

Hichert & Associates (Pty) Ltd Scenario Planning, Horizon Scanning, Risk Scenarios, Futures Research
9 Cylnor Street, Somerset West, 7130, South Africa, Tel: +27 (0)21 8555 839, Cell: + 27 (0)82 5766 429, www.hichert.co.za

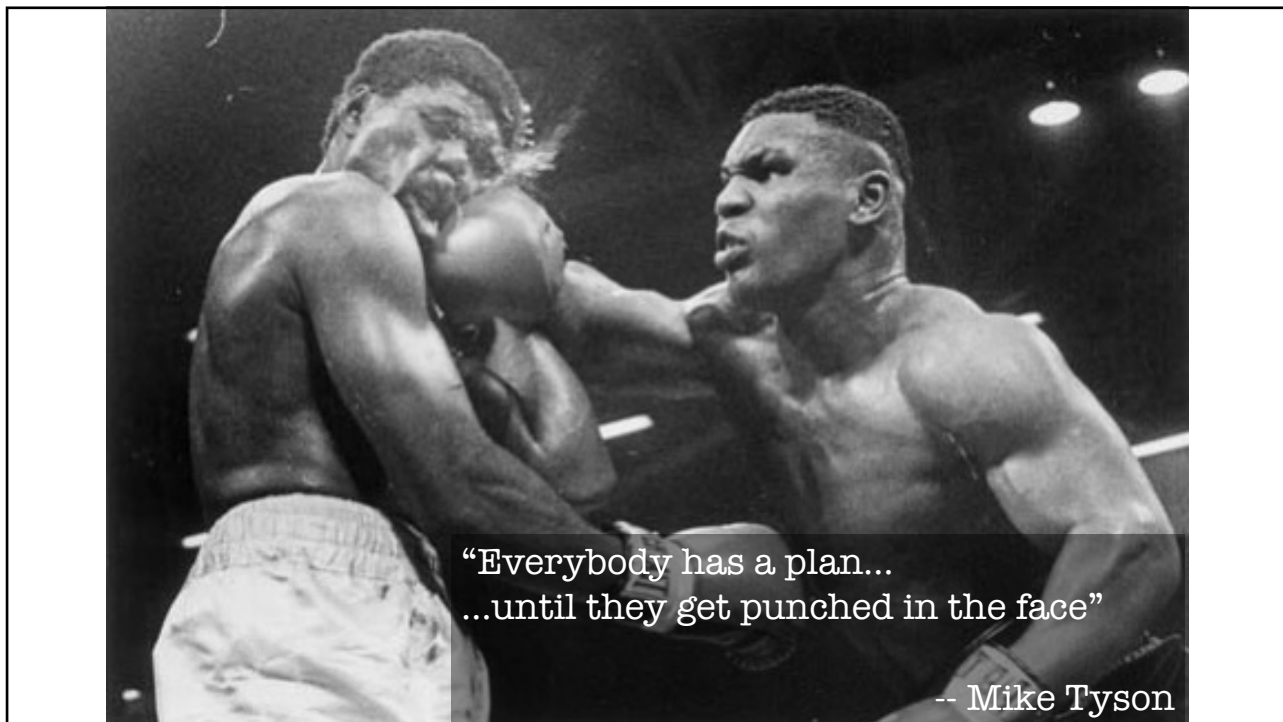
FORESIGHT AS AN APPROACH TO INFORM SOUND POLICYMAKING

Tanja Hichert

27 April 2021



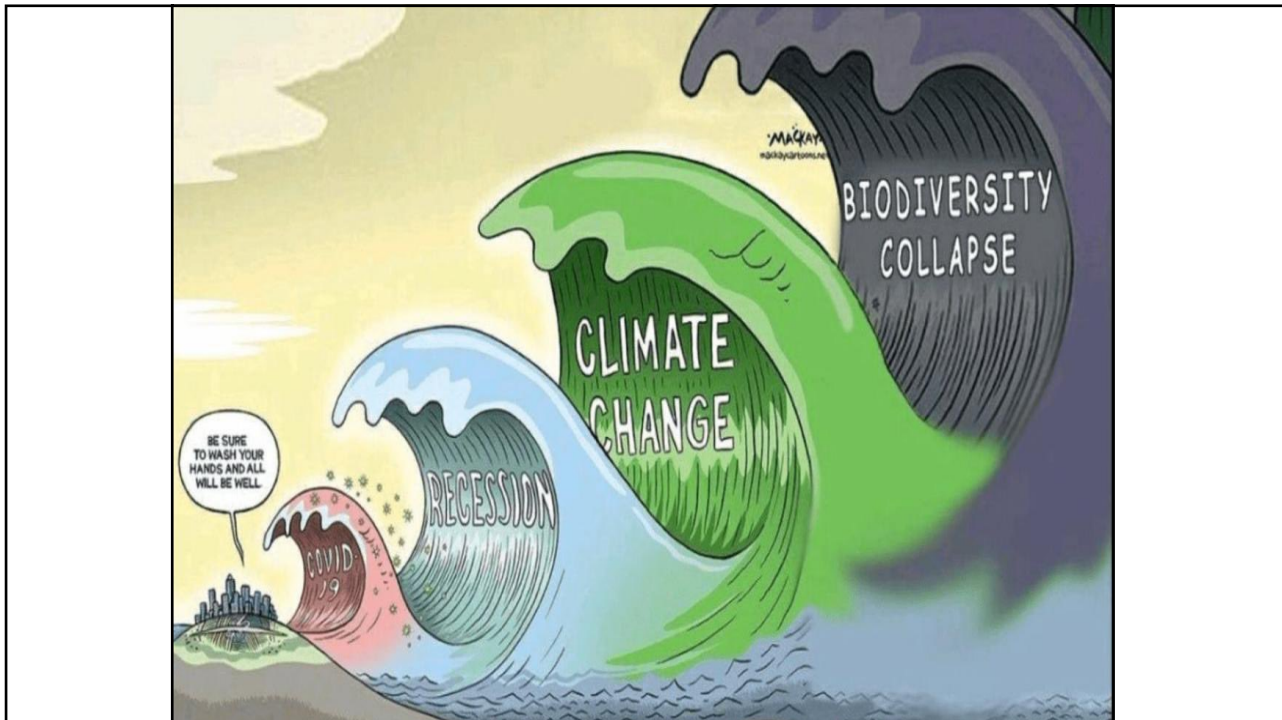
WHY FORESIGHT?



It's a VUCA world

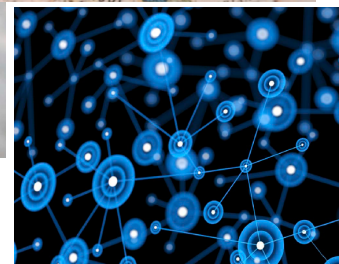
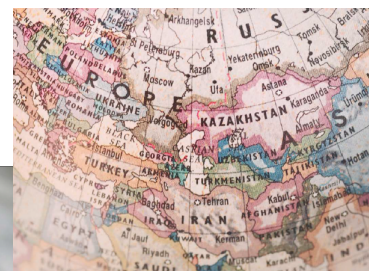
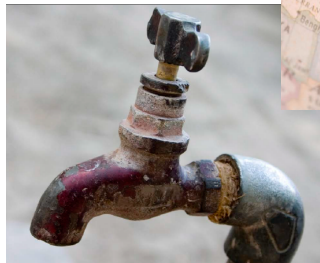
- **Volatility** reflects the speed and turbulence of change.
- **Uncertainty** means that outcomes, even from familiar actions, are less predictable.
- **Complexity** indicates the vastness of interdependencies in globally connected economies and societies.
- And **ambiguity** conveys the multitude of options and potential outcomes resulting from them





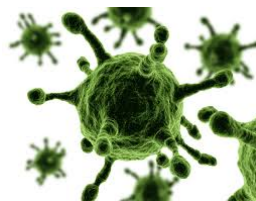
Megatrends: Driving forces shaping the future

- Large-scale social, economic, political, environmental or technological changes that are slow to form but which, once they have taken root, **exercise a profound and lasting influence** on many if not most human activities, processes and perceptions.
 - Global population growth
 - Urbanisation
 - Ageing of societies
 - Warming of the planet
 - Acidification of the oceans
 - Growing momentum of digitalisation, big data and bioengineering



