

FUTUREPOL: Research proposal for the ERC Starting Grant

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State-of-the-art and objectives

The research project “A political history of the future: knowledge production and future governance 1945-2010” – FUTUREPOL – studies how contemporary societies engage with the future. It seeks to answer the fundamental question: How does the future become an object of governance? Moreover, through the historical analysis that underpins it, the project asks: How is this process different today, than earlier in the post war period? With these questions at its core, FUTUREPOL aims to lay the foundation for a new field of research in the intersection between transnational history, science studies, and the literature on governance—a field that we might call a political history of the future.

The project posits four research objectives:

1. to study the emergence of a global future field in the post war period, particularly with reference to the circulation of scientific and intellectual ideas around futurology,
2. to explore the way that these ideas gave rise to forms of future governance in national administrations in Europe,
3. to understand how such forms of national future governance stood in relationship to emerging world futures, particularly after 1970, and
4. to study the evolution of means of future governance over time up until the present day.

Through its dual emphasis on the historical dynamics behind the construction of future knowledge and future expertise, on the one hand, and the evolution of means of future governance in public administrations, on the other, FUTUREPOL will provide a bridge between the emphasis on transnational ideas and networks in history and the literature on changing means of governance in the social sciences. It will help us understand the process in which the future becomes a scientific and political object, and give us new knowledge of how societies in different contexts over time and space deal with conflicting future visions and create legitimacy for certain future paths, rather than others. The project is therefore of immediate relevance to our understanding of how European societies create futures.

The rise of a future field

The future offers a particular challenge for the governance of contemporary societies. What is the future, and can it be steered and controlled? Different societies over time and space have answered this question very differently, ranging from the oracles of Antiquity to the foresight processes of the European Union. This makes the future a pertinent object of historical analysis, but it also points to the question of how and why ideas of the future and of our possibilities to influence it change over time. FUTUREPOL intends to set out a new field of historiopolitical analysis, a political history of the future. At the heart of such a political history of the future stands the way that the future, for key actors, organizations, governments and institutions, was understood as an object of politics and governance, as something that could be transformed through political struggle, and as something that could be planned, influenced and controlled through politics. A characteristic of modern societies, it can be proposed, is their belief in the *knowability* and *governability* of the future, in their faith that the future can be known and controlled. This perspective on the political history of the future departs in important ways from how historians have hitherto engaged with the future. A previous wave of historical writing has indeed established that the future has a history, in the form of images and concepts of the future, or in the utopian or dystopian ideas that have structured outlooks on present and future time from Antiquity onwards (Cazes, 1986). In *Futures past*, the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck argued that the shift in notions of the future from something controlled by theology and church, to a sphere of scientific rationality and political will, was a core element in the shaping of European modernity and in the birth of

modern politics. From the futures past argument, we have a chronology of the future which stretches from the *sattle zeit*, to more modern times, and intersects with the big scientific and political revolutions in European history (Koselleck, 1985). It sees the first big shift in the secularization of the future after the French revolution, followed by another shift in the late 19th century, in which the future became associated with the great mechanic trends, the invention of steel and engines, and consequently associated foremost with technological invention. This is the mechanization of the future. Finally, the great activity around methods of planning and the search for scientific forms of prediction in the post war period would represent the scientification of the future, as means such as *prospective*, *forecast*, *futures studies* or even *futurology* became labels for various attempts to rein the future in and transform it into an object of science and politics (Hölscher, 1999).

While we thus have a broad chronology of the evolution of future images in Western modernity, it is striking that what futurists and future planners thought and did, how they attempted to intervene in society, and how their ideas gave rise, even, to new institutions and technologies of governance, has hardly been studied. Today, we have an emerging strand of research on the role of prediction in sciences such as natural sciences, demographics or economics (Hartmann, 2010), but not on attempts to turn the future into a particular science and field of action. The decades from the mid 1940s to the early 1970s see a boom in the interest in the future with a stream of publications, the creation of several associations and institutes devoted to the future and important debates on the promises of so called futurology in the social sciences. How can we explain this sudden concern with the long-term? What was futurology?

