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Contribution by

South African Node at The Millennium Project

Strategic Foresight for the Post-2015 Development Agenda:

Hindsight form African Foresight

Dr. Geci Karuri-Sebina

Strategic Foresight for the Post-2015 Development Agenda
Hindsight from African Foresight

Dr. Geci Karuri-Sebina
Johannesburg, South Africa

A Panel Input to the Eighteenth Annual Session of the
United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development
06 May 2015 | Palais des Nations, Geneva

Gleaning lessons from African foresight experiences

Key messages:

1. *Some assumptions*
2. Critical insights from foresight experience in Africa: What we don't need
3. Some intervening ideas and exemplars: What we need more of
4. Increasing foresight salience and impact in the development agenda

1) The post-2015 agenda has to be transformative for the majority

- 4 key dimensions for transformation :
  1. Reconfigure power imbalances
  2. Re-structure space, which should include achieving increased efficiency, spatial justice and equity
  3. Transform institutions
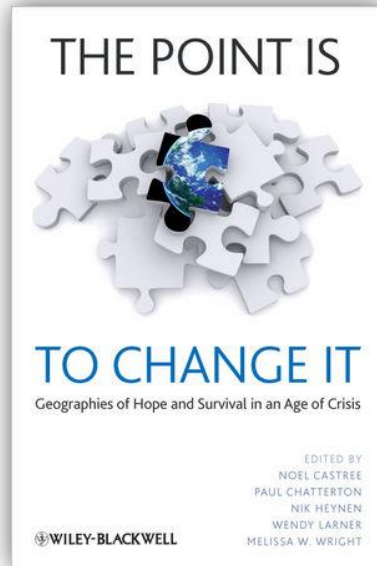 4. Build organisational and managerial capability

John James Williams, 2000

"Change is an outcome of a paradigmatic shift; without that you may have evolution but you will not have a transformational shift." ~ Alioune Sall

2) Strategic foresight post-2015 has to learn and improve

- Legitimacy of states is undermined by failing to deliver promised development outcomes
- The trouble with our strategies and policies has been:
  - "their loss of the ability to respond in time, to learn in time, to adapt and to evolve"
  - "The institutions charged with making (strategies/policies) grind on with their implementation long after it has become obvious to everyone… that they are inappropriate"
- In the knowledge society "Strategies/policies should:
  - be continuous and adaptive"
  - not be based on the predictions that no one can correctly make in any case, but only on the analysis of an unfolding pattern of variety…"
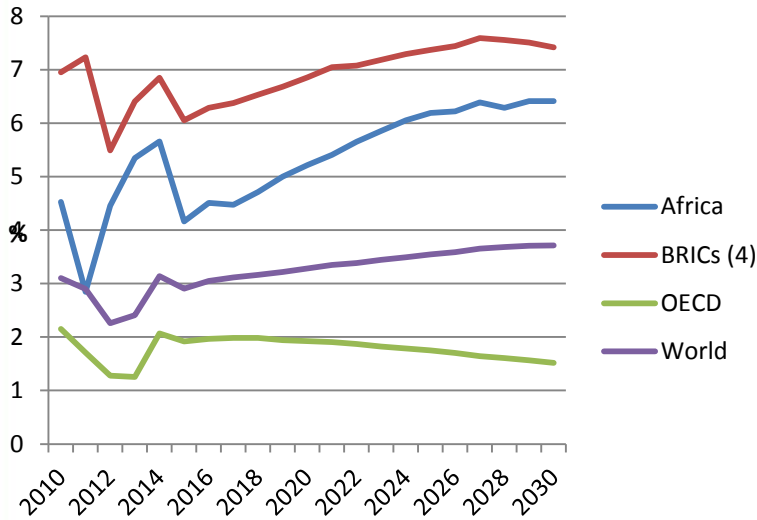
Stafford Beer, author of "Designing Freedom"

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FORESIGHT FOR DEVELOPMENT
PROMOTING THE USE OF FORESIGHT FOR AFRICA'S FUTURE