Key uncertainties / Disrupters

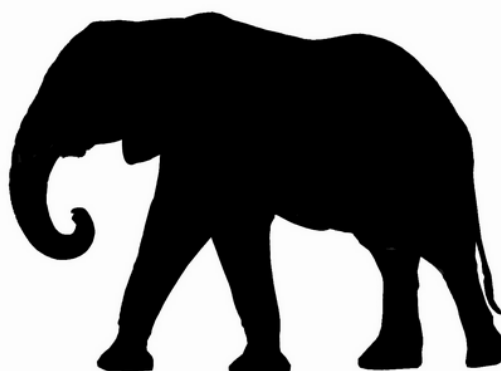
- ...come in a multitude of forms – from global financial crashes and pandemics to wars and sudden waves of immigration; and from continental-scale natural disasters to sudden shifts in population fertility.
- Ultimately, it is how megatrends and disruptive trends – especially in the field of science and technology – interact that will set the scene for the coming decades.
- It is for governments, business, communities, researchers and citizens in general to reflect on what the interplay of such trends means in terms of opportunities to be seized and challenges to be met.



“PREDICTABLE SURPRISES” & “WILFUL BLINDNESS”

Michael Watkins & Max Bazerman

Margaret Heffernan



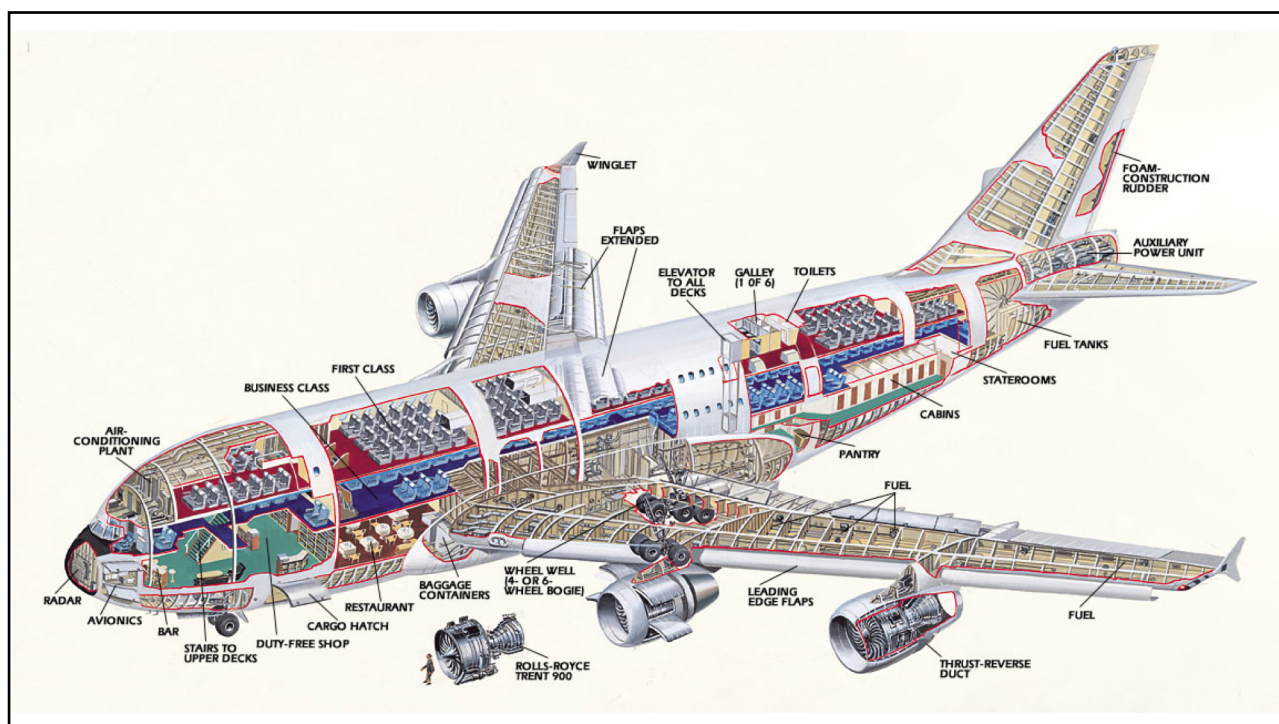
Impacting factors are never ‘single issues’

World Economic Forum
2020 Global Risks
“Interconnection Map”



In a VUCA world ‘traditional’ ways of thinking do not work anymore

- Nassim Taleb skewered investors’ belief that they could compartmentalise and predict risk based on past performance, drawing attention to unforeseeable ‘black swans’ that undermine careful predictions.
- Philip Tetlock showed empirically that foreign affairs experts were as accurate at predicting events as random chance or guesswork, and that the more sure experts seemed, the more wrong they turned out to be.
- And Daniel Kahneman revealed how people are systematically misguided when they think about the future.



