

Transcript | How to Build Foresight Into Everyday Decisions

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00:00:16.840 --> 00:00:34.359

Nigel Smith: Hi, everybody. Welcome to this panel event, How to Build Foresight into Everyday Decisions. My name is Nigel Smith. I'm the learning strategist here at Apolitical.

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00:00:35.030 --> 00:00:36.330

Nigel Smith: Can everybody hear me?

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00:00:37.590 --> 00:00:38.390

Nigel Smith: Great.

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00:00:38.790 --> 00:00:39.889

Nigel Smith: Over to you, Callie.

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00:00:40.370 --> 00:00:46.609

Callie Bradley: Hi everyone, I'm Callie Bradley, I am an event producer here at Apolitical, and I will be co-moderating this event with Nigel.

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00:00:47.420 --> 00:01:01.349

Nigel Smith: Fantastic. So, still a few people joining us, but it would be really, really great to hear from all of you, so do please post in the chat. Just tell us where you are joining us from, what organization you work for.

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00:01:01.380 --> 00:01:20.659

Nigel Smith: Today is all about building your foresight skills so you can lead through uncertainty, make stronger decisions in the face of change, and you're going to hear from experts using futures thinking in real-world settings. Also, learn some practical tools to spot trends early.

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00:01:20.720 --> 00:01:25.310

Nigel Smith: Explore different scenarios and prepare for what is next.

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00:01:25.410 --> 00:01:29.890

Nigel Smith: For those of you who may be joining us for the first time, a very warm welcome.

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00:01:29.890 --> 00:01:54.049

Nigel Smith: Apolitical, for those of you who do not know, is the world's largest community for government, used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries. And I'm sure when I have a look through the chat in a second, we'll just see how many different countries are represented here today. And our mission is to make government smarter, and we do this by equipping public servants worldwide

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00:01:54.050 --> 00:01:56.200

Nigel Smith: With the knowledge and skills they need

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00:01:56.200 --> 00:01:59.389

Nigel Smith: lead the change. So let's have a look,

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00:01:59.750 --> 00:02:08.290

Nigel Smith: who we've got here. Luna from Department of Science and Innovation Technology in England, Amy from Littleton, Colorado.

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00:02:08.530 --> 00:02:17.110

Nigel Smith: daniela, Southeast Texas, so good US, contingent this afternoon, or this morning for you. Canada, London.

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00:02:17.510 --> 00:02:21.170

Nigel Smith: Let's see if we've got anybody beyond Canada and the UK.

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00:02:21.820 --> 00:02:24.810

Nigel Smith: Germany, welcome, Elta.

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00:02:25.510 --> 00:02:31.289

Nigel Smith: Flavier from France, Akhil joining from Malaysia.

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00:02:31.660 --> 00:02:34.120

Nigel Smith: So this is Philip joining from Kenya.

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00:02:34.240 --> 00:02:49.630

Nigel Smith: So, a really, really global... something else from Kenya? Kenya, really, really... Antwerp in Belgium. So, really, really global... representing the global community that we, have on Apolitical. So wonderful to see that, breadth.

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00:02:50.160 --> 00:02:56.220

Nigel Smith: Before we introduce our speakers, I want to, welcome

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00:02:56.250 --> 00:03:13.839

Nigel Smith: Vera, Yakinoff, Vera is going to tell you about the Introduction to Futures and Foresight course that Demos Helsinki have developed with AP Political, and my colleague is also going to post a link, to that course in the chat. So, Vera, over to you.

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00:03:15.250 --> 00:03:18.759

Vera Djakonoff: Thank you, Nigel. So, hello everyone, my name is Verd Yakonov.

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00:03:19.120 --> 00:03:31.449

Vera Djakonoff: come from Think Tank Demos Helsinki. We are global operating organizations, and we help governments and organizations navigate uncertainty and also build capacity for systemic change.

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00:03:31.560 --> 00:03:51.189

Vera Djakonoff: And I'm so happy to share that for this course, we've partnered with Apolitical, as well as some wonderful governance experts around the world, to create this short course, designed to give all of public servants practical tools for thinking ahead.

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00:03:51.440 --> 00:04:00.030

Vera Djakonoff: And what we've witnessed is that that's something that's only becoming more and more essential as we feel that the pace of change is accelerating.

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Vera Djakonoff: So, in this course, we will introduce you to futures thinking and some core foresight methods and where to use them, so spanning from horizon scanning to scenario thinking and backcasting, and also how AI is bringing new opportunities to the field.

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00:04:17.339 --> 00:04:26.800

Vera Djakonoff: We think it's, ideal for many different people, from public servants to strategy units and cross-functional teams.

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00:04:26.800 --> 00:04:41.440

Vera Djakonoff: Who are looking to build a strong foundation for future rare decision making, whether it's something that you're only taking your first steps in, so your first steps in foresight, or whether you're looking to strengthen your existing practices.

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00:04:41.570 --> 00:04:46.840

Vera Djakonoff: So, if this resonates with your work, I would warmly encourage you to register and dive in.

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00:04:47.000 --> 00:04:47.649

Vera Djakonoff: Thank you, Mark.

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00:04:47.650 --> 00:04:48.320

Nigel Smith: Brilliant.

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00:04:48.600 --> 00:05:05.450

Nigel Smith: Great. No, thank you so much, Vera, and it is a terrific, course. I would say that anyway, but I would highly, recommend that you do all, sign up. So just a few technical notes to get out of the way before we really get stuck into today's conversation.

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00:05:05.450 --> 00:05:12.890

Nigel Smith: This event is being recorded for on-demand viewing on the Apolitical website. Please do not record it yourself.

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00:05:12.890 --> 00:05:24.700

Nigel Smith: Contact details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer. Closed captions are available, and they can be toggled on or off in your screen settings.

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00:05:25.590 --> 00:05:37.409

Nigel Smith: Before we introduce our wonderful speakers, we're just going to run through a couple of quick polls, really just to get a sense of where you are coming to today in the discussion. So, first poll.

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00:05:37.670 --> 00:05:38.670

Nigel Smith: Question.

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00:05:38.750 --> 00:05:58.320

Nigel Smith: you'll see this pop up. What is the biggest roadblock to thinking long-term on your team? So you should be able to see that pop up, and click. Lack of time, short-term priorities for leadership, risk aversion, or something else. And if you do have something you want to add something else, do post that in the chat, and we'll have a look what you have to say.

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00:06:02.240 --> 00:06:04.729

Nigel Smith: Oh, a clear winner, it looks like.

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00:06:12.410 --> 00:06:24.700

Nigel Smith: Okay, so, clear winner, short-term priorities from leadership. So, perhaps something we will get into, in the panel. And in terms of the something else,

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00:06:24.700 --> 00:06:33.100

Nigel Smith: Chris, says, uncertainty, and Emma, funding and money. Budgets only set for one year, so again, that sort of element of short-term

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00:06:33.100 --> 00:06:36.570

Nigel Smith: It's a... Next question.

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Nigel Smith: So, in your opinion, which area of government needs foresight the most right now? So these are really, kind of.

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00:06:43.830 --> 00:06:52.109

Nigel Smith: policy areas, I guess. Climate, digital NI, AI, education, the economy. And again, if you want to add something else, do pop that in the chat.

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00:07:05.300 --> 00:07:10.950

Nigel Smith: So, just in terms of people who put in other while we're watching, Safety and community well-being.

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00:07:11.330 --> 00:07:15.590

Nigel Smith: Agriculture and food systems, so those are in addition to the ones we've got on an option.

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00:07:19.770 --> 00:07:36.660

Nigel Smith: Okay, but clear... well, not quite as a clear winner as the last one, but digital and AI is tops, followed by climate, and then the economy. So, thanks so much for taking part in those polls. Let me introduce our speakers, now. We have got three

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00:07:36.660 --> 00:07:41.990

Nigel Smith: brilliant, guests joining us today. Dexter, Dochty.

