

## Why the World Needs Futures Studies: A Social and Methodological Challenge

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*This work<sup>1</sup> aims to focus on the absolute need that the world has today of Futures Studies. Thanks to this discipline's historical and methodological specificities in human sciences' context, Futures Studies can help humankind to manage the critical issues that are threatening it. The topic will be discussed through an exclusively theoretical approach, also describing the Italian contribution to Futures Studies: e.g., Eleonora Barbieri Masini's work, or Aurelio Peccei's, who (as early as the 1960s) was among the first to emphasize (in a complex approach) the risks the Earth would run. Nowadays, the delay in the actions that could have been taken many years ago places the world in front of previously unthinkable scenarios. New migrations caused by climate changes, possible criticalities due to the lack of demographic balance in the world population, our own survival as a living species at risk. In this sense, the new challenges that Futures Studies have to face are both socio-cultural and (in a particular approach) methodological. In the present times, many situations at the international level seem to have reached their limits. There is very little time to eventually refine (or change) the tools both of analysis and problem solving. As Aurelio Peccei pointed out in his time, phenomena (and problems) interact with each other in a very complex way. So, Futures Studies can help in the search for a possible solution by giving their particular multidisciplinary and overall look.*

**Keywords:** *Futures Studies, Italian contribution, world criticalities, methodological issues*

### The Role of Futures Studies in “Interesting Times”

In 2019, the 58<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Biennale of Art in Venice's title recalled a well-known Chinese anathema: “May you live in interesting times”. As it often happens, art is ahead of its time, and seems to feel first the coming changes. The following two years were, in fact, particularly “interesting” for all mankind. There was the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which the world has not yet completely emerged from. To worsen the general context of crisis, in these days the whole world is witnessing the increasing deterioration of the delicate international balances due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In this devastating framework, the problems linked to climate change still remain unsolved, and interact with the other criticalities, in a very uncertain context (Maggino and Facioni 2015). In such a complex situation, all scientific disciplines are called

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upon to make their own contribution to restore balance and peace: elements without which well-being is impossible anywhere in the world. A very hard, very difficult, but necessary job. A job made even more complicated by the difficulties that the different disciplines sometimes encounter in communicating with each other (Barbieri Masini 1993). Indeed, interesting times can be perceived as hard, but they are, at the same time, an opportunity to grow materially and intellectually for those who experience them. Interesting times are difficult, and sometimes cruel, but they can give to humankind<sup>2</sup> the opportunity to change for the better, albeit with great effort. In such an uncertainty, future has a role. It can be a starting point for searching a resolution (Gidley 2017). Futures Studies are well aware of the difficulties of this kind: they were born after the World War II, to face the challenge of a world to be rebuilt. A world which was going to divide itself again into two opposing fronts. World War II was just over, but the world was already ravaged by the Cold War and feared by its possible consequences.

A situation whose possible developments was necessary to study, to prevent and face. The Rand Corporation in the USA developed techniques of investigation and analysis: e.g., Delphi Method (Dalkey 1969), scenarios – a technique developed by Herman Kahn, the strategist who inspired the Doctor Strangelove character. In the same period, Europe provided the theoretical bases, the epistemic foundations (Barbieri Masini 1993). Thus, Futures Studies were born to develop strategies in order to avoid (in the future, or, better, in the possible futures) problems, or anyway to improve the conditions found in the present times. A task of *enormous responsibility*, taking up the concept formulated by Heller (1988), especially when Futures Studies are not only extrapolating data (forecasting), or imagining possible futures (foresighting), but making the complex work of *anticipating* the future, that means to create in present times the premises for future results (Poli 2011, 2018, 2019, Paura 2022). The risk of colonizing the future, and consequently the life of people in the future, is one of the paramount and controversial topics in the discipline (Barbieri Masini 1993).

