

Please note: The Masters Research Project (MRP) was Originally submitted to OCAD University in May 2019 to meet graduation requirements. This version being shared with you has since been updated with some new graphics (with the help of graphic designer, Regi George), and minor edits.

ABSTRACT

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The possible futures ahead belong to everyone, and in this critical juncture of time in our society, where polarization and power struggles abound, and the hegemonic Western ideas and ideals seem fractured, it feels even more critical we seek these plural and inclusive images of the future as a way forward. The field of Futures Studies, however, is foregrounded by its own Western cultural and epistemological heterogeneity with much of the geographic focus of the fields work and its practitioners thus far, skewing heavily to the global North.

In combining research with expert interviews, the study takes a temporal lens, of past-present-future, to understanding the Western influence on the field, and makes a case for why the field needs to transition to being more inclusive, both for its own ongoing relevance and potential social impact.

In offering a possible way forward, the study draws from the insights generated and proposes the first draft of an inclusive futures framework called Lotus. The framework, inspired by the Lotus flower, is targeted at current Futures practitioners, and seeks to guide its users in questioning the belief systems, worldviews, and epistemological groundings underpinning their work; its goal being to generate futures with our broader community that are inclusive, plural, anti-colonial and culturally sensitive. While the field cannot become inclusive and representative overnight, it can become a better ally in the process, and it is to support in this transition that the framework seeks its utility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research study is a labour of love and time. Working on it from India I missed being around my North American community, but friends, SF&I classmates, and my amazing advisors did not let the inconvenient distance or time difference get in the way. They willingly got up early or stayed up late to talk to me. Sometimes just to hear me out, other times to give me constructive advise. Some of you claimed you had no idea what I was talking about (looking at you Sheng, Sandra, and Rene) yet you listened, nodded, contributed and supported me. I could not ask for more.

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Lastly, the most heartfelt gratitude to my family for their love, encouragement, and support. I could not have done this without my mother's love, amazing food and emotional support, or my father's encouragement, print runs and grammar checks, or my brothers telephone calls. Thank you will never be enough.

DEDICATION

To everyone who sees the question, "What are you working for?" and answers it with "Inclusive futures".

Dhanyavaad (Thank You) for what you do. I cannot wait to collaborate with you.

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PREFACE

I would like to begin by sharing an excerpt of a conversation I have been having more often lately.

Others: "So, What are you up to these days?"

Me: "Oh, I am working and wrapping up graduate

school."

Others: "Oh, that's great! What are you studying?"

[pause]

Me- "Foresight, Innovation and Systems change theory."

[long pause]

Most others: "Oh, and what.. exactly does that mean?"

As you can imagine, depending on the situation, what follows is a variety of responses. Suffice it to say, this is the hardest conversation to get started these days. I likely need a simpler answer and not an academic one. More often than not, though, no matter what I say I generally get raised eyebrows,

puzzled looks, a chuckle followed by a pause added in just to make sure I am not joking.

There is almost always more discussion and curiosity about my works particular focus on taking an arts-based lens to engage with equitable and inclusive futures, and by the end of it, people usually respond encouragingly with,

"That's really interesting. I have never met someone doing that before."

I imagine many fellow SF&I'ers¹ can relate. And as a former accountant, I can assure you, no one (myself included) expressed such interest in my career before. I may feel seen, but not really understood, and that is something the field, world over, struggles with due to its loose boundaries and diverse origins and confusing nomenclature. While the niche association does feel cool, the irony isn't lost on me. Something as relatable as thinking about the future should not be novel. Most people think about the future and always have. So, if anything I am now actually doing something almost every living person does; I am just, perhaps, doing it

 $^{^{\}scriptscriptstyle 1}$ My graduate program is named Strategic Foresight & Innovation or SF&I for short.

in a more methodological, socially intentioned, and wider scale. I feel genuinely grateful and excited to have found a career focused on collaborating with broader cross-sections of our society in this conversation with my personal call for action to engage more intentionally with our collective futures. It is my hope that the number of other practitioners applying our field in this inclusive direction goes from being a minority to one that becomes a defining backbone to our fields practice.

The inspiration for this research study stemmed from my personal observations, experiences, and conversations in the field, and while its completion marks the official end of my graduate degree, undertaking it has opened me up to the study of subjects and topics I, personally, had previously never considered or studied.

I share my process and findings with the sincere hope that readers find it helpful, relevant, and insightful to their futures work. The culmination of three months of dedicated research, interviews, reflections, and writing, I am both excited and grateful to those who have been a part of this journey, while fully acknowledging that this study is my first formal attempt to bind together what I have read, heard, felt, and thought. It also presents the first (of what I expect to be many) iterations of the Lotus framework, and I look forward to immersing myself further in the field of Futures Studies, to speaking to practitioners, working on projects, and continuously applying and building it further as I go.

If there is one thing that has supplanted itself on me in this research journey, it is the value and need to step away from the multitude of screens and make time for intentional conversations. I could not have proposed the Lotus framework had it not been for my expert interviews, and the insights they shared from their diverse backgrounds/ experiences/histories and observations. There are many more conversations to be had, and if you would like to speak with me upon reading this research, I would be most open and grateful for it and its learnings.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Complicating matters for the field of Futures Studies is that it still goes by many names - *Futures Studies, Futures,*Strategic Foresight, Forecasting, Futures Research,

Futurology, Futurism, Scenarios approach, Anticipation, Prospective!

Different names that share the same objective - to anticipate what *could* occur but has not yet occurred, and to deal with this uncertainty by generating (where possible) a variety of possibilities or alternatives (intentionally plural). Professional Futurists work to prepare those whom we work with and for, that change is inevitable, something not to be blind sighted by but mentally primed for, anticipated and prepared for in a variety of ways, and in some cases- to be ready to influence it. Futures are not equitable, at least they have not been so thus far.

But I believe in the power and potential of this field and feel its importance the moment I consider what is happening in our world.

On one side, it feels like we are living in hyper-sensitive, deeply polarized times, shrouded with daily doses of dystopia from reports of the latest tech surveillance move, extreme weather event, fake news, all kinds of violence (gun, gender, racial, animal, ecological), children in cages, income inequality, pollution of all kinds (might I add, even of kinds I could not have imagined), bombings and wars, hate crimes, phobias, border walls, shows about apocalypses, to Brexit, and dare I say most headlines involving Donald Trump. Not to mention the growing stress on democracy around the world.

Heavens forbid, any country's GDP or company's annual net profits fall either because there is a whole slew of headlines dedicated to that too.

Then I look over and follow movements like:

- women speaking up against sexual harassment (#MeToo),
- African-Americans fighting for racial equity and social justice (#BlackLivesMatter), and
- indigenous-led global divestment movement
 #DivestTheGlobe urging people to "divest their households, institutions, and cities from banks that

finance desecration projects, such as tar sands pipelines" (Tobias, 2017),

- people of all ages, particularly youth, publicly fighting for climate change inspiring unity world over to protest (#ClimateStrike, #FridaysforFuture, Extinction Rebellion),
- youth movements in the U.S. against gun violence (#NeverAgain),
- various groups coming together to protest for changes that ensure greater equality and equity around the world (#Occupy, #EqualPay),
- citizens around the world alert and increasingly engaged in political engagement (from Brexit to Yellow vest protest to fighting for honest media and honest governments, and running for office like congresswomen such as Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the U.S. most recently), in
- entertainment with minority actors fighting for acknowledgment and equality (#OscarsTooWhite) and then the release and spectacular success of a movie like Black Panther, and
- in literature, the opening up of diverse narratives demanding they be writing their own stories versus

white authors channeling minority characters (#ownvoices), not to mention the spectacular rise of minority led Speculative fiction in the form of Afrofuturism, Latinx Futures, Indigenous Futures, and works by other minority authors across the spectrum.

These might still be fringe movements, but once you look you realize the list is long on this side of the border too. And, as Karl Mannheim, one of the founders of classical sociology, had once observed, it is small movements that bring about big future changes. We know these social movements had been incubating for decades, though, waiting for the right precipitating event(s). This fight for equity has the power to upend the status quo like no other, in fact, we can argue, it already is.

To me, every single person in these movements is a futurist. They have an understanding of the issues, the systems, an idea of the possibilities, and the conviction to corral others towards their preferred future vision. That said, I couldn't tell you with the same conviction where the field of Futures Studies lies is in these movements. I know some practitioners are fighting for equitable and ecological futures, but I also know they are a small subset compared to the numbers working in corporations, governments, or [predominantly,

Western²] academia. I am also aware that many of these movements are driven by groups that remain underrepresented in our Futures community, which is still predominantly older Western, white, male.

I am then confronted by the likelihood that many, myself included, are not represented in the worldviews held by the majority of those practicing in the field *or* the worldview of those they are working for. In this realization, I am reminded how our ideologies and worldviews, while invisible, drive so much of what we do, and how the act of engaging and changing the future is as much an act of knowing about and learning from the past. Dr Alonso-Conchiero prompts us to be more self-reflective when he writes:

"As the distinguished historian, Edward H. Carr, asked himself, 'What is history?' It is historians who determine which "facts of the past" become "historical facts" according to their own biases and agendas. So he suggested that **one should study the historian before studying the historical facts.**

Perhaps we should do something similar and follow his guide when asking, what are Futures Studies?... And could we also suggest that we should study who did a futures study before studying the futures presented by the study?

(Alonso-Concheiro, 2015)

What would we find if we did as Dr Alonso-Conchiero suggests and study ourselves as a group first?

My personal experiences of being engaged with the Futures Studies community the past two years, through conferences and membership organizations (like the Association of Professional Futurists), tells me that while we are an increasingly diverse and global group, we are far from being representative of the world and still skew heavily to the global North (both in terms of our ethnic make-up and geographic focus of work). Our world might be increasingly multicultural, ideologically divided, and financially unequal, but our social movements are more united, more frequent, more diverse, and more systemically focused- all elements that point to brewing seismic shifts to our current systems of

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² The word 'Western' is used extensively in this research study, and is being used to represent the non-Indigenous Europe and North America *and* the ideologies of extraction, colonialism, capitalism, and information technology, which are rooted in these geographies. Despite being a blanket statement word, this is not to infer everyone from these geographies represents these ideologies, but to reference those who do.

power and privilege. But despite our field being about anticipation and preparation, I don't see this sense of urgency being reflected in the tone and tenor of our field's conversations and conferences. I don't see our Futures community leading the charge to engage, include, and reflect underrepresented groups who have remained historically excluded from Futures conversations in the past (groups such as Women, People of Colour, Black, Indigenous, Youth, LGBTQ, cultural and religious minorities, varying socioeconomic groups, communities in more fragile states, persons with disabilities, etc.).

What could happen if we don't adapt to be more inclusive? Could we [futurists] ironically find ourselves irrelevant? Since I strongly believe in the uniting power of the Futures Studies field, I found myself asking:

How might the practice of Futures Studies allow for inclusion and plurality? (my primary research question)

In asking this, I had to step back and ask myself the broader questions of why I think the field is not inclusive to begin with; what might have contributed to this exclusivity; why does our society even need more radically inclusive and plural images of the future; and, why our field even matters in the larger social context. Given our work in preferred futures and systems change, Futures Studies' seems naturally positioned to be an ally to underrepresented groups, yet we don't appear to be. Ultimately, through this study, I was looking for answers on what might have contributed to our fields global purview but limited worldview, and how we could be more inclusive.

I started by asking,

How might we understand the evolution of the field? (secondary question)

In Chapter 3, I share some select historical background, and how it deeply influenced our fields identity.

I shifted to more contemporary times in Chapter 4, seeking to understand,

In what ways is the field being practised today? (secondary question)

To see how our field has been adapting modern day pressures and analyzing where we show up and where we seem invisible. With that in mind, in Chapter 5, I shift to trends that point to where our future global needs for Futures work appear to be. The undeniable shifting of foci from the global North to the global South, and the possibility

of being blindsided by the South's overwhelming needs if we do not widen our aperture quickly.

The research study had started out being more exploratory and more open-ended, but this shifted when I spoke to expert practitioners from around the world. Their stories, lessons shared, and wishes gave life to the more structured research I had done. So in Chapter 6, I focus on sharing key themes, practices, and principles that emerged from this collective research, with particular attention given to the (unintentional/intentional) systemic imbalances of power and privilege that exist within our field's work. Reflecting on these imbalances was a clear turning point in the research for me. The realization that we cannot achieve inclusivity, plurality and equity unless we address these imbalances of power and privilege.

With that, this culminates in Chapter 7 with my offering the first draft of a new conceptual framework called Lotus. The Lotus framework is also my response to the last subquestion,

What might 'inclusion and plurality' look like in the field? (secondary question)

Drawing from my findings in chapter 6, the proposed

framework is a guide for practitioners who want to do inclusive futures work with broader cross-sections of community, outside the realm of corporations and governments, and seek a wider representation of worldviews and ideologies in these images. The Lotus framework guides practitioners in revisiting how they design their Futures workshops and sessions while also addressing various systemic imbalances of power and privilege; it showcases key inclusive futures principles; and, also prompts practitioners to work in anti-colonial, culturally sensitive and epistemologically plural ways. I also see the framework as an aggregator of decolonial and intentional design methods, tools, frameworks, principles from various fields and hope future versions can actually connect users to specific examples as suggested further reading, tools and research. I hope this helps us build a united and multi-disciplinary community of practice learning and working together on inclusivity. This has to be a collective effort. While Futures Studies cannot become inclusive and representative overnight, we can become better allies, and it is to support in this transition that I see the utility of the framework.

As a woman of colour from the global South, I also choose to draw from my own observations and experiences in the Futures field, and from my own visions and dreams of what I want to see. In line with feminist scholarship, I have also

elected to write personal reflections on the research process after Chapters 3, 4, and 5 to ensure my personal voice is heard within this academic study.

In chaos lies opportunity, and given the seemingly insurmountable problems we are facing, we, as Futures practitioners, have the capacity to play a leading role in creating a more equitable and inclusive society. This study is my effort to contribute to this movement.

CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There has long been a call within the field by a growing number of practitioners to address inclusivity in Futures Studies from multiple angles, such as axiological, epistemological, ontological, and methodological³. When I started this research, it was a broader investigation to understand the lay of the land (the history, the present day applications, future trends). Specific to inclusivity, I was able to find examples (such as frameworks, projects, papers) addressing the issue from an individual angle(s). As the project progressed, I struggled to find more comprehensive examples where different layers and levels of inclusivity were being addressed in one tool/framework etc. (ideally also visually so it could be easier to understand the connections being drawn). I was searching for 'this item', hoping it existed so I could use it in this study.

When I started, I knew we were not inclusive enough as a field, I also knew I wanted to be a more inclusive practitioner, I knew I was not alone in this intention, and lastly, I knew I would likely not find another opportunity any time soon to spend a few months researching this topic.

That said, this chapter shares the research methodology I undertook, the experts I consulted, and also names some of the limitations that ultimately shaped the study. My process was part research, part inquisitive inquiry, and part inventive creation. There are the research-heavy Chapters 3, 4, and 5 which cover matters concerning the past, present and future, followed by Chapter 6 which is an analysis of key themes, practices, and principles emerging from my interviews, and finally in Chapter 7, the introduction of Lotus, the inclusive futures framework I conceptualized as a synthesis.

Research Methods employed

Literature Review

I conducted literature reviews on:

- -Futures Studies as a field (looking at aspects of its history, its present day application, and influential future trends)
 -I also researched and drew on principles, tools and methods
- from the fields of Design thinking, Design research, Futures Studies, and Systems thinking.

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³ Axiological- covers how we value things, and what we give worth to. These beliefs form the foundation to our field, and become embedded in what it produces. This shapes how we talk about Epistemology- which is how we conceive knowledge, how we transfer knowledge and which knowledge we think is valid. These shape our fields' Ontology or what we define as existing within our field, and their relationships.

-Lastly, I also conducted research to find (sociology) frameworks focused on defining systems of privilege and oppression, and more broadly frameworks from other fields guiding practitioners to intentionally design for plurality, inclusivity, and decolonization.

Primary Research

Two forms of primary research were conducted:

Online Survey

The first was an anonymous online survey created using google survey where participants were allowed to self-identify as either primarily Futurist/Futures practitioner or as primarily having another professional body of work (theatre, politics, etc.), but doing Futures/Foresight in the course of their work.

The survey was shared on LinkedIn, and the listserv's of the Association of Professional Futurists and the World Futures Society. The survey covered questions on practitioner demographics, and their practice- of the 15 responses received, ten self-identified primarily as Futurists (please see research limitations below).

Expert Interviews

The second form of primary research was expert interviews. Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted, asking practitioners about their personal journeys as Futures practitioners, their experiences in the field, and how they are pushing boundaries in their work. In searching for global experts, I turned to social media such as LinkedIn, and Twitter, as well as my own professional networks. Serendipity was most certainly at play in how I was able to find and connect with some of the practitioners listed below. In my letters of invitation and Informed consent, I asked practitioners to self-select if they considered themselves as primarily Futurists/Foresight practitioners, or as having another primary professional body of work while also practicing some aspect of Futures work in their careers. Out of the 13 interviews, 8 identified as primarily Futures practitioners, and 5 as practicing Futures during the course of their primary professional body of work.

