



Futures Literacy Norway is an informal collective of researchers, consultants and policy makers involved in innovation and leadership for the future

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Policy learning and leadership for the future

The reorientation of research and innovation policy towards societal challenges has led to a need for futures literacy in policy making and leadership.

The Research Council of Norway, The University of Stavanger, The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education and the company Fremtenkt are experimenting with new types of anticipation practices and leadership.

UNESCO
FUTURES LITERACY SUMMIT
2020



Lofoten, Norway , Photo: Getty

A reorientation towards societal challenges

Per Koch, NIFU

There has been a significant reorientation of research and innovation policy development worldwide. Politicians and policy makers are increasingly making decisions on the basis of what is needed “out there”, instead of thinking of science and industrial innovation as engines of growth that will deliver wealth and prosperity by themselves, as long as there is sufficient funding.

The strong attention towards environmental and societal challenges – exemplified by the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals – has contributed to this reorientation.

Stuck in the past

However, policy makers worldwide, including in Norway, are struggling with finding ways to meet this reorientation with appropriate measures and instruments.



Per Koch is coordinating Futures Literacy Norway's delivery to the UNESCO Summit. Photo: Martin Skulstad

The problem is not that they are unfamiliar with targeted and strategically oriented funding of research and innovation. Norwegian policy makers have long traditions for supporting such programs and instruments, but measures have often been based on a linear understanding of innovation processes: public money is put into the relevant research and innovation institutions and one hopes innovations will materialize!

Many of the major decisions regarding such funding are left to the scientists or the industrialists. Many of them are, after all, active members of the relevant expert committees, boards and decision-making institutions.

The overall ideological framework has been that the market knows best, or that scientists will produce the best results if left to their own devices/decide by themselves.

The fundamental problem with this “fund and forget” regime is that it does not create the conditions for open deliberation about the potential for negative effects resulting from innovation. As the science and innovation system is understood as something that exists outside the economy, delivering ideas, products and innovation into society, it becomes easy to think of ethics, responsibility and sustainability as factors that should only be considered after the product, process or service has been delivered. By that time, however, it may be too late.

Several kinds of lock-in

Furthermore, the ministries and agencies have established practices based on New Public Management approaches. Management by objectives is not detrimental to challenge oriented policy making in and for itself. The goal is, after all, to give institutions more freedom to make strategic decisions when needed. Still, there is a tendency for governance to target existing indicators, statistics that were established to measure the effectiveness of a system set up a long time ago. They were set up to solve the problems of the past.

All these factors lead to several kinds of lock-in. The systems for funding science and innovation reward those who have already built the capacity for “scientific excellence” or “world leading innovation”. They are often very good at solving problems within and for the existing system, but do not necessarily deliver new solutions to new problems.

Nor do they give input to the kind of systemic change that is needed when you face unsustainable systems of production, consumption and trade or oppressive beliefs causing social marginalization and inequality.



What's next for Oslo? Photo: Leo Patrizi

Furthermore, the understandable focus on predictability and responsibility found among civil servants does not necessarily lead to creativity and innovation. Their need to deliver within their own area of responsibility – their silo – makes it hard to ensure the necessary interaction between various policy areas and institutions. We see a similar tendency in science, where the gospel of publish or perish weakens transdisciplinary research.

We need creative leaders

This fragmentation of the decision processes also makes it hard to develop creative, innovative and future oriented leaders within academia, industry and in policy institutions. There must be a balance between predictability and creativity, for sure, but these machine-like models of learning and production tips the balance in favor of predictability. There is too little room for play, experimentation and thinking outside the box.

This makes it much harder for all of them to handle the unexpected, being those concrete challenges – like Covid-19 – or big systemic shifts, like climate change and the polarization of politics.

Insight into the system as a whole

Policies, science and innovation are systems which are set up to prepare for the future. After all, science and innovation are about producing new “things” and policy makers are supposedly to work towards making the world a better place for all, in the future.

Still, scientists and industrialists rarely reflect on the wider effects their inventions may have on society as a whole. Policy makers have a tendency of seeing the future as a better version of the past. Prognoses and forecasting are useful tools, but they are not good at predicting the unpredictable.

