

Applying an Integral Framework to Government Foresight Projects

Maree Conway
Victoria University
Australia

Abstract

Developing a foresight capacity to underpin the development of policy and strategy is not a new activity for numerous organisations and governments, and is not confined to any one or two world regions. Many futures approaches and tools can be used to develop a foresight capacity, but a basic tenet of good futures work requires that decisions about project approach and methods be made on the basis of an understanding of the needs of the client, both overtly in terms of their brief for a foresight project, but also tacitly, in terms of the context of the organisation, its culture and its staff.

This paper explores an integral foresight project framework derived from the work of Ken Wilber (2000) that can be used to build this understanding of client needs and context. The paper focuses on government foresight projects, since the ability to develop policy that takes the future into account while meeting current needs is a critical capacity for politicians and public servants alike. For governments, in particular, designing a foresight project is challenging because often competing priorities and a range of political realities and imperatives need to be taken into account. The paper focuses on not so much the operation or outcomes of government foresight projects per se; rather, government foresight is used as an example of how an integral foresight approach might provide a stronger project framework by, among other things, more overtly taking into account the role of the individual in such projects.

This paper is based on research conducted at the then Australian Foresight Institute at Swinburne University of Technology, as part of a Pratt Foundation funded research project on developing and sustaining social foresight in Australia.

Introduction

The use of foresight or futures approaches by organisations and governments is not new, with multiple approaches being used as the futures field has evolved since the mid-20th century. Projects have been, and are, undertaken at varying levels of breadth and depth (see Voros 2006 for a categorisation of prospective methods) by academic groups, by consultants, and by organisational practitioners. Some outcomes are published in journals such as *Foresight*, *Futures*, *The Futurist* and the *Journal of Futures Studies*, while other results remain confidential to the organisation sponsoring the project. There is a lively discourse among both practitioners and academics about the future of the field and its methods which can be found in futures journals and on websites, with opinions as diverse as the nature of foresight projects themselves.

As the futures field has evolved, so has project design and methods (Slaughter 2002b). This paper explores how an integral framework based on the work of Ken Wilber (2000) might be applied to enhance project design, by applying that framework to an analysis of recent government foresight projects. The framework itself could be adapted to suit any foresight project, but the particular focus of this paper is government foresight.

Governments around the world have been using a range of approaches since around the mid 20th century (see Conway and Stewart 2004 for an overview of recent government foresight projects). Most, but not all,

of this work has focused on science and technology foresight, with recognition of the need to have a more social focus coming only relatively recently. Perhaps understandably given its political context, long-term societal well-being – that is, recognising responsibility for future generations – has not generally been a primary focus of government foresight projects.

Accepting responsibility for future generations, and the associated long term view that accompanies that acceptance, underpins the emergence of social foresight. This acceptance can manifest itself at an individual or organisational level, and Slaughter (1999) suggests that only when foresight practice is routine in education, business and government, will long term thinking become the norm. While the emergence of a social foresight capacity cannot occur only through government action, governments are in a unique position to coordinate, promote and generate foresight practice, and synthesise outcomes for the long term good of society.

In many countries, government foresight projects have been undertaken but not continued (Australia and its experience with the Commission for the Future is a good example). Only in a few countries and regions have foresight projects been undertaken on a more or less continuing basis, and this appears to have been dependent largely, and unsurprisingly, on the political party that started the project remaining in power. Some notable exceptions include the UK Foresight project which was established in 1994, and the work now being undertaken in

Europe. The Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center was established by legislation in 1992 with a probably unique mission to "serve as a catalyst to change the way decisions are made in government by providing decisionmakers a broader context in which to make decisions, taking into consideration the long-term implications of policy and critical trends and emerging issues which are likely to have a significant impact on the state." Similarly, work undertaken on "judicial foresight" by the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies and the Institute for Alternative Futures began in the 1970s. But, as Blackman (2002) suggests:

After the wilderness years of the 1980s and much of the 1990s, governments are again showing serious and increasing interest in futures research and thinking. This extends far beyond the technology foresight programs which have been established in many countries in recent years (and of which I think it is fair to say those at the centre of government remain highly sceptical). Rather, there is a renewed desire at the heart of government to assess whether and how futures thinking and foresight can be of more help right across government departments.

Particularly in Europe, there is a significant amount of research and evaluation available which identifies good practice characteristics of government foresight (see, for example, Martin and Irvine 1989; AC/UNU Millennium Project 1999; Henley

Centre 2001; FISTERA 2003). In some cases, a synthesis of outcomes across projects has occurred, with a repository of knowledge being developed (for example, FISTERA 2003; EFMN 2006).

