WORKING PAPER

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Africa and Foresight: Better Futures in Development

CONTENTS

Author: Peter van de Pol

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

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Foreword

In the 21st century, new opportunities for growth and development will be abundantly available in Africa. The continent is already showing the world the way forward in areas like mobile money applications. It is easier to pay a cab in Nairobi then it is in New York. Kiosk owners in Zambia, not banks or phone companies, are pioneering new and safe ways of transferring money across the continent, into the furthest reaches of the country side. The success of M-Pesa, and the widespread availability of mobile platform, is spawning a host of start-ups in Kenya. M-Pesa itself has expanded into Afghanistan, South Africa, India, Romania and Albania.

Many, if not most of these future opportunities were not available in the 20st century. Rapid urbanization, smart applications of technological innovation, increased participation in the global flow of people, trade and money, not to mention the continuous fall-out of climate change, is shaping completely new development realities for an Emergent Africa.

In the 21st century, development templates from the 19th and 20th century are rapidly losing their relevance. These 'used futures' speak to a world that no longer exist. To realize the twin visions of Africa 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, and to sustain the momentum of emerging Africa, we need to look to the future.

I am pleased, therefore, to present this paper on the use of strategic foresight for better futures in Africa. The paper does not provide specific answers to how the future will look like.

Instead, our paper emphasises the importance of the exploration of possible futures (plural) for Africa. Government, the private sector and civil society should, jointly or separately, use foresight methodologies (see our Manual) in order to identify the range of opportunities (and risks) for development in an emerging Africa during the 21st century.

Max Everest-Phillips
Director, UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence

ABSTRACT

Agenda 2063, SDGs and Emerging Africa, with its promises of economic growth, social equality and a healthy environment for current and future generations, must be realized in the context of an increasingly interdependent and complex world in a semi-permanent state of disruption. There is little, if anything, in the past that prepares individuals, communities, businesses, cities and governments for the kind of far-reaching, rapid and simultaneous change of the 21st century. Change, complexity and global interdependence are creating new realities, with new and unique opportunities and challenges for development that are profoundly different from those of the 20th century.

It is in this context that Strategic Foresight is rapidly emerging as an essential additional tool to conventional strategic thinking. Strategic Foresight enables public planners to use new ways of thinking about, talking about, and implementing strategic plans that are compatible with the unfolding future. Strategic Foresight is the umbrella term for those innovative strategic planning, policy formulation and solution design methods that do not predict or forecast the future, but allow planners to work with alternative futures. By doing so, Strategic Foresight helps leaders make better decisions – decisions which, in turn, help them regain the initiative and manage the future.

'Strategic Foresight' or 'Foresight' (used synonymously in this paper) has been defined as '*the capacity to think systematically about the future to inform decision making today. It is a cognitive capacity that we need to develop as individuals, as organisations and as a society. In individuals, it is usually an unconscious capacity and needs to be surfaced to be used in any meaningful way to inform decision-making*'[1]. The emergence of modern 'state' Foresight in the 1950s reflected the growing realisation by governments that technological, social and (geo-)political change was generating a future that was fundamentally different from the past. In the 21st century, government Foresight has vastly expanded its footprint in at least three areas: in 'adaptive' and 'anticipatory' government, in social innovation, and in the call for intergenerational justice.

NASA: Africa satellite picture

'Fully-fledged Foresight' (as distinctive from strategic planning, forecasting, risk management, and more limited forms of Foresight, etc.) is **prospective**, **policy-related** and **participative**. Foresight is decidedly future-oriented. It is concerned with gathering genuine information, knowledge and information about future realities, as opposed to projecting 'old' data, assumptions and 'hindsights' from the past into the future. Government Foresight is integrated in existing policy making processes, structures and timetables, as opposed to be supplied by external parties with their own concerns and deadlines. Foresight depends on the participation of a broad range of **cognitive perspectives** and the effective use of **collective intelligence** to generate insight in the future, as

1 Conway, M (2015) 'Foresight: an introduction', Thinking Futures: http://thinkingfutures.net/wp- content/uploads/TFRefGuideForesight1.pdf, p2.

opposed to exclusive technocratic or academic points of view.

There are four major areas where Foresight can make an important contribution to the realization of Agenda 2063, 2030 Agenda and Emergent Africa:

1. **National Development Visions**
2. **Anticipatory Governance and Strategic Management**
3. **Resilient Policy Planning**
4. **Policy and Public Services Innovation**

As one of the leading development organisations in this field, UNDP through GCPSE has developed Foresight applications and methods that are exclusively tailored to the issues, constraints and capacity of developing countries and which are truly Foresight-informed, policy-related and participatory. It has built extensive ties with local Foresight ecosystems. At the end of 2016, GCPSE established the Empowered Futures Initiative (EFI), which will function as a platform for applied Foresight for developing countries.

INTRODUCTION

2015 was a memorable year for Africa. In January 2015, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted Agenda 2063, a visionary development framework that seeks to expedite the transformation of the continent. *Agenda 2063* proudly proclaims 'the Africa Africans Want', a set of aspirations for Africa that reflect a "*desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want.*"[2]

In September of the same year, world leaders, including those of the African Union, gathered in New York for the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit. They solemnly signed the final outcome document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* and committed to its core Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs encapsulate 'The World We Want', the global vision on how the world should look like in 2030, in which the spoils of human progress and economic growth will be shared fairly by all, poverty will be eradicated and the planet protected "*from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change*".[3]

In 1992, UNDP set up the African Futures project to support African countries to undertake forward-looking studies and develop a long-term vision of their development. Between 1992 and 1995, African Futures provided technical support to the planning and implementation of 25 national studies that reflected on visions and alternative strategies for the future; one example of such a process is Burundi Vision 2025. Publications of the African Futures project include a set of four scenarios for Africa in the year 2025. In early 2004, UNDP established the African Futures Institute (AFI) in order to harness the gains made under the African Futures project, and to sustain futures analysis in the region. Registered in South Africa, the AFI positions itself as a pan-African organisation, with a vision to facilitate Africa's formulation of its own path to development, developing its own methods and approaches. *

* Bingley, Kate, Foresight in International Development, in: IDS Bulletin Transforming Development Knowledge, Volume 47, Number 4, 2016, p.10

In the shadow of these two momentous occasions, a third event with a potentially high impact on the future of Africa took place in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. In March 2015, the first International Conference on the Emergence of Africa was opened by President of Cote d'Ivoire, H.E. Alassane Ouattara. The Conference Introductory Notes reveal the changing narrative on African development: "*There is a sharp contrast between the current economic dynamic in Africa and that of the 1980s characterized by a stagnant growth and an over-indebtedness. The optimism blowing through Africa today has led many African countries to develop emergence plans through different processes and long-term*

2 http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf
3 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, A/Res/70/1

CC BY-NC-ND United Nations Photo: Aerial view of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia

planning activities."[4] In 2014 the book *Africa 2050: Realizing the Continent's Full Potential* (an outcome of a study commissioned by the 5th Joint Annual Meeting of the African Union and UN Economic Commission for Africa Conference of Ministers) was launched in Kigali. The remarkable report *Africa in 50 Years' Time: The Road to Inclusive Growth*[5] , published by the African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2011, is an outstanding example of the use of Foresight in identifying strategic opportunities for transformation in a more empowered development narrative.

All three seminal 2015 events are concerned with visions of the future of Africa. More specifically, they envision a future that contains many opportunities for transformative development in Africa. Words such as 'transformation', 'transformational' and 'transformative' are omnipresent in texts, declaration and speeches on the 2030 Agenda, conveying some of the optimism and urgency surrounding the SDGs formulation process. Immediately after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Secretary General of the United Nation, told the press: "*These Goals are a blueprint for a better future. Now we must use the goals to transform the world.*"[6] The fact remains, however, that the world is already transforming at neck breaking speed, regardless of the grand visions of Agenda 2063, 2030 Agenda and Emerging Africa.