The coronavirus pandemic has made 2020 a challenging year for all of us, but one good thing may come out of it: an increasing awareness about the need for new ways of addressing the future. The Covid-19 crisis could have been predicted. Indeed, it was predicted. But the lack of preparedness for the scale of impact that the pandemic has inflicted, may legitimize the development of futures literacy in policy development. This kind of creative learning may be key when facing unpredictable crises and challenges.

In this newsletter you will find examples of how we are using anticipatory thinking and practices to help policy makers and leaders to use the future in learning, innovation and social transformation.

Leadership: Let's go EPICally MAD!

The act of leadership and innovation is about Making A Difference.

Professor Rune Todnem By, University of Stavanger



Rune By, Photo: University of Stavanger

YOU can provide leadership simply by being MAD, and all that is required to get going is a purpose in life. In fact, the notion of purpose is at the very core of the leadership philosophy I coin EPICally MAD.

It hasn't as much been actively developed as emerged through conversations with students, practitioners and colleagues, and it all started when delivering a 30 minutes leadership development session at the Dutch organization NVVB's annual conference a few years back. What I thought would be a catchy headline (We need MAD leaders!) drew more attention and created more buzz and energy than I could ever have planned or hoped for.

People were literally queuing to discuss how to be MAD after the session – and the discussions started then are still ongoing and spreading. The seeds planted have since been further developed, particularly in conversations with my good friend and colleague Dr. Ben Kuipers (Director of Leiden Leadership

Centre, Leiden University) as part of the philosophy being adopted by the Public Leadership Foundation.

This emerging philosophy consists of three parts presented in order of development: (1) MAD; (2) EPIC; (3) ally.

I'm a strong believer in leadership being about delivering on purpose together. Leadership is a verb – not a noun. Furthermore, I believe in full leadership equality: not only is it something we can all do – it is something we all have a responsibility to contribute to.

In many ways, the act of leadership is about Making A Difference – and we can all be MAD. This is not a moulding process, but one of finding and developing our own individual MADness. It could be as small as helping, complementing, or challenging someone; asking someone for advice or the question no one else dares to ask; or simply step up and make a decision when no one else is ready to.

It could be to give up your seat to someone who needs it more than you; not to litter; or to use a reusable water bottle or coffee mug – the accumulated effect can be substantial. We can



Snapshot from Rune's TED talk video EPICally MAD

all Make A Difference to our family and friends, colleagues, neighborhood, school, city, country, and planet.

On the operational side it is up to every single one of us how MAD we want to be and what that MADness will look like. My personal purpose is to be MAD, and the question is always: Am I MAD enough?



Be who you are best! Photo: Geber89

Rather than seeking to be someone else through subscribing to traditional trait and personality characteristics, the EPIC principles below are designed to help develop our own distinct MADness:

Energy

We all have energy, and our focus should be on how to channel it in an effective and efficient way towards delivering on purpose; identify how to best recharge and stay energized; and energize those around us.

Purpose

A clear purpose in life is not only hypothesised to lead to healthier and longer lives, but also to support individual, group, organizational and institutional fulfillment and success; focus on how to identify and develop such purpose; work towards fulfilling it; all decisions to be linked to purpose.

Identity

Be who you are best – yourself – everyone else is taken; focus on developing your own identity, individuality, potential and opinions; help others to be true to themselves; do not focus on being moulded to fit preconceived leadership skills, traits and characteristics.

Courage

Enhance the courage to be yourself; to contribute to leadership; to ask the questions that need to be asked; to have opinions; to make mistakes and learn from them; and to believe in yourself and those around you.

Last but not least we have the small but powerful word ‘ally’ linking the two abbreviations. According to Oxford Dictionaries, ally (verb) means to ‘Combine or unite a resource or commodity with (another) for mutual benefit’, suggesting that leadership is something we best perform together through the process of interaction.

So, let’s go EPICally MAD together!

Rune Todnem By is Professor of Leadership at University of Stavanger Business School; Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Change Management; and part of the UNESCO Futures Literacy network.

Note: This is an edited extract from the Journal of Change Management 2019 editorial ‘New Year’s Resolution’ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14697017.2019.1565125> . To hear more about being EPICally MAD visit Rune’s TEDx talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nno1faLhoWk>.

