

# **Change by Foresight: AI for the Common Good. Algophobia, celibate machines, and FINNA as a grammar of possible futures in Public Administration**

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## **Abstract**

Artificial intelligence (AI) governance in public administration is increasingly shaped by dominant narratives that frame the future as predictable, manageable, and technologically inevitable. Such narratives tend to depoliticise AI by translating normative choices into technical optimisation problems, producing forms of anticipatory closure. This contribution interrogates AI governance as a narrative and temporal issue rather than a purely regulatory or ethical one. Drawing on narrative policy analysis and a participatory action research laboratory with public officials of the Metropolitan City of Rome, it examines how anticipatory practices can destabilise deterministic imaginaries and reopen the space of possible futures. The Change by Foresight Lab mobilises a hybrid assemblage of foresight and participatory methods to surface situated orientations toward AI, revealing tensions between efficiency, legitimacy, and democratic accountability. Building on these findings, the contribution introduces **FINNA** as a conceptual lens to interpret how anticipatory practices enable public administrations to articulate futures that remain open, negotiable, and collectively oriented.

**Keywords:** Participatory foresight; Anticipatory governance; Artificial intelligence in public administration; Public Value; Futures Literacy.

## **Introduction. Between algorithmic anxieties and pluriversal horizons**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) currently oscillates between two dominant imaginaries: technological miracle and existential threat. In public discourse, policy documents and media narratives, AI is either presented as a transformative solution that can optimise public services and governance, or as an opaque force that undermines democracy, accountability and human agency. This ambivalence fuels algophobia, which Oliveira (2023) defines as a diffuse anxiety rooted not only in fear of automation, but also in the loss of intelligibility and control over socio-technical systems.

At the same time, AI is becoming increasingly associated with the idea of the common good. Governments, international organisations and

consulting firms promote AI as a tool for well-being, sustainability and efficiency. This is often accompanied by an implicit moral imperative to embrace innovation. Oliveira (2023) describes this dynamic as the “coercion of happiness”, whereby optimism towards technology becomes the norm rather than the exception. In this context, critical questioning is at risk of being perceived as an act of resistance against progress, rather than being recognised as a necessary condition for democratic governance.

Yet these narratives obscure a less reassuring reality. AI is not an immaterial intelligence that exists in the cloud; rather, it is a planetary-scale infrastructure that is built on extractive economies, energy-intensive data centres and asymmetrical power relations (Crawford, 2021). When framed as either salvation or apocalypse, AI becomes a mythical object, a miracle or a black hole, rather than a socio-technical assemblage open to political negotiation.

This research begins with a central research question: How can public administrations govern AI without being governed by its narratives? More specifically, how can institutions avoid reproducing dominant, deterministic narratives while developing democratic, situated, and anticipatory AI governance practices?

To address this question, the research employs three analytical approaches: (1) the study of governmental AI narratives as policy myths; (2) an action research laboratory conducted with public officials from the Metropolitan City of Rome; and (3) a conceptual contribution based on FINNA, a grammar of futurity that challenges the linear, sacrificial and predictive perceptions of the future. Through this interplay of narrative analysis, situated practice and anticipatory theory, the article presents foresight not as a technical addition, but as a form of anticipatory public care that can reopen multiple possibilities.

### **Governmental AI narratives as digital fairy tales**

Public policies on Artificial Intelligence are not merely collections of regulatory instruments, strategic objectives, or technical standards. They are also narrative artefacts: stories through which governments make sense of a disruptive technology, assign responsibilities, and delimit what kinds of futures are considered legitimate, desirable, or inevitable. In this sense, AI governance operates not only through law and infrastructure, but also through storytelling.

As Guenduez and Mettler (2022) demonstrate in their comparative analysis of national AI strategies, governmental narratives are strategically constructed. They do not simply describe AI developments; they actively frame the role of the state, the position of citizens, and the horizon of political imagination. These narratives function as what policy scholars have long described as policy myths, simplified, persuasive storylines that reduce complexity and stabilize uncertainty (Roe, 1994; Stone, 2012).