In Futures Studies the relationship between humankind and the possible futures is a core topic (De Jouvenel 1964, Bell and Mau 1973, Barbieri Masini 1986, 1993, 2000, Bell 2003, 2004), a real epistemic principle. The concept that the future is not just one is a fundamental principle. Future is considered (and must be faced) as a range of almost infinite possibilities: it is the only multiple space for actions and decisions. The reflection on the hypotheses of possible futures is an essential moment of the work carried out in this specific research context, where the most daring development hypotheses are not excluded, if necessary. It is not a mere exercise in “sociological imagination” (Wright Mills 1959); in the field of Futures Studies the heuristic potentials of the imagination are, if anything, enhanced, constituting an essential moment of the research work. So, there is space for Utopia (Rüsen et al. 2005), which helps to imagine desirable futures; so as for Dystopia, which helps to imagine the worst possible future’s developments. Of course, the most complex step at an ethical level is the one in which the discipline goes from a descriptive (forecasting, foresighting) to a normative

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<sup>2</sup>I choose to use “humankind” in spite of “mankind” because the word mankind is too gender characterized.

outlook (anticipation), and deals with medium, or long-term strategies (Poli 2019). Another aspect we must consider is the *transformative* component underlying Futures Studies (Hebinck et al. 2018). Especially in times of systemic crisis like the present ones, the utopian tension towards a radical transformation of the social system finds its *raison d'être* in the conception of transformative futures, which inevitably calls into question, once again, the theme of responsibility.

### Futures Studies and Science

Are Futures Studies a science? Can we consider a science a discipline whose asserts are verifiable only *ex post*? Not only that: also if verified as true, there is no certainty that the predicted event occurred exactly because of the reasons previously adduced as the event's possible cause. This aspect - the link between forecast and the "received view" models of scientific explanation - has clearly to be explored. The model of scientific explanation was formulated in 1948 by Hempel and Oppenheim (Hempel 1965) and it is maybe the most famous model of scientific explanation and, undoubtedly, the one that gave rise to one of the most interesting debates in epistemology (Salmon 1989). A reference to it can however appear forced and, in many respects, it certainly is. The (not only apparent) stiffness of the model, and in particular the determinism that characterizes its nomological-deductive version, seems incompatible with the idea of "futures". However, according to this, the social forecast is based on an acquired theoretical level which, together with the environmental and circumstantial conditions (the elements of which are usually investigated using specific research techniques), can constitute the *Praedicens* from which the *Praedicendum* will be predicted. Anyway, it should be emphasized how an interpretation of the social forecast in this key can be better acceptable only considering the Inductive-Statistic version of the scientific explanation model. Anyway, even if the topic of forecast had a part in the debate on scientific explanation, there is certainly a "qualitative leap" in forecasting, especially when it is conceived as a design of a future, even more so of alternative futures. A different point of view of the relationship between forecasting studies and explanatory models comes from the reflection of Bas Van Fraassen (Van Fraassen 1980), that considers how much, in the design of the futures, the image of these can be conditioned by the meaning given by the context, and how much therefore the pragmatic element ends up acquiring a decisive weight.

A further element comes from Merton's theorization. In his work *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Merton 1949) he clarified how a prediction can affect its own results: in particular, he highlights the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies and the suicide prophecies<sup>3</sup> concept. Merton's reflection effectively eliminates any possibility of tracing the forecast back into a received-view model, but this does not necessarily mean excluding Futures Studies from the science

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<sup>3</sup>The concept-term "prophecy" Robert K. Merton used must be accepted. In fact, the theorization of Futures Studies was carried out years after Merton's work, and so was the terminological reflection on the differences between the concept of forecasting, prophecy, foresighting, extrapolation, etc.

context. Instead, it means that it is necessary to shift the focus of the scientificity of futures studies *from the context of the arguments to the context of the process* by which a forecast is reached.

### **Futures Studies, Sociology, and the Contemporary Methodological Issue**

This inevitably leads to a reflection on the method. Indeed, a theoretical approach about the methodological challenges that characterize Futures Studies in the contemporary historical context requires a fundamental focus on the terminological choices. In this context, the concept-term “method” is meant not as “research technique”<sup>4</sup>, but as “research process” as a whole (Campelli 1994, Marradi 2007). Thus, the use of the term “methodology” – and, consequently, of “methodological” – is not only related to the context of the choice and of the use of any kind of research technique<sup>5</sup>. The concept of “method” is here used in its Cartesian<sup>6</sup> meaning (1637), and it takes its origin in the ancient Greek etymology of the word μέθοδος, a word that indicates the path, the way to reach a goal.

