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Engaging Futures 2030: Futures Methods Transforming Governance

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Abstract

During 2000-2015, Queensland Councils emerged from the darkness of 'tokenistic' community consultation processes articulated by Arnstein (1969). The work of community engagement professionals to update Council methods in line with advancing technology and in designing new business models and strategies for the governance of consultations is arguably still in its 'teens'. One way forward is to continue a linear projected future, with a short-term view focused just ahead, which is still the norm. However, in an environment of rapid change, this approach is far too reactive, restrictive, shortsighted and un-consultative, resulting in the loss of possibilities. This article uses Inayatullah's (2008) six futures questions to create alternative community engagement futures to 2030.

Keywords: Futures Studies, Six futures questions, Community engagement, Alternative futures, Governance, Futures Triangle.

Introduction

Today Councils across Australia encourage communities to have their say and participate in city activities through a wide range of mediums. Councils inform, consult, collaborate and partner with communities in creating better city futures. A core problem for our cities is that increasing populations[1], new technologies and demand for community engagements are pressuring Councils to deliver more consultations while maintaining quality and control of outcomes. Staff who run these democratic processes are pressured to change strategies, methods and tools to sustain the number of innovations they bring.

In response to accelerant change in the field of community engagement, administrators are now beginning to reimagine feedback mechanisms by creating alternative and engaging futures to 2030. This article is inspired by a Futures workshop delivered by Sohail Inayatullah. He expertly facilitated responses to preferred futures of engagement using six futures questions: How did we get here? What do you think the future will be like to 2030? What are the assumptions you have made? What are your alternative futures to 2030? What is your preferred

future? How are you going to get there? The questions are nested within the six pillars of futures studies, working across concepts of "mapping, anticipation, timing, deepening, creating alternatives and transforming" (Inayatullah, 2008, p.7).

In the following section, I explore the workshop group's response to the first of the six futures questions. I then respond to the remaining five questions before I conclude with some of the important, unique and universal ways in which futures studies methods helped to transform governance.

Q1. How Did We Get Here?

Since the workshop was delivered in Queensland, participants began by discussing historical global, national, state and local influences on the development of community engagement in Queensland and their local areas. They argued that community engagement began well before their state's formation in 1859. They discussed the example of creation of the Greek word, 'democracy' in 500 BC, in which 'demos' means people and 'kratos' means rule. They also acknowledged the global shifts in philosophy that give a deep foundation to human rights in Australia. In a recent speech, The Australian Human Rights Commissioner commented[2] that universal rights emerged from:

> "The signing of the Magna Carta, or Great Charter, of 1215 by King John … then in the 17th Century through great philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and John Locke".

The English Bill of Rights 1689 was influential and was brought to Australia by British colonists. Following the separation of Queensland from New South Wales on 6 June 1859, it was the right to vote for many by 1905 and for all by 1965 that created a direct culture of representation and engagement. Australia adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This Declaration was globally influential. Article 19 includes, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas". The Declaration was followed by the creation of the International Bill of Human Rights incorporating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that were ready for approval by governments of the world in 1966 and were endorsed by 1976. Further, the Australian Human Rights Commission was established in 1986.

Strong civil rights movements in the United States and South Africa, the women's movement, war protests and environmental lobbyists of the 1960s to 2000s are examples of community activist groups in other countries that have influenced or informed similar practices in Australia. The group emphasised that most of the visible changes to the local areas they live in have been brought about by non-profit community organisations that have consistently requested better government representation.

Most Queensland cities developed systematic processes of local government community consultation around the year 2000. The inclusion of non-profit community groups in transparent engagement processes transformed the functioning of many community groups from that of lobbying to that of consultation.

In the early 2000s, Queensland Councils were developing consultation programs

for the first time, and many staff members exchanged strategies about their roles and programs through regional networks. In 2004, the possibilities for enhancing community consultation drove first attempts at networking internationally with other Council officers. This networking brought to their work awareness of global practices and an appreciation of a global expectation for community consultation at the local level of governance[3]. By August 2005, an international community engagement conference was held in Brisbane and the United Nations Brisbane Declaration was created in which the overarching term, 'community engagement', was recognised.

Across the 2000s, many Queensland State government consultation resources were shared with Councils, bringing substantial control and consistency into the delivery of community consultations. State politics drove change in local governments. Councils were influenced or driven by election cycles, which are like a pendulum swinging back and forth bringing different expectations for community engagement from one political cycle to the next.

During 2000 to 2015 the private sector also inspired and collaborated in the advancement of consultation practices by playing its role in research and development of technology, industry proposal developments and ongoing business networked communication.

With rising populations and improved access to better technology, community consultations have needed to become more efficient focusing on accessing and reporting just the critical information needed to make good decisions.

An important turning point was through citywide long-term futures initiatives that returned historic volumes of feedback to create visions for the futures of cities in the region. As a result of these initiatives, community consultation is now associated with policy, strategy and foresight.

