



Report

Drama to Dharma and the Holographic Buddha: Futures Thinking in Thailand

Ivana Milojević¹, Sohail Inayatullah², Ora-orn Poocharoen³, Nok Boonmavichit^{4*}

¹Senior Lecturer in Futures, Edinburgh Futures Institute, Institute for Education, Community and Society Moray House School of Education and Sport and College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Edinburgh

²UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies, Sejahtera Centre for Sustainability and Humanity, IIUM, Malaysia, and Professor, Tamkang University, Taiwan

³Director, School of Public Policy, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

⁴Post-doctoral Researcher, The Center for Social Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Abstract

This paper presents insights from a two-day foresight workshop in Thailand, where over 60 participants from government, academia, and civil society explored long-term national futures using foresight methodologies, including Change Progression Scenario and Causal Layered Analysis. Discussions covered key areas such as water security, energy transition, constitutional reform, civil service and AI, justice, mental health, and spirituality. By mapping pathways from the status quo to transformative change, participants envisioned Thailand in 2045 as a nation with adaptive governance, decentralized energy systems, equitable justice, and integrated spiritual well-being in public policy. The findings highlight systemic challenges, emerging opportunities, and strategic directions for fostering national resilience and long-term transformation.

Keywords

public policy, spirituality, justice, scenario, Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), strategic transformation

Introduction

A two-day workshop was held on 7-8 November 2023 and was facilitated by Professor Sohail Inayatullah (lead facilitator) and Dr. Ivana Milojević from Metafuture.org as well as Dr. Ora-orn Poocharoen from the School of Public Policy, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. The workshop was attended by over 60 participants from numerous leading organizations in Thailand, including School of Public Policy, Chiang Mai University (SPP); the National Innovation Agency (NIA); Futures Unit, Office of the Secretary of the Press Advisory Committee, Prime Minister's Office; Faculty of Political Science, Prince of Songkla University; Faculty of Medicine, Songkla University; Faculty of Medicine, Mahidol University; Faculty of Learning Sciences and Education, Thammasat University; King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI); Office of Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC); the Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO), APEC Centre for Technology Foresight Division; Strategic Studies Centre, National Defence Studies Institute (SSC, NDSI); Knowledge Center and Coordination on Spiritual Health; the Thai Health Promotion Foundation; We Oneness; JitArsaBank; Contemplative Education Center, Mahidol University; Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University; Thai Public Broadcasting Service; Thailand Institute of Justice (Public Organization) (TIJ); Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI); Office of the Public Sector Development Commission; Central Investigation Bureau (CIB), National Police; iLaw; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD); Friedrich Naumann Foundation; Westminster Foundation for Democracy; Futures Tales LAB by MQDC; Punch Up; International IDEA; Thongpoon Wanglee Foundation; and Vibrations.

Instead of just predicting future tech, this workshop brought together a wide range of stakeholders from

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: boonmavichit@hotmail.com (N. Boonmavichit)

government, businesses, schools, and community groups to think critically about all aspects of Thailand's future. This marks a big change from the past, when planning mostly focused on technology.

Structured Approach to Futures Thinking and Critical Success Factors

To dive into the future, a modified Six Pillars approach to futures thinking (Inayatullah, 2008, 2015) was utilized as a guideline. Core methods such as the Futures Triangle, Emerging Issues Analysis, Scenarios, Visioning, Backcasting, Conflict Transformation futures, and Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) were used as foresight tools (Inayatullah, 2004). Six working groups were created, and participants applied the methods to their research questions. They moved in and out of groups and group titles changed over the two days. The groups were:

1. Resource Governance (Water Security) in Thailand 2033
2. Enterprise Adaptation (Energy Transition) 2033
3. Futures of Constitution 2033
4. Futures of Civil Servants/Civil Service System 2033
5. Spiritual Health 2033
6. Spiritual Practice and Society 2033

Each group then proceeded to apply methods to their research domain. We do not present the findings to each method and question, rather focus our attention on scenarios and Causal Layered Analysis.

Change Progression Scenarios

After an analysis of the impacts and implications of the select emerging issues using the Futures Wheel, scenarios were developed. While there are many scenario building methods available, the “Change progression method” developed by Inayatullah and Milojević (Milojević, 2005; Inayatullah, 2022; Government of Malaysia, 2018;) was used as this method integrates both how the external world is changing and what actions are taken. In this approach, four assumptions are used to develop the future. In the first, even as the external world changes, the organization/institution in question prefers a no change future. This could be because the weight of history is too heavy (or indeed, preferred) or because the capabilities to change are not present. In the marginal change future, the world continues to change, however, given the reality of politics and the challenges of change management only a few policies are successfully implemented. In the third future, the external world continues to change, and the organization/institution successfully adapts to the changing world. In the final radical scenario, the organization leads the future, the rules of the game are reshaped. Thus, the scenario structure moves from no change to marginal change, to adaptive change and then finally to radical or transformative change. In this way, policymakers can easily see the possibilities and choices in front of them.

Scenarios were developed by the following groups: Resource Governance (Water Security), Enterprise Adaptation, Civil Service, Futures of Justice, Constitution, Mental Health, and Spiritual Practice and Society. The narratives for each scenario are presented in the following sections.

