

CSPS POLICY BRIEF

TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES: IMPLICATIONS FOR BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is based on focused research which was conducted by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) as part of an ongoing *Foresight Study Project*¹, in order to: (1) *identify* current and emerging issues as well as trends likely to impact Brunei in the near and medium term future, and (2) *prioritise* emerging issues and trends in order to provide specific future-oriented policy advice on a number of topics of concern.

Increasing socio-ecological and informational complexity in the early 21st century has shattered the assumption of a ‘normal’ or ‘given’ future. Rapid change among cultures and with technology means that we can no longer expect the future to be an uneventful continuation of the past or present. Apparently unlikely and marginal events can, and often do, create significant ripple effects not only locally but also globally. Global systems have become interconnected; one relatively small event in one country can be felt across global markets, as well as impact collective thinking on a number of issues. We are faced with disruptive forms of change (technological, ecological, social and political) in a rapidly shifting landscape. Scanning for signals and events that may be significant in the future should thus also be an ongoing effort and activity if policymaking is to be responsive and anticipative.

The outcomes of the CSPS’s ongoing *horizon scanning for emerging issues and trends* research summarized here are, therefore, preliminary and should be regularly updated. Given the current rate of change, only a continual scanning process to identify relevant upcoming issues early on can assist governments and businesses to create responsive and anticipatory decision-making. This ensures policymakers and leaders “evaluate the situations strategically in order to reduce ‘surprises’, to increase the room for manoeuvre, and to improve the overall flexibility of

¹ Foresight Study Project was led by Dr José Ramos of Action Foresight, Australia. This policy brief makes extensive use of the *Train the Trainers Manual* for the course in *Strategic Foresight and Horizon Scanning* produced by Dr Ramos for the CSPS.

governance” (Habegger, 2010). In addition, the process ensures that policies and strategies are relevant to a landscape of rapid and unexpected change.

As this journal article gives a general overview of identified issues, two main policy recommendations are:

1. Horizon scanning for emerging issues and trends needs to be comprehensive, ongoing and done across governmental sectors;
2. Specific issues and trends, selected after thorough research focused on both identification and prioritization, subsequently need to be addressed in more detail and in terms of their potential impact. This should be followed up with very specific policy recommendations on each issue or trend.

INTRODUCTION: POLICY CONTEXT

The promotion of social welfare through public policy increasingly requires the incorporation of the discipline of strategic foresight. In Brunei, the government develops strategies within the framework of the dominant national development perspective, specifically Wawasan (Vision) 2035. At the same time, both the government and the society face challenges to the implementation of Wawasan 2035. Some of these challenges have been identified as:

- Past experience and the current dominant worldview which projects a comfortable future, (easy and convenient) are based on critical assumptions which may not have been sufficiently scrutinized and challenged, and which may very well be outdated. This potentially leads to a static mindset in which certain individuals and groups cannot take responsibility for their own futures.
- There is a the lack of economic growth, and diversification efforts have not been successful. At the same time, attendant social problems such as unemployment and or underemployment, poverty and crime are on the increase.
- Brunei will continue to be impacted by globalisation, urbanisation, and technological advancements. Some of these developments are likely to significantly challenge ‘business as usual’ – BAU policymaking.
- The emergence of alternative perspectives and worldviews will continue to grow due to existing subcultures and an increase in counter-cultural influences. Alternative views are already developing under the influence of cross-cultural exchange (during study or work), globalization, and the increasing use of the internet. While a multiplicity of views may, for some people, create confusion, from an agile policy perspective, such diversity is needed to navigate complex challenges.
- Alternative views on policy issues could be utilized to help develop more robust policies and strategies needed to achieve the overall national vision. Business as usual policy making may represent a significant loss in terms of potential insights into policies that are to remain relevant to navigating rapid and unexpected changes

IDENTIFYING TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES

Trend analysis and emerging issues analysis both scan for change. However, these two methods can be differentiated based on the scope and the time of the impact of phenomena. *Trend analysis* focuses on broad patterns that are already well established and phenomena that have become commonplace. By the time a particular trend is identified, for example an ageing population or globalisation, it is already impacting societies and organisations. Identification of trends is thus relatively straightforward, as there is plenty of quantitative evidence in the form of empirical data that is available. The empirical data is usually well documented, can be tracked historically and extrapolated/investigated in terms of their potential future impact. An example of a trends analysis, focused on global megatrends, is provided in the image below:

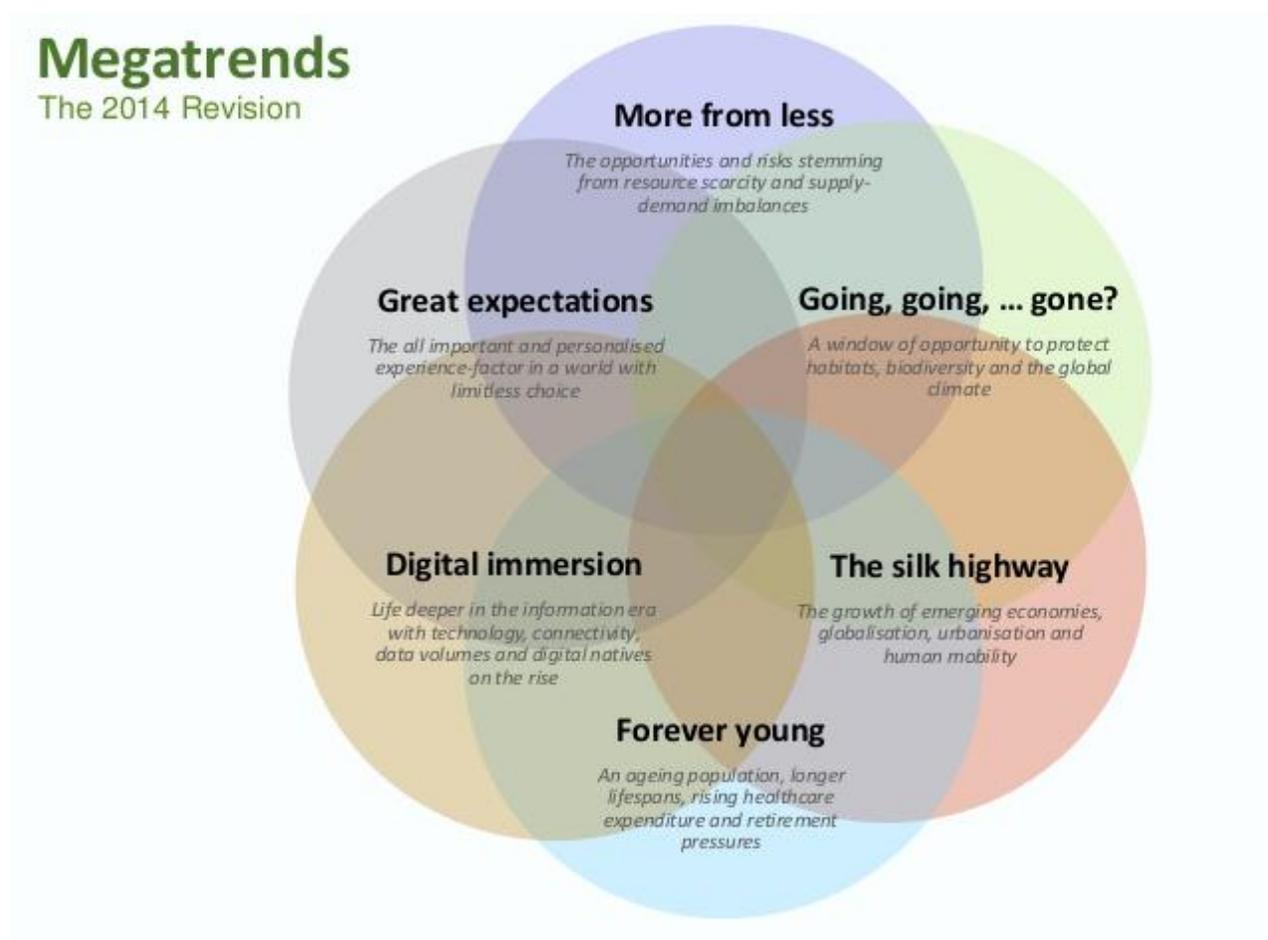


Diagram 1. Global Megatrends: The 2014 Update, by Dr Stefan Hajkowitz, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)²

Emerging issues analysis, on the other hand, tries to identify issues that are just emerging but that may prove highly disruptive in the future. Most commonly mentioned examples of emerging

² <http://www.slideshare.net/LandcareAustralia/dr-stefan-hajkowitz-landcare>

issues are, the September 11 attacks in New York and the establishment of the internet. Before their occurrence, these events were completely outside of the public awareness, foreseen by only a handful of people and even then considered highly unlikely. Furthermore, emerging issues are commonly seen as disruptive, provocative or even ridiculous. There is no ‘general agreement’ about what emerging issues may specifically be. By their very definition they are identified on the ‘margin’ of public discourse. They also question dominant assumptions about the future. Therefore, for an emerging issue to be foreseen, a worldview/value shift or a perspective from the margin is usually required.