The great disruptive forces of the 21st century, like climate change, technological innovation, ever increasing flows and networks of trade, finance and people, etc., are creating radically new future realities. How do the 'visions of transformation' in Africa relate to this global 'reality of transformation'? Are our concepts and idioms of the future sufficient to capture the radical nature of change and identify emerging strategic opportunities and challenges to realize the development visions? How do we implement our development plans in a volatile and complex environment, when the past provides increasingly less guidance for what might happen in the future? Does the 'World We Want' and the 'Africa Africans Want' speak to future realities (in 2030 and 2063 respectively) or more to a world or Africa we would have liked to see in 2015? In other words, how *future-proof* and *future-ready* are our vision of the future really?

This paper will explore how 'Foresight' can equip African governments with future-oriented tools to transform 'The World We Will Get' into 'The World We Want'. It sets the scene by emphasizing that 'The World We Get' will be significantly different from 'The World We Have': an incredible amount of disruptive change, either highly visible, simmering under the surface or still hidden from view, in virtually every domain (social, economic, political, environmental, technological, agricultural, cultural, etc.), is interacting to create radically new (and unknown) development realities, making development templates and paradigms from previous areas significantly less relevant. Subsequently, the technique of 'Foresight' is introduced and discussed, not only as a tool to make sense of African development in a rapidly changing world, but also as a tool to rethink 'development' in Africa and to pro-actively shape a transformative development narrative uniquely suited to African development in the 21st century.

4 http://www.africa-emergence.com/fichier/doc/Conference_introductory_notes.pdf
5 http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Africa%20in%2050%20Years%20Time.pdf
6 http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51968#.WFEfVXed5bU

CHANGE IN THE 21st CENTURY: The Disruptive Context

Agenda 2063, SDGs and Emerging Africa, with its promises of economic growth, social equality and a healthy environment for current and future generations, must be realized in the context of an increasingly interdependent and complex world in a semi-permanent state of disruption. There is little, if anything, in the past that prepares individuals, communities, businesses, cities and governments for the kind of far-reaching, rapid and simultaneous change of the 21st century. Change, complexity and global interdependence are creating new realities, with new and unique opportunities and challenges for development that are profoundly different from those of the 20th century (or any other modernization template currently available).

A recent report by McKinsey Global Institute summarized the uniqueness of change in the 21st century as follows: *"All at once, emerging economies are rapidly industrializing, populations are aging, new technologies are coming into use, and a growing web of interconnectedness is transforming geopolitics, the competitive landscape, and sustainability concerns. Not one of these disruptions, on its own, is a surprise. The unique challenge is that they are happening at the same time—and on a huge scale, creating second-, third-, and even fourth-order effects that are scarcely possible to anticipate. As they collide, they are producing change so significant that much of the management intuition that has served us in the past will become irrelevant. This is no ordinary disruption."*[7]

The 'great disruptive forces' of the 21st century are not necessarily new: climate change, technological innovation, urbanization, globalisation (i.e. the global flow and networks of trade, finance and people) etc., have a familiar ring to them. What is new in the 21st century, however, is their accelerating pace, their interaction and mutual impact, and the radically new realities they generate. Sometimes these 'realities' are negative: the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, '9/11', the Great Financial Crisis/Recession, the Eurozone Refugee Crisis, various local and global pandemics are recent examples of an increasing number of slow onset shocks, crisis suddenly appearing out of nowhere, perfect storms, 'Black Swans', etc.[8] But that is only half of the story: the same forces that can create so much havoc are also responsible for significant progress in development countries. The challenge facing African governments, in their quest to realize Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda, is to identify and leverage those strategic opportunities and anticipate and minimize the fall-out of the threats.

7 McKinsey & Company, No Ordinary Disruption: The Forces Reshaping Asia, 2015, p.5.

8 This 'chaotic behaviour' is in fact the 'new normal'. When the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon declared at the UN General Assembly in 2014 that 'The world was living in an era of unprecedented level of crises', he was referring nominally to the daunting list of catastrophes the world was facing in 2014. In reality, he was referring to the increasingly normal 'chaotic behavior' of a hyper complex system. See Sardar, Ziauddin, and Sweeney, John A., The Three Tomorrows of Postnormal Times, Elsevier 2016, p.1

An overview of growing interest in Foresight as a government capacity in the 2010s:*

- New government units, structures, councils, ombudsmen for the future (generation) being established in various countries of different types (including OECD, BRICs and LDCs), and across Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa
- New courses and syllabi for public administration schools and wider education, including in emerging BRICS institutions
- Incorporation of Foresight into models and methods of public sector reform and the growing use of the approach in International Institutions and think tanks on governance (including in OECD, WEF, UNDP's GCPSE, INTOSAI who are exploring the role of the national audit function driving longer-term thinking)
- Growing use of Foresight processes, capacity-building and visions by regional and international institutions in order to support their member-governments at the national level (e.g. ASEAN2035, AU2063, ECLAC conference: "America Latina y el Caraibe: visions del Mundo, miradas continentales")
- Greater public discourse among political and business leaders about need for resilience, anticipation and flexibility in the face of uncertainty and different possible scenarios
- Growth in cross-cutting (or whole-of-government) approaches in governments. In OECD countries, most of which left "5 year plans" behind decades ago, there is a revitalised interest in "National Strategic Narratives". Increasingly, mechanisms for national security approaches rely on different instruments from across domestic and foreign policy toolkits and look to the shape of emerging trends, threats and opportunities. In emerging economies, development planning processes are increasingly moving from the control of a single ministry (of Planning or Finance) to a more cross-departmental approach, embedded in a wider and longer-term understanding of the international context, in some cases more flexible, participative and iterative (Costa Rica, Wales, Colombia, Scotland, Finland, Tunisia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Rwanda, Mexico, Canada have innovated recently in the configurations of their centre of government strategic planning processes).
- The South-South collaboration aspect to growth in Foresight practice at a government level, both on specific projects and also in sharing capability and building capacity. Many Asian countries are leading on this: Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea are reaching out to Gulf, African and Latin American countries and regional institutions (e.g., ECLAC, Blue Ocean Strategy). There is also increased contribution to and leadership of international governance networks on Foresight (e.g., India's Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council hosting the Global Foresight Organisations Network 2015 conference, followed by China next year)."

* Catarina Tully, Applying Foresight and Alternative Futures to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), p.9, https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Final-DOCO-foresight-paper.pdf

Africa's future is similarly caught up in this web of incessant change, complexity and interdependency. 'Remote' issues such as the refugee crisis in Europe and structural vulnerabilities in the Chinese economy have shrunk 'traditional' aid flows and therefore temporarily diminished fiscal power of African governments. On the other hand, the surge of global financial flows makes more, non-traditional funds available for (non-traditional?) development every year. Climate change (through rising temperatures) will make the mountain kingdom of Lesotho vulnerable to mosquito borne diseases, but it will also create new regional opportunities for its rich water resources.[9] The globalization of the food market makes Africa food security vulnerable to political and environmental shocks elsewhere, but also opens up new possibilities to become a major global food basket.

Africa is by no means the passive victim of these disruptive forces. Technological innovation provides a good example. In 2015, the Pew Research Center reported that "*In a few short years, the proliferation of mobile phone networks has transformed communications in sub-Saharan Africa … It has also allowed Africans to skip the landline stage of development and jump right to the digital age.*"[10] M-pesa, the mobile-money service that started in Kenya, is now disrupting traditional banking,

payments, and money-transfer services providers across Africa. In 2013, Jumia, a Nigerian e-commerce retail company became the first African winner of the World Retail Award for 'Best Retail Launch of the Year'. It remains an open question how Africa will harness the economic potential of on-the-horizon technological innovation such as 3D printing, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology and the Internet of Everything. It will also be interesting to see how technological innovation, through its interaction with spheres of private and public live, will create new social realities in Africa, for example in political organisation and mobilisation (as social media did in the case of the Arab Spring) and changing state-citizen relationships (for example through crowdsourced public service provision).

