Conclusion: ''Foresight for smart globalization'' synthesis statement and recommendations

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to conclude the special issue on the topic of pro-poor foresight.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The paper takes the form of a draft synthesis statement and selected recommendations to emerge from the ''Foresight for smart globalization'' workshop.*

Findings – *There is a need for change at all levels of governance to address the challenges of global poverty, and efforts are needed to foster and improve national foresight capacities.*

Originality/value – *Adding poverty as an explicit dimension of existing and future foresight activities is a key component of fostering pro-poor decision making.*

Keywords *Poverty, Complexity theory, Globalization*

Paper type *Viewpoint*

At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants cooperated in drafting a synthesis statement of the major themes and ideas that tied together the background papers and session discussions. This current version of this statement is reproduced below, along with a selection of the recommended next steps that emerged from the workshop. The statement and next steps, however, do not necessarily indicate agreement amongst the participants, and these materials should not be attributed to any particular participant. A final version of these materials will be published in the upcoming workshop report (see Figure 1).

In conclusion, it is apparent that many of the recommendations suggested by the workshop participants predominantly relate to the need for change at all levels of governance to address the challenges of global poverty. Over the course of the workshop, this suggestion was regularly coupled with the idea that renewed efforts are needed to foster and improve national foresight capacities through regular activities that link stakeholders from different sectors, including the media and the public, to achieve desired outcomes. Adding poverty as an explicit dimension of existing and future foresight activities, such as scenario planning and trend analysis, was also viewed as a key component of fostering pro-poor decision-making. Finally, there was also a general assessment that a small number of pro-poor foresight projects could be activated to begin creating a repository of collective intelligence and knowledge about how the future might unfold. In the end, it is hoped that this workshop will serve as a defining point for the field by emphasizing the need to include a pro-poor dimension as a regular component of future foresight activities. Full details of the workshop, as well as the workshop participants, will be available here www.altfutures.com (see Figure 2).

Synthesis statement

Foresight is systems thinking which forges paths for action while understanding and embracing complexity. It catalyzes new insight in the minds of communities and decision makers. Foresight is invaluable for sense making and is a virtually zero cost way to test and

Figure 1 Workshop outcomes

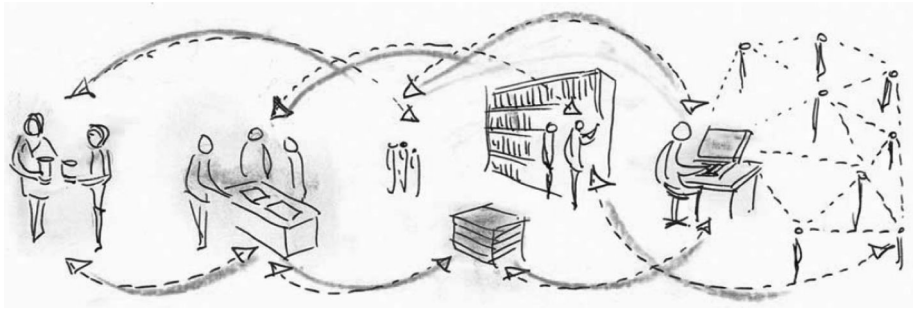
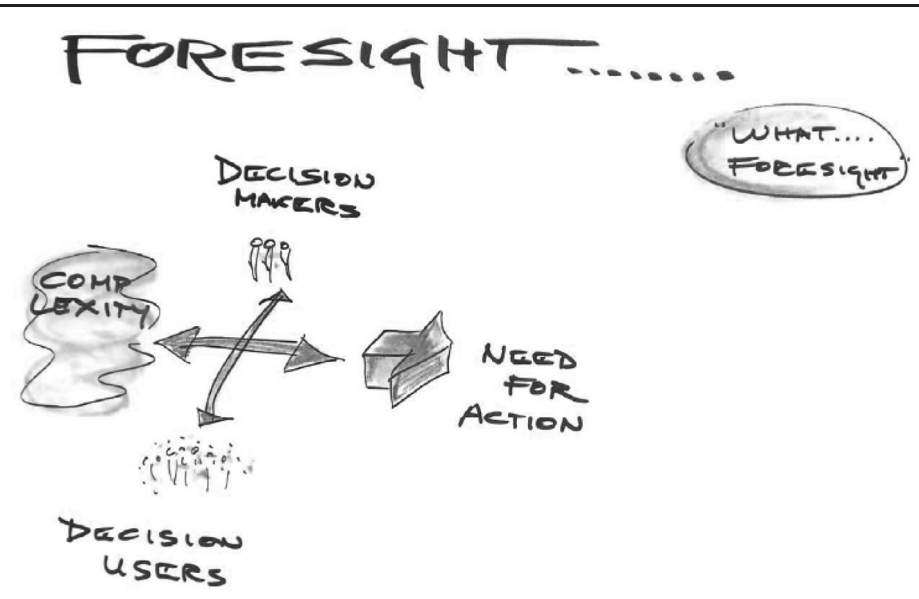