The first objective of the project is to understand the emergence of this future field, through the circulation of ideas of futurists, and the way that these ideas construed the future. We need to posit the emergence of futurology in the context of the important changes in the relationship between knowledge production and policy making in the decades after the war. Some studies have argued that the rise of futurology was indicative of the rise of a new form of political expertise (Schmidt-Gernig, 2002). Indeed some thinkers, such as the German political scientist Ossip Flechtheim or the French philosopher Gaston Berger, saw futurology, or *prospective*, as a way of creating an action oriented political science capable of dealing scientifically with normative issues of development (Flechtheim, 1968). The interest in futurology on behalf of public administrations coincided with the search for new and more scientific forms of government in the 1950s and 1960s. Through the development of scientific tools of prediction, it was hoped, the future could be controlled, and societal futures thus protected from ongoing ideological struggles such as the one between liberalism and Marxism (Fischer, 1990). However, the debate on futurology was also right at the heart of the critique of technocracy of these decades. Attempts to domesticate the future and make it an object of governance met with opposition, from public intellectuals, free thinkers, and new social movements who attempted, rather, to *free* the future from politics and expert rule.

This theme of freeing the future from the interests of the present and from the claims of science, experts and politicians, is central to a whole wave of futures thinking, beginning in the 1960s but falling back on earlier writings after the war. For this strand of futures thinking, soon labeled “futures studies”, the future was not an object of scientific expertise, but the product of a collective process of imagination and radical participation (Jungk, 1987). The *s* in *futures* became the marker of the ambition to think the future as a plural and open ended phenomenon (Bell, 1998).

The project thus argues that the emergence of a political and scientific field explicitly devoted to the future in the immediate post war period (in contrast with the much longer history of predictive ideas) cannot be understood as a neutral process of the construction of expertise – but that rather, the future is a power field in which notions of the future as an object of science and governance met and clashed with utopian ideas of the future as radical alternative. What we have is thus the development of a range of different discourses and technologies engaging with an also very different future. FUTUREPOL argues that the variety in this future field in the post war period is important, because it is directly concerned with notions of the *political*, i.e. of the scope and reach of political action. The focus on the circulation of future ideas and the way these ideas construed the future as an object of science or a radical tool of mobilization will permit us to understand how these actors saw the future, the influence they thought they could have on it, and which futures they decided to actively pursue. In addition, it gives us a genealogy of core future technologies some of which remain central technologies governing the present (Dean 2009). Mapping this variety, through a careful study of what futurists thought and did, is thus a first important research task of the project.

The Institutionalisation of the Future as an Object of Governance

At a second step, FUTUREPOL seeks to trace the process in which the future became an object of governance, and how futurist’s ideas were translated into means of state intervention. The post war state took

a clear interest in futurology. Debates began in many national administrations in Europe and beyond in the mid 1960s about the need for a systematic approach to the long-term. These debates, usually centered in social science research councils or academies of science led in several cases to the institutionalization of foresight, *prospective*, or futures studies, either within the existing planning apparatus or through the creation of new bodies devoted to the future. The forerunner for much of these developments was the American RAND foundation, where key predictive models such as the Delphi technique were developed after the war as part of a new science intended for decision-making, by futurists such as Theodore Gordon and Olaf Helmer. The OECD played a central role in bringing perspectives and planning tools from RAND to Europe, particularly with the creation of technologies for technology assessment and technological forecasting. In Europe, the question of long term planning was intimately connected to the climate of the Cold War and to the development of two different societal systems, each with its vision of the future. This cultural struggle was played out also in the field of science and in the search for increasingly sophisticated planning techniques with which to advance the future frontier. In Eastern Europe so-called *prognostiks* were part of the planning apparatus put in place in the interwar period, as were predictive models in economics or demography in the West (Porter, 1995; Desrosieres, 2000). However, the idea of a predictive science was reiterated with the introduction of the Techno-Scientific Revolution in the countries under Soviet rule (Rocca, 1982, Beissinger, 1988). This led to the establishment of Prognostic Institutes and Committees for Futures Studies in the Academies of Science in several Eastern European countries (Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, USSR). In the liberal democracies of Western Europe, institutes and bodies for the future took different form, following national legacies of planning and sometimes heated national debates on the problem of technocracy and the ‘good’ role of scientific expertise. In France, the debate on *prospective* which began in the early 1950s led to the Commissariat au Plan being charged with long term developments (Guiauder 2008, Masse-Berger, 2007). In the Netherlands, the Scientific Council for Government was created in 1973 with the aim to produce policy relevant future knowledge to complement the econometric predictions carried out by the Central Plan Buro (den Hoed, 2008). In Sweden, in the same year, later Nobel Prize laureate Alva Myrdal and socialist Prime Minister Olof Palme set up an Institute for Futures Studies, charged with inciting public debate around future developments (Wittrock, 1990; Andersson, 2006). In the UK, attempts to integrate long term planning in the civil service were met with suspicion and only really developed with the Thatcher era and after, and futurology became based instead in university research (Shonfield, 1965, Seefried ongoing).