In 2015, Africa was the second-fastest urbanizing continent, second only to Asia. In the coming decades, the continent's current 'megacities' (10 million+ inhabitants) Lagos, Cairo and Kinshasa will be joined by many more, while medium sized cities will grow even faster. The Foresight Team of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brooklyn Institute stated that, based on the current trends, the total number of individuals living in Africa's urban areas is expected to rise from 400 million in 2010 to 1.26 billion in 2050.[11] This rapid urbanization, however, will not take place in isolation: its interaction with other forces will mean that it will look significantly different from previous waves of urbanization in

Herman Kahn (February 15, 1922 – July 7, 1983) - one of the preeminent futurists of the latter part of the twentieth century, employed at RAND.

other parts of the world, and that seemingly familiar themes like slums, social dislocation, urban service provision etc. will equally be very different. As Sohail Inayatullah, in his brilliant *Six pillars: futures thinking for transforming*, wrote for Asian urbanization in the 21st century: "*When we look at Asian cities, we*

9 One of the insights of the Introduction to Foresight for SDGs Implementation workshop, organized in Lesotho in September 2015.

10 http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/04/15/cell-phones-in-africa-communication-lifeline/

11 https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/foresightafrica2016_fullreport.pdf, p.62.

see that they tend to follow the same pattern of urban development that western cities did generations ago. And yet many, if not most, western mayors now believe that they were mistaken."[12]

Globalisation', that is, the ever-increasing global flow of trade, finance, people and ideas, and the growing density of global networks, is inexorably moving forward, even though the concept has lost some of its fashionable appeal of the beginning of the 21st century. In 2015, an unprecedented number of people were on the move. Forced migration and refugees tend to receive most attention, but this number also includes a massive growth in voluntary movement and migration, pointing at an emerging internationalization of (tertiary) education, labour, leisure and culture, aided by technological innovation. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana, for example, attracts bright students from all over West Africa, while a growing number of Ghanaian students continue their studies in the United States. At the same time, Ghanaians increasingly feel they have to compete with other West Africans for quality jobs in Ghana. [13]

Africa is also increasingly absorbed in the global trade network. The volume of trade between China and Africa rose from US$9 billion in 2000 to US$211 billion in 2012. The proportion of Tanzania's exports send to Asian and African countries has risen from 30% in the early 2000s to more than 60% percent today. The increased global financial flows, on the other hand, make more non-traditional funds available for development (although the exact movement of these funds is notoriously difficult to predict). The coincidence and interaction of these trends with significant shifts from North-South to South-South development cooperation, in their turn, are creating a new geopolitical development finance landscape and redefining the key tenets and parameters of development. 'Globalisation', in many ways, has challenged the dominant development narrative of the 20th century and, in combination with the other disruptive forces of the 21st century, has been paving the way for alternative pathways to development and more empowered futures.

FORESIGHT AND AGENDA 2063, 2030 AGENDA AND EMERGING AFRICA

The vision of the SDGs is aware and explicit about the complex, interrelated and uncertain nature of the world (Agenda 2063 slightly less so). During the post-2015 Development Agenda deliberations alone, governments and communities had to deal with the fall out of calamitous events such as the Global Financial Crisis, the Arab Spring, the Ebola Epidemic, the surge of ISIS, and many more. The disruptive potential of global trends slowly moved to the center of discussions, while some slow onset

GCPSE ForesightXChange 2014, Rwanda. © UNDP GCPSE

shocks ('antibiotics resistance' an increasingly notorious example) surfaced only after the formal adoption of the SDGs. In general, there was an emphasis on the specific risks such trends posed to hard-won development gains or progress on the achievements of SDGs; potential opportunities tended to be generalized, as in the case of technological innovation, or ignored, as in the case of the beneficial consequences of the increased flows of trade, capital and people.

12 Inayatullah, Sohail, Six pillars: futures thinking for transforming, Foresight Volume 10 Issue 1, p.5.
13 as relayed to the author at a Foresight event in Accra, Ghana, in 2016.

The SDGs, the objectives of Agenda 2063 and the ambitions of Emergent Africa are just as interdependent and complex as the world they must be realized in (a fact increasingly obscured by the convenient breaking up of the vision in easily conveyable goals, targets and indicators); the issues they try to address constantly interact with each other, often in unpredictable ways, shaping and modulating outcomes that transcend traditional planning categories such as 'risks', 'trade-offs' or 'causality'. Crucially, citizens – 'beneficiaries' – do not experience development goals in splendid isolation of each other. Progress in one area – for example quality education – amounts to little if there is no prospect for dignified employment afterwards. An obvious implication of the holistic, qualitative nature of the African development visions (as opposed to the quantitative Millennium Development Goals) is the need for strategic coordination and policy coherence.

Goal 17 *Partnerships for the Goals – Strengthen the means of implementation* (and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) therefore includes a target (17.14) that calls upon governments (and development partners) to "enhance policy coherence for sustainable development". As Helen Clark, then Administrator of UNDP, remarked: *"Advancing sustainable development requires integrated approaches across sectors. Often the key obstacles to achieving an important goal may lie outside an immediate targeted sector. The 2030 Agenda must be approached holistically. The aim must surely be to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth which neither exacerbates inequalities nor trashes the environment. This requires "whole of government" and "whole of society" approaches."* [14] In a disruptive context, however, the need for policy coherence, and therefore the importance of strategic management, extends far beyond managing trade-offs between the crucial policy areas of economic growth, income distribution and environment.

GCPSE ForesightXChange 2014 Rwanda. © UNDP GCPSE

Globally, governments need new strategic planning and policy tools to identify and realize strategic opportunities and mitigate risks in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous operating environment. Government institutions, even those once considered robust, look increasingly rigid, vulnerable and powerless in the face of pervasive change in the shape of unintended consequences and unexpected combination. Traditional planning methods, geared more to deal with incremental and unambiguous change and predictable and familiar futures, are found lacking. Conventional strategic thinking generates perilously limited insights, ignorant of subtle but significant shifts in the global environment and in country and regional contexts. These insights are translated into inflexible policies that are either increasingly irrelevant or unable to cope with unexpected shocks and promising opportunities. Without prior consideration of alternative futures or sufficient adaptive capacities, governments are

14 Helen Clark: Statement on Africa and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: Mobilizing the Means of Implementation at High-Level Side Event on the Margins of the 2016 UN High Level Political Forum, Jul 18, 2016.

The Mont Fleur Scenarios

The early 1990s in South Africa, between the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the first 'all-race-elections in 1994, was an extremely fruitful period for foresight. Apartheid had robbed the past of any moral credibility, authority or guidance to decide upon the future. "During these years, dozens of "forums" were set up in South Africa, creating temporary structures that gathered together the broadest possible range of stakeholders (political parties, civic organizations, professional bodies, government departments, trade unions, business groups, etc.) to develop a new way forward in a particular area of concern. There were forums to discuss education, housing, economic policy, constitutional matters, and many other areas. They ranged from informal, off-the-record workshops to formal, public negotiations. The Mont Fleur project was one type of forum that, uniquely, used the scenario methodology.

The purpose of Mont Fleur was "not to present definitive truths, but to stimulate debate on how to shape the next 10 years." The project brought together a diverse group of 22 prominent South Africans— politicians, activists, academics, and businessmen, from across the ideological spectrum— to develop and disseminate a set of stories about what might happen in their country over 1992–2002… The group developed each of these stories into a brief logical narrative. A fourteen-page report was distributed as an insert in a national newspaper, and a 30- minute video was produced which combined cartoons with presentations by team members. The team then presented and discussed the scenarios with more than fifty groups, including political parties, companies, academics, trade unions, and civic organizations. *

* *The Mont Fleur Scenarios: What will South Africa be like in the year 2002?*, Deeper News, Volume 7 Number 1, p.1, http://reospartners.com/wp-content/uploads/old/Mont%20Fleur.pdf. For an extensive discussion of the Mont Fleur scenarios, desired and undesired futures and scenario building, see Kahane, Adam, *Transformative Scenario Planning: Working Together to Change the Future*, San Francisco 2012.

vulnerable to the vagaries of the 21st century and to losing their ability to shape the future of their nations assertively.

It is in this context that Strategic Foresight is rapidly emerging as an essential additional tool to conventional strategic thinking. Strategic Foresight takes uncertainty, unpredictability and interdependency as given and explores alternative futures, identifying emerging strategic opportunities and risks in different scenarios, testing the resilience of existing strategies under different scenarios, and prototyping integrated and innovative policy responses. Foresight allows policymakers to "stress test" their thinking against hidden biases, different assumptions and different scenarios of the future. By doing so, Strategic Foresight helps leaders make better decisions – decisions which, in turn, help them regain the initiative and manage the future.

