

The Landscape of Foresight Networks in the Asia-Pacific

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ABSTRACT

How do futurists and foresight practitioners network and organize in a scrambled world? What are their interests, spheres of influence, and focus? What are the most prominent and impactful futures and foresight organizations in the Asia Pacific, other regions, and the world? How do they collaborate and impact governance, technology, innovation, and policy? What are the emerging futures organizations and initiatives that link diverse interests and priorities of futures and foresight organizations? How can the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines (NAST PHL) leverage this futures and foresight networks and collaborate to amplify NAST PHL's foresight agenda, capacity, and impact and vice versa? What is the future of futures thinking and foresight networks from the perspective of futurists organizations? This paper provides an overview of the most compelling futurists and foresight networks and organizations operating at the regional and global levels. It shares some baseline views, assessments, and perspectives on the flavor (diversity) and landscape (horizon) of how futurists and foresight organizations advance foresight, improve the standard and evaluation of futures studies, and impact including how futurists collaborate and network to impact science, technology, and innovation initiatives and policies. Some recommendations and potential next steps are offered to create opportunities for NAST PHL and global foresight organizations to partner and collaborate.

Keywords: futures thinking, engaged foresight, foresight networks, futures studies

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Citation

Cruz SO, Moura NAK. 2023. The landscape of foresight networks in the Asia-Pacific. Transactions NAST PHL: doi.org/10.57043/transnastphl.2023.3413

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This is an updated version of the paper presented during the 44th Annual Scientific Meeting of the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines, 2022, Manila, Philippines.

Introduction

In an increasingly complex, chaotic, and contradictory world, how do futurists and foresight practitioners connect and organize? What are their areas of interest, influence, and focus? Which futures and foresight organizations hold significant influence in the Asia Pacific and globally? How do these organizations collaborate and impact governance, technology, innovation, and policy? What initiatives bridge the diverse interests and priorities of futures and foresight organizations? How can NAST PHL (National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines) leverage these networks to enhance its foresight agenda, capabilities, and impact on science, technology, and innovation?

This concise report presents an overview of the most noteworthy foresight networks and organizations operating at regional and global levels in the Asia Pacific. Additionally, the report includes recommendations and potential avenues for collaboration between NAST PHL and these futures organizations.

Foresight Networks as Collaborative Platforms

Foresight networks are collaborative platforms of communities that bring together futurists and foresight organizations interested in shaping and anticipating emerging trends and alternative visions of the future. These networks focus on foresight exchange and building the capacity of their members and networks to use futures thinking, which involves the systematic exploration of potential futures to inform decision-making, strategy, innovation, and planning.

These networks often involve foresight professionals from various disciplines, such as the academe, political science, sociology, religious studies, artificial intelligence, engineering, neurosciences, cybernetics, biology, public administration, and business administration, among others. These communities create spaces for knowledge sharing, exchange of ideas, and collaboration to foresee potential disruptions and opportunities.

The objectives of foresight networks can vary but generally include:

- *Knowledge Creation and Exchange:* Foresight networks facilitate the generation of insights, conduct research, and share research findings

and best practices related to future-oriented thinking and foresight methodologies.

- *Networking and Collaboration:* They provide platforms for practitioners and organizations to connect, collaborate, and engage in joint projects or initiatives related to future-oriented topics.
- *Capacity Building:* Foresight networks often organize workshops, training programs, and conferences to enhance the skills and capabilities of participants in the field of foresight applied in various domains.
- *Scenario Development:* These networks develop futures scenarios or plausible futures to help organizations and decision-makers understand the potential implications and make informed choices.
- *Policy Development:* Foresight networks contribute to the formulation of policies and strategies by providing insights into long-term trends, risks, and opportunities.

Overall, foresight networks play a crucial role in fostering a forward-thinking mindset, promoting future-oriented research, and facilitating collaboration among stakeholders interested in understanding and shaping the future.