What explains this variety? Very little attention has been devoted to this state interest in the future and the way that the modern state actively tried to shape a future politics. There is an important body of work on the interplay between the social sciences and the post war state (Wagner, et al., 1991; Pestre, 2004). We also know from a substantial body of literature that different societies East and West had different cultures of planning, and different approaches to the governance of science and technology (Torstendahl, 1989, Rindzeviciute, 2010), but we lack studies that can explain the role that attempts to govern the future played in the shaping of systems of governance and control on each side of the iron curtain. In the West, foresight rapidly became understood as a means with which to accommodate accelerating change and avoid clashes over conflicting future visions. Problems of alienation, social consequences of automation, and particularly, the increasingly unpredictable behaviour of the young generation were all problems that went beyond the reach of planning and needed foresight, as the American sociologist Daniel Bell stated in his famous work *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. In increasingly complex societies, it was no longer enough to simply extrapolate trends of predictable elements, but governments had to anticipate the unexpected. In the East, the same problems of value change in postindustrial societies were discussed by key groups of intellectuals in a growing critique of orthodox Marxism, a critique which attempted to incorporate open futures even within totalitarian systems, but that had to stay cautiously within the limits of tolerance. We can find such groups of intellectuals in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, tied together by the international networks of futurists, sometimes subject to persecution and sometimes enjoying relative freedom. In Czechoslovakia, the prelude to the Prague spring came from the critique of *prognostiks* by key elements in the Czech administration. In this process, the creation of a Futurological Society in the Academy of Science played a central role. The team of the futurist Radovan Richta put forward a similar critique of planning to that of Daniel Bell in the US. But the Futurological Society was crushed when the Soviet tanks rolled in (Rocca, 1989).

Studying these institutions, while placing them in the context of what we know from the social science literature of the development of the post-war state, will bring out a whole new aspect of post war European politics, namely, their desire to govern the future. The second objective of the project is thus to set out a comparative history of these institutions, which will allow us to understand how different political systems set different preconditions and limits for the future debate, and used predictive technologies with different

purposes in terms of establishing social order or accommodating change. In particular, FUTUREPOL suggests, it is useful to study the setup of these institutions and the way that institutions charged with producing future knowledge and future control seemed to reflect different systemic approaches to the role attributed to scientific expertise, policy making or public participation in the production of societal futures (Jasanoff 2005). Can we identify such different approaches to future knowledge across Europe East and West? What role did they play in the creation of an East West divide?

Between National and Global Futures

While this is a study of European institutions, taking into account also (see particularly study c) the US, these were also part of a global arena, and part of the international circulation of future ideas. This circulation intensifies over the studied period. Indeed, the institutionalization of foresight in national administrations coincides with the development of an emerging global future field, in which future issues are increasingly conceptualized as global ones, to do with the survival of the world system as a whole. The project intends to incorporate this question of global futures by studying the way in which attempts to govern the future in national administrations stood in a state of tension with the global field. The Club of Rome report *The Limits to Growth* in 1972 was discussed all over the world and met with alternative scenarios and counter reports (Vieille Blanchard, 2007). We see, around the Club of Rome report, the genesis of long term predictive models, for instance in population or climate change, an area where there are emerging historical studies (Dahan Dalmedico, 2007), but in several countries, the Club of Rome report also led to heated debates about the direction of the capitalist system, not least so in countries of the East bloc, where it fuelled dissent within the communist system (Moll 1991). This development is clearly part of a dramatic shift in outlooks on the future. The early 1970s see a rising catastrophism, in which elements of nuclear war, ecocide, and the population bomb play equal parts (Connelly, 2009). The link between future and progress seems broken, the future itself transformed from locus of hope to a space of fear and anguish. However, from visions of lurking disaster stem hope and mobilization, channeled in new global social movements such as the environmental movement, the anti bomb movement (Wittner, 1997) or a new movement for the future. Futures studies, radicalized as the intellectual tools of a new social movement, are central to this development, and increasingly take, from the mid 1960s onwards, the form of a critique of established politics and world order. They become an important influence on international organizations such as the UNESCO or the UN, but lead, also to the creation of new organizations. We see, in the 1970s, the creation of not only one, but two, international world societies for the future, the Washington based World Future Society, close to political and corporate elites, and the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF), which grows out of the Norwegian philosopher Johan Galtung and the West German journalist Robert Jungk's project *Mankind 2000* in 1968 (Jungk, 1969). The latter wants to reclaim the future from the "chronological imperialism" of the super powers, and develop intellectual tools in the form of a kind of a radical futures pedagogy, capable of freeing people's minds from the mental cages of the present. By the early 1970s, the future debate thus focuses on the world, on possible other world systems and on the future of humanity. Indeed, this emerges as the meaning of utopia in the 1970s.