Resource Governance (Water Insecurity)

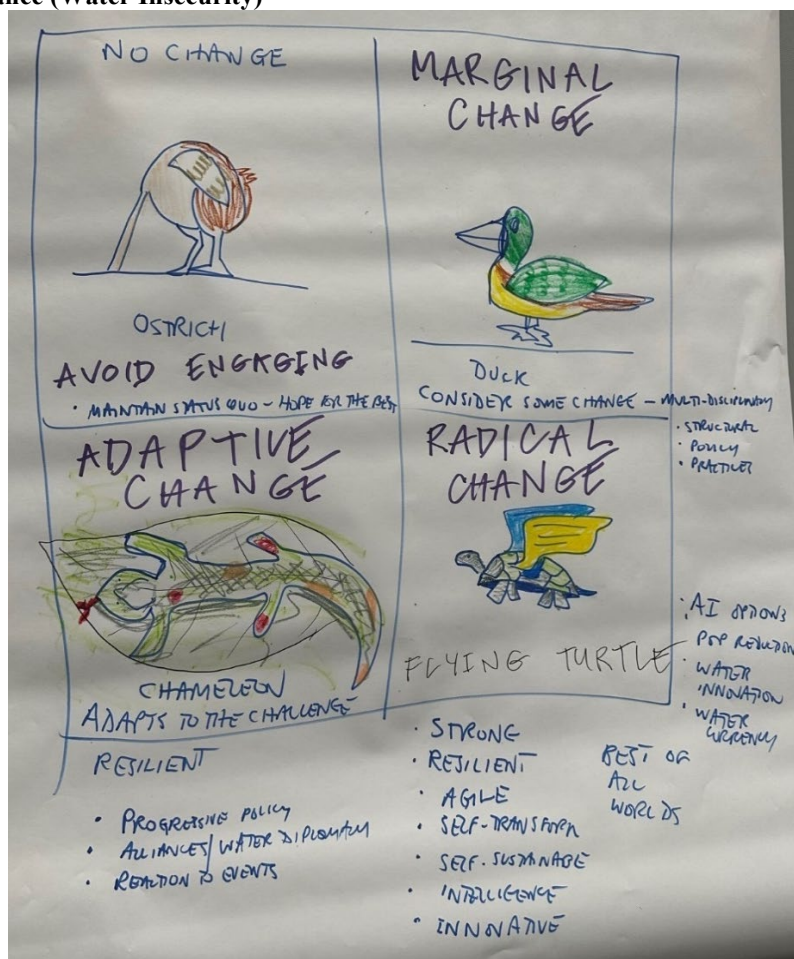


Fig.1: Resource Governance (Water Insecurity)

Table 1: Resource Governance Water Security Scenarios

No Change	Ostrich (avoid engaging): maintain status quo; hope for the best
Marginal change	Duck (consider some changes): multidisciplinary structure, policy, practice
Adaptive change	Chameleon (adapt to the challenge): resilient, progressive policy, alliances/ water diplomacy, reaction to events.
Radical change	Flying turtle (best of the worlds): strong, resilient, agile, self-transform, self-sustainable, AI options, population reduction, water innovation, water currency.

For the water insecurity group, the No Change scenario involves avoiding engagement and maintaining the status quo while hoping for the best. Marginal Change manifests through considering certain changes, such as multidisciplinary and structural policy practices. The symbol for No Change is an ostrich with its head hidden, while Marginal Change is symbolized by a duck. The symbol for Adaptive Change is a chameleon, representing adaptability to challenges, resilience, and the application of progressive policies. Radical Change, symbolized by a flying turtle, aims for the "best of all worlds," including options such as AI integration, water innovation, and the introduction of a water currency.

Enterprise Adaptation/Nature-Based Solutions

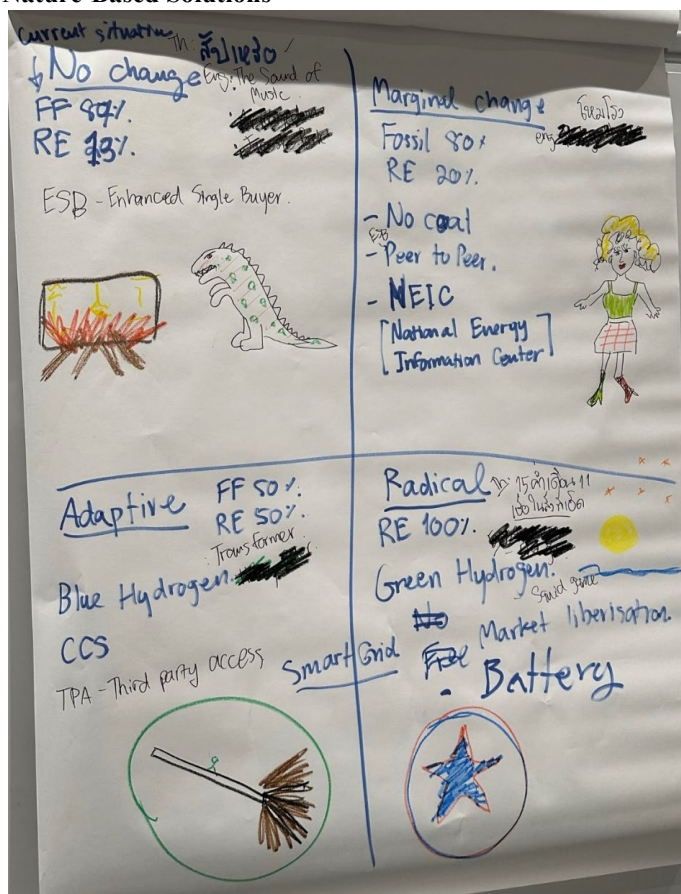


Fig. 2: Enterprise Adaptation

Table 2: Enterprise Adaptation Scenarios

No Change	The Sound of Music: A dinosaur by the fire: current situation, enhanced single buyer, 87% fossil fuels /13% renewable energy.
Marginal change	The Premiere: 80% fossil fuels /20% renewable energy, no coal, peer-to-peer, National Energy Information Centre (NEIC).
Adaptive change	Transformer: 50% fossil fuels /50% renewable energy, blue hydrogen transformer C.C.S. TPA third birthday party access, smart grid.
Radical change	Full Moon Night: 100% renewable energy, green hydrogen, market liberalization, battery.