Foresight Networks in the Asia-Pacific

There are several foresight organizations in the world that contribute to the advancement of futures thinking as a discipline and applied practice. Among those with a significant presence and impactful engagement in the region are the Asia-Pacific Futures Network, the Millennium Project, the Association of Professional Futurists, the World Futures Studies Federation, and the UNESCO Futures Literacy Network (Table 1). These organizations' key activities and services are summarized in Table 1. The focus of this piece is to introduce these networks and their contributions and recommend the next steps for the National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines to build fruitful partnerships and engagements with these communities. Some emerging networks in the region, such as the Center for Engaged

Table 1. Summary of Foresight Networks and their Key Activities

Foresight Network	Key Activities and Services
Asia-Pacific Futures Network (APFN)	Annual Conference APFN Awards Collaboration and Networking Advocacy and Awareness
The Millennium Project (TMP)	Futures Research Global Futures Intelligence System Reports and Publications Futures Workshops and Consultations State of the Future Report
Association of Professional Futurists (APF)	Networking and Community Professional Development and Membership Code of Ethics Publications and Resources Global Collaboration and Projects Recognition and Advocacy Knowledge Creation and Research
World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF)	Global Collaboration Research and Publications Education and Capacity Building Regional and National Chapters Advocacy and Influence
UNESCO Global Futures Literacy Network (UNESCO GFLN)	Knowledge Sharing and Learning Capacity Building Collaboration and Networking Research and Innovation Advocacy and Awareness UNESCO Chairs Network

Foresight, Global Future Society, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Executive Education Futures Community, the OECD Government Foresight Community, ASEAN Foresight for Science and Technology Management Group, and the Journal of Futures Studies Community of Practice will also be briefly introduced.

Asia-Pacific Futures Network

The Asia-Pacific Futures Network (APFN) is a collaborative community of foresight practitioners that is geared towards the practice and study of futures thinking in the region. It was established in 2015 at

the Graduate Institute of Futures Studies at Tamkang University in Taiwan, in partnership with the Science and Technology Policy Institute (Cruz, Sweeney et al. 2016).

The APFN has engaged a community of futures practitioners and learners around the world, with the vision to see futures thinking and strategic foresight used throughout Asia and the Pacific to address the challenges faced by people in their groups, organizations, and communities. The mission of the APFN is to provide a platform for all those who host, facilitate, and apply futures thinking and strategic foresight and help to promote the community of practitioners (Asia Pacific Futures Network, 2022).

Some key activities of the APFN include:

1. *Annual Conference*: The APFN hosts an annual conference inviting foresight practitioners from all over the region to create a peer-to-peer learning platform with extended space for networking and genuine knowledge sharing through interaction.
2. *APFN Awards*: First held in 2023, the APFN gives awards to individuals, institutions, and articles as an acknowledgment of the growing importance of futures thinking and strategic foresight in Asia and the Pacific.
3. *Collaboration and Networking*: The APFN engages practitioners and those interested in futures thinking and strategic foresight who are passionate about helping solve pressing global, regional, and local problems using the power of foresight and futures thinking.
4. *Advocacy and Awareness*: The APFN promotes the exploration, development, advocacy, and awareness of best practices in the foresight field in the region, bringing together best practices and case studies on one platform.
2. *Global Futures Intelligence System*: The Millennium Project maintains a collaborative platform called the "Global Futures Intelligence System" (GFIS). This online system serves as a hub for sharing research, resources, and insights related to global futures.
3. *Reports and Publications*: The Millennium Project publishes numerous reports, studies, and books on future-oriented topics. These publications often provide analysis, scenarios, and policy recommendations to guide decision-making and promote sustainable development.
4. *Futures Workshops and Consultations*: The Millennium Project organizes workshops, conferences, and consultations to engage experts and stakeholders in discussions on future challenges and potential strategies for addressing them. These events help foster collaboration and exchange of ideas among participants.
5. *State of the Future Report*: The Millennium Project produces an annual "State of the Future" report, which assesses global trends, challenges, and potential solutions. It serves as a comprehensive overview of key issues and provides insights into possible future scenarios.

The Millennium Project

The Millennium Project is a global think tank and research initiative that focuses on studying future challenges and opportunities facing humanity. It was founded in 1996 by Jerome C. Glenn and Theodore J. Gordon, aiming to improve global foresight and promote long-term thinking.