Richard Lum provides a useful differentiation between trends and emerging issues. According to him, a trend is a historical change *up until the present*, while an emerging issue is “a possible new technology, a potential public policy issue, or a new concept or idea that, while perhaps fringe thinking today, could mature and develop into a critical mainstream issue in the future or become a major trend in its own right” (Lum, 2016). And so while “standing in the present right now and casting our gaze into the futures”, examples of emerging issues include: “autonomous corporations that have software and robots instead of human management or staff, the emergence of digital bodyguards for children to combat cyber bullying, and the dismantling/transformation of traditional education institutions as the Millennial generation takes leadership positions” (Lum, 2016). Other examples of emerging issues are: “the rights of robots, genetic engineering ending sexual reproduction, denial of sovereignty to certain nations because of their inability to meet human rights criteria, the triple bottom line [for businesses] and beyond, passports issued by entities other than nation-states, a new United Nations functioning as an effective world government, and the end of capitalism” (Inayatullah, 2007). All these events are currently more or less unlikely; however, if they do occur they will have a dramatic impact.

While it is usually difficult to do, emerging issues analysis is crucial for the early identification of threats and opportunities because even though emerging issues may have a low probability of occurring, once they do occur they usually create a massive change and multiple ripple effects. At the same time, merely being unlikely or potentially having a high impact are not sufficient conditions for something to be identified as an emerging issue. Rather, “there must also be seeds, drivers, and reasons why one thinks the issue is emerging. It is searching for small ripples that might one day become grand waves, tsunamis” (Inayatullah, 2007).

The rise of these waves - from emerging issues (seeds) to trends to tsunamis (huge problems or well-established and known issues) - is visually presented in the chart below:

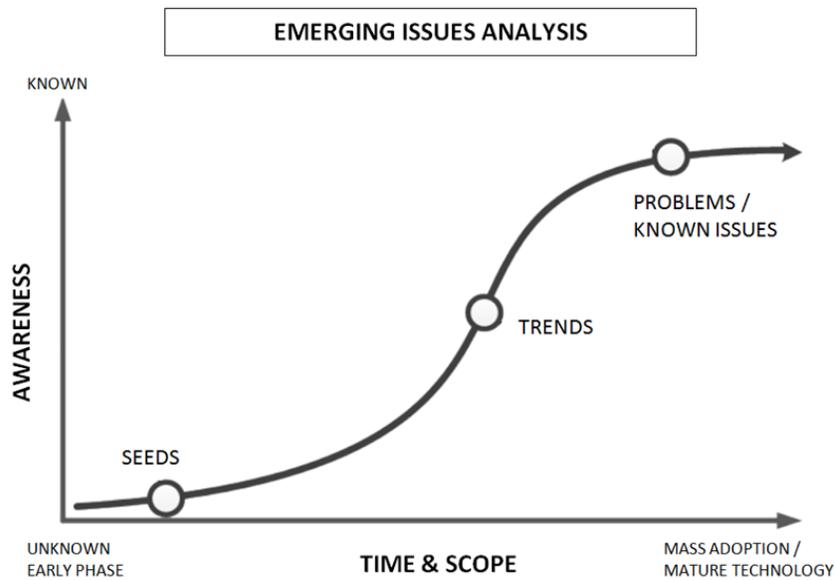
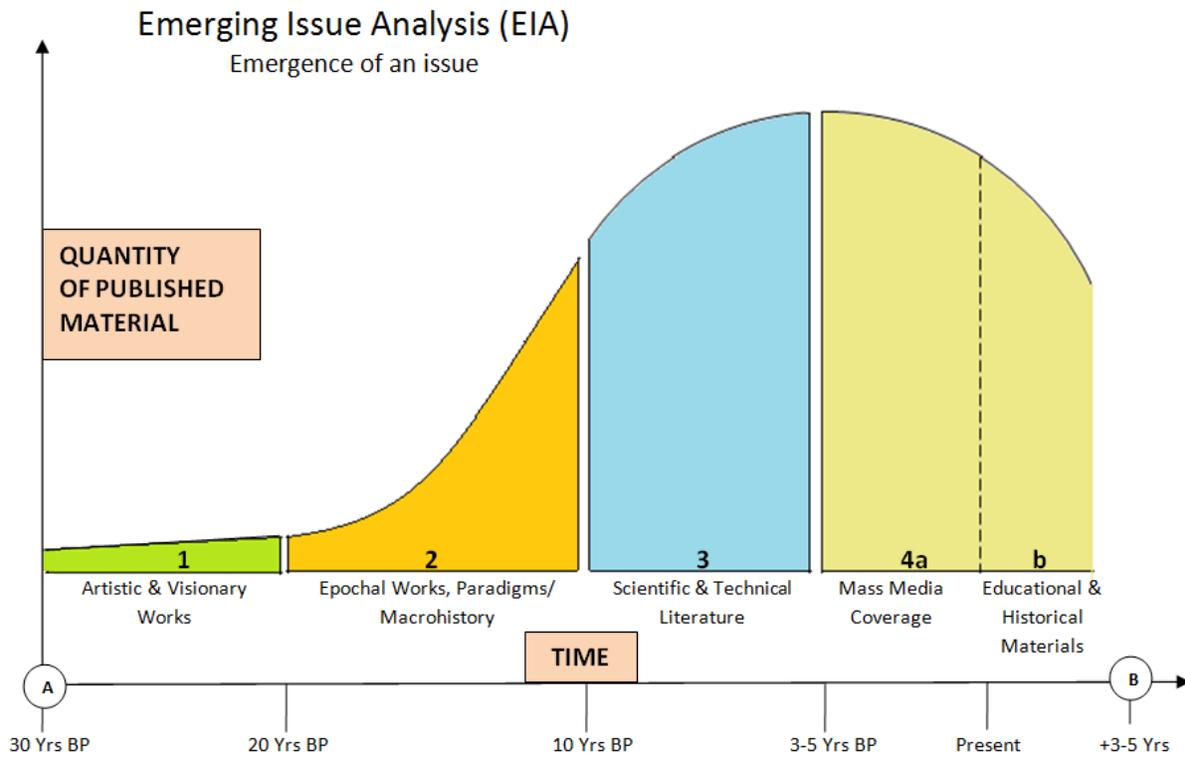