Fremtenkt: Laboratory for Sustainable and Democratic Futures



Ragnhild Nabben, photo: Fremtenkt

Fremtenkt starts from the assumption that the transition to sustainability is also an opportunity to create societies that are far better than those we live in today. We work to engage as many people as possible in imagining sustainable solutions for the future.

By Sveinung Sundfør Sivertsen and Ragnhild Nabben, Fremtenkt

Using the futures

Fremtenkt believe that *using the future(s)* is core to realizing the transition to truly sustainable cities and societies.

Specifically, our experience suggests that giving people the opportunity to reflect on their assumptions about the future, together with others, in a non-threatening environment, helps open up a space in which alternative futures suddenly appear possible.

When people start imagining the future as an open space of possibilities – rather than worrying about what the future «will bring» – there is a powerful experience that things could be different, and that they might actually do something to make it different.

This experience serves as a very effective push to get people over the threshold that many of us experience in everyday life, the sense that making any real positive difference in the world is next to impossible. The experience of the future(s) as an open space of possibilities changes our perception, both of what is possible, and of what we, through our collective efforts, might achieve.

With this in mind, and working with the local Office for cultural affairs, Fremtenkt has established a *Laboratory for sustainable and democratic futures* in Åsane, a suburb of Bergen, on the west coast of Norway.



Sveinung Sundfør Sivertsen, Photo: Fremtenkt

The aim of the Lab is to create infrastructure for sustainable, local democracy. By bringing together inhabitants, students and local government officials, Fremtenkt will create a space for collaboration that affords tools and opportunities to generate visions for the futures of Åsane and ideas for specific projects to help realise these futures, as well as allow experimentation with novel means and methods of citizen—government co-creation.

Based on these experiments, we will design methods that can be implemented in other parts of Norway, and ideally serve as

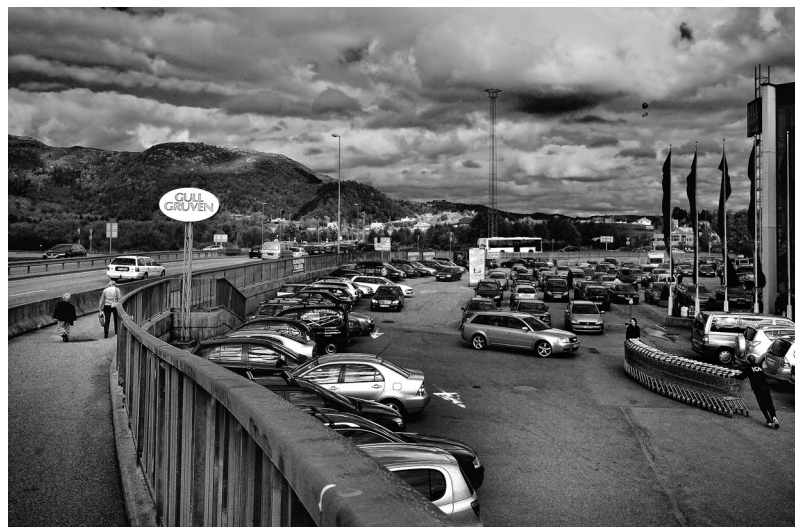
an inspiration to people in other parts of the world who face similar challenges.

Climate and conflicts

The case of Åsane illustrates the potential for conflicts between, on the one hand, ambitious policymakers seeking to reduce climate emissions, and, on the other, inhabitants who feel that the resulting measures impose unfair strictures on their everyday lives.

In Åsane, the expansion of a road toll system aimed at reducing car use caused a popular uproar.

Those opposed to the measure argued that the system put too much of the financial burden of climate adaptation on those who live in areas where they are dependent on cars for transport.



Åsane shopping center, Photo by Arne Halvorsen

There was also a social justice dimension to the protests, since the comparatively richer inhabitants could simply circumvent the toll by buying a second, electric car.

In the local elections of 2019, a single cause party founded to oppose the toll road expansion got almost 17% of the votes, making it the third largest party in Bergen. In parts of Åsane, the party got over 30% of the vote. From the perspective of a lot of people in the suburb, the toll road debacle was just the most recent example of a long history of decisions being made over their heads in the local government offices in the city centre of Bergen.