The Millennium Project engages a network of futurists, scholars, policymakers, and experts worldwide to collaborate on research and analysis. Their work aims to identify and understand emerging trends, potential risks, and transformative opportunities that may shape the future (The Millennium Project 2022).

Key activities of the Millennium Project include:

1. *Futures Research*: The Millennium Project conducts research on a wide range of topics, including technology, environment, governance, education, health, and global development. They use various foresight methods, such as scenario planning, trend analysis, and expert consultations, to generate insights and recommendations.

A successful undertaking by several nodes of The Millennium Project is the creation of the State of the Future Index and its accompanying annual report. The report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of various global trends, challenges, and opportunities, with the goal of promoting informed decision-making and policy development.

The report typically covers a wide range of topics, including technology, environment, governance, education, health, and more. It often includes scenarios for the future, identifying potential risks and opportunities that humanity might face in the coming years. The information in the report is gathered through a combination of expert opinions, research, and data analysis.

The Pakistan Node of The Millennium Project published its State of Future Index in 2017 and 2019, which explored developments that could impact the country's outlook based on several variables in the State

of the Future Index (Pakistan State of the Future Index, 2017 and 2019).

The Millennium Project aims to contribute to global awareness, policy formulation, and action toward creating a more sustainable and equitable future. By leveraging the collective expertise of its network, the organization seeks to inform decision-makers, educate the public, and promote proactive approaches to tackling global challenges.

Association of Professional Futurists

The Association of Professional Futurists (APF) is a global organization that serves as a professional community for futurists and individuals engaged in futures studies and foresight work. It was founded in 2002 and has since grown to become a leading platform for collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing among futurists worldwide.

The APF brings together professionals from diverse backgrounds, including academia, consulting, government, nonprofit organizations, and business. Its primary aim is to advance the field of futures studies and promote the professional development of its members (The Association of Professional Futurists 2022).

Key features and activities of the Association of Professional Futurists include:

1. *Networking and Community*: The APF provides a community for futurists to connect, collaborate, and share experiences. Members can engage in online forums, discussion groups, and networking events to foster connections and exchange ideas.
2. *Professional Development*: The APF offers resources and opportunities for professional development in the field of futures studies. It organizes conferences, workshops, webinars, and other educational events to enhance the knowledge and skills of its members.
3. *Code of Ethics*: The APF has established a Code of Ethics that guides the professional conduct of its members. This code ensures that futurists uphold high standards of integrity, objectivity, and responsibility in their work.
4. *Publications and Resources*: The APF publishes articles, reports, and other resources related to

futures studies. It also maintains a knowledge library and a blog to share insights and research findings.

5. *Collaboration and Projects*: The APF encourages collaboration among its members on various projects, research initiatives, and consulting engagements. This allows futurists to work together and leverage their collective expertise to address complex challenges and opportunities.
6. *Recognition and Advocacy*: The APF promotes the recognizing and understanding of futures studies as a legitimate field of inquiry. It advocates for the integration of futures thinking in decision-making processes across different sectors and industries.

Some successes of the Association of Professional Futurists include the published report on Foresight Evaluation in 2022, considered by UNESCO as a reference to facilitate conversations about evaluating foresight, and the success of participation of futurists sharing their cases and outcomes of their consulting and personal projects (Association of Professional Futurists, 2022). The APF also contributed significantly to the field's professionalization by creating the Professional Foresight Competency Model, a resource enjoyed by members and those who access it from the APF website. This Professional Foresight Competency Model details the several standardized competencies that can be strengthened and developed by foresight professionals to improve their capacities and capabilities to do futures work.

World Futures Studies Federation

The World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) is a global network and organization that promotes the field of futures studies and futures thinking. It serves as a platform for collaboration, research, and knowledge exchange among scholars, practitioners, and organizations involved in futures studies worldwide (The World Futures Studies Federation 2022).