"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

~ Karl Marx from *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845

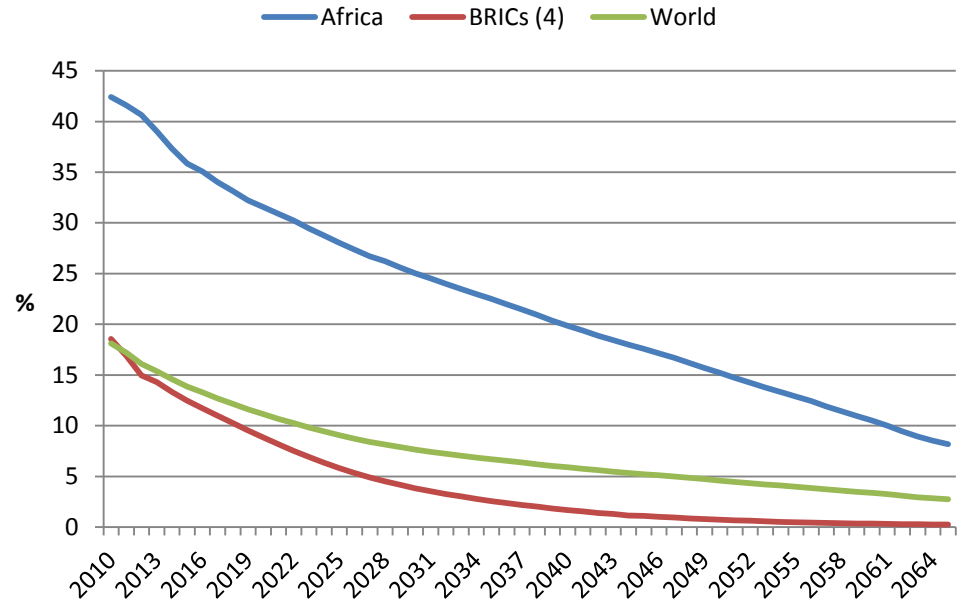THE POINT IS

TO CHANGE IT

Geographies of Hope and Survival in an Age of Crisis

EDITED BY
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WILEY-BLACKWELL

2010

3) Africa matters

fastest growing economies

2nd most unequal region

Forecast of regional GDP growth rates, history and forecast

Forecasted share of population living on US$1,25/day

Source: IFs base cases, forecast from IFs v7.05, historical data from World Development Indicators, World Bank (2013)

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" People say that if you find water rising up to your ankle,
that's the time to do something about it,
not when it's around your neck.

~ Chinua Achebe

> > > > > > > > FORESIGHT < < <
South Africans
Thinking about
Tomorrow
Today
FUTURE
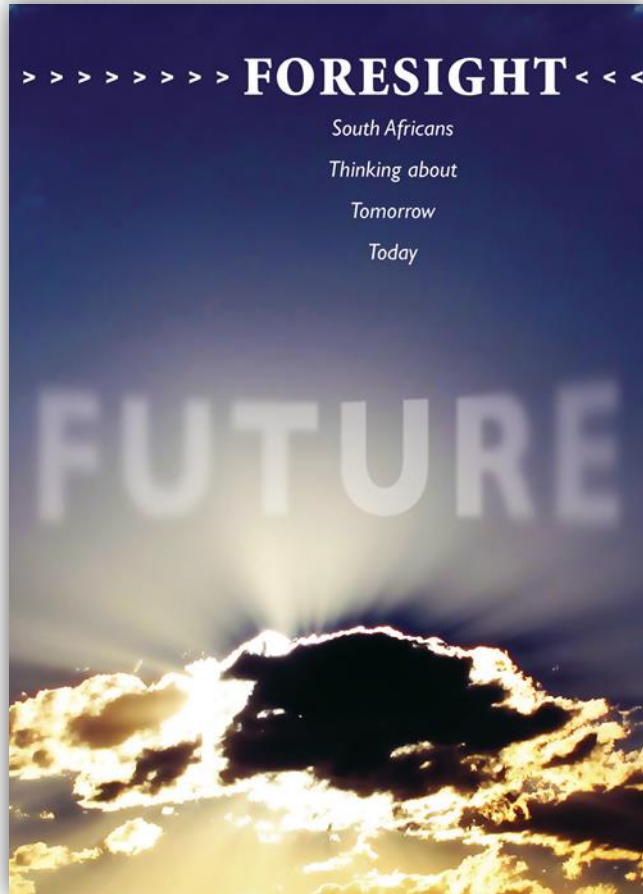
Critiques from hindsight:

1. All foresight and no action: Foresight can become an end in itself

2. Elitist foresight: Foresight can be used to legitimise exclusive perspectives

3. Exploitative foresight: Foresight can be used to advocate preconceived agendas

4. Extravagant foresight: Foresight can inordinately consume time and resources

5. Accountability-free foresight: Foresight can lack any systematic assessment of value

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"The prospects for progress in Africa are greater than ever before, yet many structural challenges persist. The pressure to tackle these challenges simultaneously, and to ponder the trade-offs implied in different policy choices, is probably the most complex issue Africa faces today. Africa must **deepen** its strategic reflection and its ability to plan for the future if it is to take advantage of existing opportunities. Long-term planning efforts, such as the AU's Agenda 2063 and others, present a huge opportunity in this regard."   ~ ISS, 2014

The Future we want for Africa — AGENDA 2063 — Unity, Prosperity & Peace

The Future we want for Africa — AGENDA 2063 — Unity, Prosperity & Peace

Critiques from findings:

- Quantification without qualification
- Quantification that lacks independent, reliable data
- Selective foresight with biased assumptions and orphan variables (e.g. politics, culture, ideology)
- Deterministic or self-serving thematic choices and issues
- Paradigmatic blockages (blinkered foresight)
- Decontextualised foresight - a lack of relation with global scenarios
- Foresight without operationalization frameworks
- Once-off or ad hoc foresight with no sustainability
- Unclear funding arrangements
- Lack of awareness and communications campaigns to reach targeted audiences

Recommendations to AU:

1) Legitimacy and ownership are key
2) Evolve relevant, context-specific methods that are transparent and inclusive.
3) Create and institutionalise a cross-cutting foresight / futures intelligence capability
4) Adopt a rigorous monitoring and evaluation approach
5) Secure continual resource support– but ensure who finances does not compromise legitimacy
6) Communication and action

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Reflective Dialogue

- *The Creation and Use of 'Future Intelligence Capacity' to Promote the Goals of a Successful Knowledge Society*. November 6-8th, 2007 in Stellenbosch

- *Imagining Africa's Future #1: Beyond Models of Catch-up and Convergence*. March 11th, 2013 in Paris

- *Imagining Africa's Future #2: Decolonizing the Future – Visions and Methods.* December 6th, 2013 in Paris

- *All-African Futures Forum: Transforming Africa's Futures*. May 26-28, 2014 in Johannesburg

- *Foresight for Development Roundtable (Strategic Foresight, Gender & Development, Green Economy, Development paradigms)*. March 28, 2015 in Johannesburg

Questions:
- How has the future of Africa been conceptualised, by whom, and why?
- What epistemologies and methodologies have been applied?
- How did / could African futures contribute to strategies, plans and actions?

Recommendations:
1. Ensure clear and shared vision(s)
2. Build consociational democracy (consensus- building)
3. Translate visions into operational strategies
4. Adapt tools for managing complexity
5. Address negative and distracting politics
6. Beware: Contestations for future and its vehicles; "Used futures"
7. Increase capacity for learning, and experimentation

Thematic Foresight

- Knowledge, innovation, technology: prospects for change

- Trend-spotting, but also a need for systematic assessment and insight (reflecting and rethinking)

- Diversity of voices and perspectives

- Paradoxes of "development" – cellphones but no power; formality and informality

- Aspirations and potentials: societal values, materiality, constraints
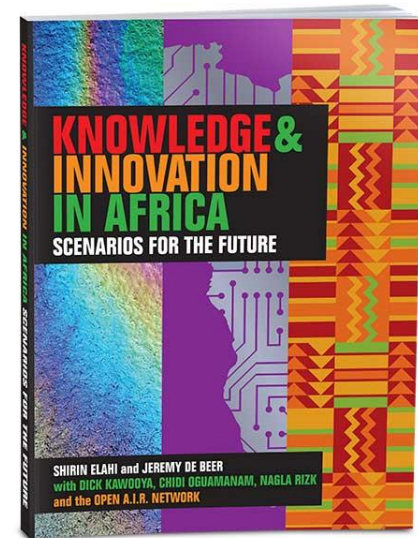
Open Foresight