Strategic Foresight enables public planners to use new ways of thinking about, talking about, and implementing strategic plans that are compatible with the unfolding future. Strategic Foresight is the umbrella term for those innovative strategic planning, policy formulation and solution design methods that do not predict or forecast the future, but allow planners to work with alternative futures. Strategic Foresight allows decision makers to go beyond 'business-as-usual' and explore the

implications and impact of their policies under different circumstances.

Strategic Foresight can help devise policies that capitalize on the transformational possibilities of the preferred future, moving from foresight and insight to strategy and action. By collaborating on Foresight with other stakeholders, such as communities, businesses and academia, government agencies can become more attuned to the distributed knowledge inside the wider environment, leverage imaginative use of technology and 'sense signals' of emerging change, leading to much greater awareness of probable futures. Long term visioning remains crucial, to set widely shared, realistic and inspirational visions, while at the same time the significance of short-term resiliency, improvisation and flexibility to achieve that vision is amplified.

Much of the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will depend on the ability of national and sub-national public service organisations to turn words into tangible results for all citizens. That is not a given. Public administrations in all countries are facing stubborn capacity constraints. Governments need practical tools and 'space' to experiment, learn and adapt in order to deal with the challenges of SDGs implementation in the volatile reality of the 21st century. The core characteristics of classical public administration are rationality, predictability and hierarchy. Many of its structures, procedures and outputs are based on these principles. Complexity, uncertainty and a demand for meaningful citizen engagement are profound challenges. 'Foresight', with its proven track record and fit in bureaucratic structures, is emerging as an essential addition to conventional planning and policy tools. [15]

15 There is increased recognition for the contribution Foresight can make to SDG implementation. See also Strategic Foresight: How to Enhance the Implementation of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in Developing Countries by Sergio Bihar (http://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Global-Trends-Newsletter-Jan.-2016_Published.pdf), Strategic Foresight for the post-2015 Development Agenda by UNCTAD (http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/ecn162015d3_en.pdf) and the presentation Sustainable Development, SDGs and engaging with the future by Catarina Tully (http://www.slideshare.net/SitraEkologia/catarina-tully-soifsdgsjune2016).

FORESIGHT IN GOVERNMENT

Introduction

'Strategic Foresight' or 'Foresight' (used synonymously in this paper) has been defined as "*the capacity to think systematically about the future to inform decision making today. It is a cognitive capacity that we need to develop as individuals, as organisations and as a society. In individuals, it is usually an unconscious capacity and needs to be surfaced to be used in any meaningful way to inform decision-making*" .[16] Foresight "*involves a range of activities related to the production of knowledge about possible futures. This knowledge is not of the future, nor any real future, but rather 'the manufactured knowledge of a restricted number of possibilities.*"[17] More specifically, government Foresight is a "*systematic, participatory, future-intelligence- gathering and medium-to-long-term vision-building process aimed at enabling present-day decisions and mobilizing joint action.*"[18]

The defining feature of Foresight, therefore, is that it takes unpredictability and complexity as its starting point and hopes to find knowledge and intelligence about possible future realities through the exploration of *alternative futures* (plural). Fully-fledged Foresight adds an additional layer of complexity by not just investigating the possible future manifestation of one specific factor, driver or dimension (e.g., economic growth or climate change), but also considering how a broad range of factors might interact with each other to bring into being alternative complex future realities. This extra layer of complexity is important when considering development results: 'access to quality education', 'healthy lives', 'sustainable consumption', 'dignified employment' do not exist or materialize in isolation.

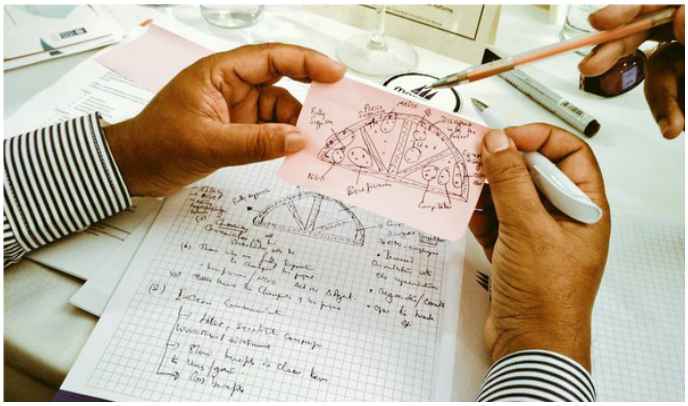
16 Conway, M (2015) 'Foresight: an introduction', Thinking Futures: http://thinkingfutures.net/wp- content/uploads/TFRefGuideForesight1.pdf, p2.
17 Dreyer, Iana, and Stang, Gerald, Foresight in government – practices and trends around the world, p. 7, http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/Yearbook/2.1_Foresight_in_governments.pdf.
18 Miles, Ian, Saritas, Ozcan and Solokov, Alexander, Foresight for Science, Technology and Innovation, Springer Switzerland 2016, p.12.

The Rockefeller Foundation and pro-poor Foresight in Africa

"From 2009 to 2013 the Rockefeller Foundation supported a horizon-scanning network of Searchlight grantees, most of which are located in the Global South. The Searchlight network has been at the core of Rockefeller's efforts in the area of pro-poor Foresight, an approach to develop impactful programmatic strategies in complex, rapidly changing contexts with and for the poor."

"In South Africa, foresight was used to provide insight on strategic choices that need to be made by decision-makers who are planning for the long-term future sustainability of the King Sabata Dalindyebo (KSD) municipality. A primary objective of using foresight was to raise awareness of, and build practical experience and local capacity with, long-term scenario methodologies as a tool to inform KSD's municipal strategic planning and implementation processes. The municipality has been trying for a long time to convince national authorities and potential investors that it had a vision and plan for its growth and development. It sought in particular to attract a significant amount of investment capital from a national government programme aimed at enhancing public and private urban development investment in township areas in South African cities so as to improve the quality of life of township residents." *

* Eyakuze, Aidan, and Muliro, Arthur, Dispatches from the Frontline. Using pro-poor foresight to influence decision-making, 2014, p.iii



GCPSE ForesightXChange 2015, Mauritius. © UNDP GCPSE

'Towards an Innovative Civil Service in Mauritius'

Mauritius is on the cusp of transitioning into the high-income country bracket. A successful transition will require as much an economical as an institutional transformation. *Vision 2030* gives the broad outlines of the preferred future where the newly elected government wants to take the country. New growth industries, new trade opportunities and technological innovation feature prominently, while some of the opportunities (Mauritius' strategic location in trade and knowledge networks, high educational standards, highly developed public-private collaboration) and challenges (the effects of climate change, vulnerability to global shocks) are highlighted. There is consensus that the achievement of this vision requires change, adaptation and innovation from the Mauritius Civil Service.

In 2015, the Government of Mauritius, UNDP Country Office and GCPSE teamed up to apply Foresight to prototype new public services that were future-ready. In the *foresightXchange Towards an Innovative Civil Service in Mauritius* civil servants came up with new ideas for transport, education, health and civil service recruitment.

These type of results, typical of both Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, are the outcomes of a broad set of interactions with other (seemingly unrelated) factors and, crucially, can generate 'second-, third-, and even fourth-order effects' of their own (as the tension and interaction between economic growth and environmental sustainability demonstrates).

Rwanda - Development through Good Governance - Foresighting of Service Delivery in Secondary Cities

In 2014, the Rwanda Government embarked on a journey to apply Foresight methodologies to identify strategic future opportunities for urban and rural development. Key senior decision makers participated in a *foresightXchange* and developed integrated policies for the future development of secondary cities in Rwanda, emphasising the need for a future-oriented perspective and integrated policies. Early 2016, the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) commissioned a further Foresight study to explore strategic growth opportunities for secondary cities and design public policies and service delivery options to achieve those strategies. In September 2016, RGB presented the report **Development through Good Governance - Foresighting of Service Delivery in Secondary Cities.**

The emphasis on *complex, alternative futures* (plural) as the main source for information, intelligence and knowledge about the future, is what sets Foresight apart from those activities that try to predict one particular future reality, be they oracles, star divination, crystal bowls, tasseomancy, *haruspices*, forecasts, or the popular (and lucrative) brand of literature that *predicts* the Future of a fashionable issue. Much of what has been or is still being called 'Foresight' is, in reality, just the latest attempt to predict the future. The sophistication or 'scientific' nature of these efforts is irrelevant because the starting point is wrong; the future is 'emerging', i.e., 'in the making', not hiding somewhere and waiting to be discovered. Government Foresight practice of the last 60 years can be located somewhere between these two extremes of divination and emergence.