These foundations help community consultation to bring democracy, salience, transparency and foresighted intelligence to governance and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. *Shared History: Critical Community Engagement Factors Transforming Governance*

Pre 1900s	Development of global democracy and civil rights. Greek democracy 500 BC, Magna Carta 1215, English Bill of Rights 1689.
1900s -1920	Most Queenslanders receive right to vote 1905; and right to representation in Parliament in 1915.
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the UN. Australia is a signatory.
1960s	Civil rights movements, women's movement, war and environmental lobbyists were strong drivers of change. Aborigines have right to vote 1965.
1970s	International Bill of Human Rights (inclusive of UDHR) becomes international law in 1974 (Williams, 1981).
1980s	Creation of the Australian Human Rights Commission 1986. The Commission can pursue unfair communication issues, e.g. where disabled persons do not have access to information that others do.
1990s	Coalescence of the foundations of community consultation policies in council's and state government departments.
2000-2010	Councils develop consultation policies, strategies, actions, innovations, teams, databases and digital communication practices with the future in mind. Queensland Councils introduce Futures Studies and visioning initiatives, helping to align community feedback with Futures perspectives.

Q2 .What Do You Think The Future Will Be Like to 2030?

The Futures Triangle – Mapping The Future

The Futures Triangle was developed by Sohail Inayatullah to help map a vision of the future, the "quantitative drivers and trends that are changing the future" and the weights or "barriers to the changes we wish to see" (Inayatullah, 2008, p.8). The futures triangle is applied here to help map the possible future of engagement from a business as usual perspective, firstly by understanding what is now the official Queensland vision guiding city community engagement. Then drivers of the vision are identified, which include population, demographics and technological changes. Finally, weights of the past are discussed, such as particular attachments to rigid systems of government, and old strategies that hold back achievement of the vision.

Futures Triangle Vertex 1 - Official Vision For Community Engagement In Queensland Cities

Many Queensland cities have a customised vision for community engagement. However, any official vision for community engagement is guided by the official role of the Mayor and Councillors who are known as the 'executive arm'. CEO and employees are the 'administrative arm' (See Figure 1 Executive Responsibilities Inclusive of Community Engagement (Department of Queensland Treasury, 2015)). Further, Section 4(2) of the Queensland Local Government Act (2009), includes five overarching principles that apply to anyone performing responsibilities under the Act:

1. Transparent and effective processes and decision-making in the public interest.
2. Sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of services.
3. Democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement.
4. Good governance of, and by, local government.
5. Ethical and legal behavior of local government employees.

These principles officially guide all Queensland local government community engagement visions. As the pendulum swings toward greater control by the executive arm over the administrative arm, community engagement activities can become pressured. This relinquishment of separation of powers is at the discretion of power holders and additional resources are required to manage this process democratically.
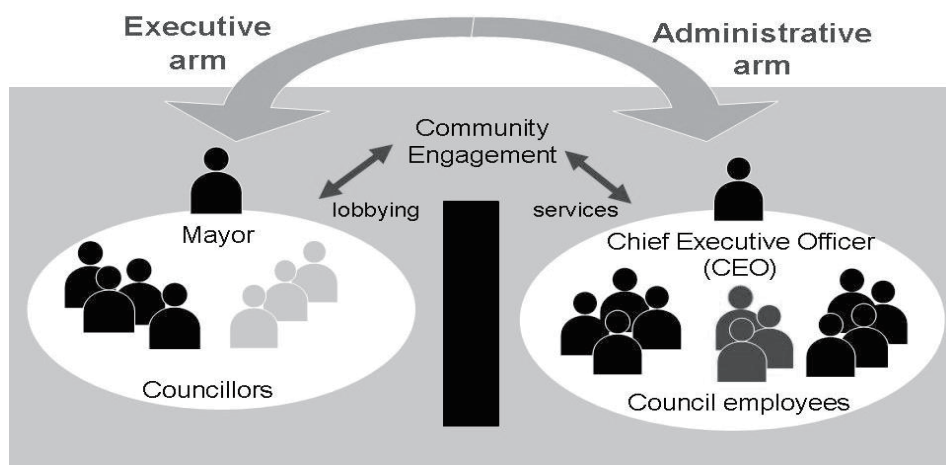

Figure 1. Executive responsibilities inclusive of Community Engagement

Futures Triangle Vertex 2 – Weights Holding Back the Vision

Under the Queensland Local Government Act (2009), Queensland Councillors as well as employees of Councils have a duty toward achieving the above five principles. However, "The executive arm determines the way the Council achieves the purpose and principles of local government" (Queensland Department of Local Government, 2015). How successfully each Council performs the above five principles is at the discretion of each Council's executive arm. The community may argue that discretionary arrangements create inconsistencies in engagements within a city and from one city to the next. The community may perceive that all relatively large projects need to be conducted to a very high standard in terms of its resourcing, methods, reach and political attention. For example, community consultation for a new Town Plan is a requirement of the Local Government Act (2009). However, the Act only sets out the minimum consultation requirements. A risk is that while one Council may achieve great things in consulting their communities about citywide

issues, an even larger neighboring Council may leave their opportunities relatively unexplored and uncreated.