For reasons to do with the sheer magnitude of the problem, the project does not intend to study this development of a global future arena in its totality. Rather, it seeks to integrate this global dimension by focalizing on two core problems: First, it intends to study how the future is negotiated between the national and the global arena, as future issues increasingly become global concerns and are played out in global scientific and political networks, and second, it argues that the future, in the context of the Cold War, served the role not only of gulf but also bridge for intercultural communication (Sarasmu-Miklossy 2010). Because of common problems of uncertainty and a common interest, across the iron curtain, in futurology, the future also emerged as an arena in which certain forms of intellectual cooperation were possible and indeed took place. In 1972 we witness, for instance, the creation of the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (the IIASA) which served as a platform for emerging global future issues between East and West (McDonald, 1998; Rindzeviciute, 2010). The World Futures Studies Federation played a key role as the meeting point of futurists from East and West, and eventually from China, India, Japan and the Arabic world, too. At the congresses of the Federation, futurists meet to debate the theoretical, epistemological, and political problem of the future. Its activities, which straddle the fall of the iron curtain, and thus also reflect the rapidly changing nature of future visions in Europe after 1989, have not been studied. Indeed, its archives are still dispersed from Rome to Sydney and Honolulu, and so studying it requires some historical groundwork (see Andersson ongoing, and <http://www.interdisciplines.org/paper.php?paperID=93>).

The first part of the project thus aims to study the emergence of a future field in the post war period, as a field organized between utopian calls for another world on the one hand, and technocratic policy making, on

the other, and as a field in which national concerns met global ones. It seeks to understand the process in which the future became a scientific and political object, object of political struggle but also object of control. We can ask the following central research questions, recapitulations of those that figure in the outline above: how did the future give rise to new forms of intellectual engagement, new international networks, new forms of expertise, new social movements? How did futurist's ideas translate into policy and give birth to forms of future governance or even future regimes? What do these things have to say about the future itself and its sudden transformation from hope to fear in the post war period?

Historicizing Contemporary Forms of Future Governance

In the previous pages, I have laid out a history of the first decades of the post war period. However, FUTUREPOL also intends to connect this study of the early post war period with a study of key transformations in the idea of the knowability and governability of the future in the decades from the 1970s onwards. Particularly, FUTUREPOL puts forward the hypothesis that forms of future governance have not only reflected but *enacted* changing governmentalities in this period, and that discourses and technologies of the future have been key sites of political change. As such, it proposes, that it is in the field of future governance that we can identify central moments of change in the objectives and technologies of modern governance. We have seen the birth of central predictive technologies such as foresight in futurists debates of the immediate post war period – it is another question how these change over time particularly in the period described by the social sciences as characterized by fundamental transformations in the way that public power is exercised in contemporary societies.

The project wants to engage here with the by now substantial body of literature in the social sciences – ranging from political science to STS studies – on changing forms of governance. This literature describes a shift from *government* to *governance* (Kooiman, 2003), a shift that follows the rejection of planning and state regulation after the unpredicted events of the oil crises and 1989. The governance literature tends to explain this shift with reference to two factors, both directly relevant to the project. First, it argues that recent decades have witnessed a core shift in the organization of public power, particularly in the structure of the state and its interaction with other social actors, market and individuals – from a strong state preoccupied with the welfare of its citizens, to a hybrid or network state concerned with the governance of risk (Beck, 1992). Second, it argues that a key point of change lies in the question of knowledge production and its location in society, in social coalitions of experts, scientists, and citizens (Wynne, 1996, Callon et al., 2009), a shift also described as a shift from technocratic mode 1 societies, to reflexive and interactive mode 2 knowledge societies (Nowotny et al., 2001). Both these arguments are problematic (and arguably themselves future visions of the present), but they speak to tendencies clearly present in the future field, first, in terms of the changing nature of the means of future governance, and second, in terms of the knowledge production around futures and the transformations of futurology or futures studies as a scientific activity.