Governments decide to undertake foresight projects for a range of reasons, and outcomes are always implemented in a political context, so a variety of approaches have been used. The continuation of a foresight project will always be subject to political and organisational imperatives. The substantial number of government foresight projects that have been undertaken, however, suggests that there is value in developing a government foresight capacity to inform policy decision-making over time.

This paper explores and applies an integral framework to inform the design of foresight projects that can be adapted to suit the necessarily different contexts in which those projects are undertaken. By using the integral approach based on the work of Ken Wilber (2000), the framework incorporates both external factors such as participants and process, as well as the "inner" perspectives of individuals in those projects.

An Integral Foresight Project Framework

Recent work undertaken at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia has contributed to the development of *integral futures*, where a holistic view of the full range of futures approaches, perspectives, philosophies, tools

and methods is sought. As Slaughter (2004: 152) writes "A key aspect of the integral approach is to honour all truths and acknowledge the value of many different ways of knowing across all significant fields". The work of Ken Wilber is one theoretical underpinning of integral futures.

A basic concept in Wilber's work is the four quadrant model of development with which to view human activity and indeed, human existence and consciousness. The four quadrant model is represented simply in Figure 1.

Wilber's Four Quadrants

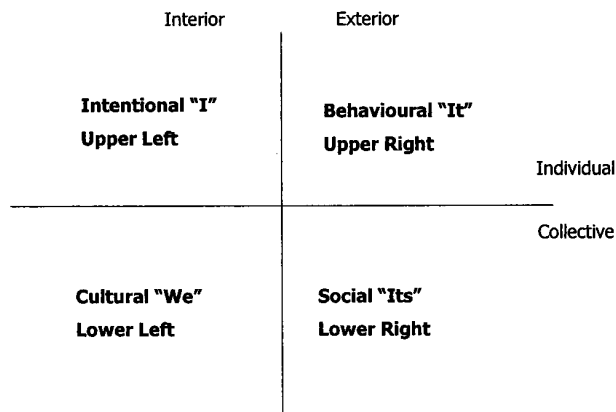


Figure 1: Wilber's Four Quadrant Model

Wilber's integral theory is significantly more complex than just the four quadrants, and consists of a range of concepts such as holons, lines or streams, states, waves and types found in each quadrant (see Slaughter 2004). Each quadrant also has a different type of "truth" or validity claim that relates to different types of knowledge held in each quadrant. Accessing left hand quadrant knowledge always involves interpretation and is largely invisible, while right hand quadrant knowledge is empirical and can be observed. Both provide different perspectives on a given reality or context and looking at only the external

and empirical and not the internal and interpretative ignores critical elements that will determine the ultimate success or failure of a foresight project. An integral framework aims to integrate both internal and external perspectives.

The Upper Left quadrant is the subjective realm, the region of individual consciousness, thoughts, values, motivations, ideas and images. The only person who can "know" this realm is the individual. For others to begin to understand what is occurring in an individual's consciousness, a process of "engaging" with the individual needs to occur. The validity claim in this quadrant is

truthfulness to the individual. This is the realm of "I" language.

The Lower Left quadrant is the cultural, inter-subjective realm, the collective form of the Upper Left, where only the group can provide interpretation about the unwritten "rules of the game" that allow individual members to share a collective space. The language is "We" with justness as the validity claim in this quadrant.

The Upper Right quadrant is the objective realm of individual and organisational behaviour, with a validity claim of *truth*, where things can be described by using "It". The Lower Right quadrant is the inter-objective social realm, the world external to the individual or the organisation. The validity claim here is *functional fit*, and can be described by using "Its". Tensions exist between quadrants, such as tensions between individual and organisational or cultural values. For example, because a particular strategy will work or have a "functional fit" in the Lower Right quadrant, it does not automatically follow that the strategy should be implemented – that decision is influenced by the Lower Left cultural quadrant. There can be real tension here that often gets played out in heated debates among groups and individuals involved in a foresight project, since just because a strategy *can* be implemented does not mean it *should* be.

A more detailed explanation of Wilber's model is beyond the scope of this paper. Its value for foresight projects lies in its attention to both the individual and the collective, and the interior and exterior domains of thinking and action. As Wilber

(2000: 90) has said:

But now global systems and integral meshworks are evolving out of corporate states and value communities. These inter-dependent systems require governance capable of integrating (not dominating) nations and communities over the entire spiral of interior and exterior development. What the world needs now is the first genuinely second-tier form of political philosophy and governance...an integral system of governance that will call us to our more encompassing future.