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00:07:42.240 --> 00:07:45.339

Nigel Smith: Nancy, Muigay, and Ben Holt.

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00:07:45.340 --> 00:07:51.600

Nigel Smith: Dexter is a Foresight Analyst with the OECD Strategic Foresight Foresight Unit.

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Nigel Smith: He works to design foresight processes that explore the possible future trajectories of emerging technologies, as well as the multilateral system, and he works to strengthen strategic foresight and long-term thinking across the OECD and governments around the world.

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00:08:06.200 --> 00:08:27.389

Nigel Smith: Nancy is currently the program manager for the Democratic Futures in Africa Opportunity at Open Society Foundations, and there she supports partners in Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Earlier in her career, Nancy served as a network weaver for the School of International Futures, and founded Nawiri Foresight Lab.

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00:08:27.390 --> 00:08:31.999

Nigel Smith: And Ben... Ben is Principal Consultant at the School of International Futures.

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00:08:32.000 --> 00:08:55.540

Nigel Smith: Previously, he was Global Lead for Strategic Foresight at the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, where he helped embed foresight in the UK crisis response, reimagine the future of multinational food security programs, and he is also the author of the Strategic Foresight book. And you can read more of the full bios if you go to the resources tab. So, warm welcome, it is wonderful to have you all here.

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00:08:55.540 --> 00:08:59.760

Nigel Smith: So let's just start, three of you, with a little icebreaker to kick things off.

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00:08:59.900 --> 00:09:07.779

Nigel Smith: Quick wait, 30 seconds, just to share your responses. And again, if you'd like to respond in the chat, to this question, we'd love to hear that as well.

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00:09:07.920 --> 00:09:08.960

Nigel Smith: Big question.

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00:09:09.250 --> 00:09:16.639

Nigel Smith: What might be a government job title in 2040 that doesn't exist yet today?

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00:09:17.150 --> 00:09:25.569

Nigel Smith: I'm just gonna go in first name, alphabetical, order. Ben, let's go with you first.

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00:09:26.870 --> 00:09:29.370

Ben Holt: Thanks, Nigel. It's a pleasure to be here.

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00:09:29.920 --> 00:09:31.470

Ben Holt: So I'd like to see...

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00:09:31.590 --> 00:09:40.509

Ben Holt: the expansion of roles focused on future generations and intergenerational fairness. So Wales already has a Futures Generations Commissioner.

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00:09:40.580 --> 00:09:51.929

Ben Holt: And at the School of International Futures, we're supporting other countries and blocs following suit. And I really hope that by 2040, that's the norm. So, you know, could there be a director of intergenerational impact?

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00:09:52.040 --> 00:09:53.830

Ben Holt: That's a normal job title.

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00:09:55.030 --> 00:09:55.890

Nigel Smith: Dexter?

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00:09:56.900 --> 00:10:02.079

Dexter Docherty: Yeah, so I was going with a minister or a director of social connection.

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00:10:02.080 --> 00:10:17.970

Dexter Docherty: I think we are dealing with a whole lot of loneliness, and I think there'd be roles in building a sort of psychological safety net in the kinds of environments where people can be creative, think, connect to one another, and address that. I think that'd be a really interesting avenue for government to think about what its role would be within that kind of space.

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00:10:18.830 --> 00:10:20.469

Nigel Smith: Great. And Nancy?

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00:10:23.440 --> 00:10:39.030

Nancy Muigei: Thank you so much. I actually went with Minister for Hope, and why I go for that is because you look at the world where we are right now, from one crisis to the other, and lots of despair, and when you think about designing the futures.

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00:10:39.240 --> 00:10:52.349

Nancy Muigei: I imagine that, hope is what we need to be able to think about when we look at future generations, and what these futures will mean. And so, in many ways,

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00:10:52.710 --> 00:11:10.649

Nancy Muigei: Thinking about hope is not just wishful thinking, but it's actually something that we should be able to aim for, and so hope is one of those things that will be very elusive, and so

having a government title and somebody in charge of that, and just to bring hope into the situation would be great.

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00:11:11.010 --> 00:11:20.000

Nigel Smith: Wonderful. I love the optimism of that. Brilliant. Thank you all. Okay, I'm just going to hand it over to Callie to get the panel started. Callie, over to you.

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00:11:20.810 --> 00:11:33.589

Callie Bradley: Thank you, Nigel. So, let's begin by discussing what foresight means in the public sector. So, Dexter, I'm going to start off with you. How would you define foresight in a public sector context?

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00:11:34.020 --> 00:11:35.920

Dexter Docherty: Nice, okay, well...

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00:11:35.920 --> 00:11:58.850

Dexter Docherty: Thanks for having me. I didn't say that on my icebreaker moment. So, at the OECD, and I personally think of foresight as sort of a structured methodology or set of methodologies for anticipating, exploring, and shaping the future in a structured and systematic way. So this is about broadening the horizon of discussion, both in terms of temporality, thinking longer term.

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Dexter Docherty: But also horizontally, thinking in systems, thinking about interconnections and interdependencies between systems.

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Dexter Docherty: This is a complementary function in public sector work that has a lot of structural pressures towards being short-term and being siloed. I'm sure a lot of people listening to this understand those pressures. So.

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00:12:17.790 --> 00:12:34.170

Dexter Docherty: foresight, future studies more broadly. It's a big family of methods, so single definitions are quite hard, and often our conferences get too bogged down in arguing over which one's right. But in government, this requires two big things to me. Unlocking creativity.

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00:12:34.210 --> 00:12:49.109

Dexter Docherty: And that often involves empowering younger voices, different voices, marginal voices, to speak up, giving people who might not always be in the strategic decision-making rooms the space to talk about things, people who haven't been too accustomed to institutional behaviors.

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00:12:49.110 --> 00:13:09.720

Dexter Docherty: But then also cultivating humility, understanding and getting people to understand the limits of their models, the limits of their approaches, and how the world is changing in ways that are beyond their control. Yes, I saw a comment down there. Creativity doesn't have an age over that. Marginal voices can also include people who are older, for sure, on that.

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00:13:09.810 --> 00:13:27.910

Dexter Docherty: And then, yeah, but a lot of this work is about getting people to be clear about their own assumptions that are embedded within things, and be aware of their own worldviews. And I think this last thing, so I did my undergrad in history, and history is the study of continuity and change.

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00:13:27.910 --> 00:13:42.769

Dexter Docherty: And my firm belief is that a lot of conventional evidence-based policy has a very serious bias towards continuity. We analyze data about the past, we project it into the future, assuming that it will be largely the same. And the foresight is about bringing in the methods to understand change.

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00:13:42.770 --> 00:14:06.950

Dexter Docherty: And that often is a little bit more qualitative, it is a little bit more speculative, it is a little bit more imaginative. And I think broadly, we're trying to come in how to do that. In a public sector, a lot of these foresight methods actually came out of spaces like militaries and moved into businesses. The difference in the public sector that is crucial to this is with a military, while there is a very long-standing... you can't get surprised, that's not allowed.

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00:14:06.950 --> 00:14:16.690

Dexter Docherty: But what you're optimizing for is less complex, and so in a public sector setting, what you're optimizing for is not like in a business, where it's just

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00:14:16.690 --> 00:14:30.129

Dexter Docherty: make the biggest return on investment. It's what are the values going to be... what are the values going to be across governance, and where do we piece that together? And so, to wrap that up, there is a question of values and how we reflect on those and bring humility, awareness, and creativity in that space as well. Thank you.

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00:14:30.970 --> 00:14:43.989

Callie Bradley: Yeah, thanks, Dexter, and that's great that you've touched on these values, because, Nancy, I'm going to go to you next. What I'm wondering is, what mindsets or behaviors are essential for public servants to practice effective futures thinking?

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00:14:44.600 --> 00:14:55.670

Nancy Muigei: Yeah, so when I think about that question and reflect back to my time in civil service, one of the key things that I sort of bring on board is the issue around humility.

