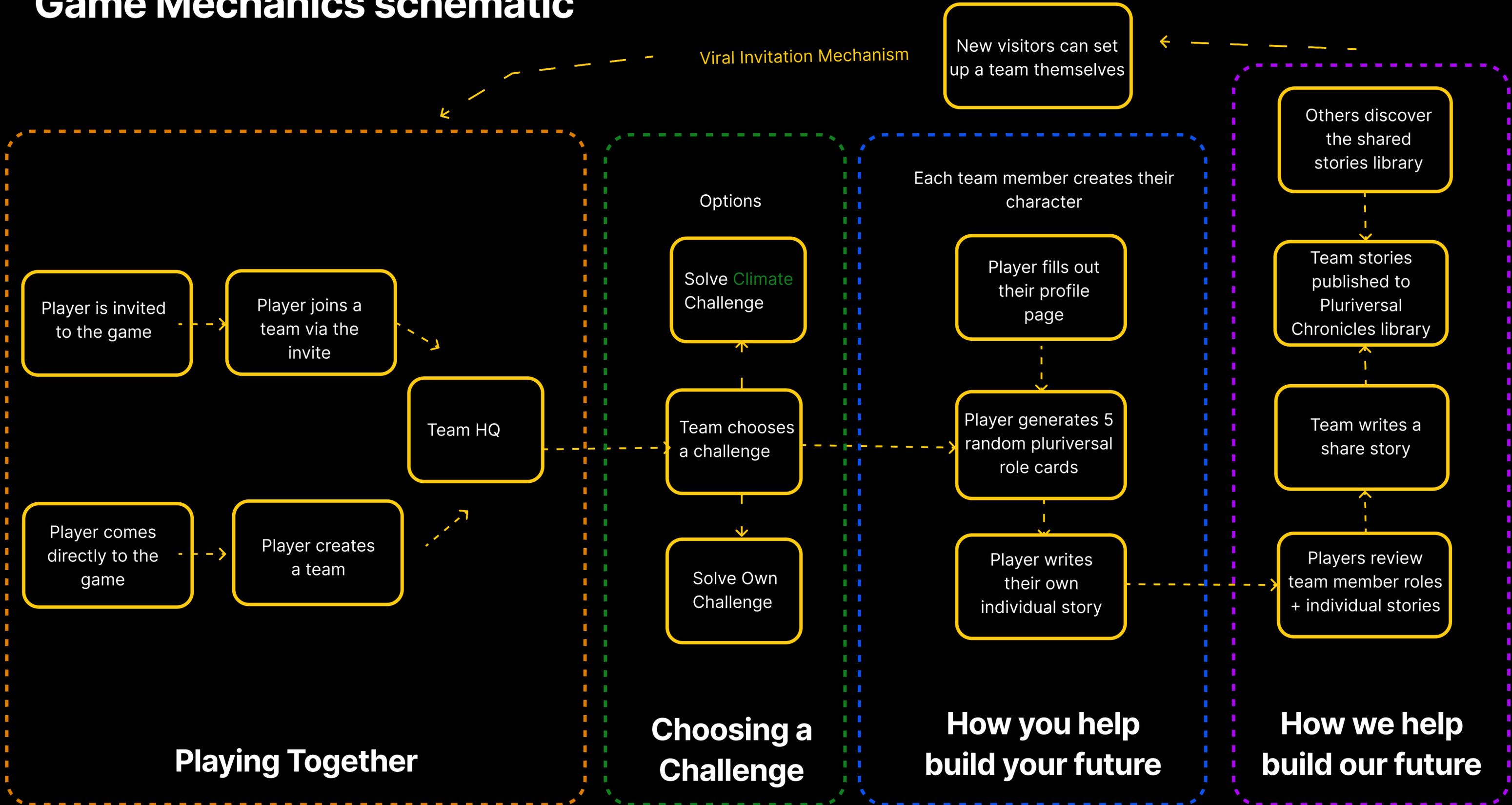
- Each player picks one card from each of the five categories for a total of four each:
  - Ways of Being
  - Ways of Knowing
  - Ways of Doing
  - Ways of Making
  - Frame Breaker
- Consider the cards, and their prompts. Answer these questions:
  - Ways of Being: What role did you play in supporting the challenge outcome?
  - Ways of Knowing: What did you understand about this challenge, that maybe other characters might not? In what way . . did you understand or know?
  - Ways of Doing: What is it that you do . . that perhaps others don't?
  - Ways of Making: How did you bring your contributions to life in your individual story? What is unique about the way you approach things?
  - Frame Breaker: How did your Frame Breaker card challenge your perspective? what was easy and what was hard?
- Lastly, choose a name for the character and write it down. Don't overthink it. Be playful and not too prescriptive.

# How To Play: Step Three

- **Step Three: Character Introductions and Shared Story**

- Each player introduces their character to the group
- This group of characters take their “selves” and face the challenge together
- Begin a discussion as a team, of how you reached your success, given who you are as a collective of characters.
  - The goal is to reflect, engage in generative dialogue and create a truly shared story. . When the dialogue feels complete, spend some time writing this shared story.
- Consider:
  - How did these characters get to these solutions, together?
  - How do each character’s strengths (or blind spots) contribute to solutions for the group?
  - What is the chemistry of the team?
  - What emerged out of the group dynamics?
- If you’re playing online, you can contribute a story to the Pluriversal Chronicles portion of the website; a repository of stories from Pluriverses meant to inspire and help us develop our ability to try-on and try-out Pluriversal Futures, building our capabilities in ourselves and our communities

# Game Mechanics schematic



# The Prototype

We've developed an online prototype that provides more context around each of the steps in gameplay

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