Primarily Futures practitioners:

Aarathi Krishnan

Aarathi Krishnan specializes in humanitarian futures and strategic foresight, and is the Global Futures and Foresight Coordinator with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as a Futures Fellow with IARAN. Her practice covers both strategic foresight, organizational change, training, research, horizon scanning and experiential futures, with a specific lens on decolonized and feminist futures.

Dr Cindy Frewen

Dr Cindy Frewen, FAIA, urban futurist and architect, teaches the Design Futures Workshop and Social Change at the University of Houston graduate program in Strategic Foresight. In addition, she consults, speaks, and writes on the future of cities and design futures, specializing in the intersection of people, technology, and complexity.

Daniel Riveong (Futures Practitioner, based in Spain)

Daniel Riveong is a formally trained futurist with a focus on socio-economic change. He was an Emerging

Fellow at the APF on future of prosperity in the Global South. He previously led a digital consultancy in Malaysia with clients such as Gucci and Western Union. His research

interests include: Global South futures, food systems, and economic systems.

Frank Spencer

Frank Spencer is the Founding Principal and Creative Director at Kedge – a global opportunities firm that leverages its expertise in integrated thinking, foresight, innovation, and strategic design to empower organizations to seize aspirations, transformation, and growth. He holds a Master of Arts in Strategic Foresight from Regent University.

Dr Jim Dator

Dr Jim Dator is Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii at Manoa; Core Lecturer, Space Humanities, International Space University, Strasbourg, France; Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Futures Strategy, Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology; Daejeon, Korea, and former President, World Futures Studies Federation. He is editor-in-chief of the World Futures Review.

Dr Tanja Hichert

Dr Tanja Hichert Is a South African futurist with specialized skills in scenario planning, facilitating strategic conversations and scanning. She has extensive experience in applying Futures Studies to 'development issues' in the 'emerging world'. Tanja has passion for expanding and building the practical application of Future Studies on the African continent.

Dr Ziauddin Sardar

Dr. Ziauddin Sardar is a London-based scholar, award-winning writer, cultural critic and public intellectual who specializes in Muslim thought, the future of Islam, futures studies and science and cultural relations. *Prospect* magazine has named him as one of Britain's top 100 public intellectuals and *The Independent* newspaper calls him: 'Britain's own Muslim polymath'.

<u>Primarily another professional body of work, but practicing Futures:</u>

Dr Arianna Mazzeo

Dr Arianna Mazzeo is a professor of practice in design, art and engineering at Harvard. She is also directing the Global Design Impact Network to enable inclusive Pedagogy in design and community. Her research is applied design practices informed by the challenges of cities, inequalities, and the intersection of the disciplines of arts, design and engineering.

John Thackara

John Thackara is a British-born writer, advisor, event producer and public speaker. He is a senior fellow at the Royal College of Art, and visiting professor at School of Visual Arts in New York and at Pontio Innovation in Wales. Thackara writes about live examples of what a sustainable future can be like with a special focus on social and ecological design. He has published online since 1993 at thackara.com and in books his most recent title is How To Thrive In the Next Economy.

K.J. Joy

K. J. Joy is a Senior Fellow with Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management, www.soppecom.org. He has more than 30 years of experience in the environment-development sector, especially water, both as an activist and a researcher. He has been coordinating the work of the Forum for Policy Dialogue on Water Conflicts in India and has most recently co-edited the books "Alternative Futures: India Unshackled" and "India's Water Futures: Emergent Ideas and Pathways".

LeKesha Lewis

LeKesha or L. D. Lewis is an American writer and editor of science fiction and fantasy primarily centering Black women and femmes in extraordinary worlds and with extraordinary power. She also serves as Art Director for FIYAH Literary Magazine for Black Speculative Fiction, and was awarded the 2017 Working-Class Writers Grant by the Speculative Literature Foundation.

Dr Sheila Ochugboju

Dr Sheila Ochugboju is an international development and Futures professional with over 15 years experience, working in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. She is also the co-founder and Director of a Knowledge Management and Media Consultancy called Africa Knows.

Skawennati Tricia Fragnito

Skawennati is a Mohawk multimedia artist, based in Montreal, Canada, who makes art that addresses history, the future, and change. She is best known for her online works exploring contemporary Indigenous cultures. She is Co-Director of Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace, a research network of artists, academics, and technologists who investigate, create, and critique Indigenous virtual environments. She also co-directs their workshops in Aboriginal Storytelling and Digital Media. Skins, This year, AbTeC launched IIF, the Initiative for Indigenous Futures; Skawennati is its Partnership Coordinator.

Research Limitations

While every effort was made to create and execute a comprehensive research study, the following study limitations are acknowledged:

Time limitation

Additional time would have allowed for a broader investigation into how the field engages in plural and inclusive futures; as well as additional expert interviews across a wider (geographic, demographic, disciplinary) range, with those who primarily identify as Futures practitioners and those who do not; and the further development and then testing of my Inclusive Futures framework through workshops and feedback from experts who regularly design and conduct futures workshops/sessions.

Academic journal paywalls

Certain key Futures journals (such as 'Futures') cannot be accessed by the OCAD University library systems, and given the paywalls many published research are otherwise inaccessible. I had to get creative in how I might access them, sometimes succeeding and many times not. So while we speak of and seek plurality and inclusion, we must note how our academic infrastructure can inhibit equitable access to work, and thus inhibit inclusion.

Diversity of Expert Interviews and Survey Participants

A confluence of the limited time, professional networks, and accessibility to finding diverse practitioners (many not identifying as Futurists/Foresighters)- a sincere attempt was made to assemble as diverse a group for expert interviews, and survey participants as possible, but not without gaps. Conscious about intersectional and geographic plurality (that is not just European, North American and/or male) required spending additional time searching for experts who might not be as publicly visible, particularly in the global South. In obtaining responses/experts from Africa, I noted it's not just the hurdle of finding African practitioners, but also culturally and racially diverse ones. I am reminded that studying and practicing in the Futures field is something still very exclusive and caters to privilege. The multidisciplinarity of Futures practitioners is both a strength and challenge- while self-identified 'Futurists, Futures, Foresight' practitioners can as a result offer diverse perspectives, it was very challenging to find practitioners who engage in Futures elements but do not primarily self-identify as a practitioner associated to the field. This for the very reason that they can be from any field, and might not even use the language we are so used to using in the field or in the manner we use it (including the term 'futures'). I attempted to address this searching for practitioners who self-identified using the 14 terms 'systems, alternative systems, speculative fiction author, indigenous futures'.

Despite the attempts made, the interviews and survey participants do reflect a bias towards Futures practitioners, who are male and from the global North.

Having shared my research methodology, process and constraints, I now share the findings with you starting with a abridged historical look at the origins of Futures Studies as a formal field.

CHAPTER 3 LOOKING BACK- THE ORIGINS OF FUTURES STUDIES

Before critiquing the present or commenting on the future, one has to look back and understand the historical context. This is a core Futures Studies principle. This historical analysis is both relevant and necessary in studying who we are as a community of practice today.

So, how did the field of Futures Studies get born and evolve? What were the dominant narratives?

When was it formalized and by whom? Who were the initial practitioners?

Did it have a professional 'code of ethics'? What was its societal purpose, if there even was one? What was the field's original intention?

These were some of the key initial questions that primed this research, in part, realizing I could not explore the potential future legacy of the field (as one of radical inclusivity) without being familiar with the field's history, and how this has framed the fields thinking and tools. Most of the above questions were answered, based on what I discovered, and in not finding a professional code of ethics anywhere took that as a 'no' for that question.

As it would be, both the exercise of researching the history and the results, reiterated the importance of plurality and inclusiveness as something that has been structurally missing in the field.

First the results. In researching the history of the field, it became clear there are many possible ways to frame and present this story. More broadly, Futures Studies as a field is trans/multi/and cross-disciplinary, global in its relevance and construct (though as it will be shared, heavily leaning towards Western Europe and North America in its inclinations), and multi-sectoral in terms of where it is practiced (adapted from Gidley, 2016). Given the broadness, many have studied and presented their take on the fields' history from different angles, and in keeping with this research study being about how the field could be more inclusive, I have chosen to focus on key events, sectors, and practitioners that shaped the field. The available literature on the fields' past that I could find was almost exclusively Western in content and focus, and this is noted as both a reflection of the field's past and as a scope limitation for the research.

I have, for this section, drawn mainly from [1] Eleonora Barbieri Masini and Katrin Gilwald's 1990 paper 'On Futures Studies and Their Societal Context with Particular Focus on West Germany', [2] Ziauddin Sardar's 1993 essay 'Colonizing the future: the 'other' dimension of Futures Studies' which builds on Masini and Gilwald's paper, [3] Hyeonju Son's 2014 paper 'The history of Western Futures Studies: an exploration of the intellectual traditions and three-phase periodization', [4] Wendell Bell's 1996 paper 'An Overview of Futures Studies', and [5] Wendy Schultz's 2015 paper 'A Brief history of Futures'. Each of these authors addresses the fields' 'stages' of development by the following different names: period, approach, phase, path, and wave, respectively.

To start, futures as a broader concept has been a source of study, practice and fascination since the start of human civilization, granted its earlier manifestations were often in the form of divination, as evidenced through ceremonial rituals (religious and spiritual), and then in the longer utilitarian cycles involved in agricultural/hunting rituals. There was the progression of its reference in art, storytelling, and the increasingly scientific/technological lens with the

development of tools to track time, such as calendars and clocks. The progressive incorporation of Futures in history is also parallel to the increase in our desire and ability to plan and control, to increase the chances of favourable outcomes, with the introduction of irrigation, taxes, money management, and wars/conflict (Bell, 1996).

This increased desire to plan and control, and forecast as a way to attain growth is one that becomes more evidenced in the Western origin story of the field. This partly because the idea of the future in the West has developed in conjunction with the idea of [linear, one-directional] progress. Following Comte, the West believes itself to have entered the positive scientific era (postindustrial, consumer, and so forth) while the non-West has remained in the philosophical (speculative) or theological (religious) (Inayatullah, 1993).

While the historical evolution of the field is presented chronologically, two key themes identified in the literature review belonging to the developmental stages or preformalization have been noted. These themes have remained relevant as the field formalized itself into accepted 'stages' of development.

Theme #1 The narrative of domination

As we may imagine, many events led to the ultimate formalization of the field, and they all played a role, like pieces to a puzzle, with literature holding a special place in the history of the field.

While there were fiction works prior to English writer Thomas More's 'Utopia' in 1516, this publication is considered a landmark in both fiction and Futures. More sketched an image of the future as an aspiration, creating an enduring metaphor for an ideal society, an idea that recurs throughout the history of futures, and through this work coining the term 'utopia' as an ideal place (Bell, 1996). There is, however, another historical significance of this work to the field. 'Utopia' took place in newly discovered the Americas, and was written just 24 years after its discovery by Columbus. As Sardar notes 'Utopia' was the first idealization of 'the native' and non-Western cultures, and the start of a pattern where, as he puts it, 'the reality of a known land where people lived according to different worldviews, different models of knowing and being were used as the location for the projection of ideas, which were entirely European in their origin and concern' (Sardar, 1993).

With time, as literature, science and technology continued to develop so did the imaginations and expanding narratives of control and domination (this happening in parallel to European colonization around the world). As Schultz writes, "but that story of progress encourages the development and the acceleration of resource extractive economies, and the development of a recurring argument in the history of futures between images of technology and images of the environment." (2015).

Theme#2 The Western need to intervene, plan, predict, forecast, control

From the perspective of Futures as a field, it is the need for national planning around World War I that paved the way for the field to enter the bureaucratic structures of government, as well as modern society at large. As Bell writes, "...the mass mobilization required complex planning for the future by civilian as well as military leaders, from the allocation of material and personnel in industry, to distribution of food and clothing to the civilian population" (Bell, 1996). Foresight and forecasting, as skills, were born in the U.S. in large part owing to the tremendous amounts of investment in the American war effort, aimed at winning the World Wars.

In the U.S. the fields' integration continued into the Great Depression, with U.S. President Herbert Hoover appointing the Research Committee on Social Trends, led by sociologist

William F. Ogburn, to study social change across American society. In 1933, it released the landmark report 'Recent Social Trends in the United States'. The struggles to pull free markets out of depression encouraged exploration in largesystem forecasting having contributed to the belief that the economic breakdown required broader governmental intervention (Bell, 1996; Schultz, 2015). Then, World War II marked a particularly critical time as the field experienced accelerated experimentation, sophistication and adoption. As Schultz explains, "All the countries embroiled in the war needed grand-scale planning and forecasting...and, the experiences, research questions, and perspectives emerging out of World War II" influenced the role of the field in both postwar Europe, U.S. and the postcolonial world (2015). It is worth noting that it is in this period between World War II and the 1960s that the U.S acquired its status of a global superpower, at the power of its military-industrial complex and it was critical it retains its status (Sardar, 1993).

<u>First Stage- 1945-1960's - Military and governmental</u> <u>national planning</u>

It then comes as no surprise, that the first formally recognized stage of the field, beginning from 1945-1960, was described to be dominated by a 'technical/analytical'

perspective (Masini, Gilwald, 1990). Concerned primarily with military and intelligence research in the U.S. (Sardar, 1993), this period a marked a removal from the previous associations with utopia's, prophecies, religious attitudes, and mystical orientations that are associated to Futures (Son, 2015).

After World War II was a time of great geopolitical significance around the world.

The Europeans utilized the field to re-envision its society, redesign and rebuild their shattered infrastructure after the war (Schultz, 2015) and come to terms with the reality of the ultimate breakdown of the global Western colonial empire that was taking place across vast parts of the world, with over 100 countries becoming independent after the war (and over 70 countries just between 1945-1970).

The pitting of U.S.A and The USSR as global superpowers, with both vying for greater power, and with this in mind the U.S. which had already been experiencing the emergence of military futures thinking saw the creation of its first futures think tanks such as RAND and Hudson Institute in the late 40's strategizing new ways to dominate. As Bell describes, most of what RAND produced was related to futures thinking and included policy alternatives, scenarios, computer

simulations, technological forecasting, warnings, long-range plans, predictions, and new ideas.

Many of the prominent Western Futurists, many from military backgrounds, were sent to work with these newly independent nations, who all at the same time needed to establish their national development plans, constitutions, national borders, etc. Below the more tactical needs were the internal debates on how and why these new nations wanted to take stock of 'the psychological character, economy, society, and culture' of their countries on their terms versus those established by their colonizers, searching and creating their distinctive nationalist images. The involvement of the West, in particular the U.S, in this deeply personal and critical stage of Future studies, as per Sardar's critique, was very much about how to keep the non-Western countries in agreement with Western politics, economic interests and agendas at large and suppressing pluralistic democratic tendencies by identifying trouble spots, political and national movements in these new states that could signal a move towards socialism and the communist bloc, and to map out strategies and programmes for the 'development' of the Third World. (Sardar, 1993). Futures was a tool to ensure it could monitor these countries, and in doing so also where and when possible diminish the global geopolitical relevance

of the USSR. Recolonizing, with one form of colonization in the global South being replaced with yet another.

In commenting on the general attitude towards the non-west by Western governments and futurists, Inayatullah wrote, "We should, then, not be surprised that the non-West exists as the space that must be denigrated, developed and disciplined. It is the space of turmoil and uncertainty that could cause a wrench in the emerging new world order-but how the West has historically created the conditions for this disorder are rarely covered in futurists' briefings of potential disasters ahead" (1993).

<u>Second Stage- 1960s-1970s - Professional</u> <u>associations, and Environmental and social</u> movements

A time period only covered in papers by Masini, Gilwald and Sardar this second phase is noted as the 1960s-early 1970s, where the 'personal/individual' perspective gained influence, and writers such as American Alvin Toffler, French Bertrand de Jouvenel and Austrian Robert Jungk gained prominence in the field, and the time, as Wendell Bell describes, 'concern with the future became Fashionable' (Bell, 1996).

Sardar speaks of the publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring in 1965- a piece that sparked the widespread conversation on environmental concerns, depletion of natural resources, overdevelopment, etc. This leading to the bifurcation in resulting movements- one featuring the technocratic segments of Western society, which used the awareness of the environmental situation to establish the belief that new worlds needed to be explored and colonized (the Moon, Mars), and the other welcoming the alternative 'hippie' environmental movements of the 60's and 70's replete with protests, feminism, sexual liberation, marijuana and Black assertion (Sardar, 1993).

The 60's were also the period of time marking the formal creation of professional Futures societies, with the World Future Society (WFS) in 1966 and the first meeting of an international group that would later be known as the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) happening in Oslo, Norway in 1967 (Bell, 1996); this group met in Kyoto in 1970, and then Paris in 1973 where WSFS was officially formed. Interestingly, Bell describes how WFSF organizers (Johan Galtung, I Bestuzhev-Lada, de Jouvenel, Robert Jungk, and John McHale), were aware of the fact that almost all of the think-tank industry's work at that time was being funded (directly or indirectly) by the armament effort, therefore

serving military and related industrial goals, and this is what motivated them to dedicate the Oslo conference to peace and development.