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00:14:55.720 --> 00:15:06.190

Nancy Muigei: And we may have the expertise, but it's also important for us to listen intently, but also to bring in different voices into the room, and so being able to...

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00:15:06.380 --> 00:15:17.950

Nancy Muigei: step back and be able to give people space to be able to participate. The other aspect as well is looking at the aspect of time, because in many ways, foresight is also

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00:15:17.950 --> 00:15:26.809

Nancy Muigei: playing around with time. And so, looking at time not just as a constraint, but really a boundary in that particular aspect.

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00:15:26.820 --> 00:15:35.970

Nancy Muigei: And because most of the work that we do is always around being able to make wise choices, or be able to,

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00:15:36.130 --> 00:15:43.560

Nancy Muigei: think about the implications of the different risks, or even the opportunities. It is important for us to be very much proactive.

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00:15:43.560 --> 00:15:56.350

Nancy Muigei: think about where we are right now, especially on the continent, with the different demographic... demographic shifts and the youth uprising, or even just the cost of living crisis. How can we be able to think

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00:15:56.400 --> 00:16:15.550

Nancy Muigei: ahead and be able to prepare policy interventions or choices that we might have to make way before the ministers or decision makers are actually able to ask us for those particular issues. The other thing I've also learned as well is to just have a curious mind, and this can come from, just

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00:16:15.620 --> 00:16:19.840

Nancy Muigei: Being, looking at the world from the point of view of a 6-year-old.

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Nancy Muigei: And so, if you think about that as a child, they ask all kinds of questions, but they also have... they never really, they're very carefree, and so being... having that particular mindset of a child.

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00:16:33.470 --> 00:16:46.670

Nancy Muigei: And then the other aspect is really around collaboration. How can we bring in voices of those that... the policies that we are designing would impact them? Not to just inform them, but actually to bring them into the space.

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00:16:46.670 --> 00:16:54.230

Nancy Muigei: So that they can actually be able to participate. And if you think about, the South African Constitution, or even the Kenyan Constitution.

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00:16:54.230 --> 00:17:06.849

Nancy Muigei: they have an aspect of public participation. And so, when you think about, foresight and foresight tools in that aspect, most of it are participatory. And within, civil service or public service or within government.

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00:17:06.849 --> 00:17:13.400

Nancy Muigei: There are a lot of opportunities that we could be able to take advantage, especially when you think about the policy cycle.

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Nancy Muigei: at what point do we need consultation, and at what point can we be able to bring in the different people? I think the other aspect that I think is quite important is agency, because if you remember, why is it that we do the things that we do, is to be able to make wise choices, because in many ways, governments are very powerful, because through their action and inaction.

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00:17:36.050 --> 00:17:39.380

Nancy Muigei: You are able to shape the futures of not just

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00:17:39.380 --> 00:17:44.410

Nancy Muigei: The different ministers that you're working on, but also the destinies of people's futures.

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00:17:44.410 --> 00:17:53.380

Nancy Muigei: And so, in many ways, it is important to be able to think about our agency as a public servant, or civil servant, and that kind.

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00:17:53.390 --> 00:17:56.340

Nancy Muigei: And I think, to just summarize it.

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Nancy Muigei: My, mentor, Jeremy Betham, who did 40 years at Shell, has this, mnemonic where he says, he calls it,

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00:18:07.960 --> 00:18:17.320

Nancy Muigei: So, heroes can practice purpose, and he summarizes it into, five features, which is scenarios and systems thinking, humility.

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00:18:17.400 --> 00:18:28.889

Nancy Muigei: patience and persistence, purpose, and then the five C's, which is curiosity, creativity, courage, confidence, and collaboration. I think, just to finalize, is that

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00:18:28.960 --> 00:18:45.429

Nancy Muigei: the... sometimes it takes... it takes a while to actually be able to see change, and so having to think about long time frames, but also being intent... intently looking at how can we be able to make wise choices each and every day. So I'll stop at that.

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00:18:46.990 --> 00:19:11.639

Callie Bradley: Thank you, Nancy. Yeah, hearing a lot of overlap between you and Dexter, you know, humility, creativity, curiosity, questioning assumptions. I'm going to come to you next, Ben. So, I'm curious, if you can share an example from your career that illustrates a key principle of foresight in action, you know, whether it's one of these principles that we've been discussing, or a different aspect of foresight. Just curious to hear about an example from your career.

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00:19:14.260 --> 00:19:19.290

Ben Holt: Absolutely, and... Everything that's been said resonates, and...

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Ben Holt: Definitely plays through the work that we've been doing.

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00:19:23.190 --> 00:19:37.120

Ben Holt: Foresight is a flexible set of tools and mindsets, right, so you can apply it across a whole range of situations to help organizations, to help communities and individuals deal with uncertainty, complexity, and a rapidly changing world.

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00:19:37.420 --> 00:19:41.480

Ben Holt: And actually using it to give people that hope and that agency.

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00:19:41.720 --> 00:19:43.919

Ben Holt: that Nancy was talking about is critical.

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00:19:44.310 --> 00:19:56.839

Ben Holt: And I spent many years working in the humanitarian sector, so you're dealing with crises there, and crises strip people of hope for the future, and agency often, over their immediate circumstances.

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00:19:57.770 --> 00:20:05.170

Ben Holt: And as an example, so when the war in Ukraine broke out, I was working for the Red Cross, Red Crescent, in the IFRC,

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00:20:05.680 --> 00:20:14.830

Ben Holt: And even as that organization then sprang into action to deal with those immediate, urgent, like, operational response needs.

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Ben Holt: My team was asked to use Foresight to look three to five years out at the kind of ripple effects caused by that conflict, and to consider how they might impact humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities elsewhere in the world over time.

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Ben Holt: And so we activated our network, we were able to tap into a massively diverse set of perspectives.

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Ben Holt: Place, presence, information, signals of change from around the world, thanks to the nature of that organization.

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Ben Holt: And to consider how that might play out. So it's combining that evidence with the creativity that's been talked about.

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Ben Holt: And we worked through that to create scenarios, to consider the potential impacts and implications for us as a humanitarian organization.

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Ben Holt: And I was really nervous, you know, playing that back to an operational team, dealing with a live war, and I'm coming to them saying, well, here's a possible future.

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Ben Holt: But after we'd done these initial engagements, I was told by some people that the issues and the questions that we'd raised

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Ben Holt: were really, really useful for those urgent, immediate decisions that were being made today, right? So, that was amazing to hear, that these bigger picture, longer-term perspectives can really complement urgent, crisis-led decision-making.

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00:21:31.410 --> 00:21:32.520

Ben Holt: And, and...

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Ben Holt: that kind of opened the door to us, and we went on to integrate Foresight thinking in their regional strategy and planning processes, so it stopped being a separate, added-on, additional thing, and it became fundamental to,

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00:21:47.780 --> 00:21:51.239

Ben Holt: to what they did. So, you know, a final point on that is that...

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00:21:52.130 --> 00:22:08.149

Ben Holt: often when you talk about foresight, or start to speculate about the future, and ask your organizations to engage in this, you often hear people saying, well, I don't know what's going to happen next week, so what's the point thinking about the future? And that came up in the poll, right, earlier.

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Ben Holt: And so...

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Ben Holt: I think if it can be used effectively during the early days of a war, that could show that it can really add value in these kind of complex, urgent, and uncertain contexts.

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Callie Bradley: Yeah, thanks, Ben, for sharing. I mean, that sounds like really challenging, but also fulfilling work in Ukraine. And just to transition from your experience, Nancy, to yours, talking about some everyday foresight tips for civil servants.

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Callie Bradley: If you had to pick, you know, one or two simple tools or methods that civil servants can start to apply for it in their day-to-day work, what would you say?

