THE FUTURE(S)

INSTITUTE ROYAL DES ETUDES STRATEGIQUES (IRES)

RABAT, MOROCCO
July 13, 2016

ANTONIO ALONSO CONCHEIRO
Why is it important to explore/study/imagine/anticipate the future?

Our survival may depend on it.

The future is the space where we will live the rest of our lives.

Every action is future oriented.

Our life is an activity directed to what will happen. The meaning of the present or the past only becomes clear only in relation to their future. Human life is “futuring”, and it’s determined to a great extent by that which still has not happened.

José Ortega y Gasset, What philosophy is

Foreseeing is the origin and the means of all enterprises, big or small.

Paul Valéry
WHO HAS A VISION OF THE FUTURE, CONTROLS PART OF THE PRESENT


OUR SOCIETY IS THE MOST FUTURE ORIENTED SOCIETY THAT HAS EVER EXISTED (Anthony Giddens), BECAUSE IT NO LONGER HAS A SENSE OF CONTROL OVER THE FUTURE.

IF WE ARE NOT CAPABLE OF IMAGINING OUR FUTURES, SOMEONE ELSE WILL IMAGINE THEN FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT.
THE FUTURE WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESENT. IT WILL LIKELY INCLUDE UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES.

“...THE FUTURE IS A NAKED CHILD, AND AS A CONSEQUENCE, VAIN AND UNPREDICTABLE; WHEN YOU LESS EXPECT IT, HE PLACES A ROSE IN YOUR EAR, OR PISSES ON YOUR BOLD HEAD.”

Mario Benedetti, *Imperfect future*
THE **PAST** IS THE REALM OF MEMORIES

THE **PRESENT** IS THE REALM OF ACTIONS

THE **FUTURE** IS THE REALM OF DREAMS, EXPECTATIONS, PROJECTS, DESIRES, FEARS, ALTERNATIVES
**ACTION WITHOUT A VISION, IS IMPROVISATION.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alice:</th>
<th>I DON’T KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cat:</td>
<td>THAT DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU ARE GOING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia:</td>
<td>THE THING IS THAT I DON’T KNOW WHERE I AM GOING!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Gato:</td>
<td>THEN IT DOES’NT MATTER WHICH WAY YOU CHOOSE!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lewis Carroll, *Looking through the mirror* 1872

**VISION WITHOUT ACTION, IS ONLY A DREAM.**

“WALKER, THERE IS NO ROAD. YOU MAKE THE ROAD BY WALKING.”

Antonio Machado
OUR FUTURES ARE RISKY BECAUSE OUR SOCIETIES ACTIVELY TRY TO BREAK WITH THE PAST AND CONQUER THE FUTURE.

THE RISKS ARE GREATER WHEN WE DO NOT EXERCISE OUR CAPACITY TO ANTICIPATE.
WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE IF IT DOES NOT INCLUDE THE FUTURE?

A MERE REPORT OF THE RELATIONS OBSERVED IN THE PAST CAN NOT BE CALLED KNOWLEDGE.

Hans Reichenbach
TIME COMPRESSION.

- Everything seems to happen at great speed.
- The evolution of things seems to have accelerated.
- We live in “real time”; We want immediate retribution, satisfaction.
- New technologies mature and diffuse faster.
- What acceptable yesterday, today is doubtful.
- We are submerged in a succession of revolutions of all sorts, with no time to catch our breath.
- As time passes we have less time. Time is being compressed.
- Before we can solve a crisis we have another on top. We have little space/time to think/analyze,

OUR CRISIS ARE SPEED CRISIS. THE ONLY SENSIBLE ANSWER IS TO TRY TO ANTICIPATE CHANGE, NOT AS A PREDICTIONS, BUT AS CONJECTURES.
TO STUDY THE FUTURE(S)?

FORTUNE-TELLER?

¡JE, JE!
DEFINITELY NO!

STUDYING THE FUTURE IS NOT ABOUT:

**PREDICTING** (Anouncing something that will certainly happen)

**DIVINATION** (Discovering the ocult future by means of spells)

**OMENS** (Predicting the future using the songs or flight of birds, the guts of animals, and similar observations)

**FORECASTING** (Knowing the future on the basis of certain indications)

**PROPHESIES** (Anouncing future things based on a supernatural gift)
FUTURES STUDIES ARE NOT ABOUT GUESSING HOW THE FUTURE WILL BE (WE CAN’T;

THEY ARE ABOUT MAKING REASONABLE CONJECTURES ABOUT HOW IT COULD BE.

...IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE DECISION MAKING PROCESSES, MAKING THEM MORE FLEXIBLE, BETTER INFORMED, WITH GREATER CAPACITY OF ADAPTATION, MORE CONFIDENT.
PURPOSE:

- TO EXPLORE AS SERIOUSLY AND RIGOROUS AS POSSIBLE THE POSSIBLE AND DESIRABLE FUTURES.
- TO ANTICIPATE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES;
- TO ILLUMINATE THE FUTURE AND/OR THE ISSUES WHICH HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT UPON THE FUTURE.
- TO BETTER PREPARE OURSELVES TO FACE THE FUTURE;
- TO HELP US BUILD A BETTER FUTURE.
- TO BETTER INFORM POLICY MAKING (directly or indirectly)
WHAT CAN WE KNOW ABOUT THE FUTURE?

VERY LITTLE!

BUT THAT LITTLE IS PRECIOUS.

Kenneth Boulding

ALL OUR KNOWLEDGE IS ABOUT THE PAST,

BUT

ALL OUR DECISIONS ARE ABOUT THE FUTURE.

Ian Wilson
INTEREST IS IN PARTICULAR ABOUT COLLECTIVE FUTURES AND LONG TERM FUTURES.

TO MAKE USEFUL CONJECTURES ABOUT THE FUTURE ONE REQUIRES:

IN PLATO’S TERMS:

*LOGISTIKON*: RATIONAL PROCESSES

*NOUS*: INTUITION/IMAGINATION.

IN NEUROLOGICAL TERMS:

THE TWO BRAIN HEMISPHERES:

*LEFT*: THE INTELECT; ANALYTICAL AND OBJECTIVE THINKING

*RIGHT*: INTUITION; IMAGINATION; PASION; SUBJECTIVE, DIVERGENT THINKING.
TO STUDY THE FUTURE IS TO STUDY POSSIBLE CHANGES. IF NOTHING CHANGES, OR COULD CHANGE, THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURES WOULD BE WORTHLESS.

BUT IF THINGS CHANGE OR MAY CHANGE AND THEY TAKE US BY SURPRISE, OR IF THEY ARE POISED TO CHANGE IN AN UNDESIRABLE DIRECTION, WOULD IT NOT BE WORTH THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE (ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE AND/OR DESIRABLE CHANGES)?

FUTURES STUDIES ARE INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE BECAUSE IT CAN BE DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESENT; THEY TRY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND POSSIBLE CHANGES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES.
HELL IS THE TRUTH SEEN TOO LATE.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)
TODAY, “TOO LATE” IS NOT ANTICIPATING IT.
THINKING ABOUT OUR FUTURES IS A LIBERATING EXERCISE. NOT DOING IT, IS ACCEPTING THE TYRANNY OF THE PAST AND ABANDONING US TO OUR FATE.
THANK YOU!