For the Enterprise Adaptation group, the No Change scenario resembles the current situation where fossil fuels represent 87% and renewable energy represents 13%. There is an enhanced single buyer. This scenario is titled "The Sound of Music," represented by the image of a dinosaur by the fire. This ratio progressively changes to 80/20 in the Marginal Change scenario, 50/50 in the Adaptive Change scenario, and 100% renewable energy in the Radical Change scenario.

Progressive change involves reducing the use of coal, transitioning to peer-to-peer and a national energy information center, moving towards blue hydrogen transformation, third-party access, smart grid implementation, and ultimately green hydrogen, market liberalization, and battery integration.

Civil Service



Fig. 3: Civil Service

Table 3: Civil Service Scenarios

No Change	Slow Turtle
Marginal change	Turtle on the Move
Adaptive change	Turtle Lab
Radical change	Turtle on the Rocket

The civil service group created scenarios, each symbolized by a turtle. In the No Change scenario (2023), a turtle on the phone represents the slow pace of civil services in Thailand. The services are rudimentary and limited. In the Marginal Change scenario (2027), civil service transitions to a slightly faster pace, symbolized by a turtle on a skateboard. Some are concerned about potential setbacks, so a helmet for safety is introduced. There is increased efficiency compared to the previous ‘tāo’ speed.

Venturing into the Adaptive Change scenario (2030), the metaphorical laboratory features a turtle climbing a staircase, symbolizing progress within the lab or a sandbox, aiming for a full-service extension. Experimentation is key, and there is recognition of the need for trials before fully implementing new services--a gradual ascent with the aim of broader acceptance by 2030.

Finally, in the Radical Change scenario (2033), the turtle takes flight with a rocket, breaking free from the confines of Thailand. This scenario envisions a tech-savvy turtle symbolizing transformative change. By 2033, the imagined scenario involves a leap forward into a new era, transcending boundaries by riding on a rocket with a phone in hand.

Futures of Justice

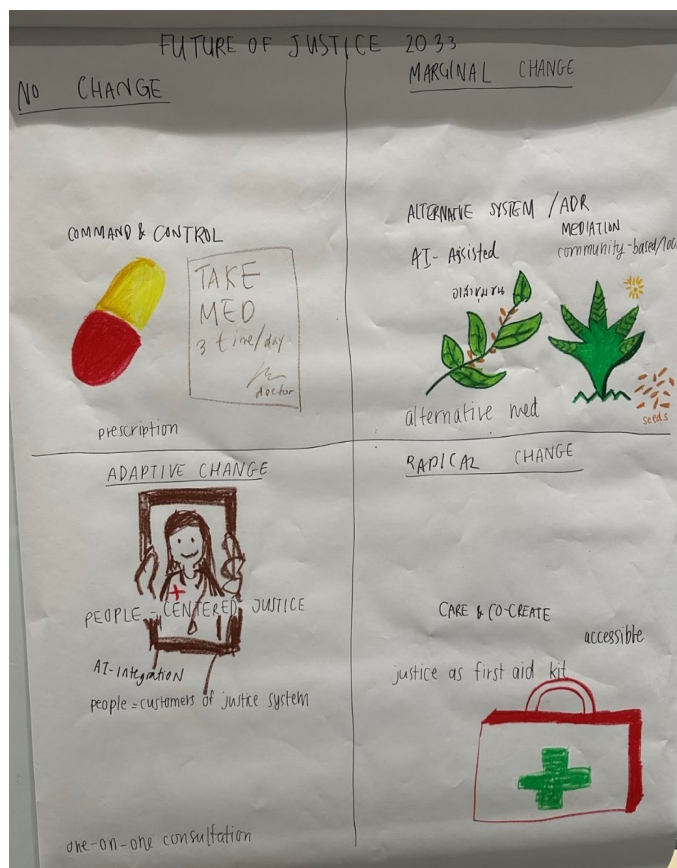


Fig. 4: Futures of Justice

Table 4: Futures of Justice Scenarios

No Change	Prescription: take medicine three times a day, command, and control.
Marginal change	Alternative Medicine: alternative system/ADR mediation community-based/local volunteer, AI assisted.
Adaptive change	One-on-one Consultation: People-centered justice, AI-integration, people are the customers of justice system.
Radical change	First Aid Kit: Care and Co-create, accessible.

For the Justice group, the No Change scenario is aptly represented as a ‘pill’ to be taken, akin to a prescribed medicine taken daily. This approach involves command and control, emphasizing a prescriptive methodology. In the Marginal Change scenario, an alternative system emerges, featuring ADR mediation, community-based and local solutions, with AI assistance – a paradigm reminiscent of opting for alternative medicine.

In the Adaptive Change scenario, the focus shifts to people-centered justice, AI integration, and individuals becoming customers of justice systems. This approach includes one-on-one consultations. Finally, the Radical Change scenario envisions an accessible system with care and co-creation, symbolized as a ‘first aid kit’ for justice.