Within the Narrative Policy Framework, AI policies mobilise characters, plots, and moral lessons that stabilise uncertainty and legitimise choices (Jones & McBeth, 2010).

In the case of AI, governments are frequently positioned as heroes or benevolent stewards, tasked with taming a powerful but ambivalent technology. Big Tech corporations may appear as villains concentrating data and power or as indispensable partners in innovation. Citizens, in turn, are alternately portrayed as beneficiaries of smarter services or as vulnerable subjects in need of protection.

These narratives perform three core governance functions. First, they enable sense-making, translating technical uncertainty into intelligible storylines. Second, they provide legitimisation, justifying public investment and regulatory choices. Third, they foster mobilisation, aligning diverse stakeholders around shared imaginaries of progress, trust, and competitiveness. Through repetition across policy documents, these stories acquire a taken-for-granted quality, becoming difficult to contest.

Guenduez and Mettler (2022) identify six dominant narratives recurring across governmental AI strategies (Table 1).

Table 1 – Comparative Reading of AI Policy Narratives

| Narrative (Gunduez & Mettler, 2022)               | Core Plot (NPF lens)   | Government Role | Link to Anticipatory Governance (AG)  | Relation to AI Governance Frameworks   |
|---|--|-----------------|---|--|
| 1. Building an AI marketplace                     | Heroes = startups<br>Victims = citizens without access<br>Villains = global competition. Moral: invest to win AI race.   | Enabler         | AG risk: short-term competitiveness overshadowing long-term systemic risks.             | Mirrors OECD emphasis on innovation ecosystems; risk of technonationalism.   |
| 2. Counteracting the winner-takes-all practice    | Heroes = state<br>Villains = Big Tech monopolies<br>Victims = society deprived of data. Moral: enforce data sharing.     | Regulator       | AG value: opens data for public foresight use; but risks coercive state control.        | Connects with EU AI Act (risk-based regulation); overlaps with debates on digital sovereignty.                                   |
| 3. Engaging in strategic collaboration for AI R&D | Heroes = coalitions of states/ academia<br>Villains = isolation<br>Moral: partnerships ensure progress.                  | Leader          | AG: aligns with multi-actor “systems of systems” approach (Fuerth, 2012; Guston, 2014). | Resonates with OECD & EU calls for international coordination; reduces isomorphism risk.   |
| 4. Creating ethical and trustworthy AI            | Heroes = regulators/values<br>Villains = harmful algorithms<br>Victims = citizens’ rights.<br>Moral: regulate for trust. | Regulator       | AG: builds legitimacy and foresight literacy; enables feedback loops.                   | Overlaps with AI4People principles (Floridi et al., 2018; Floridi, 2023), EU’s “trustworthy AI”, and UN DESA Policy Brief (2025) |

|  |  |                       |   |  |
|--|--|-----------------------|---|--|
| <p>5. Educating AI professionals</p>                 | <p>Heroes = students/ educator<br/>                 Villains = skill gap<br/>                 Victims = labor market.<br/>                 Moral: train talent.</p>                      | <p>Enabler</p>        | <p>AG: expands anticipatory capacity via skills; avoids “foresight illiteracy.”</p>   | <p>Consistent with UNESCO and OECD skills agendas; aligns with <i>Strategic Foresight for skills</i> (Bandera, Battini, &amp; Lippi, 2025) and UN DESA Policy Brief (2025)</p> |
| <p>6. Advancing the deployment of AI in practice</p> | <p>Heroes = innovators &amp; government<br/>                 Villains = inertia<br/>                 Victims = citizens lacking services.<br/>                 Moral: adopt AI fast.</p> | <p>Enabler / User</p> | <p>AG risk: speed &gt; deliberation; foresight reduced to acceleration narrative.</p> | <p>Mirrors “Fourth Industrial Revolution” framing; riskstechno-feudalism (Varoufakis, 2023).</p>   |

Taken together, these narratives reveal a strong discursive isomorphism across policy contexts, privileging linear, solution-oriented futures and framing AI deployment as inevitable. The table 1 summarises how these plots assign roles to governments and delimit the scope of anticipatory governance.