The WFSF was established in 1973 and has since grown to become one of the leading international bodies in the field. Its primary objectives include:

1. *Global Collaboration*: The WFSF aims to foster collaboration and networking among individuals

and organizations involved in futures studies. It provides a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing research, and connecting with fellow futurists from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds.

2. *Research and Publications*: The WFSF promotes research and academic scholarship in futures studies. It organizes conferences, workshops, and seminars where researchers and practitioners can present and discuss their work. Additionally, the WFSF publishes the "Futures" journal, a leading publication in the field, which features scholarly articles, book reviews, and case studies related to futures studies.
3. *Education and Capacity Building*: The WFSF supports the development of futures studies programs and educational initiatives worldwide. It encourages the integration of futures thinking in formal education systems and offers resources and support to educators and trainers in the field.
4. *Regional and National Chapters*: The WFSF has regional and national chapters that operate at the local level, organizing events, conferences, and initiatives tailored to specific regions or countries. These chapters help foster engagement and collaboration within specific geographic areas.
5. *Advocacy and Influence*: The WFSF advocates for recognizing and applying of futures studies in decision-making processes, policy development, and sustainable development efforts. It aims to enhance the impact and relevance of futures thinking across various sectors of society.

The WFSF has also successfully run Futures Learning Laboratories with the support of UNESCO by creating of online courses to make futures learning accessible and contextually-based for the countries they are run in. The participants of these Futures Learning Laboratories were able to learn foresight and use their newly acquired knowledge to craft ideas that would benefit their local communities.

The World Futures Studies Federation plays a vital role in promoting futures studies as a discipline, facilitating international collaboration, and advancing the understanding of future-oriented thinking. It serves as a hub for individuals and organizations interested

in exploring and shaping the future, contributing to the collective knowledge and understanding of global challenges and opportunities.

UNESCO Chair Network

The UNESCO Global Futures Literacy Network (GFLN) is an initiative aimed at promoting futures literacy worldwide. It is part of the broader futures literacy movement, emphasizing the importance of developing the capacity to understand, shape, and navigate possible futures (UNESCO 2022).

The GFLN focuses on building a global community of practice and collaboration among individuals, organizations, and institutions interested in futures literacy. Its key objectives include:

1. *Knowledge Sharing and Learning*: The GFLN serves as a platform for sharing insights, experiences, and methodologies related to futures literacy. It promotes learning through exchanging ideas, case studies, and best practices.
2. *Capacity Building*: The network aims to enhance the capacity of individuals and organizations to engage in futures thinking and foresight activities. It provides resources, training programs, and educational materials to support the development of futures literacy skills.
3. *Collaboration and Networking*: The GFLN fosters collaboration among its members, enabling the creation of partnerships and joint projects focused on futures literacy. It facilitates networking opportunities and connects individuals and organizations with similar interests and goals.
4. *Research and Innovation*: The network encourages research and innovation in the field of futures literacy. It supports the development of new methodologies, tools, and approaches to enhance futures thinking and engagement with multiple futures.
5. *Advocacy and Awareness*: The GFLN promotes the importance of futures literacy at local, national, and global levels. It advocates for the integration of futures thinking into educational systems, policy-making processes, and various sectors of society.

The UNESCO Global Futures Literacy Network is an inclusive platform that welcomes participation from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. The network aims to empower individuals and organizations to navigate uncertainty, envision alternative futures, and take informed actions to shape a desirable future by fostering a global community focused on futures literacy.

Emergent Futures Communities in the Asia-Pacific Region

Center for Engaged Foresight

The Center for Engaged Foresight created a Circle of Engaged Foresight Practitioners to enable futurists and foresight practitioners in the Asia-Pacific and the world to collaborate on project-based initiatives. It pools its network of foresight professional's knowledge, skills, and resources to support a community or an organization's foresight initiatives to help achieve shared goals or outcomes. The Circle's network of experts has different backgrounds and disciplines, bringing diverse expertise and perspectives to support a project. They collaborate by sharing ideas, coordinating efforts, and executing tasks based on their individual strengths and areas of specialization (Center for Engaged Foresight, 2022).

