



## ***CHANGING THE WAY UNIVERSITIES USE THE FUTURE?***

### **A WORKSHOP ABOUT THE NATURE AND ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOMORROW'S SOCIETY**

**SÃO PAULO (BRAZIL) - 15 JULY 2013**

#### **Introduction – Exploring the Subject**

The utility of Universities is often explained with reference to the important role played in assuring humanity's future. The university is seen to deliver on this role in three general ways. By preserving knowledge that is of "good quality", even when it is research about humanity's horrors or terribly dangerous tools, the university serves as a guardian and judge of the stock of what we know. By discovering new knowledge the university adds to the stock of knowledge, sometimes in ways that seem to serve no purpose and sometimes in ways that appear to address direct problems in need of research based and inventive solutions. By diffusing knowledge into different communities and networks as well as serving as an initiator and executor of such flows universities help generate the fabric of understanding that sustains social life.

This justification of universities on the grounds of preparing for the future – be it at the institutional, student or community levels through preservation, discovery or diffusion of knowledge – inevitably assumes a definition of what is the future. Only the question of what is the future has, for the most part, not been addressed. Instead the focus has been, perhaps understandably, since every person does it every day, on how to use the future to make choices in the present. Institutions, albeit through somewhat different processes, are no different. Here the future plays a role, explicitly and implicitly, not only to assign significance to what is sensed in the present but perhaps more importantly in determining what is given meaning at all. These are the meanings and patterns that arise from the amazing temporality of our universe as expressed through both its motion across irreversible time and the constant percussion of emergence, in its many forms.

That the future is a pivotal and powerful component of our sense making and making sense seems fairly clear. Consequently it seems logical to expect that changes in the way we use the future have a significant impact on what we see and do in the present. In this respect universities have played an important role, contributing to changes in the way the future is used in different periods and in different systems/sub-systems. In our present human systems universities are one of the primary creators and perpetuators of the way we use the future. This is because, as already noted, in current human systems universities have a particular and critical function to play with respect to key aspects of knowledge preservation, diffusion and creation with impact on society as a whole, locally and globally. This includes knowledge of why and how to use the future.



The trouble is that for the most part our understanding of why and how has been based on a somewhat narrow definition of what is the future. In the case of industrial “modern” societies the future has largely been a target, the subject of planning and predictive forms of discovery. Rarely has the question of what is the future been explicitly posed or the definitions used gone beyond rather practical versions related to planning in one form or another. One of the challenges of this FL Uknowlab is to reconsider the nature and role of the university in the development of humanity’s anticipatory systems and then to consider how a more sophisticated way of using the future could alter the way learning is conceived and organized today.

## Agenda

- 9:00 – 9:45** **Session 1** –Background on UNESCO-Rockefeller Project on Scoping Global Anticipatory Capacities and the Futures Literacy UNESCO Knowledge Lab. Overview of the workbook. Introduction to Session 2 – instructions for breakout group discussions of probability and hope.
- 9:45 – 11:15** **Session 2** – Level 1 Breakout Group Discussions of the Subject, Probability and Hopes. Starts with introductions. Groups are divided into four topic areas: Society, Economy, Governance, Technology
- 11:15 – 12:00** **Session 3** – Level 1 Breakout Groups Report Back (5 minutes per group!)
- 12:00 – 12:30** **Session 4** – Level 2 Presentation of the Learning Intensive Society Reframing Model – tools for imagining post-industrial social systems.
- 12:30 – 13:30** **LUNCH** – stay-in lunch, fill-in the survey
- 13:30 – 13:50** **Session 5** – “Time travel” creativity exercise.
- 15:00 – 16:15** **Session 6** – Level 2 Breakout Group Discussions – Reframing the role of the university with respect to the future – an exercise in rigorous imagining.
- 16:15 – 17:00** **Session 7** – Level 2 Breakout Groups Report Back (5 minutes each!)
- 17:00 – 18:00** **Session 8** – Level 3 Discussion Plenary – Making Anticipatory Assumptions Explicit – Asking New Questions and the Discipline of Anticipation



