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New Zealand: new futures, new thinking?

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Highlights

- New Zealand's history of futures studies is described in various phases and examined through the lenses of wicked problems and futures literacy
- Long-term stewardship is increasing as noted in practical examples and legislation though in tension by presentism
- Maori culture will influence futures studies such as in the 2017 Act giving the Whanganui River status equal to a person
- Collaborative environmental governance is an important approach with an inherent long-term focus
- Futures studies has a pragmatic impact on policy development that has yet to develop into an integral futures approach

Abstract The development of futures studies in New Zealand over several decades is reviewed. As in other jurisdictions, early futures studies in New Zealand were predominantly problem-oriented using trend analysis and scenarios. More recently it is heading towards developing more long-term perspectives including crowd-sourcing possibilities through social media. This is supported by the strong sense of stewardship embedded in its indigenous culture and an increasing use of participatory processes in environmental decision-making around highly complex issues. The potential to address complexity through technologies for wicked problems and futures literacy is discussed in detail. While the potential for wider relevance appears to move in disconnected phases of activity, there is a movement towards forms of long-term stewardship, albeit tempered by presentism. One highlight is the 2017 Act providing the Whanganui River with legal status equal to that of a person. Another is the use of collaborative environmental governance such as the Land and

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