A quick look at the contemporary future landscape (Andersson, 2008) makes it clear that the future governance of the contemporary state has changed significantly in recent decades. In the period from the 1970s onwards, which sees the emergence of means such as PPB and New Public Management, we witness changes also in the institutions charged with the future (Bezès 2009, Hood, 2000). In several countries, for instance France, public bodies previously devoted to planning and foresight (the Commissariat au Plan) have been replaced by bodies or agencies for strategy or risk analysis such as the Centre d'Analyse Strategique (Tireira, 2007). In other countries (the Netherlands, Sweden) institutions for futures studies have remained in place, but the content of their work appears to have changed, as an early emphasis on descriptions of future change has been replaced by more communicative processes, with reports, for instance, on national identity (WRR). Meanwhile, the demise of planning seems to have gone hand in hand with the rise to prominence of other technologies of future control, such as the proliferation of foresight as a policy tool on the national, European, and global level. In the UK, it was the Thatcher and New Labour era that saw the creation of a big government programme, Foresight UK, to deal with future issues of new technologies and innovation policy. European integration has also led to the rise of large scale foresight processes as an instrument of deliberation around common European futures in key fields of technology or in the process of enlargement (Loveridge, 2007). We can even witness, post 1989, a second wave of creation of futures institutes in Eastern Europe, where such institutes have had an important role in the process of transition. Some of these institutes are clear continuations of futures studies conducted in academies of science under communism. In Prague, the Prognostiks Institute, with roots deep in the Soviet planning system, became the platform of the ideas of the Chicago boys (oral information from Jacques Rupnik: Bockman, 2002).

We can thus not deduce that activities of future governance have somehow ended with the end of planning, but rather, we need to understand how contemporary societies attempt to know and govern the

future, and how contemporary forms of future governance reflect claims of predictability and control. The activity outlined above begs the question, how does the use of foresight today differ from the way that it was used in public administrations in the more immediate post war period?

Arguably, these changes in rationalities of future governance interact with transformations of the future as a scientific object, and with the way that futures studies and futurists have become a form of global future expertise in recent decades. Today, futures studies are an established academic activity, usually situated in business schools or management studies. There are world congresses for professional futurists, and futures studies are a policy tool for processes of global governance such as the UN Millennium Goals. Processes of scientification and professionalisation seem indeed to have replaced 1970s controversies around the future as science or utopia. But what is the role of such future experts in society? Predictive knowledge is arguably today part of a futures market place, in which future visions, scenarios, and the tools with which to realize them are the products. But who sells them, and who buys them? How does future knowledge travel from such actors, consultants and experts, into public bodies where they become elements of new social futures?

Answering these questions, thereby shedding light on transitions in future governance over time would be an important contribution, and challenge, to the social science literature on changing modes of governance. Particularly, it would permit us to problematize the central idea of a rupture from societies of planning, to societies of risk that underpins this literature. Indeed, if we look again at the history of future governance laid out in the previous pages, then it becomes apparent that the institutionalization of foresight as a means of governance is a paradoxical phenomena already from its genesis in the 1960s and 1970s. It seems, on the one hand, to represent a peak in ambitions of control and social engineering by extending the reach of planning into the future. On the other, the shift from planning for the present, to planning for the medium and long term was itself indicative of a shift in post war governmentalities. The interest in foresight had to do with the realization of the limits to planning in terms of dealing with emerging problems such as unintended developments in increasingly complex political systems, negative consequences of previously implemented decisions, a fundamental shift from industrial to postindustrial societies. It stemmed from advances made in planning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the availability, for instance, of increasingly sophisticated econometric models and planning tools such as computer simulation, systems analysis, or cybernetics, which permitted prediction and created an illusion of future control. However, the importance of these techniques was the way that they seemed to create order to complexity, allow for the scientific calculation of uncertainty and risk, provide a basis for the coordination and evaluation of complex and potentially ungovernable social systems. In other words, systems of future governance sprang out of mentalities of planning – but they also seem to be at the origin of the emergence of modern forms of governance such as the governance of uncertainty, complexity, and risk, and as such, to be carriers of changing governmentalities in the present (Dean, 2009). A historical study that can point to the origins of contemporary discourses and technologies of future governance, and then connect these origins with a careful study of changing objectives, discourses and ideas over time, can explain how gradual transitions in governance came about and the role that this played in changing the futures of post war Europe.

