

# Trends and Emerging Issues for Brunei Darussalam: The Futures Deck and Card Game

Diana Cheong  
Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies  
Brunei

Ivana Milojević  
Metafuture  
Australia

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## Abstract

*This report describes the Futures Deck and card game that was developed and utilized in 2016 and 2017 by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies, Brunei Darussalam. The deck was designed to assist policy makers in Brunei to come to terms with emerging issues and trends of relevance to Brunei, as well as to the broader ASEAN region. The deck and the game were utilized in the context of foresight workshops, specifically within the ‘anticipation’ segment of the six pillars approach (Inayatullah, 2008).*

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## Introduction

Like most other countries and regions, Brunei is in the midst of a challenging global transformation, with a restructuring of its economy, society and human engagement with its natural and built environment. As a response, the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) has embarked on the task of infusing proactive and anticipatory approaches into advising policy making. The CSPS is a government-funded research think tank set up in 2006 to undertake independent and objective policy research and analysis on strategic issues concerning Brunei Darussalam. Since May 2016, CSPS’s expanded mandate is to become an “Internationally recognised foresight think tank” - in addition to its flagship as the premier think tank for strategic and policy studies for Brunei Darussalam. More concretely, CSPS has engaged in several foresight projects such as: (1) identifying emerging issues and trends likely to impact Brunei in the near and medium term future; (2) conducting horizon scanning processes in order to provide more future-oriented policy advice; (3) developing alternative approaches to strategic planning, and, (4) identifying specific strategies and policies more likely to lead towards the fulfilments of the overall goals and the main eight strategies of the Brunei’s national vision: Wawasan 2035. One outcome of this process was the creation of the Futures Deck. The goal behind such an

outcome was to further develop the anticipation skills of the policy makers in Brunei. The creation of the deck took about six months and it is planned that it will be further refined.

The identification of trends and emerging issues of relevance to Brunei – upon which the deck is based - went through several phases. The initial phase identified some thirty key trends and issues (May-July, 2016), to which another forty or so were added later (August-September) – both phases were conducted by the researchers of the CSPA. Finally, participants at the CSPA Forum (22 September 2016) on Applying Strategic Foresight and Horizon Scanning for Policy Making in Brunei offered their own input. The Forum participants included senior government officers, including permanent secretaries, as well as CEOs and other executive level participants from the private sector. The participants were presented with a list of forty trends and emerging issues at the Forum, out of which twelve were prioritised and described in more detail. The participants then voted on issues in terms of their importance and future impact for Brunei. They also proposed additional topics, trends and emerging issues to be included within the deck. Issues identified during and after the Forum were then collated within a Futures Deck, where each trend or emerging issue is described and summarised. The description is followed by three key questions of relevance to Brunei. These questions were further discussed and trialled at a three day workshop conducted by the CSPA in November 2016. A total of twenty eight participants attended the workshop. Participants were middle to senior level officers drawn from the government and private sector, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, Management Service Department, Civil Service Institute, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Development, MOC Sdn Bhd and SprintVille Technologies. During this workshop the card game was also trialled, receiving a positive response from the participants.

## The Futures Deck



Figure 1. Cover and the first card of the deck

The creation of the futures deck was inspired by the future deck cards previously created by the Centre for Strategic Futures, Singapore<sup>1</sup> and The Takshashila Institution, India<sup>2</sup>. The Futures Folio on the Emerging Themes for Europe's Future published by the European Commission in 2013 was also consulted<sup>3</sup>. While there are a number of other futures decks<sup>4</sup>, it was these three that were

seen as the most appropriate given their public policy context<sup>5</sup>. This was then followed up with the research on trends and emerging issues by the CSPA researchers. Researchers investigated global, regional and national trends and then scrutinized them in light of the governmental priorities and social issues in Brunei. Local knowledge and the previous research of government documents, surveys, mainstream and social media was utilized by the researchers.

