

FUTURES STUDIES IN ASIA: PLAYERS AND INSTITUTIONS

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This report presents the players and institutions engaged in futures studies in Asia. Futures Studies can be defined the study of alternative futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie them.

A futurist can be defined as: the futurist employs time, especially future time, to transform the present. Through deeply democratic processes, the futurist helps organizations and institutions move from the default future (which is often the used or the disowned) to the preferred future.

This report is focused on individuals and institutions who are explicitly engaged in futures studies, and not those, who may from time to time write a report with the word future mentioned in it, or who are strong lobbyists for one particular future – that is, foundational to futures studies and futurists is the concept of alternative futures. As well, as in many nations there are councils related to the future of technology or business but these are in no way futures studies institutions or organizations

1. JAPAN

1. The most important current futurist living in Japan is Professor David Lindsay Wright ("Wright David" dlwfuture@hotmail.com) He teaches in the Media Architecture Department at Future University – Hakodate (FUN), in the city of Hakodate, Hokkaido, Japan. He teaches courses for year 1, 2, 3 and 4 students at this university. While the university is called Future University, it does not explicitly engaged in futures activities – ie there is no foresight or scenario planning mechanism in the Office of the President. Its main foresight work is Professor Wright's courses.

There are certainly other Japanese futurists. Along with Professor Wright there is:

2. Kaoru Yamaguchi, who works with the Japan Futures Council . Little recent information is available on Professor Yamaguchi. However, in the 1990s he played an important role with the World Futures Studies Federation (www.wfsf.org) and developed the idea of the Muratopia (<http://muratopia.org>) and in developing futures oriented workshops and conferences at Awaji. He also inspired the Network University of the Green World. Yamaguchi is an economist by training, focused on New Economy futures.

3. Far more active is Professor Ryota Ono ("Ryota Ono" ryota@aichi-u.ac.jp). He teaches Futures Studies at Aichi University. Ono is not in a department of Futures Studies, but he does teach a specific course titled Futures Studies. He is on the editorial board of the Journal of Futures Studies (www.jfs.tku.edu.tw), published by Tamkang University.

Writes Ono: " Among courses I have taught in universities such as communications technology, telecommunications policy, management information systems, I love to teach futures studies (FS) most. As almost all students in the Department of Business Administration have neither heard of FS nor expected to see such a course title, the enrollment to my FS course is around 20 every year. Interestingly, though, they get immediately fascinated by what FS offers to them and become pleased with their own decision to take my FS course.

I teach them basics of FS such as history, purposes, assumptions and methods using Bell's "Foundations of Futures Studies, Volume I", and then introduce them to scenario writing. I also try to help them develop an ability of critically analyzing political, economic, technological and social issues using Inayatullah's CLA. By taking my FS course, they gradually pay more attention to future generations and world and begin to reflect on their own thinking and actions in the present. "

2. Korea

In Korea, there are two futurists of note. And a third who lives in Japan.

1. First is, Youngsook Park (harmesen@dreamwiz.com), who is Chair, of the World Future Society Korea Club and Chair of the Korea note of the Millennium Project. She is a futurist and also an organizer-networker par excellence. She has attempted to bring futures thinking and futures studies throughout the Korean government. The website she manages is: <http://www.korea2050.net/> It is largely in Korean.

About their activities, she writes: "We started Korea2050 (now it is called UN Future Forum) in Jan 2004 with then Minister Lee Young-tak who is currently DPM level Chairman of the Korean Stock Exchange as chairman. As he hold the government position he is now honorary chair, and I am the president of UN Future Forum. It was officially registered to the Ministry of Finance in 2005.

We currently have some 5000 members who receive our regular web magazine which are issued 2-3 times a week, with a lot of future stories in Korean. We publish State of the Future (by Millennium Project) annually, starting from 2004 version. This year's version for 2006 will come out in May or so. We will soon to publish the Futurist in Korean.

For the American World Future Society Conference, 40 or so members attend the annual WFS Conference.

We have conducted several Korean government futures projects, future of education2030, and some Min of Construction work as well."

Recently in March Ms Park influenced Incheon Airport to have a two day conference on the futures of airports.

2. The second Korean futurist of note is Dr. Yongseok So (futures@kt.co.kr). He recently finished his phd from the University of Hawaii under the supervision of Professor James Dator, one of the founders of modern day futures studies.

