The History and Future of Anticipatory Democracy and Foresight

Clem Bezold

Abstract
Anticipatory democracy involves enhanced participation in shaping the future. Foresight involves applying futures tools to decision making. The Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) over its four decades of work with communities, governments, and companies has evolved its “aspirational futures” approach that calls for creating expectable, challenging, and visionary scenarios and using these to enhance vision and the creation of preferred futures. Jim Dator’s approach to scenario development was IAF’s starting place. IAF has supported foresight in executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, with the largest companies and nonprofit organizations, across six continents. Humanity is maturing, and the values of equity and inclusion are rising globally. Economies are transforming, including major job loss to automation and “abundance advances” technologies that provide low cost energy, 3D printing and local manufacturing, and home and community food production that have the potential to lower the cost of living. Foresight must be applied to understand and help create equitable and sustainable futures using these abundance advances in a transformed economy.

Keywords
foresight, anticipatory democracy, aspirational futures, equity, abundance advances, scenarios

Origins of the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF)

IAF was founded to promote and pursue anticipatory democracy and foresight. “Anticipatory democracy” was introduced by a major event in the futures field—the publication of Alvin Toffler’s 1970 best-selling book, Future Shock (Toffler 1970). Toffler diagnosed “future shock” as a side effect of increasingly rapid change and as a driver of social problems. In the last chapter of the book, he proposed a prescription for future shock: anticipatory democracy.

I met Toffler in 1973 while I was doing research on my dissertation on Congress and foresight. At the time, the energy crisis was raging, and I was a graduate student working with Jon Mills, Director of the University of Florida Law School’s Center for Governmental Responsibility. It seemed irresponsible to let crises like this emerge and surprise us. So as a political scientist, I set up my dissertation to explore foresight—ways to anticipate change and to avoid crisis decision-making. That work took me into being a futurist.

One of the case studies I examined for my dissertation was the “foresight provision” of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives. 1

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The provision was added in 1975 to the oversight responsibility in Section 10 of the House Rules. This foresight responsibility calls on committees to do futures research and forecasting that identify changes in the larger environment and their implications for legislation.

Toffler had influenced John Culver, an Iowa Representative who was responsible for the House foresight provision. Together with his wife Heidi, Toffler had started the Committee for Anticipatory Democracy, which advocated for anticipatory democracy and foresight in the 1970s. The Committee comprised national thought leaders including Margaret Mead, Betty Friedan, Jonas Salk, as well as leading futurists Roy Amara, Jim Dator, Buckminster Fuller, Ted Gordon, and Willis Harman. Politician/futurists were also active at various times, including Newt Gingrich, Al Gore, Stuart Udall, and John Culver.

Toffler asked me to join the Committee and to coordinate some of its efforts. At the request of Culver (in 1974, he had been elected Senator Culver) and two Representatives, Charlie Rose of North Carolina and John Heinz of Pennsylvania, Toffler, Jim Dator, and I worked with the Committee to put on the first legislative seminar on foresight for the U.S. Congress in September 1975. The attendees included Senator Ted Kennedy.

The next year, Toffler convinced William Birenbaum, then President of Antioch University, to put up the seed money for us to start the IAF, housed at the Antioch School of Law. This novel law school had been created by the founders of Legal Services Corporation—Edgar and Jean Camper Cahn—as a law school that would train lawyers to work for the poor. That is where we started IAF in January of 1977, and it has always been for me a touchstone of the Institute.

The first conference that we organized at IAF in 1977 considered alternative futures for the American legal system. It resulted in the book *Judging the Future* (Dator and Bezold 1981). This was the topic of IAF’s first conference because of Jim Dator’s long involvement with foresight in justice systems and the interest of Dean Edgar Cahn.

### Anticipatory Democracy

There were lots of activity in the 1970s focused on anticipatory democracy—much of it stimulated or reinforced by Toffler. He recruited several leaders of these efforts to write articles and asked me to edit the resulting book: *Anticipatory Democracy: People in the Politics of the Future* (Bezold 1978).