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00:22:49.060 --> 00:23:05.390

Nancy Muigei: Yeah, thank you so much. First of all, I would begin by saying that we would need to, first of all, understand the purpose as to what we want to address in terms of answering, is it a policy question, and also understand the timeframe. For instance, is it

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00:23:05.390 --> 00:23:19.140

Nancy Muigei: 3 years, because if it's 3 years, there are already conventional tools that we already have in our pocket, or in our toolbox, that we could easily draw on. But if it's more than 3 years, then I think

136

00:23:20.500 --> 00:23:35.189

Nancy Muigei: try... trying to shift from the normal electoral cycle, timeframe, and thinking about it from maybe 10 years, which is really quite, I think, the most comfortable. And so, what I would first of all say is that,

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00:23:35.570 --> 00:23:45.000

Nancy Muigei: it's really a question of, are we gathering intelligence? And if it's gathering intelligence, then we would be looking at what mapping tools could we be looking at.

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00:23:45.030 --> 00:24:01.079

Nancy Muigei: I'd give a very good example. When I worked in international aid, one of the key things that we did was to keep our risk matrix. And so, if you think about a risk matrix from a very short time frame, as an everyday tool, in many ways, you have signals of the future.

139

00:24:01.080 --> 00:24:12.860

Nancy Muigei: But although you don't define it that way, you look at your risk matrix from a political context, because usually a standard risk matrix, depending on how it would work, I'll give an example of

140

00:24:12.880 --> 00:24:28.499

Nancy Muigei: what, DEFED used to use then, or FCDO, is that you'd have the political context, you'd also have, the fiduciary, you'd have different categories that if you looked at, for instance, if you were doing,

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00:24:28.990 --> 00:24:35.359

Nancy Muigei: An impact will for that... for... for... an impact will for that, matter is that you would look at,

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00:24:35.450 --> 00:24:49.440

Nancy Muigei: the sociological issues, the technological issues, ecological, economic, and also the values. And so being able to keep a pattern of that, because

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00:24:49.440 --> 00:25:00.160

Nancy Muigei: By keeping a record of that, you're able to draw on the patterns. And so one of the key tools that you might already have in your toolbox is that you have been keeping all these risk matrices

144

00:25:00.160 --> 00:25:11.049

Nancy Muigei: for over a long period of time, and you can actually begin to make patterns of how things are changing and shifting. The other thing as well, to think about it in terms of a second tool is

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00:25:11.250 --> 00:25:30.719

Nancy Muigei: Are you... are you dealing with, issues that you can't really understand, especially, for instance, if you're working on anti-corruption, or trying to understand, money laundering, or different kinds of issues? I'm just, referencing, from my background. So you might want to look at a causal... a causal layered analysis, so that

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00:25:30.720 --> 00:25:34.230

Nancy Muigei: That goes deep into understanding the different systems.

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00:25:34.230 --> 00:25:43.570

Nancy Muigei: Because... and also how the system interacts with different issues. For instance, it could be in your day... in your daily newspapers.

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00:25:43.570 --> 00:25:57.500

Nancy Muigei: you may find that there are particular issues that are being reported, in different ways. And so, being able to go deeper beyond just the news headline. And so, if you imagine the inverted iceberg.

149

00:25:57.500 --> 00:26:07.029

Nancy Muigei: And when you go down below the iceberg, it's basically beginning to ask the hard questions, and the questions that we usually wouldn't see at the very surface. And so.

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00:26:07.210 --> 00:26:17.869

Nancy Muigei: in the first instance, what I would say is that if you are thinking about collecting intelligence, getting to know what are the issues, I would sort of say look at,

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00:26:17.870 --> 00:26:27.929

Nancy Muigei: Drivers of change or signals of change, and you can use the pastel or steep approach in terms of being able to map out those particular trends.

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00:26:27.940 --> 00:26:44.209

Nancy Muigei: But if it's something around uncertainty, think about AI and how AI is emerging. You may need some deep work in terms of research, but there's also an element of intuition that you need to be able to bring on board. And then if you're thinking about systems and how the different systems interconnect.

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00:26:44.210 --> 00:26:48.670

Nancy Muigei: You may want to think about causal layered analysis, and there are many other tools.

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00:26:48.670 --> 00:26:50.280

Nancy Muigei: Yeah. Thank you.

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00:26:51.160 --> 00:27:00.389

Callie Bradley: Yeah, great, Nancy. Thanks for sharing. I can see how, you know, especially just recognizing patterns over and over can become a really implementable, daily tool.

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00:27:00.390 --> 00:27:15.149

Callie Bradley: Ben, moving to you, just to zoom out a little bit more, we're talking more now about frameworks and approaches. Which frameworks and approaches can really help civil servants make sense of signals and connect them to emerging risks or opportunities in their work?

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00:27:16.260 --> 00:27:21.649

Ben Holt: Yeah, I think everything Nancy said is excellent, and to build on it, I think...

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00:27:22.390 --> 00:27:27.219

Ben Holt: It's partly how you think about the future, as well as what you think about.

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00:27:27.370 --> 00:27:31.059

Ben Holt: When you're talking about signals of change and making use of them.

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00:27:31.490 --> 00:27:46.009

Ben Holt: Because as humans, we think about the future all the time. You know, we imagine possibilities, we make plans, we write strategies and create budget projections, and our organizations are designed to deliver stuff over time, right? And so.

161

00:27:46.580 --> 00:27:51.869

Ben Holt: All of that is talking about the future. And so, while it's natural.

162

00:27:52.070 --> 00:28:04.150

Ben Holt: there's also a bunch of psychological biases, preconceptions, and assumptions that shape our view of the future. So before you start to be able to make good use of those emerging signals of change, you have to question.

163

00:28:04.340 --> 00:28:05.600

Ben Holt: How do you...

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00:28:05.940 --> 00:28:11.989

Ben Holt: currently think about the future, and where do those ideas come from? What's clouding those signals, potentially?

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00:28:12.510 --> 00:28:23.919

Ben Holt: So, the... there's an area of tools, called Futures Literacy. So, really, that's helping you get better at dealing with uncertainty and complexity, helps you...

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00:28:23.950 --> 00:28:36.280

Ben Holt: to combine the data and evidence with creativity and imagination, and to expand the range of possibilities that you're open to when you think about a future. So, a simple trick there.

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00:28:36.580 --> 00:28:45.090

Ben Holt: can be to... to shift the questions that you ask. So, if you were a vehicle manufacturer, asking what is the future of a car?

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00:28:45.510 --> 00:28:51.509

Ben Holt: We'll give you one set of possible options for yourself as an organization, for the industry you work in.

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00:28:51.860 --> 00:28:53.610

Ben Holt: But if you were to ask.

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00:28:54.900 --> 00:29:12.999

Ben Holt: a broader question. You know, what are possible futures, in the plural, for personal transport, you suddenly open yourself up to exploring a much wider range of signals, to considering different options, right? And, there's a good book by Amy Webb called The Signals Are Talking, and there's lots of examples in there.

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00:29:13.200 --> 00:29:15.590

Ben Holt: But for you, you know, to make it concrete, again.

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00:29:16.230 --> 00:29:24.740

Ben Holt: Lots of people were intrigued by the idea of personal flying transport, and they understood cars, they understood planes, so lots of people tried to stick wings on a car.

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00:29:24.740 --> 00:29:39.709

Ben Holt: Because they understood those things from their own experience and from the past. And that's what they imagined the future would look like. Meanwhile, across a whole different set of industries, people are inventing new kinds of computer software and chips and new types of materials.

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00:29:40.520 --> 00:29:48.949

Ben Holt: And the drone industry emerged, right? Which has completely shifted the future of that kind of individualized personal air transport.

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00:29:49.280 --> 00:29:50.210

Ben Holt: So...

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00:29:50.330 --> 00:29:56.680

Ben Holt: That would be a kind of... my take on it initially would be to think about how you think in the first place.