Other types of weights to the vision are where burgeoning communities require connectivity with authentic engagements and how the ever-changing needs of contemporary youths steeped in online community knowledge can be ethically embraced. The ability to plan effectively to engage age groups meaningfully and face-to-face has never been greater. In fact there are many groups marginalized by social structures. At the national level, according to the Australian Human Rights Commission "If you are young, live in a rural or remote area, have a disability, are Indigenous, homeless or a prisoner serving a sentence of more than 3 years, your right to vote in a federal election may be restricted as a legal or practical matter"[4]. This national level weight has similar implications for local area consultations.

Futures Triangle Vertex 3 – Drivers of the Vision

The group asserted that trends help drive the official vision of community engagement. Trends become influential when they are supported by evidence and other trends that show "mutual reinforcement and overall momentum" (Molitor, 2010, p.3). Increased population growth is one such trend. Multiple sectors working independently in medium to high-density precincts creating individual visions is another. The two trends create the wicked problem of constantly needing aligned visions. The group espoused that the two trends gather momentum when combined with a third trend of cheaper, faster and more accessible technology. Internet access is increasing the willingness and capacity of communities to contribute their feedback, helping make precinct visions more meaningful. The group asserted that, as governments genuinely want to contribute to the creation of consistent and holistic visions for their cities they create a fourth trend of engaging stakeholders about the creation of whole of city visions. The four trends are examples of drivers of the official vision of community engagement.

Knowledgeable, diverse and willing stakeholders who appreciate the benefits that multi-sector engagements bring, can better shape their futures. A willingness to co-create consultations underpins the credibility and value of decisions made to create holistic visions in cities. Holistic visions can be created and sustained through consultations that include stakeholder advisory group meetings, community reference groups and regular meetings with Council. Drivers of this behavior are built on tens of thousands of examples of community engagement from the past decade alone, just in the South East Queensland Councils. These have contributed to an almost perpetual culture of engaging to win mutual benefits for communities, governments, industries and visitors.

Another driver of change is the need to build capacity to develop policy, strategy, actions and innovations before the marketplace dictates outcomes. Without the strategic development of engagement programs, Councils fall prey to a market already over-reliant on immediate digital communication. This is to the detriment of deep thinking. Online discussion often needs to be supplemented by other methods either immediately or at some stage in the overall development of a product or service. The threat of an e-poll alone leading to a significant change in policy is one driver. Another is the call for action without offering the respondent sufficient time, information and methods to conduct a thorough analysis with family, friends or colleagues. Engagement methods that don't consult groups often miss feedback

about deeper complexities or impacts of issues.

Table 2. *Engaging Futures 2030 Futures Triangle*
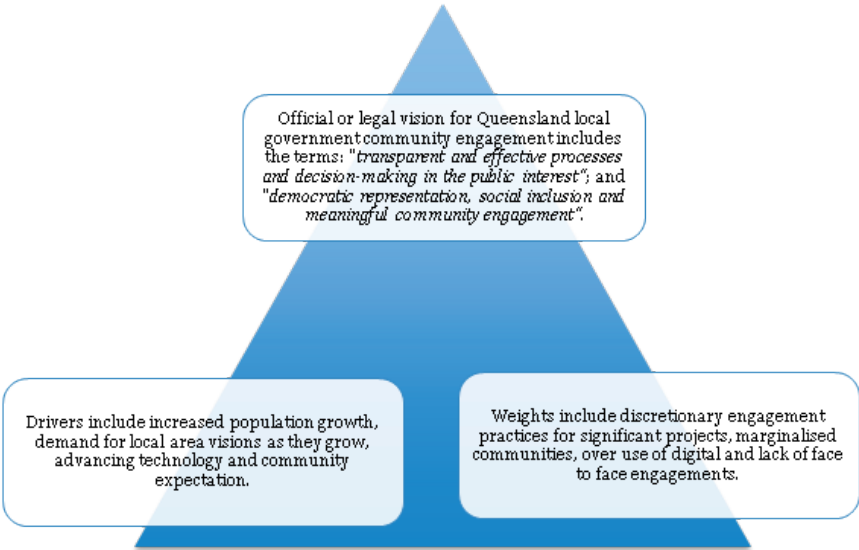
This Futures Triangle provides a summary of key drivers, pushes and pulls of Engaging Futures 2030.

Macro-Level Changes

Futuristic changes at the global or macro-level bring their own challenges and need for solutions. Doubling of populations in the region expected by 2030 will drive a need to engage hard to reach and new communities. These changes bring a need for doubling of educational facilities with 'next-gen' teaching strategies inclusive of social and community networking. Climate change and the need for disaster management engagement strategies will call for newer social media data mining techniques. Changes in the responsibilities and roles of local government will require innovative solutions for engaging communities. Global changes such as "billions of Asian, South American and African people transitioning to middle-class economies" (Hajkowicz et al., 2012), will bring opportunities to engage with new global markets. There will be increased pressure to understand deeper community issues and their connection to emerging futures.

Q3. What Assumptions Have You Made?