In my interview with Dr Jim Dator, he emphasized the importance of understanding the originating ideologies behind the organizations, and how this still reflects in their ongoing culture today. While having confusingly similar names, the WFS was started in Washington D.C. by Ed Cornish in 1966, basically as an American business, and their worldview was always U.S. centric; all their meetings were in the U.S (D.C., in particular)., with the sole exception of 1980, when they went to Toronto! The WFSF was, on the other, far more cosmopolitan from the beginning. Its founders questioned the supposed greatness of the Western model in light of its two world wars, tremendous economic depression, the attempted extermination of an entire religious group (Jewish) and other minority groups in Germany, and not to mention their colonial past of stripping people of their culture and resources, and the limiting division of communist or capitalism as the only options available. WFSF was rooted in wanting to look for different ideas about the Future from "marginal" parts and people as well. They made sure to meet in different parts of the world each time and continue to do so. As Dator explained in our interview,

"They wanted to give participants both a chance to see how different "the future" looks in different parts of the world, and give different parts of the world a taste of what Futures Studies could be for them."

Dator also spoke about how by the time the WFSF group met for its second meeting in Kyoto, it was definitely global, with representation from other Asian countries with the caveat, though, that everyone was Western educated and English speaking, so although they were from other cultures they were culturally Westerners [in many ways]; there were some women present, like Eleonora Masini, Barbara Ward, and Magda McHale, however, it was admittedly mostly men and mostly white men at that.

Despite being 'global' the overarching influence of the Western culture as the dominant worldview stands out.

<u>Third Stage- 1970s-1980s- Corporatization of Futures</u>

This period is marked by Masini and Gilwald as the 'organizational/social perspective', and Son describes this phase as 'the creation of the global institution and industrialization' of the field. A period where there was 'a rise

of the worldwide discourse of global futures, the development of normative futures, and the deep involvement of the business community in futures thinking.' Most notably the energy giant Royal Dutch Shell (or 'Shell') began using trend analysis and scenario planning in 1972 and came to be considered the gold standard in corporate futures work, setting the precedent for the many others who followed suit.

This period saw the formation of 'Club of Rome' by Italian industrialist, A Peccei, and the worldwide fame of its first commissioned study 'The Limits to Growth' (LTG). LTG was considered a landmark publication in that it also marked the use of computer simulations and systems-dynamics to make long-term predictions about the ecological and social repercussions of unregulated industrial and economic growth. It was a catalyst sparking interest and concern amongst the public and organizations to come together to address the various issues in the book, and even socialized the term 'global problematique', which described the cluster of interrelated world problems including hunger, environmental degradation, violence, overpopulation, and the increasing alienation of the working classes (Bell, 1996). In parallel, the field was also making its way in other sectors, and Son goes on to identify this phase with when 'Futures Studies and industry ties were growing and futures thoughts had extensively permeated the business decision-making

process' (Son, 2015), or as Masini, Gilwald say, a period where Futures Studies are linked with 'the decisions, values, and objectives of the commissioning organizations' (Masini, Gilwald, 1990). Sardar highlights the rise of OPEC and the resultant scare of energy shortages in the West, and the Iranian revolution with its anti-Western stance, as instrumental factors feeding into the emergence of serious Futures Studies backed by more governments and corporations (Sardar, 1993).

This stage seemed to have a more clearly delineated social, academic, and corporate identity, with efforts, attention and work happening in all three, but with the introduction of information technology, biotechnology, and new forms of agriculture, the balance was tipped towards capitalism and a new high-tech form of futures applications to maintaining the Western agendas.

Fourth Stage- 1990s- early 2000's- Strategic Planning and Forecasting

Son characterizes this phase as having the neoliberal view with fragmentation within the field. A phase where the Futures work is heavily 'confined to the support of strategic planning, and hence experiencing an identity crisis and loss of its earlier status of humanity-oriented futures' (Son, 2015). Sardar writes, "A great deal of foresight work is concerned with 'scenario planning', which, in my opinion, is devouring Futures Studies. Within some businesses, corporations and government institutions scenarios are seen as the only way of exploring the future. Future studies thus becomes synonymous with 'strategic foresight' or 'scenario planning' with a clear emphasis on winning over others, instead of exploring and developing creative, novel and inclusive solutions" (2010). In my interview with Sardar, he went on to affirm that this observation still holds stating, "Foresight consultants' have really come to the fore of the field, while activists have [unfortunately] receded."

In response to Sardar's 1993 critique, Slaughter reflecting on the history of the field wrote, "I have acknowledged the role of strategic and geopolitical interests in the field, both at its inception and later. I regret that such interests are very much with us. They remain too powerful, distorting agendas and misrepresenting what futures work in the wider human interest might mean. I, too, have criticized ethnocentricity in futures work, particularly in the dominant, empirical (and largely non-critical) US tradition. Like Sardar, I am routinely outraged by the bland acceptance of certain cultural and ideological biases. This is not an ideal world, and the

developing futures field probably still has some way to go" (Slaughter, 1993).

He further stated, "It is true that futures work can too easily, and too often, aid the already powerful in their assault, upon the planet and its non-Western peoples. If there is to be a countervailing force strong enough to call the bluff of anodyne, corporate, Western, science-and-technology-led accounts of the future, then futures people of different backgrounds and cultures need to locate common interests and work together."

To that point, while the Western and capitalistic influence on the field still appears to be strong, that is not to say the field has not been advancing on other areas and agendas. Since 1990's the field has been increasing voicing the need to decolonize itself, and to focus on pluralism and inclusivity and engagement with multiple worldviews. As a result this period is also marked by the intent to non-westernize the field with the introduction of methodologies such as Integral theory by Ken Wilber in 1996 and, most notably, Causal Layered Analysis and Six Pillars by Dr Sohail Inayatullah in 1998 and 2008, respectively, or Verge, an ethnographic futures framework, by Dr Richard Lum and Michele Bowman in 2004. Since then other methods have been tried, tested

and introduced, but the popularity and adoption of a method is not just based on its quality and thoughtfulness, but also on how often we read about it, see it being used, and how.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Prior to researching the evolution of the field, I knew the field was most likely formalized in the West by the West due to a lack of diverse authors in the formal Futures Studies curriculum I had been exposed to, but I didn't know the history of the field. I, remaining hopeful, kept searching (mostly online) for the diverse (cultural, gender, etc.) historical examples that, in my mind, must have sown the seeds for the present day field of Futures Studies (looking at time periods long before its stronghold as a military and national planning tool in the 1900's). Using keywords like "strategic foresight, foresight, futures, etc" to search, I was in retrospect not surprisingly confused, frustrated and disappointed to only keep finding a largely exclusive set of Western examples, references, and names making it appear that Futures (as a noun) was both the single handed product of the West and also of most relevance to them (versus the rest of the world).

I remember this phrase in Sardar's essay, "But this is exactly the point: availability [of references and material] is a function of visibility" (1993).

I would add it also a function of knowing what to look for in today's time of "internet searches and social media". I knew of the Iroquois philosophy of 'The Seventh Generation Principle' and feel it intrinsically emulated the concepts of 'Strategic Foresight', making the point that many of these concepts have, in fact, been in practice a lot longer than what I was finding in my literature review otherwise. My instinct of knowing that other examples, outside the fairly recent Western context, also stems from my being of South-Asian Indian origin where I know my ancient cultural history must have countless examples of various Futures principles- but it is, however, a matter of being able to find them, and find them documented in English that changes everything. It is glaringly obvious that despite all this access to information, what we see is not necessarily a reflection of 'what is or was' but rather a reflection of a number of research boundaries, such as-

- how knowledge within a field is created and by whom,
- where this knowledge is available and how much of it is freely accessible (versus behind paywalls, for example),

- if we restrict our searches largely to the web and research journals, then the 'keywords' we know to use, and the search engines themselves control what we see (as a result of their own business models and drivers that have nothing to do with the research objectivity; in solidarity to this point I switched from Google to DuckDuckGo for this research study),
- I think it's worth noting that much of the historical period covered in this last section was before there was internet or, at least, widespread internet, so academic journals and publishing authors had even more weight, power and influence as 'the' sources of knowledge. Their discretion directing what we have for history.
- the language we are seeking information in (in my case, English), and acknowledging the limits of what I might find, and not find included as a result. I do not think I can emphasize enough how much our mainstreaming of English eclipses access to knowledge that has been produced world over in other languages and cultures (verbal and otherwise). When I read this chapter I realize the importance of Edward Carr's suggestion to study the historian before we study 'the' history.

These are many (other) factors impacting what we see- some intentionally designed to constrict and restrict the whole picture of 'what is or was' to tell us a particular narrative.

Why does this matter? And, why does this matter with regard to this research study?

To me, what is known and associated with the field matters because the Future is a universally shared time and place, one that everyone, arguably should have a claim to imagine and create, and it's our fields commitment (amongst other things) to help people/companies/society navigate towards understanding what their preferred futures are to begin with. When our practitioners concentrated so heavily in a certain geography and a certain culture, we can start to see our practitioners limited worldviews would critically influence the epistemological and ontological considerations of our field. It is also worth noting that there are more individual 'futures' in the global South than the North, in absolute numbers, both by current population numbers and the expected growth in the near future (more on this in Chapter 5). So, given the growing influence of the global south on our collective futures one can understand the importance of inclusivity and plurality in the field (both in terms of its practitioners and its worldviews and epistemologies), and the severe and long lasting impact of not embodying this for us all.

In summary, the evolution of the field had seen it go from being a subject of divination, to one of predictions and forecasting. In this collective stage of development, the epistemological and cultural worldview was characterized by the Western (largely American) corporatist, empiricist, machine-led view of the future that comprises the Western hegemony. Perhaps the most egregious and persistent theme across all stages was that of colonization. Using (Western) images of the future, colonization has over time remained, but its form has changed- from rooted in geography to rooted in our minds across our culture, intellect, history, imagination and emotion. Save Sardar and Ziauddin, the history of the field is marked by an absence of prolific (published, widely known) non-Western authors, and a notable absence of voices from various socially underrepresented groups, including women, other genders, and cultures. I was often finding these underrepresented voices through mentions in papers by Western male academics and editors, only further emphasizing the stronghold of these gatekeepers. But the push to pluralize and open itself as a field was, by the end of the 90's, coming loudly from those particularly minority practitioners within the field, and by the external forces of globalization.

CHAPTER 4 LOOKING IN THE MIRROR- FUTURES STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Having looked at the Western historical development of the field in last section, I now explore how the field has evolved and presented itself in more contemporary times. Unlike my research looking at the past in Chapter 1, I was unable to find a concentration of academic articles that agreed upon a fifth stage for Futures Studies as a field. As such, for purposes of this research study, I define the "Present" stage as being from the early 2000s till now (2019), and, drawing from expert interviews, personal experiences, and articles from different Futures journals (Futures (Elsevier), World Futures Review (Sage Journals) and Futures Studies Journal), I discuss the role of the Futures field and its evolution. I call this stage:

<u>Fifth Stage- early 2000s till The present – The</u> <u>era of complexity</u>

Referencing Son's 2014 paper again where Futures Studies in the early 2000s was described as having the neoliberal view with fragmentation within the field. A phase where the Futures work is heavily 'confined to the support of strategic planning, and hence experiencing an identity crisis and loss of its earlier status of humanity-oriented futures' (Son, 2015).

Underneath this continued neo-liberalization of Futures Studies is the playing out of a confluence of several other global factors that have lead us to where we are today, and it is for this analysis I choose to start back at the year 2000.

To begin at the year 2000 means to begin with the Y2K/millennium bug along with fragile dot com bubble that had got everyone thinking about the turn of the century and what that could mean if the bug was indeed real (Gary, 1998). Given the panic and uncertainty of what a failed Y2K could mean globally, companies and governments world over undertook understanding and planning for contingencies and possibilities, and it is said the demand for futurists soared. Rosen explains the anxiety:

"As New Year's Eve 2000 approached, it became clear that Y2K had evolved beyond a software hiccup. Outside of war and natural disasters, **it represented one of the few**

times society seemed poised for a dystopian

future...As a result, many newspaper stories were a mixture of practical thinking with a disclaimer: More than likely nothing will happen ... but if something does happen, we're all screwed." (Rossen, 2018)

As, Dr Jim Dator, in his 1999 talk titled "Y2K as a Futurist's Dream" includes,

"Why is Y2K so important to futurists?...Y2K gives us something we have never had before: evidence of how humans react to information about future events which will happen in a very concrete way on and following a very clearly defined point in time. We never have that. All of our forecasts (not predictions) are more or less vague. Consider "Overpopulation," or "Global Warming." Or "A Meteor Attack." (Dator, 1999)

A dystopia of another kind, the early 2000s were also marked (and marred) by 9/11 and the start of 'War on Terrorism' with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. In the U.S., the 'War on Terror' has remained big business, and with regards to the government [and defence, in particular] the second largest industry sector [after for-profits], by dollars and jobs, where foresight work is done. Keeping with the origins of the field, the government and defense have the

longest history of any industry that formally looks to the future, and this has not changed much (Foresight University, 2017).

For the U.S. and the rest of the world, the 'War on Terror' also marked the entry of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Ladin, and Taliban in our everyday vocabulary, and the general societal rise of Islamophobia. It also started another wave of significant geopolitical upheaval in our world with the take down of Saddam Hussein, and Muammar Gaddafi, and Osama Bin Laden.

From their ashes, we the emergence of citizen-led democracy in Africa, with the start of the Arab Spring in Tunisia that triggered a chain of revolutions in other Arab countries.

There was a global (hopeful) fervour over the possible liberated futures for Africa, for new democracies and the power of youth and social media to bring out social change in our world. Around the same time, in other parts of the world, particularly the U.S., we saw the Occupy movement take shape, followed more recently (since November 2018) by the 'Gilet jaunes' or 'Yellow vest' movement in France. These movements, all a product of social disenfranchisement, tied to the fight against social and economic inequity (the anti 1%) and the perpetuation of elitism, classism and

plutocracies and the lack of 'real democracy' around the world (Kroll, 2011; Day, 2011, Lichfield, 2019).

The current global gap between rich and poor has been widening, and doing so at faster rates, setting the scene for systems fuelled by powerful plutocracies, increased racial divides and domino effects on health, education, and intergenerational wealth that will be felt for generations to come (Global Inequality). Economic inequality and racial wealth divides are mutually reinforcing (and broken) outcomes of the current economic system (Collins, Asante-Muhammad, Hoxie, Terry, 2019), thus highlighting the ever critical need for us (in Futures Studies) to consider our study of trends and signals and drivers from an intersectional lens (i.e. the added realities of people from different races, socioeconomic classes, and genders).

More broadly, it is worth noting that the field of Futures Studies appears virtually invisible in these and other social (and inherently political) movements, and perhaps this is not a surprise given the majority of practitioners are working with corporations and governments (the very institutions these social movements are revolting to reform). The rare interconnectedness of Social movements and Futures Studies, or Feminist movements and Futures Studies,

have been written about by many. Markus Schulz, from the New School for Social Research, made a case for Sociology and Futures Studies noting, "against the claims of the 'end of history,' Futures Studies [leveraging the rich toolbox of movements research] can help to carve out spaces for reflective decisions and expand the realm of the political (Schulz, 2016)"; Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling made a similar case in 2011 for Feminist movements and Futures Studies needing to learn from each other in ways that made both stronger, and allow to base political discussions for diverse futures on. This could not be more relevant or necessary right now we see a global political (and patriarchal) assault on women's rights over their own bodies. Despite the transdisciplinary nature of Futures Studies, collaborations between other fields is still rare. While I address the almost non-existent culture of collaboration in chapter 6, the invisibility of Futures Studies in the social change conversation was brought up by Dr. Cindy in our interview. Speaking to where she feels the field can make a mark (and needs to make a mark), she said,

"The field can make a mark in social change.

Instead of always looking at things from the angles of technology and economics, which is the corporate world.

There is compelling evidence that we are going to move beyond that economic/corporate paradigm and move into

issues that keep coming up such as mindfulness, holistic thinking, and systems thinking where you actually look at the underpinnings of how things change vs. just looking at money as the overriding factor in decision making. This is hard because the entire industrial era was so amazingly persuasive and compelling in making people behave in a particular way, the cog in the machine, which was often inhumane and unhealthy, in other words, short-termism."

Our social discourse and where we are investing our energies and money is, undoubtedly, influenced by politics. Politically, in a matter of eight years, we experienced the monumental election of President Barack Obama in the U.S. and his narrative of hope and change, followed by the (also monumental) Brexit decision in the U.K., and the winning of Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. election with his narrative of nationalism and divisiveness (Thompson, 2016); both marking the ushering in of a 'global anti-globalist movement' (Murdoch, 2018) and, in Trump's case, the heavy tilt towards populist and nationalist governments around the world. While some Futures practitioners anticipated both events, the field was largely just as blindsided as many others. Would we have had a different position had we been more embedded in community?