Like all fairy tales, these narratives are as revealing for what they omit as for what they proclaim. One major blind spot concerns the material and planetary costs of AI. As Crawford (2021) argues, AI systems are grounded in extractive infrastructures – mining, energy consumption, logistics, and invisible labour that rarely appear in policy narratives focused on digital efficiency and smart services.

A second blind spot relates to power asymmetries. Varoufakis (2023) describes the current digital economy as a form of technofeudalism, in which public institutions increasingly depend on privately owned platforms and infrastructures. Within this configuration, governmental AI strategies risk becoming reassuring stories told at the margins of real power, rather than instruments capable of reshaping it.

Finally, and most critically, prevailing AI narratives tend to foreclose plural futures by universalising narrow techno-economic imaginaries that marginalise alternative temporalities, epistemologies, and ways of relating

technology to collective life, resulting in a strikingly monocultural vision of the future.

If these are the dominant global fairy tales of AI governance, an open question remains:

what happens when these narratives encounter the everyday practices, constraints, and moral reasoning of public administrations on the ground?

The action research addresses this question by shifting from policy stories to situated practice, introducing the *Change by Foresight Lab* as a methodological and epistemic intervention.

### **Methodological framework: Change by Foresight as situated practice**

This study adopts a participatory action research design grounded in the paradigm of anticipatory governance and futures literacy, conceiving foresight as a situated social practice embedded in institutional contexts. The methodological framework was developed and tested through the *Change by Foresight Lab*, conducted with public officials of the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital (CMRC). The Change by Foresight Lab was a time-bounded participatory action research intervention with heterogeneous CMRC public officials, designed to activate collective sense-making and ethical deliberation on AI governance.

The research is anchored in three complementary epistemological traditions.

First, anticipatory governance frames foresight as a public capacity that integrates anticipation, feedback, and societal engagement into decision-making processes (Guston, 2014). From this perspective, governing AI requires not only regulatory instruments but also institutionalised spaces for exploring implications before technological trajectories become locked-in.

Second, the framework draws on futures literacy, understood as the ability to imagine, question, and use multiple futures to inform present action (Miller, 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Futures literacy explicitly rejects deterministic views of the future and emphasises imagination as a cognitive and political skill.

Third, the study adopts a developmental evaluation stance (Patton, 2011), appropriate for complex and evolving settings such as public administration. Rather than applying predefined indicators, the lab was de-

signed as an adaptive process, generating real-time learning and supporting participants in interpreting emerging insights for action.

The methodological architecture intentionally integrates multiple participatory techniques into a single anticipatory cycle, moving from divergence to convergence and action. The lab integrated a hybrid anticipatory cycle combining Future Workshop (Jungk & Müllert, 1987; Vidal, 2006), Q methodology (Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2012), Group Concept Mapping (Trochim, 1989; Kane & Trochim, 2007), Design Fiction (Bleecker, 2009; Dunne & Raby, 2013), and Nominal Group Technique (Delbecq et al., 1975; Harvey & Holmes, 2012) to move from imaginative divergence to collective sense-making and prioritised action.

Rather than being juxtaposed, these methods functioned as mutually reinforcing moments within a coherent anticipatory process.

The integration of methods is theoretically grounded in the conception of foresight as “way-finding”, proposed by Sarpong, Maclean, and Alexander (2013). In this view, foresight is not a linear sequence of analytical steps but a contextual, relational, and ongoing practice through which actors collectively navigate uncertainty.

Seen through this lens, the Change by Foresight Lab operates as a situated practice of reflexivity-in-action, enabling public officials to inhabit provisional futures, test assumptions, and negotiate meanings. Foresight here becomes less a tool for prediction and more a form of anticipatory public care, preparing institutions to remain responsive, accountable, and open to plural futures.

