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A Monthly e-Newsletter From:

Institute for Alternative Futures

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Forward Perspectives

IAF Futurist Briefs Professor Muhammad Yunus on Futures Methods

IAF vice president Eric Meade attended a “Global Assembly with Muhammad Yunus” at the University of Glasgow on July 4, 2010. The conference brought together leaders from the worlds of microfinance and social business to share ideas and to celebrate Nobel Peace laureate and Grameen Bank founder Prof. Muhammad Yunus’ 70th birthday. Prior to the conference, Eric had the opportunity to meet privately with Prof. Yunus and to brief him on the field of futures studies and its usefulness in development efforts. Eric provided Prof. Yunus with copies of the Pro-poor Scenario Toolkit IAF has developed with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. Putting foresight tools in the hands of poor communities themselves reflects Prof. Yunus’ principle that “events in the real world are driven by the dreams of people” (Yunus, *Building Social Business*, p. 205).

During the conference, Eric presented a paper on the future of microfinance impact assessment in which he outlined three different mindsets that exist along a continuum of increasing complexity. These include a deterministic mindset rooted in Newton’s laws of motion; a probabilistic mindset that captures the emergence, chaos, and non-linear change that characterize complex systems; and an integral mindset that explicitly integrates subjective dimensions. (One “weak signal” of this emerging integral mindset is RESULTS founder Sam Daley-Harris’ focus on the “transformational dimension” of microfinance, which he discusses in his [“Purpose, Poverty, Pitfalls, and Redemption”](#) speech to TEDx NJ Libraries.) Each mindset has its uses in measuring the impact of microfinance programs, but making policy decisions based on simplistic assessments that do not capture the more complex impacts of microfinance could actually lead policy-makers away from the most promising ideas for alleviating poverty. For the full paper, click [here](#).



News & Events

IAF Launches New Website: Please update your bookmarks to www.altfutures.org

We have moved! The Institute for Alternative Futures is excited to announce the release of our newly redesigned website. The new website is at www.altfutures.org; our previous domain, www.altfutures.com, will redirect you to our new site.

With a fresh new look, it provides an even greater array of projects and publications from IAF's 33 years of working with a wide range of clients on the future of health, sustainability, education, non-profits, and government. The site highlights our work on the DRA Project (Health Equity), pro-poor foresight, our new Center for Education and Learning Innovation, the future of the healthcare system, and foresight seminars.

We invite you to explore the updated www.altfutures.org today, and please bookmark us for future reference!



IAF Releases Pro-Poor Scenario Toolkit

In a meeting in March 2009, the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) and the Rockefeller Foundation agreed to develop global foresight for the world's poor population, which we call pro-poor foresight. IAF and the Rockefeller Foundation specifically want to encourage people from the academic, civil society and policy communities to include people who have experience in poor communities to develop scenarios that explore the local future in the context of a changing world. With that end in mind, we designed this Pro-poor Scenario Toolkit that places those poor populations at the center of concern for the future. This toolkit specifically invites policy-makers, researchers, students, professors and active citizens to explore the future as stakeholders who can identify actions to be taken today to avoid feared consequences and to achieve desired outcomes. IAF will collect the scenarios developed by groups around the world and will post them online. A special committee has also been established to award prizes for the best scenario submissions. Download the [Pro-Poor Scenario Toolkit](#) and [a set of global forecasts for the year 2039](#) for use in the scenario development process.

Clem Bezold Speaks on Social Determinants of Health at MD Anderson Cancer Center

In June, the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center held a workshop entitled "Disparities in Health in America — Working Toward Social Justice". The workshop offered a comprehensive approach to the issue of health disparities and provided attendees with a broad knowledge of the issues. In his panel presentation, IAF founder Clem Bezold noted an increasing base of evidence that social determinants of health play a larger role than health care in shaping our health. For example McGinnis et al. (2002) had identified several factors which shape health and have estimated their relative importance over the life course as follows: behavior (40%), social environment (15%), physical environment (5%), genes (30%), and health care (10%). Most recently the University of Wisconsin, as part of their County Health Data project comparing all the counties in each state (www.countyhealthrankings.org), estimates that health care accounts for 20%, the social determinants of health for 40%, and the environment for 10% of our health. Carolyn Clancy, director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), has argued that health care accounts for 25% of the difference in health. Thus if health care might explain 10 to 25% of the difference in health, then 75 to 90% of health is still shaped by other factors. Unfortunately our spending does not reflect this reality. While the U.S. spends more than two trillion dollars on health care per year to treat people *after* they get sick, less than 4 cents of every dollar are spent on addressing factors other than healthcare.