Constitution

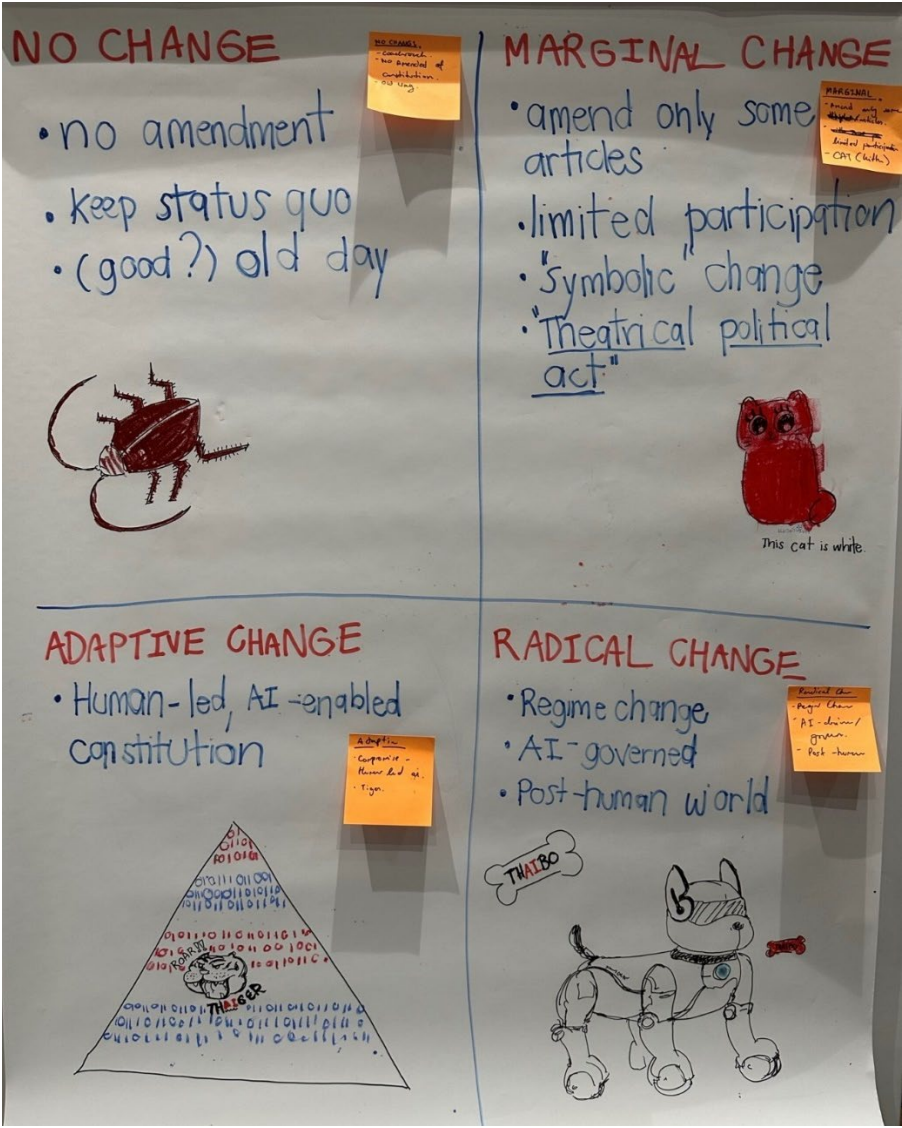


Fig. 5: Constitution

Table 5: Constitution Scenarios

No Change	Cockroach: amendment, keep status quo, (good?) old days.
Marginal change	Red cat with the description – the cat is 'white': amend only some articles, limited participation, symbolic change, triad trickle political act.
Adaptive change	Roaring Tiger: human-led, AI-enabled constitution.
Radical change	THAIBo - Thai Robotic dog: regime change, AI governed, post-human world.

For the Constitution group, the No Change scenario involves maintaining the status quo and idealizing the ‘good old days,’ with no amendments to the Constitution. The image associated with this scenario is that of a cockroach. In the Marginal Change scenario, only some articles are amended, featuring limited participation, symbolic changes,

and theatrical political acts. The image representing this scenario is titled ‘This Cat is White’ (though it was painted in red).

In the Adaptive Change scenario, a human-led, AI-enabled constitution is envisioned, symbolized by a THAIger image. Finally, the Radical Change scenario portrays a shift in regime, AI government, and a post-human world, symbolized by a THAIBo image.

Mental Health

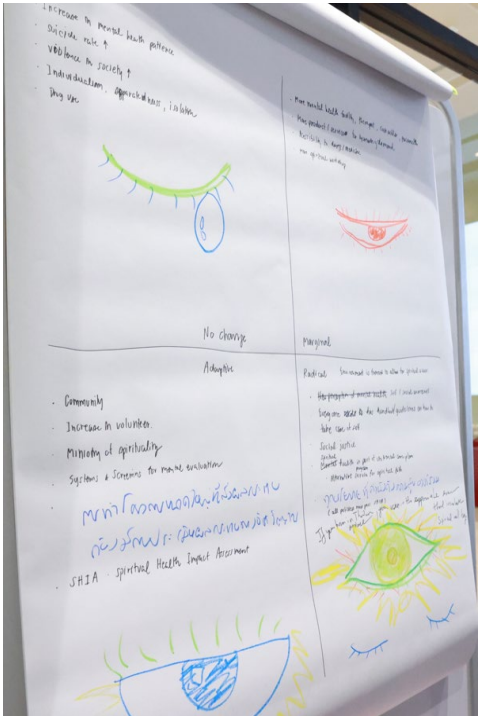


Fig. 6: Spiritual Health

Table 6: Spiritual Health Scenario

No Change	Teary eye: increase in mental health patients, suicide rate, and violence in society. Individualism, separation, isolation, drug use.
Marginal change	Gazing eye: more mental health facility/therapist /counselor/personnel. More products/services to meet increasing demand. Accessibility to medicine. More spiritual workshops.
Adaptive change	Open eye: increase volunteers, ministry of spirituality, mental evaluation systems and screening, Spiritual Health Impact Assessment. (SHIA).
Radical change	Third eye: The environment is designed to allow for spiritual access and promote self/social awareness. Everyone has handbooks/guidelines on how to take care of oneself. Social justice. Spiritual health is part of the universal care plan. Alternative services/programs for the spiritual path. If you were born in any place in Thailand, you are in an appropriate environment that incubates spiritual well-being. All policies are concerned with holistic happiness.

