



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
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Anticipation and foresight

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Better preparation for the future of the planet and humanity is the objective of UNESCO's Division of Foresight.

One of UNESCO's essential missions is to be a laboratory of ideas, with the task of anticipating the needs of future generations and the transformations of the modern world. This prospective aim is inscribed in UNESCO's Constitution.

The Organization has the responsibility not only "to contribute to peace and security" through education, science and culture, but also to "maintain" and "increase" knowledge and to encourage cooperation among the nations "in all branches of intellectual activity".

INTELLECTUAL WATCH

UNESCO's watching role is therefore an integral part of its mandate of intellectual cooperation. The Foresight Programme gives this mission a particularly significant visibility. More than ever, it is vital that UNESCO have the capacity for intellectual watch.

There is a difference to be noted between foresight and forecast. Foresight is obviously not prediction, but nor should it be confused, as it often is, with forecasting. Foresight tries to imagine different possible futures (or "futuribles"). Foresight thus trains its sights first on the present. It diagnoses the "bubbles" of the future that are already discernible and questions current decisions in terms of their potential consequences. Finally, it

attempts to "manage the unforeseeable" in a future primarily marked by uncertainty.

The Division of Foresight, Philosophy and Human Sciences therefore seeks to shed light on the actions and medium- and long-term policies of Member States using "upstream" expertise. This completely trans-disciplinary expertise transcends divisions between the different fields of the

Organization's competence (education, science, culture, communication and information).

ACTION OF THE FORESIGHT DIVISION

The *21st Century Talks* and *21st Century Dialogues* gather together prominent personalities, representing different currents of thought, cultures or sensibilities from different regions of the world, to work on key questions about the future. Participants in these sessions have

included notably Arjun Appadurai, Mohammed Arkoun, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Jean Baudrillard, Aziza Bennani, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Manuel Castells, Jacques Delors, Jacques Derrida, Cheick Modibo Diarra, Claude Hagège, Axel Kahn, Paul Kennedy, Julia Kristeva, Edgar Morin, Luc Montagnier, Stephen Jay Gould, Paul Ricoeur, Jeremy Rifkin, Marie Ribinson, Saskia Sassen, Michel



Some 50 intellectuals from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe brought together by the *21st Century Talks* tackle the issue of "The Future of Values".
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The World Report: Towards Knowledge Societies

“Towards Knowledge Societies” is the first report in a new UNESCO series. Published every two years, these reports will focus on themes that are UNESCO’s priorities, such as cultural diversity or sustainable development.

Published in November 2005, “Towards Knowledge Societies” emphasizes UNESCO’s interest in the potential for a new form of development based on sharing knowledge, due notably to technological advances in information and communication.

The Report establishes clearly the difference between knowledge societies and information societies. Information societies are based on technological breakthroughs, while knowledge societies “encompass social, ethical and political dimensions”. The Report focuses mainly on how to build knowledge societies to promote a “smart” form of sustainable human development. Analyzing the increasingly crucial role of economic growth, the Report suggests that knowledge can provide new impetus for development in countries in the South. It also provides a detailed analysis of factors that block numerous countries’ access to opportunities promised by new information and communication technologies, particularly the growing digital divide and the constraints on freedom of expression. The Report concludes with a series of recommendations to remedy the situation.

Serres, Peter Sloterdijk, Amadou Toumani Touré, Alain Touraine, Gianni Vattimo, and Michael Walzer.

The Division of Foresight, Philosophy and Human Sciences is also responsible for developing the forward-looking report on 20 global problems entitled “The World Ahead: Our Futures in the Making”, translated in six languages.

A number of partnerships have been established with institutions and civil society actors, including Expo 2000, the Agenda of the Millennium, the Club de Rome, etc.

Lastly, the division has had numerous articles on future-oriented themes published in key newspapers and magazines in over 100 countries in the world. The articles communicate UNESCO’s key themes in its different fields of competence.

To Find Out More

UNESCO World Report , “Towards Knowledge Societies”

http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1520&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Contact :

www.unesco.org/shs/prospective