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00:29:57.000 --> 00:30:00.820

Ben Holt: I paused there. There's other things we could go into, but I'm aware.

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00:30:01.210 --> 00:30:11.289

Callie Bradley: No, thank you, Ben. Yeah, that theme has just come up so much in this discussion of expanding the range of possibilities in the future, and kind of examining those assumptions and biases.

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00:30:11.330 --> 00:30:24.040

Callie Bradley: Dexter, I'm gonna pivot a little bit. So, you know, we saw in our poll that one of the main blockers for people implementing futures thinking is short-term priorities from leadership. So, I'm wondering.

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00:30:24.040 --> 00:30:31.929

Callie Bradley: How can foresight be used in decisions that are short-term or high pressure, where there may not be sufficient time to step back?

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00:30:32.670 --> 00:30:40.869

Dexter Docherty: Yeah, I mean, I'm gonna be a bit of a problematic panelist and play with this. I think it's a bit of a misconception that, that foresight is slow.

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00:30:40.870 --> 00:30:51.979

Dexter Docherty: You know, and then depth is what you want to drop in a compressed situation. You know, I'm going to spend a little bit of time maybe talking about causal layered analysis, CLA, that Nancy brought up, but

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00:30:51.980 --> 00:31:04.189

Dexter Docherty: At the root of that and the heart of that are metaphors. Metaphors are fairly quick to develop, and a very effective way of processing information in a shared way, in a very compressed time... amount of time.

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00:31:04.280 --> 00:31:24.170

Dexter Docherty: And the counterfactual, pretty much all of the conventional evidence-based policy tools that I learned in master's degrees in education and other foreign parts of government are very slow. So it's not like your counterpoint here is that we've got a big set of tools that are excellent to use in a pinch, and foresight is coming in as the only thing that is slow.

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00:31:24.170 --> 00:31:42.949

Dexter Docherty: But then to get into CLA, so, I mean, this is one area, if you can master some tools, that can be very useful in this. So I've seen, you know, was in a master class at our OECD, or, or actually over dinner with me once, so Hale and Ayatula, who pioneered this method, can apply it in, like.

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00:31:42.950 --> 00:32:00.929

Dexter Docherty: 15, 20, 30 minutes, get you down to the core story and metaphor that you're telling about yourself and your situation, and then figure out how to reframe that. And what a method like CLA allows you to do is take huge amounts of noise and information, the litany.

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00:32:00.930 --> 00:32:15.900

Dexter Docherty: and figure out how to process that more calmly and carefully. So, by... it's not so much, hey, there's not time to step back, it's flipping that on its head and saying, by stepping back, by working on our fundamentals and our foundations.

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00:32:15.900 --> 00:32:23.679

Dexter Docherty: We can process these other things more quickly. We can build a frame of reference that everybody can work with, right? And...

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00:32:23.710 --> 00:32:39.039

Dexter Docherty: Again, the idea of not having time to step back, any psychologist would tell you if you're in a stressful situation, step back and take a breath first. That 30 seconds of slowing yourself down is a smart investment of time.

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00:32:39.240 --> 00:32:51.039

Dexter Docherty: And so, for me, that story was, I was sitting with Sohail, I was frustrated about some work stuff, and he called me, he's like, there's too much noise here, what's the metaphor you're telling me about your frustrations? And it was...

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00:32:51.040 --> 00:33:01.979

Dexter Docherty: I felt like I was like a Ferrari being asked to pull a plow in a government setting. And he was like, well, okay, let's rethink this. And what we flipped it to.

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00:33:01.980 --> 00:33:17.770

Dexter Docherty: was that I was... I was... I wanted to move really fast, and I was in a place that needed me to do slow, incremental work. And we flipped to a metaphor of tortoise and the hare. I need to figure out how to move at different paces at different times, to apply different tools and different methods.

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00:33:17.770 --> 00:33:23.759

Dexter Docherty: And that also applies, I think, more broadly to foresight methods, that there are circumstances and situations

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00:33:23.760 --> 00:33:33.410

Dexter Docherty: Where you, as you build up your toolkit and your familiarity, you draw on methods that answer really quickly to problems, and what that also does is

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00:33:33.410 --> 00:33:52.180

Dexter Docherty: learn to figure out how to cultivate that time for the deeper, longer-term work. I think within that, it's important for us to get mastery of things like AI tools that can allow us to do some of the conventional work more quickly, to free up more time to stretch those introspective processes for longer.

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00:33:53.600 --> 00:34:08.550

Callie Bradley: Thank you, and yeah, Dexter, you know, I love what you said about stepping back as a smart investment of time. I think that's true in so many different scenarios. I'm going to stay with you now. Moving forward towards sort of applying foresight to real-world challenges.

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00:34:08.550 --> 00:34:21.720

Callie Bradley: I'd love to hear about one example from your work about, you know, how you choose which future scenarios to explore when you're working on complex issues, and how those choices kind of shape your planning or interventions.

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00:34:22.230 --> 00:34:37.019

Dexter Docherty: Yeah, so I think I have a couple examples, but I want to start with a framework here from... this one from a futures and foresight luminary that I didn't meet in Pierre Wach, who described foresight and scenarios, really, as the gentle art of re-perceiving.

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00:34:37.050 --> 00:34:52.209

Dexter Docherty: And each of those words in that statement are important to think about how you go about selecting the right aspects of scenarios. So, my primary goal is about getting people to rethink and reflect on their assumptions, to re-perceive where they're coming from.

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00:34:52.210 --> 00:34:59.780

Dexter Docherty: And this sometimes can be getting people to think, and other people, to have empathy for different perspectives, whatever that may be.

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00:34:59.780 --> 00:35:10.660

Dexter Docherty: But the, you know, the identification of assumptions is key at the front of that, to get a sense of what... how are people currently thinking, and how do we broaden that out?

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00:35:10.660 --> 00:35:25.200

Dexter Docherty: What that means is likelihood is not the central priority on these things. It's a secondary priority, where we get a sense of, okay, how... how tolerable is this group to different stages of re-perceiving?

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00:35:25.320 --> 00:35:37.999

Dexter Docherty: And then when we get to that, those words, gentle art, this means your selection process needs to meet people where they're at. So, you know, we do a lot of work at the OECD with economic modelers and things like that.

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00:35:38.180 --> 00:35:57.059

Dexter Docherty: you know, it's not really the right place in a lot of our work to come in and tell them that they shouldn't be... they should be using qualitative methods entirely and throw out the numbers, or to rethink the whole structure of capitalism. Sometimes if you've got a team that's working with an economic model, the scenarios you pick are saying, let's pick 2 or 3 of the parameters in your model.

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00:35:57.060 --> 00:36:03.470

Dexter Docherty: And run some scenarios where you vary those slightly. And that means you get 4 lines on a graph instead of one.

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00:36:03.490 --> 00:36:17.439

Dexter Docherty: That has helped broaden out their thinking, it has helped them re-perceive their structure a little bit, and it met that audience where it was, and maybe you can continue doing engagement on that. So we've done a lot of that with our trade modelers, for instance, at the OECD.

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00:36:17.600 --> 00:36:37.460

Dexter Docherty: But then in terms of how we think of that modulating and the art side, I've got a bunch of examples of how we think about time in our work. So, sometimes with groups that are really, really bogged down, it can be really useful to think longer term and give people space to imagine a very different system.

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00:36:37.460 --> 00:36:52.870

Dexter Docherty: And, you know, there's a quote out there about how there are some decades where nothing happens, and some months where decades happen. If you work with people on a long timeline, because they can't imagine how their system could transform over the next 6 months.

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00:36:52.870 --> 00:36:59.589

Dexter Docherty: But you work on a 2050 timeline, and now, all of a sudden they're open. And then you come back just at the end of the exercise and ask, you know.

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00:36:59.600 --> 00:37:04.319

Dexter Docherty: A historical budget, how much do you think the world changed between 1988 and 1993?