Thus, the use of an integral framework allows the often invisible and neglected individual perspective - the inner world of thoughts, motivations, values, feelings and emotion - to be incorporated as a critical element in foresight projects.

An Overview of Recent Government Foresight Projects

There have been many stages and development in foresight work generally across the world, with futurists and practitioners focusing on particular approaches and methods. For example, the Institute for Alternative Futures (www.altfutures.com) concentrates on the development of preferred futures, while Slaughter (2002a) provides an analysis of the development of the futures field and its methods in general, identifying evolution from forecasting to scenarios to social construction and now integral methods. This paper, however, focuses on government foresight, using examples from that domain, and so will

not be inclusive of the range of approaches and foci of the multitude of non-government foresight projects that have existed and are underway today. This lack of attention to non-government projects reflects only the focus of this particular paper, rather than any judgement about their value.

Stewart and Green (2004) identify three generations of government foresight work:

- first generation: focus on technology, short-term projects, using technical experts,
- second generation: focus broadened to include markets, integrating commercial feasibility issues, using more experts including academe and industry, and
- third generation: focus broadened again to include social aspects, and using a range of stakeholder groups.

A number of phases in government foresight work can be identified. A rationalist, more technical and quantitative approach characterised the 1960/70s, with a focus on technology forecasting and short term projects using technical experts - Slaughter's first stage of methodological development. A second phase in the 1980s saw recognition of the impact of complexity, chaos and unpredictability and had a broader focus that included markets, integration with commercial feasibility issues and used a wider range of experts, including academe and industry - Slaughter's second stage of development. A third phase in the 1990s was characterised by a view of futures work as a way to generate commitment and engage stakehold-

ers and included more emphasis on social aspects (Performance and Innovation Unit 2001; Stewart and Green 2004), reflective of Slaughter's third stage of development.

Generally, however, decisions to use foresight appear to have been based on short-term imperatives rather than because government recognised the need to develop a social foresight capacity to underpin its policy decision-making processes, or because government recognised its commitment to ensuring a sustainable future for future generations. Foresight appears rather to have been viewed as a tool to facilitate improved understanding of future developments in science and technology and to allow governments to focus spending on identified priority areas:

The contribution of foresight is twofold: it provides difficult-to-acquire strategic information for decision-making, and it functions as a socio-economic mobilisation tool to raise awareness and to create consensus around promising ways to exploit the opportunities and diminish the risks associated with new science and technology developments (European Commission 2002).

A desktop scan of recent government foresight projects (Conway and Stewart 2004) looked at the focus and approach of government foresight work, methods used and outcomes, both intended and unexpected, and revealed a number of common features:

- foresight projects in government have been underway for a long time; this is not a new

methodology for government, but its popularity as a policy tool has been cyclical,

- early use of foresight appears to have been in specific government projects, led by particular departments, and focused around forecasting, with some projects continuing over a significant period of time,
- there has been increased emphasis in recent years on regional foresight, particularly in Europe and Latin America, led by governments or governmental agencies,
- early projects preferred Delphi methodology, with scenario planning becoming more common in the 1980s/1990s, with a related move to involve a wider range of stakeholders and panels in the process,
- there has been a shift away from the predictive, forecasting approaches used in early foresight projects to a more open, exploratory approach and a parallel desire for more methodological rigour in those approaches,
- a shift from a focus on ensuring prediction and tangible outcomes to one that places value on the process itself and more intangible outcomes such as networks, and
- an overwhelming focus on science and technology foresight, with a shift to integrate a more social focus in recent years.

Like all desktop scans, the publications and material reviewed are limited, and do not reflect the scope of projects undertaken now and in the past. A great deal of the history

of foresight work occurred in pre-Internet, google and electronic publishing days, which means that much of the material relating to government foresight work that could have been included (for example, significant futures work undertaken by state governments in the USA) is simply not available to researchers not involved in the projects. This limitation would only be overcome by detailed case studies, in the countries concerned, in cooperation with people involved, which was not possible for this paper. The focus here is on projects occurring since the 1990s that can be tracked using largely electronic methods.