### **Findings I. From anticipatory imagination to situated AI narratives**

The first set of findings emerges from the anticipatory cycle activated during the Change by Foresight Lab, in which imagination, reflection, structuring, and prioritisation were intentionally intertwined. Rather than producing discrete results attributable to individual methods, the process generated a progressive articulation of situated AI narratives, grounded in participants’ lived institutional experience.

#### *From distrust to anticipatory imagination*

At the start of the lab, participants were asked to write one word describing AI in public administration. The resulting word cloud was dom-

inated by ambivalent and defensive terms such as distrust, control and opacity, alongside more neutral descriptors such as tool and statistics. This configuration reflects what has been described in the literature as algorithmic anxiety, where uncertainty and perceived loss of control shape initial attitudes toward AI.

During the Future Workshop, this initial framing was neither dismissed nor corrected but suspended and reworked through imagination. When invited to envision a desirable public administration, participants shifted attention away from technological performance toward relational, organisational, and ethical qualities. Across groups, a desirable AI-enabled administration was described as flexible, integrated, and non-bureaucratic, characterised by transparency, internal cooperation, professional competence, and citizens' trust. Importantly, distrust did not disappear but was reframed as a legitimate starting condition requiring governance, competence, and care rather than acceleration.

At the end of the workshop, the Mentimeter exercise was repeated. While critical awareness remained, the dominant semantic field shifted toward terms such as possibility, sharing, relational, vision, opportunity; AI was reframed from an external threat to a negotiable socio-technical object shaped by purpose, governance, and collective intention.

#### *Mapping narrative tensions: Q-Sort and Group Concept Mapping*

The Q-sort exercise further clarified this reframing by making value tensions explicit. Statements receiving the highest levels of agreement clustered around several recurring ideas: AI as a support for transparency and informed decision-making if accompanied by clear governance; the need for ethical strategies that are operational rather than merely declarative; the insufficiency of technical compliance alone to guarantee legitimacy; and the importance of foresight and anticipatory competences within public administration. Conversely, strong disagreement emerged toward statements suggesting that technical regulation alone is sufficient, or that social acceptability can be subordinated to efficiency.

Rather than producing statistically distinct factors, the Q-sort functioned as a reflexive mirror, enabling participants to position themselves along a spectrum between efficiency-driven and value-oriented narratives.

These tensions were then collectively reorganised through Group Concept Mapping (light), resulting in a limited set of shared thematic clusters:

- functioning and governance of AI (integration, transparency, control);
- competence building (training, internal capacity, intergenerational renewal);
- support to citizens and territories (simplification, accessibility, proximity);
- public value and social justice (equity, inclusion, democratic accountability).

The mapping exercise revealed that efficiency-oriented narratives were consistently subordinated to relational and institutional concerns. AI was imagined as meaningful only insofar as it contributes to organisational coherence, social trust, and the public mission of administration.

Comparative evidence suggests that anticipatory governance is deeply contingent on socially embedded futures literacy and trust relations, rather than on tools or frameworks alone (Heo & Joseph, 2025). This reinforces the interpretation of the competence orientations identified here as institutionally situated rather than generalisable attitudes toward AI governance.

#### *Making futures tangible: Design fiction and action priorities*

Design Fiction (flash) translated these clusters into concrete narrative artefacts, allowing participants to inhabit future scenarios. One group developed a short script depicting two public officials discussing the planning of a new school building in a near-future setting. The narrative foregrounded access to data, regulatory constraints, citizen consultation, and long-term impact assessment, presenting AI as a background infrastructure supporting deliberation rather than replacing it. Another group produced a visual representation emphasising connectivity, accessibility, and ethical anchoring. Across artefacts, the future was portrayed as deliberative, accountable, and socially embedded rather than automated or frictionless.

The anticipatory cycle concluded with the Nominal Group Technique, which produced a small set of prioritised actions: systematic training on AI and foresight across all professional levels; identification of pilot areas for responsible experimentation; and the creation of a dedicated internal structure for ethical and anticipatory AI governance. The prominence of training and institutional anchoring confirms that AI was not interpreted as a purely technical upgrade, but as a transformative challenge requiring organisational learning and care.