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00:37:04.480 --> 00:37:14.420

Dexter Docherty: And then all of a sudden, people are open to the idea of the scale of change not necessarily being strained by how long of a horizon you're talking about.

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00:37:14.520 --> 00:37:31.629

Dexter Docherty: But then particularly when we've been doing a lot of our AI scenarios work, and I know that was popular with a lot of people here, we... when we've been doing work with the AI Futures Expert Group at the OEC, you know, a lot of really leading AI scientists, they have very, very big disagreements about the timelines of AI development.

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00:37:31.730 --> 00:37:42.059

Dexter Docherty: And so we deliberately, in the selection of our scenarios, didn't, in some of the exercises, put timelines on. We just used two, one that was next generation, and one that was transformational.

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00:37:42.060 --> 00:37:54.150

Dexter Docherty: And what that allowed us to do was to... the group didn't talk past each other anymore. It's just next generation to some meant 6 months, to others it meant 5 years. And transformational for some was 2 years, and for some it was 25.

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00:37:54.610 --> 00:38:05.590

Dexter Docherty: But all of a sudden, you can modulate how you name the scenarios, how you put them together, to allow a group to share, allow a group to engage in each other's process of re-perceiving.

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00:38:05.650 --> 00:38:22.810

Dexter Docherty: And then other times, with... when we've had to... we've got an upcoming publication on AI scenarios, but we did put a date on it, and it's 2030. And that's the case, if you don't get flexibility on your timeline, that means you have to have four scenarios there. We've got one of AI progress stalling, and AI progress,

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00:38:23.170 --> 00:38:29.000

Dexter Docherty: sort of slowing down, AI progress continuing, and AI progress accelerating.

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00:38:29.160 --> 00:38:35.769

Dexter Docherty: And within that, we're picking... we're modulating the scenarios that we're picking.

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00:38:35.770 --> 00:38:57.939

Dexter Docherty: So that we're bringing the group together, we're making sure that you can have a shared conversation, because people allow each other to re-perceive within that context. We're meeting our audience where they're at, and we're trying to understand what their biases are, and how to, you know, work on broadening and elongating their timeline. But that doesn't mean making people who think in 6 months think in 50 years.

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00:38:57.980 --> 00:39:13.949

Dexter Docherty: And that also doesn't necessarily mean that we have to, you know, completely reimagine everything, but it also doesn't necessarily mean that we pick the most likely story in any case. We're just picking the story that will most effectively allow people to step back and broaden out what they're thinking about.

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00:39:15.370 --> 00:39:31.339

Callie Bradley: Yeah, thanks, Dexter. That's really helpful to hear how, you know, these principles are actually applied in your career, and the decades where nothing happens and months where decades happen, I feel like, is a great saying for our current times. It feels like these are definitely months where decades are happening.

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00:39:31.390 --> 00:39:39.989

Callie Bradley: Nancy, I'm gonna come to you. I want to hear how Foresight can help public servants respond to

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00:39:39.990 --> 00:39:52.039

Callie Bradley: One of the pressing issues that's facing the world today, you know, climate change, demographic shifts, steepening inequality, what's one way where you see Foresight helping public servants respond to these?

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00:39:55.600 --> 00:40:00.900

Nancy Muigei: I think, just to, caveat that, whilst...

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00:40:01.560 --> 00:40:17.559

Nancy Muigei: where the world is right now, especially when you look at, from the Summit of the Future, and even from COVID... from the COVID-19 time until now, is that there's been a lot of our promise around what futures can be able to do.

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00:40:17.680 --> 00:40:29.140

Nancy Muigei: Which, to be fair, there's a lot that futures can be able to do when you think about, public interest questions, especially when you look at the Global South, and how it's been, how...

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00:40:30.130 --> 00:40:42.130

Nancy Muigei: Foresight has been able to help us on issues to do with addressing the question of HIV and AIDS, addressing the issues around climate change, or even addressing the question of young people, right?

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00:40:42.230 --> 00:40:59.629

Nancy Muigei: we might not be there yet in terms of answering these particular questions, but one of the key things I would like to be able to begin with is, first of all, there's a quote I saw in a book I'm currently reading, known as Beyond Broken. It says.

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00:40:59.630 --> 00:41:17.169

Nancy Muigei: Societies change when people imagine new ways of being. And so, one of the arguments that the book does make, especially in terms of observation, is that while some of the systems, when you look at maybe cost of living crisis that can give us something around the economic models that we have.

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00:41:17.310 --> 00:41:24.179

Nancy Muigei: While some of these systems might appear broken, or having failed, They're not permanent.

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00:41:24.790 --> 00:41:27.680

Nancy Muigei: And so, in many ways, they can be able to change.

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00:41:27.680 --> 00:41:50.050

Nancy Muigei: And so that particular change is what... where now Foresight comes in, because this is what Foresight was actually designed for, to be able to address complex questions, to be able to address uncertainty, to be able to also address ambiguity, and if you think about the different questions that you have, especially with what you're currently working on.

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00:41:50.050 --> 00:41:58.210

Nancy Muigei: A very good example, in 2007, when the World Development Report was launched, it actually focused on young people.

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00:41:58.230 --> 00:42:05.589

Nancy Muigei: It was talking about the youth bulge, and and the... just looking at extrapolation of figures in terms of

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00:42:05.680 --> 00:42:20.069

Nancy Muigei: where the demographic shifts would be, especially when you look at the continent, Asia, and a number of other particular spaces where this particular report did. Around the same time, in 2009, 2010, until 11,

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00:42:20.070 --> 00:42:32.310

Nancy Muigei: I was with the Institute of Economic Affairs, then we worked on what we call the Kenya Youth Scenarios. And at that particular time, in 2010, we looked into... we worked with young people, most of them were

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00:42:32.390 --> 00:42:45.309

Nancy Muigei: the age of between 18 to 30, or 35, the oldest, so the median age around that time was around maybe 18, 19, thereabouts.

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00:42:45.310 --> 00:42:58.039

Nancy Muigei: But that said, when we did these scenarios, they actually came up with 4 possible ways in which they sort of saw Kenya evolving by 2030. We are now in 2025.

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00:42:58.140 --> 00:43:14.189

Nancy Muigei: Five years into that particular scenario, timeframe coming in. But the interesting thing is that what happened last year in Kenya with the Gen Z uprising was not a surprise to us, because this is something that

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00:43:14.190 --> 00:43:25.690

Nancy Muigei: the young people actually foresaw happening, because they looked at the different tensions and how the different systems would interact, especially when you have a situation where

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00:43:26.020 --> 00:43:33.720

Nancy Muigei: Your economic systems are not serving the people the way they should, the health systems are broken, and...

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00:43:33.720 --> 00:43:37.150

Nancy Muigei: There's increased corruption and increased unemployment.

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00:43:37.150 --> 00:43:55.199

Nancy Muigei: and there isn't proper implementation of the Constitution, what all of those particular, outcomes would have, especially when they're... when these particular systems interact with each other, you sort of have a situation of what we saw happen last year, when the young people were able to,

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00:43:55.200 --> 00:44:13.999

Nancy Muigei: challenge the issues around the financial bill. And so, if I was a policymaker and thinking about some of these questions, one of the key things, especially when you think about foresight, is responsible foresight. What is it for? And why are we doing this? And so, one of the key things, especially when you're thinking about it, is

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00:44:14.480 --> 00:44:30.730

Nancy Muigei: how do the... how does the outcome of the foresight work that you do inform the policy choices that need to be made? Because one of the key things that I've also observed, especially having worked in civil services, that sometimes you do...

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00:44:30.770 --> 00:44:39.320

Nancy Muigei: You, you actually... most of the time, you'd find that, the work that... the foresight work is procured to an external party.

