Baselines and Paradigms: Building Bridges Across Generations

A Programme and Guide

Contents

Overview

The Baselines and Paradigms: Building Bridges Across Generations is based upon a concept note, presented in February 2017, and attached to this programme.

The guide and programme that follows outlines ways that this first initiative should be structured and managed, using the methodology referred in this document as Futures Roundtables [FREs]. The guide and programme are divided into four sections:

1. The purpose of the exercise
2. Generational participants, experts and facilitators
3. The exercise programme and agenda
4. Tip sheets for the organiser

The purpose of the exercise

The purpose of the exercise is [i] to identify possible different generational perceptions about a set of broad *futures-related* issues, [ii] to explore the consequences of such contending perceptions when it comes to identifying and dealing with future challenges and opportunities and [iii] to suggest ways that generational differences, if and when they occur, can be reconciled or at least co-exist in ways that can be mutually supportive.

- What sorts of broad opportunities and challenges do each foresee over a two-decade timeframe?
- What might be the sorts of technologies that each believe will have broadly defined key, possibly transformative impacts?
- What sorts of threats might challenge global peace and stability, and what ways can they be mitigated?
- What will be the basis of the 'human habitat' over two-decades time, and what does this say about the ways society can be defined?
- What might be the nature of government and governance within a two-decades time frame?
- To what extent might the concept of 'the family' change, and if it does, what will be the consequences and the alternatives?
- What will be the nature of 'friendship' over two-decades time? How will friendship be developed and maintained?

- What are the sorts of health threats and opportunities that can be foreseen, and what might be their broad societal impacts?

- What will be the purpose, parameters and processes of 'education' in the future?
- How and in what ways do the different generations agree or disagree with their respective world views?

These questions not only determine the programme and agenda, but also the outputs. The latter should lead to [i] a series of answers to the questions, above, [ii] the basis for developing ways to understand and bridge generational perspectives for planners and policymakers, [iii] a compilation of both # i & ii leading to relevant publications; [iv] justification for undertaking similar initiatives in other parts of the world, and [v] an initial test of the approach and methodology of the *Generational* project.

Participants, Experts and Facilitators

There are four types of actors in the FRE initiative. *Generational Participants* refers to the target groups, which in this instance are those representing age, social and economic differences, which the

Generational project is designed to explore. A second group consists of the *Experts* who will individually and collectively describe what they feel will be the future in two-decades time. The third element, the *Organisers*, consists of those people who prepare all aspects of administration and organisation pertaining to the FRE.

Participants. This initial initiative is intended to determine the attitudes of two broad age groups, to the extent possible differentiated in terms of background, gender and experience.

There will be 18 participants – 6 from the African continent, and 12 from Europe, principally the United Kingdom.

Age groups:

- 9 participants between 20 and 24 years old
- 9 participants between 55 and 65 years old

Gender:

- If possible 9 women and 9 men

Experience:

- 20-24 years old -- 4 with university backgrounds and 5 school leavers; 3 in professional positions, 4 in non-professional positions, 2 unemployed

Experts. The programme requires 5 experts to 'paint portraits of the future'. Each will be asked to consider the possible impacts of their respective expertise in a three-decade perspective,

and then together the 5 will combine their expertise to suggest what a 2050 world might look like. These 5 experts should be involved with some aspects of the following sorts of sectors:

- **Transformative technologies** – including 'the singularity', Artificial Intelligence, tactile communications, teleportation, cyber systems, or, in other words a range of technologies that could transform social, geo-political and physical environments

- **Outer space** – including cyberspace and outer space, outer space and economic systems, outer space and energy, outer space and human habitats

- **Societal trends** – including demographics, health and longevity, nature of social constructs, physical infrastructure, socio-economic disparities, urban versus rural, governance systems

- **Economic paradigms** – economic drivers, impact of transformative technologies on economic systems, new types of goods and services

- **Security spectres** – principally concerned with international affairs, security policies, cyber and outer space threats, international and intra-state conflict, ethnic and religious violence

Facilitators. There are four types of facilitators that will be required to organise and run the Futures Roundtable exercise, three of these are essential, one is optional:

- **Organiser** – Overall responsibility for the organisation and administering of the Futures Roundtable event and follow-up. From participant and expert selection to the final report, the FRE will depend greatly upon the support it receives from the organiser/s.