Journal of Futures Studies Community of Practice

The Journal of Futures Studies (JFS) is an academic journal focusing on futures studies and related disciplines. It is an internationally recognized publication featuring scholarly articles, research papers, and book reviews that contribute to the advancement of futures studies.

The JFS covers a wide range of topics within the field, including foresight methodologies, scenario planning, futures thinking, strategic foresight, trend analysis, and the exploration of possible future scenarios. It serves as a platform for researchers, scholars, and practitioners to share their findings, insights, and perspectives on future-oriented topics (Journal of Futures Studies, 2022).

Published by the Institute for Futures Studies, the Journal of Futures Studies is typically released on a regular basis, with multiple issues per year. Recently launched is the Journal of Futures Studies Community of Practice, which brings together readers and contributors

to the journal to foster collective knowledge and understanding of the field, providing a platform for scholarly discourse, dissemination of research, and the advancement of futures studies as a discipline.

Global Future Society

The Global Future Society was launched by the Dubai Future Foundation of the United Arab Emirates Government as a landmark partnership between leading foresight organizations such as the Association of Professional Futurists and The Millennium Project. The Global Future Society is a network for international dialogue on how citizens, nations, and organizations can navigate and work toward building a positive and responsible future for humanity. It aims to harness the knowledge and expertise of local and global networks to shape practices in futures and foresight (Museum of the Future 2022).

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Executive Education Futures Community

The Futures Community Conference is an event run by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Executive Education Singapore Futures to put together futurists, thinkers, builders, practitioners and alumni. Using an unconference format, participants attend remotely to interact with practitioners, and participants of their choice. This event hosted around 200 attendees from different professional fields around the globe and was introduced for futures enthusiasts, thinkers, and practitioners to share high-impact research, think pieces, games, and new futures programs. This gathering seeks to strengthen public sector engagement and build their existing futures thinking and scenario planning capacities to achieve their goals in complex and ambiguous contexts (Futures Community Conference Report, 2021).

OECD Government Foresight Community

The OECD's Government Foresight Community brings together public sector strategic foresight practitioners from around the world to exchange information and content on the latest foresight developments in government policymaking. The community aims to

strengthen the global foresight capacity by drawing on collective experience and bringing future insights on key issues of our time. The Government Foresight Community Annual Meeting facilitates participation from multiple timezones, including Asia and the Pacific (OECD Annual Report 2021).

ASEAN Foresight for Science and Technology Management Group

The ASEAN Foresight for Science and Technology Management Group was convened and comprised of planners, foresight practitioners, and researchers from all ten ASEAN member-states and two observer states. Many of the members of this network are leaders in their respective fields and trained in the discipline of strategic foresight. The group was formed as a partnership between the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation and Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. The network participates in workshops to develop scenarios anchoring on recommendations from the ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology, and Innovation. Specifically, the objectives of the group are to facilitate the exchange of information and content among ASEAN member states on the latest foresight developments in government policy-making, visualize and analyze common emerging issues affecting ASEAN, and provide consolidated foresight advice for ASEAN bodies in setting regional directions and priorities from an STI lens (Cameron 2021).

The Case of Northwestern University

Northwestern University (NWU) is a private Higher Educational Institution (HEI) in Laoag City, Philippines that has been using futures thinking and strategic foresight since 2014 (Center for Engaged Foresight, 2020). They have established the NWU-Philippine Center for Foresight Education and Innovation Research, or NWU-PhilForesight, as the institute to promote and advance the use of futures thinking in research and apply strategic foresight for strategic planning, strategy, leadership, and other developmental purposes. Today, the University is the inaugural UNESCO Chair on Anticipatory Governance and Regenerative Cities in the Philippines, and has collaborated with the UNESCO

Futures Literacy Network to promote futures thinking in the Asia-Pacific region and the Global South. They have prepared a four-year program to organize events in the Philippines to capacitate relevant stakeholders in futures thinking tools and methods that can be employed in leadership and governance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in mind. Northwestern University is the first institution in the Philippines to offer futures thinking courses in all of its degree programs, both in the undergraduate and graduate tracks, including executive education. Northwestern University continues to increase its capability and capacity to provide cutting-edge futures initiatives and events to democratize access to futures knowledge in the Philippines and beyond.

