



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Future scenarios on lifelong learning

Key findings and future scenarios on
transparency and transferability of
learning outcomes



Ensuring transparency and facilitating transferability of learning outcomes: analysing two decades of European and national initiatives

Cedefop research project 2022-2025



Aim:

Map and analyse European and national policy initiatives (from 2000 to 2020) promoting transparency and transferability of learning outcomes; examining their **coherence** and joint **contribution** at system and individual level; and exploring **future policy directions** towards 2040.

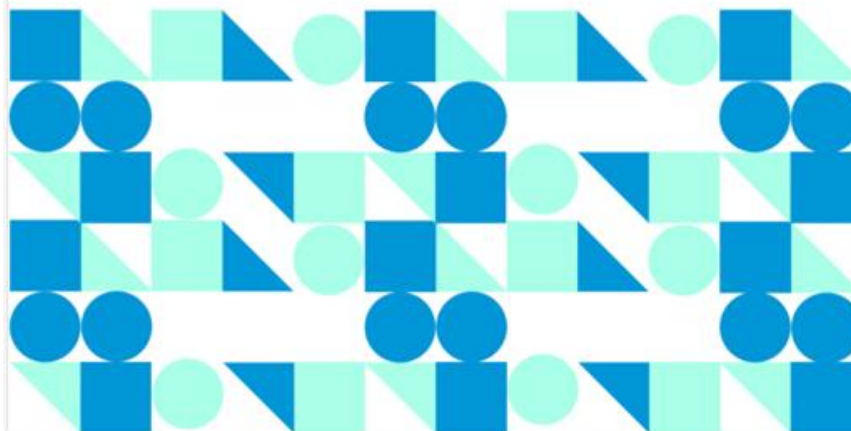
Methodology

European level 2022-2023	National level 2022-2023	Individual level 2023-2024	Future scenarios 2024-2025
• Literature review • 20 interviews with policy experts • Online expert workshops	• Literature review • Case studies (8) with desk research and interviews (55) • Online survey (98 respondents from 28 countries)	• Literature review • Country cases with stakeholder and learner interviews (70), focus groups (54 participants), learners case histories (20) • Statistical comparative analysis	• Literature review • Quasi-Delphi panel: 33 EU and national experts • Two rounds of scenario validation workshops (EU-level and national-level)

Research paper

Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey

Analysis of developments at
European and national level



Mobility

Lifelong learning

Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes

Quality assurance

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)

European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)

Credit accumulation and transfer

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

European Credit System for VET (ECVET)

Comparability of skills and qualifications

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Framework for qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA)

Europass

Key Competences Framework

European Classification of Skills, Competences, and Occupations (ESCO)

Microcredentials (MC)

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

EU Council Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)

Recognition of qualifications

Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)

Directive on Professional Qualifications (PQD)

EU council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition (AR)

Key considerations

- Significant progress in developing common frameworks and tools
- Increasingly coherent policy framework
 - Learning outcomes as unifying element
 - Growing convergence across policies and countries
 - Greater attention to learning outside formal settings
- **Stronger synergies *within* sectors (e.g. HE–HE, VET–VET) than *across* them.**
 - HE initiatives more integrated than VET