- **Facilitator** – Responsible for guiding the FRE process, including ensuring that participants and experts follow the overall FRE programme, that plenary and group sessions result in substantive discussions and that there are clear and sound conclusions resulting from the event.

- **Monitor** – Normally a psychologist or social psychologist who will monitor the dynamics of the FRE, with particular attention in this case to the differing or similar attitudes of the participants. The monitor should also assume the essential function of writing a report about the dynamics of the event and the generational outcomes and implications.

- **Recorders** – The FRE process always benefits from a graphic designer, who can capture the 'travel route' of FRE discussions – a useful tool for understanding the dynamics of the event. Similarly, it would also be useful to have someone who could capture the thoughts of individuals and groups at the FRE, and have these as anther mechanism to promote the utility of the event.

Futures Roundtable – Context and Design

The objective of a **Futures Roundtable** is to create plausible descriptions, or, 'portraits of the future' that will get participants to think more speculatively and in a more structured way about factors that might determine the future and their possible consequences. These portraits reflect overarching tensions between the *transformative*, i.e. radical change, and the *incremental*, i.e., slow evolution, and span a range of subjects, from the global economy, socio-economic and political structures to security and technology. These portraits in turn provide insights into the societal, economic and political opportunities and vulnerabilities that could underpin the future.

How will different types of Generational participants interpret the consequences of such factors when it comes to explaining their own lives and the societies of which they will be a part. Do generationally different groups share the same views about the future, or, are they different, and in what ways? To what extent are their views determined by their assumptions and expectations driven by technologies, e.g., social media?

The Futures Roundtable design

A **Futures Roundtable** is designed as a two-day event, and, as already noted, is intended to demonstrate the relationship between societal transformations and their impacts on the types of societies that one might anticipate. Hence, the FRE's

initial objective is to give Generational participants some sense of what society might look like in a longer-term future, namely, in two-decades time. It focuses upon global transformative factors that might influence, shape and indeed transform society in the future; and, from a two-decade societal perspective, results in 'portraits of the future' – i.e., alternative descriptions of society.

Towards that end, a group of experts from a wide range of disciplines provide over the course of the first day a two-decade perspective that will result in three different 'portraits of the future'. Each of these portraits give views about societies in the future, and each in subsequent sessions during the day should lead to a range of conclusions about their possible consequences.

During the second day, the types of futures – *portraits* -- that were identified in the last session of Day #1 are used by the participants to consider what their impacts might be to themselves and upon the societies of which they will be a part. Broadly speaking, Day #2's focus is intended [i] to generate participants' views about what might be the key drivers of change and their overall impacts; [ii] to

propose what they feel will be the impacts of such changes on their societies and economic, security and governance systems; [iii] to ascertain the extent to which there are generational differences that can and cannot be reconciled; and, [iv] the implications of #iii.

The types of factors that might also assist in determining the sorts of expertise chosen for the roundtable are suggested in Annex #2: Ten Transformative Factors.

As noted in the diagram below, *Futures Roundtable* sessions involve an inner and outer circle, where experts during the first day occupy the inner circle, and the Generational participants the outer circle.

Organising and facilitating the Futures Roundtable

In this section, the overall requirements for organising and facilitating the Futures Roundtable are listed under four headings:

- **Meeting preparations**
- **Day One: Portraits of Societies in the Future**
- **Day Two: Planning from the Future**
- **Exercise Follow-up**

For each, there will be a 'Tip Sheet' that explains in greater detail what FRE

organisers and facilitators need to consider. Organisers and facilitators might also look at **Annex #1** for an example of an FRE agenda.

Meeting preparations

Preparations for *Futures Roundtable* [FRE] initiatives involve **four critical factors**:

- Identify a diverse mixture of sector experts, participants, psychologist or social-psychologist and possibly a recorder;
- Ensure that Generational participants and experts have a clear understanding about the objectives of the FRE, and have an equally as clear appreciation of their individual and group roles in the FRE exercise;
- Ensure that means are available to capture and disseminate key messages that emerge from the FRE exercise;
- Provide appropriate facilities for all aspects of the exercise, including plenary and group sessions, coffee, luncheon and dinner breaks.