Thus, focusing the term “method” in its Greek etymology of “path” means considering scientific only what is produced with accuracy and rigor at every step of the research process. And the need to follow a correct scientific method unites all sciences, whether they are more structured (such as chemistry) than of a humanistic nature, such as Sociology. In effect, there is a special and strong link between Futures Studies and Sociology. First of all, Eleonora Barbieri Masini, the mother of Futures Studies, the one who first gave to the discipline a solid theoretical structure in its complex – and who led for many years the World Futures Studies Federation – was a sociologist<sup>7</sup>. The two disciplines have many aspects in common: e.g., a multidisciplinary outlook, and the sensitivity to the multiple signs of change that society produces. Both Futures Studies and Sociology are characterized by a constant reflection on the human being, on social dynamics, on their possible causes, and on their possible consequences. Indeed, the epistemic approach of Futures Studies implies a dense reflection which, if introjected in all its nuances, necessarily involves the way the social researcher conceives the meaning itself of the sociological work. In Futures Studies, in all its theoretical and practical difficulty, the sense of the role of the social scientist in society is inevitably redefined. In a certain sense, this role is exalted. Futures Studies approach close an ideal circle between the image of the sociologist in contemporaneity (post-industrial, post-modern, post-everything), as emerging

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<sup>4</sup>In this approach, the Delphi “Method” is meant as a technique of research on Futures.

<sup>5</sup>The choice and the use of the research techniques is a fundamental part of the process, of course. Anyway, it is an important part of the larger context of the research path, who starts from the conceptualization of the research object (and its dimensions) and ends with the reflection on the results of the research itself (Campelli 1994).

<sup>6</sup>René Descartes first published anonymously his “Discours de la méthode – pour bien conduire la raison & chercher la vérité dans le sciences” in 1637 in Leiden.

<sup>7</sup>In the in the long interview she granted to me in 2009 (Facioni 2011), Eleonora Barbieri Masini explained to me that she dealt with Futures Studies because they focused, in a different, future-oriented way respect to Sociology, on one of her most beloved research subjects: the social change.

from the social criticism of Beck (1986) or of Bauman (2000) - just to name two of the most important theorists in recent years - and the way in which this role was conceived, at the dawn of the discipline, by Comte (1830-1842). A problematic closure of the circle, that cannot be accomplished painlessly: it passes, in fact, through the theorization of Weber (1917/1919), and inevitably touches an “epistemic nerve” (not only in Sociology or in Futures Studies, but in all Human Sciences): the scientist's *Wertfreiheit*, which Weber theorized since 1904, in *The cognitive objectivity of social science and social policy*.

It is impossible to escape this criticality (Appadurai 2013) in the practice of the research on futures, and in particular in the anticipation step. Each social scientist who is about to embody images of possible futures must necessarily deal with it, not only, taking up De Jouvenel's (1964) theorization considering the possible futures, but (inevitably) the desirable, and the utopian ones. In what does the “desirability” of the futures to be built consist of? How many non-scientific aspects the scientists' vision of “desirable” futures consists of? Foresighting futures, building futures, anticipating futures, transforming futures, is something very similar to a process of creation. It is the result of a collective work, of a collective stipulation of sense, and there is a very strong creative element in.

Thus, how long a single researcher, or a research group, can maintain firm the fundamental principle of transparency, the Weberian *Wertfreiheit*, having the possibility of building up a possible future? A future which inevitably will reflect his/her/their personal idea of a “right” society - and, consequently, his/her/their own personal system of values. Furthermore, the role played by the scientists' tacit knowledge in such contexts should not be forgotten (Polanyi 1966). Of course, this work is not questioning the scientists' ethical correctness: it only stresses on the *impossibility* of building up futures without referring to some value system. In this specific context, the ethical problem cannot be only solved by a scientist's open declaration of the scientists' own opinions, or of the scientists' own system of values, or of their personal (religious, political, of any other kind) beliefs, proposing not to be influenced by these aspects in the making of the research work - as it happens in the sociological context and in the sociological research work, both theoretical and on field. Indeed, in an anticipatory context, the consequences of the today's decisions will affect the people of tomorrow. Thus, the *Wertfreiheit* principle is impossible to practice, having a research group the task of deciding today what will be the best for tomorrow.

