

Foresight in Thailand: Some Development and Underpinning Theories

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Abstract

This paper aims to depict the history of foresight programs in Thailand, their development, and current practices in proportion to the global foresight landscape and their underlying epistemologies. The objective is to bring awareness to the historical development of future studies, investigate the underlying epistemology, moral and ethical foundation within the discipline. The findings indicate that it is important to make explicit our philosophical presupposition, as it reflects on the direction of foresight practice and tool selections for foresight practitioners in Thailand.

Keywords: Futures Studies, Foresight Theory, Ethics, Critical Thinking, Narrative Foresight

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ภาพรวมและปรัชญาของอนาคตศึกษาประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ อธิบายประวัติความเป็นมาของอนาคตศึกษาในประเทศไทย โดยรวบรวมข้อมูล พัฒนาการและแนวทางปฏิบัติในปัจจุบัน วิเคราะห์ถึงญาณวิทยาที่แฝงอยู่ และนำไปเทียบกับแนวทางปฏิบัติของอนาคตศึกษาทั่วโลก เป้าหมายหลักของผู้เขียน มุ่งไปที่ การสร้างให้เกิดความตระหนักรู้ถึงประวัติความเป็นมาของอนาคตศึกษา การสืบค้นรากฐานทาง ศีลธรรมและจริยธรรมที่อยู่ภายใต้กรอบความรู้ สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงสมมติฐานทางปรัชญาที่ชัดเจน และมีความสำคัญต่ออนาคตศึกษา เนื่องจากเป็นรากฐานที่สำคัญในการกำหนดทิศทางในอนาคต ของการพัฒนาอนาคตศึกษาและช่วยในการเลือกเครื่องมือที่เหมาะสมสำหรับผู้ที่ออกแบและ นำไปใช้จริง

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Introduction

Foresight (similar to future studies) is known today as an activity to create knowledge of the future. COVID pandemic in early 2020 and its unforeseeable impact on the global population confirms that we live in a VUCA world full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (*Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity*, 2020).

Organizations are forced to step forward, react to unexpected events or disruptions, and develop an anticipatory capacity for strategic planning. Foresight capacities have been adopted in public sectors, mainly to find solutions and strategies for policy-making. However, the application has been limited to its utility in forecasting and preparation for extrapolated demand. The crucial missing element is its underpinning philosophies behind our future studies or foresight practices. Understanding this can change the problem framing which has a potential to shape the future of our country.

The paper outlines Thailand's foresight landscape in six sections, as follows:

Hindsight: Brief history of foresight in Thailand

Onsite: Current foresight practices

Insight: Theoretical basis of foresight

Oversight: Overlooked aspects and limitations in foresight workshop

Resight: Re-evaluating the vision of foresight

Foresight: Alternative foresight tools for the future of Thailand

Hindsight

Thailand's futures study can be dated back to 1975, as seen in the academic research by Dr. Somporn Sangchai, title "Some Aspects of Futurism." Sangchai (1975, p. 39) emphasized that "Planning has become the other side of the coin for futurism." Consequently, its connection to the present might be an obstacle of seeking alternative futures or actions. A few years later in 1978, another academic research on "Cultural futures for Thailand: The ethnographic enquiry" was conducted by Robert Textor, who outlined an ethnographic and cultural approach to show a widespread agreement among the interviewees, particularly on the possibility of large-scale violence in Thailand in the 1980s (Textor, 1978, P. 347-360). These two pieces of work provide some invaluable insight the foresight of futures work in Thailand.

Twenty years later, APEC Center for Technology Foresight was established in 1998 by Dr. Yongyuth Yuthavong and hosted by the National Science and Technology Development Agency of Thailand (NSTDA). The aim was to equip APEC Economies with planning tools and prepare for rapid change and major societal challenges. The dream team--Dr. Nares Damrongchai and Dr. Chatri Sripaipan--put together the book “A Decade of Foresight: Technology Foresight in Asia-Pacific, 1998-2008”. Since then, APEC has continued to produce Foresight reports in various dimensions, such as water, energy, and emerging diseases.

