The futures of construction: a critical review of construction future studies

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Abstract
Anticipating the future is increasingly being seen as a useful way to align, direct and improve current organizational strategy. Several such 'future studies' have been produced which envision various construction industry scenarios which result from technological and socio-economic trends and influences. Thirteen construction-related future studies are critically reviewed. Most studies fail to address the complexities and uncertainties of both the present and the future, and fail to explore the connections between global, local, construction-specific and more widespread factors. The methodological approaches used in these studies do not generate any significantly different advice or recommendations for the industry than those emerging from the much larger canon of non-future oriented construction research. As such, these reports are less about the future than the present. If future studies are to make a worthwhile contribution to construction, it is critical that they develop our appreciation of the practical ability of stakeholders to influence some aspects of the future and not others, and an awareness of the competing agendas and the relative benefits and disadvantages of specific futures within the construction sector. Only then can future studies provide insights and help in preparing for the opportunities and threats the future may bring.

Keywords: future studies; scenarios; construction