1235 **Library** records

817 **Video** posts

44 **Themes** covered

2014 stats:

> 22,000 visits (17,000 unique)
>
> 41,000 page views
>
> 2,000+ social media followers

Top 14 countries visiting:

> South Africa
>
> USA
>
> UK
>
> Kenya
>
> Canada
>
> India
>
> Germany
>
> Nigeria
>
> Uganda
>
> Australia
>
> Brazil
>
> France
>
> Tunisia
>
> Netherlands

Learn

National-level lessons

- South Africa's diagnostic and foresight process enabled the open, shared confrontation of harsh national realities through an independent, endogenous Planning Commission.

- Now challenges, of implementation

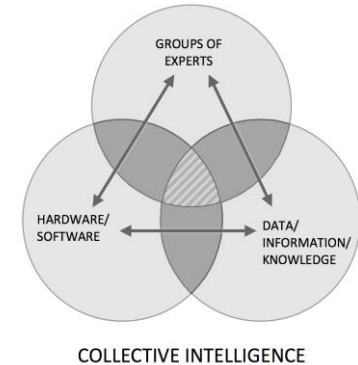https://nationalplanningcommission.wordpress.com

International exemplars and lessons
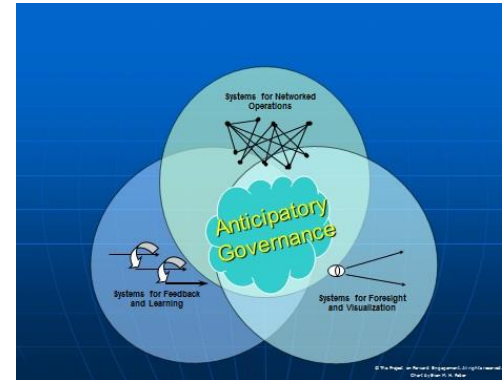
- Global think tanks and centres focused on improving quality of decision-making, as well as practicable means of institutionalising foresight into systems of leadership and governance.

http://forwardengagement.org
http://www.millennium-project.org

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In Summary

Messages towards strategic foresight for post-2015 agenda:

1. Ensure legitimacy and ownership
2. Democratise foresight - be inclusive in means and ends
3. Systematise strategic reflection through collective intelligence and dialogue
4. Undertake systematic assessment and empirically-grounded analysis
5. Institutionalise foresight
6. Equip with relevant tools and methods
7. Build capacity for learning and experimentation
8. Communicate the foresight
9. Operationalise the foresight
10. Learn from what we have seen or done, and from others

We need to dare to think, dare to speak, and dare to act
~ Alioune Sall

"The past belongs to the ancestors, the present belongs to God, and the future belongs to human beings.

~ Fang saying

Thank You

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COUNTRY	With LTPS
Algeria	0
Angola	1
Benin	1
Botswana	1
Burkina Faso	1
Burundi	1
Cameroon	1
Cape Verde	1
Central African Republic	0
Chad	0
Comoros	TBC
Côte d'Ivoire	1
DR Congo	½
Djibouti	TBC
Egypt	1
Equatorial Guinea	0
Eritrea	0
Ethiopia	0
Gabon	1
Gambia	1
Ghana	1
Guinea	½
Guinea-Bissau	1
Kenya	1
Lesotho	1
Liberia	1
Libya	0

COUNTRY	With LTPS
Madagascar	0
Malawi	1
Mali	1
Mauritania	1
Mauritius	1
Morocco (Non AU)	1
Mozambique	1
Namibia	1
Niger	2
Nigeria	1
Republic of the Congo	½
Rwanda	1
São Tomé and Príncipe	1
Senegal	1
Seychelles	1
Sierra Leone	1
Somalia	0
South Africa	1
Sudan	0
South Sudan	0
Swaziland	½
Tanzania	1
Togo	0
Tunisia	1
Uganda	1
Western Sahara	0
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	1

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