The first (and at the time of the writing the current) version of the Brunei Futures Initiative's Futures Deck consists of fifty cards, three of which are introductory (About: 1. Futures Deck, 2. Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies and 3. CSPA's Brunei Futures Initiative).

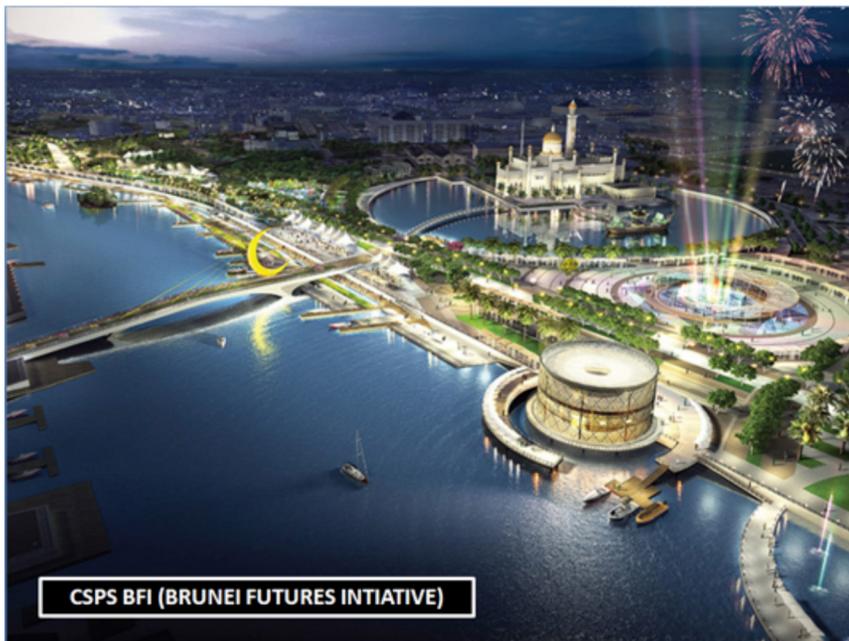


Figure 2. The third introductory card in the deck. Vision of the Pusat Bandar (central area) of Bandar Seri Begawan from the 2014 Project for the revitalization of the Kampung Ayer (water village) zone by giD&Partners<sup>6</sup>

The other forty seven cards are organized within these nine main areas: Economy (nine cards), Society (ten cards), Work (three cards), Environment (six cards), Health (five cards), Technology & Science (four cards), Conflict & Security (three cards), Education (four cards) and Governance (three cards). Earlier versions of the deck had dozens of additional topics within these areas. The larger list of issues was then reduced based on the prioritization processes described earlier. The deck is meant to be a starting point; used at workshops and forums as a platform to share ideas and views on issues and to examine the impact of the issues on public policy. The project is on-going as the horizon scanning research continues. It is envisioned that the deck will be updated regularly (for example, bi-annually).

Below is the list of forty-seven prioritised trends and emerging issues for Brunei Darussalam (Tables 1 & 2). Seven examples of the actual cards are provided in the Appendix.

Table 1 & 2. *Forty seven prioritised trends and emerging issues for Brunei Darussalam from the Futures Deck*

BRUNEI FUTURES DECK – LIST OF TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES (1)				
	ECONOMY		SOCIETY	WORK
1	FAILURE TO DIVERSIFY	1	WORLD CLASS NATIONAL THEATRES	1 AUTOMATION & UBERISATION OF WORK
2	TRADE GLOBALISATION	2	BRUNEI'S GHOST TOWNS	2 HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND MISMATCH
3	'MADE IN BRUNEI' LABEL	3	COMMUNITY DISINTEGRATION	3 BRAIN DRAIN
4	BRUNEI POPULATION REACHES ONE MILLION	4	WIDESPREAD POVERTY	
5	BRUNEI AS A TOP TOURIST DESTINATION IN ASEAN	5	UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME	<b>HEALTH</b>
6	BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE	6	WOMEN IN POWER	1 OUTBREAKS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES
7	FINTECH	7	THE END OF TRADITIONAL FAMILY	2 GROWING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
8	THE RISE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP	8	ENDING STATELESSNESS	3 GREATER HEALTH AWARENESS
9	BRUNEI STOCK EXCHANGE	9	LOSS OF LOCAL LANGUAGES	4 ANIMAL WELFARE & THE PLIGHT OF STRAYS IN BRUNEI
		10	DISAPPEARANCE OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE	5 DEPRESSION ON THE RISE