In 2006, Dr. Chulakorn Masatienwong, Ministry of Education, published a research paper on “The Foresight of Education Policy and Strategy for Thai Children.” (นโยบายและยุทธศาสตร์ทางการศึกษาแบบมุ่งอนาคตเพื่อเด็กและเยาวชนไทย). The majority of foresight tools implemented in Thailand were selected to forecast the technical changes, supporting organizations’ policy design and agenda-setting. Until 2010, foresight in the public sector was limited to a strategic plan, concentrating on science, technology, and education.

A breath of fresh air seemed to blow through Bangkok when foresight application expanded to address social problems in Thailand. Adam Kahane was invited to conduct a Transformative Scenario Planning workshop in August 2010 in the midst of political division among Thai citizen. A prominent conflict mediator and facilitator of Montfleur negotiations and Peace Negotiations in Columbia, Kahane and his team aspired to offer the first collaborative foresight workshop on Thailand’s politics (Kahane, 2012).

Amid political division, his team brought together 35 political, civil service, business, trade union, and NGOs to have a dialogue on “How Thailand will be passed on to our descendants.” The attempt was to create the possibilities for what Thailand might look like over the next 25 years. His communication strategies and plans yielded three scenarios to be completed in the following 18 months. What might have been the major step towards a groundbreaking deliberative process in Thailand was unexpectedly and prematurely terminated by the military coup in May 2014. The junta was established to govern the country, declared martial law, censored the media, and detained politicians and activists—including some participants.

Onsite

Fast forward to 2016, Thailand 4.0 scheme was unveiled by the military government, with an announcement published in the Royal Gazette. It was an ambitious attempt to transform the agricultural-based economy to the high-tech industry and innovation, bringing value-added products and services.

In 2018, Dr. Suvit Maesincee, while serving as a Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation, supported the Ministry of Higher Education, Research & Innovation (MHESI) establishment. The new ministry merged the existing Science and Technology Ministry, Office of the Higher Education Commission, the National Research Council of Thailand, and the Thailand Research Fund. It aimed to support Thailand 4.0 policy by developing high technology, enhancing R&D efficiency, and developing human resources for future demand.

“Blueprint for Change” outlines the new organizational structure within the administrative government. MHERI’s mission gears towards the previous government’s bureaucratic reform. Its main objective is to promote business related research, and plan human resources for future demand and develop business innovation (Theparat, 2019). Foresight was integrated as a mission under the Policy, Plan, and Budget departments, within this Ministry. In addition, during True Business Forum 2018: The Digital Future to Sustainability, Dr. Suvit Maesincee highlighted the “game-changer” of shifting from “economic growth” to the “thriving in balance” paradigm. To “define the future” of Thailand, he emphasized the three mandates: 1) Locating the “future setting” for a better society, 2) Creating game changers, and 3) Collaborating between public and private sectors on “innovative capacity” for transformative change into Thailand 4.0. His core message focused on the need for a new mindset, from fears about the future to taking control and daring to look into the future. (Thailand Publica, 2018)

Acting on the 10th guideline on a 20-year National Strategy, The National Innovation Agency (NIA) has become the spearhead of foresight activities, commissioning various futurists, incorporating foresight for innovation mission, and creating a network of major stakeholders and enthusiasts in recent years. One of the activities hosted by NIA is the Public-Private Chief Innovation Leadership. This policy lab brings together participants of diverse backgrounds and utilizes foresight tools in the policy design process.

IFI—Innovative Foresight Institute was established under NIA, with the following objectives: 1) Mapping society trends. 2) Support and develop futurist network 3) Encourage policy design by incorporating foresight tools. 4) Promote Foresight for the organization’s strategic planning.