Day One: Portraits of Societies in the Future

The first day has three core objectives

- Identify global transformative factors that will influence, shape and transform society in the future;
- Develop three 'global portraits' that will provide alternative visions of society in the future;
- Based upon such global portraits, consider the sorts of plausible opportunities and vulnerabilities that might emerge in the future.

The purpose of the first day of the FRE is to enable Generational participants to gain a better understanding about the types of transformative factors that may shape society in the future, and then relate such factors to the types of societies that could emerge. For the purposes of the FRE exercise, the term, 'society of the future', refers to a broad view of humanity from a global perspective, reflecting the broad implications of major transformative factors for all, e.g., the global impact of the Internet on society as a whole.

Towards a better appreciation of the possible consequences of a multitude of possible transformative factors, experts from a range of social and natural sciences and different professional sectors – Day 1's inner circle -- will be asked to create together 'portraits of the future'. The Generational participants – Day 1's outer circle – will be there 'to listen', to absorb the assumptions and perspectives that experts use to explain societal futures – strengths and weaknesses, positive as well as negative.

The first step towards developing societal portraits are brief presentations by each of the individual experts about what impacts their respective disciplines may have upon societies from a two-decade perspective. Each expert's contribution should last preferably for 10 minutes or less. Afterwards, the experts will together develop some broad futures-oriented societal themes that have emerged out of their individual presentations. Having developed such themes, the experts should prioritise the themes. With that objective in mind, the second step is for FRE participants and experts to divide into three groups, each group responsible for determining which of the broad themes may have maximum impact on societies in a two decades' timeframe.

These group sessions – driven once again by the experts and attended by representative groups of Generational participants -- will be followed by a return to a plenary session in which those themes, now prioritised, will be explained and discussed by the experts to the Generational participants as a whole.

After the presentation and discussion of priorities in the plenary session, participants and experts return once more to group sessions to apply 'the paints' – those priorities – in order to develop portraits of the future. Here, too, the experts take the lead in developing portraits that they deem to capture future societal constructs, their dimensions and dynamics.

Topics might include factors relating to governance, socio-economic and geo-political considerations, security and conflict, employment, relevant technological transformations – all, in other words, factors that portray plausible ways that societies will be structured and will function in the future. As with all societies, there are strengths and weaknesses, positive opportunities and vulnerabilities. **Hence, each portrait should include a description of possible broad-based risks and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses, and their potential consequences**.

The groups return to a plenary session in which the experts describe their perspectives about societies of the future, or, in other words, three portraits of the future that have resulted from the individual group sessions.

Only towards the end of the first day – with the societal portraits completed -- should both the experts and the Generational participants begin to actively

engage. Having witnessed the emerging assumptions and perspectives that have resulted in plausible descriptions of the future, the Generational participants will for the first time in the exercise be able to probe the implications of those futures.

In a *world café style* format, the participants will engage with the experts to probe what sorts of societies might emerge from the portraits that had been developed.

For the number of participants and experts proposed, the café style format would consist of three tables spread across a room, as outlined in greater detail in Tip Sheet Two, below. It should be noted that this session at the close of the first day is generally the only time that experts and participants will have had an active dialogue, and that the former can at last do more than just listen and ask questions of the latter.

The next day, the experts and FRE participants will swap places. Having been sensitised to plausible societal futures at the close of the first day, they will now have to come to terms with the dimensions and dynamics of possible *futures*.

Day Two: Planning from the Future

The second day concerns developing insights about generational differences, and towards that end:

- to speculate about the implications of the portraits developed by the experts the previous day for the structure and dynamics of societies in a two-decade timeframe;
- to explore the sorts of broad opportunities and challenges that different generations foresee over a two-decade timeframe, including the

nature of the 'human habitat' and related issues of outer space settlements;
- to consider to what extent might the concept of 'the family' and the nature of 'friendship' change, and what the alternatives might be?
- to speculate about the extent to which human beings might change as a species, and its possible consequences;
- to consider what the purpose, parameters and processes of 'education' in the future might be?
- to explore the nature of government and governance within a two-decades time frame.

Day 2 reverses the format of the Futures Roundtable exercise. The Generational participants now become the centre of attention, and are seated at the inner circle. Conversely, the group of experts assume their places in the outer circle. They play the role of observers, available to the inner circle to clarify concepts, cases and the portraits that arose the previous day.