Diagram 2: Emerging issues analysis S-curve

Distinction between trends and emerging issues can also be made based on the number of published materials, as in the chart below:



Source: Wildman & Inayatullah (1998)

A - B = 35 years BP = Before Present

Diagram 3: Emerging issues analysis adapted from Graham Molitor by Wildman & Inayatullah (1998).

Emerging issues are identified in stages 1 and 2, while trends are commonly identified in stages 3 onwards. Once a trend is well established, it is no longer a ‘future event’, but rather, a part of our contemporary/present society. As stated earlier, the CSPS research project focuses on both trend analysis and emerging issues analysis to scan for change. While identified and prioritised, they have not been strictly separated. This is due to the purpose of the project primarily being the investigation of emerging issues’ and trends’ impact on Brunei in the near and medium term future in order to provide specific future-oriented policy advice on a number of selected issues.

TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES OF RELEVANCE TO BRUNEI

The identification of trends and emerging issues of relevance to Brunei has gone through several phases. The initial phase identified some 30 key trends and issues (May-July, 2016), to which another 30 or so were added later (August-September) – both phases were conducted by the researchers from the CSPS. Finally, participants at the CSPS Forum (22 September 2016) on *Applying Strategic Foresight and Horizon Scanning for Policy Making in Brunei* offered their own input. The Forum participants included senior government officers, including permanent secretaries, and CEOs and other executive-level participants from the private sector. The participants were presented with a list of 40 trends and emerging issues at the Forum, out of which twelve were prioritised and described in more detail. The participants then voted on issues, in terms of their importance and future impact for Brunei.

Some hundred and thirty participants attended the forum, 124 provided feedback. The lists of trends and issues, provided by the CSPS researchers, as well as the participants’ input were as follows (Charts 1-4):

Big List of Trends and Emerging Issues					
1	Depletion of natural resources	15	Brunei stock exchange	29	E-governance takes off
2	'Made in Brunei' kicks off	16	Brunei becomes nutritionally obese	30	New models of learning
3	Severe brain drain	17	Genetic engineering of humans	31	Qualification inflation
4	Brunei as a top tourist destination in ASEAN	18	Escalation of crime and violence	32	From smart phone to smart kampong
5	Boom of the creative arts industry	19	The end of families	33	Home schooling
6	Massive tsunami hits Brunei	20	Widespread poverty	34	Participatory governance
7	Collapse of the welfare state	21	Greater health awareness	35	The abode of quality learning
8	Women in power	22	Disappearance of traditional culture	36	Youth disengagement
9	The end of food security	23	Alienated social groups	37	Widespread mental illness
10	Loss of Malay language use	24	A materialistic world	38	Active ageing
11	Rubbish filled cities	25	Erosion of cultural diversity	39	Home grown terrorism
12	Mass solar panels	26	The Heart of Borneo disappears	40	Spratly Islands conflict escalates
13	Intelligent transport systems	27	Saying yes to renewable energy		
14	Driverless cars and boats	28	Eradication of exams and 'diploma disease'		

