

**Integrating Futures Methodologies** is a workshop to be organized in Bucharest between June 9th, 2010 and June 11th, 2010. The coordinators are Prof. Ziauddin Sardar and Prof. George Cairns.

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## Vision and Objectives

Future studies and foresight have a rich store of methodologies ? ranging from forecasting, scenario planning and trend analysis to Delphi, modelling, simulation, cross-impact analysis, early warning signals, weak signals, road maps, visioning, backcasting, casual layered analysis and integral futures, to mention just a few. ?The State of the Future 2009? report, from the Millennium Project, lists over 30 methods now being used in futures and foresight work. However, given the characteristics of contemporary times ? where everything is seen to be connected to everything else, complexity and uncertainty is the norm, and there is an increasing tendency towards chaotic behaviour ? no single method can provide us with an adequate way of perceiving alternative futures. We need approaches that encompass different and divergent perspectives, concerns of diverse groups and cultures, and contradictory desires, hopes and aspirations for the future. Moreover, futures work on complex and ambiguous ? or intractable ? problems requires an inter- and trans-disciplinary approach.

All this raises a natural question: can different futures and foresight methodologies be integrated to provide trans-disciplinary and culturally inclusive perspectives on alternative futures? This complex question also raises other related issues, such as:

- Why is a topology of methods used in foresight and futures studies conspicuous by its absence?
- How do we evaluate the appropriateness and contextual relevance of different methodologies?
- Can we cluster related methods on the basis of unifying themes? (e.g. visioning and backcasting often go hand in hand, and sometimes lead to future activism)
- Are there methods that are totally irreconcilable (or, to use a Kuhnian term, 'incommensurable')?
- Is there value in integrating ? as opposed to merely applying ? different methods in order to provide multiple, multi-dimensional, yet internally consistent perspectives on a single issue?
- If so, how do we integrate different methods? Can we develop a simple framework for integration of futures methods? Or, do we need yet another method to do this? What impact would integrated methodologies have on the field?

This workshop will focus on these questions with the aim of providing clarification and insight into the theme and

issues of integrating futures methodologies.

## Format

The workshop will be organised as a 'round table' format. Participants will be required to submit a brief discussion paper for distribution at least 3 weeks before the event. From these, the coordinators will identify a number of key themes and issues: both of convergence in thinking and, specifically, of divergence. These will be used to form the initial agenda for an open dialogue in line with the principles of the Bohm Dialogues on Day One. On Day Two, the coordinators will set an outline agenda, derived from Day One, that seeks to focus thinking towards futures for higher education in Romania within a global context.

## Deliverables

A number of papers will be specially commissioned from invited participants in the workshop, with the intention of publication in Futures or Foresight, and inclusion as chapters in a book based on various Mutual Learning Workshops.

## Participants

The workshop will bring together experts on different methods in foresight and futures, as well as experts in network theory and trans-disciplinarity from Europe, US, Australia and South Asia. The list of participants includes:

Coordinators:

- George Cairns, RMIT University, Melbourne
- Ziauddin Sardar, City University, London and Futures

Speakers:

- Fabienne Gaux-Baudiment, proGective Research Centre for Futures Studies, France, Independent futurist
- George Wright, Durham Business School UK, on Delphi, scenarios and backcasting
- Jim Dator, Hawaii Research Centre for Futures Studies and University of Hawaii, USA, on Future studies
- Jordi Serra del Pino, Periscopi de Prospectiva I Strategia, Spain, Independent futurist
- Nasir Hussain, Strategic Foresight Partnership, Independent futurist
- Radu Gheorghiu, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding
- Sam Cole, UB School on Architecture and Planning, USA, on Anthropology and science policy futures
- Ted Fuller, Lincoln Business School UK, on Foresight
- Victoria Razak, UB School on Architecture and Planning, USA, on Anthropology and science policy futures
- Wendy Schultz, Principal at SAMI Consulting and Director at Infinite Futures, Independent futurist

Participants:

- Ana Maria Sandi, The World Bank
- Cosmin Holeab, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding

## MLW: Integrating Futures Methodologies

- Dan Grosu, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding
- Gheorghe Zaman, Institute of National Economy
- Iulia Maries, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding
- Liviu Andreescu, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding
- Marian Zulean, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding
- Mihaela Ghisa, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding
- Vlad Tarko, Center for Institutional Analysis and Development

Rapporteur:

- Campbell Warden, Instituto de Astrofisica de Canarias

## Programme

### Pre-workshop Preparation

Invited keynote presenters will be required to prepare a short paper (around 1000-1500 words) that outlines the futures methodology(-ies) that they have developed and implemented, in terms of their strengths, applications, epistemological foundations, and their limitations. These will be circulated before the workshop

### DAY 1

Initial meeting and reception

### DAY 2

#### First Session: Scoping the Field of Futures Methodologies

- *Welcome speech and project update* by Adrian Curaj and Radu Gheorghiu
- *Introduction to coordinators* Ziauddin Sardar, George Cairns
- *Participants? profiles* - brief introductions around the table
- *Keynotes? summary presentations* [Invited keynote presenters]. Invited keynote presenters summarise key features of their futures methods relative to other methods: ontological basis, epistemological foundation, methodological approach
- *Mapping the strengths of different futures methodologies* - Round table discussion on questions of ?why??, ?how??, ?what??, ?where??, ?when?? and ?who?? in relation to different futures methods

#### Second Session: Exploring the Spaces Between Methods

- *Probing the weaknesses of different future methodologies* - Round table discussion on identified weaknesses of different futures methods: both internally generated by participants and drawn from critical literature
- *Setting the agenda for bridging the gaps* - Scoping an initial topography of futures methods: commonality, difference, overlap, and identifying gaps ? if any ? that remain unaddressed by all approaches

Participants

## Colloquium

- *Theme:* Open discussion on key themes and issues identified by participants in response to coordinators? summary of the agenda

## DAY 3

### Third Session: Building an Integrated Futures Method

- *Introduction to issues under consideration (Coordinators)* - Setting questions to the group: How do we set about applying integrated methodologies to understanding the possible futures of Higher Education in Romania? What are the issues to be identified and addressed: substantive content, linear developmental vs. step change knowledge generation, supply driven vs. demand led, stakeholder needs and desires, power structures, etc? Who should be involved: directly and indirectly? What are the deliverables?
- *Identifying key elements of the broader agenda* - Break out groups discuss and map the issues against the initial topography of futures methodologies from Day 2
- *Reporting back and filling in the topography* - Completing the topography of futures methodologies, mapped against issues relevant to the 'real issues' of Romanian HE futures
- *Critical reflection on what has been achieved ? and what has not* Critical analysis of the developed framework through building a research design for the project: 'Exploring the futures of Romanian Higher Education: a multi-method approach?'. The research design will specify: the research questions, the methods to be used, the resources required, the intended respondents, the modes of analysis, the intended outcomes and deliverables, the limitations of the research

## Beyond the Workshop

Participants will be invited to develop their papers for blind review and incorporation into a special issue of *Futures: The journal of policy, planning and futures studies*.