

Futures Literacy, the Discipline of Anticipation, and Futures Studies

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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Management of
Social Transformations
Programme



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UNESCO Chair
in Anticipatory Systems



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Metaphysical starting point

- A preference to understand the world, to be in touch with being... sensing and sense-making, constructing meaning.
- Does not necessarily require the preference to control or influence or improve the later-than-now beyond very 'light' cooperation.
- Understanding guarantees no particular future, but does depend on capabilities – some of which can be treated as gifts or curses...

Expectations & Anticipation


- Expecting to be able to manage uncertainty is contingent on what we mean by manage.
- Managing the uncertainty (risk) associated with a bet – with doing – is exactly what closed systems processes do effectively.
- Managing actual uncertainty is not doable since novelty is only knowable once it has emerged. It can only be dealt with spontaneously. And before making bets we need to ‘name’ or perceive.
- Between imagination and action or doing is seeing... so one layer of the multi-layer framework Roberto evoked is the layer of formulation of conscious perception and meaning.

But what does this mean?

- Accepting the challenge of disrupting the existing dominant paradigm of the relationship between human agency and the future.
- Taking the Futures Literacy Framework seriously by conducting:
 - Research
 - Learning
 - Community activities
- This work is peripheral, experimental, innovative (initially incomprehensible).
- Need to walk the talk of AfF & AfE, relational ontologies, diversified epistemologies – tools for tasks.

What does the Global Futures Literacy Network do?

- Uses the FLF in a variety of ways – experimenting, testing, sharing, collaborating.
- Advances the Discipline of Anticipation as a useful shared foundation for exploring the diversity of ‘uses-of-the-future’.
- Builds FL as a capability.
- Embraces an open, deontological approach – walk the talk now – legacy is values in action

Discipline of Anticipation (DoA) (Anticipatory Systems (AS))				Epistemological (Knowledge Creation Processes (KCP))	
	System	Purpose	Type	General-Scalable (GS) (statistics, common denominators, universals, repetition)	Specific – Unique (SU) (novelty, ephemerality, spontaneity, improvisation, difference)
Ontological	Conscious Closed	Anticipation for-the-Future (AfF)	AS 1 Preparation & AS 2 Planning 	AA1	AA2
	Conscious semi-closed/open	Anticipation for-the-Future (AfF)		AA3	AA4
		Anticipation for-emergence (AfE)	AS 3 Novelty (Not-doing)	AA5	AA6
Non-Conscious Anticipation				Anticipatory Assumptions in biology, physics, mathematics, sociology, etc.	

Futures Studies

Figure 1.1 A framework for describing and researching Futures Literacy

- AA1: Forecasting
- AA2: 'Destiny'
- AA3: Creative reform
- AA4: Self-improvement
- AA5: Strategic novelty
- AA6: Wisdom and “not-doing”

Why become futures literate?

Overcome 'poverty-of-the-imagination' and the temptation to only colonize the future.