Chart 1: List of trends and emerging issues

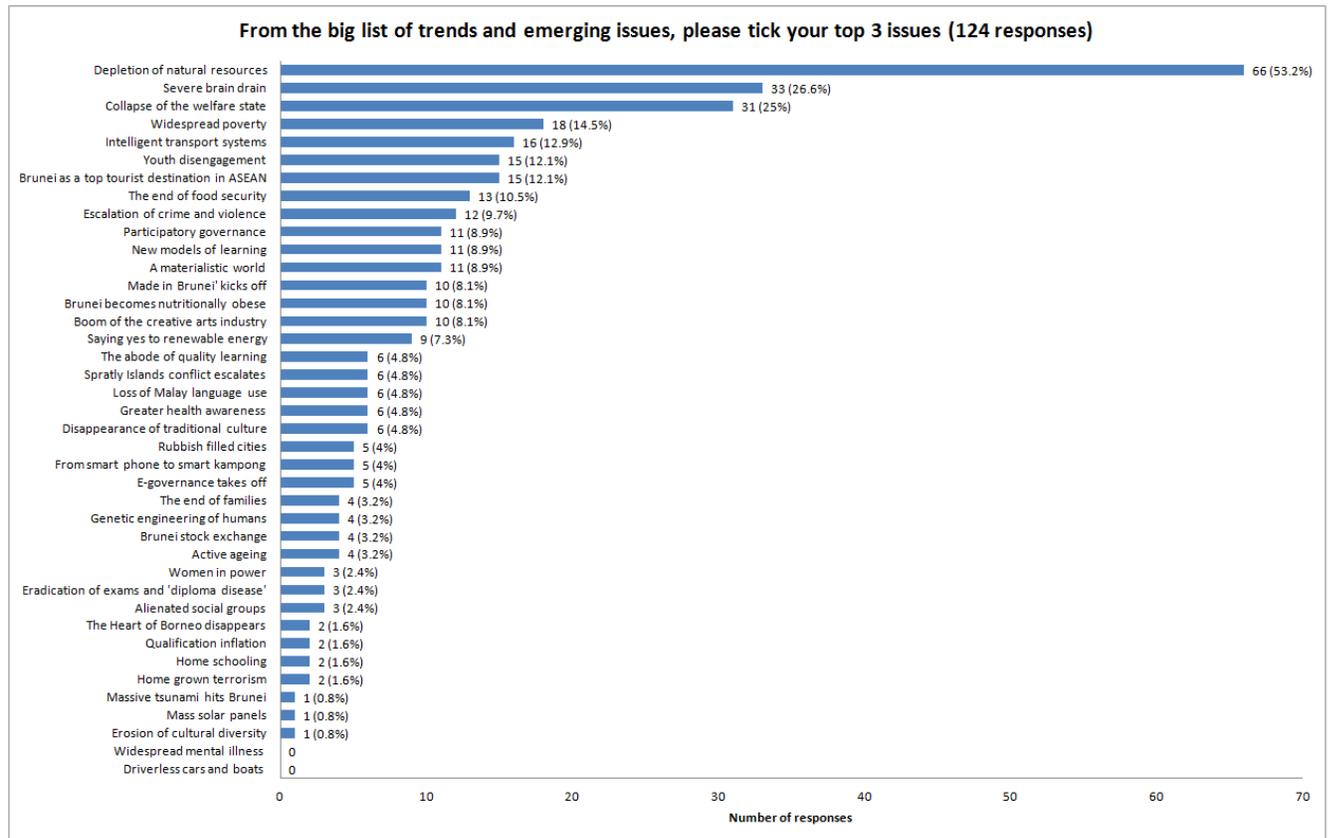


Chart 2: Forum participants' selection of top three issues

Prioritised Trends and Emerging Issues	
1	Failure to diversify
2	High unemployment
3	The future concept of work
4	Brunei's ghost towns
5	Population reaches 1 million
6	The end of jobs and social security
7	Community disintegration
8	Trade globalisation
9	Big data is here
10	Outbreaks of infectious diseases
11	Imported terrorism
12	Whole of government approach