Social determinants of health are an area of increasing activity in the health equity movement. To learn about the current state of the health equity movement, see IAF's [State of the Health Equity Movement Memo](#). For recommendations, strategies, and priorities for health equity please see [Health Equity Policies: A Review of the Recommendations](#).

IAF Discusses 21st Century Leadership for the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery

Jonathan Peck is writing a monthly leadership column for the ASDS newsletter *Currents*. This is part of a larger project with ASDS to develop a network of young leaders supported by experienced mentors in a year-long program. Great leaders see future opportunities and threats and assure that those who follow meet the challenges of the future while living fully in the present. IAF's curriculum for ASDS addresses both the future and the current circumstances for the profession. The ability to look ahead and to prepare one's profession, culture, and organization for change is a key leadership competence that will become more essential – particularly in the health care arena – over the coming years.

IAF Welcomes New Interns, Heather Frey and Alex Carney

IAF is pleased to welcome new intern Heather Frey, who brings a unique blend of futures experience to IAF this summer. Heather received her undergraduate degree in Political Science at the University of Hawaii and is now working towards her Master's degree at Hawaii's Center for Futures Studies. Heather is currently a part of a Futures of Education project at the University of Hawaii, which looks at the future evolution of higher education over the next 30-50 years. Heather has also worked as a legislative fellow with the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (P.I.R.G.), where she worked on a bill to reform the consumer product safety commission as well as an effort to revamp the CHIP children's healthcare program in Texas. After completing her summer internship at IAF, Heather will return to Hawaii for her final year of graduate work.

Alex Carney is a senior at Stanford University where he is studying both Psychology and Management Science & Engineering. His main interest is understanding the barriers to change and how we can overcome those barriers, especially barriers to new technologies. Alex is excited about learning the methods of aspirational futures to combine them with his psychology and business background. While at IAF he will work on assessing the current barriers to electronic medical records (EMRs) and investigating new technologies that can be used to create advanced simulations.

Upcoming events

"Using Foresight to Improve Decision-Making," discussion panel on foresight in government. Clem Bezold and Jonathan Peck. [Project on National Security Reform: Vision Working Group Report Release](#). July 30, 2010, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

"Future of Healthcare," facilitating a group of 50-75 in the Health Professions. Jonathan Peck. October 8, 2010, at the University of Michigan.

"Vision and Leadership," facilitating a workshop for South Central Public Health Leadership Institute. Jonathan Peck. October 13, 2010, in New Orleans, LA.

"Psychology and Technology for Police Futures," workshop for California's Police Officer Standards & Training (POST) Command College. Jonathan Peck. October 19, 2010, in Folsom, CA.

The Institute for Alternative Futures is a 501(c)3 non-profit research and education organization based in Alexandria, VA. IAF was founded in 1977 by Clem Bezold, Alvin Toffler, and James Dator. IAF has a long track record of using forecasts, scenarios, visioning, and other futures tools to help leading organizations understand the likely, challenging, and visionary developments that may take place in their environments, and to develop robust and visionary strategies that account for the inherent uncertainty of the future. IAF's past clients include the World Health Organization, AARP, American Cancer Society, and Rockefeller Foundation, as well as a wide range of multinational corporations through its for-profit subsidiary, Alternative Futures Associates. To learn more about what we can do for your organization, call us at (703) 684-5880 or write to futurist@altfutures.org.

Comments about this newsletter? Questions? Things you would like to see included in future issues? [Contact us](#).

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