For the Mental Health group, the No Change scenario foresees an increase in suicide rates, drug use, and violence both in society and among mental health patients. Individualism, separateness, and isolation prevail, symbolized by an eye with a tear.

In the Marginal Change scenario, this eye slowly opens. More mental health facilities, therapies, counseling, additional products, and services to meet growing demands, increased medicine accessibility, and more spiritual workshops become available.

In the Adaptive Change scenario, symbolized by the eye-opening even more, there is a shift towards community focus, increased volunteering, the establishment of a Ministry of Spirituality, systemic evaluation, and spiritual health impact assessments.

Finally, in the Radical Change scenario, the eye shines brightly when alert, or the eyes peacefully close when needed or chosen. This scenario includes an environment that allows spiritual access, heightened self and social awareness, universal guidelines for self-care, social justice, spiritual health as part of the universal care plan, and accessibility of alternative service programs for spiritual paths.

Spiritual Practice and Society

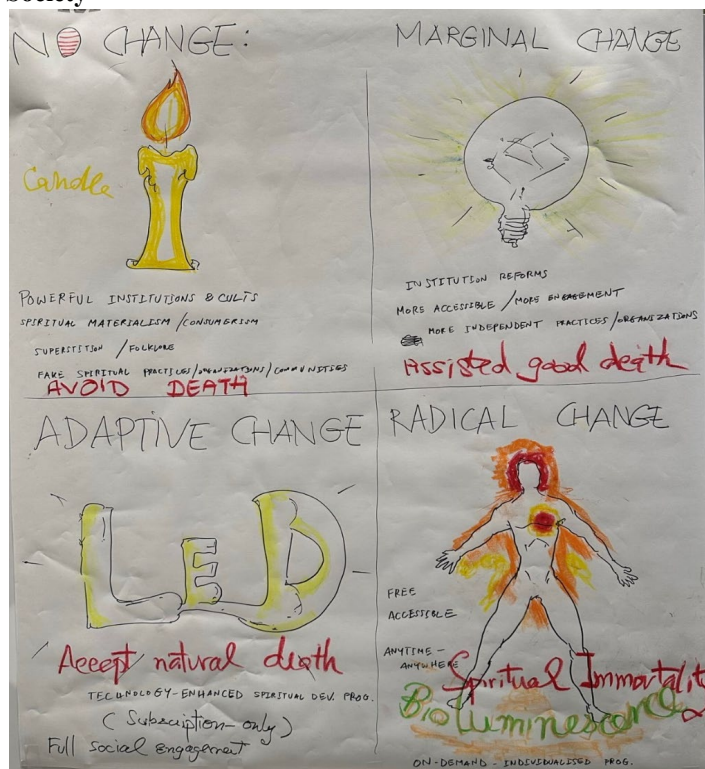


Fig. 7: Spiritual Practice and Society

No change—Candle (Avoid death): Powerful institutions and cults. Spiritual materialism/consumerism. Superstition/folklore. Fake spiritual practices/organizations/communities.

Marginal change—Light Bulb (Assisted good death): Institution reforms, more accessibility/engagement, more independent practices/organizations.

Adaptive change—LED (Accept natural death): Technology-enhanced spiritual development program. (Subscription-only), full social engagement.

Radical change—Bioluminescence body (Spiritual Immortality): Free, accessible, anytime-anywhere, on-demand individualized program.

Table 7: The Spiritual Practice and Society Scenarios

No Change	Candle (Avoid death): Powerful institutions and cults. Spiritual materialism/consumerism. Superstition/folklore. Fake spiritual practices/organizations/communities.
Marginal change	Light Bulb (Assisted good death): Institution reforms, more accessibility/engagement, more independent practices/organizations.
Adaptive change	LED (Accept natural death): Technology-enhanced spiritual development program. (Subscription-only), full social engagement.
Radical change	Bioluminescence body (Spiritual Immortality): Free, accessible, anytime-anywhere, on-demand individualized program.

For the Spirituality group, the No Change scenario depicts powerful institutions and cults, spiritual materialism/consumerism, superstition/folklore, and fake spiritual practices/communities. The predominant focus is on ‘avoiding death,’ symbolized by a candle. In the Marginal Change scenario, institutions undergo reform, becoming more accessible with increased engagement and independent practices and organizations. The emphasis shifts to ‘assisted good death,’ illustrated by a light bulb.

In the Adaptive Change scenario, there is full social engagement and technologically enhanced spiritual development programs (subscription only). The focal point becomes ‘accepting natural death,’ symbolized by LED lights. Finally, in the Radical Change scenario, on-demand, individualized programs become freely accessible anytime, anywhere. The primary focus shifts to ‘Bioluminescence – spiritual immortality,’ represented by a radiating human heart and self.

Most participants expressed a preference for a combination of adaptive and radical change. The scenario process forced participants to understand uncertainty, how choices made today could impact tomorrow, and the possibility of both a much better future, or a worse future, if nothing was done, if problems were not solved, and if opportunities not pursued.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

To integrate all previous processes, a Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) was applied. CLA suggests there are four levels of reality (Inayatullah, 2004). The first is the litany – the day-to-day data, the headlines. The second is the system that supports the headlines. The third is the deep culture of the organization. Lastly, there is the core metaphor, the unconscious story that defines what is possible. CLA helps ensure that ‘culture does not eat strategy for breakfast.’

Each group created a CLA, wherein the participants identified the litany, system, worldview, and myth-metaphor for both the present and the future, on their respective topics, as described in the text that follows.

Resource Governance (Water Security) Group

Currently, there is a downward trajectory of insufficient potable water, compounded by climate-change-related disasters. These issues are caused by a lack of water management, insufficient data on water usage, and ineffective water management practices. The prevailing worldview assumes that water is abundant, rooted in the Thai metaphor ‘there are fish in the water and rice in the fields.’ However, this metaphor no longer accurately reflects the reality of Thailand – rivers have been overfished and polluted, while rice fields are confined to private lands.