BRUNEI FUTURES DECK – LIST OF TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES (2)				
	TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE		ENVIRONMENT	CONFLICT & SECURITY
1	DRIVERLESS CARS & BOATS	1	HEART OF BORNEO DISAPPEARS	1 IMPORTED TERRORISM
2	FROM SMART PHONE TO SMART KAMPONG	2	DEPLETION OF NATURAL RESOURCES	2 THE END OF FOOD SECURITY
3	BIG DATA IS HERE	3	UNCONTROLLED POLLUTION	3 SPRATLY ISLAND CONFLICT ESCALATES
4	E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT INDEX DROPS	4	SAYING YES TO RENEWABLE ENERGY	
		5	BRUNEI'S VERY OWN TRASH VORTEX	<b>EDUCATION</b>
	<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	6	MASSIVE TSUNAMI HITS BRUNEI	1 ERADICATION OF EXAMINATION & DIPLOMA DISEASE
1	AEC 2025			2 QUALIFICATION INFLATION
2	WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH			3 THE ABODE OF LEARNING
3	PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE			4 HOMESCHOOLING

## Card Game

There are several ways to use the Futures Card Deck. Here we outline three main ways the deck was designed for use in Brunei.

1. **Discussion.** At the workshop participants are usually divided into 4-6 groups of five people per table (on average). Each table is given the deck. They then pick cards out of the deck in order to share ideas and views on issues and to examine the impact of the issues on public policy. The deck can also be used to craft new scenarios based on two or more cards. That is, each group selects two or more cards and discusses their combined impact. This is done because emerging issues and trends rarely exist in 'laboratory' conditions. That is, multiple changes commonly take place so this approach assists in understanding the complexity of the problems and changes at hand.
2. **Placement.** There was a lively and in-depth discussion amongst researchers and then participants about the difference between emerging issues and trends. Some well established global trends (i.e. 'depression on the rise') are indeed only an emerging issue in Brunei. To assist this differentiation and further discussion a big white paper is placed on the table which outlines the S curve. Participants then place chosen cards on the S curve, discussing if a specific topic is an emerging issue or a trend in Brunei. This is important because emerging issues are often neglected and such a process helps with raising the awareness of issues that may become pertinent in the nearby future. Policy-makers are then encouraged to apply that knowledge within their own zone of influence and area of work. For example, they may re-evaluate some of their strategic plans and activities of their departments, based on the emerging issues and current trends.
3. **The Game.** The objective of the game is to: 1. Encourage in-depth participation in using the deck cards; 2. Illustrate the importance of emerging issues/trends; 3. Create a more embodied and personalised experience when considering trends and emerging issues. Set up of the game is as follows: 1. Participants are placed into different/smaller groups. 2. Each group comes up with a goal or strategy relating to their organisation, field of work or the country. 3. Each group receives a copy of the deck cards. 4. One group presents their goal or strategy. 5. All the other groups/participants present as many of the topics on the deck cards (or come up with their own via the empty card) as possible that will have a significant impact on the presented goal or strategy. This activity is repeated for all the groups.