The present state of our political environment, however, would not be complete without mention of the monumental influence and role of our behemoth I.T infrastructure and Silicon Valley. Most of us today would admit our lives, and society, have been radically altered in the past 20 years with the entrance of Google, Facebook, iPhones, Twitter, Uber, etc.- initially welcomed with open arms and a sense of excitement, now shrouded by a general sense of distrust, and disillusionment around data breaches, filter bubbles, infringement of user privacy and constant tech surveillance. Many political campaigns around the world, most notably Trump's, are spoken of in the same breadth with claims to Russian interference using social media ads and fake news. Social media might only have been in our lives for 15 years, yet it has already gone full circle from being seen as the great saviour of democracy to its ultimate suppressor (Leetaru, 2019). Despite its influential power, as Frewen shared in our interview, "nobody in the field was talking about social media or social networking as a possibility (e.g. Facebook) even as little as three years out from when these tools came in and changed our world". Being blindsided might appear to be of particular concern to a field like Futures Studies, but is not a mark of incompetence. It is a humble reminder that while we can study trends, understand broader possibilities, and forecast, what lies ahead is not known. The future is an open game, despite whatever we are told and made to believe.

Even though we know not all technology is bad, we can agree the tech giants are stifling competition and getting more hegemonic, powerful, opaque, and wealthy by the day (referring to Google, Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, and Apple). Instead of seeing technology as one of the many possible tools that could be a part of some of our futures scenarios, these companies are ensuring we believe it is an 'inevitability', a guaranteed prefix to any and all of our imagined possible futures scenarios. The hyper-technological vision of everything digital with the Internet of Things extending into 'The Singularity' (a point in time when all the advances in technology, particularly in artificial intelligence, will lead to machines that are smarter than human beings) is rooted in the predominantly white, male, Silicon Valley mindset. There should be no mincing of words- this controlling of our narratives is an attempt to colonize our imagination and our future.

Putting aside the discussion of technology's increasingly tenuous relationship with ethics and equity, when we observe the current investment and focus on technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, Internet of Things, blockchain, and machine learning, can we imagine being able to live I.T.-free in the future if that is what we want? Do these technology-laden images of the future even resonate with the

majority of the non-West (let alone with many in the West)? Do our preferences, as consumers, have any power? They most certainly do, unless we already believe we have none; or if we confuse the loud headlines as a sign of majoritarian will; or if we believe the forces of technology are too strong, too irreversible. It is in truly understanding what people around the world would want in their preferred futures, not because they think it is inevitable, that makes Futures Studies pose such a threat to these (and other) colonizing attempts.

In terms of Futures Studies practitioners, while there are many working for Silicon Valley perpetuating this narrative that both aligns with the fields Western origins, and the West's general obsession with science and technology, there are many others who are vocal critics claiming Futures Studies has itself been 'colonized by the Western technology-based visions', "a hyper-technological and scientific orientation of mainstream Futures Studies. A disproportionate focus on the fields of economics and international politics in Futures Studies and on the impact of new technologies" (Gunnarsson-Östling, 2011).

The technology fuelled pace of change, innovation, and 'disruption' has accelerated exponentially in the past two decades, and the sense of chaotic complexity,

unsustainability, and shorter time cycles are becoming common social culture.

When speaking to me, Frank Spencer reiterated the need to "to really see complexity as our friend, not a form of chaos", but we know the current pace has caused companies, for one, to be deeply uncomfortable with uncertainty - it is after all a matter of survival for them. While this perspective does not align with the long view advocated by Futures Studies, we continue to see the rise in short-term trend hunting, forecasting and scenario generating to cater to this new fast-paced and demanding corporate scape. This matters because how corporations think about time, the futures, and their priorities carries undeniable influence and power. As Tanja Hichert discussed in our interview,

"Not only do corporates have an enormously huge amount of resources, but they have a massive role to play-they are the owners, curators, and suppliers of 90% of the things we do and consume. They are the colonizers of 'now'. This role of doing differently and thinking differently needs to involve them. Every decision that gets taken now, the very essence of everything right now, is going to matter a lot."

Hichert spoke about the conflict between our continued

double-digit growth goals and the environmental crisis. Capitalism has, after all, created the ability to affect the world far more profoundly and far more destructively than any previous human system, so much so that it can be held responsible for the Anthropocene (the Earth's most recent geologic time period as being human-influenced, or anthropogenic, based on overwhelming global evidence that atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes are now altered by humans.) It is now noted that capitalism so extends the effects of human activity on the environment that previous quantitative shifts have become a qualitative change (Graham-Leigh E, 2017).

The interconnectedness of extreme weather events fuelled by climate change (fuelled by our human activity), and the alarming state of our environment (and environmental degradation), cannot be ignored in 2019. As Frewen reminded me in our interview,

"There is very little that is not complex anymore - we have to account for that complexity and adaptability- it's a different way of thinking. But that's not the way people want to think about the future- they want to think about it as something known and that is the colonization."

Unfortunately, despite the increasing awareness of the human cost and ecological crisis caused by our capitalistic economic growth models- the political and corporate action needed in offering concrete alternatives is still lagging.

Public dialogue (protests, movements) about our environmental crisis have caught on and expanded, and the sustainability movement is reflected increasingly in the Futures field (sustainability/climate movement having been a part of its DNA since the '60s). It is worth noting U.K (parliament) and Ireland (government) have just become the first two countries to declare a climate emergency (BBC News), but we will have to wait and see what that actually means. It is also worth asking ourselves as a field, how many of us, hired as consultants by corporations raise the environmental concerns in our futures scenarios and strategic implications when our paycheques depend on it. In speaking to this in our interview Hichert shared,

"I choose who I work with based on the impact I can have, but the conversations I have with other people tell me their energies come from and through who is paying their bills. There are very few people who can make their living doing this [Futures] work unless with a large consulting firm, etc. We have to make a living, and work with corporations [who pay].'

That said, many Futures practitioners write about our environmental crisis, and, as confirmed many times in my interviews, it is also one of the few areas where we also see a growing innovative, creative, activist, and cross-disciplinary Futures presence. This more creative take on talking about our environment is certainly reflected in my own (collaborative) Futures installations such as Nature Deficit Disorder Clinic 2067, as well as NaturePod.

This is in part due to the simultaneous expansion of Futures Studies with the adjacent design disciplines of Speculative Design, Design Futures, Human Centered Design and Design Thinking, which are utilized by Futures practitioners, democratizing the field from a largely academic and corporate field to one that is far more creative and accessible to the general public. In fact, the merging of our field with these and other practices (such as sustainability, innovation and risk management) is a growing reality that both Daniel Riveong and Spencer spoke about to me in our interviews. The resultant merging of toolkits and subsuming of our field into these other disciplines is as Spencer said, "something that really should make us happy. This is how the field becomes 'sticky' and catches up."

As all Futures practitioners affirmed in the interviews, we have come a long way as a field in the past 20 years- we are

increasingly diverse as a field, not just in our disciplinary make up, but also geographic, cultural, and gender representation. That said, there is much more work to be done, and as I was reminded time and time again, we must be critical of how we view 'diversity and inclusion'. As Daniel Riveong commented, "Obviously, there is a lack of diversity [in our field] purely in terms or representation, but that does not mean different perspectives and worldviews." Diverse worldviews are what allow us to challenge dysfunctional systems, and understanding them is of critical importance to our field. But worldviews are not visible, they are tied to our internal belief systems, and to understand them requires we as practitioners understand our participants and their context intimately. This is a challenge when we as a field are primarily made up of consultants used to going in and out of locations and projects, and of particular importance as we do more international work. As Riveong commented on all this in our interview he said,

"Representation of diversity [in worldviews] needs to come from the local context, not just diaspora or consultants and immigrants from Western countries. The impact of our current non-local model is the lack of full systems thinking approach as you are only looking at it from one perspective. Besides knowing the mechanics of working in an Asian city like Bangkok, for example, are the cultural factors like cultural values, etc. The social knowledge is more important than the technical elements. Everything is happening within the social context, and that's what I feel is missing. Consultants jump-in and out and are not going that deep. That's one of the issues of Foresight work."

The 21st century, as I tried to evidence above, has been a time of contradiction- an emotional yoyo- and in the past couple years just as negativity has shrouded over us, we started to see the spectacular rise of communities all over the world demanding our governments and institutions decolonize, and indigenize. We are hearing these conversations on a daily basis. Commenting on this trend of the shifting dynamics of power from institutions to people in our interview, Aarathi Krishnan said,

"People are now tired of the status quo, that's why we are seeing this shift [globally]- and my sense is that this will continue and get louder and stronger because those of us who have been left out are frankly quite sick of it. Any organizations or group that aren't paying attention to these shifting of power, and are not shifting to include others will find themselves, I suspect, out of the loop and out of touch because they are representing the needs of the privileged" -

There is also mass momentum, while not formally organized, of groups previously marginalized from mainstream discourse and culture, also using creative avenues of science fiction and entertainment to tell their stories (dystopic, utopic, hopeful, or other) and to tell them in the future tense. People are taking control of the future narratives they want to be heard and seen in, and this is evident in the powerful rise of speculative fiction, design fiction, and the fragmentation of science fiction from a anglo, maledominated genre to one filled with Afrofuturism, LGBTQ Futures, Latinx Futures, Indigenous Futures, and other Ethnocentric fiction sub-genres (more on this in chapter 6).

In her <u>Tedx talk</u>, Mohawk multi-media artist, Skawennati speaks about the power of indigenous communities seeing themselves as defined by themselves in these works of science fiction. She says, "We are here and we no longer need to discuss our very survival." These stories are as she says, not about surviving, but thriving.

So, amidst the rise in racism, hate crimes and phobias by dominant groups we too are seeing a growing camaraderie amongst those excluded. But, interestingly enough, this rise in fiction is not formally under the field of Futures, and many authors don't identify themselves as part of the field, but rather as entrants from Science Fiction and literature more broadly. Perhaps this is further reflecting for us as a field. What does this tell us about how inclusive we are?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

I think the field is in the midst of a paradigm shift; a cultural awakening of who can play in Futures conversations is redefining the identity of the field as we speak. But we need more collective voices and more actions.

As I look at the present I see how the history of the field has brought us here. The Western origin and predominance of western academics and practitioners had shaped the fields epistemological framing- everything from its theoretical perspective to its tools, and where most practitioners practice, and on what subject matters. I would say, the myopic Western, capitalistic/technology lens still has a stronghold on the field, and now when people are desperate for more inclusive narratives and stories they are creating them when they don't see them, and the Futures Studies field, which I would argue was most poised to lead this movement, is not visible - it's our artists, authors, and activists who are filling this void.

But Futures Studies is still here, in fact, it's growing in popularity. Do we understand how our history might continue to follow us forward if we don't learn from its lesson?

Why it matters: The academic context

To grasp the full scope and depth of the (historic) colonization of Futures Studies as an academic field, Sardar had asked us first understand the 'well-established pattern of disciplinary evolution' and how 'intellectual spaces are created, governed, and defended in Western scholarship' (1993).

He explained how citations and co-citations of academic works establish reputations, and how publications/journals, indexing and abstracting services collectively work to shape the boundaries of scholarships within a field. Once established as seminal pieces they show up more in our algorithm backed searches (following the logic that the more we see something or someone associated to a field, the more important and relevant we perceive it to be). Thus the initial authors of a field, and I would argue present/continuing authors also, have a very important and influential role to play in framing what content is important to read and through their citations suggesting which other articles and

authors should be too. As a non-academic, I had never thought about this before, and it feels like the most basic 'aha' realization about something that has such overarching implications.

But as I learnt in my interviews, the real power to dictate what we read, at least in published works, lies with the publisher and not the author.

In speaking to his experiences in the '70s and '80s, Dr Jim Dator explained in our interview, not only did publishers require everything having to be in English, they asked it to be in 'standard' English. But in the publication of Proceedings from conferences of the WFSF that he was responsible for, if a text from a non-native English speaker was understandable as written, he did not change that into "proper English", and so he explained no "respectable" publisher would publish it. As a consequence, they had to publish the Proceedings themselves which limited their dissemination but allowed each author to speak in their own idiom. Sadly, this is not just a challenge relegated to the past but in many respects one that is very much alive today. International authors still face many challenges in getting published in Western journals.

In a more contemporary example, when I was speaking to Science Fiction and Fantasy (SFF) writer and editor, LeKesha Lewis, she spoke openly about how (the largely white) publishing community is seeking more black speculative fiction narratives, but focusing on ones that exotify West African mythologies, pushing many diasporic authors to dig into their African roots in a way that may not be authentic. In fact, in a way that might disadvantage African authors on the continent who do identify with these narratives, but might not write in English or just have different narrative structures. She concluded by asking, "Are we colonizing the past to make something sell?"

Then at a different point in our conversation, Lewis spoke about the sharp increase in black representation in books, but not authorship. That is, non-black authors are writing. more black characters because they understand this is in demand. I think this is a really valuable distinction for us in the Futures field to be conscious of- particularly in light of decolonization and inclusive futures gaining momentum in

the field. We might feel the pressure to 'diversify' our work, but it has to come from those communities, not our understanding or assumptions of them. Both these conversations and Sardar's paper have made me far more critically reflective of available literature on two levels.

First, they make the point that when diversity is not consciously allowed or sought by a field (in terms of the plurality of content, perspectives, and authors), the established systems of who we publish, index, abstract, along with how we cite and reference might keep us in the vicious cycle of continuously colonizing ourselves.

Second, our field's literature also allows us to gauge if we are actually allowing for a multiplicity of perspectives in our work (from the communities we are working in), thus, contributing to building a truly inclusive and equitable world or if we are just trying to squeeze our inherent global plurality through a sieve of Western constructs and ideology.

Why it matters: The Professional practice context

Since Sardar's piece in 1993, I would argue while the field remains largely dominated by Western practitioners, things are changing, albeit slowly. More people are now discovering the field of Futures Studies, and I imagine change is not far behind at least in how it might be applied in the real world. Otherwise, we'll just be taken over by the newer fields that appeal to the general public, without any consideration to what we have to offer that's different- which to me is the tying of Future scenarios to systems and ways we can actuate those images of the futures.

It's important to note, that it's not just about opening up the field beyond mostly Western practitioners, but that this expansion in the field and its real-world application, must in parallel be accompanied by a critical review of the pre-existing mental models that influenced its development, and the resultant frameworks and tools- with an eye on both editing and expanding their purview and cultural applicability. This larger need is an integral part of the Lotus framework that is discussed in Chapter 8.

After all, as I make the case in the next chapter, despite the frameworks having been created with little diversity in their authorship, to effect real change where it's needed most, they [our frameworks, methods, tools] must be transportable from the comforts of D.C., Paris, and London (where they were created) to cities like Dhaka, Lagos, and Dar-Es-Salaam (where they are most needed). Otherwise, Futures Studies

might risk following the path Development studies did for so long, unsuitably pushing the western agenda and despite the best of intentions, further excluding groups of people.

Plurality and alternative futures matters even more in the 21st century as it is becoming increasingly clear that these celebrated [western] ideologies of constant growth, modernization, and development as the path to the singular promised future of wealth and material abundance for all, are broken. And, broken on many levels- in its blind assumption that this is what everyone wants, in the lie that it is even possible to be had (economically or ecologically), and in the cover-up of its true cost to humans and the earth. Suffice it to say, we need alternatives.

In summary, by naming different events and movements, I shared where the Futures Studies field has evolved, adapted and reinforced itself in contemporary times, and where it has remained invisible. Building on the present, next I share some trends which tell us about where trends tell us we are going, and make the case for why this reinforces the immediate need for Futures Studies to be more representative and inclusive, or in the words of Dr Dator prepare for the consequences.

CHAPTER 5 LOOKING FORWARD- POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURES STUDIES

"Always ask what's next. And, remember, the Futurists curse: "May your dreams come true, and if you aren't ready for it, prepare to be worse off."

- Dr. Jim Dator

Having looked at the past, and the fields more contemporary development, I spend this chapter focusing on a select number of future-facing global needs as they pertain to cities, demographics, economic superpowers and environmental vulnerabilities. I make the case that our world is shifting from its western foci to that of the global South and that our fields greatest utility will be centred in the overwhelming immediate needs of groups of people that have remained largely underrepresented (or invisible) from our images of the futures. This begs the question, how can our field, with its western preponderance then be poised for adaptability, relevance and impact in a world where the critical future needs will lie largely in Africa and Asia? What would be the implications of 'business as usual', applying the corporatist, empiricist, machine-led view of the future that comprises the western hegemony? 38

Tokyo has consistently been the most populous city in the world since 1965, prior to which it was New York for much of the 20th century; it's noted a century before that it was London, and Baghdad a millennium before that (Galka, 2016).

Today, the largest cities in the world are called megacities, which the UN defines as having at least 10 million residents. Of the 33 megacities we have today, 27 are in the global South, and so are all but one of the next 15 new cities estimated to join this list by 2035; and, with history repeating itself in a way, Baghdad is one of them.

Just India, China and Nigeria alone are to account for 35% of the total urban population growth between 2018 and 2050, and in more global terms, from just 30% of the world population having been urban in 1950, we sit at 55% as of 2018 and are set to reach 68% by 20504- the number of people living in cities by 2050 being almost equal to today's world population!

⁴ UN World Urbanisation Prospects, 2018 revision

As Dr Cindy Frewen, futures practitioner and architect, expressed her views on the global South in our interview, she said-

"The changes in India and China will be dwarfed by the changes the changes coming in Africa. The shocks there are yet to come, and the size of the continent and numbers are so huge."

Increased urbanization, particularly in the global south, is often accompanied by lack of structural planning and then a slew of interconnected and systemic problems such as poverty, crumbling infrastructure, crime, disease, and a heavy burden on already very limited resources such as drinking water, clean air, food.