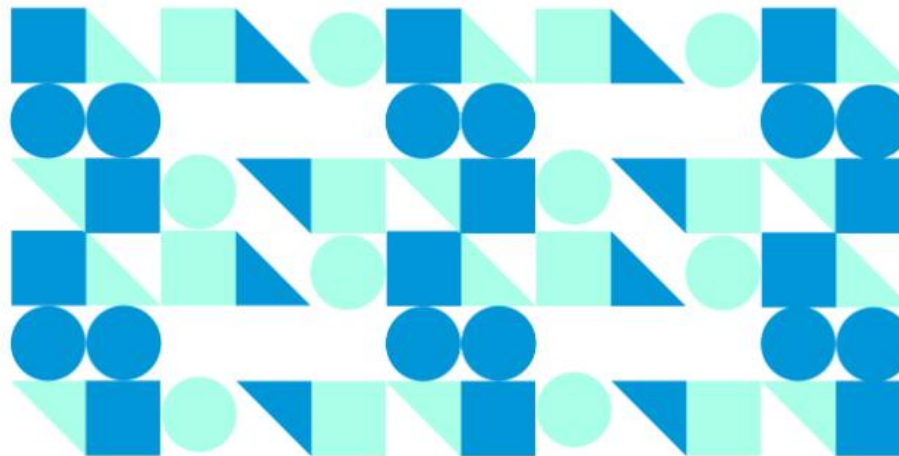


Research paper

Lifelong learning in 2000 and 2020

What has changed for the individual citizen?

**What has
changed for the
individuals from
2000 to 2020?**

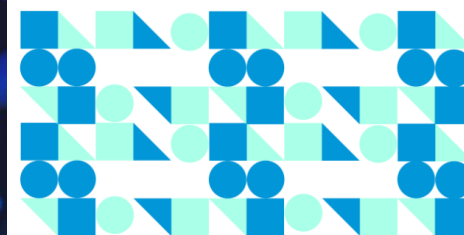


Barriers in 2020

- Underdeveloped credit systems in VET and limited cross-sectors tools and efforts.
- Fragmented validation and low take-up.
- Diverse quality assurance frameworks.
- VET still perceived as 'lower status'.
- Recognition and mobility differ across types of learners.

