

Working Papers



National Foresight in Korea: History of Futures Studies and Foresight in Korea

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World Futures Review

2019, Vol. 11(3) 232–244

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DOI: 10.1177/1946756718805219

journals.sagepub.com/home/wfr



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Abstract

Public interests in coming futures of Korea continue to be increasing. Fears on uncertainties and pending challenges as well as demands on a new but Korea-own development model trigger a quantitative increase of futures research and relevant organizations in both public and private. The objective of this paper is to review history of futures studies and national development plan and strategy linked with foresight along with its challenges and recommendations. This paper identifies drawbacks and limits of Korea foresight such as misapplication of foresight as a strategic planning tool for modernization and economic development and its heavy reliance on government-led mid- and long-term planning. As a recommendation, an implementation of participatory and community-based foresight is introduced as a foundation for futures studies in Korea. A newly established research institute, the National Assembly Futures Institute, has to be an institutional passage to deliver opinions of the public, a capacity-building platform to increase the citizen's futures literacy, and a cooperative venue for facilitating a participation and dialogue between politicians, government officials, and researchers.

Keywords

futures studies, foresight, Korea, National Assembly Futures Institutes, participation

Introduction

Currently, Korea is one of the most future-oriented countries in the world, at least on the exterior. Korea is now actively engaged in diverse activities for futures research, including government, business, media, universities, civic groups, and individuals. Historically, in fact, Korea was not a country that makes an emphasis very much on the future. As an economic, social, and political latecomer, Korea was a country that was busy following other countries. But entering the twenty-first century, changes in this trend began. There can be three reasons why the Korean society has become so interested in the future.

The first reason is the sharp increase in the rate of change and the expansion of

uncertainty. Rapid development in information and communication technologies (ICT) and progress in globalization have resulted in more dynamic changes in the global environment and required a fundamental shift in perspective. Second, there was the need for Korea's unique development model. Korea's fast-follower strategy, which has been a national development strategy, has become no longer

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effective. The achievement of the goal of industrialization, democratization, and economic growth called for a new development model unique to Korea. Finally, as Korea face macro and long-term challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and demographic changes, it begins to recognize the need for mid-to-long-term strategies.

Several factors can be pointed out that Korea's futures research and futures strategic organizations did not lead to substantial national capacity enhancement. One of the biggest problems is the frequent replacement of the government. In Korea, the presidential system maintains a single five-year term, and a new administration takes its place every five years. It is hard to expect sustained and long-term national strategies in a changing government system every five years. It is the National Assembly Futures Institute (NAFI) that was launched in May 2018 to overcome these limitations. It is the first time in the world to establish the dedicated futures studies and foresight¹ institute by and within a legislative body.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Korean Association of Futures Studies. The Korean Association of Futures Studies was launched in 1968, and the Korean government released its first future report in 1971, titled "The Year 2000 in Korea." Recently, the exploration of the future, which started on an academic level, has continued to link to national development strategies. Although futures studies and foresight in Korea have been through a lot of ups and downs for the last half century, they made a fruit of establishing a futures research institute in the National Assembly.

The objective of this paper is to review the futures studies and foresight activities performed in Korea along with a recommendation. First, a unique circumstance of its development in Korea is illustrated: (a) developmental history of futures studies and (b) national development plan and strategy linked with foresight. Second, by pointing out challenges including a dilution of futures research into the national strategy and planning for modernization and economic development, a historical effort to overcome this conceptual

error and a misapplication of foresight as a strategic planning tool is explained. Last, as a recommendation, a concept of participatory and community-based foresight is introduced as a prerequisite to a new and dedicated futures research institute.

As methodologies, this research is developed in a form of a case study while reviewing the existing literature of Korea foresight activities and interviews of the Korean futurist. Formatting as a case study of Korea, a historical scheme in development of mid-to-long-term planning in each functional area such as the administrations, the presidential office, and the legislative body are described.