TWO SHIFTS NEEDED:

1) FROM 'FORECAST' TO 'FORESIGHT', AND

2) FROM 'SILO'S' TO 'SYSTEMS'

Foresight Purpose / Rationale

- Foresight is the capacity to anticipate and plan for possible futures.
- The ultimate purpose of strategic foresight is to **make better, more informed decisions in the present**. For a partnership like the UN and Namibia the capability (or means) to 'use' and 'work with' the future in order to improve;
 - products and services,
 - decision-making,
 - risk profile, and
 - ability to cope in a VUCA - Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous - world

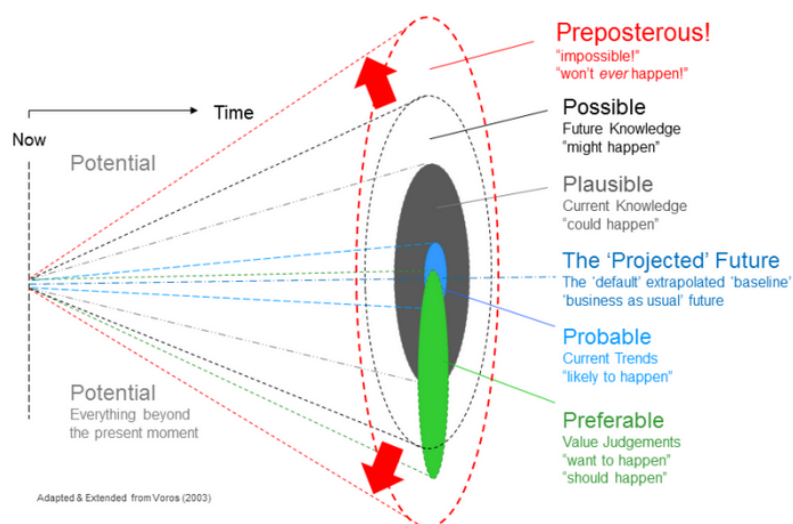


WHAT IS FORESIGHT?

Foresight is...

- ... the **capability of imagining** how we might think, do and govern differently given completely different (post-normal) futures, and it is the capability to generate views of alternative futures – because there isn't one single predictable future – and to then 'use' the future, and 'learn' from the future in order to make better decisions, choices and plans today.
- ... the **capacity to think systematically about the future** to inform decision-making today. ... an organizational or institutional capacity that informs the development of strategy and strategic plans. Integrating strategic foresight as a core part of [policy-making] can offer an effective and coordinated way of navigating uncertainty and complexity, mitigating risk, and harnessing innovation by creating transformational change that can help build resilience – which is not just about withstanding and coping with challenges but also about navigating transformative change.
- ... **not designed to predict the future** nor is it intended to entirely replace traditional forms of analysis and policy-making. Rather, it allows decision-makers and stakeholders to look outside, above and beyond, and have structured strategic conversations about change uncertainty and its impacts into account.

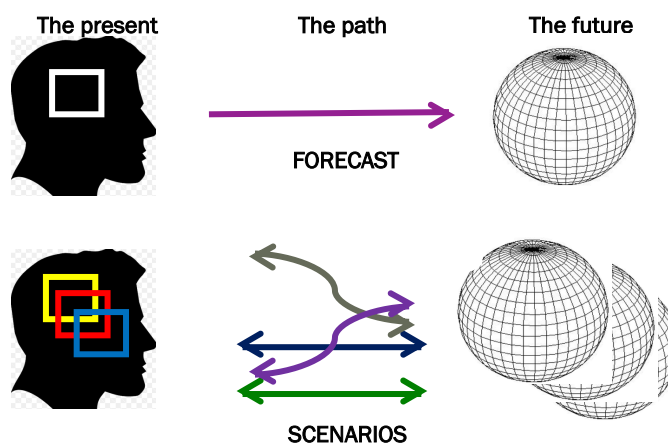
Multiple futures: think Apollo 11 moon landing