The group discussed their assumptions carefully as these are the basis of what we know to be true. Hopefully, assumptions are the stable foundations on which we build our decisions. There was agreement that some assumptions will remain while others will slowly or abruptly lose relevance. Examples follow, firstly, of assumptions and secondly, of their possible disruptors:

- There is a small number of staff dedicated to leading engagements. Or, will local government transform to balance the numbers of consultants and residents so that all cities, large and small can consistently achieve effective

results across all their social, environmental and economic initiatives?

- There are four-year terms for local politicians. Will local governments be working with a stable electoral process of four years or will it shorten to two or three, bringing about increased representation with campaigning politicians glued to salient community outcomes?
- There will be independence between local and state governments. Or will the relationship between local and state governments change or merge to a point where state initiatives can be better informed by local knowledge?
- There is one significant community engagement professional body in Australia. Or will others emerge to share power and diversify the marketplace?
- The label of "community engagement" is a relatively new term overarching the practice of community consultation. Will there be others? Are the terms "community governance", or "open sourced community" the 'next-gen' terms on the horizon?

Becoming disruptive is critical—getting prepared as much as possible ahead of the unexpected change and then making necessary changes. The key to doing this is to have a special style of leadership. Inayatullah's research with Malaysian University Deans suggests that leadership of the future needs to disrupt normal processes to enable cooperative and holistic leadership:

> "Move from the self-centered leader (I know everything), eschewing the top-down leader, and move with the node-leader (the influencer i.e. I know everyone) to the holistic leader, who works with everyone, and leads cooperatively" (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2014, p.113).

To create the above cooperative leadership situation, the group thought that Councils could create a board of community engagement futurist specialists in the region and in large Councils. The board would monitor changes and advise decision maker politicians and senior staff about these changes alongside daily decisions. For example, engagement planning, survey questions, and analysis, results interpretation and application of results would be responsibilities. Futures Studies provides a special form of strategy development where:

> "It is not "preparing for the future," but by challenging the orthodox future, it opens up the possibility of alternative futures" (Inayatullah, 2013, p.41).

While some cities rightly have access to architecture or economic panels, they do not have access to consultation panels that can think strategically managing daily issues while applying foresight. Councils and indeed other sectoral interests need access to impartial futurist consultants who can help to cooperatively lead or better inform engagements.

Q4. What Are Your Alternative Futures to 2030?

The group created futures alternatives as a result of discussion with the workshop facilitator, who presented sets of scenarios (Inayatullah, 2008, p.16). The group decided to work most closely with one of the recommended sets written by Dr. James Dator[5] that covers continued growth, collapse, steady state and transformation.

4.1 Alternative One: 'Gradual Worsening: Contraction of Engagement'.

From the group's discussion emerged the idea that engagement would contract if the quality, quantity and access to engagements gradually weakened. This scenario could result from a time of emergency, tyranny or lack of control due to a self-driven or externally-driven rapidly increased pace of change. Gradual worsening and contraction would be sign-posted by a reversal of all the gains made in the last decades. It would produce an under reliance or controlled use of available technology by power holders, limited consultation numbers with limited access, eschewing of knowledgeable consultants from organisations, reducing emphasis on transparent decision-making. The planning of engagements would become rushed, with the duration notoriously shortened to two weeks or less. Methods would become narrowed and scripted to exclude general feedback about the engagement, or about its particular topics so that 'multiple choice' answers to complex futures are limited and become the only possibilities in engagements.

Face-to-face consultations all but disappear, as power holders cannot control face-to-face consultations as they do a scripted message. There will be no friendly face or chance for meaningful exchange with consultants where questions can be answered. Control of government will increase, and stability of citizens will decrease. The culture of engagement for private industry will follow by becoming similarly bereft of warmth, caring and sharing. This future is about sharing the company line. Use of unscrupulous engagement methods online means that engagement worsens further. It doesn't matter that youth, the elderly and vulnerable community members also use the Internet. All that matters is that campaign messages online are shaped to attract high response rates. Customized feedback and standards slip and there is less transparency with no consultation reports of community feedback being provided on the Internet. There no transparency and representation of different sectoral interests. No one is interested in committing time to the potential problems projects raise because trust is limited. Short-term opportunism and immediate 'snap' solutions create a culture of arrogance. Needs are not being considered, resulting in increased alarms being raised directly through political representatives.

Not-for-profit organisations are again called upon to coordinate representative community responses and they begin to focus on political messages along with messages about community engagement. They focus on Council meetings as a location for media worthy demonstrations about important issues. Families, schools, neighbours, the environment, youth and the elderly become unimportant. A regional government does not need local Councils. Communities leave the vision of interconnected communities for another era. Engagement worsens as authorities reward ineffective change:

> "In the name of change, change is implemented to control change. This is the paradox of the modern institutional response to its sense of the chaos inspired by rapid technological and social change" (Bussey, 1997, p.3).

In a worsening engagement future, there is an epidemic of erratic change devoid of an intellectual capacity that would otherwise encompass the pragmatism of:

> "Causality, patterning, closed and open futures, culture, practical imagination and anticipation" (Bussey, 2014, p.4).