Besides, NIA also provides workshops for the public with the support and collaborations from many academic and education institutions, namely, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Thailand Futures Foundation (TFF), Institute of Public Policy and Development (IPPD), Chiang Mai University, School of Public Policy, (CMU-SPP). The initiative drives the popularity of foresight concepts and increasing interest within the government sector.

NIDA and TFF are currently very active in offering government institutions workshops and are expanding their clout through the network and word-of-mouth among policy decision-makers. Their main focus is to manage uncertainty and proactively cope with these events. Each team consists of a few key agents who design programs to provide solutions for the contracting institutions.

Along the same line, under the Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO), Futures Setting is listed as the first among seven operation directions of the organization. Lifelong learning and futures skill set are indicated as a program *“improving knowledge, skills, and competencies of the current and future workforce to meet the demand of industry that is continually faced with technological disruptions”* (NXPO, 2022). In June 2020, NXPO hosted a foresight workshop on “Safe City” and invited a group of policemen from all parts of Thailand to collaborate on technology and policy design.

At Chulalongkorn University, hosted by the Faculty of Architecture, a social lab was created to understand our society’s future: how people live, work, get education, travel, communicate. The time horizon of 20-30 years is applied to forecast the future society, which helps with urban planning, space occupation, and utilization.

Thailand’s first foresight book was published in 1983 by Nattaya Pihanthanant (Pihanthanant, 2007). However, in recent years, the most notable publications are by the three following institutions and authors:

1. Thailand Future Foundation: “Futures Thinking”, promoting foresight and supporting the movement towards Thailand 4.0.

2. Innovative Foresight Institute (IFI), National Innovation Agency (NIA), and Thammasart University: “Foresight Tools”, providing foresight tool box for policy design.

3. Associate Professor Apiwat Ratanawaraha: “Futures Study”, showcasing 18 foresight tools and explaining his foresight experience and practical knowledge in Thailand (Ratanawaraha, 2020).

An increasing number of government organizations adopt Foresight in their strategic planning process. The organization that have adopted foresight tools into practices include educational institutions, private and some NGOs (Figure 1). In contrast, only a small group of foresight agents move around, offering training and facilitating for multiple institutions without restriction or limitation to their own. The transboundary nature of the Thai foresight community leads to mutual learning and idea exchange. Each workshop creates new knowledge and insight, continuously accumulated and applied into the sector. These agents share information and exchange ideas, practices, and techniques, fostering organic growth within the community. So far, most foresight tools have been geared towards strategic planning within organizations. In contrast, some other useful concepts and techniques could be promoted to address different types of Thailand issues. The next section will introduce the three foresight theories, which could widen the scope of the foresight approaches known in Thailand.