That said, there is a widely acknowledged need for rethinking the infrastructure and land use in Åsane. Both inhabitants and the local government acknowledge that the area suffers from years of “planning neglect”, the result of which is that the purported centre of Åsane is dominated by roads, parking lots, malls and warehouses, with very little in terms of recreational opportunities or public spaces that you would actually want to spend time in.



Åsane House of Culture, Illustration: Bergen Municipality

People want to see positive change, and the local government recently gave the planning office the task of formulating a plan for the rejuvenation of the central areas of Åsane.

To ensure that this does not become another top-down effort, there must be close collaboration between the local administration and the city's inhabitants.

This collaboration should also, Fremtenkt think, not just be an extension of the existing practice of asking for people's opinion on initiatives already planned or proposed by the local government (or private developers). Doing so leaves too much in the hands of those who frame the problems and the proposed solutions. Instead, citizens should be given the opportunity to figure out what the problems are themselves and suggest their own preferred solutions to these.

This is what Kirsten Paaby and Mikaela Vasstrøm call “reverse participation” (Paaby & Vasstrøm, 2020): Rather than citizens providing input to already-formulated official plans, citizens formulate proposals that officials then have to consider and include when planning.



Such reverse participation is a core principle in the Laboratory for sustainable and democratic futures.

The Lab

The city of Bergen has the stated aim becoming the greenest city in Norway. We can only achieve this by getting everyone who lives here to work together.

Establishing the Lab is an important step in this direction, and the use of «futures» in the name is not coincidental. Fremtenkt plans to leverage precisely the resignation-busting effects of futures thinking in designing engagements for inhabitants and city officials.

We will experiment with a range of methods to help people expand both their understanding of, and ways of using, the future.

We draw our inspiration in part from the movement in futures studies called “Participatory futures”, as well as from the pioneer of public engagement in thinking about the future, Robert Jungk.

We also introduce workshop participants to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and encourage the use of these as a framework for thinking about their own, preferred futures in a regional and global perspective, and to be mindful of the necessary interconnections between the various aspects—economic, social and environmental—of any truly sustainable solution.

Because of restrictions on public gatherings in connection with the corona virus pandemic, we moved a recent engagement with inhabitants and representatives from the local administration onto an online platform. In so doing, we also adapted the Future Workshop method originally developed by Robert Jungk and Norbert Müllert to work in a limited timeframe, and with people sitting at home, rather than next to each other.

Recreating the magic of a Jungkian Future Workshop in an online format is far from trivial, but the potential payoffs are significant.

Both in terms of the possibilities this opens for collaboration across physical distances—on the 25th of November, Fremtenkt hosted academics and practitioners from a number





Bergen, Photo: Sveinung Sivertsen

of countries in an online future workshop on age friendly societies. And in terms of how this could help realise the old ambition of Jungk and Müllert to create «permanent workshop», in effect integrating the radically participatory,

bottom-up vision of citizenship embodied in the Future Workshop into everyday life.

Creative citizenship, creative leadership

The success of the project so far has hinged on the willingness of city officials to step outside their comfort zone and countenance the possibility of a fruitful collaboration with Fremtenkt – a recently established social entrepreneur with, sometimes, wild ideas.

We have been extremely fortunate to work closely with the Office for cultural affairs in Arna and Åsane. The idea for the Lab was developed in dialogue with Director John Kristian Øvrebø and Consultant Aida Rokolj, and Rokolj is a vital sparring partner as we continue to develop and expand the project.

Fremtenkt has also established fruitful collaborations with the Bergen municipality planning office, and the Commissioner for climate, environment and city development. The Lab has received funding from Bergen municipality and the regional government in Vestland.

Promoting citizens who are unafraid to embody a creative form of citizenship requires creative public leaders who are unafraid to meet these initiatives as they are presented, even if this means risking failure or working in untraditional ways.

Fremtenkt know from experience that this kind of creative leadership is not equally distributed in Norwegian public institutions. The government, however, has a stated ambition of furthering public sector innovation by, importantly, fostering a culture of innovation.

We believe that there is much to be learned from how Bergen kommune (the municipality) approaches untraditional collaborations with citizens and private sector entities, and we have therefore taken steps to establish a research collaboration with NIFU, The University of Stavanger and Bergen kommune on the topic of creative leadership to discover, test out and establish best practices that can be implemented in both public and private institutions.