Chart 3: List of prioritised trends and emerging issues

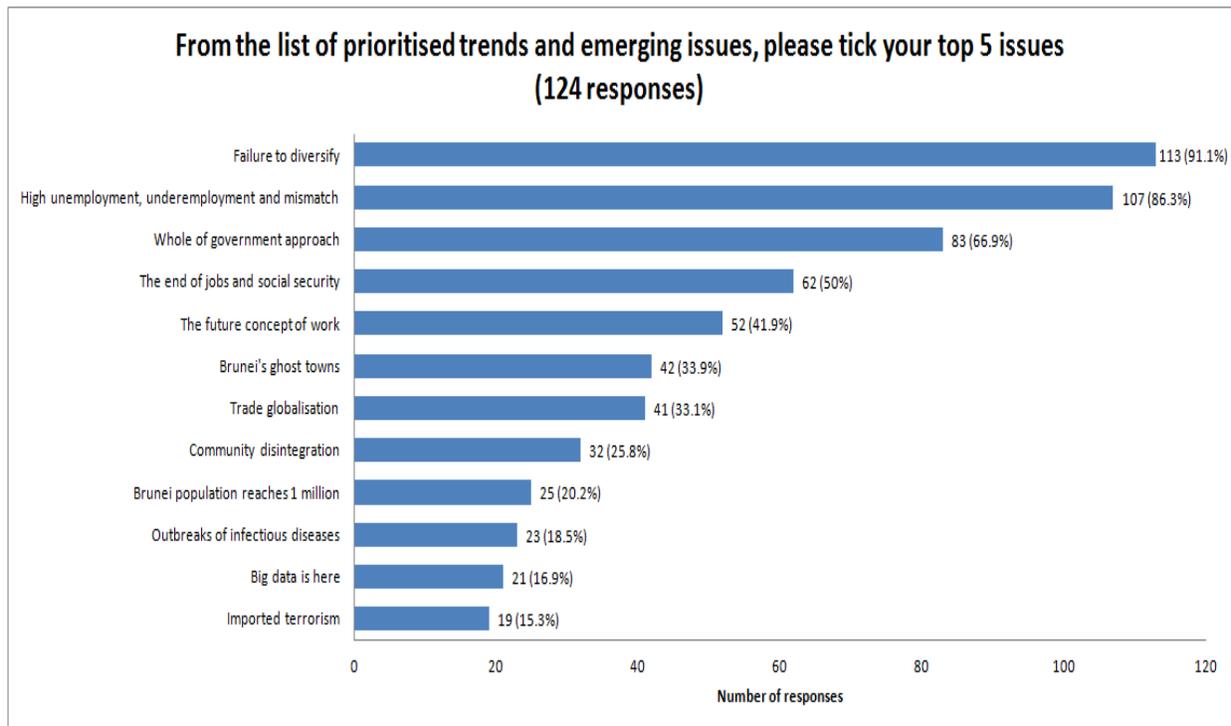


Chart 4: Forum Participants' selection of top five priorities issues

All these, as well as issues identified during and after the Forum are in the process of being collated within a CSPS Futures Deck, where each trend/emerging issue is described and summarised. The description is followed by key questions of relevance to Brunei. These questions are to be further discussed at future forums and workshops organised by the CSPS. The twelve prioritised trends and emerging issues are outlined below. They are listed in order of prioritisation by the participants during the Forum

1. Failure to diversify

Summary of the issue

Diversification efforts remain unsuccessful. The oil & gas sector still contributes significantly to total exports as well as being the backbone of the government's revenue. As oil and gas reserves are finite, the country's economic well being lacks sustainability. Furthermore, "Ease of Doing Business" is low compared to other countries in the region (84th in 2016, 4th among ASEAN countries). Failure to diversify leads to foreign investors leaving the country.

Questions for reflection

- How long can oil and gas reserves sustain the economy?
- How can we stimulate entrepreneurship and the growth of the private sector?
- Which economic clusters of activity outside oil and gas should Brunei be venturing into to diversify?

2. High unemployment, underemployment and mismatch

Summary of the issue

The unemployment rate in Brunei is estimated at 6.9%, and at a significant 25.3% among young people. Overall labour underutilization (measuring mismatch between job demand and supply) was estimated at 18%. A skill and education mismatch exists among the low-skilled as well as among graduate work entrants. Unemployment affects both out-of-school youth as well as graduates. Furthermore, it is rising. Job opportunities are low due to lack of diversification, uncertainty in the oil and gas and related sectors, and saturation of public sector employment. Even with economic development, if the education provided does not address the knowledge and skills required by the future economy the issue will persist into the future.

Questions for reflection

- How do we equip people with future-proof skills?
- Will there be meaningful jobs for our youth?
- How can we best improve the welfare and security of our future workforce?

3. Whole of government approaches

Summary of the issue

Breaking out of policy silos and doing more with less as well as collaboratively- is increasingly seen as important. Whole of government approaches have been shown to reduce duplication, minimise the use of limited resources, help with better alignment of activities and make public policy more effective. Some examples of whole of government approach initiatives include the proposed Land Transport Master Plans 2014, the creation of the one stop SME centre – DARE in 2016, and the establishment of the inter-ministry national committees to solve identified policy issues in an integrated fashion.

Questions for reflection

- Will we see the end of ministries and departments?
- Will there be a whole scale transformation to one stop centres?
- What are the key challenges faced in implementing the whole of government approach and initiatives?

4. The end of jobs and social security

Summary of the issue

The 'End of Jobs' and 'Brave New World of Work' are established projections of a world where the majority of the population will occupy a grey area between formal employment and unemployment due to automation of work. At the top- there is a class of well paid professional elites, while below, non-standard work and poverty become the norm. There is a likelihood that the majority of the population will be unemployed permanently. In Brunei, unemployment is on the rise. There is oversaturation of middle class white collar jobs and diminishing blue collar jobs due to automation and cheap foreign labour. Public welfare spending has recently been reduced. Consequently, novel policy approaches addressing the end of jobs and the brave new world of work are needed.

Questions for reflection

- Should we consider reduced or flexible working hours and UBI (or other social security strategies) to address long term or permanent unemployment?
- Should we challenge our assumptions and consider the possibility that a jobless future may not actually be a bad thing?
- Should we focus on labour market segregation to reduce inequality?