---

## Question Guides for Breakout Groups

**9:45 – 11:15**      **Session 2** – Level 1 Breakout Group Discussions of the Subject, Expectations and Hopes.

The aim of this discussion is to help you move your tacit anticipatory assumptions into explicit statements about the future. The conversation is meant to help you to identify and make clear the anticipatory assumptions that shape the often implicit image of the future of how universities will use the future. In order to make the tacit explicit please discuss the following:

- a) **Subject (10 minutes):** the nature/definition of the subject under discussion. What is it that we're talking about? What does it mean to talk about changing the way universities use the future?
- b) **Prediction (15 minutes):** What do you believe is likely to happen (probable) with respect to how universities use the future? Discuss how universities use the future in the future (predictions) This is meant to be your best guess about what will happen in the future? (Note: please try to avoid path or causal stories, try to stick to a static description of the future at a specific date. You can use the thought experiment – “Close your eyes, count to ten, now imagine you are walking out of the subway or metro or school or home and it is 2040. Describe what life is like.”)
- c) **Hopes (15 minutes):** What would you like to see happen, even if you don't think it is likely or even possible? What is your preferred future and why? What are the values you wish to see made “real” in your ideal future?
- d) **Presentation (15 minutes):**
  - a. How do “universities use the future”?
  - b. What does your group predict will happen to the way universities use the future?
  - c. What does your group hopes will happen to the way universities use the future.

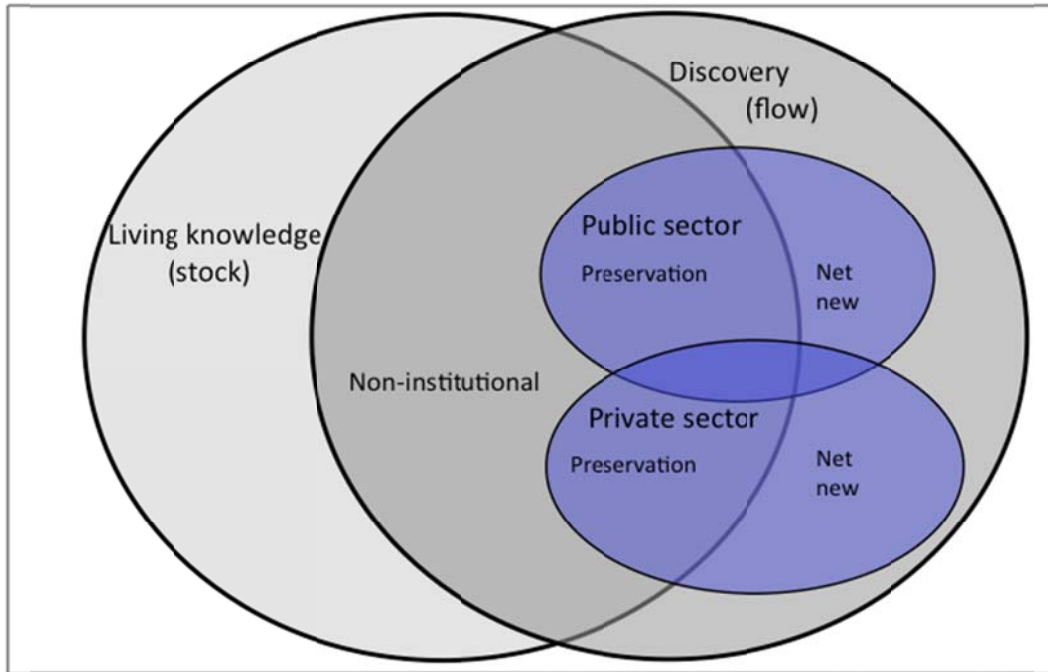
Examples of specific topics:

- Discuss the “subject” – there are two key terms: universities and the future – define how universities use the future.
- Do you think that in the future universities will be more effective both as organizations but also as creators of knowledge (stocks and flows, old and new) when it comes to developing and deploying more “sophisticated” approaches to anticipation?
- What do you hope for the future of the way universities use the future, do you hope that universities will be able to use the future differently - in what ways and why? What values motivate these hopes?