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Leaders feed communities with sensationalism that distracts them from reading all but the headlines of futures narratives. In this future, community and decision makers consult communities but feedback is gathered unscrupulously, with a pre-determined outcome and they give little consideration to it. Community consultation is conducted for significant projects but not in any meaningful, personalised way.

4.2 Alternative Two: 'Total Collapse of Community Engagement – Zombies Metaphor'.

In this alternative future, the group argued that those in control dominate the future and there is community apathy for engagement and for community itself. There is citizen angst about the problem of insular leadership. This wall of silence results in increased lobbying, causing delays to sustainable futures. Collapse of engagement is where no one consults and is caused by low trust, credibility, interest, public damnation of the official process of engagement, unofficial lobbying for a change in power. In this scenario of total collapse, civil unrest begins to takeover. People see conspiracy theories created by a lack of transparency and hear stories of 'dodgy deals'. Foresight is limited by autocracy. The damage is done and in the foreseeable future:

> "The cultural blindness of modern politics is extreme. The politicians of today are for the most part equally prisoners of the Zeitgeist, whether they stand in the ranks of the conservatives or the progressives. Who will sound the warning bells?" (Polak, 1973, p.298).

This is a system of government in which all arms of government and political parties repress engagement. The leader is cloaked in power and has even removed the 'separation of powers' between political and administrative areas of practice. The leader is able to avoid or is in league with regulators and has control over the portrayal of commonly held beliefs by community and other politicians, whether conservative or progressive. Whole communities of interest vacate because of a loss of control over defining their own future and loss of equality in a society they have helped build. At the same time, citizens relocate to other cities to experience advanced societies. In this alternative future, it is short-term planning and immediate outcomes that dominate leadership's interests. The metaphor is that the citizens who are left behind become zombies who have no real hope for participating in a better future except as consumers of it, until leadership changes. They are too disempowered to learn, act, engage and renew.

Overall, the gap between individuals, communities, sectors and regional neighbours widens so that engagement processes are exploited by what we fear: the unscrupulous leaders take the advantage, turning helpless community members into zombies.

4.3 Alternative Three: Steady State Network Analysis - Alternative to Rapid Growth.

In this scenario, an alternative to rapid growth is proposed. The concepts of family, environmental and community sustainability become vital to all. The group agreed that every family and community has underlying capacities such as (i) ideas, (ii) ability to identify family visions, actions and improvements over time, (iii) tools

to support application of visions and actions, (iv) members of different age groups who can relate to different phases of family and community life and (v) 'care' for one another.

Some family members take a 'consciousness vote' to limit their numbers to help ease the impact that populations have on the planet. This 'vote' reduces the risk of overburdening the planet's capacity to sustain life. Take the following examples as reasons for the need to create the steady state future. The first one billion people on planet earth arrived in 1800. It has taken only 215 years more for 7.4 billion people to be living on planet earth. Further, the planet's population is currently projected to be 8.4 billion by 2030[6]. In this alternative to growth scenario that population increase will be curbed.

If growth is not curbed, we will need 1.5 Earths to meet the demands we currently make on nature's capacity to sustain our biocapacity. This means we are eating into our natural capital, making it more difficult to sustain the needs of future generations. A further reason for curbing growth is the consequent trends for 1,562 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians from a wide range of habitats that are showing since 1970 to 2010, that terrestrial species have declined by 39 per cent. The main causes of decline are habitat loss and degradation, hunting and fishing and climate change[7].

In this scenario, community places a high value on win-win outcomes for the community and the environment. The Council restructures its administration to facilitate community feedback not just into the city's vision, but also into the city's community, private and public organisational visions. The visions of linkage organisations such as associations are also made publicly available for consultation. Their collective visions, drivers and weights are made transparent so that sustainability problems can be solved collectively.

A sustainable future requires alternative community products, including scientific solutions of alternative fuels, medicines, technologies, microvita and futures thinking. Cities offer 24/7 community engagement opportunities to help them to develop.

Futures thinking helps cities employ systems thinking in rebuilding relationships between organisations. Ultimately the city generates steady state community engagement. This concept uses community engagement and network analysis to integrate the providers of sustainable practices, goods and services in the creation of win-win outcomes for the city.

Five things happen to conclude this steady state scenario. Firstly, communities are asked to think of the whole city as one system. Secondly, they are asked to reduce their 'footprint' on the planet. They can do this by, for example, limiting the size of the family or by purchasing solar panels for houses, with excess energy feeding back to the city power grid. Thirdly, electricity companies offer free solar power to owners of solar panels who drive electric vehicles. Fourthly, governments increase resources to match designers of sustainable electric vehicle components to electric car manufacturers. Fifthly, governments and Futurists plan and advance carbon-neutral alternatives to the use of vehicles, such as virtual travel.

The message in this scenario is that governments can engage sectors to co-generate sustainable citywide solutions to solve city problems. Community engagement and Futures Studies creates preferred futures and aligns them to current community needs, capacities and innovations. At the same time, Futures Studies is

about remaining active to identify emerging problems and to solve them at deeper systemic levels before opportunities are lost.