The second day begins with a brief review of the *Portraits of the Future*. It is essential for the Generational participants to understand the societal drivers and dynamics that underpin the three portraits. Here, the facilitator will have to briefly touch on each of the six issues noted above, and, in so doing, should emphasise that the participants must not only consider broad thematic issues arising from the six issues, but also if possible provide practical examples.

With these plausible futures in mind, Day 2 provides a forum for exchanging insights between the two generational groups.

As suggested in Annex 1's sample programme, Day 2 principally involves plenary sessions, with only one group session throughout the day. The plenary

sessions should focus on three specific clusters of issues, based upon the six issues noted above.

These three clusters are:

- transformative technologies and their consequences, 'the singularity', artificial intelligence, communications systems, robotics, as well as possible existential threats, e.g., bio-engineered pandemics, meteor collisions with cyber systems;
- the nature of being 'human', including DNA creation and modification, manufactured body parts, and related societal issues involving human interaction such as social structures and purpose, the nature of family and friendship;
- economic and governance structures and opportunities in a two-decades perspective, including the future of work, types of conflicts and governance, impacts of outer space settlements.

Towards the end of the second day, the facilitator along with the monitor should come together to give their preliminary views about the implications of the exercise to the Generational participants and the experts. This preliminary exercise should focus on the ten issues that were outlined at the beginning of this guide [page 1]. The presenters should emphasise that these are preliminary findings, and that these will be reviewed and analysed in greater depth following the *Generational* exercise.

Before concluding the exercise, the facilitator should not that this *Generational* exercise may well be repeated again and in other laces around the world. For this reason, the facilitator should use the last session to capture lessons about the process that could

improve future FREs. The closing session of the *Generational* exercise should be a general discussion with participants about the strengths and weaknesses of the two-day event and ways to enhance its effectiveness.

Exercise follow-up

The *Futures Roundtable* exercise has a clear set of objectives as noted at the outset of this guide. That set of objectives can be summarised in terms of a single aspiration, namely, to capture possible generational differences in order to seek ways to bridge possible divides. The exercise, itself, should generate an understanding of the challenges and steps that ought to be considered to prepare for that journey.

However, beyond the exercise, *per se*, the organisers should consider maximising the utility of the *Generational* initiative by capturing the substance of the event and making it available to a wide array of organisations, and certainly those concerned with youth, education and social planning. With that in mind, the organisers should consider

- preparing a short summary of the exercise, with emphasis on the implications of the portraits of the future and a consolidated analysis of generational divides, commonalities and possible bridges;
- the substance of the report should be transmitted through social media to a wide range of individuals and communities;
- through institutional channels, e.g., those of UNICEF, the ALC, explore ways that the exercise might be used in different settings around the world.

Annex I: Bridging Generational Divides

-- Futures Roundtable Exercise --

Sample Programme

This one and a half to two-day programme can be based broadly on the agenda described below. This agenda will be adapted to the cultural and institutional contexts in which the exercise will take place. It, too, may be modified depending on suggestions and lessons from preceding Futures Roundtables.

Day One:

08.30 Registration – coffee and tea

09.00 Scene setting and facilitated introductions

Brief introduction to the objectives of the FRE

10.00

Global societal perspectives in a two decades context, focusing on potentially transformative factors or game changers and their positive and negative consequences.

Individual expert's visions (60 minutes)

Group experts' vision of society in two-decades time (30 minutes)

11.30 Breakout group discussions by experts on global perspectives, determining priorities and their plausible demographic, socio-economic and geo-political implications. In so doing, to identify factors that could have transformative impacts upon society as a whole.

(Coffee/tea served in individual group sessions).

12.30 Report back plenary sessions, focusing on the substance of the group sessions and the reactions to their findings, and the implications in terms of trying to understand what the future might look like from a two-decade time perspective.

13.15 Luncheon

14.30 Breakout group planning sessions, requiring experts in each group to create a

portrait of the future, i.e. the ways that those priorities identified in the previous plenary session will together shape a future in two-decades time. In so doing, the individual group portraits will include related views on the evolving nature of societies, the evolving nature of humanness, key transformations when it comes to the economy and work, the nature of state and governance, societal and inter-personal relations.

15.30 Plenary session on *Portraits of the Future*, with a focus on prioritised factors that will determine the future in two-decades time.