Development of Futures Studies in Korea

In this section, a historical developmental process of futures studies in Korea is described, focusing on an academic and research sector. A chronicle classification of a research realm divides by pre-eminence events, social turbulence, or sometimes actions of the historical figures. Taking account of this notion, the era of futures studies classification was reorganized based on the historical events (Son 2013). The overall developmental process of futures studies is summarized in Table 1.

Emergence of Futures Studies (1968–1981)

The futures studies in Korea was initiated along with the establishment of the Korea Society for Futures Studies (KSFS) in 1969. The KSFS was organized by Hanh Been Lee, a former deputy prime minister, purported to "prevent a surprise attack from the future" and add the value of futures research into the Korean general development scheme (Dator 2011). With thirty-five experts from various academic fields as well as government, business, and media, at the request of the Korea Institute of Science and Technology, the KSFS released the first future report titled as the "Korea in the Year 2000" (Seo 2015). It was the official government project, relayed from Herman Khan's work "The Year 2000 in

Table 1. History of Futures Studies in Korea.

Time	Event in Korea	Details
Emergence of Korea's Futures Studies (1968–1981)		
1968	The Year 2000 Committee	Established by Hahn Been Lee (then changed to the KAFS)
1969	KAFS	Introduced futures studies: its basic concepts and methods and established relationship with global futurist groups
1971	KSFS Project: Korea in the Year 2000	The first national futures project, inspired by Herman Kahn's project "The Year 2000"
1962–1981	The Five-Year Economic Development Plans	Under the advice of Herman Kahn, designed and implemented in four times (after 1981, it changed its name to "Korea Five-Year Social and Economic Development Plans")
Diversity in Futures Studies (1982–1996)		
1977 - 1999	University of Hawaii: lectures of futures studies	Lectured by Jim Dator for the Korean visiting scholars, journalist, and government officials in Hawaii
1985	KDI's Long-Term National Strategy Program	As the most influential state-owned think tank in Korea, implemented foresight to build a national foresight model and also established the Future Industry Task force in 1986
1987	Korea Future Making Institution	Focused on scientific forecast and foresight to set up a long-term vision (It later changed its name to the Hanback Foundation)
1988	Korean Association for Futures Studies	Focused on social science and participated in various international futures conferences. It later became an institutional member of the World Futures Studies Federation in 1989
1995	Korea Futures Studies Institute	Developed and distributed futures knowledge and presented alternative futures using micro and macro methods whiling providing the future knowledge database
Globalization and Alternative Futures (1997–2012)		
2001	Toffler Associates Report: Overcome Crisis—Vision of the Twenty-First Century Korea	Provided to the President Daejung Kim after 1997 Asian financial crisis. The report offered the image of the future in the twenty-first century Korea as a knowledge-based society
2004	Millennium Project—Korea	Started as the "Korea 2050" futures research club and became a Korea Node of the Millennium Project. Under leadership of Youngsook Park in cooperation with Jerome Glenn, it produces various futures studies and foresight reports.
2007	Book : "Toward Another Future Foresight and Future Strategy"	The first futures studies book covered by definition, methodology, overseas case studies. It also introduced national foresight bodies of Korea and its way ahead.
2009	KIPA's Future Strategy Research Department	Expanded its research horizon the global level and focused more on humanities and sociology sides of futures studies
2011	STEPI's Future Research Center	Implemented the S&T-based forecasting, developed futures knowledge platform, research processes and methodologies, and conducted risk assessments along with horizontal scanning

(continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Time	Event in Korea	Details
Renaissance of Future Studies and Foresight (2013–Present)		
2013	KAIST's Moon Soul Graduate School of Future Strategy	Established by Kwanghyung Lee, as the first authorized academic institute that opens master and doctoral degree programs in futures studies. It aims at training a future expert needed by society against the coming era of uncertainty
2013	The KAIST's Research Center for Future Strategy	Supports and enhances the KAIST's futures research functions and provides the national roadmap of various futures
2013	The KDI's Future Strategy Research Division	Supporting the establishment of national future strategy including national mid-term financial plan
2013	ETRI's Future Research Creative Laboratory	Researched not only about market analysis, business development, start-up ecosystem but also global megatrend and feasibility studies on the S&T
2013	Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning's Future Preparation Committee	Published a series of futures reports about "Korea After 10 Years": (a) Future Issue Analysis Report in 2015, (b) Growth Strategy in New Normal Era in 2016, (c) Time to See the Quality of Life in 2016, (d) Demand and Consumption in the Era of the fourth Industrialization in 2017, (e) Searching Future Jobs in 2017
2014	NIA's Future Strategy Center	Specializes its function in the data-driven foresight along with its aim at taking the leading position in governance based on an evidence-based futures strategy
2016	KAFS	The first academic society backed by the KAIST and students, researchers, politicians, journalist, and so on. It holds various academic and participatory venues to expand a base of futures studies
2017	NAFI	The world first futures research institute enacted and built by the formal legislative body. It aims at implementing futures studies while overcoming limits of administration-led futures research and maintaining its independence and autonomy of operations

Note. KAFS = Korean Association for Futures Studies; KDI = Korea Development Institute; KIPA = Korea Institute of Public Administration; STEPI = Science and Technology Policy Institute; KAIST = Korea Advanced Institute for Science and Technology; ETRI = Electronics and Telecommunication Research Institute; ICT = information and communication technologies; NIA = National Information Society Agency; KAFS = Korea Association for Futures Studies; NAFI = National Assembly Futures Institute.

Korea" under support from the President of the United States Lyndon B. Johnson and the President of Korea Chunghhee Park. The report focused on forecasting possible changes that might occur by the year 2000, provided a rather clear picture of the Korea futures, and described images of futures anticipated by the well-known scholars of those days. Unlike other government reports that focused more on national development goals, the KSFS emphasized more on humans and environment issues.

The futures studies in Korea, from the 1970s to early 1980s, was treated as identical as a vision for modernization and what was called "developmental studies," rather than identifying what futures studies really means. It focused on forecasting future demands for the nation's mid-to-long-term economic and industrial development (D. Kim and Jung 2011). At that time, futures studies misused to assume western modernization as a future to draw and to make a rapid economic growth

toward the desired “one future.” In other words, the futures studies was applied as a theoretical basis to drive economic and industrial development modeled on the United States and Japan. Considering circumstances of the “economic growth first” at that era, futures studies was mainly used in a form of developmental planning and strategy by the government. Drawing national strength such as strong economy and military power had to be set as the number one priority to solve a postwar poverty and political and ideological confrontation between the North and the South. Values and processes of futures studies such as preparing for uncertainty by considering alternative futures, focusing on quality of life (not just economic growth), involving citizens in foresight processes (not just foresight by elites), and striving to creatively envision new Korean development models that contribute to global welfare (not just striving to be a “fast follower” of Western development) had not been properly incorporated in the Korean context of development processes. In this circumstance, drawing and studying alternative futures were almost impossible.

Diversification of Futures Studies (1982–1996)

Upon the end of the “Five-Year Economic Development Plans,” the national agenda transitioned to more of a sustainable way such as focusing on social development and public welfare. In 1982, the government strategic planning functions started to be transferred to national or private think-tanks. Various government-funded think tanks implemented future researches at the outset. In 1985, the Korea Development Institute (KDI), one of the most influential national think-tanks in Korea launched the long-term national strategy program, followed by the Future Industry Task Force in 1986 (KDI 1987). It was purposed to build a national foresight model and benchmark foresight functions of an advanced country.

Still amid indifferent recognition toward values of futures studies, on academic side, the Korea Future Making Institution (KFMI) in

1987, the Korean Association for Futures Studies in 1988, and the Korea Futures Studies Institute (KFSI) in 1995 were established subsequently (Choi 2017). Tukjoo Chun, a founder of the Korean Association for Futures Studies and a member of the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF), actively worked to build a foundation of futures studies in Korea and promoted the Korean futures studies in the international stage. The KFMI that later changed its name to the Hanback Foundation carried out scientific and statistical analyses of futures and aimed at shaping the long-term vision in detail while holding a domestic and international research symposium. The KFSI was purposed to develop and distribute relevant futures knowledge and information to meet rapidly growing demands of futures and ultimately present alternative futures using micro and macro foresight methods. KFSI also formed a future knowledge database titled as the “Future Knowledge and Information” through the very early phone-line-based Internet services so called the “Chollian” and the “Hitel” in Korea.