Much current government foresight work is what Slaughter (2002b) describes as "pragmatic" – where an organisation attempts to better understand its industry and its place within it, with a focus on competition and finding new markets or informing policy development. Slaughter also describes progressive foresight which is about transforming the industry and re-writing the rules of the game, and civilisational foresight which takes a global view and is about transforming society by re-conceptualising human activity, and perhaps even human nature through a corresponding transformation of human consciousness.

Most projects have used similar methods, predominantly Delphi and scenarios, although a wider range of methods are now being used. Particularly in Europe, foresight appears to be emerging as a government capacity, but less so elsewhere, where projects have generally been ad hoc and/or short-lived. There is evidence that there is a

shift in emphasis towards more social issues, but the history of this major and most visible strand of government foresight is essentially about science and technology in the future rather than the future of society.

A Generic Government Foresight Model

The work already done to draw together lessons from foresight projects, particularly those in Europe, is significant. Those lessons have focused for the most part on process, structure and involvement of stakeholders. Together with analysis of project outcomes, there is a strong knowledge base to inform the development and implementation of government foresight projects.

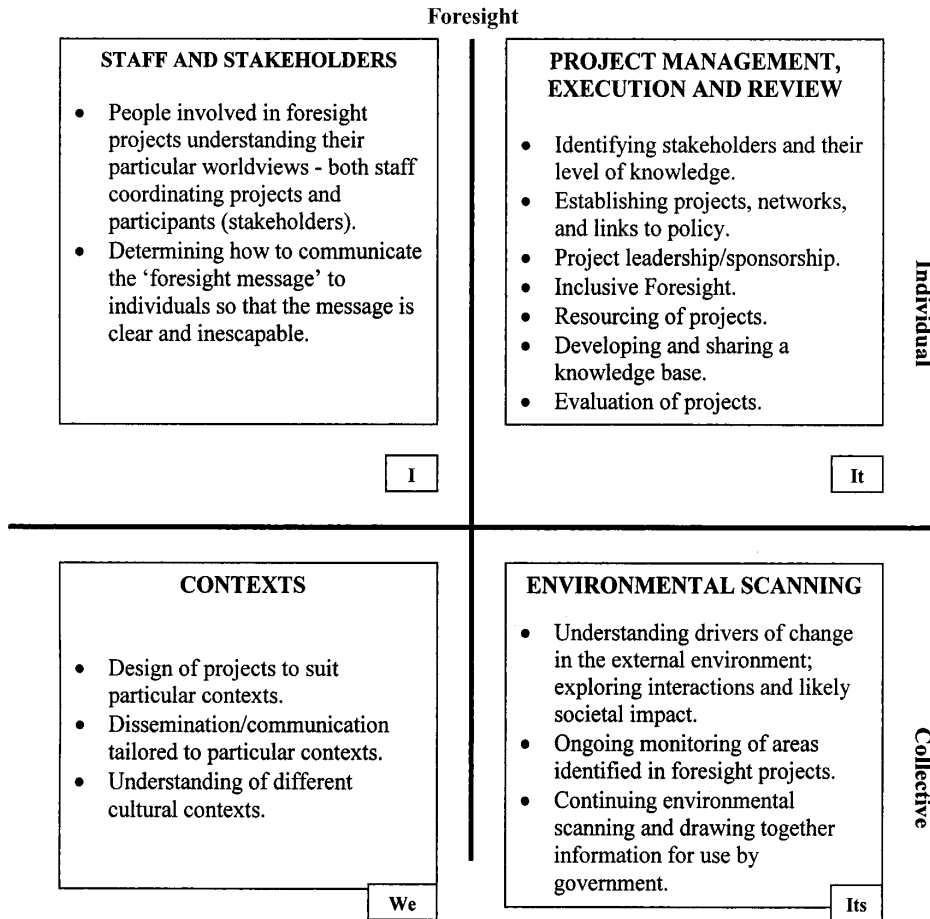


Figure 2: An Integral Foresight Framework for Government

What is often missing in the work undertaken to date, however, is analysis of how people involved in government foresight have experienced their participation and how they changed, if at all, through their involvement. That is, whether, and how, the foresight capacity of individuals has become explicit and conscious, or has changed in depth as a result of their involvement in government foresight work. Similarly, since it is people who develop foresight projects, who garner support and funding for them, who then run projects, participate in them, convince policy makers of the value of outcomes and ultimately, implement policy decisions, it makes sense to ensure that explicit consideration of these actors is part of the design of those projects.