4.4 Alternative Four: Transformation Through 'Partnerships Utopia'.

The group argued that the future of engagement is about lasting partnerships between all sectors and interested individuals. If cyber threats emerge or if there are have-nots excluded from accessing the Internet, then it will take everyone's vigilance to ensure equal and meaningful representation occurs. Methods that can help do this are championed by leading futurists who have:

> "Started to experiment with foresight that cuts across the traditional boundaries of policy areas and government departments" (Habegger, 2010. p.50).

In this alternative future, staff from different disciplines co-create preferred futures to help cities cope with rapid changes as cities grow. This is a future where civil servants are 'of the people' and will use advances in technology to help communities of all sectors to collectively create submissions, rather than only from an individualist perspective. In this 'partnerships utopia' future, other cities also help to lobby for what's best. This collective alternative future brings more robust discussion across regional boundaries.

Partnerships are generated prior to elections, during consultations, in annual forums about the futures of engagement, in groups who have a role in creating preferred democratic futures. Partnerships are created with ethical youth groups that are quickly able to cast a vote in all decision-making processes. As part of youth engagement, they participate directly in civic and city life, learning directly about the future of their city. Expert engagement education and training in schools is widely available and encouraging of discussion across boundaries. In this future community engagement consultants, like teachers, will apply a:

> "transformative pedagogy" that can "integrate valuing and respecting diversity…support cross-cultural, cross-gender communication…encourage trans generational thinking…scaffold learning to help community members develop their own voice…and a human face" (Kelly, 2010, p.1116).

The group saw that there are professionals who band together in the preferred future to have more than just a voice. The community wants an appropriate medium to speak through, to be heard on local issues and to be co-creators of the futures of cities. They want to be able to spell out the different perspectives of their profession and for their profession to have a vision that works with the city's bigger picture and longer-term future. They want each disparate area of the city to work for compromise where required so that they can create and explain under what conditions they would accept alternative futures. The group's synergy was galvanized around the need for internal working groups to bring warmth, wisdom and innovation to the future. This scenario would bring the best use of experts for one-off and ongoing 24/7 engagement processes. In this preferred future, good engagement means thinking through the implications of alternative futures.

The group discussed increased involvement in engagements by families, schools, neighbours and friends as creating a culture of engagement. This means that the whole community creates the future, where:

> "A multi-stakeholder approach, drawing on a multitude of internal as well as external sources of knowledge, is preferable to a process that is exclusively centred on experts from within government" (Habegger, 2010, p.57).

At the organisational level, consultation with all sectors is not by rote, but is co-planned, co-actioned, strategic in its outcomes, requires high proficiency but makes its consequences easy to understand. Futurists work with leaders and political representatives to help these groups to articulate their preferences.

The metaphor of partnered solutions is of two partners tied together who can't reach a goal because as one pushes the other pulls until they realize the benefits of working together. The partners succeed by working together to collect valuable insights about the future.

Table 3. *Alternative Futures of Engaging Futures 2030*

Scenarios	Gradual Worsening	Collapse	Steady State	Transformation
Description	Eschewing of knowledge holders, downgrading wages	Leaders exploit their positions of power maximizing distrust	Systemic problems and solutions are modeled to create balance	Multi stakeholders across sectors creating, not just selecting futures

Q5. What is Your Preferred Future?

From the alternative futures themes and strategies a preferred future of engagement emerged. The group discussed the idea that avoiding internal politics could be achieved by working in a collegiately supported work environment. By 'futures staff' working with more parts of the organisation, Councils would produce evidenced and trustworthy results.

In the preferred future, these matrix environments deepen and broaden horizons creating holistic perspectives across all alternative futures. Futures itself contributes in this space and is seen as:

> "A movement across spirit, mind and body, linking arts and science, experiment-experience-reflection-abstraction, across the material and the ideational, across diverse communities of practices" (Ramos, 2013, p.158).

The group argued for better methods of involving the community. They discussed the need for increased delegated authority of expert groups that would stimulate more partnership approaches in government, industry and community sectors.

Important partners for the creation of sustainable futures are local, regional and global entities. For example, Councils can delegate power to expert university consulting groups. In the preferred future of engagement seeking out globally networked partners in the management of sustainable Futures is essential. This preferred future would operate with:

"World-centric awareness where the ethnocentric biases of one's peer group are subjected to scrutiny for the cause of universal care of all peoples, justice and fairness" (Daffara, 2004, p.6).

By Councils working with universities, the approach of thinking globally and acting locally becomes a sensible reality. Universities can bring a softer or respectful approach as well as a critical approach to consulting globally through their context as learning institutions in touch with local values, global concerns and the application of ethical filters.

In order to deliver regular engagements on significant projects, standards are built around sufficient lead times, transparent planning and tracking of the value of engagement feedback. This tracking process enables an Australian tagging system, creating national comparative enquiry. Open evaluation of results will allow more institutions to participate in learning about the benefits and effects of engagement. This scenario also leads to a better-partnered situation with industry.