From a purely urban needs standpoint, given what is at stake, the importance of foresight and Futures Studies in these countries and cities necessitates being highlighted. Each decision when shaping these cities bearing long-term implications and complications for its residents.

Taking one step from urbanization, and looking at global 39

population growth and demographics, I limit the scope to a few key points, which all tie back to potential needs of focus for Futures practitioners

1. Despite a decline in fertility rates around the world, the growth in urbanization is accompanied by a growth in world populations, which the UN estimates will reach 9.8 billion by 2055; with the exception of the U.S., virtually all population increases are projected to be taking place in the world's poorer countries which are least able to absorb these increases (Mirkin, 2014). From 2017 to 2050, it is expected that half of the world's population growth will be concentrated in just nine countries: India, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, Ethiopia, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Uganda and Indonesia (ordered by their expected contribution to total growth)6.

How might these populations view the future, and what do they want or see as their images of the future (preferred and otherwise)? How do their cultural, historical, and social norms and realities play a role in this personal perception of futures for them? Are our frameworks and practitioners

⁵ UN World Urbanization Prospects, 2018 revision

⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017

prepared and familiar with these geographies, histories, societies and cultures?

2. In terms of demographics, by age, the global south again leads the global North, with a younger population

With the global south experiencing such increases in its working-age populations there are really high stakes at play. There is also an opportunity and need to support these countries in channelling their resources in empowering their youth in ways that can contribute to improved education levels, living conditions, ecological sustainability, and higher satisfaction/quality of life, and, yes, also economic growth (although given our general global emphasis is on economic growth, I am suggesting we look broader than just this).

As we know, many of these countries in the global south have been plagued by conflict and fragility, and political instability; also known for a tendency to make shorter-term decisions given these conditions - but, as we know from our Futures work, just because that has been the case in the past, does not mean there are no other possibilities for the future. Without downplaying the magnitude of the situation and the complexity involved, how might Futures studies play a more

visible and wider role in contributing to a transition in these countries such that the younger demographics are part of the change for the future- as a boon versus a crisis?

3. We cannot overlook the impact of western dominant narratives of capitalism and globalization with regard to this younger and booming population growth in the global South.

While it is easier for us to focus on the population growth (in terms of absolute numbers and/or age), I would also like to draw our attention to another point- with broader global and ecological implications- and that is how this younger and growing population will act as added consumers, with a particular focus on the scale and nature of their consumption. Historically, citizens (even urbanites) in lowand middle-income countries have historically consumed little per capita, when compared to the global North. Cities in low-income nations emit less than one tonne CO2-equivalent per person per year, compared to the six to 30 tonnes CO2equivalent per person per year in higher income countries (Cumming, 2016). With a rising middle class, access to the internet, cable t.v., and the generally interconnected world we live in, what impact do the dominant western hegemonic narratives of capitalism and globalization have here? If capitalism could have its way, these countries would be seen purely from the lens of 'emerging markets', and its citizens a

part of it 'future trends', i.e. consumers waiting to be discovered. The real issue is if capitalism were to have its way, and all these people would want the same lifestyles (at the same pace) considered normal in the global North, we know we could not handle it. We know the argument is not about their right, but the planetary limits of everyone wanting more, and no one wanting to concede. As Gandhi is quoted saying, "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed." Concession might not be the right debate, but rather the critical and imminent need for a paradigm shift in how we view prosperity, growth, ownership and capitalism. How might Futures practitioners play a role in this necessary and critical conversation, looking to our future generations to make the case?

4. Stepping away from population growth and its increased pressure on our ecological limits is the question of climate change and environmental vulnerabilities. Higher-income countries, with their higher consumption, have contributed the most to climate change, yet as a study published in the journal 'Nature Scientific Reports' shows, more than half of the highest-emitting countries rank among the least vulnerable to climate change and nearly two-thirds of the countries with low or moderate emissions are the ones most acutely vulnerable to the effects' (Worland, 2016). The

majority of these nearly 'two-thirds of the countries with low or moderate emissions' are in the global South. We know, however, that this is not just a problem of the South, but one that will directly implicate the North, both in terms of financial aid and resources required when natural disasters occur, but also in terms of migration and immigration. Climate change is expected to cause migration of up to 200 million worldwide by 2050 (McDonnell, 2019).

The pressing needs for reducing our environmental footprint and climate change related resiliency cannot be emphasized enough. It offers us all, and I argue Futures practitioners, in particular, an exceptional opportunity and imperative to be a part of this process, both in the global North and South.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

As I researched and wrote this chapter, I reflected on my personal experiences and connections to the global South and wanted and give them a voice- there are things I feel frustrated about (some of which are the inspiration for this study), the things that I feel optimistic about.

The optimism is focused on observing, learning, understanding and sharing with other practitioners. There

are many organizations and people in the various global South countries who *understand* the widespread and complex systemic and social implications of these demographic shifts (even if they don't know or use these terms) and have a vested interest in wanting to work towards giving their communities a chance at thriving and flourishing. They are also most likely not associated with our field formally, and we need to actively seek them out, or, at least, just be curious and open to seeking them out!

It was pure serendipity and curiosity that led me to discover Ashish Kothari, an Indian environmentalist and activist, and then the book he had most recently co-edited w/ K.J. Joy (one of my interviewees) called "Alternative Futures: India Unshackled". In reading a 1975 paper by Dr Dator, I saw the mention of the Indian sociologist, Rajni Kothari- and in seeking more Indian names in Futures work- I immediately searched for him online. It was a series of clicks online that led me to his son Ashish Kothari's page, and ultimately this book! On finding out more about the book, I realized it was available for free download, and both editors were open to being reached out to. Jumping on this opportunity I managed to secure an interview with Joy, co-editor, within a few days. Speaking to Joy I learnt about the 'Vikalp Sangam' process, which in English means 'Alternatives' Confluence'.

Inspired by the question "As the world hurtles towards greater ecological devastation, inequalities, and social conflicts, the biggest question facing us is: are there alternative ways of meeting human needs and aspirations, without trashing the earth and without leaving half of humanity behind?" - Vikalp Sangam has a website that represents the efforts (of an open, collective process) of a wide group of practitioners and community members who are coming together to discuss things such as: "Can we collectively search for frameworks and visions that pose fundamental alternatives to today's dominant economic and political system? How can such frameworks and visions build on an existing heritage of ideas and worldviews and cultures, and on past or new grassroots practice?" They have created an evolving Alternatives framework through their Vikalp Sangam process, and offer it to anyone interested as one means to stimulate dialogue and visioning. The website is an attempt to share alternatives more broadly because as they say, "There are very few attempts to consolidate and present in a cohesive manner, the range of these alternatives." Their alternative futures framework is a process of co-creation; it is evolving as people (new and old) join the Sangam and shape it. I personally think it is so thoughtful, and comprehensive and, while rooted in the Indian context highly translatable to other places. But neither Kothari nor Joy are connected to

the Futures Studies community, yet they are doing work that is in deep partnership to what we do, and actioning this work in various underrepresented communities in India. How can we, as practitioners, make finding these rich partners not an act of serendipity? How can we work in partnership with them?

In another example, I am also reminded of my interview with Dr Sheila Ochugboju, she spoke about working on a Futures project she led in Accra, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, where she over a series of sessions got slum dwellers (along with other community members) to sit next to local politicians and collectively generate ideas on the changes they want to see happen in their community. Of course, that requires not only a creative Futures practitioner who can make people feel comfortable and empowered but also willing politicians and community members. I think it's also important to note that Ochugboju, primarily selfidentifies first as an international development professional, and secondarily, as a futures practitioner. She has collaborated with Futurists for her work, though, and this reinforces how much we could grow our work if we collaborate across disciplines and sectors. I can only imagine all the combinations of collaborations, and that is something I am not just optimistic about but excited by. 43 My frustrations lie in observing that many of us, in Futures studies, are not sufficiently meeting everyday people where they are at. If practitioners are actively doing this work - we are not talking about it on membership listservs, it's not being featured in conferences enough. While I can think of a couple of practitioners from my personal networks who are committed to truly 'democratizing' futures work, not enough different practitioners are part of this conversation. While this research study has made me realize how inaccessible academic journals can be for non-academics, it has also made me realize how important it is for anyone doing different Futures work to be publishing it and talking about it- everywhere - because if we don't, then there's even lesser chance someone will find these examples.

I have had many conversations with practitioners who want diversity and inclusion in our circles, but then don't seem to want to act on what that would require of us, for example- if we want different income groups represented in our practitioner community, then we need to set up funding that allows these lower-income practitioners be able to attend gatherings/conferences so they can share their work- we do offer discounts/bursaries to students (which is great), but we do not often extend similar financial assistance to diverse practitioners - I think that's something for us to consider. We say diversity is important, but if we don't level the playing

field, then we really should question our motives and process. I also think we should be talking to different practitioners/groups to first understand what their perspectives and needs are versus making the calls ourselves. This seems like a basic human centred design principle, but my experiences tell me we cannot take the application of these principles for granted.

From a more introspective place, I think there are a few reasons more Futures practitioners are not embedded in community or making this a consistent part of our workbecause this work requires we go well outside of our comfort zones of the more 'elite' audiences, it requires we know or have connections to local community organizations to partner with, that we be committed to being in those communities for weeks (if not longer) just so we can first build trust and comfort in talking about the future unlike most other consulting projects, and it is not lucrative. Personally, I think for many practitioners this is uncomfortable work also because it requires a reflection on our own inherent positions of power and privilege, and the imbalances that, for example, exist between- white practitioners - 'minority' participants; scientific/academic knowledge - traditional/embodied/indigenous knowledge; older practitioners - younger participants. But once named these can all be considered in the design of the project. 44 That said, I do think we need to look at our hidden privilege more closely and address it openly and attempt to do so in the next chapter after I share findings from my interviews and survey.

If we do not look outside our individual interests, or address the uncomfortable and are not more united, proactive and considerate in our approach to inclusive Futures I think we would just undermine ourselves and repeat the past. What would be the point in that?

In summary in this chanter I shared trends that point to

In summary, in this chapter, I shared trends that point to the increasingly mounting weight of the global South in the coming decades. My purpose to make the case that we, in the Futures field, must adapt and expand our field - its practitioner base and focus of work- to one that is in line with the needs of our world. Many of the trends shared above, cross countless disciplinary lines, and present an opportunity for us to partner with local and global experts. It opens the possibility for epistemological plurality, an invitation to look at our methods and definitions of concepts (such as time, space, knowledge, prosperity) in ways we have not given enough attention to- even necessitating a look at our tools and methods to be more culturally and linguistically plural and contextual. It also presents an opportunity and need for us to democratize how we speak of our work, and where, and

in what forms- and really question whose interests do academic journals and conferences, which only a select few can access, really serve and reach in this future? Is this who we need to be speaking to? And, perhaps more importantly, can we afford to be speaking to the wrong audience? How can we pay attention to the population of the global Southwhere they are, what they are listening to, what their ideologies and worldviews are? How can we as practice learn from them and adapt our tools such that we can have a lasting impact that is contextually rooted, but globally relevant?

CHAPTER 6 LOOKING WITHIN- INCLUSIVITY IN FUTURES STUDIES

"Those who tell the stories rule the world."

- Native American proverb

Until now this study has focused on what sharing some of the fields origin story and evolutionary path, a look at how the field is currently in practice (where it appears most visible, and where it does not), and sharing where global future needs for Futures practitioners could be.

There are two parts to this chapter. The #1 first is my findings, where I share key themes, practices and principles that have emerged from my interviews and online survey and that point to what would need to change, evolve, or be considered if we want to be more inclusive. The #2 second part of this chapter, is an attempt to look more closely at the interplay of power and privilege imbalances in our fields work using a simple systems of privilege framework, and why it's important we dismantle any such imbalances if we want to be truly inclusive in our work, and as a field.

As shared in Chapter 2 (Project Methodology) I engaged in primary research (interviews and online survey) with two groups of practitioners- those who primarily self-identified as either (#1) Futures practitioners, or (#2) practitioners from other professional field who also practice some aspect of Futures in the course of their work. My interviewees were located in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America and my survey respondents were from Latin America, North America, Europe and Africa.

There was one online survey (i.e. same questions) for both practitioner groups, but given the interviews were semistructured, I had a different focus in my questions for each group. I asked group #1 about their work in community, and also more introspective questions about their opinions and experiences within the Futures field; with group #2, I asked broader questions about their perspectives, processes and reflections on integrating Futures aspects to their work, and what external considerations impacted this work. It should be noted that some interviewees in group #2 had not been familiar w/ the Futures Studies field prior to our interview.

#1 FINDINGS

So, I share the key findings in keeping with the structure above:

- (1) Part I Within the Field
- (2) Part II Within our work in the community
- (3) Part III -External considerations for Futures work

Part I - Within the Field

These findings reflect what Futures practitioners think is holding Futures Studies back from being inclusive as a field, focusing on the issues inside it.

1. There is a sense of tribalism with the Futures community

"The Futures space is very tribal, and there are a number of tribes that exist within it- you have your core tribe- the academic futurists that have come up from the institutions and group together and they are the standard barriers of what constitutes good Futures, and this group

is NOT diverse. They are certainly not inclusive, they might use the words but they do not allow for difference of

thought and practice. So, even when people are coming out to be more plural in this first tribe, the only ones that seem to get any traction, appear to be coming at it from a fully academic exercise. There is still a lot of exclusivity with that."

- anonymous Interviewee

"Think about who are the movers and shakers in the Futures space? They are the same people who have been there for the last decade and they aren't shifting and its bc they genuinely don't want to let go of their power."

- anonymous Interviewee

2. A lack of disciplinary diversity and acknowledgement of work by broader practitioner group in the field

Several practitioners expressed their concerns about the fields increasingly myopic working culture, which is dominated by corporate agendas. As both Sardar and Krishnan explain,

"A lot of work still needs to be done. The field is still very much dominated by a very particular kind of individual [Western, white], particular kinds of consultants [foresight consultants in corporations], and particular kinds of population work [Global North].

"We need diversity from a disciplinary point of view. We need to do more cross, multi, and trans-disciplinary work. Futures, in terms of disciplines, has always been pluralistic. And, a Futurist, by definition should be a polymath, instead [many] tend to be one track minded with knowledge of other areas limited."

- Ziauddin Sardar, interview

"It [Futures Studies] still does not take into account all the work that is happening from a practitioner standpoint around the world."

- Aarathi Krishnan, interview

3. Futures gatherings bias towards Western(educated)academic-practitioner

There was very vocal and critical feedback about the dominance of western academics at events, as this interviewee shared their observations,

"Even when you have global events-like Futures Fest or Primer- they still invite mainstream or 'bright and shiny' Futurist speakers. Diverse speakers still seem to be the minority...Would love to evolve to where this does not become the exception, but the mainstream; that we are a lot more bracing and acceptable of practitioners who are already working in this space, and not just the 48 academics or PhDs. Where are the people in spaces like India who are not in the mainstream?

Then when you go to the more rigorous conferences like in Europe- who gets invited to speak? It tends to be the white, middle-aged men, all from an academic or normative framework perspective. I don't see people who don't fall within those clear cut guidelines get speaking spots OR when they [minorities] do get invited they then are meant to be representing all minorities..."

- Anonymous Interviewee

4. Futures Studies is speaking a language that seems inaccessible to outside circles

A few practitioners expressed concerns on the inaccessibility and perceived shallowness of our fields general nomenclature. As Riveong shared,

"Thinking about Futures in general, there are lots of people in different parts of the world who are engaged in discussions [and work] on what the future could be like, but they don't necessarily call themselves Futurists. We need to evaluate the terms we are using (Futurist, etc.)- they are barriers. When you go to community spaces and use these terms they create ambiguity and confusion. These terms are not accessible [or meaningful] outside certain spaces (corporate, government, etc.) " - Daniel Riveong, interview

5. Practitioners want to collaborate but face internal challenges

All 13 interviewees were open to collaboration, and of the 15 survey respondents- 11 practitioners signalled they are open to collaborating and/or actively seek opportunities to do so where and when possible. Despite the overwhelming support, the following sub-themes also emerged-

a.The lack of a rooted collaborative culture- I had a number of interviewees speak of their disappointment in the lack of collaborative culture within the Futures field, as this experienced practitioner expressed-

"We don't have a collaborative practice as yet. It takes an attitude and awareness. It takes having a codependent relationship that you build up over time — different roles and knowledge in a team setting. We are at times single-minded that way, and it Is not part of the protocol, the way we work on complex issues...we don't see the necessity yet, and yet we should. There is a sense that People need to have their individual voices versus in a team. It's not in their DNA as yet." - anonymous interviewee 49

b. The lack of enabling infrastructure to facilitate collaboration -as both these respondents explained they are challenged in finding collaborators,

"I would like to work with many different groups, but I have little access to educators outside of the Global North because of age, ethnicity, geography and profession."

- -anonymous survey respondentOR

"I probably consider myself an adjacent practitioner and there are simply not so many futurists or like-minded people around me to partner with."

- anonymous survey respondent

c.Collaboration leading to devaluation of the field while only one person, from the survey, expressed this view openly, I share their perspective wondering how many others feel this way. As one survey respondent expressed,

"I have not partnered with an adjacent practitioner - I am concerned that it would devalue what futurists offer. Things descend into pop futurism very quickly."