DIAGRAMS ON THE NEXT PAGE ARE TO HELP IMAGINE AND DEFINE



## Knowledge Creation and Destruction: Mode 3?



Source: Etienne Wenger



---

**15:00 – 16:15**    **Session 6** – Level 2 Breakout Group Discussions – Reframing the role of the university in the way it uses the future – an exercise in rigorous imagining

The task in this session is to “reframe” the organizational assumptions that we use to describe the imaginary future using a discontinuous model that is provided for this purpose. The model is not based on either probabilistic or normative reasoning, although there are a set of narrative assumptions used to frame the analytical model (see p. 9 below). The primary task in this session is to engage in “rigorous” imagining exercise using the analytical model of the Learning Intensive Society provided for this purpose. In this model major aspects of the image of the future are fundamentally different than in the present. Again the idea is to avoid discussing dynamics or how this happened. The goal is to describe in as much operational and “day-in-the-life” detail what it is like to live in this Learning Intensive Society of 2040.

The following pages provide a few of the key attributes of the Learning Intensive Society model. The diagrams are meant to be tools for describing an imaginary future. Try to live inside this alternate reality as an exercise in reframing. The point is to build up a new set of anticipatory assumptions, ones that can be used subsequently to examine current dominant anticipatory assumptions and then on the basis of the contrast pose some new questions about the present. The aim is **not** to address the question of how to achieve an LIS future nor consider to what extent such a future is probable or desirable.

- The unique creation economy, a “murmuration” of “banal creativity” – heterarchical and fluid. Characterized by continuous birth, death, entry and exit of value creating networks.
- Change as compositional – as new activities and ways of organizing life emerge the old ways change position in the overall weight of the total activities (time, resources) undertaken in a given society.
- The attributes of identity creation are different, in the LIS identity emerges more consciously since there has been a change in the conditions of change – people have a greater capacity to recognize their socially constructed identity and to engage in its continuous internalization/externalization.
- Decision making capacity – the LIS is an “experimentalist” society where conducting experiments is a way of life and learning from both failure and success essential. Administration is marginal and responsibility is taken where and when something happens.
- Transformation is multi-dimensional, occurring across inter-dependent systems.

Prepare for presentation to plenary a set of bullet points that cover:

- Look for a metaphor, a title for your scenario.
- Recount a short day-in-the-life perspective.
- Briefly explain the nature, role and working of systems for using the future.