So, what is anticipatory democracy? As Toffler wrote in the introduction to *Anticipatory Democracy*, “The simplest definition of anticipatory democracy . . . is that it is a process for combining citizen participation with future consciousness” (Toffler 1978, xii). Toffler argued that representative government was a key political institution of the industrial era and that new forms must be expected in the face of crushing decision overload or political future shock we faced. That remains an issue today, amplified by social media and the more ever-present news cycle. Toffler also noted that anticipatory democracy is broader than participation in politics and policy-making. It also includes worker participation, citizen movements, technology assessment, and consumer activism.

And Jim Dator wrote a chapter of the book on the future of anticipatory democracy. He said that the aim of anticipatory democracy is to democratize futures research and researchers, and to futurize democratic processes. And that anticipatory democracy should find a way to help people dream undreamed dreams and realize them, instead of rehashing the same old nightmares and ghosts. “I believe we can and we must [do this], and the future of anticipatory democracy that I prefer—if not the one I see—lies in this direction” (Dator 1978, 328).

Inspired by *Anticipatory Democracy*, IAF facilitated many futures efforts in cities and states, for all branches of government, non-profit organizations, and corporations. In the process, we developed our Aspirational Futures approach to foresight that enables the exploration of likely or expectable, challenging, and visionary or surprisingly successful futures. (More on our Aspirational Futures approach in the following.)
IAF and Foresight in Government

Foresight in government has been a major focus of our work. Foresight is important for all three branches—executive, legislative, and judicial—though there are differences in how each does their foresight. We’ve had the pleasure to work with all three branches at the federal level and in many states; governments in Asia, Africa, Europe, Canada, and Mexico; and the UN family, particularly the World Health Organization.

Foresight in the Judicial Branch

Jim Dator has led a wide range of activities in the United States and around the world for this branch of government. As noted above, IAF’s first conference in 1977 was on the futures of the legal system (Dator and Bezold 1981). One of my favorite IAF projects of these past forty years was “Visions for the Courts: A Capacity Building Project.” Wendy Schultz of Jim’s Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, the National Center for State Courts, and I developed a training guide to enable state court systems to develop their own scenarios and vision (Schultz et al. 1993). In the ensuing decade, more than thirty state court systems held some kind of futures activity, most using that training material.

Foresight in the Executive Branch

In the twentieth century, some presidents have had the urge to do foresight. Herbert Hoover created the Committee on Social Trends, which produced Recent Social Trends in the United States (Committee on Social Trends, 1933), one of the major government foresight reports that Jim Dator identified in his presentation at the IAF Fortieth Anniversary Symposium. Franklin Roosevelt’s administration had the National Resources Committee (NRC) and the National Resources Planning Board (NRPB) provide studies and ideas for many New Deal programs. The NRPB’s activity became so significant that it upset Congress, which closed it down in 1943. Since then, however, many federal agencies do in fact engage in foresight—more on that in the following.

Around the world, at the national level, there is significant foresight activity. Policy Horizons Canada is the leading national foresight office. IAF has had the honor of doing our Aspirational Futures training for them. Finland has integrated its executive and legislative foresight activity. Singapore has a major national foresight operation integrated throughout their agencies, particularly national defense agencies.

While there are government agencies and departments around the world that do foresight all the time, it is also true that governmental foresight waxes and wanes, just as it does in companies. Unfortunately, previous waves of foresight within organizations are often forgotten.