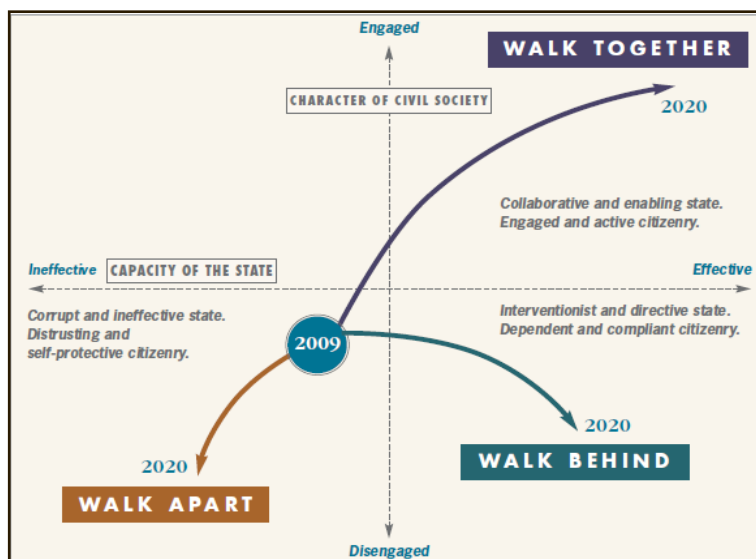
Voros

Scenarios

- Impact and 'unknowability'
- Alternative futures
- Options



The Dinokeng scenarios



‘Ambient futures’: There is no such thing as a “normal” future from which all other futures are exceptions, and no images of the futures that are more plausible or implausible than any others



You want to be able to answer this question:

- *What are the factors, both steady and sudden, that cause change and shape the future, which is not set in stone, therefore what does a preferred future look like, and what can possibly be done to start making changes now that help you and your stakeholders move ethically towards a preferred future (taking multiple views and perspectives into account)?*







GOVERNMENT FORESIGHT

“Anticipatory Governance”

- “Our legacy systems for the formation of policy are based on the **expectation of linearity**. Linearity distorts our notion of cause and effect.
- Under its influence, we tend to expect that **for every problem there is a unique solution**; and that proportionate changes of circumstances will produce proportionate changes of outputs.
- We believe that it is possible to disassemble (‘unpack’) compound, conglomerate issues, without destroying their coherence.
- We divide government into ‘vertical’ hierarchies which neatly align legal mandates, bureaucratic boundaries, and the selection and training of personnel – all in the expectation that in the end, the result will be actions that are fully integrated and part of a properly functioning whole.”
- Anticipatory governance is the (suggested) framework for fully **incorporating complexity and open futures** into legacy systems
- “... government that is **able to sense and execute changes ahead of the cusp of major events**; the better to blunt threats and harvest opportunities”

Leon Fuerth

Different purposes, different structures

Whole-of-government level	
Within ministries	
Research organisations	
Minister of the Future	
Future Generation Commissioner	
Regional collaborative - cross-system, multi-actor	