He is the lead researcher at KT Futures society research centre. Writes Seo: "The KTF SRC (Korea Telecom Future Society Research Center) was established in 2006 in order to study and forecast future transformation in various fields. The aim of the center not only assists KT to expand business opportunities, but also encourage Korean people in governments and communities to think beyond current values and practices. "

3. Dr. Tae-Chang Kim is the director of the Integrated Study of Futures Generations Centre in Kyoto. He is the editor of numerous books on futures generations thinking, including Co-Creating a Public Philosophy for Future Generations. Futures generations thinking is similar to futures studies, however, it takes a more asian epistemological approach, focusing on 1. families. 2. ancestors and future-cestors. And 3. nature. It challenges the narrow individualistic western approach to futures thinking and is explicitly Buddhist in its approach.

Kim writes about this book: "When making decisions, governments can and should strive consciously to balance the demands of the present with the needs of future generations. Various advocates for greater governmental foresight have created new processes or institutions within existing systems of democratic government. These include long-range planning departments, futures commissions, requirements for future-impact statements on proposed legislation, environmental protection agencies, and offices of technology assessment. But, as the contributors to this volume demonstrate, much more remains to be done. Some of the provocative questions posed by this book include: What is a public philosophy oriented to the needs of future generations necessary, and why is it necessary? What are the major examples of actual experiments in future-oriented governance? What were their successes and failures, and the reasons for each? And finally, what are the obstacles to future-oriented governance, and how might they be overcome? The authors of the essays in this volume suggest answers based on their extensive experience in working with governments, trying to help them incorporate techniques of foresight into their institutions and practices."

3. Philippines

The Philippines was fortunate to host the Secretariat of the World Futures Studies Federation from 1998-2002, including hosting the World Futures Studies Conference in

1999. The conference was titled The Futures of Diversity: Celebrating Life and Complexities in the Next 100 years. The publication: Globalization, Diversity and Questions in Between. Selections from the 1999 World Futures Studies Federation XVth World Conference edited by George L. Aguilar is available from www.wfsf.org.

Having had the world futures studies federation in the Philippines led to an enhancement of the foresight capacity, and there are many futurists in the Philippines or at least students of futures studies. Two however fit our categories above.

1. "Cesar H. Villanueva" <chv@usls.edu.ph>, who was the former Secretary General of the WFSF and 2. His associate George Aguilar. Both are co-directors of the Center for GLO-Cal Futures. It is now a virtual centre. Writes Villanueva, " The purpose of the Center is to bring into awareness the value, importance and vital significance of futures thinking and the foresight principles into the consciousness of people especially the young. The Center also advocates the need for compelling visions of alternative futures. Our activism is focused on organizing successor generation of leaders with the foresight and principles of sustainability, good governance and just peace. The core volunteers of the WFSF secretariat comprises the membership. Activities have focused mainly on awareness raising on futures, incorporating long term thinking in strategic peace research such as DDR, organizing successor generation of leaders." The main methods that are used are: visioning, scenario building and backcasting. CLA when needed. Transcend and Transform."

Villanueva is now full time with Pax Christi Pilipinas and part time at the graduate school of the University of St. La Salle.

4 Malaysia

Malaysia has a rich history of futures studies largely from its association with the World Futures Studies Federation. In June 1996 through Institute of Policy Development a course on futures studies was held in Penang. Futurists Sohail Inayatullah, Tony Stevenson and Zia Sardar led the course. Locally, Azizan Baharuddin, along with teaching, managed the day today affairs. Later, she became a member of the Executive Board of the World Futures Studies Federation. She is now professor and Director of the Centre of Civilizational Dialogue, University of Malaya.

Currently, the University Sains Malaysia in Penang is leading Malaysia in conducting futures studies. Through the leadership of Dato Zulfi – the Vice-Chancellor – and Professor Ramli Mohammed, they have produced one of the most important books in the area of the futures of the University. Titled, "Constructing Future Higher Education Scenarios: Insights from Universiti Sains Malaysia," this book uses Inayatullah's six pillars approach to futures studies. It does so to map out the futures of University Sains Malaysia. The book is also important in that it details the stakeholder process – in terms of discussions with staff, students, industry and others in developing a new future for USM. "Ramli Mohamed" <ramli@usainsgroup.com>

5 Thailand

Apec Centre for Technology Foresight (<http://www.apecforesight.org/>) has slowly over the years become more focused on futures studies. Initially, technology road mapping was its focus. It has now moved to a broader approach. This is largely because of a series of workshops on futures methods over the past few years. While there are no individuals who would call themselves futurists, there are a few who wear two hats. Dr. Chatri Sripaipan and Dr. Nares Damrongchai nares@nstda.or.th. They wear two hats because APECTF is housed in the National Science and Technology Development Agency. However, Mayuree Vathankuljarus mayuree@nstda.or.th could be considered a true futurist. She has attended workshops on futures studies and has coordinated futures studies program at APECTF.