Originality of the research project

FUTUREPOL promises to open up a new field of inquiry around the political history of the future. The core contribution of such a field is to give a new dimension to political history through the integration of sources and actors that it has so far not taken an interest in, and through the focus on struggles over futures as a relevant form of political conflict in contemporary societies. The reason future struggles are a central form of political struggle is that they concern the organization and direction of society. The future is an inherently normative social problem, and governing the future is necessarily a question, also, of governing the realm of social expectation, hope, and acceptance (Adam, 2005). Conflicts over future visions and over systems for future control concern the question of the itinerary of social development and over who decides over change. We can see this in the scientific as well as in the political field. Controversies around futurology concerned the futures that at each time seemed open to society – hence the presence in the future field of the big political debates of the post war period on technocracy, on the convergence of the two world systems, on the shift from industrial to post industrial societies, on individualization and value change, on problems of transition, democratization and marketisation. Of course, to their present, these phenomena were not historical, but future possibilities and thus potentially changeable. A political history of the future must take into account the issue of what futures appear, at a given point in time, as open and malleable, and which futures appear as closed and beyond the scope of politics (this is what Reinhart Koselleck called the *horizon of expectation*). Can we, by tracing the circulation of ideas and the way these are brought into politics understand this as a social and political process of the opening or closing of certain futures? A political

history of the future seeks to conceptualise the process of futures creation as one that is not determined by the course of history or by economic, sociological or technological factors, but as a social process in which futures are the outcome of actors who manage to establish dominant ideas about future itineraries, why they are more likely to occur than others, and what makes them scientifically relevant or politically legitimate.

Understanding this process, however, is of an interest that goes beyond political history because it speaks directly to emerging work in several disciplines. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in questions to do with futures production and prediction in disciplines such as history, particularly global and environmental history (Warde-Sorlin, 2009), in sociology (Adam, 2005), around anticipations of technology (Brown, 2003). The project will contribute to these emerging debates by outlining an historical understanding of how futures have changed over the post war period, and by constructing an interdisciplinary field of inquiry which focuses on the future as politics.

Particularly, the project draws on three different strands in history, sociology and political science – transnational history, science studies and the literature on modes of governance. In history, a recent wave of studies has marked a shift from historiographies anchored in narratives of the evolution of the nation state towards perspectives on *histoire croisee*, transnational and global history (Zimmerman, 2006). Such studies have focused on historicisation, on bringing out historical patterns of present controversies or problems, usually related to cultural or scientific phenomena, and often with a focus on the circulation of ideas, and on transnational networks in which ideas circulate and are negotiated between the national and the global level. These studies can help us analyse the process in which ideas of the future spread in transnational networks and societies of futurists, networks that were sometimes in direct proximity to international organizations such as the mentioned Club of Rome, UNESCO, or the United Nations. Methodologically, these studies have shown how transnational networks are constituted, act as global epistemic communities and negotiators of national and global interest (Kott, 2008). Recent studies in global history have made the case for transnational social movements as significant actors during the Cold War, in terms of establishing forms of cooperation and challenging the status quo (Evangelista, 1999). These are important insights, and FUTUREPOL takes them further, by showing that the future itself is a central arena of transnational action.

This shift towards global history stands in close communication with developments in science studies. Science studies have been particularly successful in demonstrating the complexity of the process of knowledge creation and the way that science functions as a social process (Shapin, 1994; Latour, 2005). We can borrow methodologically from the way that science studies have laid out the process by which ‘natural’ objects are transformed into ‘scientific’ objects in order to understand the process in which also the future becomes an object of science and politics, but we need to stress the limits of science studies in terms of seeing science as a source of controversy and social contestation, but disregard politics almost completely. FUTUREPOL seeks to show how scientific ideas are translated into politics, the role of social movements and political actors in accepting or rejecting science, and how predictive technologies interact with different political systems in creating systems of control. It is thus not primarily concerned with the material objects of the technologies of anticipation or prediction (while it uses them as part of the methodological analysis) – but with how these reflect particular ideas of the future and how they are used or not used by political actors. This is a way of bringing core insights of science studies into a political history perspective. Such a perspective is clearly different to much of the emerging works around the activity of prediction in history and STS, which are devoted to the origins of predictive models around natural resources, economy, population, climate (Dahan Dalmedico, 2007; Hartmann, 2010), but not to the future as a political field.

The third strand that the project draws from is the literature on changing modes of governance. We have already mentioned some of the problems with the governance literature, particularly in the way that parts of it normatively assumes that the shift from state centered societies of planning to network or knowledge societies has, first of all, taken place, and secondly, that new modes of governance are somehow more reflexive and open-ended. However, key studies of the changing nature of public power have brought out the role played in modern systems of governance by the instruments (audits, standards, foresight processes), and shown that these instruments can have the double function of relocating responsibility to citizens and markets, and setting in place new forms of bureaucratic control (Lascoumes-Legales 2007). Governmentality studies have seen such technologies of governance as a form of power over selves and subjectivities (Dean 2009). It is clear, from history, that the future has subjects (Graf 2009), and arguably, a core element of predictive technologies is precisely the attempt to govern the social world including subjects and identities. Understanding the role of predictive technologies past and present would be a core contribution to this literature.

