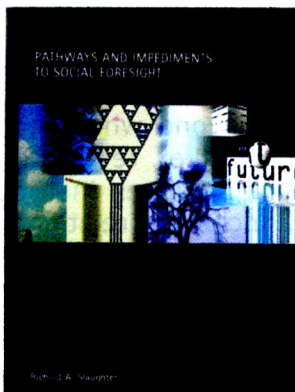


## Pathways and Impediments to Social Foresight [Ela KRAWCZYK]



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Monograph No. 10,  
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*Pathways and Impediments to Social Foresight* is the final publication in the AFI Monograph Series, Swinburne, Australia. This monograph reviews and brings together some of the key topics addressed by the series in the period between 2003 and 2006. The author, Richard SLAUGHTER, summarises the key features of the AFI programme, considers the limitations of conventional views of the future in the immediate regional (Australian and New Zealand) context, and discusses why the future still seems to be a 'missing dimension' in so many activities. He draws the attention to two areas of published work – the examination of issues forming the 'global problematique' and how they play out in the Australian context.

Starting with a brief 'conventional' description of the general situation of Australia and New Zealand at present and the challenges facing these countries in the future, the author tries to focus our attention on the elements that are missing from the traditional way of looking at the future. First, such an approach provides a description of an 'exterior' situation that deals mainly with well understood empirical issues. Second, although factors, such as world views, values and ideologies, are hinted to they are not articulated clearly. Finally, the analytical frame used to create such an overview remains in the background, often hidden and unacknowledged. Given these limitations the degree of clarity required for understanding and action is limited. And, therefore, clearly there is a requirement to develop more adequate views, which means that we need to move beyond conventional approaches.

The core exploratory part of the monograph aims to develop an understanding why conventional approaches to options and alternatives for Australia (or the world) are unconvincing and cannot sustain any sort of meaningful debate or dialogue. It includes the examination of the general reasons why the futures seems to be a 'missing dimension' in so many activities, the discussion of the various issues absent from the debates about the future of Australia, the identification of the shared resources for thinking ahead, and the examination of the lack of awareness about futures work that has been conducted in Australia and elsewhere. Having this understanding it becomes obvious that in order "to make progress we need to re-define the problem, our approaches to it and canvass ways of moving beyond the blockages outlined earlier".

In the next part of the publication the author proposes and discusses in detail the actions that can be taken to re-define 'the problem'. He draws on the lessons learned in AFI and from the research carried out into 'creating and sustaining social foresight'. The following actions are proposed and explored in detail:

- the search for layered explanations (i.e. multiple layers of causation, not just one);
- the development of an understanding of the nature and operation and social interests;
- gaining knowledge from integral understanding and practice; and
- the use of the full range of available tools and methodologies.

This monograph, as well as the series that it concludes, is a valuable resource for anyone who tries to develop social foresight capacity. The series, not only demonstrate multiple ways and angles to approaching and developing such capacity, but also challenges us to undertake actions to build and sustain social foresight.