In mid to late 2010, the U.S. federal government is in, what I would call, its third wave of significant foresight activities. There is enough activity that those working in foresight have created a Federal Foresight Community of Interest (FFCOI) that meets quarterly with dozens of federal agencies taking part. Foresight is also alive and well around the globe via several broader networks. For example, IAF has supported the Public Sector Foresight Network (PSFN) that Nancy Donovan of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) and I lead (http://www.altfutures.org/public-sector-foresight-network). The Millennium Project also maintains a network of national and regional nodes that do foresight (http://www.millennium-project.org). The European Union supports a significant foresight network and the most extensive database of foresight activities, the European Foresight Monitoring Network, with cases from around the world (http://foresight.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.html). In Latin America, RIBER, the Iberoamerican Network for Prospective of the Millennium Project (Red IBERoamericana de Prospectiva; http://www.riber.info), has major annual regional meetings and has produced a major book identifying foresight activities in the region (RIBER).

Foresight in Legislatures

Where does foresight sit in Congress and state legislatures? For the U.S. Congress and legislatures generally, looking far into the future
can seem strange. Furthermore, there has been historic hostility toward legislative branch foresight on the part of many in Congress—especially if it is foresight by the other party. Foresight includes the need to explore assumptions and alternatives, as well as look at the impacts and side effects of policy. Considering negative trends or possibilities, particularly the potential side effects of legislation, requires a high level of trust and institutional capacity to produce these analyses. Partisan hostility drives trust out of most legislatures. This has been a significant problem in the U.S. House since the 1990s.

Congress has indeed created mechanisms, often through its support organizations, to provide foresight. These include opening the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) in the 1970s, though the House killed it in 1994 as part of Newt Gingrich’s revolution after he became House Speaker. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) does some forecasting as part of its research for members of Congress and Committees. GAO does major trend reports and (after OTA’s demise) has stepped up to do technology assessments when asked by Congressional Committees. IAF has worked on some of these for GAO.

Another important example is the “scoring” by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), to assess the impacts of legislation. The CBO’s analysis, however, is often ignored by proponents if the scoring shows negative impacts. House and Senate Committees do have hearings that include questions about the future, though often not systematic, nor dealing with alternative forecasts. The House foresight provision (as noted, the research on this provision for my dissertation helped launch me into working with Toffler and becoming a futurist) remains in the House Rules but is largely ignored by House Committees. So, there is ongoing foresight work in and around the U.S. Congress, but it remains spotty. Democrats in the House periodically introduce legislation that would recreate OTA, and it is defeated by the Republican majority. If Democrats get control of Congress, OTA may be reestablished.

Foresight beyond Government

Foresight is useful for governance, as well as for other sectors, industries, fields, organizations, professions, and communities. For all of them, foresight offers early warnings of risks and opportunities, and the ability to see the big picture, to better understand systems and clarify assumptions. It allows us to identify impacts, side effects of decisions and policies. These functions have become routinized in some areas, such as required environmental impact assessments. Foresight also should—we at IAF argue—enhance aspiration and shared vision, and the ability to check the robustness of your strategies. In 1982, we created Alternative Futures Associates (AFA), IAF’s for-profit subsidiary. Through AFA, we have worked with the largest companies globally, including 10 percent of the global five hundred and over the years doing scenario work on six continents.

Aspirational Futures: IAF’s Contribution on How to Do Foresight

Futurizing democratic processes and helping people dream powerful visions and create them is what IAF has been doing. We have learned and grown since the 1970s in how to do this. In the process, we evolved our own particular approach to foresight: “Aspirational Futures.”

Foresight helps individuals, communities, and organizations in understanding the future and in choosing and creating the futures they prefer. For understanding the future, there is a big selection of tools. The major ones that IAF uses are scanning, trends, forecasts, and scenarios. These help you identify and forecast change, clarify assumptions, and explore alternatives, including visionary options.

For creating preferred futures, vision—ideally a powerful and shared vision—is one of the most important tools. Pursuing shared vision makes a big difference, whether it is a community, a government agency, a nonprofit organization, or a business. For example, in their
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Built to Last, James Collins and Jerry Porras report that companies with a powerful shared vision outperformed their competition by a factor of eight over a seventy-five-year period in the twentieth century (Collins and Porras 1994).