Foresight is used by individuals, communities, companies, cities and governments to address a broad range of issues. There is no 'natural' focus of Foresight applications. For reasons discussed below, there was an initial focus on technological innovation and security, but Foresight has proven to be equally prolific in economic, social, political and environmental matters, to name just a few. And although some Foresight applications are prohibitively expensive, requiring vast resources (human, institutional and financial) , there is no fundamental reason why governments from developing countries, notwithstanding resource and capacity constraints, cannot profitably integrate Foresight in their public policy planning processes.[19]

A Historical Overview

The emergence of modern 'state' Foresight in the 1950s reflected the growing realisation by governments that technological, social and (geo-) political change was generating a future that was fundamentally different from the past. As the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, S. Rajaratnam, noted in 1979: "*There are practical men who maintain that such speculations are a waste of time and they have no bearing at all on solutions to immediate day-to-day problems. This may have been so in earlier periods of history when changes were few and minute and were spread over decades and*

19 Dreyer, Iana, and Stang, Gerald, Foresight in government – practices and trends around the world, p. 7, http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/Yearbook/2.1_Foresight_in_governments.pdf, p.16.

centuries…[Because] we are not only living in a world of accelerating changes but also of changes which are global in scope and which permeate almost all aspects of human activity…". The turbulence of the first half of the 20th century had made abundantly clear what 'change' meant in practice and how important it was to gather intelligence about the future that was not based on past experiences.

The savage slaughter of World War One and Two and the prospect of mutual guaranteed nuclear destruction of the Cold War brutally showed the dark, destructive power of technological progress. Technology had industrialised warfare. Colonial empires were crumbling, new states were born, often in turbulent and bloody circumstances, and a bipolar world order was emerging. Social change in the first half of the 20th century produced dangerously fragile societies that all too often gave in to the simplistic temptations of nationalism, fascism and racism. On the other hand, however, technological change, as in the 19th century, was the engine of unparalleled growth, dragging millions of people out of poverty, enabling the welfare state, strengthening liberal democracy, and supporting much positive social change (as the humble washing machine demonstrated). Given this context, the initial focus of government Foresight in the 1950s on future technological innovation for economic growth and military purposes is not surprising.

In the 1950s, two separate Foresight strands evolved for use by governments. The first strand that originated in newly established government agencies and units dedicated to science, technology and innovation (STI), was mainly concerned with technological forecasting (i.e., predict which technologies will be available and economically and military important in the future), and provided advice to decision-makers where to invest in scientific research and how to support industrial innovation. There was a significant overlap between the possible 'dual' use of this technological innovation, i.e., for economic and military purposes. This strand of Foresight is still very much alive today.[20] European states, for example, have invested heavily in Foresight for STI in the 1990s after growing concerns in perceived "technology gaps with the United States and Japan, and about Europe's late reactions to developments in Information Technology (IT) and other fields."[21] In 2015, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) published a report *Strategic Foresight for the post-2015 development agenda* that focused exclusively on STI Foresight.

BY Pixel: Black Swans have become the symbol for highly disruptive yet hard to predict events and processes.

Interestingly, the ambivalence with regards to the societal and environmental impact of science, technology and innovation on future realities has persisted in these Foresight activities. The renewed European interest in the future of STI in the 1990s, for example, was also informed by broader public concerns about genetically modified food production and climate change. In the 2010s, rapid advances in 'deep computer learning', Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotic process automation

20 Dreyer, Iana, and Stang, Gerald, Foresight in government – practices and trends around the world, p.9, http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/Yearbook/2.1_Foresight_in_governments.pdf, p.13

21 Miles, Ian, Saritas, Ozcan and Solokov, Alexander, Foresight for Science, Technology and Innovation, Springer Switzerland 2016, p. 14-15

(RPA) are giving rise to serious discussions about the future (and added value) of human work and other unintended consequences (of which the 'Terminator; Rise of the Machines' is not the most outlandish one). The University of Cambridge has established an interdisciplinary *Centre for the Study of Existential Risk*, while the University of Oxford explores these issues through its *Future of Humanity Institute*. These examples show that, historically, modern Foresight explores not just 'preferred' or 'desired' futures' but also 'undesired' ones.

The second strand of Foresight originating in the 1950s added 'possible' and 'probable' futures to the Foresight repertoire and grew out of the military experience of the Second World War. "*During World War II, the American military establishment developed analytical capacities to anticipate possible events. They studied not only military events, but anything that could affect military affairs, such as technological, demographic and political trends. The focus was completely on how to win the war. After World War II, Foresight activities were shaped by the tensions of the Cold War and the threat of nuclear annihilation. Foresight activities were highly focused on 'strategic' issues related to national survival*."[22] It was the military that first introduced the acronym VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous environments. The RAND Corporation became synonymous with this particular Foresight strand. Through its famous Delphi method, huge datasets and widespread use of scenario-building, it played a crucial role in shaping modern Foresight. Many European and Asian governments adapted these Foresight approaches and integrated them in national 'strategic studies' institutes.

In the following decades, the picture becomes more convoluted. The blatant failure to anticipate the Vietnam War and prepare for the way it was fought, diminished the standing of military uses of Foresight.[23] In the meantime, the application of Foresight was branching out, from narrow military and technology applications to broader economic, social and environmental issues. It also moved out of government departments, think tanks and academia, to the private sector and civil society, which subjected their own particular concerns to the scrutiny of Foresight (corporate strategy, product development, social change, etc.). Last but not least, there was a slow but certain shift from efforts to forecast the future towards exploring *alternative* future scenarios. Royal Dutch Shell, the Anglo-Dutch oil and gas company, came to epitomize this new generation of Foresight: "… Shell-style scenario planning has never really been about predicting the future. Its value lies in how scenarios are embedded in—and provide vital links between—organizational processes such as strategy making, innovation, risk management, public affairs, and leadership development. It has helped break the habit, ingrained in most corporate planning, of assuming that the future will look much like the present. As unthreatening stories, scenarios enable Shell executives to open their minds to previously inconceivable or imperceptible developments."[24]

Another Foresight strand developed mainly outside government and corporate environment. *Futures studies* (also called futurology) is generally considered a social science but (as the examples of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk at Cambridge and the Oxford Martin School show) is more often an interdisciplinary field. Futures studies extends the scope of Foresight beyond 'possible', 'probable' and 'preferred' futures to include 'wild-card' futures (i.e., alternative futures in which 'Black Swans' - high-profile, hard-to-predict, and rare events - create havoc) and aim at a holistic view of future realities. Futures studies also pays a lot of attention to challenging hidden assumptions in prevalent views on the future. Serious futurists such as Bernard de

22 Dreyer, Iana, and Stang, Gerald, Foresight in government – practices and trends around the world, p.9, http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/Yearbook/2.1_Foresight_in_governments.pdf

23 idem, p.10

24 Wilkinson, Angela, and Kupers, Roland, Living in the Futures, Harvard Business Review, https://hbr.org/2013/05/living-in-the-futures.

Jouvenel, James Dator and Sohail Inayatullah have been extremely influential in developing Foresight methods (such as *casual layered analysis*) that expose deep-seated psychological, behavioural and cultural biases with regards to the future (not dissimilar to those commonly held with regards to the past), that can deal with the complex nature of reality and that incorporate volatility and ambiguity. The Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies at the University of Hawaii and the Finland Futures Research Centre of the Turku School of Economics, the business school of the University of Turku, Finland, are two prime examples of this strand of Foresight.