Out of the three designed options it was the third one that was trialed at the workshops in November 2016 and August 2017. The Game was slightly adjusted each time. In 2016, it involved two people from each group coming up front and sharing their vision. Participants from the other tables (two from each) were then asked to raise a 'what if' question based on the cards they thought may significantly challenge that particular vision. Participants had fun competing with each other in terms of who can come up with the most challenging 'what if' questions to the vision/strategy. Each group's performance was evaluated based on the timing (they had only 2 minutes each) and their responses. This was done to ensure the game's dynamism and participants' engagement. Two monitors measured the time spent and evaluated the responses. The whole group then voted in terms of the 'robustness' of responses – i.e. how the vision/strategy was best 'defended' in light of some challenging 'what-ifs'. The purpose of the game was to make visions and strategies more robust and for policy-makers to be more ready for future challenges being thrown their way.

After the three-day workshop in 2016, a very basic feedback form was given to the participants to evaluate the workshop, including the 'anticipating' segment within which the futures deck and the game were used. Out of twenty two participants who filled in the form, fourteen participants

marked the process as ‘highly satisfactory’ and eight as ‘satisfactory’. All twenty two participants said they would recommend the workshop to others, especially to ‘the top management’/‘upper level managers’. Other recommendations included the workshop being offered to the: ‘strategic planners’, ‘all middle and senior managers’, ‘office of Policy & Foresight’, ‘head of departments and high level executives’, ‘delivery unit & Wawasan Secretariat’ and ‘my colleagues/peers’. Several participants also commented that ‘the duration of the course was insufficient and needed to be longer’. And, of relevance to the deck and the game, they highlighted the ‘practical activities [which] really help to make us understand more in the application of the strategy’.

In August 2017, another forty participants from the government sector (PM Office, The Central Bank of Brunei, Royal Brunei Police Force, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Religious Affairs) took part in the three-day Executive Development workshop on Strategic Foresight. The game was adjusted once again, made more competitive amongst both individuals and teams. In the first instance, the teams competed against each other, in a similar manner as in the 2016 workshop. They were challenged by other teams to ‘defend’ their vision and come up with policy solutions in light of emerging issues and trends from the Futures Deck. From these teams, three ‘best performing’ competitors were chosen. They then participated as competitors amongst themselves at the Forum which included workshop participants as well as external guests (from Brunei Government, PM’s Office, CSPA Board of Directors etc.).

By manifesting a deep understanding of futures and strategic foresight and its application in policy the three selected participants received ‘the Best Brunei Futurists’ Award. In addition, the winning team for the deck card which tested their future goals against many possible future scenarios was also honoured. An open-ended feedback form was presented to all workshop participants after they engaged with the game asking them about their experience and what they thought of the game. Their responses could be grouped within the following categories: 1. Interrelatedness of Emerging Issues; 2. Spontaneous and Fun Format for Discussion; and 3. New Ideas Generation; Challenge to the Current Thinking/Knowledge. For example:

*Everything is connected... interrelated, ... regardless of topics ... you just have to find the link. There is nothing isolated no matter how remote the connection between two things. Interlinkages between different topics [help in] identifying first, second order [impacts of] emerging issues/trends. Seemingly unrelated events may have effects on another development. The Deck Game allows participants to develop more related ideas from the issues raised or asked.*

*Overall a fun game. The game was exciting, spontaneous and required simple and relevant responses to the questions given. [Teaches] us to think fast & spontaneously. Think better under pressure. A very interactive and open session. Provided swift response to any issue raised, which is better than getting solutions/strategies during official/organised meetings. Impressed with ‘the spontaneous answers’ from the participants.*

*Able to think of the “unthinkable” ... challenges us to think “outside of the box” ... exercises and opens up the mind. Knowledge sharing; teamwork; cooperative [and] competitive. Random issues can make you go beyond your normal perceptions. [We] need to check pros and cons when creating a policy. Able to assess scenarios of topics from different angles. Perspectives can be widened. The more futures scenarios, the better. There are many areas we should look into and based on others’ different background and expertise, it became clear, ... we should not be comfortable in our own cocoon. Helps open minds and get people out of groupthink. There is always a solution for any problem.*

In addition to the overwhelmingly positive response by the participants, a few had an issue with the exploratory and spontaneous nature of the game, and also commented on its limitations:

*Participants can seem to make up 'facts' to respond to questions quickly. It would be difficult to fact check or verify response that seem legit.*

*There seem to be a bias in group exercise to say that there is a direct effect (on unrelated phenomena).*

*One needs to be resourceful to be able to answer the surprise question.*

These responses indicate that a better context for the game needs to be given – including its purpose and 'how tos'. Indeed, these points were also mentioned by the participants:

*The rules of the games should be explained more clearly. Rules & regulations of the game could be very well explained better...more time allocation would solve this.*

## **Conclusion**

The processes previously described are novel for the CSPS and indeed Brunei as well. They are currently under trial and are to be fine-tuned and improved based on participants' input and based on researchers' new findings. The Futures Deck and the game based on it have been an important pilot project which is hopefully to further develop over the coming years. For now, it will continue to be applied and shared by the CSPS researchers in workshop and forum settings with Brunei's policy makers.

## Appendix: Future Deck Card Examples



**FAILURE TO DIVERSIFY**



**ECONOMY**

Diversification efforts have so far failed to deliver sustainable and significant development. Oil & gas sector still contributes significantly to total exports and continues to be the backbone of the government's revenue. But the future of the oil & gas industry in Brunei is constrained by the unavoidable depletion of this resource. Moreover, Brunei has been ranked relatively low in the Ease of Doing Business as compared to other countries in the region (72<sup>nd</sup> in 2017, 4<sup>th</sup> among ASEAN countries).

Consequently, Brunei seems unable to increase the pace of FDI inflows, and some longstanding foreign investors are leaving the country. Brunei's economic growth and development can be greatly hindered due to the loss of human resources and expertise that come with FDI, unless these are replaced with viable alternatives.