Future scenarios towards 2040

**What future policy
directions are available with
regards to transparency and
transferability of learning
outcomes?**

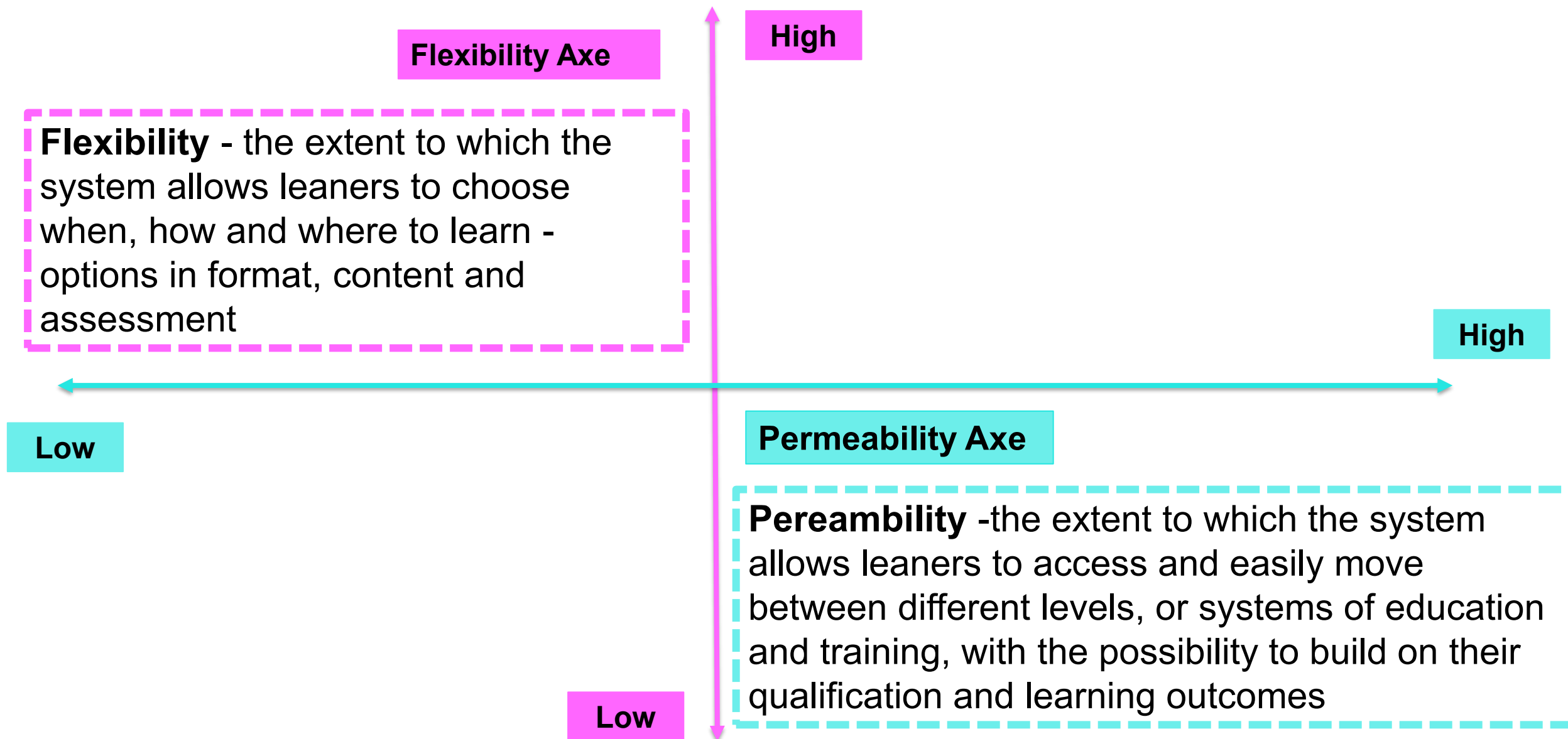


Methodological remarks