Wilber's model allows a richer analysis of government foresight to be undertaken and moves beyond the predominant focus on Lower Right quadrant activity around science and technology, and Upper Right activity, around how projects are managed, to incorporate individual views about the future. Using Wilber's framework, four domains can be identified which need to be considered in the design of government foresight work, as shown in Figure 2.

The four quadrant model is, however, just that – a model. As with all models, it comes with its own language which will not be familiar to all readers, and like all models, it is only useful if readers can apply it effectively to their own context. It should not be reified, and should be viewed, as Voros (2006: 51) has suggested, as a way "to

promote and provoke thinking about the methods we used in foresight work."

This model could be applied to any sort of organisational foresight project, and indeed, any type of government or corporate project designed to develop strategy. Since foresight work is about better understanding the future in order to make wiser decisions today, recognition of the need to focus equally on both internal and external perspectives, and individual and collective activity, can only strengthen the quality of thinking that informs strategy development.

As an example of its application, the following section applies the four quadrant model to government foresight work. Recognising both the realities of governmental operations and that the political context of government foresight projects is inescapable, a generic model that applies across all levels of government work might well be problematic. The aim of applying an integral approach to government foresight is twofold: first, to investigate whether the framework might be useful in the design of government foresight projects no matter the level of government at which they originate, and second, to begin to overtly explore the role of individuals in foresight projects, in terms of their own motivations and beliefs, as opposed to the project roles they might play (such as sponsor or practitioner).

Upper Right Quadrant: Staff and Stakeholders

This paper refers to two groups of people: first, staff, those people who are employed to work in gov-

ernment foresight; and second, stakeholders, who are the participants in government foresight processes.

Staff

Most, if not all, of the work already carried out on evaluating government foresight has focused on how the projects were structured and managed and on the project outcomes. Apart from indicating that high level individual sponsors or foresight champions are needed, there has been little focus on the people involved in the project, how they became involved, what their experiences of the projects have been, and how they, as individuals, have changed as a result of their involvement. Also unclear is the degree of foresight knowledge held by these individuals – that is, whether they came to government foresight as futures novices, or as futures aware. This latter point is probably critical: an existing member of staff, with good credibility, who understands both foresight and the policy process, is likely to be able to exert influence on the decision about whether or not government foresight work is undertaken.

The need for government foresight staff – or practitioners – to understand their own worldviews and perceptual filters through which they interpret and interact with their worlds is an element that is also not obvious in current evaluation work. If one accepts the premise that the emergence of social foresight begins with individual foresight, then the first step in a government foresight project has to be about ensuring that those people who will be

involved – from government ministers to project staff – understand what foresight is, its value and its necessity. Understanding worldviews is also critical in Lower Right quadrant work where environmental scanning takes places, so that scanning outcomes can be presented in ways that are useful to those who use will be using those outcomes (Voros 2001).

The coordinators of the e FORESEE project (www.eforesee.info) for example, report that they quickly became aware that people frequently did not understand what foresight was about. Part of their project plan was therefore an extensive preparation phase which included the formation of "foresight awareness teams" which could respond to requests to "tell us what foresight is about", and increase the understanding of basic concepts. Including in this work some guidance for participants in how to recognise their own assumptions and worldviews which might influence how they participate might be a useful addition to strengthen Upper Left focus.

On the other hand, definitions of successful foresight projects often do not rate the individual perspective as an important success factor:

The key to successful foresight involves an appreciation of holistic environment in which technology operates and consists of social, politic, economic, environmental, technological and competitive force (UNIDO 1995).

An integral perspective suggests that such success factors are Lower Right quadrant, focusing primarily on the external world and

how it is changing. The integration of individual/interior perspectives into government foresight work might be the first step in ensuring that projects continue over time, since individuals committed to foresight are probably more likely to want to find ways to continue working in the area, and to be able to present their work in a broader context which incorporates the now routine reporting on trends and issues in the external environment.

Stakeholder Involvement

There is frequent mention of the strengthening of networks as one of the major benefits of government foresight work, but this is referred to more as a benefit for communication across national borders or among expert communities, rather than as an individual benefit. Current evaluation work suggests that government foresight will need to have a broad range of stakeholders beyond the use of experts, although it has been suggested that some assessment of potential contributions will need to be made by project managers to ensure high quality contributions. As well as such an externally imposed assessment of value, stakeholder involvement could also involve stakeholders self-reflecting on their own worldviews and what they will bring to the project.