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00:44:39.330 --> 00:44:56.189

Nancy Muigei: And so, after the work has been done, you have a very good report. Sometimes, nothing really happens. And it's not because that people have chosen not to be able to use that, it's because things move quite quickly. And so, how do you make sure that the outcomes of a foresight process

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00:44:56.190 --> 00:45:15.790

Nancy Muigei: can actually be broken down in such a way that it's easily implementable from the short term, mid-term, to the long term. And also working towards how to be able to resource that, because in many ways, to some extent, it might not be easy in some of that, because there's a lot that needs to be done, especially when you think about

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00:45:15.790 --> 00:45:27.530

Nancy Muigei: Youth unemployment as a challenge, especially on the continent, or a broken economic model, and how to be able to reverse some of those particular issues that have been done over years.

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00:45:27.530 --> 00:45:43.720

Nancy Muigei: And so I think, for me, when I think about how... what civil servants would need to be able to address some of these questions, I think foresight is the way. But, one of the key things that I have to step back is we would need to...

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00:45:44.050 --> 00:45:58.080

Nancy Muigei: Consider how to bring in different voices and different divergent views, because that is where the beauty of the work is, but also to caveat that, that once we have the outcome of the process, not to stop there.

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00:45:58.130 --> 00:46:09.669

Nancy Muigei: keep on testing and seeing whether what we have produced is actually fit for purpose. And the more iterations we are able to do, especially with the work that we do, the better it is for us.

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00:46:09.670 --> 00:46:23.510

Nancy Muigei: And also, just to also say that sometimes the outcomes of what you develop might not easily be embraced. I remember in 2012, at the time when this work had come out, there were particular policymakers who said that

254

00:46:23.560 --> 00:46:26.160

Nancy Muigei: Something of this nature would never happen.

255

00:46:26.220 --> 00:46:45.830

Nancy Muigei: But, after last year, there are many... I attended many meetings where myself and an ex-colleague of mine who worked on this particular work were trying to sort of help patch up some of these particular issues. And so, I think one of the key things as well is to develop the skill on how to be able to

256

00:46:46.360 --> 00:46:54.780

Nancy Muigei: communicates to... to policymakers who want to make... who want to maintain a business-as-usual mindset, because you.

257

00:46:54.780 --> 00:47:10.389

Callie Bradley: Sorry, Nancy, thank you so much. That's really helpful to hear. I'm sorry, we're just going to have to move towards the Q&A, but I'd love to hear a little bit more from you during that, about some more, examples from your work here.

258

00:47:10.410 --> 00:47:22.389

Callie Bradley: So, thank you guys all so much for that wonderful panel. Everyone, just remember to keep dropping in any questions you have for our speakers in the Zoom Q&A.

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00:47:22.390 --> 00:47:32.439

Callie Bradley: And, quickly, before we head into questions, I'd love to invite you all to continue today's conversation in Apolitical's long-term governance and futures thinking community.

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00:47:32.440 --> 00:47:43.079

Callie Bradley: It's a space where you can connect directly with other public servants exploring similar questions, and we'll share resources, reflections, and opportunities to go deeper into the ideas we've touched on today.

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00:47:43.100 --> 00:47:46.069

Callie Bradley: You'll find a link in the chat, and I hope to see you there.

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00:47:46.510 --> 00:47:50.700

Callie Bradley: Okay, now I'm going to hand it back to Nigel for the Q&A.

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00:47:51.200 --> 00:48:01.119

Nigel Smith: Great. Thanks so much, Callie, and thanks, Ben, Nancy, and Dexter. That's such a rich, conversation. So the Q&A is good. We've got relatively limited time, so very much quick fire.

264

00:48:01.130 --> 00:48:15.209

Nigel Smith: And I'm going to prioritize the questions that have had the most upvotes, in the Q&A on Zoom. So, maybe just pop up your hand, if you want to have a crack at this one. There's some very tough questions, I've got to say, so we'll see what we get into.

265

00:48:15.400 --> 00:48:31.980

Nigel Smith: But first, can you just share any examples from a public service where decision makers have acted on foresight-based analysis or recommendations at any sort of level of government? But, you know, what are their drivers, and what arguments were the most, salient? So some, you know, kind of practical

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00:48:31.980 --> 00:48:35.969

Nigel Smith: examples. Does any of you have any examples there?

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00:48:42.780 --> 00:48:44.273

Nigel Smith: Come on.

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00:48:45.620 --> 00:49:04.569

Dexter Docherty: Yeah, I mean, off the top of my head, there was some futures work that we were doing in Indonesia as part of, as part of a broader project supporting the development of a sort of medium, long, 20-year infrastructure development strategy.

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00:49:04.570 --> 00:49:16.059

Dexter Docherty: And there was some exercises there where we were going exploring lots of different features, and one of the things is, like, the concept of resilience being mainstreamed throughout the broader development strategy.

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00:49:16.060 --> 00:49:41.040

Dexter Docherty: was a direct outcome of that exercise. And so, I think within that context, that is something where a lot of the impact of foresight is something like, that was a big picture reflection for a high-level, long-term strategy, but a particular point like that, and then coming in and saying, alright, well, how do we think about this at every different level of our analysis? How do we come in and embed that kind of thinking? How do we upskill on the methodology

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00:49:41.040 --> 00:50:05.469

Dexter Docherty: that allow us to be prepared for multiple eventualities, prepared for shifts in what has been a very good development arc and trajectory for Indonesia, but prepared for the surprises that were coming with this. And, I mean, a lot of those were due to geopolitical and or especially environmental developments, but that's the immediate one that comes to mind from the last couple of, little couple, not months, but a little less little bit of my own.

272

00:50:08.440 --> 00:50:14.179

Nigel Smith: Great, thank you. Okay, another quite big question,

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00:50:14.290 --> 00:50:21.940

Nigel Smith: How can we de- this is from Susan, how can we decolonize the way we practice foresight and engage with futures?

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00:50:23.180 --> 00:50:24.160

Nigel Smith: Ben.

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00:50:26.780 --> 00:50:31.789

Ben Holt: So the organization that I'm working with

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00:50:32.070 --> 00:50:37.189

Ben Holt: For the majority of my time, the School of International Futures is a global organization.

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00:50:37.530 --> 00:50:44.080

Ben Holt: and has a network called the Next Generation Futures Practitioners Network. Now, these are...

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00:50:44.200 --> 00:50:54.410

Ben Holt: younger people, they're change makers in one field or another, who have joined this program to gain the kind of foresight and future skills to supplement and enhance and

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00:50:54.420 --> 00:51:05.360

Ben Holt: complement the work they're already doing. That global network is incredible, the people within it. And a project that's been generated by that and is benefiting from it is,

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00:51:07.410 --> 00:51:22.300

Ben Holt: surfacing and collecting and sharing futures methods from around the world. Because it's been said a few times, the way we perceive time, the language that we use and how that conceives of the future, the models which we use to,

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00:51:23.000 --> 00:51:34.600

Ben Holt: to make our plans and what we consider, you know, fairness over the generations is different from place to place, and so there is work going on to surface that and to challenge the

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00:51:34.860 --> 00:51:42.280

Ben Holt: the kind of dominant futures models, which have certainly grown out of a kind of Western intellectual tradition in a certain small subset of universities.

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00:51:43.640 --> 00:52:01.189

Nigel Smith: Great, thank you. Thanks. And as people said, it got a lot of upvotes, and it's a really, really important, question. Quite a few people, Nancy, Saabjit, and other people in the chat have just asked if you could just, share the type of risk matrix that you, mentioned.

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00:52:04.370 --> 00:52:20.789

Nancy Muigei: So, the risk matrix, although it was... is designed really to be able to monitor the context under which, international aid programs are delivered. So, it could be specific to a particular program, for instance, you're delivering,

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00:52:22.710 --> 00:52:29.990

Nancy Muigei: budget support to a government, or... let me use budget support to a government. So, it would be specific to a particular program.