16.15 Coffee / tea

16.45 Global portraits in a generational context. In a café style format, the expert groups will discuss with Generational participants the implications of such futures perspectives on their visions of society in the future.

17.45 End of Day 1

18.15 Drinks and dinner

Day Two:

09.00 Coffee / tea

09.30   Review of Day 1's discussions, focussing on the three portraits and the societal drivers and dynamics that underpin them

10.00   Plenary session focusing on transformative technologies and their consequences

11.00 Coffee / tea

11.30 The nature of being 'human'

12.15 Economic and governance structures and opportunities

13.00   Luncheon

14.00   Group sessions on identifying generational commonalities and differences

14.45 Report back session in plenary

15.30 Coffee/tea

16.00 Preliminary report back from facilitator and monitor

17.00 Final reflections on strengths and weaknesses of the Generational exercise, and ways to improve it

17.30 Generational exercise ends

Annex Ii: Ten Transformative Factors

The list below is a brief summary of factors [5 per factor] that could serve as background material for *Futures Roundtables* organsiers:

[1]   Transformational technologies

- Internet of things will connect everything with everyone in an integrated global network
- Promise of economic progress for billions in emerging economies at unimaginable speeds
- *Sousveillance* and *surveillance* will enable all to know everything about everyone
- Robots and computers become smarter than humans, the latter at the mercy of machines
- Molecular nanotechnology could eat up or poison the biosphere, and destroy sunlight

[2]   Economic transformations

- Based on per capita GDP, developing countries will generally catch up with the developed world in the next 20 years
- Tactile robotics will generate a shift in the global economy, resulting in new forms of human employment
- Speed of financial and commercial markets will outpace states' capacities to regulate them, except for state capitalist structures
- Cyber financial systems will create parallel economies, which standard international and state mechanisms will be unable to control
- International crime, part of which linked to cyber systems, will become robust parallel economic systems

[3]   Resource swings

- Increase in middle-class consumers across the world from 1.9 billion in 2010 to 4.7 billion in 2030 will intensify resource demands as well as resource protectionism
- Energy-water nexus is fast becoming the energy-water-food-land-metal nexus, as resources turn ever-more interdependent
- Exogenous shocks in one part of the resource system will transmit rapidly to other parts of the system
- Mass desalinisation and water creation technologies to flourish but urban and rural infrastructures to make access difficult
- Energy resources as well as minerals to become increasingly linked to outer space capacities

[4]   Demographic shifts

- Population to go beyond 10.4 billion by 2045, most acutely affected to be many parts of South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America
- 70% of global population will live in urban areas by 2045, though alternative concept may emerge with cities as fluid hub-like spaces, between urban and rural
- Aging populations – the 'silver tsunami – will be one of the most challenging issues facing the world, with projected increases of over 60s to be one in five by 2050
- Violence against woman will continue to be a feature of conflict and used as a weapon of war and as a significant factor of state instability
- Demographic changes will occur at unprecedented speeds, generating intensified demands for basis needs and services

[5]   Changing climate

- Anticipating a 4 degree Celsius increase, statesman and scientist regard climate change as 'the defining issue of our age'
- Climate change will have wide-reaching impacts for the world, from health, demography, ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture, water and security
- Climate change might be the biggest global health threat of the 21st century, and its impact on health multifaceted
- Over the next 15 years, climate change will account for the movement, including displacement, for at least 700 million people
- Increasing prospect of international agreement on measures for climate change reduction, though implementation capacity uncertain

[6]   Health-welfare monitoring and response

- Manipulating DNA will prove to be one of the most transformative developments in health, directly impacting upon diseases as well as genetic defects
- Telemedicine will be made more effective through tactile communications and teleportation, enhancing health coverage globally
- Nanorobots in bloodstreams could identify health concerns, and automatically take corrective actions"
- 'Quality-adjusted life-years' calculations will be key to prescribing any treatment
- New health actors could include telecommunications firms, technology companies, retailers and food manufacturers

[7]   Atomised world

- Atomised world to create individual empowerment through technology and a desire for rights and equality
- Likelihood is that it will result in less trust in established large institutions, and more support for networked communities
- Emergence of networked communities will 'inhabit' both virtual and physical space and can move from virtual to physical
- Extent to which atomisation can result in stable systems or competitive and disruptive systems will be future challenge

