

I'm participating in the 5 day SOIF Workshop. My first. And only my second ever 5-day futuring event ever. Looks like a wonderfully eclectic group. And the first day has set us on course for an enjoyably intense week.

I will blog what it is we are doing each day, and then when I get 'back to the ranch' I will start planning the next Public Health Dorset futuring event.

Soif (noun)

thirst [noun]: a strong and eager desire for something; thirst for knowledge.

Soif (acronym)

[School of International Futures](#)



Too Long; Didn't Read (TL;DR)

Capacity building is the primary organisational challenge for developing your organisation's Foresighting ability. Foresighting or futuring seems to attract a 'certain type of globalist', so we'd best beware of our biases. The changing nature of 'non-traditional actors' now and into the future is something worth keeping an eye on! Every organisation needs an official Clown and big organisations need an official Plain Clothes Clown Division.

What we learned

There is a Clown among the invited speakers. Not kidding.

That there is a global organisation called [The Ismaili Imamat](#) and that they, like so many

organisations are using Foresighting methods to create their future. Their Ambassador is a former Canadian diplomat, Arif Lalani.

Most organisations, government, private sector and NGOs struggle to build Foresighting capacity within their organisation and also, importantly, to create space for futuring discourse.

NGOs can be framed as ‘non-traditional actors’ whose role is evolving — they may have started out as primarily ‘doing organisations’ who sought out funding to undertake their ‘charitable endeavors’, but some have with the support of seriously wealthy benefactors become funders of good works in their own right. A few are even starting to set the local, national, regional, and global policy agendas.

Non-traditional actors.

Many of the tensions in the world created by the accelerating pace of change are reflected in emergence of two ‘types of people’.

Anywhere People: Benefit from globalism, lives cross boundaries, feel at home anywhere, particularly in ‘the west’.

Somewhere People: Displaced by globalism, work and life do not cross boundaries, feel attached to a somewhere, particularly in ‘the west’.

This was an interesting discussion. Got me thinking about our ‘grand challenges’ and bias; it was evident that most (all?) of us in the room fit into the *Anywhere People* crowd.

Perspective?

Very few G7 countries seem to be maintaining a cohesive future vision of the place and aspirations in the world. However, many smaller and emerging nations are doing this. Food for thought.

Something that resonated with me — a discussion about what are the key challenges in building Foresighting capacity — getting decision-makers to create the space and make time for futures thinking. It requires effort.

You have to ‘market foresight scenarios’ as a tool — the value won’t be immediately understood by all.

Strategic Foresighting helps organisation:

1. build their vision
2. manage risk
3. develop awareness and agility of what is happening around them

Live Challenge Briefing by 'our client' [Luminate](#). These guys are related to Omidyar Network whose Systems Practice course some of my colleagues and I have done. Brilliant course and very related — check it out [Systems Practice!](#) It will definitely help groups with their Furturing work too.

The Live Challenge: In 2030, how will digital technologies be used and goverened in pursuit of the common good?

The Luminate goal is “Building Stronger Societies”, and they certainly seem to be putting some resource into this, according to their web page — supported more than 236 organisations in 17 countries with over US\$306.

Sort of proves the point about the evolution of non-traditional actors.

We had a very interesting questions and answers session after the Luminate presentation. The real question is 'who gets to define the 'common good'? However, there are four useful focal areas:

1. governance, public service, surveillance and security
2. economies dependent on data and digital
3. communities, society and civic voice
4. a changing global order

Who will have decision-making power in the future?

What types of organisations and people?

Will national security and technology economic interests align?

Is this good or bad?

No small challenge this week...

What we did

We started with a ***Hawaii Opening Exercise***. Participants paired up for 10 minutes to share three stories about their:

1. name (all of it)
2. community
3. gift

I've done this exercise before – on a New Zealand, Maori [Marae](#) during a cultural induction course many years ago. It is a great way to break the ice and get straight into “the narrative groove”.

Clearly most people had not encountered this particular exercise before, and have never considered their personal introduction, “Hi I’m Chris”, to be a story, but of course for most of us, especially in a non-formal setting, telling our stories is not something we do (or at least very often). It was good fun and some participants have hilarious stories.

We had 30 people in the room and everyone had a timed 45 seconds to deliver their story, which was challenging for many, but we got there.

Ten Statements about the Future: 90 second exercise to assess whether these statements are ‘likely’ or ‘unlikely’. Done silently by each individual.

This stimulated an interesting and quite spontaneous discussion about the future. It was simple, quick, and powerful in that it could be used to expose our ‘hidden mental models’. I will definitely try this out in my next Futures Event that I will run for my organisation later this year.

One word reflection: Around the table we went. Great summarizing technique by Cat Tully.

- reflective
- focused
- intrigued
- supported
- inspired
- overwhelmed
- confused
- engaged

- motivated
- excited
- tired

What were the take away messages

Telling our stories (in 45 seconds) shows that the people attracted to this futuring event share a few common traits.

- no one suggested that their 'gift' was being able to foresee the future! whew.
- we are all fairly 'place' focussed in the telling of our stories.
- many of us seemed not to have a 'place', but were 'global citizens' (I didn't mention to my fellow participants what the last British Prime Minister thinks of us...)
- Our 'where we are from stories are complicated', by and large.
- We 'live' for change — we seem to thrive on it. Another big whew.
- Finally, we all seem to be story tellers.

Making progress in the development of in-house Foresighting capability requires that we get a few things right — but taking others in the organisation along with us is essential. We do that by telling great stories and helping 'change the perspective' of those we are trying to influence.

"Changing perspective is everything".

Random thought, almost everyone I have spoken to on Day 1 has some connection with Canada: Citizens, residents, jobs in Foresighting, etc. Challenge — find someone with no connection to Canada and Canadian Foresighting.

This futures blog

This blog series is about how we create 'healthy places' and what our possible 'futures' could be given current trends and momentum within society, the economic and political systems, and the environment. I use the plural 'futures' intentionally, because our future is not predetermined (I hope), we can and should work towards the future we want. This blog aims to generate discussion (maybe even some debate) around 'Healthy places futures' in the hope that if we all put our minds to it, a collective vision may emerge to inform any strategy we might put in place to get us to our preferred future. We'll be leaning heavily on futuring

tools found on our Shaping Tomorrow hosted website: phd.shapingtomorrow.com.

The future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed (William Gibson 1993).re