Work undertaken by the PREST at the University of Manchester on "inclusive foresight" (Loveridge and Street 2003) aims to develop a framework for wider inclusion of stakeholders beyond experts in projects. Inclusive foresight, the authors argue, means that the role of human behaviour in foresight projects

needs to be better understood, and not ignored which can result in "diminishing the understanding of the outcome" of projects (Loveridge and Street 2003: 19). They refer to the need to take behavioural issues into concern in the choice of, and interaction between, stakeholders, in the choice of methodology and in how the project is organised, but not in the choice of staff to manage a project. However, this work is still focused in the Upper Right, rather than on the questions of the inner motivations and aspects of the individuals involved and how these characteristics might change over time. As with any organisational strategy project, much work remains to be done to understand better the influence of individuals – as individuals and as part of teams – on government foresight projects and outcomes.

Lower Left Quadrant: Cultural Contexts

A consistent finding of evaluations of government foresight projects (see Appendix 1) is that projects have to be tailored to suit the context. This is not unique to government foresight, and is a basic principle underlying futures work, as outcomes have to be "owned" by the people who will be implementing them. How a country or region's processes work, who needs to be involved, and who needs to take outcomes through the policy decision making process all rely on understanding a particular context.

The context defined in most government foresight is national or regional in focus and does not move beyond the boundaries of those

areas. While this is understandable in terms of both government process and the need to achieve effective policy outcomes, it would be worthwhile exploring how an overview of the approaches and consideration of cultural contexts used by foresight projects in different countries can be developed. In this way, a merging of the experiences of both "western" and "eastern" societies with foresight might be developed, and the lessons learned taken into account in future projects.

Upper Right Quadrant: Project Management and Execution

This Upper Right quadrant, together with the Lower Right Environmental Scanning quadrant, are at the core of current government foresight projects, and the areas in which most published evaluation work has occurred.

The need to gain top leadership support, involve stakeholders in a variety of ways, the way in which foresight units or projects should be structured, clarity around rationale and purpose, processes and methods to use in particular contexts, the need to clarify expected outcomes and the need to be aware of potential impediments to foresight work and resourcing government foresight work have all been covered in some depth in evaluation studies (see, for example, studies by Fuller and Larue 2000 and Miles and Keenan 2000).

There is a strong knowledge base in this area for those starting out in government foresight, one example of which is *A Practical Guide to Regional Foresight*, a guide produced by the Foresight for

Regional Development Network (FOREN) in the European Commission Research Directorate General. This Guide has been used extensively in Europe in the accession countries to organise and run foresight programs, including the cross-country eFORESEE project (www.eforesee.info). Another European Commission project, the Eurofore database (<http://les.man.ac.uk/eurofore/>), is a repository of foresight competencies across Europe, and the European Foresight Monitoring Network (www.efmn.info) is a developing knowledge base for foresight work and initiatives.

Lower Right Quadrant: Environmental Scanning

Information about drivers of change is often used to underpin government foresight and, in many cases, focuses heavily on science and technology. Every project undertaken has included significant environmental scanning activity. Some work is now being undertaken to synthesise and evaluate that work (see, for example, Mollas-Gallart et al. 2001). The UK Government Foresight project reportedly attempted to develop a shared knowledge pool as part of the second phase of its work but, for a number of reasons relating primarily to internal government processes, this was not a successful initiative (British Council 2003:6). The need for a shared knowledge platform to provide access to cumulative work undertaken and "know-how" (not only published articles, but also information about projects underway, evaluation reports, newsletters and networks), has been recognised in Europe

(European Commission 2002; EFMN 2006). This sharing of lessons learned will strengthen the design of future government foresight projects. The need for government foresight practitioners to be able to network effectively then also becomes critical so that communication pathways across countries are feasible.

As already suggested, a more integral approach to environmental scanning as proposed by Voros (2001) begins with scanners better understanding their own worldviews as well as that of the users of their scanning reports. For government foresight practitioners, this would potentially involve considerable flexibility in their approaches as, in the normal course of political events, ministers and officials may move into and out of portfolios during projects. Scanning reports would therefore need to be adapted often to suit these changing worldviews, but might also be used to demonstrate the limitations of perspectives held by particular ministers by, for example, progressively introducing information outside of their "comfort zones". Such decisions require strong understanding of the operational context and shrewd assessments of the individuals involved to avoid 'career-limiting' activities.

Concluding Comments

A four quadrant integral approach to designing government foresight projects has the potential to strengthen current approaches by providing a more holistic framework that integrates individual perspectives into the process. The likely success of projects should then be enhanced

so that work is undertaken on a continuing, rather than ad hoc basis.