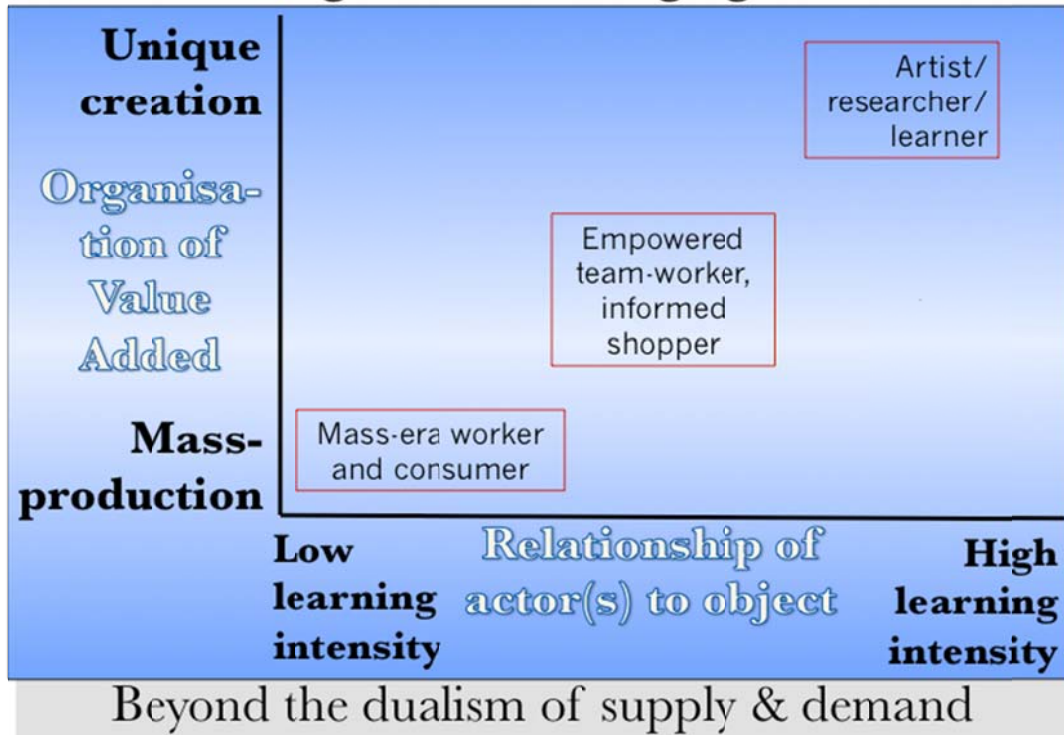


---

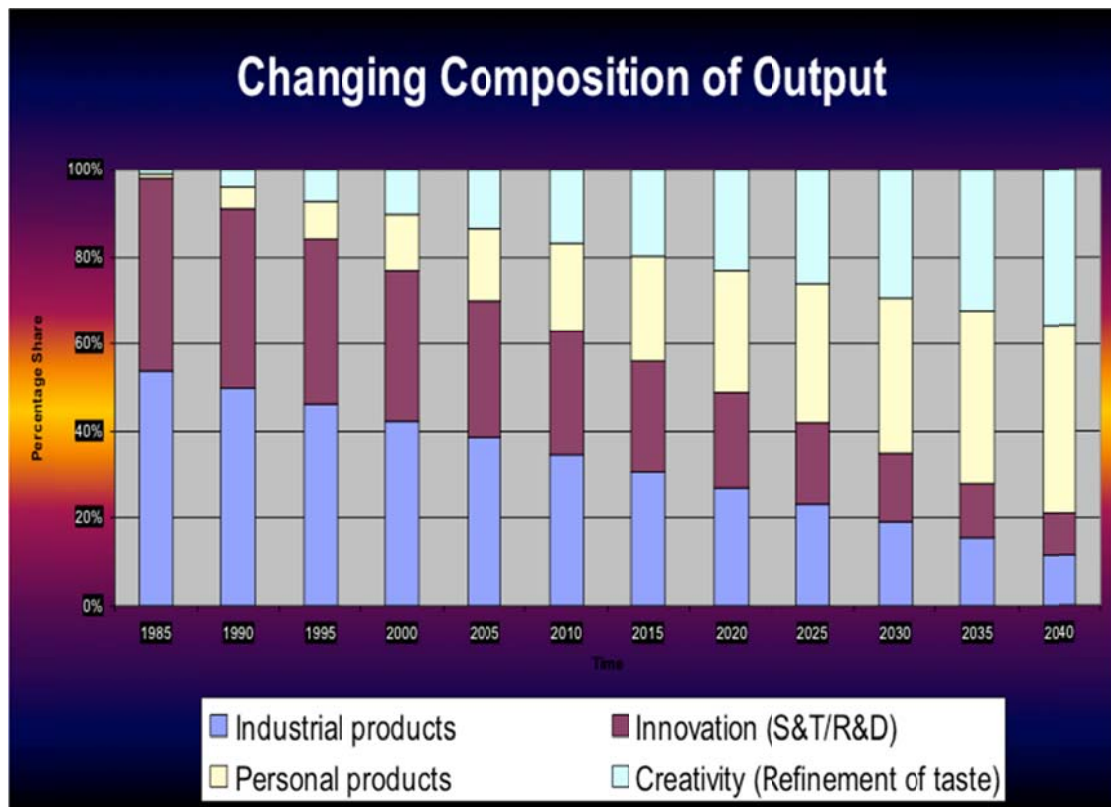
In the LIS the university need not exist and “futures literacy” may need to be ambient...