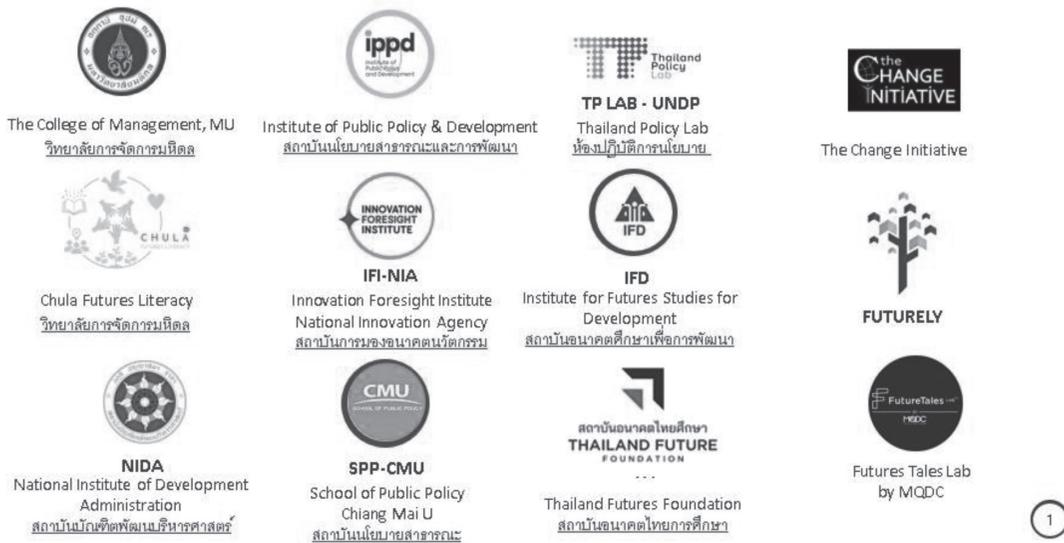


Figure 1: Organizations Involve with Foresight Practices

Insight

Piirainen and Gonzalez (2015) proposed three main philosophical outlooks which influence the selection of foresight tools and implementation approaches, namely 1) (post) positivism or empirical realism, 2) interpretivism and critical theory, and 3) pragmatism.

1) (Post) Positivism or empirical realist epistemology of foresight:

The Positivists utilize foresight tools to extrapolate the existing trend, focusing on the accuracy of the prediction. This approach is based on the assumption that the causal laws are constant and remain as such, conflicting with the reality of the uncertain and probabilistic nature of the future. Therefore the positivist sense seems like a moot point under a long time horizon because of the fluctuating nature of all the variables that created a particular outcome from the prediction (Piirainen & Gonzalez, 2015). Nevertheless, the forecasting and empirical data analysis approach have its footing mainly in science and technology. This foresight approach can be seen in the early year of the science and technology field in Thailand, as indicated in an APEC presentation—“Policy decision: Best information available + Anticipatory Intelligence = Foresight.”

In modern days, big data, science, and machine learning are being incorporated into forecasting future scenarios. Their objectives are to map the trend using new research tools, such as text-mining, agent-based models, system dynamics, and sensitivity analysis.

2) Interpretive and critical epistemology of foresight:

“What appears on the surface is sometimes different than what’s below.” The constructivists perceive the future as an agreeable set of notions and select foresight tools to accommodate the deliberative process. They seek a deep understanding of issues and go beyond the cause and effect, as the agenda is to integrate futures from multiple perspectives within the foresight process. The in-depth analysis includes social context, cultural norm, belief system, myth and metaphors (Inayatullah, 2008). These layers of assumptions, lying underneath human consciousness, are not explicit but incessantly control human behavior and thinking system. Trying to decode the complex layers gives insight into the issue at the root cause, not just what appears on the surface. However, this foresight approach does not force a consensus, without which an immediate actionable result is missing.

The futures of “what ought to be” are derived from each individual value, not knowledge or expertise. Through the deliberative process, each participant is empowered to share their views while receiving equal value consideration regardless of their expertise.

The School of Public Policy at Chiang Mai University highlights this approach and promotes organizations to be “future-ready” by focusing on preparation for the long-term futures (20+ years). They uniquely adopted Emotional Intelligence, Empathy, Complexity Thinking, and Casual Layer Analysis by Dr. Sohail Inayatullah as one of the main tools. Problem classification (through Complexity Thinking tools) occurs early in the process to filter out the immediate actionable plan from the long-term strategy. This design allows participants to set the timeframe accordingly during the scenario planning stage. The outcome is the four plausible scenarios, for which participants jointly decide by voting on the most desirable one and planning actionable steps to reach that particular scenario. The future scenario derives from collaborative work and value set from the participant group, not from the knowledge of the expert group (“*Learn to Design your Future*,” 2020)

3) Pragmatist epistemology of foresight:

Most popular and widely adopted in Thailand is this practical approach. The pragmatists believe that any foresight method useful in producing an intended output is valid. The focus is on utility and timely actionable output, a solution highly valued by organizations. The program is implemented to achieve actionable results, not just description, prediction, or deep understanding of the future (Piiirainen & Gonzalez, 2015).