If we tie the circulation of ideas surrounding the future to the development of forms of institutions for future governance as well as to the political usages of predictive technologies, then we have established a bridge between recent developments in history and ongoing debates in the social sciences. This will allow us

to connect the highly empirical studies of future discourses and their significance in different political contexts intended in the case studies, to a theoretical argument on the nature of future governance and the way that contemporary societies deal with and manage conflict over the long term itinerary of society. In sum, the projects novelty resides in its interdisciplinary perspective and in the way that it attempts to tie a study of futures past with futures present, by addressing a number of questions that are empirically groundbreaking but also derive their importance from being set in a wide context which will allow us to identify key changes in future governance across time and space.

Methodology and operationalisation

The project ambitions are admittedly large. However, the project does not intend to study the context outlined above in its totality. I plan, rather, to bring together scholar around four studies which will make it possible to shed light on these big questions while remaining on a detailed level of analysis. The intended studies are outlined below. While they require slightly different methodological approaches and profiles, the common methodological frame of FUTUREPOL departs in the interdisciplinary perspective outlined above, and aims to analyse the process in which the future becomes an object of governance. The methodology thus follows from the hypothesis that the transformation of nebulous and rebellious future matter into something that can be governed and steered is a social, cultural and political process in which the discourses, ideas and networks of certain actors are crucial, and in which political institutions and technologies of governance matter, too. We therefore need to trace the networks of futurists, the ideas they put forward and how they spread, the key controversies about the future that made up these networks and established frontiers between rivaling groups, and how these ideas made it into politics and gave birth to means of future governance.

A first step in the research strategy is thus devoted to the *circulation of ideas*, and specifically to the way that futurists' ideas reflect notions of knowability and governability, claims to predictability and control, epistemological principles of how a good futurist should approach the future, calls to science, precision, truth and facticity. We need to look at what futurists did, what and where they published, how they organized, the methodologies and technologies that they devised. How did they interact with the scientific arena, in order to establish futurology as a discipline? How did they attempt to create public legitimacy around it?

A second step focuses on analyzing the *institutionalization* of the future and how different political systems shape a new field of political intervention around the future. We need to understand the political motivations behind the creation of particular future institutions East and West, and the role that these institutions had in the political system as a whole. We need to understand the role played, possibly, by different national political cultures and approaches to the production of public knowledge (Jasanoff, 2005), and we need to understand how different political systems made use of future knowledge.

A third step is devoted to the uses of *technologies* of future governance, and to the question of how predictive technologies sought to accommodate change and, or, achieve control during the Cold War period, during the process of transition, up to the present day. How do the motivations around them, their content and their usage reflect changing notions of knowability and governability over time? Are predictive technologies reflections of future scenarios or are they also engines of certain futures (see McKenzie, 2006)?

The studies conducted by the team members follow two basic criteria: they cover the whole post war period until the present, and they situate the individual study in the perspective of international circulation of ideas and the future as a global field. Obviously, this can only be done to a certain extent. The project does not attempt to cover a gradual evolution over time, but rather it seeks to identify key historical dynamics behind shifts in knowability and governability, and it does not try to cover a global arena, but to understand the way that national and global futures come together in specific forms of future governance.

These studies are,

- a. A study of the transnational networks of futurists and the global circulation of future ideas.

Case study a is based on the historical analysis of the circulation of ideas in the networks of futurists from immediately after World War II to the present day. It will retrace and reconstruct, using historical

methodology around extensive archival work and oral sources, and sociological network analysis, the conflicts and controversies that led to the organization of competing networks of futurists. It will analyse the way that these networks came together around certain epistemological principles and technologies, and how these spread in the global field. The origin of these networks in political and cultural elites as well as different scientific disciplines will be considered, and how they were funded and sustained. The study will trace debates on futurology in key scientific journals (*Journal of Technological Forecasting*, the *International Social Science Journal*, *Futures*), and reconstruct the way that futurists' ideas were received in public debates (through interviews and analysis of documentary material such as newspapers, TV, study circle materials). From the early 1970s on, the study will focus on the construction of two separate world organizations for the future, the World Future Society in Washington and the World Futures Studies Federation, and the futures that they produced. In the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, the study particularly seeks to understand how these organizations functioned as the basis for a new kind of global future expertise and how futurists became active on a global market place for future knowledge. It will work with interviews, published reports, newsletters etc, but it also incorporates an experimental study using the software developed at the Medialab at Sciences Po, which permits tracing networks and forms of interaction on the Web.