Government foresight projects do not occur in isolation, however, and are dependant on the machinations of government and politics for their continuation. While it would be an ideal to assert that a holistic framework such as that presented in this paper should be apolitical, reality is that the nature of politics and the role of governments in foresight projects means that projects will always be political in their origin, operation and implementation of outcomes, and the depth of understanding of foresight of those who have the power to start and stop projects will always be a critical factor in the continuation of projects over time. This is true of organisational foresight projects in general, since the departure of a project champion from the organisation often results in the discontinuation of that project.

This does not negate the fact, however, that accepting responsibility for future generations and developing a longer term view to underpin policy making and strategy needs to be incorporated into government and organisational policy decision-making processes. While the unavoidable influence of "politics" – of the government or organisational variety – on foresight projects is accepted, it is people who make decisions about, and participate in, foresight projects. A possible path to ensuring the continuation of foresight projects may then rest in the emergence of individual foresight. As individuals recognise and accept the foresight imperative, discussions about fore-

sight at a government level would be underpinned by a recognition that the future of a particular society, country or the world has to be considered collaboratively, and as free of the short-term imperatives currently imposed by political systems as is possible.

This does not mean that foresight projects would be free of political and organisational constraints or imperatives, but it does mean that those constraints and imperatives might be balanced by the people involved in the process having a commitment to policy and strategy decision-making that always takes the long view. It is very easy to say that, because the influence of politics on government foresight projects is inescapable, suggesting a commitment to building a longer term view in policy and strategic decision-making is naive. A degree of compromise will certainly underpin every foresight project, and the realities of the present will always influence process and outcomes, but such a line of thought risks reifying "politics", whereas it is people who create and sustain politics.

People certainly make decisions about foresight projects in a political or organisational context, but that does not invalidate their individual thoughts, beliefs and images of the future as valuable inputs into the process. It is these individuals who have the power to start and end projects, and to determine how outcomes will be implemented, so ensuring that projects have a focus on understanding how their world-views might influence those projects would seem to be essential. This is why the inclusion of an Upper Left

perspective in foresight projects is critical. Without such a perspective, projects run the risk of being hijacked by the short-term imperatives of the present, with little regard for the long-term imperatives of the future.

Designing a foresight project with a long term perspective means that those with the power to make decisions about those projects will need to be convinced of the necessity of such an approach. Futures practitioners working with governments and organisations will need to spend time exploring their own Upper Left quadrants so that they recognise how their particular world-views influence their practice. Designing Upper Left processes into projects will enable the surfacing and exploring of the often tacit and often "undiscussable" assumptions that underpin decision making about the future. This, of course, is easier written about than done, but that does not mean that we should not attempt to strengthen our decision making processes today in order to create a better future.

As Slaughter (1999) indicated, if government foresight became the norm, it is likely that education and business would also be using foresight approaches, and the development of a social foresight capacity would be underway. Individuals working in these three sectors would have a clear understanding of the value of foresight, and be able to demonstrate its value in both strategy and planning processes and, more broadly, in any consideration which required exploration of potential futures. Further work could therefore usefully be undertaken to investigate what it might be that trig-

gers individual understanding and acceptance of the foresight imperative in our decision making processes today.

Analysis of the lessons learned from both government foresight projects and foresight work more generally is being undertaken, but this analysis needs to be both more systematic and more global in its orientation. It needs to explore why some governments and organisations recognise the need for foresight, and others do not. This will involve understanding not only local conditions and contexts, but also understanding the Upper Left motivations, beliefs, desires and images of the future held by individuals involved in projects, from ministers and CEOs to practitioners to participants.

Government foresight work represents some of the most exciting and challenging futures work being undertaken today, and has the potential to inform policy decisions which are based on long term perspectives not bounded by the here and now. As Conway and Stewart (2004: 58) suggest:

Whether or not any government decides to take the lessons learned already and explore the value foresight might hold will depend on how many in government recognise both the strength of their own foresight capacities, and the imperative of accepting responsibility for future generations as a premise for decision making today.

Government foresight is one of the key elements in the facilitation of both individual and social foresight. There is much work still to be done to analyse the experience of people

involved in projects, and to consolidate lessons learned to inform future government and organisational foresight work. This paper contributes to the task by suggesting a framework that may help to design effective foresight projects into the future, and perhaps begin to move these projects to Slaughter's (2002a) integral stage of methodological development.