The pragmatists in private and public sectors adopt foresight tools and plausible scenarios into the policy design process. The main goal is to find a solution (policies) to the problem (issues). The system thinking process is frequently implemented, entailing “diagnose, discover, define, develop, and deliver.” An expert team with insight knowledge to the issues (Delphi) are brought together to work on horizon scanning, vote on the driving forces (STEEP), and create plausible domains (scenarios). The process usually relies on quantitative and computerized data to increase forecast accuracy, channeled through the roadmap report to short, medium, and long-term solutions. This practical strategic foresight approach is used to explore multiple plausible futures to provide scenarios and contexts for decision-making. It is prevalent in policy-related organizations, such as

- IPPD (Institute of Public Policy and Development)¹: A Brief Summary of “Utilizing Futures Studies in the Transforming World”, Thailand 2035: Horizon Scanning Overview
- TFF (Thailand Future Foundation)²: Post-COVID Impact on the Futures of Aging Society, Resilient SME: COVID-19 Survival Guide, Multi-Stage Life: Achievable Life Balance
- NIDA (National Institute of Development Administration)³: Unavoidable Future of Tech Singularity, Micro Credential: Educational Trend in the Volatile World

¹ <https://ippd.or.th/en/#>

² <https://www.thailandfuture.org/articles>

³ <https://futurist.nida.ac.th/>

Foresight researchers have implicit philosophies or epistemologies underlying their assumptions about the reality of the world. These assumptions have the power to open or close our visions and guide our research accordingly. Therefore, being aware of these subconscious compasses empowers us to take control and choose suitable theories for our studies.

Positivism/Empiricism assumes that knowledge is achieved from measurable or observable evidences. Therefore, the future can be predicted from the historical record from the past to then present by formula or regression analysis. This form of forecast is widely used in science, economic and financial sector.

Interpretivism perceives knowledge through multiple lenses of historical, cultural, or societal contexts. There is not a singular consensus of ultimate reality, but rather individual or collective interpretation of the events. This enables us to investigate the dominating knowledge of the present and open some room for the other ways of knowing which can lead to alternative futures.

Pragmatism focuses on producing new knowledge based on the available tools. The goal is not to find the “right” answer, but to fulfil the preassigned objectives with an outcome of actionable practice. The summary of epistemological impact can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Epistemologies, Implications and Concerns

	Positivism/Empiricism	Interpretivism/ (Critical) Constructivism	Pragmatism
Ontology (reality of future)	There is a single reality or truth.	There is no single reality or truth. Reality is socially, culturally, historically, and contextually constructed.	Debated, negotiated, reinterpreted reality, in accordance with its function in different situations.
Epistemology (How do we know about the future?)	Evidence, formulation, theory, prediction, forecast, causation	Interpretation of meaning (discourse, language, signs) Multiple realities → judgmental relativism	Knowledge is based on experience. Research through design. Action taken from existing available knowledge.
Methodology Orientation	Trend analysis, regression models, formulas, extrapolation	Accounting of and comparing multiple views and alternative interpretation.	Mixture of different methods. Design-based research. Action research. Consequences from useful practice.
Projection	Deterministic futures	Alternative futures, make futures problematic	Practical (Actionable) futures
Privilege/ Advantage	Bureaucrats Intellectuals Capitalists	Cosmology, local knowledge. Dominated cultures. Past traditions, values, language structure	Actionable futures Preconceived understanding of the problems
Dominant Power	Power potentially steering research direction	Distributed power Deconstruction of power	No inquiry into power

Table 1: Epistemologies, Implications and Concerns (Cont.)