Taken together, these findings point to the emergence of operative narratives rather than abstract policy frames. Public intelligence is conceived as distributed, across data, technologies, professionals, and relationships, rather than located solely in algorithms. This insight prepares the ground for the next section, which examines the competences required and the barriers encountered in avoiding the risk of an efficient yet hollow administration.

## **Findings II. Competences, barriers, and the risk of Celibate Machines**

This second set of findings focuses on the conditions of possibility for translating those narratives into practice. Across the Future Workshop, Group Concept Mapping, Design Fiction, and Nominal Group Technique, participants repeatedly articulated a concern that AI adoption in public administration risks becoming “efficient yet empty”, technically performant but institutionally and ethically fragile. This concern crystallises around two intertwined dimensions: the competences required to govern AI meaningfully, and the structural and cultural barriers that hinder their development.

Participants consistently rejected the idea that AI governance could be reduced to technical literacy alone. Instead, four interdependent competence domains emerged.

First, technical and data-related competences were recognised as necessary but insufficient. Understanding AI systems, data quality, and basic explainability was framed as a baseline condition, not a guarantee of good governance.

Second, anticipatory competences, including foresight, scenario thinking, and systemic reasoning, were identified as largely absent from existing training pathways. Participants stressed that without anticipatory capacity, AI risks reinforcing short-termism and reactive decision-making.

Third, ethical and legal competences were described as needing to be operational rather than declarative. Ethical principles were considered meaningful only if translated into procedures, responsibilities, and contestability mechanisms.

Fourth, and most notably, participants emphasised relational and socio-emotional competences. The ability to mediate between technology,

institutional values, and citizens' expectations was repeatedly described as central. This includes dialogue, trust-building, and the capacity to work across silos, dimensions rarely foregrounded in AI strategies but dominant in the empirical material.

These competence orientations should be read as institutionally situated and practice-generated, rather than as generalisable or prescriptive models of AI governance competences.

Alongside these competence needs, participants identified a set of recurring barriers.

Organisational inertia and fragmentation were perceived as major obstacles, limiting cross-departmental learning and experimentation. Short-term political and administrative cycles further constrained the possibility of investing in anticipatory capacity.

A particularly salient barrier was what several participants implicitly described as normative technophilia: the pressure to adopt AI because it is expected, fashionable, or symbolically associated with innovation. In this context, compliance risks replacing reflection, and speed risks overriding deliberation. As Heo and Joseph (2025) argue, resilience-oriented approaches may operate as a substitute for anticipatory governance, legitimising short-term adaptation while discouraging structural transformation and capacity-building. This dynamic resonates with participants' concerns about normative technophilia and performative innovation.

Finally, reliance on external vendors and consultants was seen as generating epistemic dependency, weakening internal capacity and undermining institutional autonomy.

These dynamics converge in what can be conceptualised as the risk of celibate machines (Giaccardi & Magatti, 2025). In this metaphor, public administrations risk becoming highly efficient systems that produce outputs without generating meaning, learning, or relational value.

AI-driven processes may optimise workflows while disconnecting decision-making from ethical reflection, citizen engagement, and long-term responsibility. In such a configuration, intelligence becomes operational but not public: distributed across algorithms and dashboards, yet detached from judgment, care, and democratic accountability.

Empirically, this risk surfaced not as a rejection of AI, but as a warning against performative innovation: doing more, faster, and more visibly, without asking whether the right questions are being addressed. Participants' insistence on training, pilot priority areas, and dedicated gover-

nance structures can thus be read as attempts to resist this drift and to re-anchor AI within a broader conception of public value.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the central challenge is not AI readiness, but institutional readiness for anticipation. Without it, even well-intentioned AI initiatives risk reproducing the past in automated form. This insight prepares the ground for the following section, which critically examines the relationship between AI and foresight beyond a mere “marriage of convenience.”