Industry understands that the costs of engagement are outweighed by better visions and fewer problems with delivery, acceptance and use of outcomes. This arrangement works particularly well when customers collaborate with designers and manufacturers.

"Another important area is the understanding of customers as members of their networks instead of handling them as isolated entities. Here, pioneering practices are platform services that encourage customers to form communities and work together with professionals in these communities" (Viljakainen & Toivonen, 2014, p.27).

The preferred future for the group included games that are evolved further into platforms for experimenting with preferred futures. The group imagined an augmented reality field of view that allows a user to walk around and into a virtual city. Additionally the transfer of gaming and professional futures models, once developed, to You Tube and even to local television documentaries will increase citywide imaginative and connected co-creation.

While surveys are mostly a closed process, and online platforms struggle for commentary, in the future they will be replaced and stimulated by more apps, software, orgware and portals that invigorate collaborative futures. Advancements will mean that, for example, models, scenarios, visions, and strategies are created and tested by the community and by experts. Global audiences, particularly universities will wish to contribute to the conceptual equations, patterns and gradual changes needed to create sustainable cities.

Q6. How Are You Going to Get There?

While we have made technocratic progress, we are yet to conceptualize preferred futures that can eliminate current problems and uplift the total experience of community engagement, bringing engaging futures with wisdom and innovation. Toffler (1970, p.322) poses the question "What bonds of education, politics, culture must we fashion to tie the super-industrial order together into a functioning whole?" He writes that those bonds "must be based upon certain commonly accepted values or some degree of perceived interdependence, if not mutually acceptable objectives". Sharing the load across the community, private and government sectors via partnerships is fundamental to managing these ties. Strategies to achieve these and other transitions are discussed below.

At the State level, the political party currently in power is the Queensland Branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Its 'enduring values' say:

> "We believe in a society where people care about each other, where we create and engage with each other through our communities. We believe community engagement enriches our lives. We believe in government that genuinely consults with and works to strengthen our engagement in local communities" (Queensland Labor Party, 2014, p.6).

The Constitution of the other major party, the Queensland Liberal National Party (LNP) has a different perspective on the value of community engagement:

> "In which an intelligent and free Australian democracy shall be maintained by looking primarily to the encouragement of individual initiative and private enterprise as the dynamic force of progress" (Queensland Liberal National Party, 2012, p.9).

There are no mentions of 'community consultation' or 'community engagement' in the Queensland Liberal National Party Constitution.

In Queensland, this means the value of consultation is increasing and decreasing as the pendulum swings back and forth. One State party brings a wave of thoughts about community engagement with ripple effects for local government. The next party brings in new thoughts about individuals and private enterprise as its focus of engagement. At the same time, the greater global community demand for democratic principles and practices of engagement across both of these political sets of values is increasing.

From this contrast of 'enduring values,' the author identifies the need for inclusiveness of both sets of political values in policy and legal documents of Council and State government administrations. This legislative guidance would bring stability to community engagement futures.

Included in the delivery of the preferred future of engagement are co-creation, co-delivery and co-reporting of all aspects of community engagements. Digital technology is central to this objective. As technology improves, private organisations will expand their engagement domains internationally. Governments and political parties will follow suit. The group reinforced that its preferred future of integrated sectoral partnerships is exemplified through co-creation of digital TV, which would survive by creating partnerships with social media. Already we are seeing social media start-ups working with journalists to write stories that will help bring local

news to Social Media. "What these collaborations mean for the public—at least in theory—is broader and deeper news coverage, more easily accessed or discovered. What they mean for news organizations is—depending on one's place at the table— a more diverse mix of content to offer, broader reach and more scalable reporting" (Pew Research Center, 2014). Journalists will help to uphold fair reporting of information via a code of ethics where they have a "Respect for truth and the public's right to information"[8].

Integration of collaborative futures approaches would emerge in the mainstream media where social communities can merge ideas from all disciplines. Toffler's early vision about the preferred future rings true:

> "Ultimately a stream of books, plays, films and television programmes would flow from this collaboration between art, social science and futurism, thereby educating large numbers of people about the costs and benefits of the various proposed utopias" (Toffler, 1970, p.103).

Engagement champions would include Councillors who would be completely conversant with face-to-face and online engagement techniques and would champion in the media the open creation of alternative possible, probable and preferred futures. Civic pride in community consultation would climb to a new high-point.

Communications during the engagement process will complement advertising about the whole engagement program offering. Other sectors will also be able to advertise their perspectives on engagements to their constituents. There is widespread acceptance of the benefits of engagement as professional organisations begin to report on their successful case studies. These are published internationally in annual and project reports.

State government legislation in all Australian States will transform minimalistic discretionary engagement by legislating clearer directions for the planning, delivery and transparent reporting of civic engagement feedback. Additionally, stakeholder panels that work with the executive arms of government will help to make sense of the opportunities that integrated reporting mechanisms present. This reporting will result in strategies for helping to better plan and evaluate engagement programs to create improved governance that runs across the waves of change commonly experienced today. Further, increasing tracking and reporting of rates and outcomes of engagement is likely and needed and presents issues of intellectual property, strategic governance and consistency of reporting. National reporting alone represents incredible opportunities to advance the practice of community engagement.