In the 21st century, government Foresight, still going strong in its traditional field of STI, has vastly expanded its footprint in at least three areas. Firstly, governments are struggling to govern effectively and deliver on complex outcomes in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. Under a barrage of unexpected shocks and unable to collectively address existential longer-term global threats, many governments are remaining locked in reactive and crisis-management behaviours.[25] Foresight has been promoted as a potent tool to expand the vital 'anticipatory and adaptive' capacity of modern states.[26] Secondly, as part of the response to the fundamentally changing relationship between state and citizens (caused, facilitated and transformed by the spread of new technologies in general and social media in particular), Foresight is playing a prominent role in the networked, collaborative public value creation processes that are steadily replacing the 'old' hierarchical, centralized ones (regardless of the existence or not of representative, accountable and/or responsive state institutions). Cities are hotbeds of this mixture of Foresight, co-design and social innovation, as exemplified by the *Our Singapore Conversation* initiative in the modern city-state Singapore. Thirdly, Foresight plays a conspicuous role in the renewed interest in intergenerational justice. As mentioned above, the negative impact of technological innovation and economic growth, be it climate change, environmental degradation, redundancy of human labour, etc., has left people wondering what kind of world will be left behind for the next generations. The Club of Rome and its 1972 report *The Limits to Growth* is probably the best-known example. Other examples are the *Ombudsman for Future Generations* by the government of Hungary, the *Committee for the Future* of the Finnish Parliament and the *Commission for Future Generations* in the Israeli Parliament. [27]

Fully-Fledged Foresight[28]

The short and selective historical overview above goes some way to explain why there is such a bewildering range of Foresight practices, approaches, applications and methods, and why there is so much confusion about what constitutes Foresight and what it should applied to. Governments in Africa which are either new to Foresight as a strategic and policy planning tool or are looking for an appropriate 'upgrade' to current forecasting methods, will need some conceptual guidance to choose the type of Foresight most suitable to the specific challenges and opportunities posed by Agenda 2063, 2030 Agenda and Emerging Africa. Although there are still significant differences among Foresight traditions, the experiences of the past 60 years have produced some important lessons, and there is some level of convergence of

25 GCPSE, Stewardship of the Future: Using Strategic Foresight in 21st Century Governance, Singapore 2015, p. 4.

26 Most notably by Leon Fuerth, the former national security adviser to former Vice-President of the United States of America, Al Gore, in his many publications of Anticipatory Governance.

27 For an example of the work of the Committee for the Future, see the recent report of the International Seminar For The Next Generation in June 2016, https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoaeduskunnasta/julkaisut/Documents/tuvj_5+2016.pdf

28 The term 'fully-fledged Foresight' was introduced by Miles, Ian, Saritas, Ozcan and Solokov, Alexander, Foresight for Science, Technology and Innovation, Springer Switzerland 2016, p. 11. The following discussion of what constitutes 'fully-fledged Foresight' is loosely based on their description, supplemented by Bishop, Peter, and Hines, Andy (eds.), Thinking about the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight, Hinesight 2013.

what constitutes 'fully fledged Foresight', what to apply it to and what capacities and resources are required.

'Fully-fledged Foresight' (as distinctive from strategic planning, forecasting, risk management, and more limited forms of Foresight, etc.) is *prospective, policy-related* and *participative*:[29]

1. **Prospective.** Foresight is decidedly future-oriented. It is concerned with gathering genuine information, knowledge and information about future realities ('emerging' and 'emergency' data), as opposed to simply projecting 'old' data, assumptions and 'hindsights' from the past into the future. Foresight probes the impact of change, shocks and disruptions on future 'realities' in a rigorous, systematic and, in as far as that is possible, unbiased manner. Foresight involves examining and forecasting mid- to long-term change of key factors and drivers and their interaction, creating and appraising integrated and coherent scenarios of (possible, probably, desired, undesired and 'wild-card') future realities, identifying the (strategic/implementation/innovation) opportunities and challenges, and the capacities and actions required.

2. **Policy-related.** Government Foresight is integrated in existing policy making processes, structures and timetables, as opposed to be supplied by external parties with their own particular concerns and deadlines. Foresight is sponsored, championed and driven by influential political or administrative actors, 'rather than being ivory tower or outsider analysis'.[30] Foresight uses the longer-term perspective of *strategic planning* and mid-term approach of *policy planning*, connects and integrates compartmentalized lines of results ('*strategic management*') and action ('*policy coherence*'), and increases *anticipatory* and *adaptive* capacities to deal with uncertainty, disruption and innovation. At the strategic level, Foresight identifies emerging strategic opportunities (and risks), thereby providing a framework for prioritisation of policy interventions. Foresight can be used to foster *partnerships* around shared concerns and opportunities along 'horizontal' (coordination across policy areas) and 'vertical' (between public, private and civic actors) lines.

3. **Participative.** Foresight accepts and welcomes the fact that in uncertain and complex environments, relevant knowledge is distributed is the wider system, as opposed to being centralized in technocratic or academic settings. Foresight depends on the participation of a broad range of *cognitive perspectives* and the effective use of *collective intelligence* to produce worthwhile images of the future. The *enlargement* of the knowledge base avoids 'groupthink' and the regurgitation of the 'used future' (image of the future derived from the past). The *engagement* of non-traditional actors in Foresight broadens the democratic basis of future visions and imparts legitimacy on the processes and recommendations (as exemplified by the World We Want campaign in the run-up to the adoption of the SDGs; see below). Lastly, by carefully *enlisting* key actors (representing different groups of stakeholders), Foresight creates new champions of the process, insights and recommendations and contributes to the necessary change management processes that will follow (for example, adoption strategic agenda, inter-ministerial collaboration, public-private co-design and implementation, etc.).

Foresight therefore cultivates a range of organisational skills which prepare governments

29 Miles, Ian, Saritas, Ozcan and Solokov, Alexander, Foresight for Science, Technology and Innovation, Springer Switzerland 2016, p. 11
30 idem.

for the vagaries of the 21st century: a heightened situational awareness to possible, probable and preferable futures; cross impact analysis, synthesis, systems thinking, wind tunneling, and planning for long-term uncertainties; a pro-active scanning of the horizon; an ability to sort, sift through and combine open, real-time data and the creation of tight feedback loops. It entails the exploration of possible scenarios and pathways, the bread and butter of Strategic Foresight and the systematic rehearsal of potential responses. [31]

FOUR APPLICATIONS OF FORESIGHT FOR GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA

There are four major areas where Foresight can make an important contribution to the realization of Agenda 2063, 2030 Agenda and Emergent Africa:

1. **National Development Visions**
2. **Anticipatory Governance and Strategic Management**
3. **Resilient Policy Planning**
4. **Policy and Public Services Innovation**

National Development Visions: The SDGs (goals, targets and indicators) capture the global vision of sustainable development in 2030, a negotiated common ground between different development aspirations, priorities and interests among states. 'SDG alignment' requires an additional process of 'nationalizing' of the global development vision, in which a broad consensus among national actor on development aspirations is agreed upon; an aspirational national development vision formulated, and; 'local' targets and priorities specified. In the cases where such a national development vision already exists, there will be a need to reconcile the visions before any meaningful planning action can be taken. The introduction of the 2030 Agenda might also provide an impetus to update or improve existing national development strategies.

Africa Agenda 2063, on the other hand, uses a longer-term horizon. Some African nations will produce 'intermediate' national development visions (including visions based on the 2030 Agenda) that would need to be aligned with the overall vision of Agenda 2063, while it is not unrealistic to expect that some countries, in the case of change of government or regime, might want to adjust, modify or, in more extreme cases, reformulate existing vision documents. Emergent Africa, on the other hand, is already conceptually aligned with Agenda 2063 and is more concerned with identifying transformative opportunities to realise this vision.

National vision building is a crucial state capacity, in which politicians, civil servant, citizens and the private sector each have important roles to play. *Visioning* is not something that should be outsourced to external consultants, nor should it be monopolized by one particular group or ministry. Both the post-2015 Agenda and the Agenda 2063 emphasise the importance of broad participative debates, in which different groups of stakeholders in the future could deliberate (and negotiate) and decide on a common understanding for their shared future (see box on the next page).