Also in Thailand is Richard Hames, director of the Hames Group. Argues Hames about his unique approach to futures thinking. " Firstly, we are not as dogmatic about the future as most pop futurists. We are as unlikely to trumpet the latest fads as we are to create hype to market our findings. On the contrary, by undertaking deeper systemic inquiry we opt for the longer view. Finding alternative meanings in systemic intelligence we seek to reveal the structural dynamics generating the uncertainty, ambiguity and paradox within which we live.

Secondly, the diverse makeup of our collegial network ensures unbounded, multicultural thinking. Our time horizon, too, extends each moment of the present into deep time - across the entire expanse of our history, into the 21st century and beyond. Our intelligence canvas is equally expansive, combining the physical world of things and events with the metaphysical domain of cultures and values. Each is considered at various levels - from the individual to the societal.

Thirdly, we are not distracted by other activities or demands on our time. Our work is entirely focused on the research, synthesis and actioning of futures-based strategic intelligence. " Currently Hames is developing an Asian institute of futures thinking in Bangkok, Thailand.

Finally, there is Michelle Bauwens, who lives in Chiang-Mai. He takes a peer to peer approach to futures studies. Indeed, he is the director of the P2p foundation – www.p2pfoundation.net. He argues that the future is being transformed via the peer to peer revolution. This is occurring in the areas of knowledge production; manufacturing; gaming; education, finance, among other areas. Bauwens as well as written television scripts in the areas of transhuman futures.

6 Taiwan

1. More than anywhere in Asia, Futures Studies has become firmly established in Taiwan. This is largely because of the efforts of one futurist, Clement Chang . He is the founder of Tamkang University. Futures studies courses have been taught there for over 30 years. Currently, 3000-5000 students annually take courses in futures studies. There is an MA

program housed in Graduate Institute of Futures Studies. Ten students a year are accepted (from 25-75 apply). There are plans underway to develop a doctoral program as well.

Along with Clement Chang, Professor Kuo-Hua Chen (sochen@mail.tku.edu.tw) is a notable futurist. He lectures widely to audiences in Taiwan. He is also on the Executive Board of the World Futures Studies Federation and former co-editor of the Journal of Futures Studies. The current director of GIFS of Dr. Chien-fu chen (chien-fu@mail.tku.edu.tw). Other notable futurists include Jui-Guey Chen (Wilhelm@mail.tku.edu.tw), Yu-Ying Deng (tengyy@mail.tku.edu.tw) and Shunji Ji (jishunji@mail.tku.edu.tw). There are other important faculty members as well, however, they are unlikely to refer to themselves as futurists.

The university also publishes a quarterly global journal, the Journal of Futures (www.jfs.tku.edu.tw) that is available in print and on-line. Editors include Professor Sohail Inayatullah, Clement Chang and Chien-fu Chen.

The challenge at Tamkang university is to take the pedagogy of futures studies to a broader audience – in government, ngos and business.

2 Along with Tamkang University, there is Fo-Guang University. It has a graduate program in Futures Studies. It is unique in that along with external approaches to the future, it takes an inner Buddhist approach. Language of instruction is mandarin.

According to the website

(<http://www.fgu.edu.tw/newpage/fgupageen/showfguen/index.php>). "Graduate Institute of Futures Studies is the first academic institute in Taiwan or Asia that incorporates theories and practice of futures studies to explore the trend of national politics, economy, culture, society, and environment.

Future Studies is recognized a mainstream of knowledge system in the 21st century; thus, cross-field integration, instead of traditional field or course-based instruction is implemented in the curriculum. Such design is intended to establish the theory system of futurology, and conduct aggregate research on human lives. We aim to cultivate our students observation and forecast capabilities in research."

7 China

In the 1970s and 1980, Lin Zheng was secretary-general of the Chinese society of futures studies. He organized a stunning conference of the world futures studies federation in Beijing, 1987. However, since the Tiananmen square protest, futures studies had disappeared in China.

8. India.

There are a plethora of futurists in India.

1 Most notable is Ashis Nandy , author of dozens of books on the future. He was former director of the Centre of the Study of Developing Societies. Nandy can be reached at ashisnandy@hotmail.com>.