## Creating wealth – changing sources

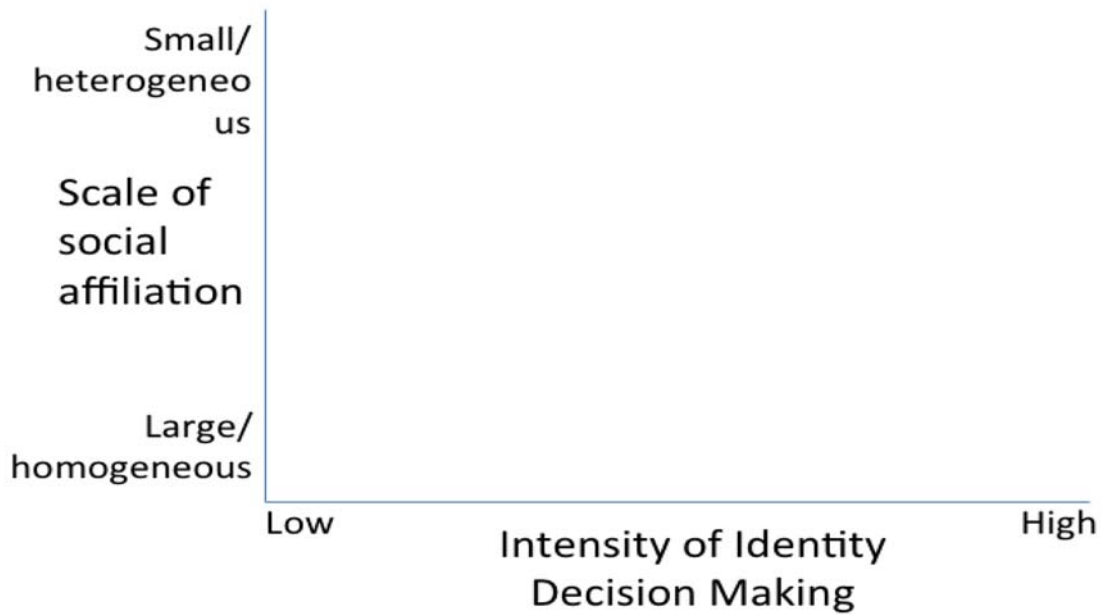


## Changing Composition of Output

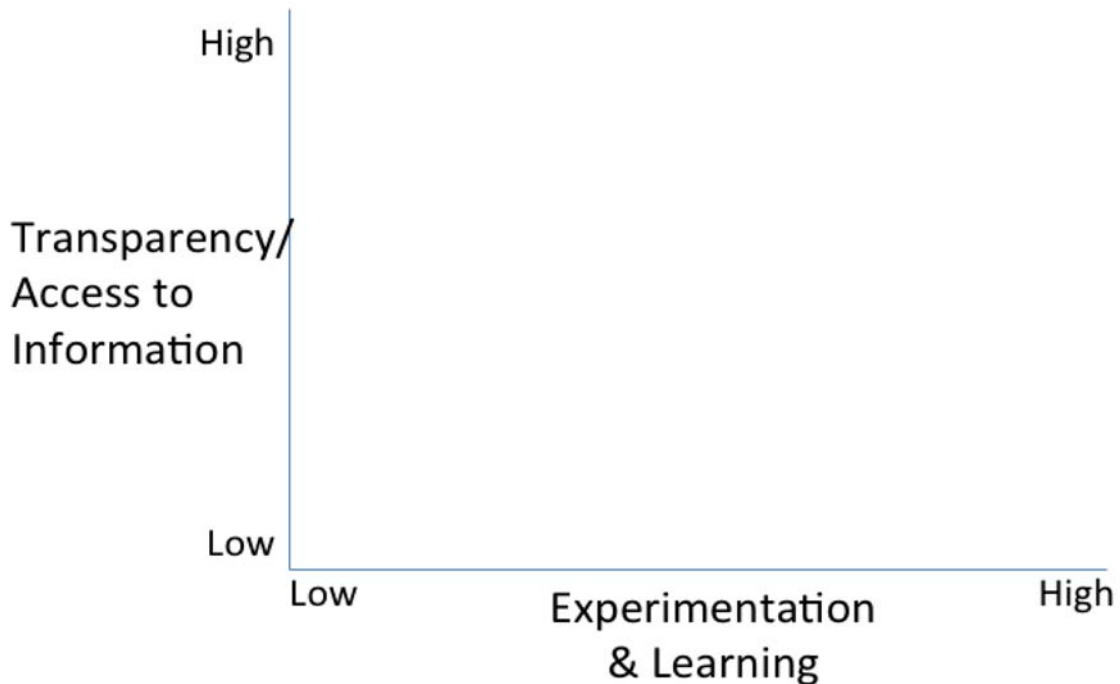