A new narrative is needed, one that perceives ‘water as life.’ The worldview must shift to recognizing water as a precious resource that should not be wasted. Systemic changes in three critical areas are necessary: implementing smart water management, acquiring real-time data on the ecological system, and establishing effective water policies. Achieving these changes could propel Thailand toward water surplus and self-sufficiency.

Table 8: CLA on Water Security Futures

CLA	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Litany	• Insufficient water • Rainfall, drought, climate	• Water surplus • Self-sufficiency
System	• Ineffective water management • Lack of effective laws • Water data analytics	• Effective water policy law • Real-time data analysis • System for innovation • Smart water management • Water research institutes
Worldview	• City of rivers • Abundance of water	• Water is a precious resource and thus should not be wasted.
Myth/metaphor	• In the water we have fish and in the rice fields, we have rice.	• Water is life • In the water we see life, without water, there is no life.

Enterprise Adaptation (Energy Transition) Group

The participants shifted from envisioning the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) maintaining a full energy monopoly to a scenario where EGAT sells technology and grid usage. They also imagined a future where consumers transitioned into prosumers, engaging in both buying and selling electricity. This vision sees a decentralized grid and increased affordability. To realize this transformation, a revision of the national energy plan is necessary. The key narrative shift is a move from ‘energy technology for the few’ to ‘energy technology for all.’

Table 9: CLA on Enterprise Adaptation in Thailand 2033

CLA	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Litany	• High energy prices • Monopoly grid • Carbon emission from fossil fuel to electricity • Coal to renewable energy • Enhanced single buyer	• The role of government is to provide not the electricity but the technology to produce electricity • Most households sell electricity
System	• EGAT has a monopoly on selling electricity • Electricity law from a single buyer • Revision National Energy Plan • Political uncertainty	• EGAT transformed from selling electricity to selling technology and grid usage • Third-party access to the grid
Worldview	• Electricity must be affordable for everybody • Fossil fuels • Government provides energy as a public good	• Consumers become prosumers • Energy price is a real price reflecting the true cost • Government focuses on renewables
Myth/metaphor	• Energy technology for the few • Households cannot sell electricity • Poor people cannot understand technology • Redistribution can make people unemployed • Thailand cannot be an ASEAN hub • PTT controls all oil prices	• Energy technology for all • Households can sell electricity • Everyone can learn how to use technology

Constitution Group

Participants argued that the current constitution, while being the highest law of the land, is overly influenced by western political theory. It also maintains the status quo by being excessively past-based and favoring a top-down structure. The core metaphor associated with the Constitution is that it is ‘holy and untouchable.’ In the preferred future, the constitution is envisioned to be resilient and living. This implies the need for a process-based public consultation to create a living document capable of responding to changing conditions, and one that is future-oriented. Thus, the process of rewriting is deemed critical, emphasizing that it is being led by the people.

Table 10: CLA on Constitution Futures in Thailand

CLA	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Litany	• Short life span • Top-down structure	• People led process • Agile - able to respond to changing conditions
System	• Status-quo based constitution focused on the past • Limited participation of people in politics	• A constitutional redesign that is process-led / people-led, including children’s participation. • Public engagement
Worldview	• Constitution as the “Highest law of the land” • Constitution as a status quo based on western political theory	• Highest law but reachable/accessible • Public consultation
Myth/metaphor	• The Constitution is holy and untouchable	• Resilient and living constitution

Civil Service Group

In this CLA, the role of AI in transforming Thailand’s civil service is explored. The participants argued that the litany includes low GDP, low government effectiveness, and conventional work hours. In the future, they envision flatter organizations with easier access to government services, where 65% of civil servants use AI. To create this future, they suggested five policy directions: first, establish a legal framework for AI; second, downsize government departments by utilizing AI for increased efficiency; third, implement whole-of-government data-sharing platforms; fourth, adopt a hybrid automated system; and fifth, enhance technological literacy. For this transformation to occur, there needs to be a worldview shift from a silo-based, paternalistic, authoritarian, and slow government to one that is lean, fast, gives autonomy to divisions, and supports partnerships. Ultimately, this requires a metaphorical shift from the “blind leading the blind” to using AI to “weave our new future together”.

Table 11: CLA on the Civil Service and AI

CLA	Current Reality	Transformed 2045
Litany	• Low GDP growth 2.6% • Low government effectiveness • Conventional work hours 8.00 – 16.30	• 65% of civil servants use AI • Flat organization • Easy access government
System	• 1074 acts • Large number of resolutions • Week management • Data collection was not implemented throughout the deficit • Corruption • Red tape	• AI positive legal framework • Downsizing (process) • Data-sharing platform • Hybrid automated system • Tech citizen readiness & resilience skills
Worldview	• Silos • Slow • Paternalism • Authoritarianism	• Partnership • Lean and fast • Autonomy
Myth/ metaphor	• The blind leading the blind • Middle-income trap • Red tape	• Weaving the new future together

Justice System Group

The Justice system group focused on transforming prisons. They took an approach where the narrative shifts from 'I fear you' to 'I fix you,' to 'We co-create safety.' This means, at the worldview level, that offenders are not seen as inherently evil but rather as individuals influenced by early childhood and the life cycle, and by addressing these factors, harmony is created in society. The punitive culture is transformed. Systemic changes they advocated for were in mediation and other conflict resolution methods. These methods would be designed to intervene in the crime lifecycle and ensure that problems are solved early on. In conflicts, efforts would be made to mediate as much as possible. This approach aims to lead to fewer people in prison and a reduction in the overall number of prisons. This stands in contrast to the current reality where prisons are overcrowded, many individuals re-offend, and drug-related issues prevail, resulting in a broken-down justice system. Indeed, at the systemic level, the problems feed on themselves, as the key performance indicator (KPI) for the police is the number of arrests, not conflicts prevented. The proposed solution is to move toward a future where safety and security are co-created with all stakeholders of the criminal justice system.