-anonymous survey respondent

Part II - Within our work in the community

The following findings take one step back from Part I and reflect what practitioners said we need to focus on, if we want to be more inclusive, in terms of how we are conducting our work with society at large.

1.The need to shift focus from "visual" diversity to distinct ideologies and worldviews

There was a resounding message from my interviews, and that was the critical need to hear more than just the established dominant narratives (of economic growth and technology).

While practitioners noted there is increasing diversity of backgrounds [in absolute numbers being engaged Futures work as participants], there is still an unquestionable lack of diversity [in our images of the future] purely in terms of representation. The balance is still skewed towards the Global North's images. Also, most importantly, they reminded me, we must not confuse increased diversity with different perspectives, ideologies or worldviews. This was

identified by many as the most critical need if we want to achieve inclusive futures. As Riveong explains,

"You can be Indonesian or Ghanian but parrot the dominant narrative. If we are part of the 'system', then we are not challenging the system, and that undercuts the value of foresight. I think this [challenging our narratives] is still missing even though we are now talking to people in London and Tajikistan."

- Daniel Riveong, interview

As, Tanja Hichert, an experienced South African Futures practitioner who does a lot of work on the continent, said her in our interview-

"I insist on working on deep diversity in the room. Of course, that depends on who the client is, and what the scenarios are needed for, but I always insist that diversity needs to be in the room. When we are charged with commissioning work we do so automatically. And, it's not just culture, gender, ethnicity, discipline diversity, its as much as worldview diversity. You can have a young, black Hausa speaking women present but her worldview which could be deeply hierarchical and deeply traditional... "

2. The need to recognize the role of language and culture and design with it-

Dator spoke about how in countries like China, South Korea, Japan (and I would add India), there is no word for 'futures' (plural), making it very difficult to think and talk about alternative futures as a concept.

Spencer spoke of his work in New Zealand with Maori community members, and their cultural coexistence with concepts of the future. He also spoke about the ease with which one can discuss more meta topics in Asian cultures versus Western countries, as it is not uncommon for conversations in Asia to speak of people, cosmos, and other planets in one frame.

3. The need to expand our concepts of knowledge, time, growth (prosperity)

The need to be expansive in our definitions and respect other forms of knowledge that exist outside of the scientific/academic-this includes and indigenous, traditional, and embodied.

Arianna Mazzeo spoke of the importance of embodied knowledge and how that is overwhelmingly overlooked when doing design research work in the community.

K.J. Joy speaks about this activism working with farmers in India around co-generating alternative water futures by learning across types of acknowledge, "...There are people's own knowledge systems and then the knowledge people like us carry- the modern disciplinary knowledge- and there is an interaction. The strength of the group I belong is that we do not say "either/ or", but rather seek an integration...We experience that in light of new information/experiences people also change their choices...Our strength is that we try to bring all these contradictions, new knowledge, new information to the people, but then it is up to them."

- K. J. Joy, interview

Many other interviewees (and sources in Futures Studies literature review) spoke about the limitations of thinking of time in the linear western construct (past, present future moving in one forward direction) versus other cultures which have other concepts (e.g. Parts of India, where time is cyclical as evidenced by the Hindi word for yesterday and tomorrow being one and the same, 'kal', and the Hindu religious concepts of reincarnation).

Frank Spencer spoke about time, saying "The western concept - the long now- is simply not relevant or new in Asian countries, this is already a part of their cultural perception of time."

Skawennati has spoken publicly about the multi-generational concept of time that is embedded and central to many Indigenous communities.

4. The need to consider other generations (past, present, future)

The consideration of multiple generations in their futures oriented work came up in interactions with LeKesha Lewis and Skawennati either in our conversations and/or in my interpretation of their work based on my research- multiple generations as not just our ancestors, but all living generations (from young to old), and as future generations yet to come (as many as 7 generations ahead as per Iroquois philosophy). University of Hawaii- Indigenous Politics, professor Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Kaopua speaks of our debt to future generations in her ted talk when she says, "We are literally living on borrowed time".

5. The need to recognize and acknowledge the historical past

In many underrepresented communities, the past is painful, and requires some attention before authentic conversations about the futures can be had. But as Dr Sheila Ochugboju said in my interview, "Reconciliation is a very heavy word.

A very heavy process...it isn't something we can get to easily in many countries here in Africa, but we can recognize the past, and agree to move forward."

K.J. Joy spoke of the need to understand the historic placement of "minority" groups as we work in alternative futures because without this context we cannot truly advance equitable, and socially just narratives.

6. The need to share 'Futures literacy' more widely with the public

The need to 'democratize' futures came up several times in my interviews, with Sardar and Spencer speaking of their own personal efforts and initiatives on taking futures education programming to more sectors, communities and countries; and, Krishnan and Riveong spoke more broadly of the efforts by organizations such as the UN or European Union. I should note that Futures 'literacy' can imply 'illiteracy' and that suggests we are going into communities with the mindset of teachers versus that of teachers and learners- as this research has tried to communicate, our western models have much to learn from communities around the world, and it is imperative we be more open.

7. We need to empower Futures practitioners in the community versus parachuting in consultants

It was noted our current model relies heavily on consultants (Westerns or diaspora) when what we need is local agency and involvement from those who have a cultural and social understanding as well as the systemic and subject matter.

8. The rise of culturally diverse Speculative fiction (Indigenous Futures, Afrofuturism, LatinX, Indian futures, Chinese futures, etc.)

A point of bifurcation - with experts having very strong opinions about this topic-most optimistic about the new voices, faces, images and ideas that speculative fiction was giving room to, and a few others asking we be more critical of the implications.

Dator explained how he is, unlike many futurists, not a fan of futures fictions, and tries to discourage people from consuming it uncritically. He is concerned about the ability of futures fiction to colonize people's images of the futures. Good fiction, especially in movies and games, is so powerful that it encourages many people to believe they have actually experienced a "real future". Overwhelmingly, when he asks people about their images of the futures, they almost always reply in terms of fiction they have read and seen, and not

from images that they are learned from serious studies of the futures. The point of any work of fiction is to entertain and make money. The point of good futures work is to help individuals and groups envision, design, and work towards preferred futures—very different motivations.

Skawennati, as an indigenous artist who writes and creates Indigenous stories in the future tense, has spoken publicly through her Ted talk about the rise in diverse speculative stories being critical as the first step in allowing indigenous and other underrepresented communities to finally be seen as they choose to be seen.

LeKesha Lewis spoke about how speculative fiction is an equalizer given other literary genres including fiction, which are more earthly, have the need for historical accuracy grounding a story's narrative,

"[speculative fiction] allows you the choice to only address what you want to address, and not the rest- if I want to depict issues of slavery, I can create a different fictional species or race and showcase different elements. If I want to depict trauma I can make it other forms of trauma happening to people and not just sexual trauma."

Building on the positive Futures practitioners view of this movement, Riveong and Krishnan commented on their hopes that these diverse narratives are ultimately tied to systems,

"I am looking forward to when it [culturally diverse Speculative fiction] grows - I would like to see when ppl are also untangling and unpacking the underlying systemic inequalities that underpin that culture, the values, the indigenous history. We don't name the elephant in the room, so want to see it go beyond the really cool visions of the future, piece of fiction, what does it mean for the actual change we are seeking, beyond the buzzword, the new bright and shiny thing."

-Aarathi Krishnan, interview

"I am excited by it, but I am also worried about it. I also understand you can't go from 0-100 overnight. I just don't want it to be like design thinking, where there was a hype cycle then a backlash, but then with design thinking, it got absorbed. It has become a common practice (which is a good thing). I don't want there to be a backlash if people don't think it's [speculative fiction] deep enough, but the next step will be that it goes deeper, and that will only make it stronger."

—Daniel Riveong, interview

Part III External considerations

This part focuses on broader themes, practices and principles that are influencing our futures work.

1.Capitalism as a dominant narrative that necessitates reframing

By far, one of the most recurring themes that surfaced in the interviews. Experts noted we need to redefine capitalism, and re-write how we speak about capitalism- our narratives all too often portray it as a force that is too big, too heavy to budge. This despite us knowing it is like everything elsepliable and liable to change.

John Thackara, as an author and public speaker, has spoken extensively of the need for us to shift from a resource-based economy view to one that is more caring based.

2. Given the chaotic pace and fragility of things, the need to build in 'transitional' design principles in our Futures work

In speaking about the more fragile subjects such as political, and social situations around the world where Futures practitioners can have an impact, Dator emphasized the importance of building up aspects of 'transitional' design into our work saying, "If one prepares, then we can transition from collapse to transformation, and not just fall deeper into a miserable collapse."

3. Funding of Futures projects

There were lengthy discussions on the impacts of funding on projects- who funds, with what intention, and which strings attached. While Dr Sheila Ochugboju spoke about the importance of Rockefeller being flexible funders so we could adapt to the African contexts, Aarathi Krishnan spoke of more traditional funding in Humanitarian initiatives that require you to have "preset goals, such that our Futures work is not about needs assessments, it's about needs verification [against our original goals]."

Tanja Hichert also spoke about the critical need for more unstructured funding for social futures work.

4. The shifting systems of power and privilege

This theme was spoken about in various ways by various interviewee's. The coming up of the global South, the black lash to technology, the rise of social movements marking the voices of minority groups being at their collective loudest, all mark upcoming shifts in our prevailing systems of power and privilege.

The first half of this chapter was focused on key findings that highlight issues that need to be addressed within the field, in our actual work delivering Futures work in the community, and more overarchingly. Now I shift to the second half of this findings chapter, where I look more deeply at power and privilege.

#2 SYSTEMS OF PRIVILEGE

As alluded to previously in the study, the themes of power and privilege kept coming up. We cannot be inclusive if we harbour such imbalances, so this section seeks to draw on other findings from my interviews and also analyze how these imbalances are showing up within our field, and within our work with the community at large.

I did not, however, know how to verbalize or show this, so to this effect, I searched for a simple framework that could allow me to understand what systems of privilege were, and how this applied to Futures Studies. Where there is privilege there is the creation of oppression, so as a natural extension in my research I uncovered 'The 5 faces of oppression' by Iris Young, and 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' by Paolo Freire, both of which are detailed and extensive and referenced widely. Given I have no background in sociology, and the clear limitations of time and scope, I turned to introductory sociology texts and found the writings of author and sociologist, Allan G. Johnson. While he wrote, spoke and taught in U.S. universities about the system of white privilege, I adapted his framework to Futures Studies to see if it applied, and I think it does. In this book 'Power, Privilege, and Difference', as well as blog he explains how a few unquestioned principles can give an unearned advantage (power and privilege) to a particular social group. 56

These privileges can be understood by asking 3 simple questions:

- 1. Dominance- which group enjoys positions of power?
- 2. Identification- which group sets the standards for the community?
- 3. Centeredness- which group's ideas and what they do is at the centre of attention? (Johnson, 2012)

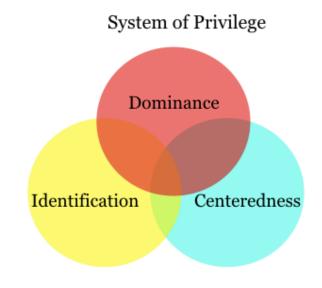


Figure 1 For added context, this is how he writes about it, in relation to white privilege,

- 1. A system of white privilege, for example, is whitedominated, which means the default is for white people to occupy positions of power. White-dominance doesn't mean that all white people are powerful, only that the powerful tend almost always to be white
- 2. White-identification means that the culture defines 'white' people as the standard for human beings in general. People of colour, for example, are routinely identified as 'nonwhite,' a term that doesn't tell us what they are, but what they are not.
- 3. White-centeredness is the tendency to put white people and what they do at the centre of attention—the front page of the newspaper or magazine, the main character in the movie.

As it relates to Futures Studies, I see at least TWO ways in which we have power and privilege imbalances that we must recognize and keep in mind:

- 1. Within our field (as in within our practitioner group)
- 2. Within our work in the community

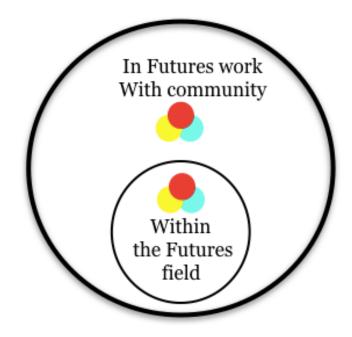


Figure 2

System of Privilege within our own Futures community-

Based on my literature review, interviews here is what I surfaced using these principles:



Dominance- which group enjoys positions of power?

In relation to dominance and positions of power, my research highlighted the particular dominance of Westerntrained academic (PhD) practitioners. Most practitioners, who call themselves Futurists or Futures/Foresight practitioners, come from academic backgrounds.



Identification- which groups set the standards for the community?

Academic-Practitioners are the most prolific authors and originators of frameworks that dominate the field, and also practice as consultants/facilitators.



Centeredness - which group's ideas and what they do is at the centre of attention?

I spoke to a variety of practitioners, from academics to field practitioners to artists, and the dominance of White male, Western (educated) academic practitioners as speakers at conferences, keynotes, and the face of Futures Studies was acknowledged.

System of Privilege in our work with the community-

As practitioners, we have a deep role to play in creating the space that allows for us to generate truly inclusive futures with our audience. While recognizing our power and privilege came up particularly when speaking to practitioners doing work in more fragile countries and communities, it applies more broadly. Here is how our imbalance in power and privilege showed through using these three principles



Dominance- which group enjoys positions of power?

- Futures practitioners have a position of dominance, as subject matter experts of the Futures process we are there to deliver, and
- 2. There can also be a dominance on a personal level based on the race/class/gender dynamics between us and our participants.

"Navigating the uncertainty of visioning also brings up prejudice and decision blocks that we need to overcome [as practitioners overseeing the process]."

- Arianna Mazzeo, interview

Given many practitioners are from the Global North and white privilege is real, we can create a situation of imbalanced power and privilege and lack of relatability with participants, Aarathi Krishnan shared,

"Personal relatability with who facilitates the Futures exercise is key, and so is the need to land concepts to where a society or community is at. If you go to the Middle East, and you are not Arabic, the meaningful conversations will happen in Arabic, outside the session. If you don't speak Arabic, you don't have the credibility to have an impact, and yet we continue to send in white, male/female, to speak to these countries and contexts without the depth of the cultural and social lens."



Identification- which groups set the standards for the community?

As leading the Futures exercise process in the community we determine where/when/how we will present concepts and go through the Futures process as a group (which I translated as "setting the standards for the community").

"In my opinion the western thought model of how and why you do it is still dominant..."

- Tanja Hichert, interview

"By default of where you are working [in Africa], of course as a scenario facilitator you can impose a boundary stating we won't talk about belief systems and spirituality because we are here to talk about economy etc, but I don't do that- the issues that are raised and how you deal with them speak very very deeply to things like social cohesion here."-Tanja Hichert, interview

"We [still] send in white capacity building trainers who want to talk about gender inclusion, but we have to be careful we land concepts to where a society or community is at. It is unethical to go into a context like Afghanistan and not consider the fragility of that state, its economy, of the social contract that exists when you are talking about Futures, and the trends need to be contextualized to the local, regional, environmental situation. It's a very new topic to lots of new people- particularly when working with different ethnic, cultural, demographic groups where cultural, social elements are a key part of that."

-Aarathi Krishnan, interview

Centeredness - which group's ideas and what they do is at the centre of attention?

Dependent on our client or project objective, Futures practitioners have a preset purpose (or focus) and this drives the interactions. Practitioners get to define why an activity is being done.

In Summary, in this chapter, I have shared key principles, themes, practices as they have emerged from my primary research as things that need to be considered if we want to be comprehensively inclusive as a field. This means, inclusive is not just about the futures we create, but inherently implies and requires we looking within the field and be as inclusive as possible as a 'practice'. I also noted critical themes that are outside of our field but drive our work, such as funding, capitalism, chaotic pace of change, and systems of privilege.

I felt there were many layers of nuance that emerged from my primary research, and the findings I have shared with you in this chapter were the inspiration and inputs for Lotus, the inclusive futures framework I am about to share with you in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7 LOOKING EXCITED- PRESENTING LOTUS, INCLUSIVE FUTURES FRAMEWORK

Futures practitioners know (or should know) an ample range of tools that can be used to facilitate creating futures images... They are generally applied in a more or less automatic way to speculate about possible or preferred futures. But much less effort has been devoted to answer basic ontological, epistemological, and axiological questions of the futures field, and without these answers, it is unlikely that the field will mature; that is, the future of the futures field will be bleak.

-Dr. Antonio Alonso-Concheiro

This chapter is the culmination point of this research. Here I introduce the first version of Lotus, the conceptual inclusive futures framework I have developed after reflecting on the research I did, the interviews I had, and my own experiences in the Futures field. As my literature review affirms various groups that had remained largely underrepresented in our Futures conversations to date (such as those from the Global South, Indigenous, People Of Colour, youth, LGBTQ) and

with both shifting future demographic trends (increased populations in the global South) and social trends. As such, I expect we will be doing more work with these communities, and as stated in my introduction, while our field cannot become more inclusive and more representative overnight, we can learn to be more aware in the design of our community Futures projects. I see this framework as a part of the transition toolkit our field can turn to as it goes from the present (mostly Western, white, male) to more multicultural and inclusive.