2 Another important futurist is Rakesh Kapoor. He is director of Alternative Futures. He is an executive board member of the World futures studies federation and can be reached at: rakeshkapoor@airtelbroadband.in. He recently edited a special issue of the journal Futures titled Transformative Initiatives.

3 In the 1970s and 1980s, the leading Indian futurist was Satish Seth . He managed to introduce futures studies in 10,000 schools. He is now retired. He is most recent book was, *Managing Development for Future : A Study in Transition and Change* Management. Delhi, Gyan, 2001, 2 vols., 1334

4. Dada Shambhushivananda is a unique futurist who has been writing in the area for five to six years. His main focus is neohumanist futures. He has research centres in Thailand and Taiwan. Neohumanism seeks to expand the future through expanding how individuals explore self and society. It seeks to explore inner and outer futures – from yoga and meditation to global governance and cooperative economics. Dadaji shambhushivananda@gmail.com

5. SP Udayakumar Udayakumar is an educationalist and futurist. He has organized workshops on the futures of south Asia, and his doctoral dissertation explored the implications of the writing of textbooks (nationalism) on alternative futures. He directs the South Asian Community Center for Education and Research (SACCER) at [Nagercoil](#) in [Tamil Nadu](#) to carry out community work, and educational and research ventures. He is on the editorial board of the Journal of Futures Studies. drspudayakumar@yahoo.com

9 Pakistan

While there are many who study the future in Pakistan, Raja Ikram Azam would be considered a true futurist. He is director of the Pakistan Futuristics Institute. He holds classes, does consultancies, advises businesses and the government in all matters related to the future. Azam has written dozens of books on the future. He can be reached at: 37, School Road, F. 7/1, Islamabad, Pakistan. Tel 92-51-920-4359.

10 Sri Lanka

The most notable futurist from Sri Lanka could be Arthur C Clarke, however, as important, if not more so, is Susantha Goonatilake . Goonatilake has written extensively on a new Asia developing that uses its own epistemological framework to innovate in science and technology. He is author of dozens of books on the futures of science including *Global Science* and *Merged Evolution: Long-Term Implications Of Biotechnology And Information Technology*. susanthag@hotmail.com.

11. Singapore.

Singapore is unique in that while there is not one particular individual who may call him or herself a futurist, the nation has taken a whole-of-country approach to futures studies. Their product is the Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning or RAHS Singapore. This is developed by Patrick Nathan and colleagues in the National Security Coordination Centre, Office of the Prime Minister. Their approach has three parts. 1. scanning the horizon for threats. 2. focus on problems that can spin out of control and 3. using diverse and multiple approaches to dealing with uncertainty and complexity. Currently, Nathan and RAHS are exploring developing an MA program in Futures Studies in Singapore. Patrick_Nathan@nscs.gov.sg

SUMMARY

While there are dozens of other individuals who engage in futures studies, generally they are focused on what Richard Slaughter has called, pop futures, or populist futures. These are comments on the future for the daily newspaper. Academics as well tend to include "the future" as a subheading at the end of their report or paper. As well, there are dozens of institutes in Asia, who from time to time hold a symposium where the word future is mentioned or where a special report on the future of X is used. Of course, most recently the future has become associated with climate change, environmental catastrophe on the one hand, and the future as digital revolution on the other- Green-topia countering digital-topia. While both are important images of the future, futures studies, explores these images and many more. Moreover, after exploration comes the creation of the future – its invention and transformation.

Futures Studies is likely to grow dramatically in Asia over the coming decades. Foresight in government (as they move away from feudal orientations), corporations (as they move away from family style leadership) and non-governmental organizations will most likely use the theories and methods of futures studies. Moreover, they are likely to develop approaches that are uniquely Asian (is in futures generations thinking by Kim, neohumanism by Shambushivananda and Asian epistemologies by Goonatilake).

We look forward to a renaissance of futures studies in Asia.

Websites:

Fo Guang University - <http://www.fgu.edu.tw/newpage/fgupageen/showfguen/index.php>

Journal of Futures Studies – www.jfs.tku.edu.tw

Graduate Institute of Futures Studies, Tamkang University -
<http://future.tku.edu.tw/en/conference-overview.htm>

Kaoru Yamaguchi – www.muratopia

Future University - <http://www.fun.ac.jp/en/>

World futures studies federation – www.wfsf.org

Apec Technology Foresight Centre – www.apectf.org

University Sains Malaysia – www.usm.my

Korea future club - www.korea2050.net

neohumanist futures - www.gurukul.edu

The Hames Group – www.hamesgroup.com

Peer to Peer Foundation - http://p2pfoundation.net/Main_Page