- b. A comparative study of the institutionalization of foresight in a number of countries in Western Europe (France, the Netherlands, Sweden, UK).

The study focuses on the institutionalization of foresight and futures studies in a number of Western governments and attempts to analyse the process in which the future was transformed into a problem of governance. It will focus on the debates, in parliaments and social science councils, of the uses of future studies, and on its nature as science, applied science, policy or planning. These debates are accessible through the analysis of public records, parliamentary and public debates, and the archives of these particular institutions. The study will analyse, moreover, the organizational setup of these institutions and the way that it reflects different weight given to scientific expertise, policy making and public participation and different notions of how knowledge about the future could be construed in order to gain social legitimacy, but also different perceptions of the future as public or private interest, as a question of democracy, bureaucratic efficiency or political economy. This study will analyse directives, staff, modus operandi, where de facto these institutions were placed, in direct proximity of cabinets, in bodies of planning, in academia, who controlled their composition, their constitutional, administrative, and financial status. It needs to pay attention to the role of national institutional legacies and political cultures of post war welfare states. It will take into account the content of their activities, i.e. the future questions they addressed and the debates they produced. Is their work directed at policy makers, at the public debate, at the scientific community? Finally, also through the analysis of parliamentary materials, institutional archives, published reports and interviews with key policy makers and civil servants, the study will seek to identify major shifts in the setup and positioning of these institutions in the political landscape over time, as well as in the content of their work, the futures addressed and produced, and analyse how such institutional shifts reflect shifting notions of future knowability and governability.

- c. A study of the role of future governance in the construction of the East West divide, and in the transformation of tools of future governance post 1989.

This study will look at the means and technologies of future governance across the East West. It seeks to analyse the political usages of futures planning and futures studies in creating systems of control East and West, through a particular focus on the role of predictive technologies. The study will place a particular focus on the late 1960s, as well as on the transformation of systems of planning after 1989. It is based on extensive studies of archival materials and published reports, it seeks to complement this with interviews. It will retrace the instruments – computer modeling, Delphi techniques, scenario building, indicators, participatory workshops – that were deployed in future governance East and West. How were these designed to accommodate or oppose change, incorporate or reject social conflict and critique? How did usages as well as motivations around these instruments change over time? Which futures did they carry? The study will be a comparative study of the US (the RAND Corporation) France (The Commissariat au Plan, CAS) and Czechoslovakia (the Prognostik Institute). Finally, the study will trace the origins of new instruments such as strategy analysis or risk governance in the 1990s and 2000s in search for new technologies of anticipation and control in these same institutions, analyse the political rationalities around them and how they are used

in modern systems of governance. This requires looking into standards and norms for strategic analysis and risk governance as well as to how such policy tools have spread in the global policy arena in these decades.

- d. A study of the development, in the period from the late 1980s, of foresight as a policy tool on the national and European level.

This study investigates the emergence of foresight as a central policy tool in the present, which aims to prepare the ground for future developments particularly around economic and technological issues such as innovation policy, biotechnologies, ICT and the knowledge based economy. One of the first attempts to use foresight as a form of public policy was Margaret Thatcher's creation of Foresight UK, a foresight exercise which has since become a policy model for other national foresight processes as well as for the European level. Foresight is often quoted, in the literature on governance, as an example of a network driven, interactive policy tool and as central to anticipating innovation and dealing with controversy particularly in science policy (Loveridge, 2007; Lyall, 2005). More recently, foresight is a tool also for the creation of social futures and so its use has spread from the field of technological innovation into other arenas. Let us ask the naïve question of what foresight is. How is it expected to influence the future? What forms of knowledge and expertise is it based upon? How does it reflect public and private interest? In what ways does it anticipate future events and what future scenarios does it project? Which actors, social groups, and interests does it include? Answering these questions require tracing the motivations of the Thatcher and ensuing New Labour governments, the later spread of foresight as a form of policy learning between European countries, and the role of the EU in promoting such processes in member countries as well as on the EU level. This study will be based on key policy documents, memos on methodology and scenario construction, interviews, but also participatory observations of what happens in foresight processes. Particularly, such observations can bring out the process in which objectives are identified, diverging interests dealt with, stakeholders produced, and forms of consensus forged.

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