Intended use

The Lotus framework is intended to act a guide that can be used any Futures practitioner (current or new to the field) who is planning a Futures activity and wants design their work to be inclusive, equity-focused, and anti-colonial. This framework also aims to challenge pre-existing systems of privilege that the practitioner(s) might be unintentionally taking with them into their work. As Dr Alonso-Conchiero suggests above, the framework also aims to push practitioners in the field to intentionally reflect on and create opportunities for axiological, epistemological, ontological and methodological plurality. It is a work-in-progress and,

and while there are already plans to workshop and further develop the framework this has not yet occurred.

The framework will generate different responses for different projects and leaves a lot of room for the user to experiment with it. It is meant to emphasize adaptability, as when Inayatullah writes, "We can live in multiple spaces, use different theories and methodologies, each having its purpose, each useful depending on the person, time and particular space we inhabit" (2013). While presented as a static framework in this paper, it is intentioned to be an interactive framework housed online.

The origin story

When I originally started this research study I had not chosen to take on a pre-existing Futures framework to synthesize my work since I was looking at the field so broadly and was not sure what my interviews and survey results would find.

Now at the end of my research, I revisited Causal Layered Analysis (Inayatullah, 1998) since it is the primary futures framework that I have seen used to talk about worldviews given it goes straight to the heart of the myths and metaphors that are shaping these narratives. I have seen it be combined with Theory U and used to effectively re-write those myths and metaphors, but I did not feel it applied well across my very broad range of findings. So, I expanded my initial scope by looking outside of our field for frameworks focused on principles of designing with diversity, inclusivity, plurality, anti-colonialism, and decolonialism- which formed the essence of my researches theoretical findings.

I find it important to emphasize the research constraints of time and access. Despite many sincere attempts, in what I was able to access (i.e. articles not behind paywalls), I found incredibly insightful papers, books, articles, and checklists, but very few visual frameworks, and none that I felt captured what I was imagining. I fully acknowledge this might be due to my own limitation of not using the right keywords or knowing where to look.

It is at this point of not finding what I was looking for that I chose to conceptualize a framework that could communicate the layers and nuance I saw coming forward in my research as it relates to the need for inclusive futures.

Inspiration

I was struck by how often I was seeing the use of adjectives such as "chaotic, bewildering, overwhelming, hopeless" to describe the current environment in the world. I would be lying if I didn't say I connected to many of these emotions at varying occasions, but as I have said previously, I also most genuinely believe in the power of inclusivity and in the power of Futures Studies as a piece of the puzzle that can get us to more positive images of the futures. In carrying these conflicted emotional feelings, and in being in India, I was reminded of the Lotus as a beautiful flower that always rises about the muddy waters. As I researched it further, it deeply resonated with me, and I turned to its symbolism and representation in Hinduism and Buddhism to inspire the framework, which for simplicity, I call Lotus.

Other than the alignment of the lotus to the conceptual framework I am about to share, I also wanted to intentionally use it as the visual framing. We must note Western cultural heterogeneity and dominance in our field exists not just over the tools, techniques, and epistemology, that we speak to more often, but also our visual communication. Emphasizing that to be truly inclusive, we must also visually 'decentre' from all dominant Western influences (Gamble J, Hagen, P, McKegg, K, West, S, 2019; Baek, S 2018).

The Lotus as Metaphor:

1. The lotus always grows in murky waters, but rises above it,

and is said to bloom most beautifully from the thickest and deepest mud, just as inclusive, compassionate, plural images can help us rise above the negativity and chaos by offering an alternative path towards more preferable futures.

- 2. The Lotus stands for faithfulness, which in the framework stands for the commitment that generating truly plural, inclusive and anti-colonial futures really requires of us also. The framework aims to ask questions that require reflection, intention, and honesty on part of the user.
- 3. A lotus flower fully bloomed and open represents full enlightenment and self-awareness. While the framework does not, by any means, promise any enlightenment, it does seek to generate a critical self-awareness at three levels (1) the inner petals asking a practitioner questions about how they convene their futures session (2) the second level highlighting certain key concepts of what inclusive futures would embody and (3) the outermost layer petals serving as prompts for topics/themes that can allow us to intentionally reflect and decolonize our Futures process.

Collectively, the petals aim to ask us, as practitioners, to self reflect on and question our own mental models, biases, and worldviews. They also attempt to move us away from [unintentionally or

otherwise] defining the other within our own terms [of definition].

4. The leaf of a lotus can offer a barrier between the muddy waters and the flower. Here it represents the political and social space needed to just be able to even openly discuss the need for more inclusive and alternative images; the desire to rise above the (current) dystopia. One can argue, without this self-acknowledgement and public space to discuss the need for something else, we cannot effectively do plural and inclusive futures work in a community. This is particularly relevant in a political environment where dissent has no room.

5. The lotus appears delicate, but is both flexible and strong, securely anchored under the water, with its roots planted in the soil and in the framework the roots represent certain key anchoring principles to doing inclusive futures work.

6. In Buddhism, even the mud has a meaning, representing our messy human lives; and in this case an analogy for the negativity around us, forming the motivation to work hard to bloom above it.

It is said that rising above the mud to bloom requires great faith in oneself, along with practice and intention, and there is a reason why not every plant can do what the lotus can, but just by existing as it does, the lotus offers us hope, and in this framework represents what we could achieve if we choose to commit to working towards a more inclusive society.

Lastly, a **pink lotus** represents the Buddha and the history and succession of Buddhas, and in this framework, the proposed movement forward for Futures Studies from its own history of exclusion to a new anti-colonial, and inclusive normative.

This framework also brings me coming full circle to the Alonso-Conchiero's quote in my introduction, who had suggested taking a page out of the historian Edward H. Carr's book on **studying the historian before studying the historical facts** by asking,

"Perhaps we should do something similar and follow his guide when asking, what are Futures Studies?... And could we also suggest that we should study who did a futures study before studying the futures presented by the study?

By going through the questions and prompts I pose in my framework, each practitioner actually studies themselves-how they think about the design of their Futures project, how they define certain concepts (of time, space, knowledge, history, etc.), and how they are grounding their work.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, while I have put thought and intention behind the conceptual framework, it has not been workshopped with participants due to time limitation. This is part of my next steps (see conclusion).

<u>In summary, key components of the Lotus</u> framework are:

- 1. The core (main purpose)- to surface diverse worldviews, and ideologies.
- 2. The first layer of petals questions focused on how we convene our Futures sessions.
- 3. The second layer of petals highlighting some key inclusive futures design principles.

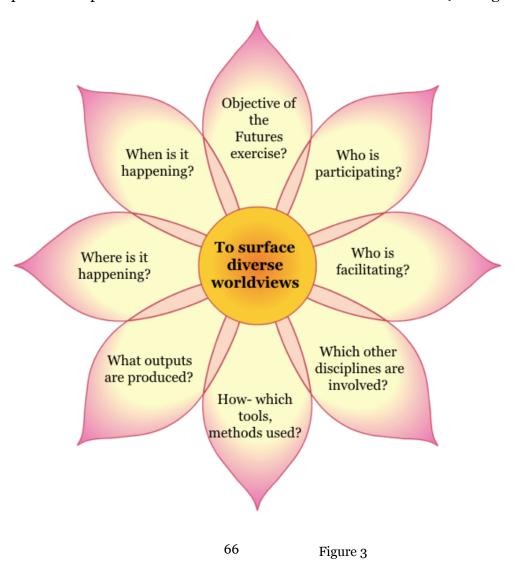
- 4. The outermost layer of petals- anti-colonial, and inclusive design prompts.
- 5. The Leaf Acknowledging before we can do Futures work, we must first understand if the communities we are doing our work in see a need for more inclusive or alternative images of the future, and also have the [political, social] space to be able to discuss this need.
- 6. The roots of the flower Naming some key considerations that can ground our work with intentionality.

The Framework - step by step

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#1 The core objective of the Lotus framework is to harness the more diverse worldviews and ideologies we know are co-existing with us in the world. As such, this is at the centre of the framework. Borrowing from the CLA, the practitioner could ask participants to use myths and metaphors to visualize their internal worldviews about the subject of the futures workshop to gauge the diversity of thought present in the room.

#2 The first layer of petals is focused on being more inclusive in the basic logistical design of our Futures projects, i.e. how we convene our sessions. To name what this logistical design can involve- I used the **5 W's** (Who, What, Where, When, Why) **and How** to generate some questions a practitioner can ask themselves to determine this (see Figure 3 below).



As I illustrated in Part IV, Futures projects can (unintentionally) reinforce a system of privilege (see Figure 2) so if we want to be more inclusive I propose we start by challenging more immediate situations of unequal positions of power and privilege that can arise between the facilitation team and those participating. **For this, I map these 5 W's & How questions to the System of** Privilege principles (see Figure 4, 5, 6) -

Project Logistics- The 5 W's + How are mapped to 'Systems of Privilege' principles-

System of privilege Principles	Mapped to Logistical design considerations
Dominance - Which group enjoys positions of power/dominance over others?	The potential power and privilege of WHO is facilitating (or part of the broader team) over WHO from the community is attending/participating? Is the end user/community participating themselves OR are they being represented and spoken for? At what point of the workshop/session are they attending if not the whole thing? For how long? How much space are they given to speak?
Identification- Which group sets the standards for the community?	The team leading the Futures project has the authority to determine- HOW the futures project will be executed (using which tools, methods), WHAT outputs will be produced (e.g. a report), WHERE and WHEN a project will take place.
Centeredness- which group's ideas and what they do is at the centre of attention?	The client and/or Futures team determining WHAT is the primary purpose/objective of the project?

Figure 4 67

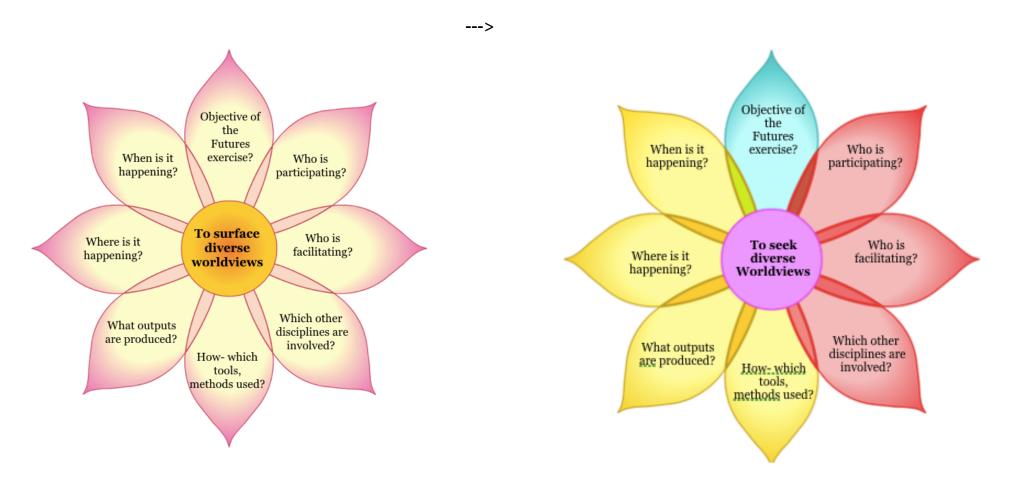


Figure 5 Figure 6

#3 The conceptual framework would also include prompts that can support practitioners in answering the 5 W's + How questions. I have shared a few examples below,

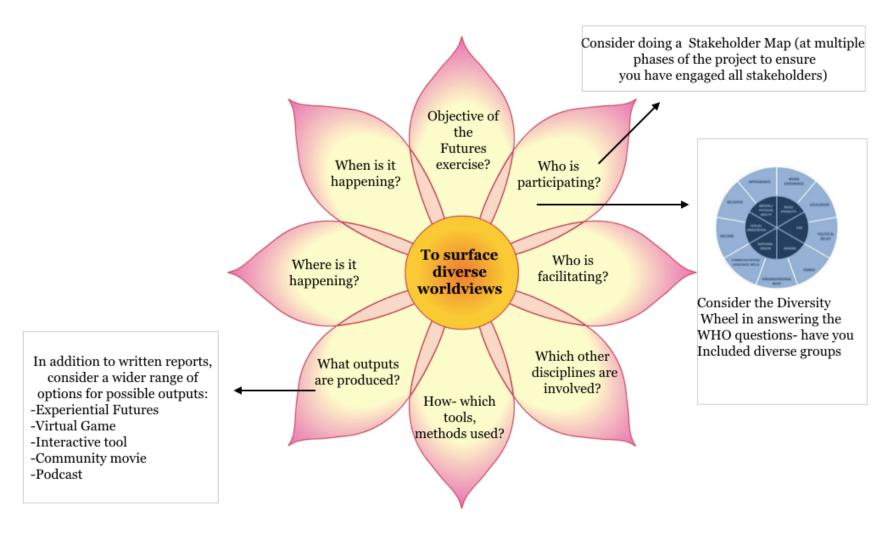


Figure 7 69

The next potentially interactive element is the overlap between petals. These overlaps represent different logistical considerations and identify key concepts the Lotus framework is trying to identify and address (see Figure 8 below). The intention is that in the interactive model, if you shift the order of petals, you get different overlaps, thus different concepts being raised and different questions you are trying to ask and answer. When the framework is online and interactive, I would envision practitioners could use this feature to design from multiple perspectives. For now, I have chosen to illustrate the concept using the following order of petals. These are my initial and personal definitions of the concept- and would be workshopped to ensure they are the most important ones to highlight.

- 1. Nothing about them, without them are your primary constituents/end users in the room? Are you hearing what they want for their futures direct from themselves OR from others who are representing them?
- 2. Power and Privilege + Relatability There are many circumstances that can lead to power and privilege imbalances in who facilitates and who participates. Have you designed for equity, power balances, and relatability (particularly when working in underrepresented communities and different cultures than your own)?
- 3. Designed for diversity- collaborative richness the lack of true, cross-disciplinary collaboration in Foresight is very real. This overlap is a reminding to explore that and design for that diversity intentionally. Have you designed for radical collaboration?
- 4. New epistemological knowledge production We need new ways to conceive our knowledge, and this can happen in many ways, particularly when we combine different disciplines, different groups, creating different frameworks and methods. Are you open this?
- 5. Social accessibility of outcomes Have you designed your project's outputs such that they make outcomes accessible and understandable by the communities in which work was done? Communities must be able to own the knowledge they generate.
- 6. Maximizing range of output possibilities This is to emphasize being creative in what we can generate as outputs.
- 7. Setting up for maximum accessibility- Where and when our sessions are held can either be an enable or barrier. Have you considered all the ways your sessions can be more accessible?
- 8. Ensuring maximum participant engagement When something happens directly impacts engagement. Have you determined this with the community directly, or in consulting local partnerships?

Showing all overlapping petal <u>concepts</u> -For greater details see attached graduate research study (page 71)

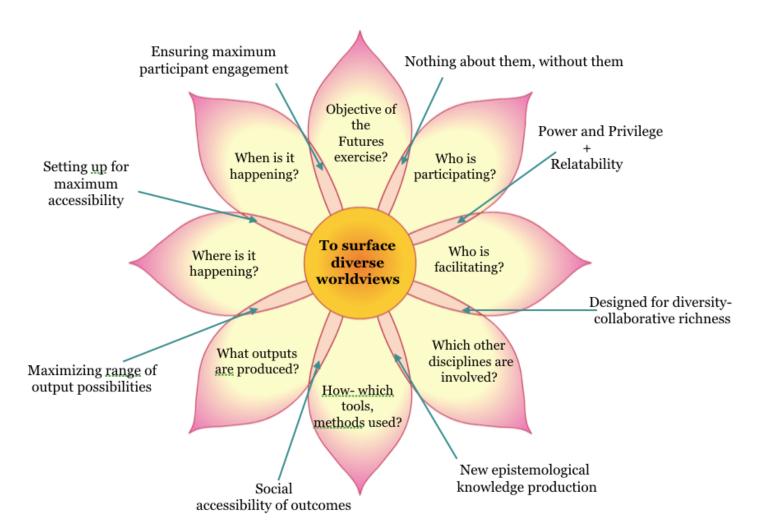


Figure 8 71

#4 We next shift to the second layer of petals, which building of the overlapping petals concepts above, highlight some broader key inclusive futures principles. These concepts are a product of my personal observations and reflections, drawing from my own work and readings on inclusive design (see Figure 9).

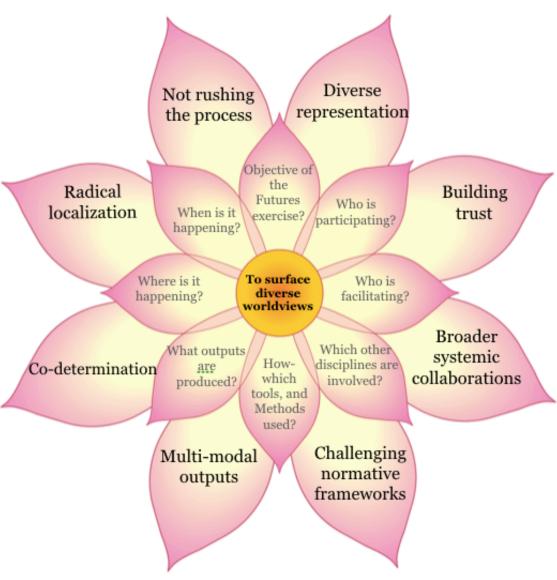


Figure 9 72

These principles allow us to move closer to designing with communities as partners.