This research is a natural extension of the work already underway in the Laboratory for sustainable and democratic futures, and Fremtenkt are therefore excited also to be part of

a research project headed by Kirsten Paaby and Mikaela Vasstrøm, and funded by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (KMD), which will look into precisely how local public institutions handle the processes of collaboration and co-creation with inhabitants, in Oslo, Stavanger and Bergen.

Fremtenkt are also pursuing research collaborations with civil society entities in Poland, France, Italy, Austria and Germany on the topic of creative citizenship, and the use of online Future Workshop in furthering international citizen



Illustration by Natee127

collaborations and strengthening relationships between people and countries from the bottom up.

In addition to these projects, Fremtenkt are developing a program for high schools teaching sustainability and citizenship together with Fyllingsdalen VGS (a highschool in Bergen), and working to convince the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) to bring Futures Literacy to the unemployed.

References

Paaby, Kirsten & Vasstrøm, Mikaela. (2020) Omvendt deltakelse i lokaliseringen av FNs bærekraftsmål. <https://eduaction.no/publikasjoner/>



From a foresight workshop with Sohail Inayatullah in the Ministry of Education and Research in 2019, Photo P Koch

More Use of the Future in Norwegian Research and Innovation Policy Learning

The activities presented in this newsletter are not the only ones applying the future to research and innovation policy learning.

Senior Adviser Erik Øverland has, for instance, used foresight actively in the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

The Ministry of Local Government and Administration presented several scenarios associated with their recent white paper on innovation in the public sector.

The Research Council of Norway and Innovation Norway have also made active use of foresight, including futures literacy laboratories.

Moreover, professor Andrew Morrison skillfully led the international Anticipation 2019 conference at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design in Norway, which also included sessions of policy learning and development.



Lisa Scordato coordinates the futures literacy work of NIFU in the AFINO Center, Photo: NIFU

AFINO: A network and learning centre for responsible research and innovation in Norway

By Lisa Scordato, NIFU

Innovations capture our imagination, our hopes and our fears. Innovation may spur economic growth and transform societies but are they bringing about the world we want?

Are we directing research and innovation towards desirable goals and a more sustainable future? Are we involving everyone who is affected, and who can contribute towards reaching these goals?

These are some of the critical questions which will be explored in AFINO, a newly established network and learning centre in Norway.

The aim of the centre is to establish broad dialogues and shared commitments to ensure that innovation contributes to a more just, inclusive and sustainable society. It explores how research and innovation may better address future societal challenges through research and learning laboratories.

AFINO organizes activities and events to promote better integration between researchers, the industry, the community and policy makers to build an understanding of responsible innovation in Norway.