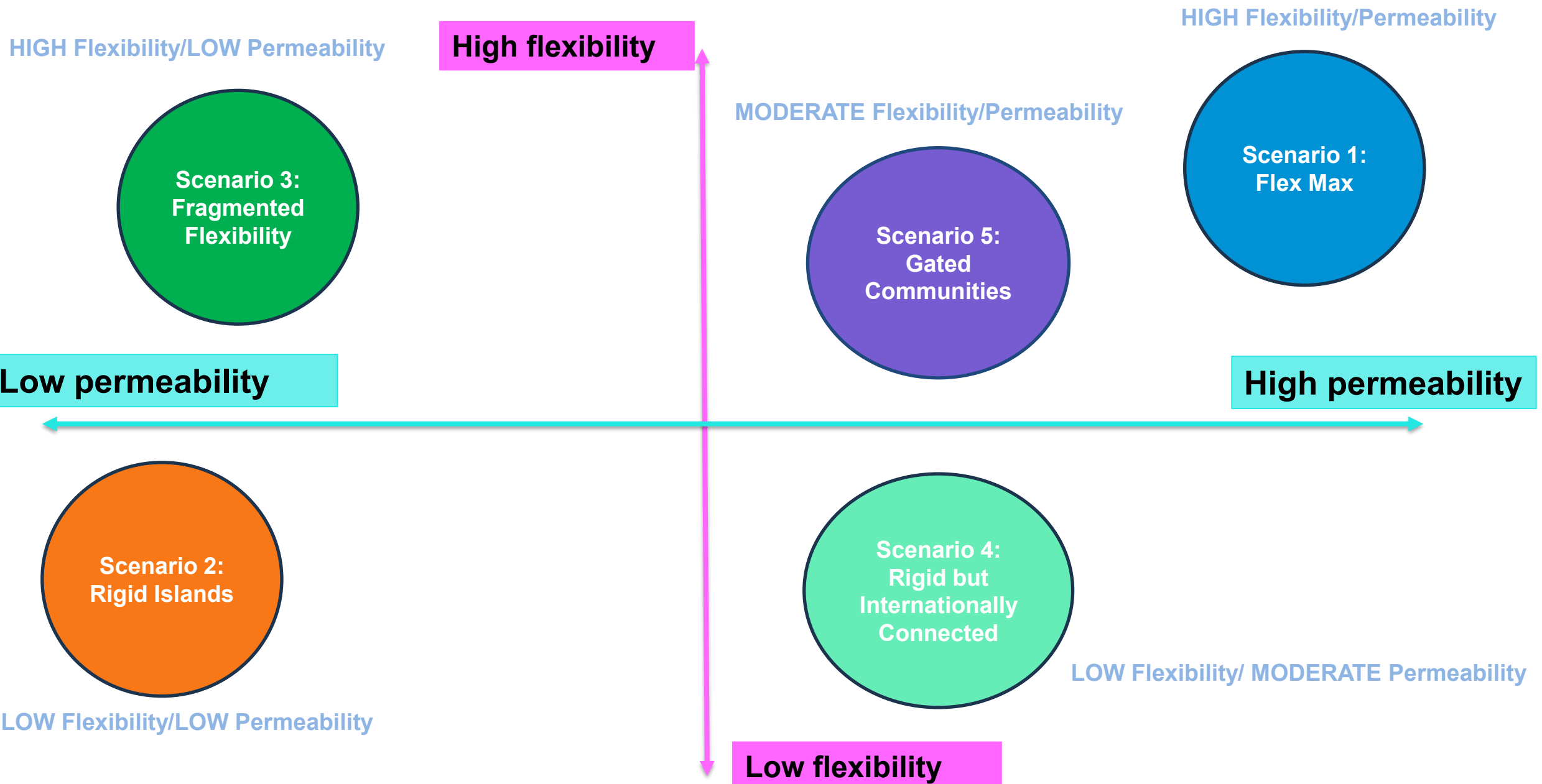
- Past trends as starting point (path dependency approach)
- Exploratory rather than normative scenarios
 - Tool for discussion - no predictions
- Comprehensive approach → generalisation