Furthermore, a powerful shared vision is one of the most effective change management tools. Given a higher purpose, people are more willing to change even if they feel their position or interests are threatened by that change.

Visions are your values projected into the future, creating a “north star” to guide what you do. Vision involves committing to create that preferred future. Vision is more than understanding—it is commitment and creation. In IAF’s government, nonprofit, and corporate work, we have seen the power of shared vision make a huge difference in the organizations we were aiding.

Choosing and creating your preferred future is really putting yourself, your community into the space of saying what it is that you most want to create, what your vision is. At their best, those visions are ennobling definitions. This stimulates creativity, releases energy, and links values to choices.

Our understanding of and use of vision have been shaped by several colleagues that I would like to acknowledge:

- Trevor Hancock, a Canadian public health physician and environmentalist who brought vision into the community futuring and health futures work that we did in the early 1980s;
- Jonathan Peck for his relentless inclusion of intuition, feeling (vs. thinking in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator context), humanity, and engagement across IAF’s vision and scenario development work;
- Roger Fritz, an architect, community developer, and executive coach who worked with us on many efforts over two decades. He shared with us his “Aspirations Model” that helps people understand that creating your future—driven by your aspirations—should shape your behavior and that helps change your circumstances. In contrast, many people suffer changes in their circumstances (e.g., loss of a job, cut in budgets), and their behavior becomes reactive; they become victims of their circumstances and lose their aspirations (Fritz and Underwood 2006);
- Bob Olson, as IAF’s Research Director, developed and maintained alternative forecasts and scenarios for high tech and high spirit transformations;
- Jim Collins and Jerry Porras with their book Built to Last and their subsequent work (Collins and Porras 1994);
- Peter Senge, for his ongoing work on vision and learning (Senge 1990), including, in the early 1990s providing detailed coaching on a major national health care vision project we were developing;
- Leland Kaiser and Kathryn Johnson who lead vision infusion into health and health care, and my colleagues at the International Health Futures Network, including our development of the Celebration Health Vision for the Disney Development Corporation and Florida Hospital;
- Joan McIntosh and her colleagues at “The Grove” and the graphic artist movement for integrating audacious goals and graphic facilitation into our work across many projects;
- Wendy Schultz, Beatriz Monahan, Jim Dator, and Oregon Chief Justice Wallace Carson, for their work on our vision and scenario training for state courts, the project where I said “scenarios are futures for the head, and vision is futures for the heart”; and
- The leaders of Military Health Systems 2020 (MHS 2020) that developed vision and audacious goals that shaped Military Medicine for decades: William Rowley (who subsequently became IAF’s COO), Scott Beaty, Ed Ponatoski, and Eric Schoomaker.
- Ian Miles, Luke Georghiou, and their colleagues at the University of Manchester in our scenario work for U.K. agencies where we added their
description of preferred futures as surprisingly successful space or “success scenarios.”

In working with our clients, whether organizations, communities, or corporations, we often do both scenario and vision work. Among our corporate clients, there were several for whom this led to vision-driven change management. The Gartner Group did a global survey of multinational companies on what groups did effective change management consulting for multinational companies. Based on this survey, they identified a few large consulting firms and a dozen “boutique firms” globally doing effective change management—and IAF was on that list! We were honored, even though we don’t sell “change management” services. We earned a spot on that list for facilitating the development of powerful shared visions that gave people throughout the organization a higher shared purpose and, thus, enabled the organization and its corporate leaders to make the changes needed to achieve the shared vision.

An important innovation in scenario development that is at the core of our Aspirational Futures approach is our calling for developing scenarios in each of three different types of futures or zones of the future (Bezold 2009):

- expectable (most likely)—given current trends what is most likely to happen?
- challenging (what could go wrong)—what are key challenges that are plausible and should be thought about?
- visionary (surprisingly successful, undreamt dreams)—if multiple stakeholders and the environment aligned to create your vision of the future, what would it look like and what path would take us there?