5. *The future concept of work*

Summary of the issue

The growth of more focused digital services and social media sites has given rise to freelancing, subcontracting and online jobs where workers can work for dozens of employers over the span of their careers. The traditional world of work, based on the nine-to-five mentality and lifetime jobs, is fading towards an ‘uberisation of the workplace’. Many professions – skilled and unskilled – are now on the verge of extinction. New types of jobs and occupations are continually being created. Such a new world of work characterised by automation and crowd work will likely increase productivity.

Questions for reflection

- What opportunities may flexibility and automation of work bring to Brunei?
- What are the potential jobs of the future and the skills required to fulfil them?
- How can we ensure that the future of work will be attractive for everyone?

6. *Brunei’s Ghost Towns*

Summary of the issue

The sight of tourists wandering aimlessly on the side of the road is unfortunately more common than it should be. In addition, there is a noticeable large scale exodus of locals to the border towns of Miri and Limbang, and neighbouring cities, during the weekends and holidays. A recent CSPS large-scale survey shows that the majority of locals and tourists would choose to spend more of their holidays in Brunei if appropriate leisure and recreational options were developed and offered. Exacerbated by decreasing employment opportunities, it is especially the highly qualified and skilled who consider emigrating abroad not just for better jobs but for better lifestyles as well.

Questions for reflection

- What if a majority of Bruneians eventually choose to live elsewhere?
- How do we encourage locals to choose to spend more of their holidays in Brunei and to increase local tourism?
- How do we increase the livability of our cities?

7. *Trade Globalisation*

Summary of the issue

FTAs such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the ASEAN Economic Community and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will cut down barriers to trade and open up new export and import markets for signatory countries. Overall, the Brunei economy has been

projected to be one of the largest net gainers from such FTAs. However, with any FTAs, the free movement of workers and capital and reduced protection for local firms and the local workforce is likely to generate winners and losers. Action must be taken now to ensure that local workers and firms are ready for a more productive and competitive economy tomorrow.

Questions for reflection

- How can local businesses and the workforce be made more internationally competitive?
- Will FTAs change the way Brunei trades with non-partner countries?
- How can we support groups of people and businesses that may be negatively affected during the transition phase?

8. Community Disintegration

Summary of the issue

Brunei's close knit society has been one of the Sultanate's proud attributes. Failure to address the disintegrating effects of rapid social change, including urbanization and modernization may endanger our integrated social fabric. Examples of community disintegration include: money issues known to turn family and friends against each other; the crime rate rising; abandonment of old people and babies; ex-criminals often shunned by society and unable to find employment; marginalised youth finding it difficult to integrate into society; the lure of modernity accelerated via the internet and global mass media; and new gender power relations challenging the mores of traditional culture.

Questions for reflection

- What if the threads in our social fabric are unravelling?
- Which issues have the highest impact on community integration, or alternatively, disintegration?
- Should we impose more social control programmes to maintain the status quo or is it time to adopt a paradigmatic change in policy to embrace social change?

9. Brunei Population Reaches 1 Million

Summary of the issue

A much expanded workforce and market base is required to reach Wawasan 2035 growth objectives. It is estimated that Brunei needs a population of 1 million to achieve those goals. The main feasible strategy is to encourage inward migration of overseas people. With an influx of overseas migrants, Brunei will be a multicultural country with a mass market for domestic goods and adequate supply of labour. It will also spur innovation and allow industries to develop, facilitate growth in the economy and bring benefits to the tourism industry. On the other hand, the society may need to address several issues such as the loss of a dominant culture and

tradition, locals competing for jobs with immigrant communities and a potential rise in social cohesion issues as society becomes more heterogeneous.

Questions for reflection

- Should Brunei aim to reach a critical mass of 1 million people by 2035?
- If not, how do we meet our need for an expanding workforce and expanding market base?
- If yes, what type of population and migration policy should Brunei pursue?

10. Outbreaks of Infectious Diseases

Summary of the issue

There are 354 generic infectious diseases in the world today, with 197 of these are endemic, or potentially endemic, to Brunei (Berger, 2016). Brunei has successfully contained infectious diseases before they reach pandemic levels, such as SARs, H1N1, dengue, hand foot and mouth disease (HFMD) and swine flu. A new scare, the Zika virus, has now reached pandemic status and the WHO has designated the Zika virus a public health emergency of international concern. As many as four million people may become infected with Zika before the outbreak is resolved.

Questions for reflection

- Is Brunei prepared to combat sudden and exponential outbreaks of diseases?
- What policies are required for sustainable control of infectious diseases?
- How vulnerable is Brunei to outbreaks of diseases as these mutate and become harder to combat?

11. Big Data is Here

Summary of the issue

With the Internet of Things (IOT) and with the whole world increasingly online, the volume of data available is growing exponentially. Google, Facebook, telecommunications companies and many business organisations are already leveraging on big data to tailor products and services to suit customer preferences, enhance their competitive edge and increase their market share. The ability to effectively manage big data and extract knowledge is now a key competitive advantage. Big data has the potential to impact all sectors of the economy, as well as the effectiveness of public service provision.