Public service organisations play an important role in the key processes of vision building. In their official capacity, public servants theoretically provide politicians with *technical expertise*, framing what visions of the future are deemed 'feasible', and influencing what is possible and prioritized. Public sector institutions also function as *intermediaries* between state and citizens and have access to information on citizens' current concerns and needs. Civil services combine robust organisational power with structures that deeply penetrate society and can rapidly identify, mobilize and facilitate key stakeholders' meetings.

31 For an extensive discussion of some of the most important Foresight methods available, please see the GCPSE Foresight Manual, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/global-centre-for-public-service-excellence/foresightmanual.html.

The global development vision of the 2030 Agenda was the culmination of a long process. Discussions on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had a significant influence on these initial deliberations. In clear contrast with the formulation of the MDGs, which were perceived to be prepared largely by "'experts' at the UN, World Bank and OECD" and therefore often criticized for promoting donor-led and top-down visions on development, the formulation process of the SDGs was much more inclusive. Nothing illustrates the philosophy behind this approach better than the global, regional, national and thematic consultation processes, culminating in "A Million Voices: The World We Want".

The formulation process had several key components where crucial 'political' issues were negotiated that are present in any vision of the future.* Different countries have different development aspirations, priorities and interests they would like to see reflected in the 2030 Agenda. The Open Working Group (OWG), an intergovernmental outfit in which most of the 30 seats were shared by several countries, established an initial agreement on a shared vision, as laid out in its proposal to the General Assembly in July 2014. In January 2015, the official Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post 2015 Development Agenda commenced. The resulting sense of common understanding and shared ownership has provided a significant momentum for the implementation of the SDGs.

* See Graham Long, Sustainable Development Goal Indicators are technical, but also political, https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/sustainability/2015/05/13/sustainable-development-goal-indicators-are-technical-but-also-political/

Many bureaucracies, however, lack mechanisms, processes and methods for the kind of engagement that development visioning requires and citizens demand. The bureaucratic consultative processes can be limited in terms of active engagement ('once-off'), restrictive in terms of participation (either for ideological or practical reasons), or poor in terms of incorporating recommendations (if they diverge from the expert consensus). Foresight provides a rich repertoire of methods to have realistic but aspirational *deliberations* about the preferred future. These methods provide a platform and a structure for different 'voices' and perspectives to have a meaningful conversation with each other and to produce a document that cannot be ignored. Well-known vision-building Foresight approaches are *Future Search Conference* and *Appreciative Inquiry*.

Anticipatory Governance and Strategic Management: Agenda 2063 and especially the 2030 Agenda are aware and explicit about the complex, interrelated and uncertain nature of the world. National development plans usually contain some awareness and systematic incorporation of economic contingencies (often in the shape of macroeconomic scenarios that contain fluctuations in exchange rates, energy prices, available fiscal space, etc.) but very little in the way of disruption at the scale discussed above. But for all the 'smartness' of the goals, targets and indicators, the 2030 Agenda only provides limited, if any, insights in what the future has in store, beyond 'the world we want'. The specified targets per goal tend to say more about how the desired situation was conceived of in 2015 (and before), but provides limited strategic guidance for the 'future'. The SDGs are essentially 'moving' targets, whose precise manifestation in 2030 will be shaped by significantly different (constellations) of forces than in 2015, let alone in the preceding decades.

That means that there is a lot of work left at the strategic and policy level before the SDGs can

be implemented in Africa. Likewise, African governments still have to explore what kind of transformative strategic opportunities are lurking in the future to realise Agenda 2063 and Emergent Africa. Concretely, government must explore and anticipate what 'healthy lives', 'quality education', 'economic growth and jobs' etc. will look like in 2030. What possible health threats will there be in 2030? What type of education increases the chances for what kind of jobs in 2030? What sectors will produce economic growth in 2030, and which not? On what kind of markets, which market mechanisms, and what level of volatility, will national food security in 2030 depend? How will the four disruptive forces of the early 21st century – urbanization, technological innovation, ageing population and global flows of trade, capital and people – interact with each other in Africa to impact the 17 Goals?

GCPSE ForesightXChange 2014, Rwanda. © UNDP GCPSE

Strategic Foresight is therefore an indispensable part of the strategic capacity of African states, if the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and Emergent Africa are to be realized. Foresight enables governments, in a rigorous, systemic, systematic and unbiased manner, to gather intelligence about their key aspirations, goals and targets in the future, without having to rely excessively on either data and knowledge from the past or outdated assumptions about 'development', 'education', 'urbanization', 'energy' etc. Foresight enables governments to anticipate emerging trends (opportunities and risks) with transformative potential, identify strategic opportunities that will accelerate the realisation of their visions, and develop a future-oriented strategic framework for policy prioritisation and policy coherence (i.e. the choice of a cluster of cross-sector policies that will contribute to the realisation of a desired future reality). Crucially, Foresight, by relentlessly focusing on integrated images of the future, will enable governments to remain focused on integrated results. By doing so, Foresight helps leaders make better decisions and regain a sense of direction over the future of their nation.

The introduction of Strategic Foresight, in the context of Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030 and Emerging Africa, might also provide some much-needed impetus and momentum to strategic state capacity in Africa. Many developments conspire to put this strategic state capacity under pressure: imperfect alignment between political and administrative leadership, *de facto* (if not *de jure*) weak centres of government, bureaucratic fragmentation (and bureaucratic fiefdoms), institutional confusion on the difference between strategic, policy and budget planning, an exaggerated emphasis by development partners on the latter two, the dominant position of economic sciences in development planning, etc. Strategic Foresight cannot fix these complex institutional problems, but it can initiate and sustain collaborative government functions.

Resilient Policy Planning: Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda are visions in which the dreams, hopes and aspirations of so many people, communities and countries find a positive and appealing expression, will serve as a call for action for the years to come. The visions, with its appeal to emotions such as hope, optimism and perseverance, will also function as a powerful rallying cry when things get tough. The broad deliberative process provided the crucial first step for collective action. But getting agreement on paper visions, goals, targets and indicators, however hard won, is just that: the first step. Making the

visions work – making sure there is a guaranteed, safe and healthy path through education for poor girls from rural area in Nigeria, for example, with real prospects for dignified employment – is the real test. In that sense, Agenda 2063 and the SDGs have a long, hazardous and uncertain way to go.

The previous chapter discussed some of the strategic 'dangers' on the road of Emerging Africa and SDGs implementation (projecting past strategic opportunities and threats onto a radically new reality in the future). The next hazard posed by a VUCA world, after agreeing on a 'future-compatible' vision and identifying concrete future strategic opportunities that accelerate achievement of that vision, concerns 'ordinary' policy, budget and implementation processes, the bread and butter of development planning. Classical planning is a highly sophisticated system with meticulously delineated and sequenced steps, clear roles and responsibilities, and (formally at least) anchored at the heart of the policy-making process. But the very robustness of this planning process might turn into rigidness when confronted with a VUCA reality. Much of classical planning is based on or aimed at predictability, clear causality and eliminating uncertainty, which causes severe implementation problems in an operating environment that is the opposite.

Globally, governments are experimenting with planning tools that allow for change, complexity and uncertainty. Classical planning methods, with their emphasis on predictable, gradually unfolding, unambiguous change, have been found wanting to deal with the inevitable changes, disruptions and shocks that will happen between 2015 and 2030. Already, meticulously prepared development plans are faltering due to a host of unexpected events. A good example is the 2007-2008 world food price crisis, in which, apparently out of nowhere, food prices around the world spiked dramatically, generating significant knock-on effects such as economic and political instability and social unrest. Most countries had not considered food security contingencies on this scale, let alone the second- and third order effects, and were desperately unprepared to deal with the fall-out. Given the globalization of food production and consumption, and therefore the increased vulnerability of national food security to all kinds of events beyond the control of national governments, disruptions of these kinds are bound to recur.

The rigidity of classical planning is exacerbated by the time and resources it requires, the vested bureaucratic interests in the existing system, and the fixture of plans in strict, inflexible (legal and budgetary) frameworks. A lack of Foresight leaves government agencies often slow to detect the increasing irrelevance of policies and inattentive to promising opportunities until they have passed by, but existing institutional arrangements make it next to impossible to change course. SDG implementation will require a tool and flexible institutions to enhance the resilience of classical planning in an unfolding future.