Scenarios are powerful. They stimulate the imagination and enable us to check assumptions and clarify implications. They explore different kinds of future space. With Aspirational Futures, we have the client consciously define “visionary” space for the organization or community developing the scenarios. We have worked with many groups who enhanced or revised their vision after exploring the visionary scenarios in their collection of futures. One striking example was the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the largest health-focused foundation in the United States, as Jim Marks described in his Welcome to IAF Fortieth Anniversary Symposium. RWJF had Jonathan Peck develop a Scenario Symposium as part of its own Fortieth Anniversary celebrations in 2012. One of the two visionary scenarios was “Culture of Health.” The Foundation reflected on the scenarios and the experience of their symposium. They made creating a “Culture of Health” their vision and redirected their programs and funding to achieve this (Institute for Alternative Futures 2017, 3–6).

Learning Scenarios from Jim Dator

Our Aspirational Futures approach to scenario development grew out of Jim Dator’s mentoring and his own approach to scenarios. Jim and Al Toffler had been my major guides to futures in the years before we established the Institute in 1977. Jim, based on his observations, noted that all our narratives (stories, scenarios) on social change issues can be classified into four recurring groups of images, stories, or policies regarding effects of that change, as follows:

1. Continuation—business as usual, more of the status quo growth;
2. Limits and Discipline—behaviors to adapt to growing internal or environmental limits;
3. Decline and Collapse—system degradation or failure modes as crisis emerges; and
4. Transformation—new technology, business, or social factors that change the game.

We used these in our early work. Over time, they have evolved in their focus to the following:

- Continuation/Business as Usual became “Expectable”—the most likely future
based on current trends. (If the major
trends include significant change, then
the expectable scenario will not be a
continuation. For example, there are
expectable technology-driven trans-
formations, just as the Internet has
transformed our economics, learning,
entertainment, and social interactions
over the last two to three decades. It is
expectable that future technology de-
velopments will also transform our lives,
so these would be included in an
“expectable” scenario.)

• Jim’s second scenario, Limits and
Discipline, and his third, Decline and
Collapse, were merged to become
“Challenging” in our scenarios explor-
ing what “could go wrong,” forcing
groups to consider major challenges
they might confront. In our challenging
scenario, this can lead to dire circum-
stances but seldom collapse. Jim argues
that most systems do face the real pros-
ppect of collapse and one of the scenarios
should explore that.

• Transformation evolved to become
“Visionary”—with visionary as defined
by the community or organization
developing the scenarios. In the early
days of using Jim’s categories, we dif-
ferentiated between “high tech” trans-
formations as described by Al Toffler,
and “high spirit” transformations as
described by Willis Harman. As we
became more aware of the power of
vision and incorporated that into our
foresight practice, it made sense to use
the power of scenarios to explore what
visionary futures would be and describe
the paths to those futures. After all, our
job as humans, organizations, and com-
unities is to imagine the future we pre-
fer, to define those preferred futures,
commit to them, and create them.
Scenarios should allow us to explore
our visions, our aspirations. And this
exploration of “visionary space” needs
to be defined by the user, rather than
IAF. The value of defining visionary
space and the paths to it lead us to say
that in developing a set of four scenar-
ios, two should be visionary—allowing
the exploration of different visionary
outcomes and/or different pathways to
these “surprisingly successful” futures.

The Rise of Equity and
Maturing of Humanity

Our approach to foresight is also influenced by
our commitment to equity. We have observed
the trend in values and attitudes in support of
greater equity (and sustainability). Most fore-
sight is done by and for governments and orga-
nizations with a unitary focus. The disaggregated
impact on different populations are seldom
assessed. Ignoring such disparities perpetuates
inequities. Yet we have witnessed in our work
and beyond a growing awareness of and support
for equity in many forms. With this sensitivity
to disparities among affected populations, there
is increasing awareness of the need for appro-
priate tools that consider disparities and equity
in policy—and recognition that foresight should
contribute to that. We at IAF have made a com-
mitment to equity and health equity in our work.

