

UNESCO CHAIR IN ANTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP & FUTURES CAPABILITIES:

Highlights 2022-2024



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The UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme mobilises expertise of higher education and research institutions to address the interdependent challenges of today's increasingly complex world. A UNESCO Chair partners with UNESCO to advance knowledge and practice in an area of common priority, in this case relating to advancing societal futures literacy and foresight capacities. This paper presents select highlights from the official mid-term progress reporting of the UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Leadership & Futures Capabilities.

The UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Leadership & Futures Capabilities has integrated futures literacy and foresight into the curricula of secondary and tertiary educational institutions, including the Parsons School of Design, the Danish National School of Performing Arts, and Niels Brock Copenhagen Business College. It has consolidated anticipatory methods into graduate courses at Aarhus University and provided professional community training for the Asian Development Bank, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Network Partnerships for Future Generations in Africa, among others. This includes a series of open courses, training sessions, and workshops engaging more than 500 participants from different communities, educational institutions, and business sectors.

The Chair has contributed to **academic publications** in journals such as *Futures & Foresight Science* and participated in developing foresight programs, including the Future Generations Forum where the Chair contributed to [the Wales Protocol for Future Generations](#).

To further **anticipatory governance**, the Chair has illuminated futures concerns, generally and politically, of Danish citizens through the development of a national survey: the [Futures Barometer](#). It has also been advocating for capability training initiatives in the public sector and among multilateral organisations and is preparing for the UN Summit of the Future, for which it has received special accreditation to participate. The Chair has also assumed a board position in the Network of Institutions and Leaders for Future Generations.

The Chair has hosted, organised, and participated in over 30 **public and civic engagements** and civil society mobilisations, including a [Futures Philanthropy](#) initiative in collaboration with Philea - Philanthropy Europe Association, which extends the reach of futures literacy and foresight into philanthropy and civil society.

ANTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP
& FUTURES CAPABILITIES

EDUCATION, DISSEMINATION, AND TRAINING

A

APPLIED RESEARCH ON FORESIGHT AND ANTICIPATION

B

ENHANCING ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

C

DEMOCRATISING FUTURES THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

D

THE FOUR PILLARS OF ANTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP & FUTURES CAPABILITIES

A

EDUCATION, DISSEMINATION, AND TRAINING

The Chair has successfully integrated futures literacy and foresight into educational curricula, professional training, and community training.

Selected Highlights:

- Launched the Danish hub of Teach the Future, integrating futures thinking into Danish education.
- Introduced anticipatory processes and methods in courses at Aarhus University, Parsons School of Design Paris, the Danish National School of Performing Arts, IT University of Copenhagen, the National Film School of Denmark, Sino Danish Center Beijing, Niels Brock Copenhagen Business College, and Akademiet for Talentfulde Unge.
- Developed futures literacy capabilities for over 150 cultural leaders, educators, and experts in Denmark, in collaboration with the Danish Library Association, Association of Danish Museums, and UNESCO ASP School Network.
- Conducted upskilling programs in futures and foresight for 200 employees at the Asian Development Bank and the Office for the General Council in Manila, Philippines.
- Offered Futures Thinking and Creativity courses in partnership with Hyper Island, focusing on innovative futures thinking.
- Facilitated a course for the network Partnerships for Future Generations in Africa to promote futures literacy in the region.
- Introduced futures literacy in education at UNESCO ASP Network's annual meetings at UN City, leading to a partnership with the National Coordinator to expand futures thinking nationwide.
- Received philanthropic funding to create open source educational material for students in primary school, including the comic "Aeon & Mewtronix - A Futures Tale" in collaboration with Sohail Inayatullah, UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies, accompanied by a teacher's guide with exercises (publishing in Q3 2024).

B

APPLIED RESEARCH ON FORESIGHT AND ANTICIPATION

The Chair has contributed to academic publications and participated in conferences and futures forums.