Figure 2 Foresight Linkages



Note: Foresight can aid in creating linkages between complexity, the need for action, decision makers and users

edit alternative blueprints for action. Foresight creates a safe space for addressing unpopular and challenging issues. Foresight is an integral part of the policy process, which it informs and enhances.

Poverty is itself a complex system, existing at multiple levels ranging from the global to the grassroots. Pro-poor foresight identifies and engages relationships among the complex systems that sustain poverty, while seeking to ultimately eradicate it. In this journey, the future of the wealthy and the poor in all nations is inextricably linked. Neither can avoid the shocks and discontinuities that the future may bring, such as the impact of forces that include climate change and economic crises. A first requirement for pro-poor foresight is procedural fairness, which is an indispensible pre-condition for outcome fairness. Processes must be open, equitable, and characterized by independent thinking.

Pro-poor foresight is required now because we are in the midst of a unique, critical period characterized by multiple and severe flaws in existing paradigms and deep uncertainty about the consequences of present choice on future outcomes. There is a shattering of old

forms underway, and this is true on both the national and global levels. Only by working with a collaborative, forward-looking mindset can these problems be effectively addressed.

While there is a unique need for pro-poor foresight, there exist many barriers to its success and advancement. These include an unwillingness to effectively shape the future, an inability to see or do things differently, a myopic and exclusive focus on the short-term, and a sense of powerlessness to shape one's destiny. These barriers exist more strongly in some cultural and political systems than in others.

Yet, we do continuously shape the future with our individual actions and our collective policies. If done well, foresight increases our chances of wisely and successfully structuring our future. If not, we squander an opportunity to improve our collective awareness and our global systems.

However, foresight cannot do everything. Foresight should inform policy making processes by identifying strategies and directions and their implications. But, in some cases, foresight is necessary and relevant in spite of inaction on the part of governments.

The desired outcome of pro-poor foresight is to expand the range of practical responses to complexity. Pro-poor foresight can be used to map, address and monitor these complex interacting systems, and it includes specific analysis of future impacts and opportunities that affect the poor.

Selected recommendations

1. If there is a driving, central force in the poverty-system, it is that improved governance is needed not only at the national, but at the supranational level. Pro-poor foresight must be addressed at global, regional, national and local levels.
2. Foster national foresight capacity, including pilot efforts in countries willing to have involvement across ministries and regions, while involving the media and the public.
3. Develop and implement large scale participatory approaches to pro-poor foresight, including:
   - use virtual spaces, such as wikis, to create collective knowledge for pro-poor foresight, particularly poverty reduction;
   - use gaming and simulations before importing solutions or policies from other countries and/or regions;
   - use scenarios to signal the urgency of problems, particularly for the poor;
   - use foresight to establish the values of different constituencies; and
   - create ongoing learning systems that become a living repository of collective intelligence.
4. Conduct more technology road mapping specifically geared to the poor, including:
   - couple technology road mapping with scenario exercises to address barriers preventing development and deployment of pro-poor technologies;
   - address the gap around applied research for pro-poor technologies; and
   - use foresight to stimulate the development of leapfrog technologies for the poor.
5. Map the associations of conflict with economic development to illuminate the intersection of economic geography and pro-poor foresight.

About the authors

Clement Bezold, PhD, is Chairman of the Board and Co-Founder of the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF). Bezold established IAF with Alvin Toffler and James Dator in 1977 to encourage ''anticipatory democracy'' and foresight. Trained as a political scientist, he has been a major developer of foresight techniques, including IAF's unique ''aspirational futures'' approach, which uses scenarios to help clients not only to better understand what might

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