As futurists, we see the indicators of a sig-
ificant long-term shift in re-defining and sup-
porting equity. This shift at times gets overrun
by counter trends and events, like the Trump
election and the killing by police of unarmed
black men. But “equity rising” is a fundamental
trend that is occurring—a growing awakening
to fairness or equity, including health equity.
Differences among races, income classes, or
other groupings that are avoidable and unfair
are getting more and more attention.

As it did with slavery, humanity is changing
its mind about fairness. In the 1840s, many
people in the United States would say that
slavery is just the way it is. By the 1860s, the
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Now society is changing its mind about
equity or fairness more broadly. In the twenti-
eth century, the Civil Rights Movement had to
overcome the segregation and discrimination
that followed the ending of slavery. Likewise, women’s rights—voting, education, employment, and pay were put in place. More recently lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) rights, particularly gay marriage, have been put in place. In all of these cases, the unfairness did not totally disappear. But it was no longer legally acceptable.

There are indicators of this trend toward equity in official definitions and goals. For example, the World Health Organization, in revising its “Health for All” vision in the 1990s, declared that achieving true health for a community or a nation required meeting certain values: equity, solidarity, sustainability, ethics, and gender rights. Similarly, the Millennium Development Goals and the successor Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included health equity among the globally accepted audacious goals.

In the United States, every ten years, the nation declares its health goals for the nation in its “Healthy People” process. In the late 1990s, it set its Healthy People 2010 Objectives for the Nation, including two overarching goals: “increase quality and years of healthy life” and “eliminate health disparities.” For 2020, these goals were amended to say “achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups.” The draft 2030 overarching goals include “eliminate health disparities, achieve health equity, and attain health literacy to improve the health and well-being of all.”

My own observations on “equity rising” were shaped by my having the honor to work as a facilitator to the World Health Organization (WHO) on the Health for All revision and to the Department of Health and Human Services on the development of the 2010 Healthy People Objectives. This rise of equity is also visible in the directions and funding support from the RWJF, The Kresge Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. These and other indicators of this trend of rising support for equity reinforce Martin Luther King’s comment that “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

There are two particular IAF projects to note in alignment with this trend. First, the Disparity Reducing Advances Project (the DRA Project, http://altfutures.org/projects/health-equity/#DRA-Project) was a multiyear, multistakeholder project supported by the RWJF, the National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control, the Agency for Health Research and Quality, and Florida Hospital to identify the most promising advances for bringing health gains to low-income and underserved communities and to accelerate the development and deployment of these advances to reduce disparities. DRA Project reports, available at the link above, include several on technology, particularly biomonitoring, the social determinants of health, obesity, and diabetes, as well as a paper for the American Medical Association’s Commission to End Health Care Disparities (Bezold et al. 2008).

Second, from 2016 to 2018, Jonathan Peck led our Health Equity and Prosperity—An American Freedom and Justice Project (http://altfutures.org/projects/health-equity/#HEP-Project) that brought together multiple partner organizations and convened hundreds of people to stimulate leadership in health equity. This eighteen-month project was funded by the RWJF, and has been folded into the efforts of a key partner, hundred Million Healthier Lives, which is working on the goal of measurably making hundred million people healthier by the end of the year 2020.

**Future Tasks for Foresight and Anticipatory Democracy**

We now turn to consider the future of foresight and anticipatory democracy, and global, national, and local needs.

Societies and nations need foresight processes. Some of the national foresight efforts mentioned earlier are ongoing, as are some global foresight efforts to identify challenges and opportunities and develop shared visions and goals. For example, Jerry Glenn and colleagues in the Millennium Project do ongoing foresight on global challenges and options, and the Millennium Development Goals represented a globally set vision in terms of audacious goals. Some of these goals were achieved by 2015,
some were not. These goals have been revised and extended to 2030 to become the SDGs.