In this period, Korea’s great aspiration on development and continued interests on futures started to gain an attention from overseas. The well-known futurist Jim Dator at the University of Hawaii engaged to give a series of lectures of futures studies to various Korean visiting scholars, journalists, and government officials from 1977 to 1999 (Dator 2011) in Hawaii. Especially his visit to Korea in 1980 gave him another opportunity to teach and train the Koreans about futures studies across the country. Meanwhile, Dator and the WFSF made an attempt to hold a regional conference on the Korean peninsula along with futurists from both the North and the South. Although it did not go through well at the end, it was a meaningful effort to open a peace talk channel with a medium of futures studies.

Era of Globalization and Alternative Futures (1997–2012)

The continued efforts on democratization, industrialization, globalization, and development in science and technology (S&T) triggered

drastic changes in politic, economy, society and culture in Korea. Especially the Asian financial crisis surged in 1997 was considered an unprecedented failure to respond to future risks and then ended up with increasing demands in a different economic development pathway (D. Kim and Jung 2011). The crisis demonstrated that uncertainty in Korea continued to grow as the society became more closely linked with the global environment. Thereby, many sectors of the society started to recognize futures studies as indispensable and carried out futures research by establishing a number of research institutions in private, governmental, and academic fields.

After the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Alvin Toffler wrote the report titled the “Overcome Crisis—Vision of the 21st Century Korea” and then provided it to the President Daejung Kim in 2001. Toffler suggested a knowledge-based society as the future image of Korea. He emphasized that based on the well-established information and technology cyber infrastructure, Korea needs to restructure the government organization, industry structures, and the education system along with an emphasis on the development of bio technology (Toffler 2001). In line with the above attempt, academic and private sides spearheaded on development of futures studies and foresight of Korea. Particularly, there were a series of efforts in researching overseas futures studies and their relevant institutions, and outreaching Korea to the global stage. The KSFS, the first academic society of futures studies, started to focus on international relations and social interconnection between Korea and China in the 2000s. The society published the “Today and Tomorrow of China” in 2003 and the “Future of Korea: Vision 2030” in 2005 (D. Kim and Jung 2012). In addition, launched first as the “Korea 2050” in 2004, the Korea Node of the Millennium Project was established. Under the leadership of Jerome Glenn, the director of the Millennium Project, Youngsook Park, the representative in Korea implemented various foresight researches including its series of the Korean publications such as the “State of Future” (D. Kim and Jung 2012). In

particular, this branch becomes a member to the Futures Group of United Nations University and conducted studies on global conflicts, and its resolution with a close cooperation with other United Nations research organizations (The Millennium Project Korea, n.d.).

From a national think-tank side, in 1998, the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEPI) founded the Future Science and Technology Research Center (Renamed as the Future Research Center in 2011). The main research areas of the center include (a) science-and-technology-based future vision and strategy, (b) establishment of a foresight knowledge platform, (c) development of futures research processes and methodologies, (d) future risk assessments and policy alternatives, and (e) future and horizontal scanning (Choi 2017). The STEPI regularly published the quarterly periodical “Future Horizon,” but the center was closed and dissolved in 2018. The Korea Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), another government-funded research institute, began to conduct futures studies to meet the rapid environmental changes and future uncertainties (Woo et al. 2014). The institute expanded its research horizon to the global level and conducted researches on a long-term influence of major foreign countries on Korea. In particular, by applying the view from theory of a rhythmical cycle of societies, the institute analyzed future environmental changes in various fields of Korea. It means that the institute took a rather different approach on futures such as perspectives from sociology and humanities rather than that of the S&T.