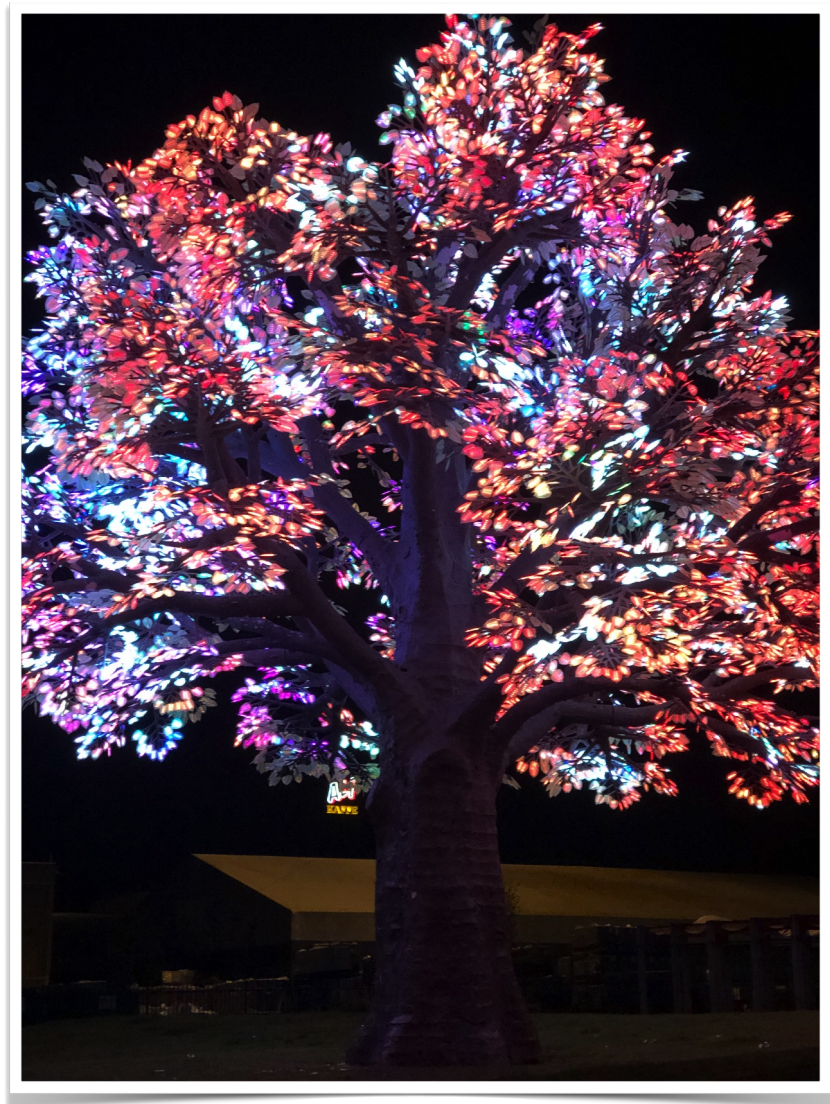
Headed by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), AFINO consists of a network of university and research institute partners. The Centre was launched in November 2019 and receives funding from the Research Council of Norway for five years.

The Research Council of Norway

The Research Council of Norway (RCN) is a government agency that allocates funds to research and innovation within all fields. RCN advises the authorities on research and research policy and is also tasked with creating meeting places

for researchers, trade and industry, public actors and other users of research.

RCN is currently experimenting with 3rd generation research and innovation policy, or Transformative Innovation Policy (TIP).



Alexander Green' shining tree in Oslo is reframing your expectations of nature and technology, Photo P Koch

It can be noted that the experiments represent aspirations for learning and development in the research and innovation system broadly enough understood to encompass the research council level. TIP is motivated by a failure to engage grand societal challenges in constructive ways.

Following on from science policy generations motivated by 'market failure' and 'systems failure', the diagnostic and



prospective motivating the 3rd generation relates to 'transformation failure'. RCN has initiated two virtual, national pilot centres for "excellent transformation" trying to foster a modality, knowledge, skills and capacities conducive to partnerships and crossover (disciplines as well as societal sectors) collaborations. AFINO is the second pilot.

AFINO research projects and working groups

The activities of AFINO are defined by a number of working groups and satellite research projects. In several of these foresight and futures literacy are important components.

Building learning arenas through Futures literacy laboratories

As an associated partner to AFINO, the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) has the task to develop new learning arenas by using future literacy laboratories as tools and methods in the research projects and activities.

The futures literacy labs will support us developing scenarios of alternative futures. These scenarios will identify important challenges, possibilities, drives and critical junctions that may affect innovation, market developments and policy-choices in the future in several critical sectors. Moreover, the labs will help participants free themselves from preconceptions and mental lock-in.

NIFU will also arrange a national future laboratory, exploring the use of responsible research and innovation and research and innovation policy in the transformation of Norwegian economy and society. The special role of oil and gas in the Norwegian economy, at the same time as the world is facing dramatic climate change and needs the development of clean energy production, will be one of many factors that needs to be considered.

Futures literacy laboratories will be organised in collaboration with four research projects about responsible innovation and governance:

- Responsible strategies for tackling food waste
- Responsible innovation in the Norwegian salmon farming industry



AFINO is to include stakeholders and citizens in the discussion of responsible research and innovation. III:Jelina Preethi

- Governance for responsible digital transformations
- Responsible innovation in digital health and welfare sectors

The Nordic Sustainable Innovation Dialogue series

In this work group, the BI Norwegian Business School will involve both academics from the Nordic countries as well as representatives from business, policy and civil society in deliberating about whether a particular Nordic way of facilitating and anticipating the necessary sustainability transformation exists.



