



Building a foresight system in the government

Lessons from 11 countries

DRAFT for discussion only

Public Service Foresight Network
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Outline

1. Review of foresight systems in 11 countries in 2017
2. Lessons learned from foresight practice in other countries
3. Forecasting vs foresight
4. Key elements in the ideal foresight system

SINGAPORE: THE FORESIGHT SYSTEM IN 2017

- **Strategic Future Network** – A regular forward-looking conversation of top bureaucrats chaired by the Head of the Public Service.
- **Centre for Strategic Futures** in the Prime Minister's Office Strategy Group supports the Strategic Futures Network, convenes strategic conversations, manages the national scenario process, coordinates foresight across the government and curates key information.
- **Strategic Foresight Units** in a number of Departments support departmental policy development and work collaboratively with the Centre to develop strategic and applied foresight products.
- **Government Foresight Network** convenes a monthly conversation of working level scanners and foresight people from across the government to share insights, ideas and analysis.
- **Horizon Scanning Centre** conducts on-going scanning to identify weak signal of change particularly in the security and intelligence area.
- **Key products:** Customized scans, foresight studies, “National Scenarios” provide broad context; and a national-wide dialogue on the future.

UK: THE FORESIGHT SYSTEM IN 2017

- **Senior Management:** regular meeting at most senior level to discuss emerging issues.
- **Cabinet Office:** Scanning team explores short and medium term issues; convenes monthly meeting with key scanning and foresight players.
- **Government Office for Science** hosts
 - Horizon Scanning Program: identifies potential longer-term opportunities and threats; prepares a scan of scans using STEEP and current themes to frame; producing evidence cards to facilitate discussion; coordinates scanning across departments
 - Foresight Program: Conducts foresight studies; conducts coordination, oversight and capacity building across all departments
- **Departments:** In many departments foresight is done or managed in the Office of the Science Advisor.

GERMANY: THE FORESIGHT SYSTEM IN 2017

- **Bottom-up process:** There is a champion in the Chancellor's Office who encourages and facilitates dialogue and capacity-building.
- **Training:** Once or twice a year there is a foresight training session open to all public servants;
- **Networking:** There are regular networking sessions to share experience and to identify and frame questions that need to be answered.
- **Building foresight into policy process:** There is growing interest and demand to integrate foresight into policy process. It may become a legislated requirement.
- **Foresight units:** Military has only dedicated foresight unit.

FRANCE: THE FORESIGHT SYSTEM IN 2017

- **Prime Minister's Office:** Centre strategique does short and some medium term foresight. Effort is made to promote media and public debate.
- **Foreign Affairs:** The Policy Planning Group does global geopolitical scenarios every two years to stimulate awareness and debate. Method: Research, brainstorm consequences, build and share, present.
- **Decentralized:** Other departments have some capacity which is “loosely coordinated”.
- **Think tanks:** Several think tanks play an active role in promoting public dialogue on emerging issues.

FINLAND: THE FORESIGHT SYSTEM IN 2017

- **Political briefing:** Public service prepare a published scan of emerging issues for the next government.
- **Prime Minister's Office:** Coordinates scanning; conducts foresight studies and coordinates foresight in departments; convenes strategic conversations; has tried trend cards to facilitate discussion.
- **Departments are active:**
- **Extensive national capacity:** Government draws on extensive scanning and foresight capacity in universities and private sector to support innovation agenda.

NORWAY: THE FORESIGHT SYSTEM IN 2017

OTHER COUNTRIES IN 2017

- **JAPAN:** NISTEP has focussed on technological forecasting to support innovation. This year there is an interest in building foresight capacity.
- **AUSTRALIA:** CSIRO has a ten person foresight team that provides consulting service inside and outside the organization. Some interest / capacity in several departments including military and tax office. Scanning is managed by an external contractor.
- **DENMARK:** The Prime minister chairs a “Disruption Council” with 7 ministers and 32 stakeholders looking at how to use technology to promote prosperity and equality while maintaining the essence of Danish society.
- **SWEDEN:** Closed the Minister of the Future. New government frustrated with long-term advice.
- **CHINA:** Interest in State Council and National Development and Reform Comm
- **INDIA:** Interest in S&T Centre
- **OECD:** Foresight Advisor in SG’s Office, Digital Futures project, growing interest across the organization.
- **Other UN:** UNESCO, UNHCR, UNDP/Singapore