Renaissance of Future Studies (2013–Present)

The Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) is the first academic institution in Korea that opens a degree program in futures studies. In 2012, the KAIST received a government approval to establish the Graduate School of Future Strategy (GSFS) and started to receive a master degree student, followed by a doctoral degree student in 2015 (Choi 2017). The KAIST GSFS aims to train

future experts who possess a future insight and strategic planning capabilities, needed by the public and private sector. The curriculum can be broadly divided into futures studies as well as strategy and policy. Futures studies teaches theories and methods and solutions to domestic and global intractable issues while the strategy and policy emphasize on the use of formal analytic tools that facilitate a procedural linkage between national strategies and policy implementation in detail.

The KAIST GSFS also opened the Research Center for Future Strategy in 2013 concurrently to support the school's futures research functions in fields of science-and-technology-based strategy, policy, and management (Cho 2017). Since 2014, the center has published the quarterly magazine, the "See Futures" and various national futures strategy periodic including the annual research report, the "National Future Strategy." Moreover, led by the eager-minded Korean Futurists including Kwanghyung Lee, the Korea Association for Futures Studies (KAFS) was established in 2016 (Seo and Yoon 2016). Tactically, it was the first academic society backed by KAIST GSFS and its students, futures researchers from various fields of expertise, journalists, politicians, and businesspersons. This association still actively holds various academic venues, and the open public discourses and events to encourage public participation and expand the principle and underlying value of futures studies to the Korean society.

Unlike the previous long-term planning and S&T-focused foresight bodies, these newly established organizations, although not sufficient, do possess values and process of futures studies and foresight. In this flow, the department chair of the KAIST GSFS, Lee was appointed as chair of the Future Preparation Committee in Ministry of Science, ICT, and Future Planning. In addition, Korea Electronic and Telecommunication Research Institute (ETRI) launched the Future Research Creative Lab within the organization. As a futures research unit, the ETRI future lab provided the analysis not only about feasibility studies of S&T but also about global future trends. The National Information Society Agency (NIA)

also installed Future Strategy Center, relaying its original expertise of big data analysis, specializes its future function at the data-driven foresight. Its ambitious aim is to take the advantageous position in governance on a future strategy and be the world-renown research center for an evidence-based futures research (NIA 2013).

National Development Plan and Strategy Linked With Foresight

Korea has been equated foresight with a national development strategy and planning.² In other words, Korea's mid-to-long-term strategy and planning for national development has been established based on foresight activities. In this session, the Korean foresight activities that link to the national development strategy and planning will be observed into three parts, planning activities in the administrations, the presidential secretariat, and the legislative body.

Administrations

The beginning of the national planning could be seen in 1961 as the establishment of the Economic Planning Board. The board played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's mid-to-long-term economic development plan and strategy, reviving from the Korean War. Including the "Five-Year Economic Development Plans," the planning functions centered on economic growth and modernization led by economic and finance ministries (E. Kim and Kim 1997). However, after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, there were increasing demands on preparing an uncertainty and focusing more on the "quality of life," rather than a mere economic growth. In this flow, the Ministry of Strategy and Finance has published a report based on foresight called "Vision 2030" in 2006. The report contained the national long-term future vision and strategies that contributed to shift the paradigm of Korea by putting an equal weight on both growth and welfare. However, the report was immediately criticized for its

insufficient efforts on making a public consensus (S. Kim 2006).

Subsequently, in 2012, the Ministry of Strategy and Finance focused its major projects on finding structural and macro policy alternatives to the major national challenges rather than that of short-term policy responses (D. Kim et al. 2010). In the same year, a project for the “Promotion of Quality Level of the Korean Society 2020” was conducted by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance with experts in various academic fields. This diversity enabled the report to diagnose societal issues of Korea in a different view and provided a rather innovative political and social break-away (Woo et al. 2014). In addition, the ministry has organized the “Mid-to-Long-Term Strategy Committee” by a presidential decree. Since March 2018, this committee has been preparing the fourth national development plan and strategy also known as the “Vision 2050” (Choi 2017).