## Social Dynamism – Social Identity Creation



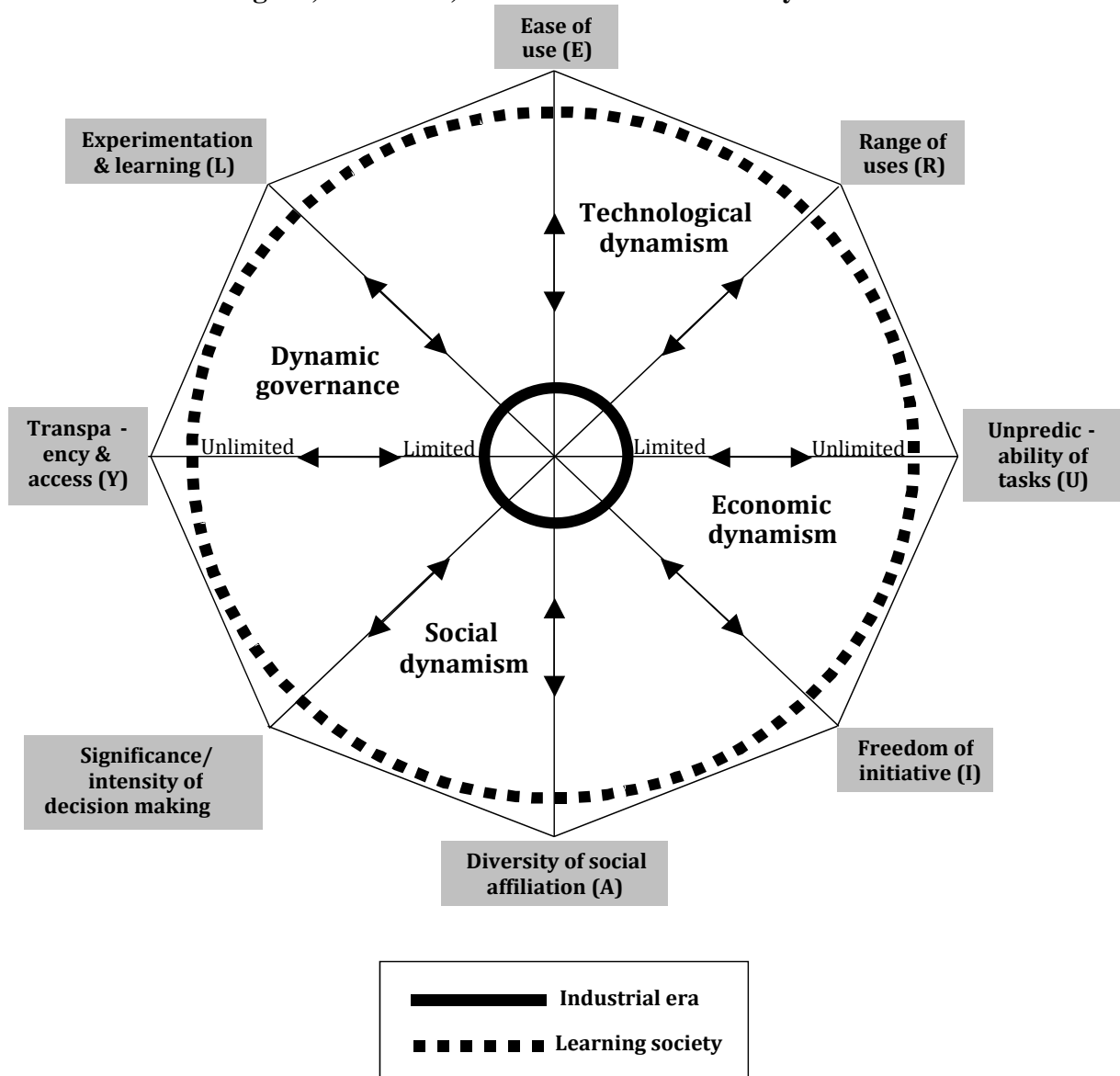
## Dynamic Governance – Decision Making Quality