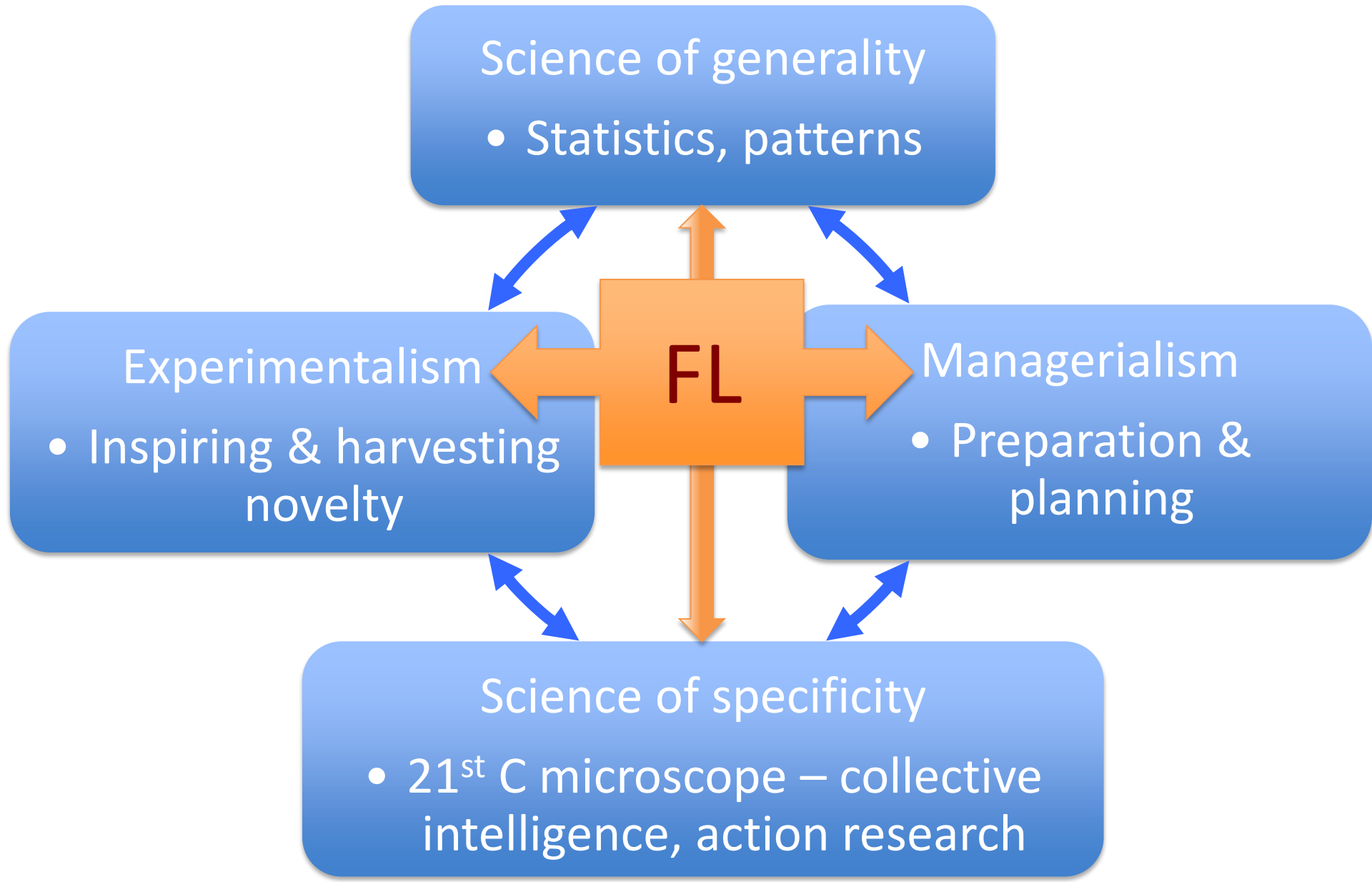
Uncertainty becomes an asset not an enemy.
Reduces fear and defensiveness.

Kindles hope and a diversification strategy towards resilience.

Repetition and Difference in the System Conditions of Complex Systems: Locating Agency

		Repetition of system conditions		Difference in system conditions		
Change arising from causal sources		Local repetition	General repetition	Incremental difference internal	Novel difference internal	Non-contiguous external
Non-volitional causal factors (no conscious agency)	Inertia	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Not much to be done about all of this.</h2>				
	Reflex adaptation					
	Chance					
	Ignorance					
Volitional causal factors (conscious agency)	Preservation through continuity	Success in achieving stasis without change		<h2 style="margin: 0;">Endogenous change – within system reform to maintain system conditions</h2>		Co-existence
	Preservation through discontinuity	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Success in achieving stasis with change</h2>				Disruptive coexistence
	Exploiting novelty					Transformation

The value-added of Futures Literacy



Elements of the Global Futures Literacy Network

- Anticipatory Systems Conferences
- Futures Literacy Centres
- UNESCO Chairs in Future Studies/FL
 - Finland, Greece, Italy, Malaysia, Netherlands, Tunisia, United Kingdom, Uruguay
 - Under development: Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Morocco, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Thailand and more...
- Specific large scale projects, like Imagining Africa's Futures prototyping research project, UAE co-design of FLL, etc.
- Specific action-research/action-learning projects with 'local champions' around the world – usually as an FLL-N (many examples, such as UNFCCC, etc.)

Soul Food

Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Ursula Le Guin Translation

Everybody on earth knowing
That beauty is beautiful
makes ugliness.

Everybody knowing
that goodness is good
makes wickedness.

For being and nonbeing
arise together;
hard and easy
complete each other;
long and short
shape each other;
high and low
depend on each other;
note and voice
make music together;
before and after
follow each other.

That's why the wise soul
does without doing,
teaches without talking.

The things of this world
exist, they are;
you can't refuse them.

To bear and not to own;
to act and not lay claim;
to do the work and let it go:
for just letting it go
is what makes it stay.

How we anticipate matters
it changes the present.



Thank you
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