Unlike other realms, the S&T-driven foresight has contributed to enhancing the nation’s research and development capabilities. While applying futures research methodologies, this foresight provides an evolutionary pathway to the S&T field by importing current trends and applicable factors comprehensively. The first S&T foresight was initiated as a national R&D program called the “Highly Advanced National Projects” in 1992 (Shin et al. 1999), followed by the regular long-term planning in a national S&T policy on a five-year basis. The S&T foresight adapted the survey of experts including the two-round Delphi surveys, exploring future technologies and calculating a technology realization period as well as its development levels (Korea Institute of ST Evaluation Planning [KISTEP] 2017). However, it was still hard to identify futures studies in the S&T until 2013 due to its focus on innovation system and ICT infrastructure. In 2013, with an establishment of the Ministry of Science, ICT, and Future Planning, the new administration made a strong emphasis on a word of “future.” In 2014, with a group of seventeen private experts, this ministry launched the Future Preparation Committee (Choi 2017). This

committee was responsible to come up with future issues that could pose future opportunities and threats in areas such as politics, society, economy, S&T, and environment. Various governmental S&T research institutes including the STEPI have begun to concentrate on forecasting a future S&T, devising a national strategy, building a roadmap for the S&T development, and conducting an in-depth analysis of potential issues in future societies (KISTEP 2017).

Office of President and Its Secretariat

Due to the increasing awareness of a futures view along with globalization and institutional progress toward democratization, under the Office of the President, the Presidential Commission on the Twenty-First Century was launched in 1989 (Seo, Park and Lee 2010). The commission published the report “2020 Korea” and took a normative approach toward futures studies while minimizing the interference from the concurrent regime. This report produced various future scenarios and also drew a preferred future vision so that individuals and societies could achieve a sustainable development. However, the research outcomes of the commission were evaluated as a mere extension of the “Five-Year Economic Development Plans.” This commission was further developed and renamed to the Presidential Council for Future and Vision in 2008 (Seo, Park 2015). The council especially focused on pan-governmental future issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and aging society and tried to benchmark overseas foresight models to the Korean society. In 2013, the new administration also established the Presidential Committee for National Cohesion to promote a national consensus and public participation on a policy-making process. This committee presented necessary but debatable issues to the society for an idea circulation purpose. In 2014, this committee held the “Korea Open Forum” to focus on solutions to respond to future issues by inviting the public extensively and achieve the goal of social consensus and policy legitimacy.

Legislative Body: The Korea National Assembly

A policy making by the Office of the President and the administrations is often limited by the power of a legislative body, the Korea National Assembly. This is because, in a democratic governance system, the assembly is the sovereign organization representing the public opinion so as to have the implicit public-endorsed authority and the indispensable role in a national decision making (Seo 2015). In 2001, the first bipartisan committee for long-term futures, the Special Committee for Future Strategy and Science and Technology was established in the National Assembly. However, its inherited standing position as a “special” committee and the absence of functions to review and approve bills limited the committee to control the future plans, strategies, and policies of the ministries (Seo 2015; Seo, Park and Lee 2010). Bad enough, the committee members changed frequently without the continuity on their direction. In 2014, four years after its first feasibility study of dedicated future institutes within a legislative body, the bill of the “National Assembly Futures Institute Act” was proposed to the assembly for review (Park 2014). A series of efforts for the last three years finally enabled the bill to be enacted, and the future institute in the National Assembly officially opened in May 2018.

The NAFI was motivated to fill the existing gap of an administration-led futures research. By establishing it within the Korea National Assembly, the NAFI is to overcome the “ministry selfishness,” bridge futures research output and policy implementation, and finally enhance the “check-and-balance” function of the assembly to national policy in a more futures-friendly way. In other words, the NAFI was designed to draw up a mid-to-long-term national plan on a principle and value of futures studies and foresight (NAS 2018).

Limitation and Challenge

The advantage of foresight functions within the administration is that it is effective and efficient to determine policy direction easily and set up a

strategy and research outcomes aligned with a policy agenda. However, on the other side of this benefit, as seen on the Korean case, an excessive policy initiative by the administrations blurred values and processes of futures studies at the end. It means that foresight has been diluted with the myopic focus on each administration’s own achievement rather than approaching it with a comprehensive, long-term, and participatory view. In addition, due to the heavy reliance on a political stance of the presidency, the direction from the Presidential Office easily changed by a different regime while it is sensitive to changes in its internal politics and power games (Seo, Park and Lee 2010). Thereby, historically, it is almost impossible to carry out a long-term futures-oriented strategy.