### Synergy Conditions for Transition Scale Change: Technological, Economic, Social and Governance Dynamism





### Before and After

	<b>Industrial Era</b>	<b>Learning Intensive Society</b>
<b>Wealth</b>	Physical/financial	Human capital
<b>Rules</b>	Simple property rights	Complex property rights
<b>Governance</b>	Ex-ante allocation of power	Real-time allocation of power
<b>Values</b>	Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>Economy</b>	Mass production	Production for self/community
<b>Home</b>	Life organized for work	Work organized for life
<b>Authority</b>	Hierarchy	Networked autonomy
<b>Identity</b>	Imposed identity	Co-created identity
<b>Freedom</b>	Liberation from constraints	As a capacity to do things

### Narrative frame for the “Learning Intensive Society” story

**Purpose:** Goal discovery – what is the potential of the present? Not optimisation or contingency.

**Point-of-view:** Change in daily life (metric: agriculture to industry). Not institutional or macro level variables (although obviously the changes in the conduct of daily life have aggregate and institutional implications).

**Temporal frame:** Comparative static cross-section in 2020 – the issue is not describing the voyage or how or why to get from A to B.

**Protagonist:** the actor is a leader in government, a senior civil servant, since the aim of the exercise is to understand how to play a leadership role from within government, the policies (choices that could be made now) that would enhance this role.

**Rules:** universal declaration of human rights, representative democracy, mixed economies (markets not planning), etc.



The LIS is defined by:

- 1) Ambient computing – high levels of ease-of-use, range-of-uses for information technologies such that these tools are no longer “evident”;
- 2) Unique creation – high levels of unpredictability of tasks and freedom of initiative for wealth creating activity mean that the predominant source of value-added is the refinement of taste (banal creativity);
- 3) Bottom-up collective identity – high levels of diversity of affiliations and intensity of identity generating decision making produce sense making that integrates (internalises) the social nature of the individual;
- 4) Governance – high levels of transparency/access to information and experience in making strategic choices emerges reflexively from the interaction of ambient computing, unique creation and bottom-up collective identity.

The descriptive short version: The LIS is about daily life when:

- Infocom is ambient and ubiquitous, the use not the tool requires skill;
- Unique creation predominates in a high transaction intensity, post-subsistence, quality of life economy;
- Identity is bottom-up, highly heterogeneous, produced endogenously on a highly liberating minimum common denominator of values; and
- Decision making capacity allows people to embrace experimentalism, heterogeneity, complexity and spontaneity.

**Some suggestions for discussion in the working groups:**

- How is wealth accumulation & exchange organised
- What kinds of property rights predominate (diversity of contractual relationships, mix of different degrees of copyright/copyleft)? How does this relate to business models (ways of making a profit)?
- How is trust established and maintained?
- How is power allocated (is authority assigned or taken, is decision making capacity gained through experimentation, is complexity embraced)?
- What kind of equality matters (hierarchy and/or heterarchy)?
- **How is the creation of knowledge organized?**
- **How is the future used in the university, outside the university – is there an inside/outside of the university?**

Note – this FL Uknowlab is an example of the practice of the Discipline of Anticipation. For more information regarding the emergent DoA see for instance: <http://www.fumee.org> and UNESCO Foresight