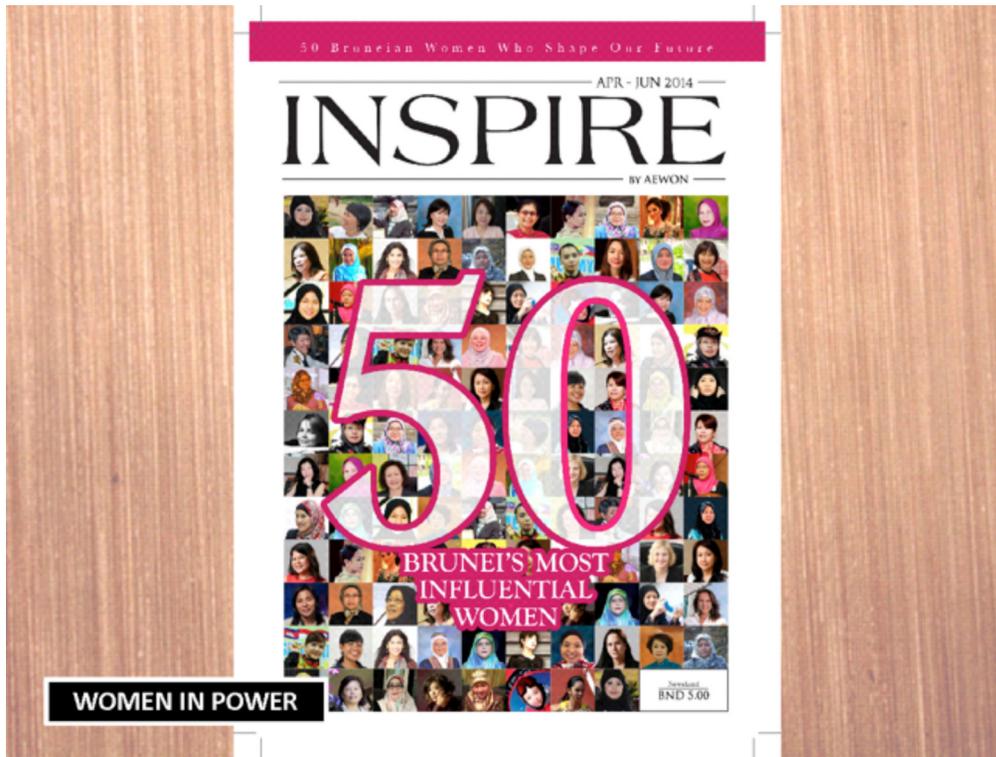
**Questions for reflection**

- Which economic clusters of activity outside oil & gas should Brunei be venturing into to diversify?
- How can we stimulate entrepreneurship and the growth of the private sector?
- Which feasible alternatives can replace decreasing FDI inflows, or alternatively, how can FDI be encouraged?

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 **SOCIETY**

Statistics show women are becoming more educated than men in Brunei, comprising 60% of the total number of university graduates. Increasingly, women hold executive level jobs and Brunei has seen its first female Deputy Minister. If such trends continue, women may become the main breadwinners in the future.

At the same time, Brunei is historically a patriarchal society and women have traditionally been subordinate to men, both in the workplace as well as in the domestic sphere. Women are expected to be the primary caregivers for children and responsible for housework whilst often being excluded from household decision-making processes. As main breadwinners, the dynamics of gender relations in Bruneian households will change dramatically. There will be rising tension within families and women could be pushed to the limit as both household's providers and caretakers.

**Questions for reflection**

- If women become the main breadwinner of the household, how would Bruneian households change?
- Would we benefit from a shift away from a patriarchal society?
- What policies, such as subsidised day care for children and the elderly, could be put in place to allow women to be more fully engaged in the labour market?



Photo Credit: The Brunei Times



**ENVIRONMENT**

Brunei's air quality continues to be among the safest and cleanest on the planet. However, when it comes down to protecting our waterways, much is left wanting.

For example, dubbed the Venice of the East in the 16th century by Magellan, there is the famous stilted water village of Kampong Ayer which has been in existence for over 1300 years. Kampong Ayer is home to some 30,000 people, complete with hospitals, schools, shops and restaurants, and is a popular tourist destination. However, strewn with rubbish accumulated over the years, a mini 'trash vortex' eddies the waters surrounding Kampong Ayer, presenting a hazard to residents, tourists, boat drivers and wild life. If nothing is done, our waterways in the future may become trashed beyond repair.

**Questions for reflection**

- What types of efforts to clean up Kampong Ayer and other waterways are currently being implemented?
- Do we have penalties in place for littering or programmes to raise awareness about the existing 'trash vortex'?
- Which policies may be the most efficient in addressing the problem?

*Photo Credit: Daniel Abdullah*



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**HEALTH**

Non-communicable diseases such as cancer, heart diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases and strokes accounted for 62% of all mortality in 2012 and collectively have been the top cause of death for more than three decades in Brunei. With obesity prevalence at nearly 30% of the population, Brunei has the highest percentage of obese adults in ASEAN.

The Government and private stakeholders are increasingly stepping in with health awareness campaigns. Healthy living and daily exercising are promoted as the new norm for Bruneians instead of just being a trendy style of living for the privileged few. Bruneians are becoming more attentive to health related issues, especially with the food we eat, our office working conditions and even the air that we breathe.

**Questions for reflection**

- What are the trends and drivers shaping the future of health in Brunei?
- Are existing policies adequate to specifically address existing obesity and micro-nutrient deficiencies?
- What strategies can further encourage healthy living practices?



**TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE**

'Smart City' technology / The Internet of Things (IoT) has the potential to be scaled up from a personal mobile device to an entire city or Kampong. The use of an integrated IoT systems and real time monitoring to manage the resources of a Kampong can dramatically improve efficiency, reduce wastage, and enhance residents' quality of life. Telbru has come out in support of developing smart cities in Brunei and the National ICT Whitepaper 2016-2020 aims to ensure that Brunei's population will be ready to fully utilise IoT smart technology on a macro scale.