The aforementioned limits in the administration and the Office of the President trigger the needs in establishing an exclusive, permanent, politically neutral, inter-ministerial and participatory research institution for futures (Seo 2015). Establishing it within the National Assembly also has limitations including a possibility of tainting its functions by political negotiation and bargaining, and ineffectiveness of linking policy implementation and research outputs (D. Kim and Jung 2011). However, despite this weakness, positioning it within the National Assembly enables the institute to be an institutional passage to deliver opinions of the public and a cooperative venue for facilitating a dialogue of both national futures and long-term planning between politicians, government officials, and researchers (D. Kim et al. 2010). Now, it is the time to see whether this newly established institute, the NAFI, can revive the value and process of national foresight.

Building toward a Foresight Community

Futures studies and foresight activities in Korea are now at the new turning point to take a leap forward. So far, the foresight activities in Korea were centered on the government mainly. It is a right time to put the network between the citizen participation and the community-based foresight in the center of the

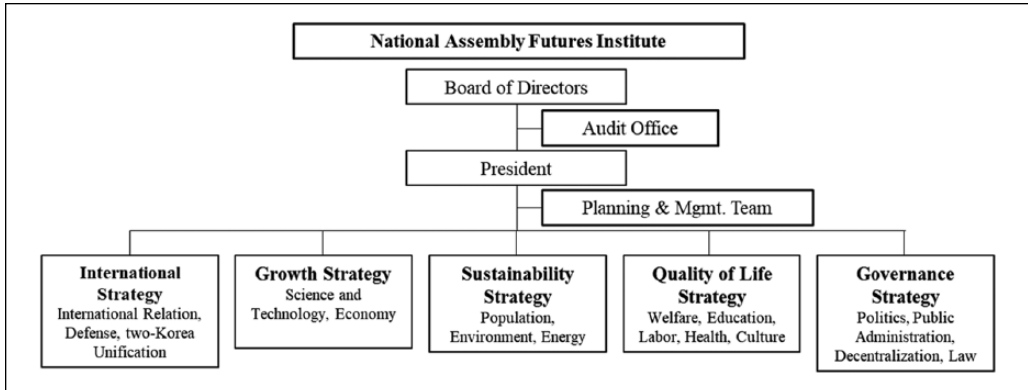


Figure 1. Organization chart and fields of study in the NAFI.

Source: NAFI (2018).

Note. NAFI = National Assembly Futures Institute.

future. The overflowing information and the smarter citizens are refusing to simply follow the future envisioned by a handful of elites and experts. Therefore, it is necessary to design a plan that can create a desirable future with citizens and make it possible to realize it by the local and its community. The community is best suited to pursue a common goal of a “desirable future” for a society based on mutual obligations, common interests, emotional ties, trust, and spontaneous authority and order.

The cores of the community-based foresight are first to help citizens to experience diverse futures and to support citizens to find their own role in the future that they had experienced. The role of the government should be an effort to capture the various future images of the community and citizens and to link them to policies. Governments should also encourage communities and citizens to understand futures from various perspectives and to come up with new solutions. Second, the community-based foresight is to lay the foundation for the future of consensus among governments, markets, experts, and citizens. It is a system that reflects the opinions of diverse and wider society members in national foresight. It is important to ensure that the future vision and strategies established through consensus are used and reflected in the daily lives and personal goals of each citizen. Citizens can pursue changes in their lives so that an agreed future

vision can be achieved and use future information for their career, education, occupation, and aging design. Business can also use future information to maximize business opportunities and reduce risk along with efforts to meet the agreed future vision. The role of the government in national foresight is to provide balanced information about the future so that the people can find their own vision and concentrate on their role.

