



**First International Symposium of
UNESCO Chairs in Anticipatory Systems,
Futures Studies and Futures Literacy**

June 19 - 20, 2019

Department of Sociology and Social Research

Via Verdi 26, 38122 Trento - Kessler Room

University of Lincoln UNESCO Chair on Responsible Foresight for Sustainable Development

Aims and framework for
collaborations in research and
education



Organizzazione
delle Nazioni Unite
per l'Educazione,
la Scienza e la Cultura

Con il patrocinio della
**Commissione
Nazionale Italiana**
per l'UNESCO



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair
in Anticipatory Systems



UNIVERSITY OF TRENTO - Italy



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Department of Sociology
and Social Research

University of Lincoln UK



Lincoln UNESCO Chair on Responsible Foresight for Sustainable Development

Aim: This project aims to increase the capacity of institutions, communities and individuals to frame and act on sustainable futures, which they construct through images, visions, stories, scenarios, models and other representations.

Assumption: Sustainability depends upon the capacity of individuals and groups to act to protect and transform society.

Lincoln UNESCO Chair

RQ: In what ways may awareness of anticipation and self-modified images of the future, enable more effective change processes for social transformations?

RQ: Can the capacity to investigate relevant contexts in depth and to be able to articulate alternative possible futures, empower people to reframe futures in their own terms?

RQ How is “responsibility” manifest in anticipatory structures?

Lincoln UNESCO Chair Team

Dr Andrea Caputo – women entrepreneurship, negotiating futures [e.g. Jordan]

Prof Ted Fuller – responsible foresight

Judith John – corporate governance systems [Nigeria]

Dr Paul Igwe – entrepreneurship, higher education [Nigeria]

Zoraida Mendiwelo-Bendek – social justice, community learning [Columbia]

Dr Mahfuzur Rahman – eco-garment manufacture [Bangladesh]

Dr Eric Ruto – sustainable food security [Kenya]

Dr Shrabani Saha – women's health, eco-tourism [India]

Broad approach

SDG related projects with partners

Framing each project through a forward view,
as Futures Studies (Foresight, Anticipation,
“Futures Literacy”) to stimulate ‘transformative
practices through ...

Narratives of the possible...

Responsible and considered action...

Expansion of anticipatory capability ...

Modus Operandi

SDG related challenges to a class or structure of problem, e.g.
Garment Industry, Tourism, Health, Higher Education, Post-conflict peace

AND

One or more SDG (e.g. Women education, social justice, poverty
reduction, anti-corruption etc.)

AND

'The future as a space for the development of aspiration and
specific actions, being explicit about the orientation to transformation to
an imagined possible future.

AND

Using futures thinking, while identifying the multiple competencies
required.

AND

Multi stakeholders co-laboratories (multiple competencies and
perspectives) in participatory approaches to knowledge development and
the creation of necessary institutional forms, i.e. social innovation



UNESCO Chair network collaboration

Education: embedding *futures thinking* into applied practices, rather than for its own sake.

Approaches, theories, cases. (e.g. women's entrepreneurship)

Research: Many questions...

and the 'evaluation' issues will be important,

BUT specifically for this project:

The questions of “**what is responsible foresight**”, how is it manifest, what systemic characteristics (of responsible anticipation) etc?

To elaborate the RQ briefly

- Assumptions
- Hypothesis
- Theory
- Model
- Ethics
- Methodological possibilities

Broad assumptions

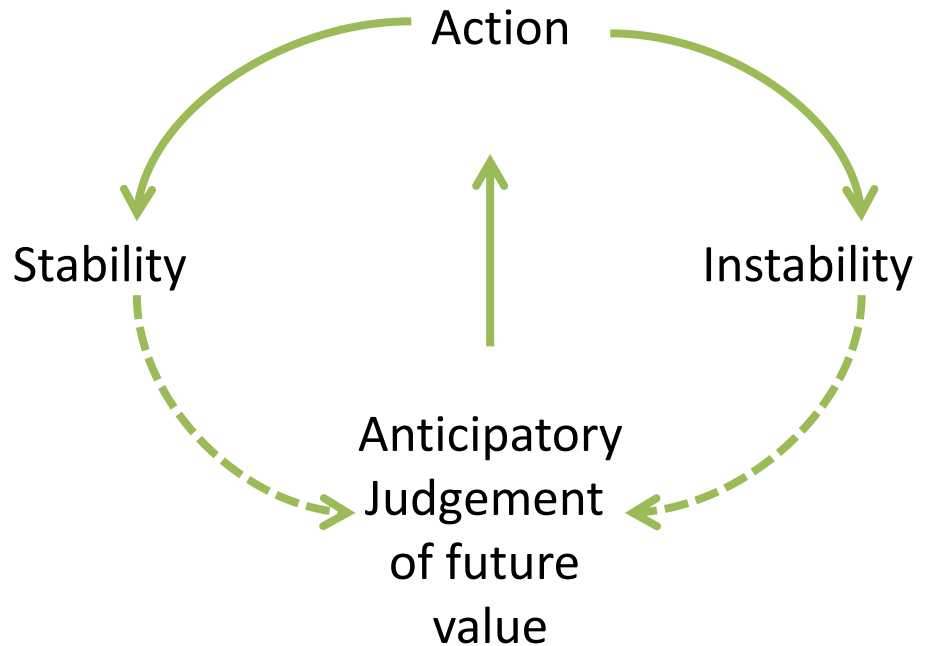
- Society creates its own futures, they are not pre-determined (*ontological emergence*)
- There are many possible futures (*Futures Studies epistemology*)
- Not all futures are equal (*Critical Futures Studies*)
- The future cannot be predicted, but futures can be imagined, explored and learnt from (*value of Futures Studies*)
- Social action creates futures; creating better futures is a **responsibility of humankind**, including me. (*Interpretation and decisions to act reflect values*)
- Anticipation is existential



Hypothesis

Anticipation is a
'causal
mechanism' in the
process of
emergence

The natural
disposition to
anticipate is causal
in social change



Theory

Emergentist – new (social) structures are formed through interactions, which produce unstable properties, (*emergents*) some of which are stabilised through becoming ‘group’ norms. Interactions and unstable (ephemeral) emergents manifest as narratives, practices, artefacts etc.

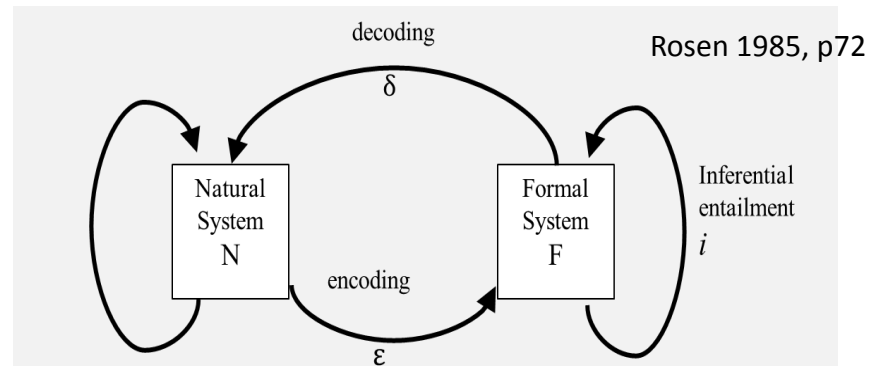
The anticipation of the ‘value’ of these emergent practices stabilises them as “norms” through enacting and beliefs

Model

“The character of a predictive model [in anticipatory systems] assumes almost an ethical character even in a purely abstract context.

We might even say that the models embodied in an anticipatory system are what comprise its individuality; what distinguish it uniquely from other systems.

As we have seen, a change in these models is a change of identity...” (Robert Rosen et al., 2012, p370)



Ethics and agential freedom

“Desirable and undesirable regions” is an example of (ontological) consequentialism

Reflexive Anticipation as a mode of knowing and acting, (e.g. precautionary principle) is *deontological*

Any statement of “ought” will fail because freedom means you can act regardless to consequences (e.g. Hume)

Duty of care for the future – but who sanctions? (e.g. Kant, Scruton)

Responsibility: caring for the future

- ‘Without a conception of “ought”, there could be no guide to politics’ (Rosen et al. 2012, p1)
- Caring for the future is therefore an *imperative*, a *responsibility* and a *duty*... which are ethical values and in contrast with complete freedom and individual (short term) gain
- Appadurai (2013) replace an ethics of *probability* [externally imposed futures] with an *ethics of possibility* - “ways of thinking, feeling and acting that increase the horizon of hope, that expand the field of imagination, that produce greater equity in [...] the capacity to aspire”.

Methodological possibilities

- Engage in and study empirical cases of intervention producing the capacity to aspire
- Analyse and critique the dominant ‘framing’ (*e.g. narratives, assumptions, practices, norms*) in explicit group contexts (*e.g. firms, industries, NGOs, governments, communities etc.*)
- Assess the nature and roles of ‘anticipation’ and modelling relations in transformational change and the agency of emergents in such transitions



Summary

Lincoln UNESCO Chair needs to collaborate with you on

1. Developing the 'futures thinking' capacity of partners in a range of applied fields related to SDGS
2. Developing a research programme on the manifestation of responsibility in anticipation of social transformation.



Final words on this community

Anticipation is a defining characteristic of living entities, including communities

Communities only exist as communities because they share a sense of their future.