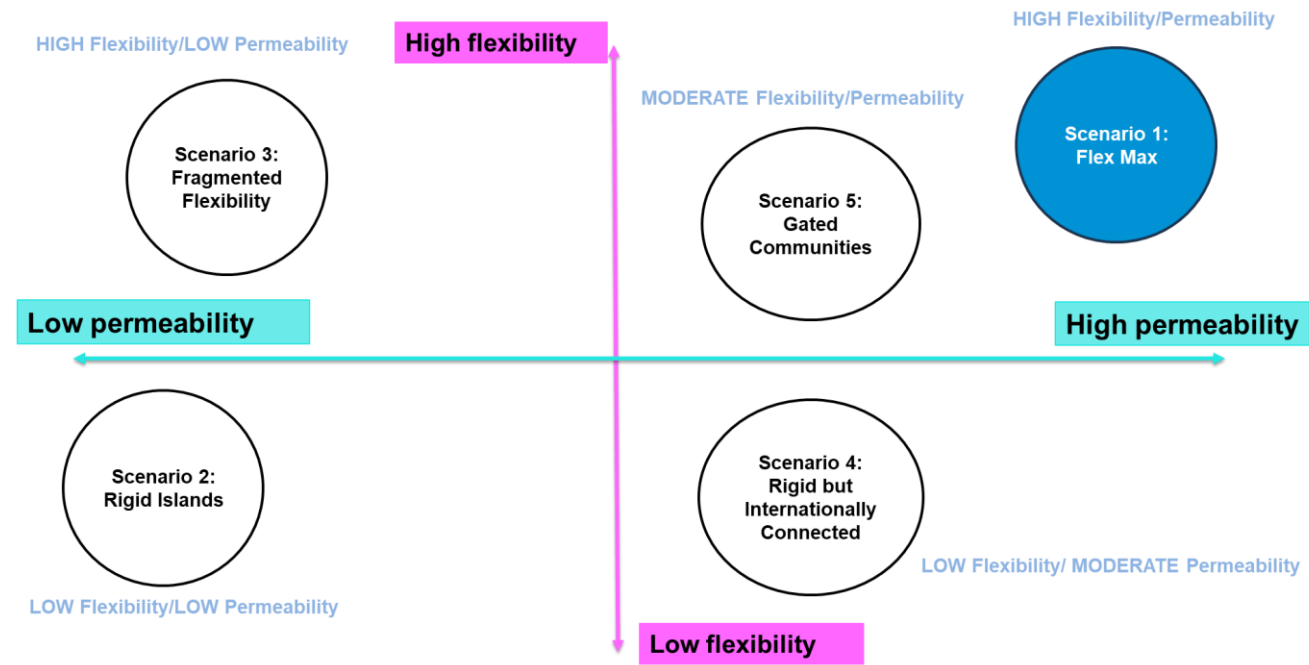
Identification of the vertical and horizontal axes