Table 4. *Backcasting Steps: Community Engagement Transforming Governance to 2030*

Descriptors / Timeline	Transformative steps (backcasted) to 2030.
Collaborative Modeling 2030	3D modeling will allow school children to help design cities. Futures Studies in schools opens up pathways to awareness of alternative inclusive futures.
Globalisation 2029	Involvement of global city exchanges will make consultations extremely interesting for touring groups who will be funded by global partners.
Tracking 2028	Improved technology will create searchable online databases for consultations nationally. New legislation for community engagements will create a point of quasi-regulation.
Delegated Authority 2027	Private sponsorships will create self-delegation where private organisations conduct consultations helping their workforces to understand their organisation's role in city and global futures.
Internal Networking And Mixing Of Disciplines 2026	Formal programs will be introduced and reintroduced across Councils. Each City will have internal and external showcasing of their talents and experiences with consultations. Working across diverse communities of practices including the political will allow integration of 'cultures of opposition'.
Youth Access 2024	Youth access through forums will be created through youth having their own Council engagement teams.
Technological Advancements 2022	Salient advances will tie all forms of communication into neat bundles of community engagement possibility e.g., TV and Q&As about local area issues. The shows are run by locals for everyone.
24/7 City Futures Initiatives 2020	Cities host 24/7 city futures visioning initiatives giving perpetual access to preferred images of the future. Community engagements include studies of the future.
Academic Partners 2018	Academics who study PhDs in community engagement in local governments will be encouraged with additional resourcing. Futures Studies is pervasive as a necessary discipline.
Cross-Sector Partnerships 2017	Cross-sector partnerships will ensure that private and public organisations can showcase their work in local governments.

The table above backcasts preferred alternative and engaging futures for transforming governance to 2030.

Concluding Remarks

Offered below are some of the important effective, unique, universal and unmet strategies, actions and innovations that help transform governance.

Importantly, this workshop was conducted by an experienced international futurist who nested the Community Engagement workshop within a framework of the six pillars of futures studies. The workshop followed a detailed presentation of imagery about broad ranging and global futures. The presentation provided an expansive horizon of futures thinking that stimulated deep and positive Six Pillars of

Futures Studies of alternative community engagement futures. Current and emergent issues were introduced to help participants surpass the creation of business-as-usual futures. Participants effectively created four alternative futures most of which included elements of disruption but were concomitant with the principles that guide Queensland local government community engagement visions. These principles are included in the futures triangle as drivers of engagement visions: efficiency, transparency, representation, inclusion and meaningful engagement. Of these principles, perhaps 'meaningful' is the most important to include in the preferred future as the role and the future of democratic city engagement lies both in creating meaning during the engagement and in producing meaningful communities.

The engagement futures workshop itself was unique and participants found it to be meaningful and beneficial for reasons that follow. It was a rare opportunity for this community to meet and discuss engagement futures from their perspective. Also, the two-day workshop, held at a hotel on the Gold Coast, allowed varied discussions to be relaxed, reflective and free of the administrative and political constraints of the day. The group identified historical events that influenced their practice of engagement. They also identified drivers and weights that helped provide a starting point for action learning in the workshop. It helped to create transformative steps to accelerate preferred community engagement futures. Moreover, futures methods enabled deep and constructive contributions to be made for transforming community engagement within wider governance issues to 2030.

More universally, the workshop involved the input of different professional perspectives including from governance, communication and marketing, economic development and community services as well as more broadly from engineering and other disciplines. Finally, after the action learning workshop had addressed the participants needs they were mindful that:

> "By questioning the given future, alternative futures can be explored, and the preferred future has a greater probability of being realized" (Inayatullah, 2006, p.666).

With Futures Studies, under-performing hegemonies or tyrannies of the present can be reshaped allowing alternative futures to emerge. Unmet policies, strategies, actions and innovations were backcasted to help transition preferred futures of 2030 into the realities of Council administrators. Community engagement can move beyond traditional perspectives through preferred engaging futures of 2030.

Engaging futures of 2030 have factors within them that are critical to transforming the future. They engage our hearts and our collective minds. They engage our hopes and our fears. Engaging futures of 2030 share the transformative power to invoke and revoke, write and rewrite improved futures.

Notes

1. The Southeast Queensland (SEQ) region, where the workshop was held, includes the State capital City of Brisbane. SEQ's population is projected to grow from 2.8 million people in 2006 to 4.6 million in 2031, a figure greater than the current State population (Queensland Treasury, 2012).
2. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/rights-and-responsibilities-2014
3. http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/ASPA/UNPAN020336.pdf

4. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/publications/right-vote-not-enjoyed-equally-all-australians
5. Dr. Dator discusses his alternative futures sets at 2:30 minutes in this interview "Why Futures Studies?" by Dr. Jose Ramos (2012) *https://vimeo.com/42630507*
6. http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#pastfuture
7. https://www.worldwildlife.org/publications/living-planet-report-2014
8. http://www.alliance.org.au/code-of-ethics.html

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