However, there are some trends in particular that foresight and anticipatory democracy must consider and contribute to:

**Work and the Economy Are Being Transformed**

Job loss to automation will be significant. Estimates range from 14.5 to 47 percent of U.S. jobs that will be lost to automation by 2030. There will be new jobs created in the process, but probably far fewer than those lost. Furthermore, distributed manufacturing or 3D printing will change many sectors, leading to a “zero marginal cost economy” where the marginal cost of producing something is nearly zero, and it sells at that price. AI will similarly lead many services to be made available at very low cost. This will reduce the income and profit that can be generated in many sectors (Rifkin 2014).

As a result of high structural unemployment, a universal basic income will be needed. And the safety net will need to be restructured, with tax reform and other revenue policies developed. Simultaneously, it will become more important that all, young and old, develop their own sense of personal meaning and that they are “contributing” throughout their life, whether through paid work, raising families, caring for older persons, or other volunteering.

**“Abundance Advances” Need to Be Made a Reality**

That is, the range of technologies for low-cost in-home and in-community energy production and storage; local manufacturing (3D printing) of home goods, home building components or whole homes; in-home and in-community food production (from community gardening to urban/vertical agriculture; from conventional growing to aeroponics, cultured meat, 3D printed food). These need to be developed and deployed in sustainable and equitable ways.

IAF’s national scenario effort, Human Progress and Human Services 2035, funded by The Kresge Foundation has made me more conscious of these intersecting challenges—job loss to automation, a guaranteed basic income, tax and finance reform, revised safety net systems, including housing, and optimizing abundance advances—and all require significant foresight. http://altfutures.org/projects/human-progress-and-human-services-2035/

What about the role and future of anticipatory democracy (A/D) itself? A/D is foresight with active citizen participation. One central part of A/D are community future efforts. In the 1978 Anticipatory Democracy book, we documented those, primarily in the United States (Bezold 1978). These community goals and futures efforts have continued under various names, and their frequency has ebbed and flowed around the world. The United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand all have had significant examples of thoughtful community futuring activities and goal setting. Some of these have focused on the future of their community overall, others focused on specific topics, such as health and wellness, or the environment. In the last two decades, equity and sustainability have been growing themes in the analysis and goal setting of these efforts, reflecting the “equity rising” trend.

We continue to observe the power of vision and shared goals in many community efforts in our Human Progress and Human Services 2035 project. We worked with eight state and local areas to develop 2035 scenarios focused on their communities. Two of them had developed widely shared community vision and goals—San Antonio (https://www.sa2020.org) and San Diego (http://www.sdforward.com/about-san-diego-forward/vision-and-goals). They have real advantages over other communities in improving their residents’ well-being and accelerating positive change.

Going forward as a nation, we will need to have widespread participation in developing shared vision and effective designs to deal with the key challenges we are facing. This is important for giving each of us, as citizens and voters, thoughtful, meaningful choices to reflect on, including how the transformations we face—social, economic, and technological—will be rolled out.
A/D needs to help ensure that economic and social transformations work for all. This includes having the opportunity, for all, to make meaningful contributions. That is a significant task going forward, particularly in the face of huge unemployment, and the establishment of a guaranteed basic income. How might each of us pursue opportunities and make our contributions?

In conclusion, I believe that humanity is maturing. Foresight and A/D can help us individually and collectively understand what might happen, explore and invent positive options, clarify our values, and develop shared visions and goals. That is for me where A/D and foresight should be and are headed. It has been an honor, great fun, and very fulfilling to have traveled on these paths over our forty years at IAF.

**Author’s Note**

This article traces the history of anticipatory democracy and foresight, and it provides a forecast. It evolved from a presentation at a symposium celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF).

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**Author Biography**

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