	Positivism/Empiricism	Interpretivism/ (Critical) Constructivism	Pragmatism
Concerns	<p>Post-truth era. Politics of information.</p> <p>Divergence between the reality and the information used to justify the decision because of political pressure from interest group.</p> <p>The motivation of foresight is not for justice, but rather an assertion to decision making or policy decision.</p>	<p>The futures discourse states that there is a good society emerging from the struggles between good over evil, introversion over extraversion, empathy over objectivity.</p> <p>Self reflection or enlightenment can be found between consciousness and the objects it represents.</p>	<p>Responsible for only tasks at hand</p> <p>Negligent of the expectation emotions (hope and fear) of the public.</p> <p>Inclusivity, Equality, Sustainability</p>

Oversight

Some practical knowledge and reflection from participatory research from the past foresight workshops with academic and governmental institutions are noted as follows:

Setting Objectives and Assigning a Foresight Team

There are cases when organization leaders are confused between focusing on their organization's future or their working system's future. An early decision on the pathway and staying on track will produce the ultimate result.

Analyzing the organization's future helps the team foresee the key drivers and relationships and the role the organization will have in each scenario. On the other hand, analyzing the system's future helps the team identify how the most plausible scenarios could affect its existence and role. Both analyses shall be done separately in order to produce an unbiased result. Setting aside a foresight team that can facilitate

the activity and steers and implements its actionable steps is advisable. Some additional guidelines and instructions shall be provided for the designated internal foresight team for the subsequent foresight workshops performed within the organization.

Applying Cynefin Framework on Policy Design

Cynefin is a complexity thinking framework, developed by David Snowden to assist decision-making.⁴ It is based on shifting the understanding of the world from composed of simple machines to composed of complex systems. In the dynamic and interconnected environment, organization leaders must understand the nature of the problems and distinguish among simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic contexts. Simple context has clear cause and effect. The solution can be found from best practices in the past. Complicated context requires expert knowledge to unlock the problem and identify the best solutions from multiple right answers. Complex context does not reveal the right answers, as the future trend is not predictable. Despite being in the dark, chaos context demands an immediate response during the crisis, full of an unknown future (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Recognizing these contexts will enable public officials to identify the situation and align a suitable policy design.

Cognitive Biases

In preparation for extreme futures or wild card scenarios, it is important to motivate the group to think out of the box and move beyond one's realm of comfort. As human beings, we each have a different degree of desirable futures. *"If we focus on preferable futures instead of anticipating plausible and probable futures, we end up serving one interest group or another unequally (Puirainen & Gonzalez, 2015, p. 10)."* Foresight is inherently a normative process. To achieve the group outcome, one must perfect the art of balancing future scenarios that allow for imagination instead of mental blocks. The choice of an analogy with a less blatant or offensive tone could help maintain the collaborative effort. While it makes sense to stretch the group's imagination, imposing personal values on the group thinking could create discomfort among participants and alienate some group members, thus hindering group work efficacy.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cynefin_framework

Emotions and Emotional Intelligence

Group discussion around some controversial policy options could lead to intense feelings among the team. Creating a safe environment where everyone can express themselves freely is the key to fostering dialogue on uncertainty, conflict, and risk.

Participants should be encouraged to engage wholeheartedly and continuously throughout the process by being present and embracing deep listening skills. CLA (Causal Layered Analysis) is a foresight technique that leads participants through deep surgery into their belief system, which might challenge religious, norm, cultural practices (Inayatullah, 2008). Fear, anxiety, or frustration could surface. A protected environment will enable the group to free their mind and explore what lies beneath them. Practicing emotional intelligence by being aware of one's feelings and recognizing others' reactions are crucial to sustaining the group performance (Goleman, 2006).

Resight

Modern futures studies can be traced back to 1945, right after world war II, when France's "prospective studies" center was founded. The term "prospective" has been adopted as signifying decision-making with the contemplation of long-term consequences. Since then, a great number of western European countries have made significant development on a philosophical basis for future studies. Not only have they attempted to increase awareness and interest in the futures field, but they vitalized the criticism of global models. This work subsequently led to the formation of international groups to promote human development as an individual, a group, and a community in the emerging world. (Masini, 2006)

In Eastern Europe, future studies are considered an essential process required for policy planning. It is not a mere projection of the past, but rather a principle based on statistical and probably analysis, focusing on scientific and technological processes and their consequences towards social progress.

