



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO's Foresight Programme: New challenges and perspectives

European Foresight Platform Final Event

**Forward Looking Activities Governing
Grand Challenges**

27-28 September 2012

Vienna

What is UNESCO?

**“Since wars begin in the minds of men,
it is in the minds of men
that the defences of peace
must be constructed.”**

UNESCO’s Constitution Preamble

***Five functions –
laboratory of ideas, standard-setter,
catalyst for international cooperation,
clearinghouse, capacity-builder***



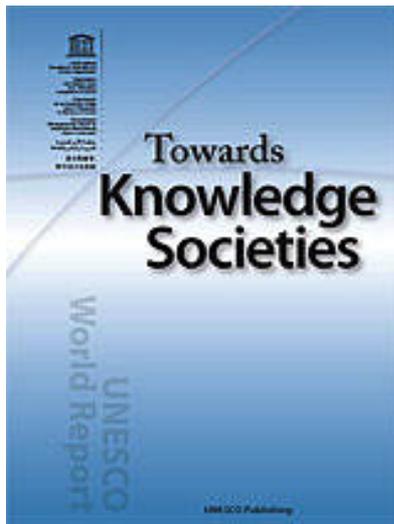
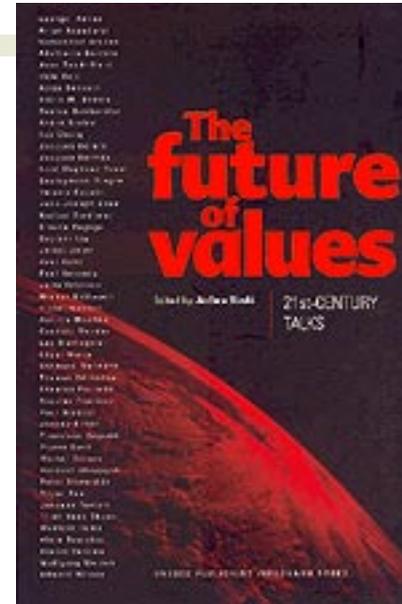
Building from the past: *the birth of the Foresight Programme*

- Established as the Analysis and Forecasting Office in 1994 by the UNESCO Director-General
- Anticipatory reflection, analysis and forecasting on key UNESCO issues in order to draw implications for policy and action
- High standing within the organizational structure
- Main activities in the late 1990s to 2005 included the *Twenty-first Century Talks and Dialogues*



Published titles

- The Future of Values (2005)



- Towards Knowledge Societies (2004)

Bridging the gap: **linking foresight to strategic planning**

- Promote and sustain a culture of foresight within Member States and in UNESCO's main areas of activity: education, science and culture
- Introduce new intellectual perspectives and support futures thinking related to UNESCO's activities
- Support collaborative capacity building activities
- New labels: UNESCO Future Forums/
Lectures/Seminars



UNESCO Future Forums and Future Lectures

- Interdisciplinary roundtables to strengthen reflection on key future-oriented challenges
- Curated by the Intersectoral Platform on Anticipation and Foresight
- Aims to provide Member States and Sectors with forward-looking perspectives
- Guide UNESCO's future actions



UNESCO Future Forums and Future Lectures

2009

- “The special needs of Middle-Income Countries in the context of development”
- “New approaches to Science Education: What role for UNESCO?”
- “Mitigating Climate Change – Building a Global Green Society”
- “Moving Towards a Green Economy and Green Jobs”
- “The Discoveries of Genomics: Towards a New Industrial Revolution”
- “The Future Forum on Knowledge Acquisition and Sharing”
- “Investing out of the crisis and towards a green economy through action in the social domains”
- “The Global Financial and Economic Crisis: What Impact on Multilateralism and UNESCO?”
- “The G-20 Summits and the UN system: Prospects and Challenges”, *Future Lecture by Kemal Derviş*
- “The *Genesis* Project: promoting environmental awareness and education through art in the 21st century”, *Future Lecture by Sebastião Salgado*
- “The challenges of biodiversity – beyond the international year of 2010”, *Future Lecture by Hubert Reeves*

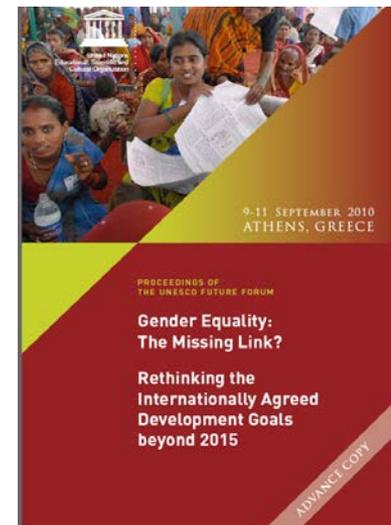
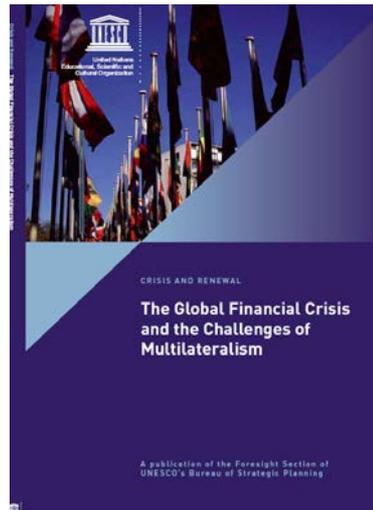
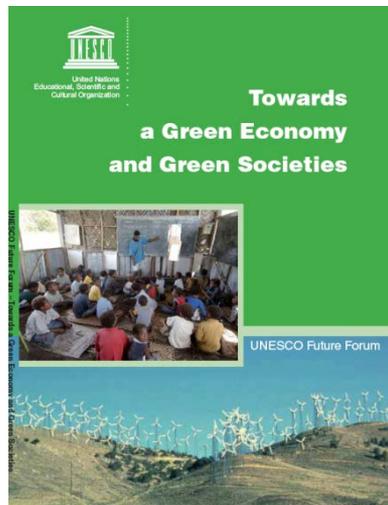


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UNESCO Future Forums and Future Lectures

2010

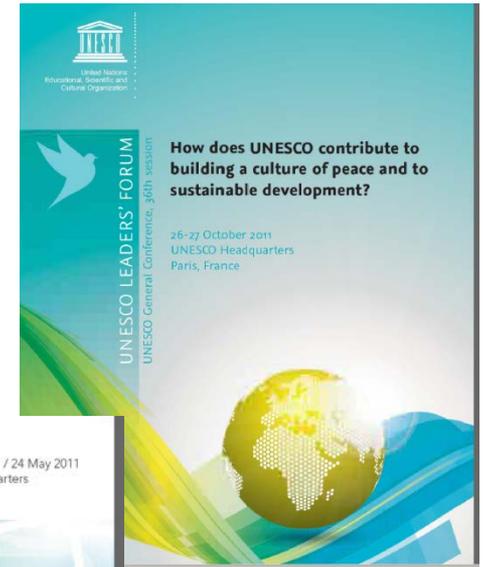
- “UN Women: The New UN Framework for Gender Equality”
- “Gender Equality: The Missing Link? Rethinking the Internationally Agreed Development Goals beyond 2015”
- “Small Island Developing States (SIDS), with special emphasis on the Caribbean – the challenges for international development cooperation in the 2010s”



UNESCO Future Forums and Future Lectures

2011

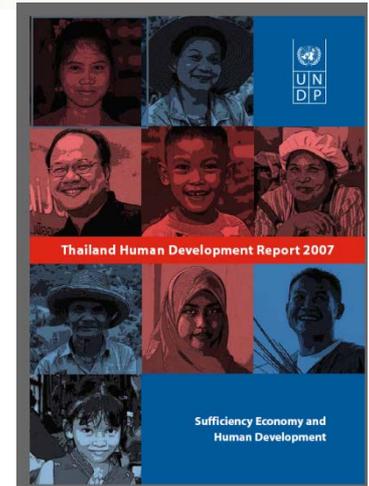
- “New Humanism in a Globalizing World”
- “Challenges of a Green Economy and Green Societies: Attitudes, Policies, Governance”
- “How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?”, UNESCO Leaders’ Forum



UNESCO Future Forums and Future Lectures

2012

- Confucianism and New Humanism in a Globalized World
- Global Water Futures 2050+
- The Arab Spring: a year after – Egyptian Perspectives
- Towards a Sufficiency Economy: A New Ethical Paradigm for Sustainability, *Future Lecture by Suwannee Khamman*



Mainstreaming within UNESCO: *making foresight a household word*

- Establishment of foresight units in Programme Sectors and field offices
- Setting up of conferences and roundtables with forward-looking perspectives
- Undertaking foresight studies on various themes (e.g. revisiting the Delors Report)
- Inclusion of a foresight dimension in each Sectors' programme and budget

“The visibility of our Organization can benefit from intellectual and policy-type discussions...After running the 21st century talks for several years, this approach was reviewed in order to provide more effective policy discussions.”

- Irina Bokova, Director-General

Evolution of the field:

Towards a new discipline and practice

“The time has come for futurists to collaborate to develop a discipline concerned with the nature, role and use of the future, both in human systems and more generally as part of our efforts to understand our anticipatory universe.”

Riel Miller, “Anticipation: The Discipline of Uncertainty”,
The Future of Futures, AFP, 2012



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Becoming more sophisticated in the way we use the future to make decisions

- Global challenges that appear beyond the capacity of existing systems
- Changes in the conditions of change provoke a search for new questions
- The emergent discipline of anticipation – a rigorous approach to using the future to understand and act in the present
- Enhancing the capacity of the communities-of-practice engaged in anticipation – building Futures Literacy



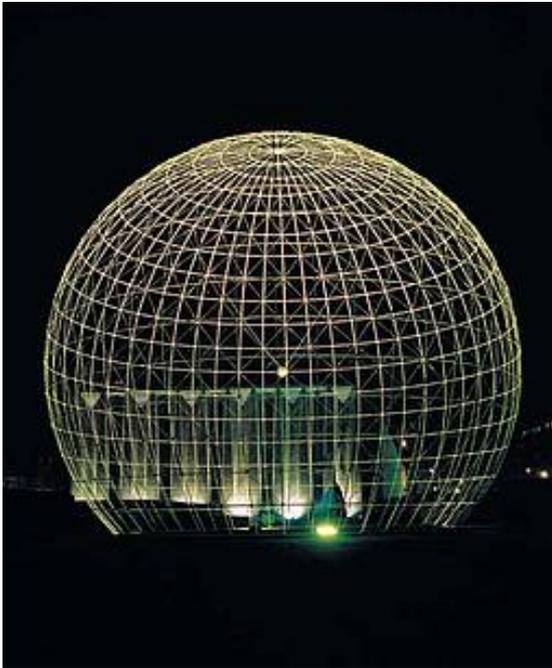
“Embracing Complexity and Using the Future”

the new Foresight Programme at UNESCO

- Just getting started, initiating collaborative ventures
- A learning-by-doing approach that integrates the future into the design of actual activities throughout UNESCO, builds capacity and fosters innovation
- Examples of collaborative projects: the Asia-Pacific Conference on Education for the Future
- Creating links to existing communities-of-practice at global and local levels, public and private
- Global collaboration to specify and pursue a research agenda on the discipline of anticipation



Using the future more effectively: *the UNESCO challenge*



The Symbolic Globe by Erik Reitzel

- UNESCO as a major player shaping the UN agenda – sustainability, poverty reduction and the culture of peace
- Now at the cusp of formulating a Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2021) and the Programme and Budget (2014-2017)
- Partnership building with the foresight community and other networks

Invitation to the European foresight community

- Collaborate to initiate, design, implement the discipline of anticipation, engage in rigorous imagining
- Work together to reinforce the global, regional and local communities-of-practice by developing shared projects and networks
- Use the future to change the present



[And lastly...]

UNESCO Foresight Programme

Website:

www.unesco.org/new/en/bureau-of-strategic-planning/themes/anticipation-and-foresight/

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