Questions for reflection

- How does big data impact upon the privacy of individuals?
- How ready is the Government for such a revolution, both in terms of infrastructure and analytical capabilities?

- How ready are Brunei businesses to leverage on big data and data analytics to grow their businesses and to improve their competitiveness both locally and overseas?

12. *Imported Terrorism*

Summary of the issue

Brunei has introduced pro-active measurements such as the Anti-Terrorism Order of 2011 and the Anti-Terrorism (Terrorist Financing) Regulations 2013. Due to the close proximity to Indonesia and the southern Philippines, Brunei may one day face some ‘spill over’ of terrorist activity. Current tensions in the Middle-East, Persian Gulf, and the South China Sea may all have an impact on Brunei’s security in the near-term future. Indiscriminate terrorist attacks could occur and/or target specific groups of people. The perpetrators could include foreign terrorists entering and passing through Brunei and locally based misguided individuals and disengaged youth who may respond to the online radicalization, illegal recruiting and propaganda tactics aimed at inspiring ‘lone wolf’ attacks.

Questions for reflection

- What may be some of the root causes of potential terrorism and extremism (e.g. youth disengagement, poverty, misuse of religious teachings, etc.) in Brunei?
- How can Bruneians help prevent radicalization of vulnerable individuals and assist in efforts to deradicalize those already impacted?
- How prepared is Brunei to deal with acts of terrorism?

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The CSPS research project will keep on expanding and will continue to respond to the changing environments and conditions, both globally and in Brunei.

Each issue identified has a large number of policy implications and thus requires attention, more research and a further discussion with key stakeholders. As far as the prioritised issues are concerned some recommendations explored by the researchers of the CSPS and at the Forum are listed below.

- Critically analyse post-oil provisions and policy options immediately. Examples include enhancement of the sovereign wealth fund, diversification of government revenue, fiscal reforms to guarantee intergenerational equity, investment in renewable energy, and fostering growth of other economic clusters and SMEs.
- Address the rise in unemployment, underemployment and the mismatch between job demand and supply (Cheong & Lawry, 2009; Rizzo, 2015). Examples include specific educational reforms and approaches (i.e. investing more into relevant professional and

tertiary education, developing skills on the job and technological skills, life coaching, financial literacy programmes), encouragement of creativity and entrepreneurship (i.e. expansion of government policies which enable this sector), and a review of occupations in terms of salary and prestige to address any obsolete hierarchies.

- Enhance existing whole of government approaches, and introduce and test new/pilot initiatives. Develop participatory governance. Agile and anticipatory governance needs to lead the way to make other policy options possible.
- Identify social groups who are and may be in future negatively impacted by social change, their needs and requirements, and, make policy adjustments. For example, will the youth, old people, women and rural communities be adversely affected by modernisation and urbanisation?
- Review social welfare policies in light of key future trends. Introduce pilot projects such as universal basic income, flexible or reduced working hours, improvement of childcare and elderly care services. Examples include job share, a 4-day working week, a 6-hour working day etc. Another option to explore is a work-from-home strategy – as an alternative work arrangement in view of the significant loss of productivity caused by traffic congestion and to adapt to women’s increasing participation in the labour market and their continuing childcare responsibilities.
- Develop more desired leisure and recreational options locally so that there are less cross border escapes when Bruneians start to view their hometown as a preferred and livable city (Cheong & Rahman, 2015).
- Step up efforts to ensure Brunei businesses and workforce are more internationally competitive. Examples include developing cluster-based industries and more forums on the implications of trade partnerships. Also develop strategies to protect local businesses and workforce that may be negatively affected during the transition (i.e. enhance benefits to local SMEs).
- Build social resilience through community development and the sharing economy approaches, with the government as enabler. Encourage greater acceptance of diversity and even more, a more competitive spirit as opposed to a culture of entitlement (Cheong, 2013).
- Do longitudinal surveys on the core values of Bruneians and especially of young people and prepare for the future with anticipatory policies. Which core values can be nurtured and sustainable and which need to be discouraged in the framework of Wawasan goals?
- Be alert and continuously scan for potential terrorism and extremism in Brunei. Address issues faced by vulnerable and disengaged social groups. Introduce community based and online preventative strategies aimed at thwarting radicalization.

At this stage, however, these are preliminary recommendations to be further explored. Given that this journal article gives a general overview of identified issues, two main policy recommendations are:

1. Horizon scanning for emerging issues and trends needs to be comprehensive, ongoing and done across governmental sectors; and
2. Specific issues and trends, selected after thorough research focused on both identification and prioritization, subsequently need to be addressed in more detail and in terms of their potential impact. This should be followed up with very specific policy recommendations on each issue or trend.

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