The future studies in the United States and Canada can be divided into three orientations: technology, utilizing the computerized, technological process in research; sociology, including local communities to design their futures; global, working under the big picture of global outlook on world order.

On the global landscape, foresight practice has become highly fashionable and adopted by corporate, national, and civil agendas. (Son, 2015) Corporations' main interests lie in business strategies and innovations. National endorses foresight as a policy device involving large-scale activities focusing on economic, technological, and social issues. Civil aims to nurture the growing civil society on tackling imminent crisis including environmental issues or global economic instability.

Sadar (1993) argued that the third world has been colonized by the western development concept whereby future studies serve as academic and intellectual instruments in the last frontier. Despite the advanced development of critical futures studies, there is still a lack of coherent discipline and diversity. Son (2015) indicated our current stage (from the 1990s to the present) as a neoliberal view and fragmentation of the futures. This remark is an alarming signal to investigate the underlying moral and ethical foundation within the discipline, make explicit our philosophical presupposition, and reflect on the direction of foresight practice and tool selections. (Bell, 2017)

The visions in futures thinking (or desirable futures) have implicit values based on the influence of history, science, literature, philosophy, or policy. If people are unaware of the changing elements or unconscious of its direction, they naively become part of the change and let the reinforcement process involuntarily unroll. Masini (2006) stresses that futurists must re-evaluate these visions by looking for and listening to "seeds of change" among alternative sources. Her vision of future studies marks essential elements of critical thinking and inclusivity, connecting to social responsibility and ethical values for futurists in searching for visions and building projects for action.

Foresight

An overview of the foresight history in Thailand shows isolated movements in future thinking, ranging from the field of culture, education, and resource management. Not until 2018, under the initiative of Dr. Suvit Maesincee, foresight practitioners formed and took part in shaping the ecological systems in Thailand, along with surging interest in both the private and public sectors. However, most projects are mandated by some organizational objectives to serve their agenda. The practices are limited within the duty of each institution, but fail to acknowledge the white elephant in the room. Under the political upheaval and resurgence of country-wide protest, how future-ready is

Thailand to handle the different generations' dividing political views? Does Thailand provide its citizen with equality and justice to access their desirable future?

Since the establishment of APEC's first foresight center in Thailand, most practices, tools, and implementations have revolved around strategic foresight. The most common purposes are strategic solutions and actionable plans for the uncertainty of this ever-fast-changing world. Foresight has been in high demand because government organizations face multiple pressures and challenging disruptions. However, building greater anticipatory capacities for policy design is simply reacting to the possible futures instead of proactively creating one's own.

The increasing demand of futures studies in both private and public organizations attracts more people into field. While practitioners have access to a wide varieties of online foresight tools such as United Nation, they tend to choose the tools based in the practical application of the issues they are working on. This creates some risk of limiting the focus to empirical evidences, while ignoring the underlying causes of mechanism of the issues. This can be seen from a case study of air pollution problem in Thailand. The government policy and solutions are limited to the relationship of the seasonal concentration of PM2.5 and the agricultural biomass burning in some regions of Thailand. However, other causes contributing to haze are the year-round industrial, vehicle emissions and most importantly, the outdated emission standard which doesn't hold the polluters accountable to the haze problems (Boonmavichit and Boosabong, 2022). Acknowledging that there is more to reality than meets the eye is a crucial step enabling the practitioners to investigate the root causes of the problems.

Alternative foresight approaches and tools should be promoted among government organizations involved with long-term national strategic plans. It is also important to set up a group with diversity in age, occupation, expertise, and experience and extend to include non-stakeholders, as they might be able to give different perspectives that could otherwise be overlooked.

Structural changes take time. Student protests might one day be considered the revolutionary narratives for the new generation to look back on. Notwithstanding contemptuous expression, the echoing villification on Bangkok's street exhibited an unprecedented public statement about the failure in governance, defying the longstanding law, and marking a dot in the history that opens up new possibilities and unknown risks.