Elisabeth Gulbrandsen from the Research Council of Norway is actively engaged in the AFINO work. She is also part of Futures Literacy Norway,

More specifically, they will look into issues such as innovation and whistleblowing, and how such a Nordic approach might be competitive in a global landscape.

In an ongoing series of primarily stakeholder dialogues, but also talks, lectures and workshops, AFINO wants to deliberate on how far such a function of the Nordic model might inspire a third way of including larger parts of the population into the anticipatory innovation process itself. This work will be based on the value of freedom of speech, inviting groups that usually do not participate in the public debate.

Illustrative Nordic cases on sustainability

In this work group, AFINO develops case-studies that highlight sustainability challenges and solutions in industries of importance to the Norwegian economy. The cases will be used as input in two of AFINO's other work groups: The Nordic Sustainable Innovation Dialogue series and Learning arenas through Future Literacy Laboratories. They will also be applied in teaching in Bachelor, Master and Executive programs at the BI Norwegian Business School.

In close collaboration with our partners from the industry, public sector and civil society, AFINO will develop one to two new cases each year. When selecting relevant cases related to sustainability, innovation and whistleblowing, we will focus particularly on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The work is specifically concerned with “the Nordic model”, and to what extent and how it can combine social and ecological sustainability with productivity and innovation.

Quality and foresight in responsible research and innovation

The Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities at the University of Bergen will utilize a so-called “post-normal science” framework to elucidate and deliberate the concept of quality in science. Given this background, they want to help linking good science to good policies, in particular in terms of designing our common futures.

Implicit in this effort is the recognition that the sciences as we currently see them practised, are not really fit for purpose. We see too many silos that do not communicate with each other;

we detect too many reward mechanisms that maximise vacuous or even badly flawed scientific outputs; we note too many power mechanisms in the struggle for influence and funding, and we notice too many communication breakdowns between the sciences and their publics, i.e. potential users.



From the new Oslo, Photo: Gettys

AFINO Research School

The AFINO Research School will develop and run interdisciplinary courses for PhD candidates from varied research cultures, on Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The courses will address themes such as history and philosophy of science, research ethics, the social contract of science, the triple/quadruple helix model of innovation, and the

interactions between science, society and policy (for instance, the challenges of doing RRI for SDGs and the challenges related to models and numbers for policy).

The research school will be articulated around one-week summer schools and shorter lectures series by Norwegian and international scholars (including members of the AFINO international committee).

The objective is to create a networking platform for Norwegian PhD candidates where participants learn about and critically discuss aspects of RRI and CSR and their concrete implementation in their own research projects.

Building blocks for enhanced societal responsibility

In this work group, the Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) and the Centre for Biosafety (GenØk) are jointly working on advancing the conceptual development and implementation of societal responsibility, encompassing RRI and CSR as well as perspectives from the arts and humanities. The activities will engage all actors involved in the quadruple helix of innovation.

This work group is also to develop a sustainability model for AFINO and facilitate an inclusive discussion with AFINO partners to determine the optimal organizational model and mandate for a continuation of AFINO. The main outcome will be a set of recommendations for how to integrate RRI and CSR in organizations in different sectors.

AFINO and UNESCO

AFINO is associated with the UNESCO network for futures literacy in several ways. Per Koch from NIFU and Rune By from the University of Stavanger are members of the network and coordinate an application for a Norwegian UNESCO Chair in futures literacy. Riel Miller, the leader of UNESCO's FL activities, is a member of the AFINO international advisory board.



Riel Miller of UNESCO, here seen at a Futures Literacy Event in Paris, is a member of AFINO's international panel, Photo: P. Koch

AFINO web site: <https://www.ntnu.edu/afino>

See also our report on the AFINO lab on food waste: <https://bit.ly/336SeLY>

A New Norwegian UNESCO Chair in Futures Literacy will be Fostering Leadership and Policy Learning for Change

The University of Stavanger and Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) has presented UNESCO with a proposal for a new Norwegian UNESCO Chair in Futures Literacy (LIA).



Leadership for the future is a shared responsibility
Photo: Huseyin Bostanci

By Per Koch, NIFU and Rune By, UiS

The starting point for the LIA project is the urgent need to develop the capabilities and capacities needed to address societal challenges, as these are – for instance – reflected in the UN sustainability goals and in the current Corona crisis.

