

How Futures Studies Help the Environment?



The environmental activists and experts are under the pressure of different forces to plan effectively and appropriately for the 3rd millennium, but none of these forces suggest a certain way to implement proper changes. Forces like: global communications, global economies, global climate change, ecosystems' devastation and rebuild, competition of the institutes claiming that they preserve the environment, pressure for merging the organizations, reviewing the environmental plans, etc.. It is not an overstate to say that these forces have a potential power in creating a significant new thinking on mission, structure, content and the quality of activities, organizational body and the relations of beneficiaries at the institutes related to the preservation of environment and natural resources; but they do not offer a definite way to create such a new thinking.

In order to conduct effective planning for environmental activities, the managers and experts should be able to predict intelligently the effect of new changes on their organizations and plans. The effective environmental planning in an uncertain time depends on gathering exact information from environmental changes in a continued manner.

The environmental scanning model begins with scanning the external environment for emerging issues that pose threats or opportunities to the organization. As part of this step, trends are specified that describe the issues and can be used to measure changes in their nature or significance. Each potential issue or trend is then analyzed (evaluation/ranking) as to the likelihood that it will emerge and the nature and degree of its impact if it should actually materialize. This stage produces a rank ordering of the issues and trends according to their importance to current or planned operations.

Forecasting focuses on developing an understanding of the expected future for the most important issues and trends. In this stage, any of the modern forecasting techniques may be used. Once the forecasts are made, each issue and trend is then monitored to track its continued relevance and to detect any major departures from the forecasts made in the preceding stage. Monitoring, in effect, identifies areas for additional and continued scanning. For example, subsequent monitoring may begin to suggest that an original forecast of the employee turnover rate is no longer credible, which would imply the need for more focused scanning, forecasting, and analysis to develop a more credible projection.

One of the major limitations of the traditional long-range planning model is that information about the changing external environment is usually not taken into account systematically or comprehensively. When this omission occurs because of an assumption that "we cannot predict external changes," long-range planning destines itself to surprise and failure, if only because it locks itself to the information known from direct experience in the past and immediate present. Information from the external environment adds important components to long-range planning, however. First, it identifies new and potentially crucial subjects that should be added to those identified and tracked during monitoring. Second, it identifies possible developments that must be used to adjust the forecasts of the internal issues derived from forecasting--specifically, the surprise events that are used in policy impact analysis or techniques like probabilistic systems dynamics and in other rigorous forecasting methods used in traditional long-range planning.



Editorial

A general review is given on the relation of FS with the environment...



How Futures Studies Help the Environment?

Environmental monitoring and scanning along with scenario-based planning can be helpful...



The Positive Effect of Dykes on the Future of Environment

The humans can intervene in the environment in a positive manner...



The Growing Trend of Waste Production

The humans can intervene in the environment in a negative manner...



A Futurist

Joseph Voros is introduced to our readers as a futurist...



Book Review

SAGE Handbook of Environment & Society is the book that is reviewed in this issue...



Web Surfing


A number of useful futures links are introduced here...



Virtual World

The Nature Institute's website is reviewed ...

Editorial



The sustainable development along with preserving the environment has made the process of goal setting for the future of the environment a difficult task. The main reason for such a hard condition is the societies' inevitable commitment to the sustainable development. The developing countries need to proceed with their current path of development and progress in one hand, and their commitment to the preservation of the environment on the other hand. Since industrial and technological progresses have had undesired implications for the environment in recent decades, industrial development has been a synonym of moving against the preservation of the environment. This can be even seen in modernized and industrial countries, but they have made efforts to build a balance between the current course of industrialization and the devastation of the environment to rebuild some parts of vanished natural environment and prevent the process of environmental deterioration.

The preservation of the environment has not been limited to the experts of natural resources, but it has become a topic of study for the futurists. Dividing foresight fields into five main areas including: Society, Technology, Economy, Environment and Policy (STEEP) is a remarkable sign of the importance of "Environment" for the futurists. On the lowest level, the futurists can conduct "Environmental Monitoring and Scanning" that is one of the basic techniques of Futures Studies and can be applied in different fields including "the environment". The data resulted from environmental monitoring and scanning can be used in designing scenarios for the future of natural environment. In recent decades, there are two dominant views on environmental futures research: the first view is concentrated on moving from current situation toward the future relying on reforming what has been going on, and the second is goal setting for achieving not an ideal future, but a reasonable one comparable with what has been gained in developed countries.

Considering the contents of Iran's 2025 vision statement, it seems that the first perspective is more appropriate for our country to evaluate current situation, design various scenarios and choose the most proper one for the preservation of the environment. A review of what has been studied in this field reveals that a set of factors are considered in developing different scenarios for the future of environment: enhancing the environmental culture of the citizens and the villagers, changing the people's environmental behavior especially from economic points of view, rebuilding the forests and natural resources, removing subsidies that are against the preservation of the environment, developing green technologies, reforming the culture of consumption through changes in life styles, better use of agricultural fields by enhancing their productivity, population control, controlled immigration to the villages or the cities, and finally using proper technologies to reduce air, soil and water pollutants and etc..

Among these factors, "enhancing the environmental culture of the citizens and the villagers" is regarded as the most important factor so that other factors may find meaning in the light of that enhancement. In other words, no change will appear in people's behavior dealing with the environment unless a change is made in their perspectives regarding the nature. The people's participation in the optimum use of natural resources and their preservation is an evident phenomenon. Given these considerations, Futures Studies help the environmental activists and experts in effective decision making and planning to grasp a better comprehension of environmental alternative futures.

In this Issue:

- Editorial
- How Futures Studies Help the Environment?
- The Positive Effect of Dykes on the Future of Environment
- The Growing Trend of Waste Production
- A Futurist
- Book Review
- Web Surfing
- Virtual World
- English Abstract



Futures Studies & The Environment

Iranian Society of Futures Studies E-Monthly
On Futures Studies

Editor: Bayazid Mardukhi, member of the board of trustees at ISFS

For all of the members and who are interested in Futures Studies
www.iransfa.ir