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00:52:30.030 --> 00:52:47.829

Nancy Muigei: But the reason as to why I took a risk matrix in that particular, as an example, was that these are some of the tools that within, public service or civil service, we may have access to, especially around being able to monitor different kinds of risk.

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00:52:47.830 --> 00:52:51.470

Nigel Smith: It could be operational risk, it could be delivery risks.

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00:52:51.470 --> 00:53:07.920

Nancy Muigei: political risks, and also contextual risk and fiduciary risk, and apart from other risks that you may be able to monitor. And so, why I sort of take a risk matrix in this particular aspect is because if you are looking at a three-year,

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00:53:08.040 --> 00:53:27.290

Nancy Muigei: time frame, this might be a very good way to be able to just pick out some of the signals in terms of the different changes. And if you're able to look at it for over time, you can be able to sort of see the patterns in terms of what is shifting and why... and begin to ask those questions, like.

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00:53:27.290 --> 00:53:42.809

Nancy Muigei: what is... what is the underlying reason as to why we have all these particular shifts? But that is just one way, but the only caveat I would give around a risk matrix is that it's still linear, but it's also a very good source of collective intelligence.

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00:53:42.810 --> 00:53:58.639

Nancy Muigei: From a day-to-day perspective. So, if you're already using a risk matrix, maybe what I would sort of say is that, to go one step back and to be able to look at the different, risk matrices that you've had over time and begin to make sense of

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00:53:58.640 --> 00:54:12.999

Nancy Muigei: the changes that have happened, and begin to ask those particular questions. The other thing that we also do have access to, as civil servants, I don't know about the institution where I previously worked, is that we actually got a summary of.

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00:54:13.190 --> 00:54:17.229

Nigel Smith: What was happening in the world in terms of the daily newspapers.

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00:54:17.230 --> 00:54:35.450

Nancy Muigei: And so that, in a sense, gives you a hint of the different issues that could be happening. And if you are doing a horizon scanning, that provides you a very good, entry point to be able to have a sense of the different things that are be... how... in terms of framing, yeah.

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00:54:35.450 --> 00:54:37.620

Nigel Smith: More signals.

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00:54:38.200 --> 00:54:50.499

Nigel Smith: Yeah, Dexter, this might be a good one for you. Luna asks, I think, very specific question. I work with conflict of interest as part of the due diligence process when selecting officials who may advise the department.

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00:54:50.710 --> 00:54:53.690

Nigel Smith: What futures thinking can I apply to that scenario?

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00:54:54.280 --> 00:54:55.230

Nigel Smith: Any thoughts?

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00:54:56.220 --> 00:55:00.710

Dexter Docherty: I didn't even know it was gonna be a test. Nope.

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00:55:01.430 --> 00:55:07.490

Dexter Docherty: I would think that... What you can do in these settings, even...

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00:55:08.010 --> 00:55:18.640

Dexter Docherty: I think if you were to take something like the HR process and get interviews with some of the people that you're selecting, you could ask questions that would put people in positions to...

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00:55:18.640 --> 00:55:32.019

Dexter Docherty: To have to empathize with other stakeholders, and get them to demonstrate whether they could understand and speak from or... and... and play act from different perspectives, and provide an understanding of different angles.

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00:55:32.020 --> 00:55:49.029

Dexter Docherty: And I think that might be a useful way of seeing whether those people could, within their responsible capacity, get in the room and not just advocate for a single position, but think constructively about how to find links between multiple positions. Look, I think there's a whole bunch of other sales.

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00:55:49.030 --> 00:55:49.560

Nigel Smith: Thank you.

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00:55:49.560 --> 00:56:02.649

Dexter Docherty: our futures process is about making sure you check the backgrounds and the integrity of the people and all of that, so this is not legal advice that you should take. But I think there are ways to use questions about personas and design futures exercises in your interview process to make that come up.

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00:56:02.650 --> 00:56:19.630

Nigel Smith: Yeah, great. No, Luna, I hope that's helpful. And again, just a little plug for that course that Vera mentioned at the beginning. This is sort of the type of scenarios that that course will help you think about. Okay, last question, and it is a big one. So, you might all want a very brief, response.

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00:56:19.740 --> 00:56:21.290

Nigel Smith: To this.

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00:56:21.570 --> 00:56:24.890

Nigel Smith: So many environmentalists and economists predicted

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00:56:24.930 --> 00:56:44.089

Nigel Smith: Through evidence-based practice, the harmful effects of climate change and the housing crisis for years. The biggest roadblock was the financial banking investment sectors. How do we balance futurist speculation that is largely on track with the negligence of those with financial powers that have the ability, but don't mitigate the devastation

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00:56:44.090 --> 00:56:53.819

Nigel Smith: and influence actions for the better. Now, I can see Ben and Dexter already having a little grin at this one, so... and a little nod, maybe. Ben, do you want to have a little...

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00:56:53.850 --> 00:56:55.040

Nigel Smith: Attempt first.

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00:56:55.260 --> 00:56:56.680

Ben Holt: Sure, I mean...

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00:56:57.280 --> 00:57:07.149

Ben Holt: It's interesting, because I've been having quite a few conversations about the insurance industry, because those are... that is an industry engaged with the future, and there are some really interesting

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00:57:07.690 --> 00:57:25.029

Ben Holt: crisis-focused insurance policies coming up, and the conversation now rattling around is, how might the insurance industry begin to invest in mitigation ahead of crises to prevent it? Because there's a financial incentive for them to do that. But it's a really interesting blurring of a boundary between

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00:57:25.200 --> 00:57:33.189

Ben Holt: Kind of anticipatory action, development, and pure naked capitalism. So there's an interesting space in there to explore.

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00:57:34.080 --> 00:57:44.510

Nigel Smith: This actually feels like a good place to, talk about in the, in the, in the, in the online community, in the, maybe, maybe it's a good, rich discussion that can be had, online.

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00:57:44.510 --> 00:57:56.619

Nigel Smith: Look, I'm really sorry, we are very much running out of time, so no more time for any more responses, but do please engage with us and our panelists. I hope they'll be able to join us in the community, but I'll hand back

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00:57:56.620 --> 00:57:58.599

Nigel Smith: to Callie to... to wrap up.

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00:57:59.760 --> 00:58:14.380

Callie Bradley: Thanks, Nigel. So yeah, we've had some incredible wisdom from each of our speakers, so much so that just not enough time in the day to hear it all. I'd like to thank you all... I'd like to ask you all to join me in giving Dexter, Nancy, and Ben a virtual round of applause.

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00:58:14.380 --> 00:58:20.790

Callie Bradley: And most importantly, thanks to you, the audience, for investing and learning and being so engaged in this topic.

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00:58:21.040 --> 00:58:30.200

Callie Bradley: The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today, which will help us continue improving our content. We really appreciate your responses.

322

00:58:30.530 --> 00:58:44.750

Callie Bradley: Before you go, and while you're responding to that poll, I want to share a few more events that you can register for to join us again soon. If you're not available to be there live, remember that you can always register for the event in order to get sent the recording to catch up whenever suits you.

323

00:58:44.970 --> 00:58:52.760

Callie Bradley: So coming up next Thursday, you can join us for the Career Mapping Toolkit, where you'll learn the most effective ways to plan ahead when it comes to your career.

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00:58:52.920 --> 00:58:59.249

Callie Bradley: In two weeks, we have AI for Time Management, the last session of the year in our AI Skills Labs series.

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00:58:59.430 --> 00:59:07.900

Callie Bradley: And to finish off the year, we'll be exploring how to use data to tell better stories with Dr. Steve McFeely, Chief Statistician at the OECD.

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00:59:08.930 --> 00:59:21.769

Callie Bradley: Okay, that is all we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful, and we want to say a huge thank you to our speakers, to everyone who's made today happen, and to you for taking the time out of your busy days.

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00:59:21.870 --> 00:59:31.580

Callie Bradley: Keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, and we hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon. Have a great day. Goodbye.