Five alternative scenarios for 2040

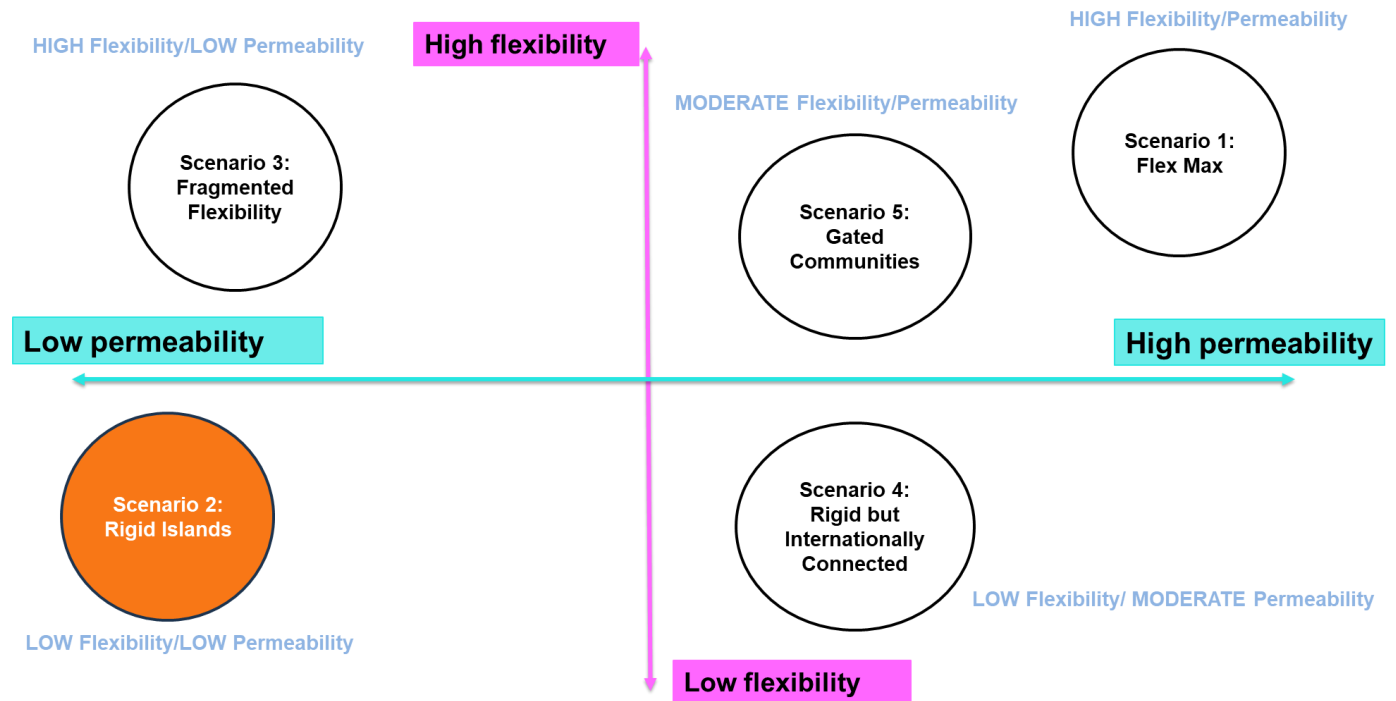


Scenario 1: Flex Max



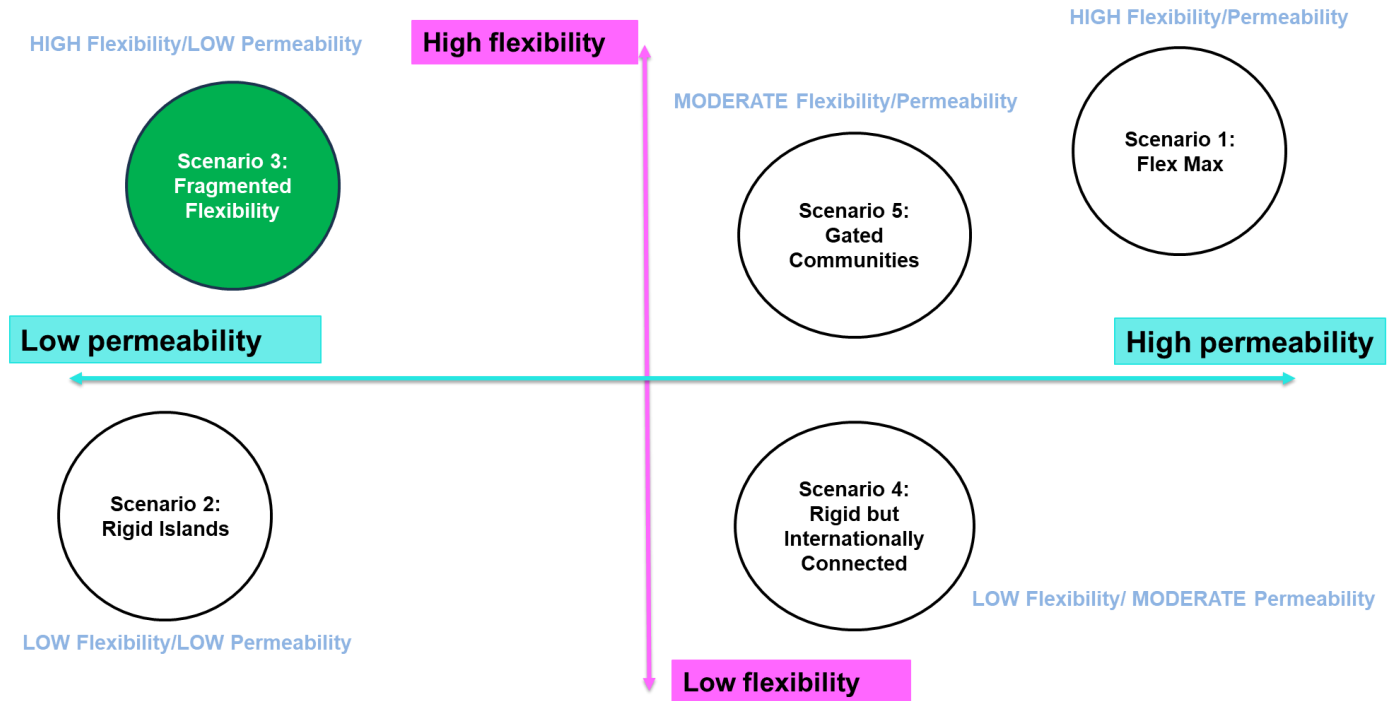
- High flexibility: wide range of learning opportunities
- High permeability: smooth transitions and mobility (e.g. compatible credit systems, common QA criteria, validation)
- Learners – struggle to navigate a complex landscape
- Strong investment in cooperation and coordination across national and international actors – tension between coordination and innovation.