With mobile phone penetration at 118.8% and being top in Asia for Facebook penetration, Bruneians are quick to embrace technology. With IoT-enabled innovations, Brunei can achieve smart city status by 2035, radically changing the way we live, work and play.

**Questions for reflection**

- What are the key trends and issues connected with the emergence of IoT?
- How might the Internet of Things (IoT) impact on various aspects of Brunei (e.g. tourism, government services, energy use, etc.)?
- How might the smart city vision be re-imagined for Brunei, such that it was not just an imported "used future"?

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**WORK**

The unemployment rate in Brunei is estimated at 6.9% and at a significant 25.3% among the youth population. Overall labour underutilisation, measuring the mismatch between job demand and supply, stands at 18%. Employment opportunities in Brunei could remain restricted due to the lack of diversification and heightened uncertainty in the oil & gas and related sectors. Without a sufficient number of jobs being created to match the flow of fresh labour entrants, the labour market may soon face an increasingly serious unemployment problem. Moreover, even with sufficient jobs, without creating the right ones, the unemployment problem could transform into one of underemployment, including increased mismatch of skills and employment.

Prolonged unemployment and underemployment problems have a rippling effect and lead to further economic and social troubles.

**Questions for reflection**

- What are the key employment trends for Brunei?
- How do we equip our youths with future-proof skills?
- How can we best improve the welfare and security of our future workforce?



**GOVERNANCE**

A whole of government approach refers to public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve shared goals and integrate government response to a number of issues. Breaking out of policy silos, working collaboratively and doing more with less is increasingly seen as important. Whole of government approaches have been shown to reduce duplication at the local level, minimise the use of limited resources, help with better alignment of activities and make public policy more effective.

The awareness of this approach is also increasing in Brunei. A number of initiatives towards integrated government approaches have already been set up such as the proposed Land Transport Master Plan 2014, the creation of a one stop SME centre - DARE in 2016, and the establishment of the intra-ministry national committees to solve identified policy issues in a holistic fashion.

**Questions for reflection**

- What are the emerging futures of the public service? Will we see the end of ministries and departments?
- Should there be a whole scale transformation to one-stop centres?
- What are some benefits and challenges related to the whole of government approach and initiatives?

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## Correspondence

Dr. Diana Cheong (corresponding author)  
Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies  
Spg 347 Jln Pasar Baru Gadong  
BE1318 Brunei Darussalam  
E-mail: diana.cheong@csps.org.bn

Dr. Ivana Milojević  
Metafuture, Australia  
www.metafuture.org  
E-mail: ivana@metafuture.org

## Endnotes

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2. <http://takshashila.org.in/the-takshashila-future-deck/>. Accessed 12 October 2017.
3. The Futures Folio was produced by ‘a consortium led by Fast Future, with TCS Digital World and Peter Stevens’ as part of DG Connect (Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology), Digital Futures Task Force and the Futurium foresight exercises which ran from 2011- 2013. For more information consult <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/blog/journey-2050-visions-and-policy-challenges-digital-futures-takes-its-final-bow> (Accessed 12 October 2017) and [http://espas.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/generated/document/en/Digital%20Futures\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://espas.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/generated/document/en/Digital%20Futures_final_report.pdf) (Accessed 12 October 2017).
4. For example Manoa School Change Engine Deck: <http://journal.rorosoro.com/manoa-school-change-engines-deck/> (Accessed 12 October 2017); GEElab FutureDeck <http://www.geelab.eu/content/futuredeck> (Accessed 12 October 2017); and Arup Drivers of Change Card Sets: <http://www.driversofchange.com/tools/doc/> (Accessed 12 October 2017), to name a few.
5. Indeed, in the last thirty years there has been a move from expert based forecasting to interactive-based foresight. The increased use of Futures Card Decks is an example of this.
6. [http://gidnp.com/prj\\_2014\\_1\\_gh.html](http://gidnp.com/prj_2014_1_gh.html). Accessed 12 October 2017.

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