Setting aside ‘National Development Plans’ and donor sponsored initiatives

Futurist > Government foresight programs

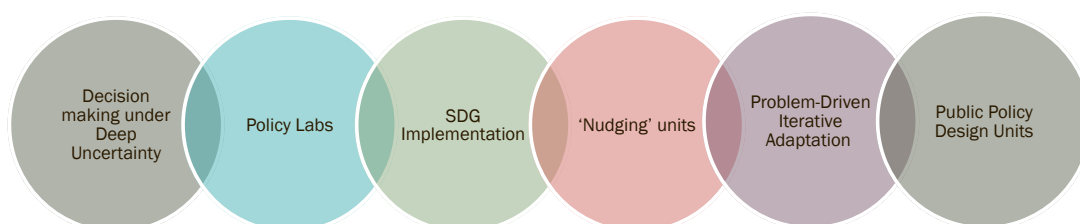
Government foresight programs

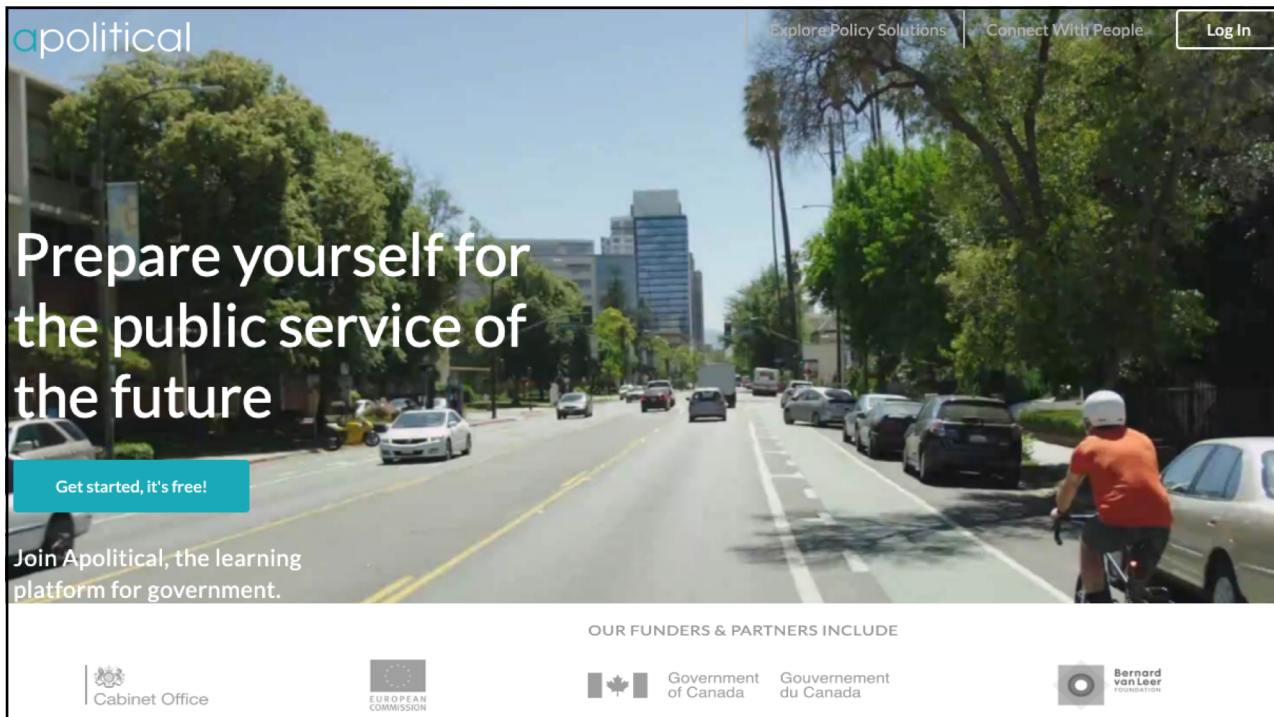
Governments of many nations have long understood that it is critical to take a structured approach to thinking about the future in order to better build prosperous societies.

Below is a summary of major agencies from a select group of major countries that have an explicit remit for foresight activities. In the next weeks we intend to significantly expand the scope of this analysis to include other nations and a broader view of future-oriented policy initiatives in the countries already covered.

Australia
 Canada
 European Union
 Finland
 France
 Japan
 Singapore
 South Korea
 United Arab Emirates
 United Kingdom
 United States of America

'Complimentary' activities/approaches





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Policy Horizons Canada uses foresight to help the federal government build stronger policies and programs in the face of an uncertain future.



OECD Working Papers on Public Governance No. 44



Anticipatory Innovation Governance

Shaping the future through proactive policy making

PIRET TÖNURIST
ANGELA HANSON




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The Museum of the Future Accelerator Challenge

The Museum of the Future Accelerator is a four-week program pairing the world's most exciting technology companies with the Museum of the Future team. The Accelerator program is hosted under the umbrella of Dubai Future Accelerators, part of the Dubai Future Foundation's platforms. The program is divided into three challenges: Advanced Wearables, AI Guides and Social Companions, and VR/AR Virtual Experiences. 15 companies have been selected to develop and pitch their visitor interaction technologies to enrich the visiting experience of The Museum of the Future. Winners will be selected to develop technology for the museum's launch.




Blog

Futures, Foresight and Horizon Scanning

Organisations: [Government Office for Science](#)

Behavioural Insights: Do experts know what they don't know?