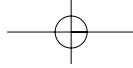
Correspondence

Maree Conway
General Manager, Quality,
Information and Planning
Victoria University
PO Box 14428, Melbourne 8001
Email: maree.conway@vu.edu.au

References

- AC/UNU Millennium Project: *Factors Required for Successful Implementation of Futures Research in Decision Making*. Accessed at www.acunu.org/millennium/applic-exsum.html.
- Blackman, Colin. 2002. "Editorial." *Foresight*. Vol. 4 (2): 4.
- British Council. 2003. *UK Foresight*. Briefing Sheet 21, downloaded from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/science-publications-briefing-sheets.htm>.
- Conway, Maree and Stewart, Chris. 2004. *Creating and Sustaining Social Foresight in Australia: A Review of Government Foresight*. Australian Foresight Institute Monograph No 8. Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.
- Conway, Maree and Voros, Joseph. 2003. *Foresight: Learning From*

- the Future. *Journal of Institutional Research*. Vol. 12 (1): 1-15.
- EFMN. 2006. "European Foresight Monitoring Network." Accessed at www.efmn.info.
- European Commission. 2002. "Thinking, Debating and Shaping the Future: Foresight for Europe." Downloaded from ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/foresight/docs/for_hleg_final_report_en.pdf.
- FISTERA (Thematic Network on Foresight on Information Society Technologies in the European Research Area). 2003. "WP1 Review and Analysis of National Foresight: Report on Findings on IST from Eight Selected National Foresight Exercises." Downloaded from <http://www.itas.fzk.de/eng/projects/fistera/wp1reps/d1.1-0304.pdf>.
- Foresight for Regional Development Network (FOREN). 2001. "A Practical Guide to Regional Foresight." Downloaded from <http://foren.jrc.es/>.
- Fuller, T. and Larue, D. 2000. "The implementation of foresight in organisations: a structural issue?" Paper presented at The Quest for the Futures: A Methodology Seminar in Futures Studies. Finland.
- Hayward, Peter. 2003. "Foresight in Everyday Life." Australian Foresight Institute Monograph 1. Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.
- Henley Centre. 2001b. "Benchmarking UK Strategic Futures Work." A report for the Performance and Innovation Unit (now UK Prime Minister's Strategy Unit: The Strategic Futures Team). The Henley Centre, London, UK.
- Accessed June 2004 online at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/su/benchmarking.pdf>.
- Loveridge, Denis and Street, Penny. 2003. "Inclusive Foresight." Discussion Paper Series 03-13. Downloaded from <http://les.man.ac.uk/PREST>.
- Martin, B. and Irvine, J. 1989. "Research Foresight." *Priority Setting in Science*. London: Pinter Publishers.
- Miles, Ian and Keenan, Michael. 2000. "FOREN Workpackage 2 Final Report." Downloaded from http://foren.jrc.es/Docs/Foren_Report.pdf.
- Molas-Gallart, Jordi, Barre, Remi, Zappacosta, Mario and Gavigan, James. 2001. "A Transnational Analysis of the Result and Implications of Industrially-oriented Technology Foresight Studies." Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. Downloaded from <http://www.jrc.es/home/pages/detail.cfm?prs=909>.
- Performance and Innovation Unit, Strategic Thinkers Seminar. 2001. "Strategic Futures." Downloaded from <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/su/strategic%20futures/summarystrat.pdf>.
- Ramos, Jose. 2004. "Meta-Scanning Foresight Practice in Australia: a Review of Practitioners and Organisations." Australian Foresight Institute Monograph 7. Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.
- Slaughter, Richard. 1999. *Futures for the Third Millennium*. Sydney: Prospect Media.
- _____. 2001. "From Forecasting and Scenarios to Social Construction: Changing Methodological Para-



- digms in Futures Studies" *Foresight*. Vol. 4 (3): 26-31.
- _____. 2002b. "A National Foresight Strategy for Australia." Paper provided by author.
- _____. 2004. *Futures Beyond Dystopia: Creating Social Foresight*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Stewart, David and Green, Brandi. 2004. "The Foresight Process in Practice." Downloaded from http://www.busi.mun.ca/vector-chair/foresight_process1.htm.
- United Nations Industry Development Organisation UNIDO/ International Centre for Science and High Technology. 1995. "Technology Foresight within the Context of Sustainable Development." Downloaded from <http://unido>.
- Voros, Joseph. 2001. Reframing environmental scanning: an integral approach. *Foresight*. Vol. 3(6): 533-551.
- Wilber, Ken. 2000. *A Theory of Everything*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.