- Atomisation's trajectory may be linked to how those in power in 'established institutions' respond

[8] Global governance and complex systems

- Contemporary state constructs will increasingly be a fiction, arbitrarily imposed upon groupings that are developing alternative identities
- Issues that states will seek to manage will increasingly either exceed their competencies to handle or too small to make it cost effective
- More agile entities (e.g., private sector, cities, networks) could increasingly overlap with states and challenge the state model
- Though the private sector will remain key investors in transformative innovation, the role of state will also play a transformative role
- States will coalesce around a global agenda reflecting regulatory frameworks to deal with 'rogue actors' such as networks, international crime and the private sector

[9] Cyberspace, outer space and human space

- Relationship between outer space, cyberspace and human space will be exponentially more important in two decades time than today
- Growing portion of the planet's economic and social functions, e.g., the Internet, will be increasingly dependent upon outer space
- Outer space will provide platforms for earth-based conflict and for dominating cultures and economic needs of those without outer space capacities
- Infrastructure and demographic movements of humans into urban areas could intensify exposure to outer space debris, which could be mitigated by capacities in outer space
- Exploration of outer space that will eventually extend the very habitat of the human species

[10] Organisational alternatives

- The physical sciences dominated the industrial age, the biological sciences, namely, living systems, are beginning to dominate the 'knowledge age'
- Hierarchical organisational models, based upon specific sets of specialisations, will be less able to deal with ever more complex and uncertain issues
- Assumptions that 'leadership' is vested in planners, synchronisers and coordinators, and that 'efficiency' and 'best practice' are essential for success are contrary to designs of organisations of the future
- Successful organisations will be based upon on a sense of evolutionary purpose, and what the world needs from them, rather than on budgets and targets
- Shared consciousness and radically decentralised empowerment mark an organisational that can deal most effectively with uncertainty and complexity

ANNEX III: PORTRAITS OF THE FUTURE

These are three examples of portraits of the future that have been consolidated based upon the output of two *Futures Roundtable* initiatives.

Atomised versus globalised world

Atomisation may result in less trust in established institutions, supporting the emergence of networked communities, which could inhabit both physical and virtual space. Whether this results in a kind of consciousness that supports stable and sustainable financial, environmental and socio-cultural systems or greater competition in what would be a more heterogeneous world is unclear. However, the extent to which accountability maintains pace with change and how those in power respond to atomisation will be critical factors in determining atomisation's trajectory.

The globalisation alternative will be driven as a reaction against the atomised world, and that fear will coalesce around a global agenda reflecting regulatory frameworks to deal with perceived 'rogue actors', be they networks, markets or states. A global community would be intolerant of deviation. A globalised world is a technocratic rather than a relational world.

Hierarchical versus decentralised empowerment

A significant portion of human activity is undertaken within organisational constructs. From health, governance, defence and infrastructure to education, manufacturing and entertainment, organisations are generally the central mechanisms for generating process, outputs and in various ways outcomes for societies at large. Since the late 19th century, organisations reflected 'reductionism', where hierarchy, specialisations and terms such as 'command and control' reflected how perceived objectives were pursued. However, the assumption, viz, control, runs contrary to the complexity and uncertainty that will increasingly underpin much of human activity.

Increasingly, the sheer speed and access to information and the interdependence of the modern environment leaves little time for the reductionist construct. For highly complex problems to be solved 'shared consciousness', i.e., extremely transparent information sharing, and 'empowered execution', i.e., pushing decision-making and ownership to the right level for every action, will reverse the reductionist construct.

Developed world versus developing world

Over the past 40 years the developed world has changed relatively little in comparison with the massive upheaval in governance, economy and society experienced by the developing world. The latter's rate and scale of change is radical whereas the developed world is much less so. This is likely to continue, with migration and other factors resulting in 'a more even world' — one which most likely will strengthen the impact of alternative actors.

Given rates of change, flexibility of developing states (e.g., leapfrogging technologies), the ways in which the developed and developing world are distinguished in today's terms will be less relevant. Indeed, some of the most positive developments could happen in what is today the developing world, given that it is more flexible and less limited by, for instance, existing institutional and technological infrastructure. Protectionism vs. collaboration and state thinking vs. global village thinking will likely be a key feature in that future.