### **Foresight and AI: Beyond the marriage of convenience**

The growing association between Artificial Intelligence and foresight in public governance is often presented as a natural and mutually reinforcing alliance. AI is framed as a powerful analytical engine capable of enhancing horizon scanning, pattern recognition, and scenario modelling, while foresight is expected to provide strategic orientation and long-term vision. Yet empirical evidence and critical scholarship suggest that this relationship is far from straightforward.

A recurring risk identified in both policy discourse and practice is the reduction of foresight to computational prediction. When foresight is absorbed into AI-driven dashboards, simulations, or forecasting tools, anticipation risks becoming synonymous with probabilistic optimisation. In such configurations, the future is treated as an object to be calculated rather than as a space of political and ethical deliberation (Guston, 2014).

This instrumental drift is particularly visible in public administrations under pressure to demonstrate efficiency and measurable impact. AI-powered analytics promise speed, comparability, and apparent objectivity, but they also tend to privilege what is already legible in data, marginalising uncertainty, dissent, and qualitative knowledge. As a result, foresight may inadvertently reinforce existing trajectories instead of challenging them.

From an anticipatory governance perspective, foresight is not meant to deliver better predictions, but to enable reflexive capacity: the ability of institutions to question assumptions, explore alternative futures, and adjust action accordingly (Tönurist & Hanson, 2020). In this sense, foresight functions as a gesture rather than a tool: a collective practice that keeps futures open rather than closing them prematurely.

Recent comparative research has shown that anticipatory governance

can itself become a mechanism of closure, either through prescribed futures under strong state leadership or through resilience-based responsabilisation that shifts risk and responsibility onto individuals and communities (Heo & Joseph, 2025). This risk is particularly salient when foresight is absorbed into optimisation logics that privilege adaptation over deliberation.

Critical perspectives further challenge the assumption that AI-enhanced foresight is culturally neutral. Escobar's notion of the pluriverse invites attention to the multiplicity of worlds and futures that coexist, often outside dominant techno-economic imaginaries (Escobar, 2018, 2020). Similarly, Hui's concept of cosmotechnics highlights that technologies always embed particular moral and cosmological orders (Hui, 2019; Hui & Lemmens, 2021). From this viewpoint, AI-driven foresight risks universalising a narrow vision of progress unless deliberately opened to plural epistemologies.

The findings from the Change by Foresight Lab resonate with this critique. Participants did not reject AI-supported analysis but consistently resisted the idea that anticipation could be delegated to algorithms. Instead, they framed foresight as a human-centred, deliberative, and situated practice, in which AI may assist but never substitute judgment, responsibility, and care.

Beyond a marriage of convenience, the relationship between foresight and AI thus appears as a productive tension. AI can support anticipatory processes by expanding informational capacity, but foresight must retain its critical, ethical, and political core. When this balance is lost, anticipation risks becoming another performative layer of technocratic governance: efficient, sophisticated, and profoundly unreflective.

### **Power, democracy, and Moral Circle expansion**

Debates on Artificial Intelligence in public governance are increasingly framed in technical and ethical terms, yet the underlying issue is fundamentally political. AI systems do not merely support decision-making; they reshape power relations, redistribute agency, and redefine who is visible, accountable, and contestable within democratic systems. From this perspective, the challenge of governing AI cannot be separated from broader questions of democracy and moral responsibility.

A central risk identified in the literature is the technocratic drift whereby complex political decisions are reframed as technical problems best solved through algorithmic optimisation. Coeckelbergh (2024) warns that such dynamics may contribute to forms of digital authoritarianism, not necessarily through overt repression, but via subtle shifts in governance where citizens are governed by systems rather than through deliberation.

Floridi (2023) conceptualises this tension as a growing disconnect between agency and intelligence: intelligence becomes increasingly automated, while human agency is reduced to supervision or compliance. The empirical findings of the Change by Foresight Lab resonate with this critique. Participants repeatedly emphasised the need to preserve human judgement, contestability, and institutional accountability, suggesting a widespread concern that AI may shift power away from public deliberation toward opaque socio-technical assemblages.