Foresight is emerging as one of the approaches to infuse classical policy planning with a manageable dose of uncertainty and unpredictability. Several governments in developing countries use *scenario planning* to identify risks and opportunities in future policy implementation environment. These scenarios often explore the possible impact of key global or local trends (for example fluctuating energy prices or changing demographics) on important policies and produce recommendations for policy adjustments or enhancements. Another popular Foresight application in a planning context is '*back-casting*', in which policy planners work backwards from a 'preferred future' (a vision or a goal) through different implementation scenarios, picking the most 'resilient' path for the policy.

These and other Foresight methods[32] are a major contribution to make policies 'work' in society. Foresight not only imbues classical planning with a more comprehensive risk assessment, it also highlights the (unexpected) opportunities and requires adjustments to existing plans in the here and now. SDGs, Agenda 2063 and Emerging Africa policies will therefore become more 'resilient', that is, effective in a range of different circumstances. By collaborating on Foresight with other stakeholders, such as communities, businesses and academia, government agencies can become more attune to the distributed knowledge inside the wider environment, leverages imaginative use of technology and 'sense signals' of emerging change.

Policy and Public Services Innovation: The successful implementation of Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda will require innovative policies and public services. The speed of technological innovation, the mobility of people and ideas, the concentration of human activity in large urban centres is changing the way governments and citizens relate and interact with each other. These trends (and many others) are generating a new kind of public space, where co-design, prototyping and collective action create innovative (public) goods and services. In many countries around the world, public service organisations are engaging with policy and service innovation.

Recently, Foresight has been coupled with a new wave of technological, social and public innovation, creating a new field of application. Public officials, citizens and entrepreneurs team up in 'social innovation labs' to do a 'quick-and-dirty' exploration of alternative futures, with the creative aim to reframe problems in surprising new ways and to identify high-leverage entry points for innovation. These typically concern short-term cycles, in which the potential of opportunities is tested through prototyping and leveraged by scaling up.

32 See GCPSE Foresight Manual http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/global-centre-for-public-service-excellence/foresightmanual.html.

MAPS AND STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development speaks to the core mandate and values of the UN System, including promoting and encouraging respect for human rights for all, without discrimination. UN agencies, funds and programmes can broker relevant knowledge and technical assistance on sustainable development challenges, opportunities and solutions. They can also support Member States in identifying and convening key stakeholder groups.

Responding to Member States' request for coherent and integrated support from the UN development system to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has identified elements in support of a future common approach for effective and coherent implementation support, under the acronym MAPS: Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support.

MAPS frames the UN development system's support countries in the implementation of the new agenda, through their respective programming frameworks known as UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). The UNDAF is the strategic framework that encompasses the overall shared results of the UN development system in a country. It articulates the issues around which a UN country team develops and supports its joined-up contribution, and details how a UNCT will work together in a coherent manner to achieve results through advocacy, normative and policy support, technical assistance and operational activities to support capacity development and service delivery.

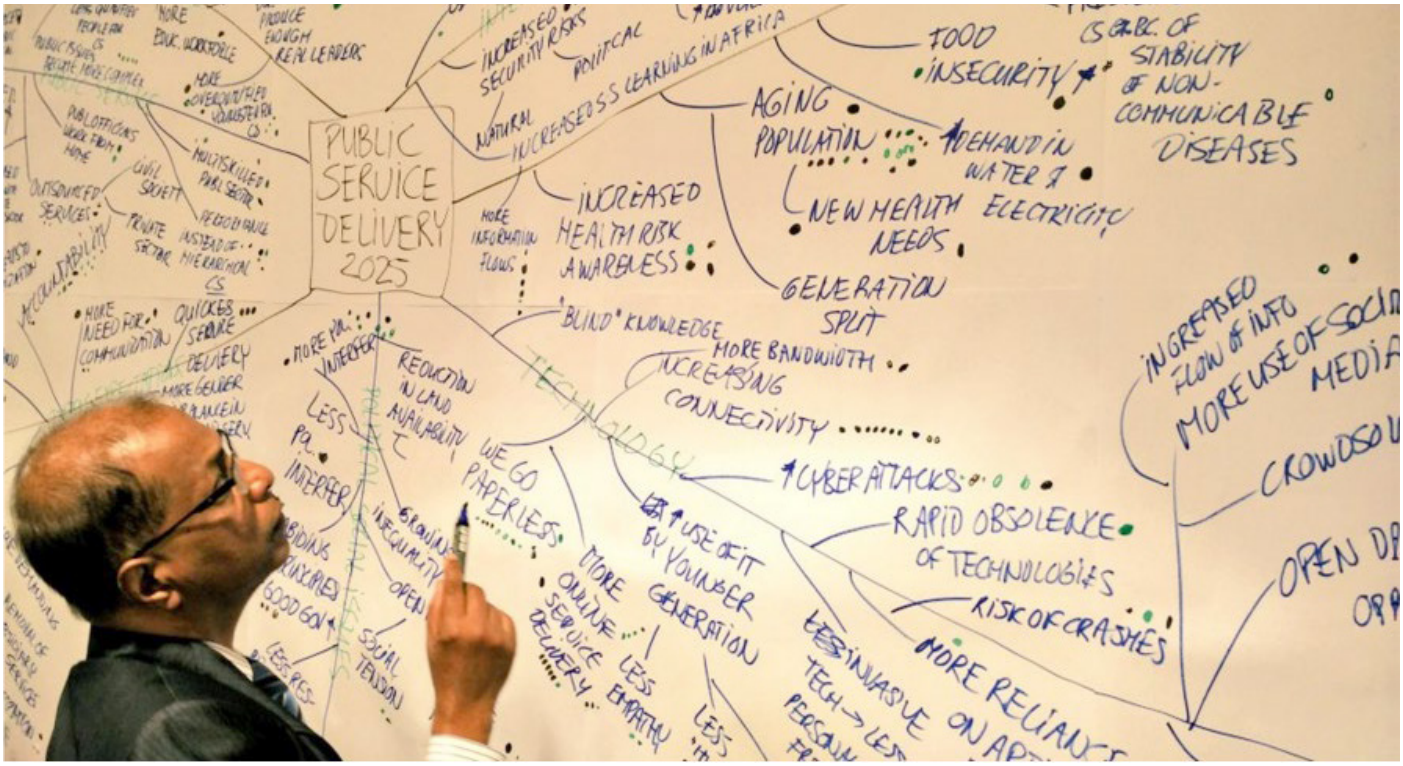
Foresight can contribute to these efforts by guiding national visioning processes ('Mainstreaming'), identifying new strategic opportunities for development ('Acceleration/Prioritization') and informing anticipatory and resilient sectoral policies ('Policy Support').

GCPSE AND EMPOWERED FUTURES FOR SDGS IMPLEMENTATION

The Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (GCPSE) has been at the forefront in the UNDP and UNCT in exploring, prototyping and scaling up Foresight-related approaches for government agencies in developing countries. In the past two years, it has worked closely with over 15 governments (Rwanda, Tonga, Maldives, the Pacific region, Papua New Guinea, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Lesotho, Ghana, Namibia, South Africa and Malawi) in exploring, tailoring and mainstreaming Foresight for development, development planning or SDGs implementation.

As one of the leading development organisations in this field, UNDP through GCPSE has developed Foresight applications and methods that are exclusively tailored to the issues, constraints and capacity of developing countries and which are truly Foresight-informed, policy-related and participatory. It has built extensive ties with local Foresight ecosystems.

At the end of 2016, GCPSE established the Empowered Futures Initiative (EFI), which will function as a platform for applied Foresight for developing countries. GCPSE-EFI provides government foresight capacity development services and has produced a range of documents highlighting different dimensions of the approach (http://bit.ly/GCPSEforesight).



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UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence

#08-01, Block A
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119620
T: +65 6908 1063
F: +65 6774 4571
E: registry.sg@undp.org

www.undp.org/publicservice
twitter.com/UNDPpublicserv
www.fb.com/GCPSE
unteamworks.org/publicservice