Selected Highlights:

- [“The Place and Limits of Futures Analysis: Strategy Under Uncertainty 25 Years On.”](#) *Futures & Foresight Science Journal* (November 2023). This academic paper discusses the levels of uncertainty in situation analysis and its implications for futures and foresight methods.
- [“Business Crisis Management in Wartime: Insights from Ukraine.”](#) *Journal of Contingency and Crisis Management* (October 2023). Co-authored with contributors from UCU Business School in Lviv, Ukraine, this paper explores various crisis management techniques and the quality of foresight during wartime.
- “Foresight, Strategy, and Impact.” [In Scenario Planning and Futures Thinking](#), edited by Wright G. and Crawford M., Section 4, “Validation Impact and Evaluating Performance.” Elgar Publishing (2024). This book chapter examines the evolving relationship between strategic foresight and the broader field of strategy.
- Contributed to “Cultivating Futures Thinking in Museums” edited by Kristin Alford (Routledge, 2024), where Chapter 2 highlights recent advances in museology, focusing on interactive, futures-centric approaches and the role of museums in enhancing community futures literacy. Co-authored by Nicklas Larsen and Loes Damhof, UNESCO Chair in Futures Literacy in Higher Education.
- The European Space Policy Institute (ESPI) and the Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies (CIFS) collaboratively conducted a foresight analysis on the [Future of Space Exploration in Europe in 2040-2060](#).

Ongoing Research:

- “The Role of Artificial Intelligence Visioning in Furthering Participatory Foresight,” with colleagues from the Aarhus Centre for Hybrid Intelligence (CHI) to understand the impact of AI visioning on community participatory foresight processes.
- “Theory and Practice in Negotiating the Future,” exploring the intersection of foresight and negotiation processes, including contests and collaborations aimed at shaping the future.



ENHANCING ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

The Chair has focused on national and international advocacy and mobilisation to introduce and integrate futures and intergenerational fairness into policy and governance.

Selected Highlights:

- Fostered national discourse on future generations through media and partnerships, highlighting the need for long-term political representation.
- Joined the [Network of Institutions and Leaders for Future Generations](#) (NiFG) as a member organisation holding a seat on the board.
- Contributed to the 2023 FARSIGHT publication on safeguarding future generations.
- Developed the Futures Barometer, a national survey exploring Danes' attitudes towards the future, sparking discussions across political and media platforms about anticipatory governance and political representation.
- Mobilised national and international support for the UN Summit of the Future.
- Formed a Danish coalition with UN Global Compact, Globalt Fokus, the Danish Parliament's 2030 Panel, and WELA - Wellbeing Economy Lab to advocate for future generations' representation and implement anticipatory leadership in public administration.
- Joined the Danish Wellbeing Economy Alliance to push for future generations' representation in law.
- Contributed to the Wales Protocol for Future Generations, providing a framework and proposals for how to institutionally implement futures representation and engagement.
- Delivered capability training with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Collaborated with The International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to initiate a polycrisis 'think-and-do-tank' in Europe to enhance anticipatory humanitarian efforts amid global crises.
- Awarded special accreditation by the UN to attend the general assembly during the UN Summit of the Future 2024.

D DEMOCRATISING FUTURES THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Chair has integrated futures capabilities resources into public engagements and civil society mobilisation. It has led initiatives to bring anticipatory leadership and futures thinking into philanthropy.

Selected Highlights:

- Hosted online and free [Futures Seminars](#) on topics such as the impact of political decisions on future generations, futures thinking in public policy, and design's role in shaping the future.
- Partnered with Future Days Festival (Lisbon) to democratise futures thinking and address urban challenges in Lisbon.
- Participated in talks, panels, and moderations at events like the annual Danish Culture meeting and Democracy Festival where the Chair moderated UNICEF and LEGO on competencies needed for youth to navigate complexity.
- Created [The Future Mirror](#), an open-source AI tool with Centralbibliotekerne, Innovation Lab, and AI Artist Andreas Refsgaard to create future-oriented prototypes and artefacts.
- Launched the [Futures Philanthropy](#) initiative with Philea to integrate anticipatory capabilities with philanthropic efforts, aiming to democratise futures thinking in philanthropy and civic society.
- Mobilising local actors across educational and cultural spheres to engage in, celebrate, and participate in futures activities during UNESCO World Futures Day on December 2nd.

The Chair in Media

- Amalie Kønigsfeldt, "[Ny rapport om filantropiens fremtid: Konservatisme er den største risiko](#)", May 7th 2024, Fundats
- Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies, "[Ny Epinions-undersøgelse: Danske vælgere er træt af politikernes kortsigtethed](#)", December 18th 2023, Via Ritzau
- Jens Høyer Jensen, "[Danskerne mener, at politikerne tænker for kortsigtet. Skal vi få os en fremtidsminister?](#)", December 18th 2023, Zetland
- Philea, "[Philea Launches Futures Philanthropy Initiative](#)", April 24th 2023, Philea
- Jesper Knudsen, "[Lærer på Bornholm: God ide at lære eleverne 'fremtidskompetencer'](#)", June 15th 2022, Folkeskolen.dk

THE ROAD AHEAD

To ensure a futures-prepared society, it is imperative that anticipatory leadership and futures capabilities gain widespread adoption across education, governance, research, and community engagements. The UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Leadership & Futures Capabilities remains committed to systemically enhancing futures capabilities by continually advancing research on futures, foresight, and responsible business, expanding educational initiatives, fostering greater public engagement, and advocating for integrative policy development to build resilient and anticipatory societies.

