

Open peer review: "Shedding darkness. Embracing futures uncertainty from a decolonial perspective"

A conversation between César García Martínez and the editors-in-chief of Futures Reframed, Roanne van Voorst and Tessa Cramer

Futures Reframed publishes parts of its review process to be transparent with readers. Below is how this afterword grew through our exchange.

1. The editors: first round of feedback

We read César's afterword with a lot of interest and saw great potential in it. In the margins of the draft we noted five themes.

- **Accessible language.** We publish work that is rigorous and also readable for a wide range of futures thinkers, including practitioners and other knowledge keepers who may not be academically trained. So we asked César to replace most of the jargon with simpler wording of his own. Simple, without being simplistic. Roanne rewrote one passage as an example, using an everyday case: calling people "illegal" instead of "undocumented" frames them in a way that can justify exclusion.
- **His own voice.** Some passages came across as if a Large Language Model had written them. Whether or not that was true, we asked for writing that shows why only César could write this piece, in words that resonate with him, embodied.
- **Positionality.** In places the text stayed abstract and generic. We asked César to make his stance clear early on. Is his analysis based on his own experience, on theory, or both? Who is the "we" in his text?
- **Be sharp towards us.** We invited César to act as a critical outside voice. Are we still blindspotted? What is missing? What can we do better in the rest of our publications? To help, we offered him the abstracts and introductions of the first articles in this issue.
- **Conceptual clarity.** We asked César to unpack the hegemonies he refers to, the transdisciplinary approach, and his assumptions about uncertainty, a concept with a rich scholarly history of its own. Tessa also suggested putting one striking verb at the centre of the argument, and possibly sharpening the title after the revision.

2. César responds

"I will double check the form and the style to reduce the jargon and make it easier to read. I actually don't rely on any LLMs to craft any of my ideas, but sometimes I help myself with DeepL when I want to find a specific concept that first comes to mind in Spanish. Using concepts like *delve into* or the em dash has become natural for me, but it is interesting to reflect on how much this normalization might have been AI influenced lately."

He asked us to send the accepted papers so he could check whether the abstracts he had were still current. He also agreed to keep some of the review comments public: "I find it a good practice."

The editors reflect

César's answer made us pause. AI shapes how all of us write now, even those who only use it to find a single word. A phrase like *delve into* or the em dash moves from model to reader to writer without anyone noticing. For a non-native speaker who writes with a translation tool, that line gets even blurrier. So our question changed. We stopped asking whether a text was written by AI and started asking whether the author feels every word. That is what slow, humane science means to us, and César's revision showed it can be done.

3. César sends his revision

"I have gone through all of the suggestions over the past few days and made consistent modifications following your feedback. I think it truly helped to make a more interesting and reachable piece that reflects on the strengths, blindspots and theories that I believe can contribute to this issue and the FR perspectives."

4. The editors: final round

The revised version took a big step in clarifying the argument and the structure of the piece. We were especially enthusiastic about the final deframing section, where César criticises Futures Reframed itself for still being written largely from a Western perspective. That adds an important layer to what we are trying to do, and we will take this blindspot to our editorial board.

We also noticed that the piece grows more soulful and provocative as it goes on, so much that we became quite soulful ourselves while reading it. The opening sets up the context in a more conceptual way. We asked for no further changes and suggested he let the abstract hint at the soulful side that unfolds later. After a final proofread and reference check, the article was ready for publication.

5. César's closing words

"For me, it was a great opportunity to reflect and bring what I hope are some constructive insights to your beautiful project. It means a lot to me as an early stage researcher to see that some green seeds grow in academia, and Futures Reframed is a great motivation to keep learning."