Scenario 2: Rigid Islands



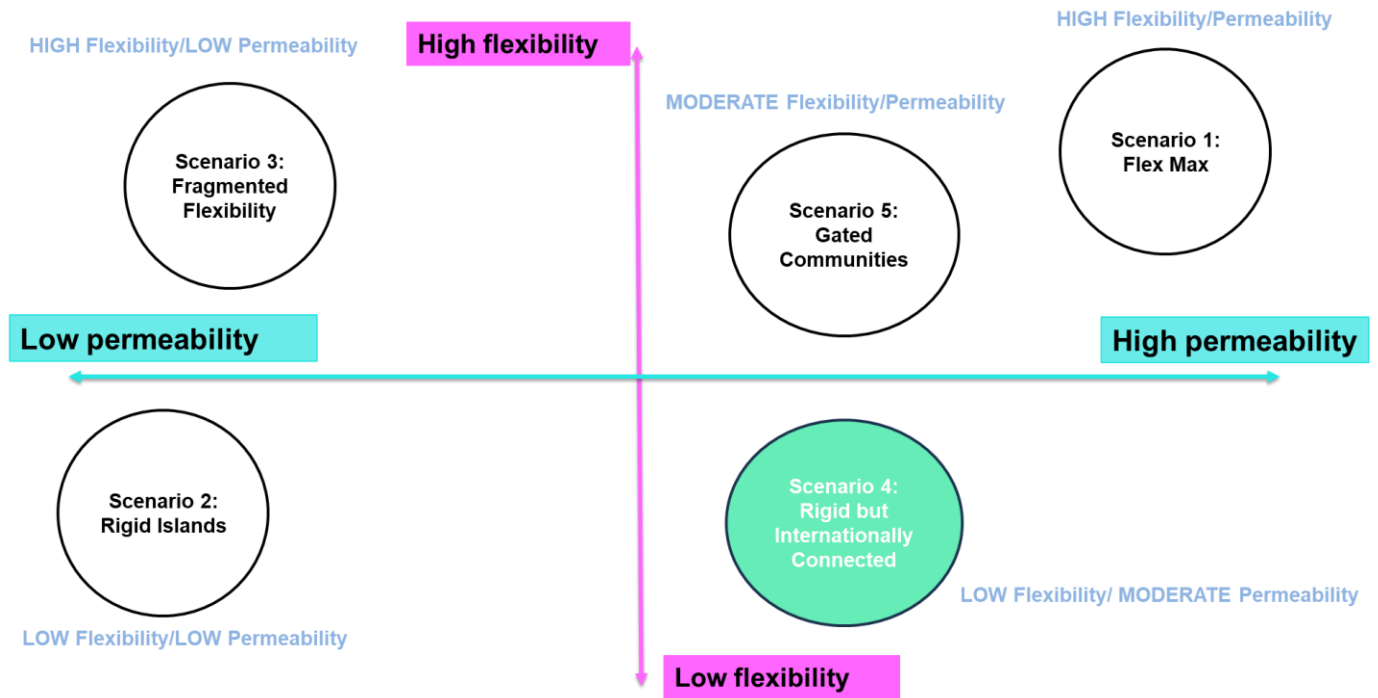
- Low flexibility: linear and structured pathways – trusted formal institutions
- Low permeability: limited transitions and mobility
- Learners – fewer opportunities to change direction in life.
- Centralised control with sub-systems operating independently under own rules and traditions