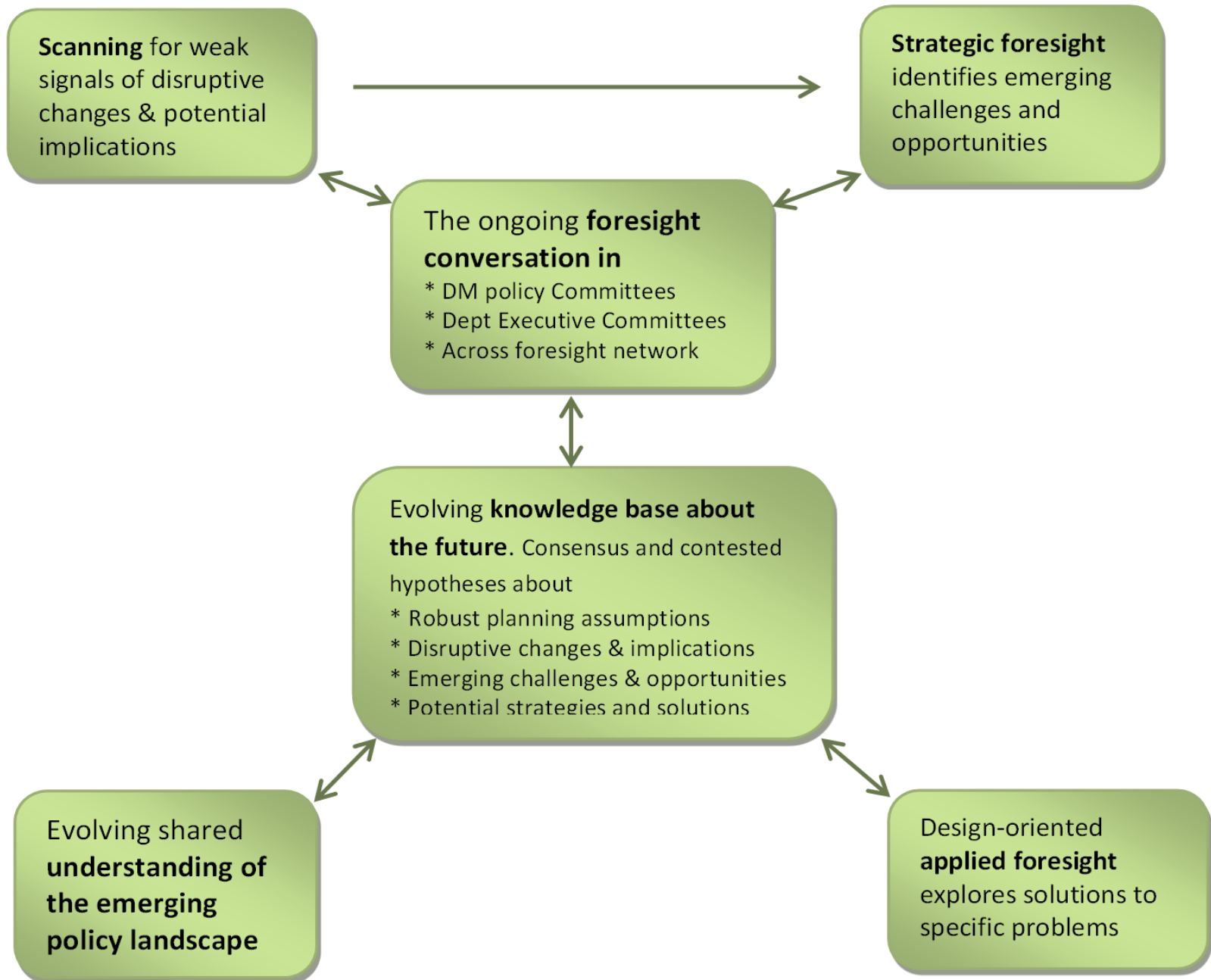
LESSONS LEARNED FROM FORESIGHT UNITS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

1. In countries that take foresight seriously, the senior public servants are active in an **ongoing foresight conversation**.
2. In Singapore, UK and Finland **sophisticated scanning processes** familiarize leaders with the early signs of potentially disruptive change on the horizon.
3. Several countries use **strategic foresight** to explore how large systems and complex public policy problems could evolve and the surprises that could emerge.
4. Several countries use **applied foresight**, which draws on design thinking to help groups develop solutions to specific problems.
5. Several countries are attempting to **curate “building blocks” from the foresight conversation** so the next conversation or project does not start at the beginning.
6. Issue: **citizen engagement** – if citizens are not immersed in the real possibilities of disruptive change, dialogue often focuses on / reproduces the expected future.

FORECASTING vs FORESIGHT

APPROACH	TOOLS	IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS	PRODUCT
Forecasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scanning for trends • Data analysis • Trend extrapolation • Trend impact assessment 	The future is an extension of the present. Surprises come from changes in the value of the known variables	An understanding of the expected future
Strategic Foresight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scanning for weak signals of change • Driver analysis • Influence maps • Cross impact analysis • System analysis • Scenarios • Assumption testing 	The underlying system is evolving. Surprises come from changes that disrupt the system	An understanding of the range of plausible futures and the potential surprises that current policies and institutions are not ready to address
Applied Foresight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on strategic foresight • Stakeholder analysis • Design thinking • Strategy and vision building 	By understanding how the system could evolve and the surprises that could emerge, we can develop more robust policies, strategies and visions	Policies, strategies and visions that are robust across the range of plausible futures

KEY ELEMENTS IN A FORESIGHT SYSTEM



Appendix: Horizons Strategic Foresight Method

FRAMING

- Identify the issue or problem of interest
- Consider the larger system(s) shaping the issue
- Prepare a simple domain diagram of what is “in” or “out” as a guide. Allow it to evolve over the study.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Identify “current assumptions” buried in public dialogue and policy documents
- Identify key trends people assume are true
- Summarize key assumptions as a description of the expected future.

SCANNING

- Scan for weak signals of potentially disruptive changes
- Conduct interviews and facilitate dialogue to understand the system and develop insights

SYSTEM MAPPING

- Identify key elements or nodes in the system
- Describe key relationships
- Use a system map to identify where change could occur and direct further scanning for weak signals as needed

CHANGE DRIVERS

- Use insights from scanning to identify change drivers shaping the system. A useful change driver disrupts the system map in a surprising way.
- Do influence maps to see 2nd to 5th order consequences
- Do cross impact analysis to explore surprises from driver interaction

SCENARIOS

- Develop scenarios to explore a range of futures
- Identify potential challenges and discontinuities
- Test robustness of current assumptions and strategies

RESULTS

- Identify robust planning assumptions and strategies
- Identify key uncertainties, surprises and emerging issues
- Better understanding of how the system or issue could evolve
- Improved policies and programs that are robust across the range of plausible futures

If you have information to inform or update this study
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