Societal polarization can be attributed to social media influence and the divergent narratives among multiple generations over the years. The longer this persists, the more civil conflict Thai people will have. Thailand needs a safe space to allow constructive dialogues and communication among all parties. It is time to adopt and utilize alternative foresight approaches to reunite the people.

An increasing number of academic articles support narrative approaches as a great potential for futures thinking and strategy development (Milojević, & Inayatullah, 2020). Singapore's Foresight Conference in 2019 highlighted multiple narratives by embracing disagreement instead of focusing on winning (*Foresight Conference 2019 Report: Society 4.0*, 2020). Narrative foresight was proposed as an alternative tool that takes into account multiple contexts which shape the interpretations of individual and collective knowledge. "Narrative Foresight seeks to investigate current modes of knowing the world, challenge detrimental and non-functioning schemes, and open up alternatives. The alternatives use the future to change the present" (Milojević, & Inayatullah, 2020, p. 20).

A constructivist believes that the future is to be guessed, envisioned, built collectively and inclusively (Godet, 2020). How Thailand will navigate through the political division is yet to be determined. The question comes down to whether foresight tools shall be put in place to serve a greater purpose in building a new collective future or merely constricted to provide a solution for strategic plans like previously done in Thailand.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the development of foresight practices in Thailand and the underpinning philosophies. Most foresight materials and practice focus on providing tools for policy-making and innovation but leave out the consideration of its fundamental epistemology. While the current stage studies and practices are largely based on the western style of futures studies, it is advisable for practitioners to apply a critical lens in understanding its evolution, both in domestic and global settings, to re-evaluate, reflect, and re-conceptualize the philosophy behind their practices. Amid the ongoing public health, economic and political instability, Thailand futurists must be conscious of the social responsibility and the ethical values in creating the visions (desirable futures),

not to reinforce the inherited paradigm, but to investigate how the existing and widely accepted paradigm might be suppressing other ways of knowings, so futures can remain open for possibilities that would lead to the prosperity of all citizen.

Appendix

A wide range of toolkits is available online for free download. The chosen four are included to cover both private and public foresight practices in Thailand and around the world.

The Futures Toolkit by the Government Office for Science, UK

Designed for the newcomers by providing some introduction to futures thinking and some design questions for the policy-making process, this toolkit is a useful overview and resource to ensure sound decisions making for government policy.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf

Strategic Foresight Toolkit by the School of International Foresight (SOIF)

This comprehensive manual, toolkit, and guidance provide a step-by-step preparation of the foresight process. Among a wide range of tools for public and private sectors, SOIF selected 12 techniques and adapted them for Save the Children organization.

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/strategic_foresight_toolkit_online.pdf/

Futures Thinking in Asia and the Pacific by Asian Development Bank (ADB)

This handbook captures the lesson drawn from the foresight pilot project by ADB in collaboration with its regional partners, such as Srilanka, Cambodia, and the Philippines. Aiming to provide transformative change among government officials, ADB attempts to unleash them from just knowledge and evidence but also incorporates emotions and creativity in futures thinking. The most interesting aspect is the application of foresight to support innovation in development work. This comprehensive manual, toolkit, and guidance provide a step-by-step preparation of the foresight process. Among a wide range of tools for public and private sectors, SOIF selected 12 techniques and adapted them for

Save the Children organization.

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/579491/futures-thinking-asia-pacific-policy-makers.pdf>

Foresight Tools by Innovation Foresight Institute (IFI) and National Innovation Agency (NIA)

Published in Thai, the foresight handbook provides an introduction to future thinking for strategic planning at the enterprise or national level. The comprehensive content allows reader to understand futures thinking, from its definition, multiple designs and analyses, the nine tools and their the application. It's one of the early free reference foresight books for Thai readers.

<https://nia.bookcaze.com/viewer/1500/1/เครื่องมือการมองอนาคต>

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