Table 12: CLA on Justice System Futures in Thailand

CLA	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Litany	• Overcrowding prisons • Reoffending • Crime rates are still high • Drugs are a major problem	• Fewer number of people in prison and eventually fewer prisons
System	• Criminal records • KPI – no. of arrests • Centralized institutionalized system • Weak, limited, reintegration	• Mediation of conflicts and other methods to reduce intake into prisons
Worldview	• Command & control • Punitive culture • Offenders = bad guys • Crime control = safe society	• Care and harmony • Prevention and early intervention • Co-creation
Myth/ metaphor	• I fear you • More prisons, more safety	• We co-create safety • I fix you • Fewer prisons, more safety

Spirituality Groups

There were two Spirituality groups: the first group consisted of activists, scholars, and facilitators with extensive experience in shaping spiritual health in Thailand, while the second group consisted of physicians, scientists, and psychologists who have incorporated spirituality into their practice. As a result, there are two separate CLA analyses.

The first Spirituality group CLA focused on shifting spirituality from individual behaviour to a spirituality centered on meeting basic human needs. Instead of the commodification of spirituality, the focus is on the equal distribution of resources, reduction in inequality, and a decrease in crime rates. However, due to a sense of powerlessness, fortune-telling remains in demand. What is needed is a shift to inner empowerment and enhanced personal and collective agency. To move in this direction, numerous system changes are required. These include regulating temples and implementing educational reform (emphasizing critical thinking, diversity, and open-mindedness). At the worldview level, this means a shift from power over others to power within, a transition from consumerism to well-being and inner satisfaction. Most powerful is the narrative shift – from Drama Land to Dharma-land: a land of equity, well-being, and inner transformation. The former is based on emotions and short-term ‘tribal’ politics, and the latter on the core ideas of spiritual humanism.

Table 13: CLA on Spiritual Health

CLA	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Litany	• Superstition, sacred amulets, commodified spirituality • The popularity of fortune tellers • Increase in suicide due to powerlessness and hopelessness • Temples are no longer community centers	• Social safety net • Equal distribution of the resources • Reduction of income inequality • Lower crime rate
System	• A lack of regulation and audits on temples • Lack of public support for spiritual health and wellbeing • Religious organizations not meeting the demand for spiritual wellbeing • The government makes use of religious groups to maintain power	• Fulfill basic human needs • An education policy that embraces reform toward diversity, open-mindedness, and critical thinking
Worldview	• Wealth, safety (free from danger), health (illness recovery) • Believe in “power-over” approaches due to caste system mindset – not believing that everyone is equal • Commercialism/materialism • Focus on the individual actions creating a good society • Individual over social structure • Lack of sense of agency and security	• Power within • Co-creating mentality • Cultural competency • Diversity • Life goal is not measured by career achievement but by all satisfaction
Myth/metaphor	• Drama-land • Theater Stage • Nation/Religion/Monarchy	• Dharma-land

The second Spirituality group deconstructed current views of spirituality and offered a powerful alternative. The narrative shift was from capitalism, consumerism, and materialism to spirituality as part of daily life. This means moving from a lack of educational, economic, and social policy on all things spiritual to a range of evidence-based policies that would integrate spirituality into public life. Metaphorically, this would be the shift from ‘we have to spend’ and ‘life is about me’ to ‘we live to give and love’ and ‘life is about me, interconnected with others.’ Thailand and the planet would be quite dramatically different in this future. It would be, as in the earlier CLA, a Dharma-land.

Table 14: CLA on Spiritual Practice and Society

CLA Layers	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Litany	• No awareness • Mental and spiritual disorders • Domestic violence • Social network violence • Meaningless rituals	• Awareness, mindfulness, as practices • Spiritual literacy • Measurable benefits from spirituality
System	• Inequity and political pressure • Lack of policy on spirituality	• Spiritual literacy in the educational system • “Wellness” centered in healthcare system • Spirituality integrated into public policy
Worldview	• Capitalism, consumerism, materialism • Spirituality is irrelevant – it is meaningless to me • Spirituality is a luxury for the rich, for those who have a lot of free time	• Spirituality is for me and everyone • It is an essential part of life

CLA Layers	Current Reality	Transformed Future
Myth/ metaphor	• We must spend • We live to take • Life is struggle • Life is all about me	• We live to give • We live to love • We live in meaningful life • “Everyone can be a champion” • Life is a journey in search of meaning • Life is about me, interconnected with others

In summary, participants formulated seven distinct Causal Layered Analysis (CLAs) across six topics to explore more profoundly and comprehensively their respective issues. This approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the issues from various perspectives, encouraging participants to question dominant assumptions and challenge prevailing narratives. Consequently, it empowered the creation of fresh narratives concerning the future and facilitated the integration of these novel perspectives into strategic considerations.

Conclusion

While it has become popular to explore the implications of AI on society, this group of over sixty participants chose more remarkable areas of research. They explored the implications of AI on the civil service, but what is novel compared to other foresight work globally was the focus on spirituality. It was not just their scenarios that were novel; for example, the creation of AI-personalized Buddha holograms, but the integration of spirituality into public policy in daily life. They linked spirituality to social change, envisioning a shift from a society driven by scarcity and fear to one where individuals had more inner and outer power, enabling them to use innovation to reduce inequity, transform the prison system (moving towards mediation and life cycle interventions), and even decentralize the energy system based on renewables. It wasn't just the energy system that needed to shift, but also the water security system, using big data and effective water management to shift the discourse to "water is life." To make this transition, many suggested it was time for a people-led process to rewrite the Constitution, making it more resilient and future-focused.