- 1. Diverse representation is as the name suggests about ensuring we have (a) multiple community stakeholder groups present, and (b) within those stakeholder groups, as much diversity as possible (ages, races, genders, abilities, education levels, religions, etc). This is where the diversity wheel (mentioned in step #3), above, can be a helpful guiding tool.
- 2. Building trust. How might we do this given our fields' largely consultant model where we are used to 'going in and out' hosting short workshops and sessions with clients. This transactional model does not translate over when working with broader communities, particularly vulnerable communities. Building trust takes time and/or relationships with pre-existing local organizations, however, our current funding, and professional models tend to be driven by shorter cycles.
- 3. Broader systemic collaboration points to the need to ensure any necessary local, national, international systemic collaborators are present and part of the process with the community where possible, and when applicable.
- 4. Challenging normative frameworks, is a key part of inclusive futures, in that it asks us to be as pluralistic and inclusive as possible by challenging the dominant and limiting frameworks we use almost exclusively.
- 5. Multi-model outputs as a principle seek to ask practitioners to reflect on how we can ensure we produce project outputs/summaries that can be accessible both to the communities themselves, as well as funders/institutions. This may require additional work in that these outputs take different forms, thus, being multi-modal.

- 6. Co-determination is the working together of the community in self-determining critical factors related to the futures exercise in partnership with the facilitators. I intentionally suggested co-determination (vs. self-determination here) because there might be certain funding, futures process, timing constraints that need to be negotiated between community and facilitators. It is noted that designing with our end-users real-time invites more ambiguity and bravery into the process.
- 7. Radical localization has to be with ensuring we adapt and customize our projects to the needs of the local community in partnership with local community expertise.
- 8. Not rushing the process refers to the need for us to acknowledge that our futures work might require more time than a funder/project/collaboration might allow. This principle requires us to be honest about the needs of the community and our project and to design, ask, and plan for what is needed in the best interest of the community.

#5 After considering how to be inclusive in our project design, and then our involvement with the community directly, we move to the outermost layer of petals which are anti-colonial, culturally inclusive prompts (see Figure 10).

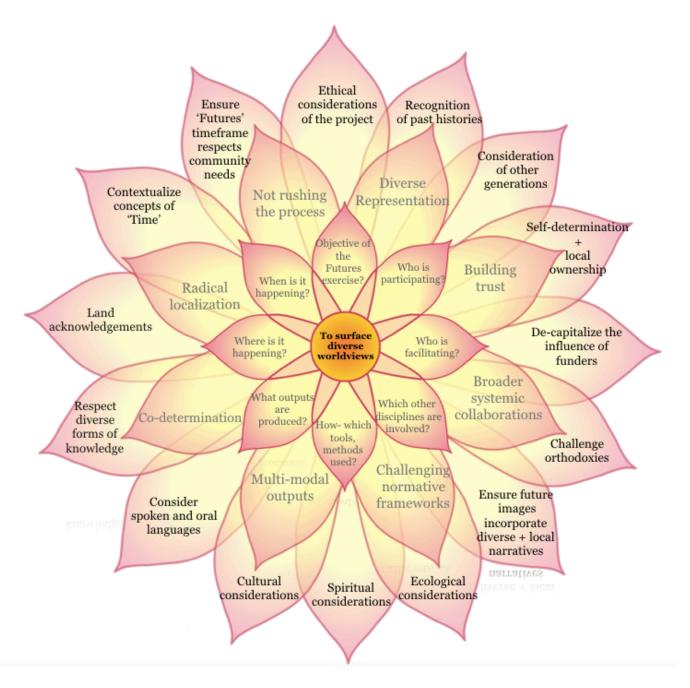


Figure 10 75

These inclusive, anti-colonial prompts are-

- 1. Ensuring 'Futures' visioning timeframe respects community needs refers to the balance between 'pushing people out of their comfort zone' and 'understanding the community and their desire and ability to think ahead and by how much'.
- 2. Ethical considerations prompts practitioners to acknowledge that all projects are ethical statements, and to thus ask themselves questions such as-
 - 1. Am I clear on the ethical implications of doing said project?
 - 2. Have I addressed the considerations from Layer 1 and 2 as best as I can?
 - 3. Can I affirm that my work in the community is about exchange and co-creation and not (knowledge) extraction?
 - 4. Do my good intentions match the actuality and potential impact of the project?
 - 5. Am I/we advancing a particular agenda?
 - 6. While I really want to do this project, am I/we right for this project?

These questions become particularly relevant and critical when working with vulnerable communities or dealing with very fragile environments.

3. Recognition/Acknowledgement of the past- this prompt seeks to remind practitioners that engaging in Futures work inherently requires our addressing the past. And, while, depending on the situation 'reconciliation' may be out of scope, we can and should at least name/acknowledge/recognize the past so we can allow participants to more openly consider the future.

- 4. Other Generations- this prompt seeks to ask if other generations have been considered in the scenarios/images generated and if they have not been how they can be. These different generations are from ancestors to future generations and include different generations that are currently alive from youth to elderly. This is also to remind practitioners that certain communities naturally involve different generations, and to be aware and supportive of this process.
- 5. De-capitalize the influence of funders- this prompt seeks to name any pre-set agenda by a funder/client that might be influencing how the Futures activity is done, and what images of the future are being generated. Acknowledging a lot of funding for transnational projects originates in the global North, asking ourselves how might we break this pattern of privilege based on access to funds? How might we use our privilege strategically? How might we de-emphasize monetary privilege? (Barndt, Reinsborough, 2009)
- 6. Self-determination and local ownership- speaks to the need for local communities to self-determine how they want to work with their images of the future, and to ensure there is local ownership of the process and results. This also entails the building of futures process capacity within the community (vs. the consultant model).
- 7. Challenging orthodoxies- refers to the need to ensure an environment where difficult conversations amongst diverse stakeholders are being encouraged so the deeper rooted issues/orthodoxies/myths/belief systems are being surfaced and discussed versus having hegemonic narratives trump without discussion. We may have a 'diverse' room of participants, but we cannot achieve inclusive and plural futures without such conversation.

- 8. Ensure futures images include diverse and local narratives- this is two-fold. One about ensuring we as practitioners are emphasizing diverse narratives (vs the dominant and limiting narratives of capitalism, economic growth, technocracy, etc), and second about ensuring we push our participants to go further if they do not represent certain contextual inevitabilities e.g. scenarios of the U.S. that do not consider multiculturalism, scenarios in Europe that do not consider an ageing population or negative population growth, scenarios in Asia that do not a younger and urban demographic. I would include the environment and climate change vulnerabilities for everyone.
- 9. Cultural considerations- refers to the need to understand and contextualize to cultural norms such as gender dynamics, verbal/non-verbal communication, food considerations, etc. These might seem trivial but can have an immense impact on the process.
- 10. Ecological considerations- this prompt is centred on how communities view this ecological relationship and consider for them in the scenarios and images of the future, and to ensure we as practitioners are making space for these narratives.
- 11. Spiritual considerations we do not often hear of spirituality in Futures, but in many communities around the world, including Indigenous communities, spirituality is a very important aspect in this discussion, and we as practitioners should understand this further and include for this in our processes and methods accordingly.
- 12. Considering spoken and oral languages seeks to emphasize the need to be more flexible in how we view, define, and incorporate language into our work. It is also to point us that practitioners should understand the linguistic limitations of where they are going. In my interview with Dator, he spoke about how in countries like China, South Korea, Japan (and I would India), there is no word for 'futures' (plural), making it very difficult to think and talk about alternative futures as a concept.

- 13. Diverse forms of Knowledge-This is to acknowledge forms of knowledge outside of intellectual and academia, which could, for example, include indigenous, traditional, and embodied forms of knowledge held by the community. What opportunity is there to learn from, incorporate, merge these different knowledge forms in the Futures process.
- 14. Land acknowledgement- in naming colonization and the taking of lands from indigenous communities, it is critical for us as practitioners to start our engagement with the community by understanding this history and naming it and acknowledging the true ancestral owners of the land where we stand. This is particularly relevant in settler colonial geographies/territories.
- 15. Contextualizing concepts of 'time' What conceptual definition of time is influencing your project design? Time as a linear, one-directional or one that is circular? How does the local community view the concept of time? How might you adjust your methods/tools/processes to their concept of time OR create space for whoever is attending to choose the concept of time that they relate to most e.g. In Hinduism reincarnation and other mythologies reflect a circular concept of time, however, not every Indian is Hindu, nor does every Hindu view time this way.
- #4 Now shifting from the flower which is about how we might use the framework to design for more inclusive and plural scenarios/images of the future- we go to the leaf of the flower. The leaf stands for the community openly acknowledge it desires for different futures, and having the political/social space to be able to openly discuss this without fear. It is important for us as practitioners to understand the broader political and social climate because inclusive futures ultimately challenge hegemonic views. Without this understanding, we run the risk of not meeting people where they are at and running a futile futures session, where authentic images will not be generated in fear they might be seen as dissent.

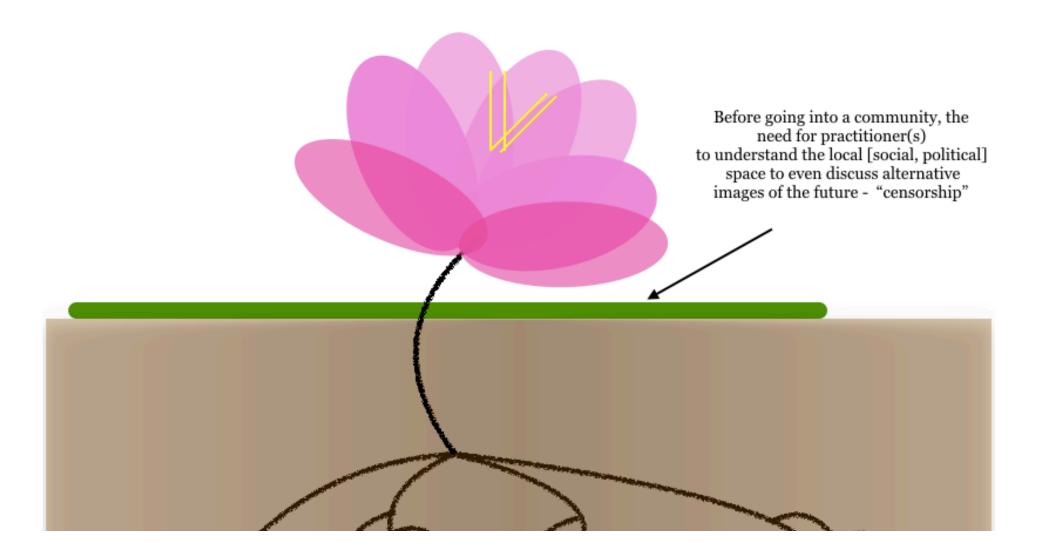


Figure 11 80

#5 Finally, **the roots of the Lotus flower** as an analogy to other grounding factors you might want to revisit/consider/ask practitioners.

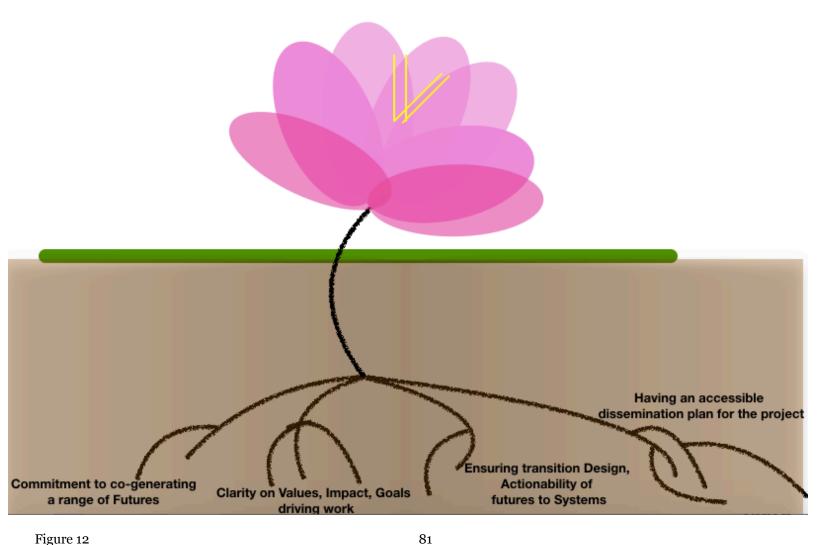


Figure 12

- 1. Are you committed to generating a range of scenarios (A shift from multiplicity or the sheer number of Futures images produced by a group of people to images/scenarios that truly challenge the status quo and offer a wider range of possibilities)?
- 2. Are you clear on the values driving your work, and the impact you want to have in the community? Are they rooted in inclusiveness?
- 3. Have you considered how to build in actionability and transition design into the scenario/image generation process so that they are not just grand fictional narratives which cannot be acted upon by the community? This is particularly important as we are working towards giving communities skills and ownership over the futures process.
- 4. Have you considered **where** you would like to disseminate the results (different than the form of output discussed in petal 2) in public forums or private platforms or academic journals (and thus, behind paywalls making them inaccessible to many communities)- Considering this upfront is to differentiate between not just making more inclusive futures work with your participants, but also ways the work can be more accessible and allow for greater learnings across broader communities of practice.

In Summary, in this chapter, I shared with you, in detail, the **first static draft version of Lotus**, the inclusive futures conceptual framework that has been created as a result of this study. It seeks to be comprehensive and layered, as I believe the process of inclusivity necessitates, however, not having been workshopped as yet it requires further work.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

As Sardar writes, "Disciplines and discourses do not emerge from a vacuum but have a history and cultural context" (2009). The reflections of this history and context, I believe can be traced from is formalization till date, although I believe a paradigm shift is taking shape. We live in a time, where people want something other than the dystopia which has become commonplace. People are meeting, organizing, demanding, and creating the narratives they want to see. The field of Futures Studies, which has largely been absent from these charged people-led social movements, can either choose to be a part of them or not. These are the movements of people already here. Then there are the future generations; the ones we know are coming, and as all trends suggest, will be in more largely concentrated in geographies and cultures the field has remained largely absent in. Fortunate for us, time moves, and while our past might have defined our history, it does not have to continue to define us going forward. We can make that choice of what discussions and cultural contexts we want to make a part of our present and thus define ourselves by. It helps that the field is diversifying from within, and in ways that is making change inevitable. This process to me, is a result of us being introspective on

who we are, and who we want to be. This tying back to the defining quote from Alonso-Concheiro, I used in my introduction and research body, where he asks us to "study who did a futures study before studying the futures presented by the study".

We can speak of wanting to be more inclusive and plural simply because we understand the larger social and global forces demand this of us now, but without questioning our underlying worldviews or understanding what being with the community really means, this change cannot happen authentically or be as deep as it needs to be.

As I have showcased in this study, being more inclusive, anticolonial and culturally sensitive is much more than an intention, and requires we all be reflective, and open to the unlearning and relearning required, and in doing things differently.

As with any major change, however, there must be transitions that support the process, otherwise, we run the risk of setting ourselves up for failure. The first draft of Lotus, the inclusive futures framework, offered in this study is one such transitional element. It was conceived by drawing on the multiple sources of this study- the research, the insights graciously shared by practitioners, and my own experiences. That said, the framework is a work-in-progress.

Next steps

As mentioned earlier, any established framework, especially one that is meant to be anti-colonial, and culturally and geographically adaptive, necessitates rounds of review and feedback. Due to the limitations in time, I was unable to share the framework outside the comfort of a few conversations. As such, I view my next steps to be:

• A closer look at the framework, and the various layers and prompts, which will require my continued research of subjects such as inclusive design, postcolonial theory, decolonization, power/privilege/oppression, systems change theories, and cultural plurality. Given my largely futile research results for visual frameworks from other fields of study, I would like to reach out to practitioners and academics who study and practice in these subjects for guidance and feedback as I develop it further.

- While a critical aspect of the framework for me is to guide practitioners in respectfully co-generating images of the future that are diverse in their ideological and worldview backing, another equally important aspect is that these images can also be actionable from a systemic perspective. Given this is the first draft of the framework, I realize this connection is still nascent, and one that I would very much. like to intentionally develop further, as I see this futures-systems connection as one we need to give more attention to generally as a field.
- As more elements are added, I would like to have a few initial sessions sharing the framework with different Futures practitioners who have experience doing inclusive futures work in various settings to obtain their feedback and suggestions, and
- As I have mentioned on occasion earlier, I intended for many aspects of the framework to be interactive and, as such, I would like it to be housed online (on my website mpathy.ca). This would also make it more accessible, allowing more potential users to critique it, try it, and in doing so, further build it, making it more robust so we can all use it.

• Lastly, I would expect rounds of testing the framework in an open workshop setting with diverse stakeholders in various settings, ideally including the experts who inspired it in the first place.

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