For citizen participation and community-based foresight to be successful, several conditions must be met. First, it should provide enough options for citizens to choose from various futures. The provision of these various options is an important role and mission of future researchers. Second, governments should strengthen their links with policies so that citizens can expect their future to be realized. Through this institutional device, citizens can be confident that their expected future is far from a mere possibility. Finally, it is necessary for citizens to be able to gradually experience how the lives of the future can be changed even if it takes time. If the future does not change even if they participate in it, citizens will lose interest in foresight participation. If these conditions are not taken into account, the citizen participation and community-based foresight may remain superficial. It is believed that these conditions are potential prerequisites to a new and dedicated futures research organization.

Since 2010, numerous futurists and various institutions aspired to have the Korea-own futures research organization under founding concepts of becoming an exclusive, permanent, neutral, overarching, and participatory entity (Heo and Seo 2018). The NAFI, a world first futures research institute enacted and built by the formal legislative body, opened in May 2018. The NAFI is the long-awaited organization crystalized based on the aforementioned aspiration. Figure 1 depicts the structure and focuses of the NAFI (National Assembly Futures Institute 2018).

If it is the purpose of the National Assembly to reflect the will of the people, the NAFI can be a hub for community-based foresight activities. The NAFI should be able to function as a focal point for government foresight organizations and communities that are fragmented in Korea now. In addition, the NAFI needs to play a role in establishing networks with domestic and foreign foresight organizations and facilitating communication with the public. If possible, the NAFI should try to expand the community-based foresight activities to the local level through collaboration between the central and local governments. It is also necessary to establish a foresight unit in each local community to support the citizen participation in foresight activities and to share the results with other local and central governments and communities. To the end, these attempts will further expand the base of the national foresight.

Conclusion

A new initiation of applying futures studies and foresight functions through the dedicated futures research and academic institutes and another wave of conceptual transformation is on the verge of public policy and its decision making. In addition, the NAFI aims at conducting a network-based research under the open think-net structure, a decentralized but closely connected hub of all available knowledge. Started from renaissance of futures studies and foresight in 2013, a new governing term *participation* is about to dominate the Korean political, economic, and social scenes.

In fact, a core element to futures studies and foresight researched and consented by various futures scholars - a value and utility of participation³, is an unstoppable movement and trend in Korea (Beise and Stahl 1999; Cuhls 2003; Horton 1999; Könnölä et al. 2007; Miles and Keenan 2002; Saritas et al. 2013; Van der Helm 2007). For the next decades, it is believed that principles and values of participation will be another prevailing factor in futures studies and foresight.

Since its introduction, the national foresight of Korea neglects the public, a major “customer” of government policy, and does not have a sufficient institutional mechanism that enables to induce interests, participation, and consensus (Seo and Yoon 2016). A dominance of national agenda by government or few closed experts groups taints a core of the foresight process and its indispensable conditions, participation. Recently, a series of participatory efforts and continuing trials of foresight started to emphasize importance of its process and conditions in policy making. Furthermore, a rapid transformation of the world demands Korea to come up with its own development model, which contributes to the global welfares. Futures studies and foresight with value and utility of participation will be a good cornerstone to build this model. For Korea, it is the time to be a creative future leader in international societies rather than just the “fast follower” to the other developed countries. In light of the previous studies, a case study on the NAFI as well as its establishment process and a practical application of participation in futures studies and the foresight process can be good candidates for further research.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Notes

1. In this paper, a term of futures studies and foresight is frequently used. Even though the range and purpose of them are different, both futures studies and foresight explore the realm of “futures.” Except a few cases where one of these terms was purposely used in the past, these two terms are replaceable and treated identical in this paper.
2. Especially in Korea, the meaning and application of futures studies and a foresight has been recognized same as those of development strategy and planning. The bewildering mixture of alternative futures and “modernized” or “advanced” economic development plans hampered to exhibit historical values and procedures of futures studies.
3. Participation in futures studies and foresight enables practice to do problem reframing, change and threat detection, examination of alternative futures, collaborative and social learning, empowerment, and creation of new value networks (Saritas et al. 2013).

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