To create a new future, the participants explored alternatives and the range of choices ahead. They used the scenario method, moving from no change to marginal, adaptive, and finally radical. In this group, most wished for an adaptive and radical scenario. For example, the Spirituality group imagined the establishment of a Ministry of Spirituality. The radical scenario went further, with spiritual health being part of universal care.

After examining alternatives, they moved toward a shared preferred future. This can be summarized as:

- Water security
- Full energy security through households using renewable energy
- Spirituality integrated into the day-to-day life of Thais
- A civil service that uses AI wisely to increase efficiency, accuracy, and peer-to-peer data sharing
- An easily accessible, personalized, community-based justice system based on collaboration and mediation.
- A people-led constitutional reform process

While the vision may seem far-fetched to many, they used backcasting to articulate steps to reach this vision. They imagined by in 2040 four critical events:

- Merging of all religions in Thailand
- Operation of the first energy hydrogen station in Thailand
- Launch of the first tech-enhanced i-spiritual platform expediting people's spiritual development
- Introduction of innovative social policies emphasizing spiritual goals/dimensions for collectiveness

And earlier in 2030 five critical events:

- Widespread flooding affecting over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world prompts urgency for an energy transition, leading to a decentralized energy structure
- Decentralized and local hydrogen energy production
- Implementation of carbon capture solutions

- The successful hosting of a major international spiritual health expo in Thailand

While these strategies and events enhance the possibility of creating the desired future, equally important are the metaphors - the narrative shifts. Noteworthy is the shift from "Drama-land" (endless politics) to "Dharma-land," a land of virtue. Regarding the nation, they envisioned Thailand transforming from an elephant on the edge of a cliff to an elephant on a trampoline in the highlands. The foresight-enabled elephant could climb to the heights of impossible futures, and if there is a failure, there is a social safety net – a trampoline that can protect and allow for new goals to be realized.

And what if there are conflicts between narratives and visions of the future? Participants in this workshop used conflict productively to develop and enhance their vision. Conflict can be past-based and negative, future-based, and negative (win-lose), past-based and positive (history of getting along), and future-based and positive (win-win for all). An example of this was work done by the futures of the Constitution group.

Conflicts over whether and how to change the Constitution can be distilled into two perspectives. One, mostly coming from the 'elite' and 'the old power,' that do not wish to change anything, while the other desires the Constitution to better reflect current and forthcoming changes.

Looking toward the past through a more constructive lens (past positive) they have the option of recognizing positive historical contributions. For example, in 1997, the new Constitution was created and recognized as the 1st people's constitution, a manifestation of democracy in Thailand. This led to a full-term government – an unprecedented event in Thai political history – and political stability without any clashes. Such events were accompanied by economic prosperity during peaceful times and stable growth, increasing 'people politics.' All of this laid the foundation for people's participation. Focusing on the constructive use of the past in this way can support the argument that similar processes are needed again. There should be a continuation of people's involvement in the creation of the Constitution, revamping and renewing it based on new realities and emerging futures.

There is an acknowledgment that the world is constantly changing, and it would be beneficial for Thailand to respond to this proactively. Alternatively, if Thailand does not catch on, it will be left behind. Additionally, it is important to communicate the message that those in power will not lose anything if all the people in society gain. In fact, they could move from being a national or regional elite to winning a global elite status as leaders of innovative changes, such as facilitating the creation of the new, people-led, and AI-facilitated Constitution. So, not only are the elites not losing anything, but they may gain even more than what they currently have (i.e., regional/global acknowledgment and recognition).

This initiative is, therefore, not about losing or gaining by specific groups. A conflict between an 'old guard' and 'new generations' is reframed to be about benefiting Thai society to be better poised to address current and future challenges. The new 'frame' is about coming together and compromising. In this way, "we can all move together – you gain, we gain."

The workshop participants placed significant emphasis on integrating AI and technology across various domains, including the Constitution, justice, and spirituality but they gave little attention to four important aspects, including:

Data privacy: The development and training of AI systems relies on collecting vast amounts of user data, raising concerns about data privacy and surveillance. Thai citizens may be particularly vulnerable to privacy violations due to weaker regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms.

Digital colonialism: There is a risk that unknowingly adopting certain technologies could perpetuate a form of digital colonialism, where Thailand becomes dependent on technologies developed and controlled by external entities.

Bias and discrimination: AI algorithms may perpetuate existing biases present in historical legal documents or datasets used for training, thereby perpetuating inequalities, discrimination, and marginalization of certain groups within society.

Ethical and accountability concerns: Risks associated with dependency on AI and its implications, as well as the need to develop AI in alignment with our cultural context, such as algorithmic bias, accountability, and transparency, may not be adequately addressed.

Mercer (2023) cautions against assuming the role of technology in relation to humans. If technology is merely viewed as a tool for humans, futurists would have a clearer understanding of its design and implications. However,

if it has the power to colonize our future, it could constrain our visions towards a narrow conception of a desirable future, and then it becomes the architect of our destiny.

Futures thinking thus begins with the hypothesis that the world is changing dramatically. In this shift, it is easy to become fixed and rigid by choosing used futures that no longer create external prosperity and inner peace. Or, by exploring alternative futures, new possibilities can be discovered and potentially created. This moves from a reactive past to a preferred future and can help create a compelling vision, a new image of the future. By linking this with backcasting – strategies to make the novel more plausible – and conflict transformation futures (ways to create win-win positive futures outcomes), the new image can eventually become the new reality. The two-day workshop attempted to create coherence in a sea of change so that the entire system could shift to a higher order.

All in all, it was clear that participants imagined a positive future and focused on steps to create it, including how to resolve conflicts along the way.

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