Albertine Pegrum-Haram, Projects Officer, GOS and Sepi Latifi, Projects Officer, GOS, 1 April 2019 - [Advice/Tips](#), [Future Policy Network](#), [Futures Capability & Resource](#)



How susceptible are policy-makers to biases? Are policy-makers over-confident, under-confident, or are they "well-calibrated"? The Behavioural Insights Team can help to answer these questions.

[Read more](#)

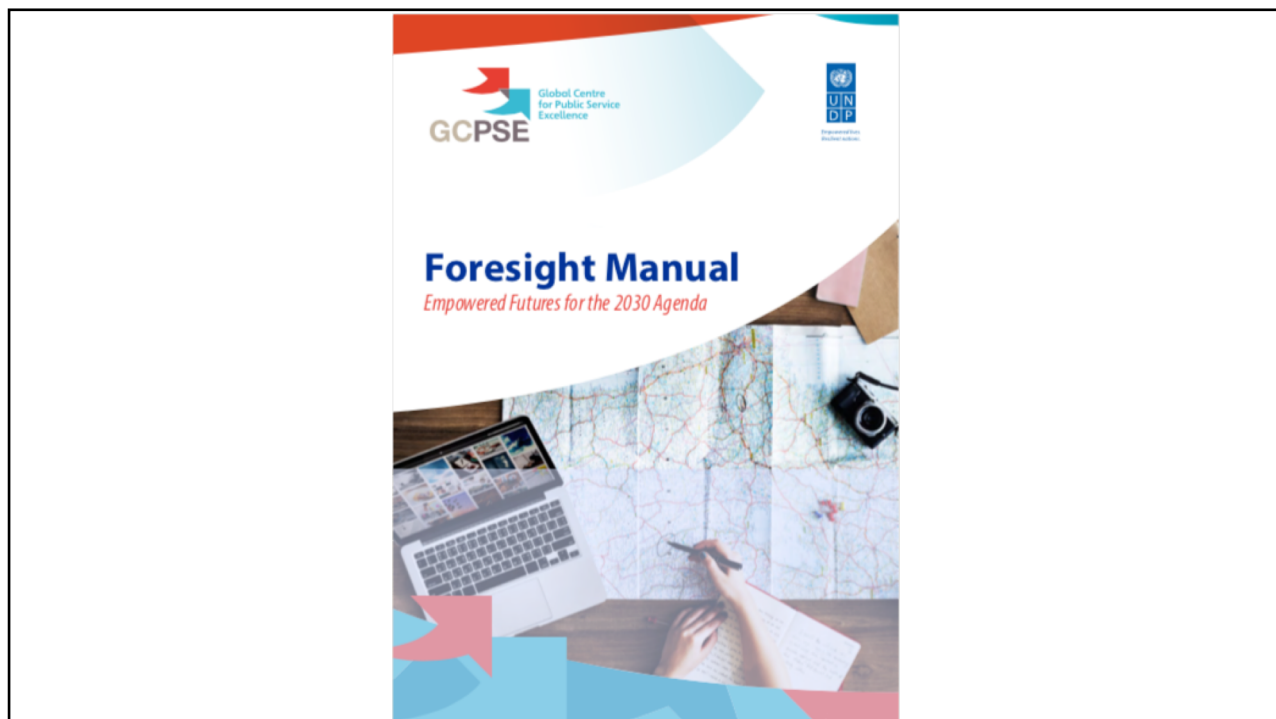
About GOS Futures, Foresight and Horizon Scanning

This blog is a place for policy makers, stakeholders and academics to connect with findings from the Government Office for Science Futures, Foresight and Horizon Scanning programme.

[Find out more.](#)

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BENEFITS

Benefits of strategic foresight

1. Thinking more diverse, open, balanced, and non-biased
2. Focusing on the right questions and problems more clearly
3. Being aware of, and influencing, assumptions and mental models
4. Anticipating change and avoiding surprise
5. Producing more creative, broader, and deeper insights
6. Identifying a wider range of opportunities and options
7. Prioritizing and making better and more robust decisions
8. Constructing pathways from the present to the future that enable rehearsing
9. Catalyzing action and change
10. Building alignment, commitment, and confidence
11. Building a learning organization
12. Understanding the context, in all its complexity, through establishing frameworks

Andy Hines

Q & A / DISCUSSION