

# A Review of Sohail Inayatullah's "Prout in Power: Policy Solutions that Reframe Our Futures"

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The purpose of futures studies is to make the world a better place and improve the welfare of all living beings. Alternative futures, ethics, and increasing democratic participation are parts of exploring sustainable futures (Bell, 2003). In Sohail Inayatullah's new book, he uses PROUT (progressive utilization theory) as theory and strategy to discover not only alternative futures, but also practical approaches to create better futures.

## The Book's Framework

There are six sections of the book, starting with the concepts of PROUT to issues of politics, education, society, economy and transformation. In first one, the author deconstructs PROUT to provide a new scope of futures-focused policy-making from triple bottom line to a quadruple bottom line. Neo-humanism is weaved into theory and action to make policy processes future-oriented and deeper. The four classes in Sarkar's theory of social change are workers, warriors, intellectuals and accumulators of capital. These are applied to understanding history and policy-making. Organizations and individuals can glean insights across the landscape of institutions to selves through playing the Sarkar game, with case studies detailing and demonstrating it.

Political issues in Asia and new emerging Asian visions are presented in part two. Historical and emerging conflicts and the rise of Asia make Asian visions and futures unique. Inayatullah analyzes the present conflicts and the possible future using Sarkar's four classes to understand the power shifts in play, with case studies of visions and influencers. He suggests that deeper transformations beyond geopolitics need to be explored, rather than re-creating copy-cat or used futures. For example, while today's Olympic games are dominated by rich nations and fueled by commercial excess, a PROUT approach would emphasize triumph through achieving one's best and focus on creating a green Olympics.

School systems today mostly prepare students for global competitive capitalism or national economic development, instead of what it means for a someone to live a life of meaning and wellbeing. Globalization, virtualization, and "Asia-leading" are key forces that further deepen this – a form of social control. Inayatullah argues neo-humanist education is a way out of this dominant history, with a PROUT strategy needed focused on practice. Three case studies of higher education with academic leaders are elaborated through scenarios, causal layered analysis (CLA), backcasting, narrative and Prout analysis.

In part four, Inayatullah explores the futures of crime and prisons, debates between rehabilitation and punishment and a case study of e-health. Traditional rehabilitation and punishment is challenged, with various new types of crimes emerging as a result of revolutions in science and technology. Social and economic systems need to be changed to reduce crimes, with multi-pronged strategies for diverse offenders. The future of prisons needs to be reformed through soft technologies, helping offenders reintegrate with society. In health, three

e-health in 2025 scenarios are provided, where the PROUT policy perspective integrates spirituality and technology to create powerful visions for the future in this area.

In the realm of political economy, the author investigates and deconstructs six futures of the global financial crisis using CLA, and reconstructs them creating different solutions based on underlying stories, worldviews, systems and visible data. As well as CLA based solutions, he argues PROUT policy give us new pathways out of our emerging crises. The rationale for PROUTist economics and other economic approaches are introduced and compared. Here a unique viewpoint is put forward - that learning from yoga's ethical context and physical movements may help us implement a more balanced and flexible world economy. In addition to triple bottom line, another indicator for a fourth bottom line is added and discussed.

In the final section, since PROUT is a theory as well as a vision of the future, Inayatullah lists guiding questions to help us examine organizations and social movements and evaluate whether they are on the path to creating better futures or not. From the PROUT perspective, climate change is identified to be a leadership issue. This section also puts forward seven positive trends encourage us to create more positive futures. He ends by exploring alternative futures of PROUT and the strategies needed for PROUT to be a success.

## Conclusion

PROUT is an idealized socio-economic system while neo-humanism is a holistic social philosophy. It is noteworthy that Inayatullah allies this to alternative futures to create new narratives. The triple bottom line is applied to measure the conditions of organizations, adding a quadruple bottom line. Readers can learn about PROUT and neo-humanist theories, strategies, visions, but also how they interact with problems and crises we encounter today and in our futures. The most significant contribution of this book is solutions: from the most visible short term focused policy answers to the unconscious level of narrative with a long term focus, many solution are presented on many different issues. Using the PROUT perspective, Inayatullah creates powerful insights that lead to new policy pathways which should be considered as essential elements in our collective social and global conversations for action.

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## Reference

Bell, W. (2003). *Foundations of futures studies: History, purpose, and knowledge*. Vol 1. New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers.