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Creative Foresight Space for Enhanced Work Milieux

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Authors: Sirkka Heinonen (sirkka.heinonen@utu.fi), Juho Ruotsalainen (juho.ruotsalainen@utu.fi), Sofi Kurki (sofi.kurki@utu.fi)
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Purpose

This brief presents the concept of *Creative Foresight Space* (CFS), which is an alternative workspace as well as a foresight methods-based processing platform for a new kind of proactive and innovative working culture. CFS is a concept to stimulate both creativity and futures thinking. It combines physical, digital, virtual and peer-to-peer collaborative approaches for innovative and social futuring in organisations. It is designed especially to meet the challenges posed by the transition from information society to a meanings society. CFSs also provide a diverse platform for special futures workshops – called *Futures Cliniques*. CFSs enhance work milieux, augment work motivation as well as strengthen futures thinking and foresight competence.

Linking Innovation to Foresight in Corporations and Organisations

Innovations are born where there is enough space to encourage creativity. Companies and organisations striving for innovation are increasingly interested in creating workplaces and workspaces that promote interaction, creativity and innovation. They have an immense unused potential to develop creative and innovative work environments.

As the operational environment of companies and organisations has changed, foresight has gained more ground in their operations. Companies are well advised to link foresight both to their strategy work and innovation processes. In order to bring systematic foresight and innovation processes into a company, the whole organisation needs to be committed to a new way of thinking. This, in turn, requires a new culture of managing as a part of a whole new working culture. Such a new management culture presupposes a new kind of work milieu.

Creative Foresight Space (CFS) seeks to provide a new type of work milieu in ordinary offices. CFS links innovation processes (creative thinking) to foresight processes (futures thinking).

The CFC project was initiated to explore the possibilities of developing better work environments by supporting organisational change and encouraging creativity and futures thinking. In addition to developing the concept of CFC, the project included a wider foresight process that concentrated on the knowledge and expertise needed in the future.

Enhancing Creative Work Milieux for Futures Thinking and Well-being

The theoretical objective of the study was to develop a concept of an innovative and experimental working space to stimulate creativity, futures thinking and well-being at work. The concrete aims were to design visually stimulating CFSs 1) to host participatory foresight sessions, especially Futures Cliniques, 2) to provide a space for self-organised futures exploration and 3) to demonstrate and apply several methods developed in futures research for futures sense-making and innovative problem-solving for companies, public institutions, regions and citizens. CFSs and Futures Cliniques were designed as a structured process, employing user-friendly multisensory instruments for open futures learning.

Part of the study was to probe into possible futures for societal development and for the future of work. This was done through literature reviews, interviews and participa-



tory foresight sessions held in two regional CFS pilots.

The ultimate purpose of CFS was to help decision-makers by opening up vistas and even unexpected prospects for future developments in a longer and broader perspective than standard strategy.

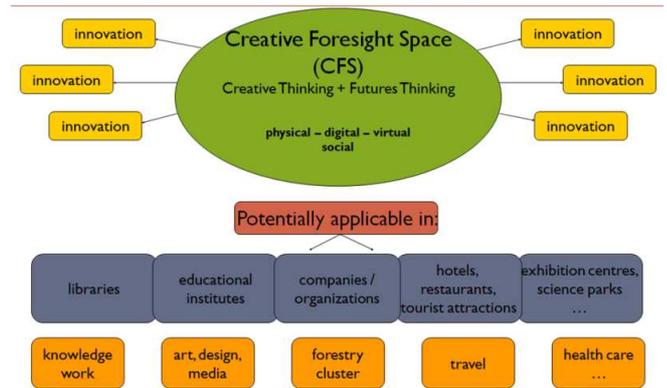


Figure 1. The Concept of Creative Foresight Space (CFS)

Futures Wheel, Table and Window

CFS is a methodological umbrella concept that was developed at the Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC). Essentially, it is a futures gallery or social futures learning hub to enhance working milieux in all kinds of organisations. It also acts as a platform for participatory, co-creative foresight sessions. Such sessions were designed as special Futures Cliniques where several foresight methods are used to probe into the futures of the subjects selected.

The methods demonstrated and applied in all Futures Clinics included the Futures Wheel, an easily applicable and discussion-oriented tool, the Futures Table, a matrix framework for analysing different aspects of a phenomenon and sketching scenarios, and, in particular, the Futures Window, a visual presentation of weak signals to stimulate futures work by watching it (Heinonen & Hiltunen 2012).

On average, at least five different foresight methods are used at a Futures Clinique. In this case, the Futures Research Methodology CD Version 3.0 (Glenn & Gordon 2009) produced by the Millennium Project was also frequently employed in addition to material from the iKnow project (Ravetz et al. 2011). Apart from foresight methods, several innovation techniques were also applied in the Futures Cliniques (e.g., de Bono's (1985) Six Thinking Hats). The participants were not required to be familiar with any of the methods beforehand. Instead, the idea was to introduce and enable futures learning on site – both in terms of content and methods.

The visual design and atmosphere of the CFS is a method in itself aimed at multi-sensory futures exploration. In some of the sessions, the emphasis was laid on visualisation and visual material from cartoons to pieces of art, which were used experimentally to fuel the participants' imagination (Heinonen & Kurki 2011).

Two concrete cases of CFSs were installed for a certain period of time (ca. six months) for experimenting. During the experiments, all the results were carefully tracked and documented. One CFS was set up in 2010 in Helsinki

City Library (in Finland) and the other inside the Technology Centre Innopark in the Hämeenlinna region (in Finland).



Figure 2. Futures topics such as the future of housing can be explored by co-interpreting visual art.

The concept of CFS can be implemented in two separate modes: the stimulus version or the slow version. The stimulus version aims to excite imagination and enhance creativity through such stimulation. The slow version, on the other hand, enhances creativity through elements that sooth the visitor and let time and space for new ideas or understanding emerge. This kind of futures learning (Heinonen, Kurki & Ruotsalainen 2012) can be achieved through slow motion digital walls or by providing niches for silence and solitary futures exploration.

Shift toward Meanings Society

The most important socio-economic trend identified during the project was the **shift from information society to a meanings society**. In terms of work, the central findings were that there is a need for new organisation models, a radical mixing of different industries and branches, as well as utilisation of prosumerism (producers + consumers) in a new work paradigm. In addition, a set of new competences and skills were identified: seven competences that are critical for future work life in 2020 were presented.

The Future of Work in Ubiquitous Interaction

The future of work and the future economy will be shaped especially by changes in two intermingling areas: **the technologies used and people's ways of life**.

The guiding technology of the future, quite unsurprisingly, will be the Internet with its different applications and services. The values and norms of **Web 2.0** will spread to the entire society – **and the workplace**. Digital natives will take participation, bottom-up approaches, collaboration and sharing for granted. They will be intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically influenced.

Moreover, people will increasingly strive for a life that is personally and individually meaningful. The source of **meaningful experiences** can be anything, be it consumption, work, arts or social relationships.

The Internet together with the strengthening of the ethos of self-expression is leading away from information society to a new societal form: the meanings society. This transition will have a significant impact on how we work and the organisations in which we work.

Despite increasing automation, work will not disappear. People will continue to do what machines are not capable of doing – taking care of creative, non-routine and non-linear tasks. Nevertheless, by 2050, work could transform in such a deep way that this might be the end of work as we know it. We might see a return to the roots of work, to the time before the institution of wage labour. Work would thus become an act of creativity and autonomy, not something we do because our livelihood depends on it.

Instead of the institution of wage labour under an employer, self-organised peer-to-peer production and prosumerism could form the basic framework for work in the future. The ideal worker in such a future scenario may not be the diligent toiler with narrow expertise but an enthusiastic and ingenious *amateur* (Heinonen & Ruotsalainen 2012).

Meanings Competence as a New Skill

Out of all the work skills, especially **meanings competence** could be of most crucial importance in the future. Production in the creative economy is in essence the handling of cultural meaning. Production aims

more and more at products and services that aid in constantly recreating one's identity and constructing a personally meaningful way of life. This is not solely a concern of the creative class, but all industries have to take into account this change in society and consumer demand.

Meanings competence is the ability to create and interpret meaning, construct and communicate social reality. Workers need meanings competence not only as a tool but also as a skill to construct one's work as a comprehensible, fulfilling and meaningful endeavour. Jobs will be less and less clearly defined, and workers must learn to "define" their jobs for themselves. Creating meanings competence is a social process that calls for interaction competence since culture is socially shared by definition. Creativity, stories and innovations can only be created in socially liveable environments where there is fluid interaction between individuals. Socially lively work means also taking consumers along in the production process as the best way to ensure that the products and services will be deeply meaningful. Essentially, meanings competence is not only a matter of work life, but people will increasingly strive to make their life meaningful and purposeful as a whole.

Danger of Work Becoming Too Big

The most important trend identified in working life was not only the mixing of different industries but different spheres, values and procedures: consumers becoming producers (and producers consumer-like), work becoming leisure-like (and vice versa). This development has several benefits, as it helps make work more meaningful and products more in line with demand. However, it also contains serious threats: instead of work becoming more meaningful and fulfilling, it can attain too big a role in our lives.

By 2050, technology will become an inseparable part of our environment but also of our selves. The next stage of "mobile technology" will be technology incorporated into our bodies and us becoming cyborgs. Our thinking, communication, work and leisure will be intermediated, supported and enhanced by technology. One of the most prominent effects of technologies is the dramatic enrichment of communication. Vivid communication promotes openness, which in turn encourages innovation. We are increasingly living a life of ubiquity and transparency. In a ubiquitous society, the line between work and leisure, public and private will become blurred. It is a matter of further investigation to determine the pros and cons of this development.

Testing New Techniques, Products and Processes

Examples of the main topics that were dealt with in the Futures Cliniques are: "Future concepts of urban housing and sustainable multi-locality", "Radical innovations in combating climate change", "The future of libraries", "The future of technology centres", "The intertwined futures of work and the Internet", "The utilisation of 3D worlds", "Emerging digital culture", "Meanings and time competence as future work skills".

Clients of recent Futures Cliniques conducted by the Finland Futures Research Centre include, for example, the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, the Finnish Innovation Fund, Technology Centre Innopark and Helsinki City Library.

For each Futures Clinique, the participants were selected to represent different industries, branches and fields. The heterogeneity of the participants and co-creative methods used resulted in various progressive and future-oriented ideas. For example, the Futures Cliniques considering the futures of libraries helped in redesigning the activities of Helsinki City Library's "Kohtaamispaikka" (Meeting Point).

The participating organisations profited from the project in the form of new ideas for future development. In addition to the core concept (CFS), it was possible to test

some of the tentative ideas as well as the new techniques, products, services and processes of the participating organisations in the workshops. The participants also received all the materials created in the project and in the Futures Cliniques conducted as part of the CFSs.

The results of the project were also presented in the media, which both disseminated information and made the project more influential at the local and even regional level, thus giving the participating organisations another means of marketing. The project also added to the well-being of the participating organisations' employees. Visiting the Creative Foresight Space and attending Futures Cliniques were often regarded as legitimate out-of-official-role behaviour and relaxation with futures-oriented intellectual stimulation. The ideas and innovative stimuli from the CFSs, together with the adoption of a more holistic and longer-term perspective, provided concrete input for regular work.

Democracy and Participation to Profit from Creative Public Spaces

The project implicated untapped possibilities of collaborative, co-creative and peer-to-peer foresight activities. Participatory foresight or planning methods could be used considerably more in policy and decision-making processes. In government, each ministry could have its own Creative Foresight Space. Large companies and organisations could have their own CFSs while smaller enterprises could share a common CFS, located, for instance, inside a technology park, science hub or conference centre.

Another central issue is the planning and designing of public spaces. The concept of CFS could be implemented not only in corporations but in public spaces and public enterprises as well. This would not only improve work-related well-being but also benefit democracy and participation. For citizens, libraries and educational settings would be ideal places for futures learning through CFSs.

Ubiquitous digital technologies and Internet solutions have a huge potential for creative processes as well as participatory policy planning and democratic decision-making. The potential of Internet-based technologies and services should be further examined, especially in virtual foresight workshops, cross-fertilised by face-to-face Futures Cliniques.

The CFC project with its hybrid concept for futures learning and two experimental case studies is the first step. The second step is to disseminate the experiences of these cases to make a concrete call for further action. The concept of Creative Foresight Space and of Futures Cliniques could also be adapted to involve policy-makers more directly in foresight processes. These tools can be utilised to enable decision-makers, experts/researchers, planners and citizens to collaborate – in form of crowdsourcing and "learning" futures.

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About the EFP: Policy professionals dealing with RTD, innovation and economic development increasingly recognize a need to base decisions on broadly based participative processes of deliberation and consultation with stakeholders. Among the most important tools they apply are foresight and forward looking studies. The EFP supports policy professionals by monitoring and analyzing foresight activities and forward looking studies in the European Union, its neighbours and the world. The EFP helps those involved in policy development to stay up to date on current practice in foresight and forward looking studies. It helps them to tap into a network of know-how and experience on issues related to the day-to-day design, management and execution of foresight and foresight related processes.