Leveraging Networks for a Future-Ready STI Philippines

The National Academy of Science and Technology Philippines (NAST PHL) can leverage foresight networks to amplify the capacity and impact of its foresight agenda on science, technology, and innovation, focusing on PAGTANAW 2050. Here are some specific steps the organization can take:

1. *Establish Collaborative Partnerships:* NAST PHL can forge partnerships with the above-mentioned foresight networks. Collaborating with these communities will expand the expertise, resources, and knowledge available to NAST PHL, enabling it to undertake more comprehensive foresight activities and initiatives.
2. *Foster a National STI Foresight Network:* NAST PHL, in collaboration with these regional networks, can support the national STI foresight network by providing expertise, research, knowledge, cases, and capability-building. This network can facilitate a broader collaboration and foresight exchange for NAST PHL. NAST PHL can organize regular meetings, workshops, and conferences to engage network members and foster a vibrant foresight community in the Philippines and the surrounding region.
3. *Conduct Foresight Research and Studies:* NAST PHL can initiate and support research projects in partnership with these networks, particularly the World Futures Studies Federation and

The Millennium Project, focused on foresight in science, technology, and innovation. This includes conducting horizon scanning, trend and emerging issues analysis, scenario planning, impact assessments, and evaluation. The findings of these studies can inform policymaking, guide research priorities, and help identify strategic opportunities for the Philippines. NAST PHL may also seek the assistance of the World Futures Studies Federation, the Association of Professional Futurists, and the UNESCO Chair Network in capacitating educational institutions to create academic programs in futures studies and strategic foresight.

4. *Develop Foresight Training Programs:* NAST PHL can leverage the support of these networks, such as the Center for Engaged Foresight, in designing and delivering training programs to build and widen the capacity of researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders in foresight methodologies. By equipping Filipino scientists and other stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge, NAST PHL can foster a culture of foresight and ensure the effective application of foresight techniques in science, technology, and innovation.
5. *Engage Stakeholders through Workshops and Consultations:* NAST PHL can organize workshops, consultation sessions, and stakeholder engagement activities in collaboration with these networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Futures Network and the Association of Professional Futurists to involve a wide range of stakeholders in foresight exercises. By soliciting input and feedback from academia, industry, civil society, and the public, NAST PHL can gather diverse perspectives and ensure that foresight activities reflect the needs and aspirations of different sectors.
6. *Establish an Online Foresight Platform:* NAST PHL can develop an online platform in partnership with The Millennium Project dedicated to foresight in science, technology, and innovation. This platform can be a hub for sharing foresight reports, research findings, and best practices. It can also host interactive tools, discussion forums, and collaborative spaces for network members to engage in virtual foresight activities.

7. *Influence Policy and Decision-Making:* NAST PHL can actively engage with policymakers and decision-makers in the Philippines with the support of these networks. By providing evidence-based recommendations and expertise, NAST PHL can better produce policy briefs to inform policy choices and strategic decision-making. Regular interactions, policy dialogues, and participation in relevant committees can ensure that foresight insights are integrated into the national science, technology, and innovation agenda.

8. *Foster International Collaboration:* NAST PHL can continuously seek deeper collaboration with international foresight organizations, such as other national academies of science and technology with foresight initiatives and the UNESCO Chair Networks. Participating in international conferences, joint research projects, and knowledge exchange programs will enable NAST PHL to stay abreast of global trends and leverage global expertise in advancing its foresight agenda.

By leveraging foresight networks through these strategies, the National Academy of Science and Technology of the Philippines can enhance its foresight capabilities, strengthen its impact on science, technology, and innovation foresight, and contribute to the long-term development and progress of the country.

Contributions of Authors:

Both authors contributed equally to the development of the article.

Acknowledgment of funding and others:

Not applicable.

Disclosure of conflict of or competing interest:

No potential conflict of interest reported by the authors

Additional information:

Not applicable.

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