While transparency is often presented as the primary democratic remedy to algorithmic power, critical scholarship highlights its limits. Full transparency does not automatically guarantee understanding, contestability, or justice. Moreover, demands for transparency can themselves become instruments of control, forcing subjects to be endlessly legible to algorithmic systems.

Drawing on Glissant's notion of the right to opacity, scholars such as Benjamin (2019) and Couldry and Mejias (2019) argue for the legitimacy of resisting total datafication. Relatedly, emerging debates around the right to opt out of automated decision-making foreground refusal as a democratic act. The refusal of certain AI applications by citizens or by institutions should not be dismissed as technophobia but recognised as a form of political agency. This perspective aligns with participants' insistence that AI must remain contestable and optional, rather than imposed as an unquestioned norm.

Beyond immediate concerns of power and rights, AI governance raises a deeper ethical question: who is included in the moral horizon of decision-making? Building on Sebo's (2018) concept of moral circle expansion, foresight can be understood as a practice that systematically widens the scope of ethical consideration to include future generations, non-human entities, and ecosystems.

Seen in this light, foresight functions as a bridge between democracy and responsibility. The Change by Foresight Lab implicitly enacted this expansion, as participants repeatedly referred to intergenerational im-

pacts, long-term trust, and environmental consequences when imagining desirable AI-enabled futures.

### **FINNA, a grammar of possible futures**

FINNA is proposed here not as a method, a framework, or a normative model, but as a grammar of futurity, a way of speaking, imagining, and inhabiting futures that resists determinism while sustaining collective intention.

The term *finna* originates in African American Vernacular English as a contraction of “fixing to”, indicating an imminent but not yet realised action (“I’m *finna* go”). As cultural scholars have noted, this linguistic form carries a distinctive temporal quality: the future is neither fully projected nor deferred, but already present in intention, desire, and preparation (Imarisha, 2015).

In this sense, FINNA differs radically from forecasting. Forecasts extrapolate from existing data to identify what is most likely to happen if current trajectories persist. FINNA, by contrast, insists on what must be made possible, even when probability, power, or resources are lacking. It names a future that is spoken into being by those to whom the future has historically been denied.

Conceptually, FINNA operates first as an act of refusal. It refuses linear temporality, where the future is treated as a calculable extension of the present. It refuses what might be called *sacrificial time*: the idea that some communities, ecosystems, or generations must bear harm now for efficiency, innovation, or growth later.

This refusal resonates with critical futures scholarship that challenges predictive dominance and algorithmic inevitability (Benjamin, 2019; Coeckelbergh, 2024). In the context of AI governance, FINNA rejects the closure produced by optimisation logics, risk scores, and performance dashboards that silently convert normative choices into technical outputs.

FINNA also performs a subtle queering of time. The future is not a distant endpoint but a contested space that can be entered provisionally, narratively, and collectively. This temporal stance aligns with pluriversal and decolonial critiques of modernist progress narratives (Escobar, 2018, 2020).

FINNA becomes operational when placed in dialogue with foresight. While foresight creates spaces to explore alternative futures, FINNA gives

those spaces linguistic and ethical force. It transforms anticipation from analysis into commitment.

Within the Change by Foresight Lab, FINNA captures what participants enacted implicitly: a refusal to delegate the future to algorithms, experts, or regulations alone; and a willingness to articulate futures grounded in care, responsibility, and democratic accountability. FINNA thus functions as an embodied anticipation, rooted in situated practice rather than abstract projection.

Importantly, FINNA does not describe what will happen. It insists on what must remain possible.

As a grammar, FINNA enables public administrations to speak futures that are not yet authorised by data, budgets, or political cycles. It reclaims imagination as a public capacity and reframes foresight as anticipatory public care, a responsibility toward those who are absent, unheard, or not yet born.

In this sense, FINNA offers an alternative to the predictive closure of AI: not anti-technology, but radically political. It holds open the space where institutions can still have a say: a space in which institutions can still articulate the intention to make another future.

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### **Data availability statement**

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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