Over the next two years, the Chair will enhance futures capabilities in Denmark through targeted initiatives. Staff in 30 libraries will be trained in futures to lead local climate actions, building on the alliance and alumni of cultural leaders engaged in earlier trainings.

The commitment to integrating futures literacy into the Danish educational curriculum remains steadfast. The Chair is actively pursuing additional support to ensure the continuation and expansion of educational endeavours, tying futures capabilities to the well-being of youth. Through a strengthening relationship with the national UNESCO ASP Network, the Chair is planning training programs and repeated facilitation at the annual meeting.

Leveraging the outcomes of the UN Summit of the Future, the Chair aims to boost local capabilities and support futures-oriented policies in response to the Pact for the Future and the Declaration for Future Generations. As part of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, the goal is to influence 2027 government policy to represent future generations in Danish law, advancing educational and policy initiatives for a sustainable and inclusive future.

Continuous efforts to merge futures and philanthropy will support a sustainable, futures-prepared, and anticipatory philanthropic sector, exploring the future of impact measures and value creation. The Chair will create a new, practice-oriented framework for how to approach futures and foresight based projects and is planning a conference about future generations and intergenerational fairness in Denmark. Additionally, the Chair will continue to fundraise to support Teach the Future, Futures Negotiation research, and implementation initiatives.

WHAT IS A UNESCO CHAIR?

A UNESCO Chair is a collaborative initiative between a higher education or research institution and UNESCO to advance knowledge and practice in a specified area. The Chairs create connections between academia, civil society, local communities, research, and policy-making. Their projects and activities aim to stimulate public intellectual debate, ethical reflection, standard setting, scientific progress, knowledge sharing, and education, all with the goal of promoting international cooperation.

THE UNESCO CHAIR IN ANTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP & FUTURES CAPABILITIES

The UNESCO Chair in Anticipatory Leadership & Futures Capabilities has been hosted by Aarhus University (AU) and the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) since August 2022. It is chaired by Dr. Adam Gordon (AU) and co-chaired by Nicklas Larsen (CIFS) in close collaboration with Jonas Mikkelsen, Director (CIFS) and with great support and involvement from extended teams in both institutions and its partners.

The Chair works to address the societal and global challenges of tomorrow and foster a culture of futures thinking in support of responsible leadership and development in Denmark and beyond. It engages in research, teaching, training, and policy and public engagement activities to spread methodological understanding of how people and institutions can use anticipatory processes to better guide actions in the present.

Aarhus University is one of Denmark's premier research and teaching institutions. As Chairholder, the university contributes to the expansion of the field of futures studies through teachings and academic publications that furthers the creation and dissemination of knowledge about foresight and anticipatory leadership.

The Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies is a leading independent, non-profit think tank, with more than 50 years of global experience working across the public, private, academic, and civic sectors as well as with the general public. As co-Chair, CIFS leads projects and initiatives to promote futures thinking in education, professional capability development, public policy, governance, and civic engagement.

THE CHAIR ENGAGES A MISSION DRIVEN PORTFOLIO OF INTERCONNECTED PURPOSES

EDUCATION, DISSEMINATION AND TRAINING through curriculum development, educational courses, electives and resources for students, educators, the public, practitioners, organisations, business leaders, and governments.

RESEARCH ON FUTURES FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS through knowledge creation about and documentation on anticipatory leadership and futures capabilities, to support and promote their dissemination and widespread adoption.

ENHANCING ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE by promoting the adoption of futures, foresight and long term thinking, and futures related capacity building in governments, multilateral organisations, and the public sector.

DEMOCRATISING FUTURES THROUGH PUBLIC AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT by making resources and knowledge accessible to the public as well as promoting and engaging the public in discussions and experiences about futures through arts, culture, and civic engagement.

DEFINITIONS

ANTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP directs leaders' attention to anticipating changes, challenges and opportunities in the external environment as a basis for decision-making.

FUTURES CAPABILITIES are the skills, tools, and methods that enable individuals or organisations to effectively anticipate, explore, and prepare for future developments.

CONTACT

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Photo, Dmitry Kostyukov (2023) for Parsons Paris at UNESCO World Futures Day in Paris, December 2023.

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