The proposal has been developed by professor Rune By of the University of Stavanger and Special Adviser Per M. Koch of NIFU.

The LIA partners approach Future Literacy from different backgrounds – the University of Stavanger from a leadership and organisational change perspective and NIFU from a systems innovation and innovation policy perspective. Both are oriented towards organisational and societal change, in which leadership is an essential pillar.

Future oriented leadership

LIA has a particular focus on leadership. We see leadership in the broad sense of the word as key to the development of such transformative capabilities.



Photo: SDI Productions

Through LIA Rune Todnem By and his partners will use the future literacy perspective to enrich and strengthen relevant research and education at the University of Stavanger and among its partners.

The aim will be to create a platform for future oriented leadership research and training in Norway, a platform that may also contribute to anchor the future literacy approach in Norway.

Many researchers suggest that leadership is nothing without purpose. However, some observe that we tend to focus on leaders at the cost of the activity of leadership. Consequently, we obsess with individual leaders, their power, and how they achieve through others. Such a worldview emphasizes that leadership is a limited resource and capability that can only be mastered by a chosen few. Hence, we are arguably limiting our own leadership capabilities and capacity.

Professor By's practical work on the EPICally MAD framework (Making A Difference through a development of Energy, Purpose, Identity and Courage) and his upcoming theoretical work on the Telos Leadership Lens (TLL) suggest that we should be looking at leadership as a shared responsibility which we all can contribute to, and which we should not abdicate from. His theoretical work focuses on how we all as individuals must contribute to delivering on a shared purpose, and this onus is included in his working definition of leadership: Leadership is the collaborative pursuit of delivering on purpose.

Anticipatory systems and future literacy will play an essential role in defining purpose as purpose is directly linked to the future and about taking on a more proactive and responsible role in shaping the future we want and need. Through anticipatory systems different futures covering a vast range of opportunities and challenges will emerge, be shaped, and enriched.

Research and innovation policy

Per Koch and NIFU will use their expertise, networks and communication channels to stimulate the use of anticipatory systems and processes in research and innovation and in relevant policy institutions, in Norway and in the Nordic area.

Special Adviser and Editor Per M. Koch of the Nordic Institute of Innovation, Research and Education has worked for 30 years within the area of research and innovation and its related policy areas, both as a policy maker and as a social scientist.

He observes that the current policy system and its institutions are not set up to handle socio-technological shifts, unexpected turn of events, as well as challenges that require cooperation between various policy areas and institutions, sectors, branches of industry and academic disciplines. New Public Management

and its use of management by objectives were meant to give public sector institutions more freedom and ensure the organisational flexibility needed for innovation and transformation.

The fact is, however, that ministries, because of their need to legitimize expenses and protect their turfs, become increasingly detailed oriented. Agencies and councils will have to report on objectives to their owners, within the silos, which makes it hard to coordinate efforts across policy areas.

Moreover, the objectives are most often defined on the basis of the challenges of yesterday, not the problems and opportunities we might face in the future. The Weberian ideals of task specialisation, hierarchies, rules and regulations and impersonality also makes it harder to engage the kind of policy entrepreneurs and change agents needed for social transformation.

A need for a futures literacy

The societal challenges require the ability to transform both mindsets, organisations and societies, and they require a future literacy, as reflected in the following quote from UNESCO:

“Futures Literacy (FL) is a capability. It is the skill that allows people to better understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do. People can become more skilled at ‘using-the-future’, more ‘futures literate’, because of two facts. One is that the future does not yet exist, it can only be imagined. Two is that humans have the ability to imagine. As a result, humans are able to learn to imagine the future for different reasons and in different ways. Thereby becoming more ‘futures literate’”.

In other words: Companies and public sector institutions are facing leadership crises, where current leadership ideals and practices do not fit the needs of a rapidly changing society. This is where the University of Stavanger pillar of LIA converges with the NIFU pillar. The two strands of work will enrich each other in the exploration of new forms of leadership that can make use of future literacy in the face of grand challenges.



The Futures Literacy Norway Newsletter

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Front page photo of Stavanger, page 2 and top photo this page by Getty.