Scenario 3: Fragmented flexibility



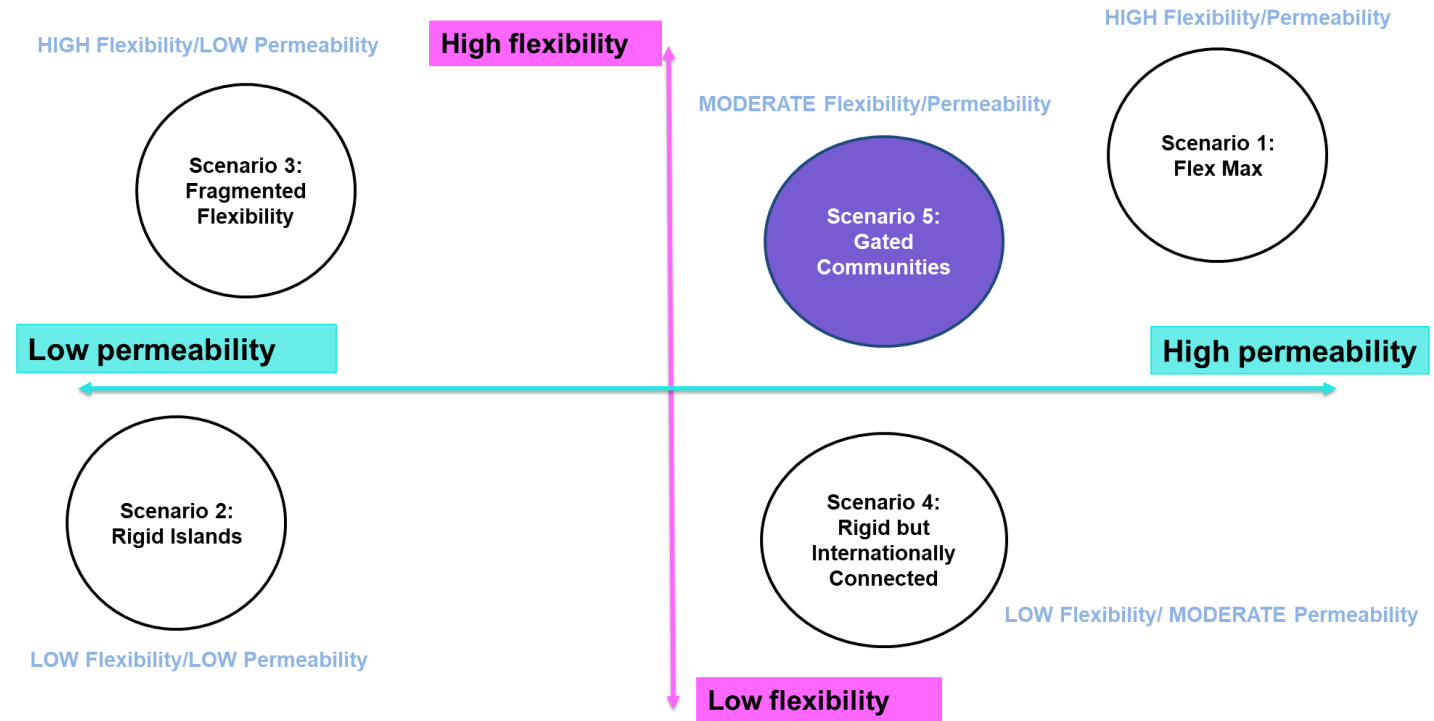
- High flexibility: wide range of learning opportunities
- Low permeability: limited transition and mobility (e.g. incompatible credit systems, common QA criteria)
- Learners – cannot easily combine – duplication of efforts
- Sectoral policy governance – decentralised innovation

Scenario 4: Rigid but internationally connected



- Low flexibility: structured and standardised learning pathways
- Moderate permeability: Mobility across borders is well-developed (e.g. international cooperation on credits, quality assurance, recognition)
- Learners – no transitions between systems and progression tied to initial choices
- Policy priorities lie in cross-border cooperation across formal actors

Scenario 5: Gated communities



- Moderate flexible: partial offer of learning options
- Moderate permeability: internal transitions increasingly developed
- Learners – limited international mobility and international students
- Policy makers prioritise efforts on building a strong national learning ecosystems

Thank you

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Project page:

Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes:

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/transparency-and-transferability-learning-outcomes>

Research papers:

Transparency and transferability of learning outcomes: a 20-year journey: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5609>

Lifelong Learning in 2000 and 2020

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5613>

Shaping the future of lifelong learning: policy scenarios for 2040

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/5619>



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