Even when all possible interest groups are represented, it is clear that deciding today for tomorrow requires a choice related to values. For this reason, the anticipations must be made, when possible, on highly specific situations, or contrarywise on aspects that certainly cannot fail to be valid also for the human beings in any possible future. UN SDGs are a typical example of very broad-spectrum anticipation field: there is no doubt that humanity will have, in 2030 and in subsequent years, the need for a healthy environment, good quality of water and food, education, and so on (United Nations 2015). Compared to the more traditional human sciences, Futures Studies are more open to experimentation, to listening to the signals of change. Although, it should not be forgotten that there is a huge, enormous responsibility on the shoulders of the Futurists. Above all, the Futurists

themselves (Marien 2002) should not forget it. Therefore, based on what has been said so far, the difficulties the world is going through involve Futures Studies not only from an ethical, but also a methodological point of view, considering how the theme of *choice* is central to the discipline. Futures Studies aim at a sensitive change, if not a desirable transformation of the possible futures in the world.

In these days, the complex dynamics at the international level are rapidly changing the balance of power - economic, political, financial, etc. - and this cannot fail to have repercussions in the everyday life of the many societies of the world. For example, it is no longer so certain that the SDGs will be reached within the set time frame: in 2015, the year of the UN document on SDGs, the hypothesis of a war between Russia and Ukraine, and the consequent energy crisis, was probably not considered as a possible event. In order to act in time, the analysis and the search for solutions must be accelerated - and now it is very difficult. Here a very close link between Sociology and Futures Studies is evident: both disciplines need to analyze the emerging criticalities at different levels. However, for Futures Studies these analyzes - be they at a micro, macro, or medium-range level - are the essential prerequisite for making any type of choice about the possible futures. Understanding the needs of social communities - which is a fundamental research object of many participatory techniques used in Futures Studies (Di Zio and Pacinelli 2011) - is extremely difficult, in times of uncertainty.

Thus, the today's Futures Studies methodological challenge is in paradoxes: the less time we have to analyze a rapidly changing situation, the stronger is the need to find solutions even in the long term. And the stronger the need to find solutions in a very short time, the easier the risk of colonizing the future, taking away from it that characteristic of plurality which is one of the epistemic foundations of Futures Studies themselves. Last but not least, there is a great difficulty in disseminating awareness of the future in social contexts affected by critical issues - and developing the Futures Literacy (Karlsen 2021) is, according to me, probably the essential prerequisite for positively acting on possible futures. In times of crisis, where the present itself is under discussion, it is not an easy-to-achieve goal. However, it is desirable that as many people as possible be sensitive to the idea of building together the future. Unfortunately, this is much more feasible in times of peace and economic equilibrium, in which there are no excessively conflicting ideas of the future.

Thus, if the methodological goal of Futures Studies is to work on possible futures that are better than the present time, the goal is now rapidly changing. Nowadays, it is maybe a question of guaranteeing the existence of futures.

### **The Former Italian Contribution to the Contemporary Debate on Futures**

From the beginning of this work we mentioned the extreme difficulty of the times that the world is currently experiencing, especially since the Covid-19 emergency in 2020, and with the recent worsening of the international situation due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. A crisis situation that is grafted onto an environmental imbalance whose possible consequences cannot be

underestimated. Less well known is how much of the current debates on the risks facing the planet if the imbalances that afflict it are not eliminated were introduced internationally by an Italian manager, Aurelio Peccei (Facioni and Paura 2022). Indeed, Italy gave a great impulse to Futures Studies and to reflection on issues and problems that are still unresolved and increasingly urgent today.

Also in Italy everything starts after the end of World War II. In those years, there is a fundamental philosophical contribution to underline. That is, the theorization of Nicola Abbagnano, who in the 40s of the XXth century formulated his personal idea of existentialism, or positive existentialism (Abbagnano 1948). Abbagnano's particular approach to existentialism is not characterized by alienation as in other authors, but restores to the individuals their place in history, their capability to act and interact in history. It is equally important that this theory be formulated, exactly in this period, in Turin. It is important because at this very moment in Turin - and in the wider context of Piedmont - an impressive amount of brilliant and innovative personalities was concentrated, in the most varied disciplines and fields. All people united by a vision capacity that goes beyond their time. Innovators. Future makers. Some names of theirs: Franco Ferrarotti, Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini, Norberto Bobbio, Renato Treves, Rita Levi Montalcini, Renato Dulbecco, Adriano Olivetti. Between them, in this extraordinary and vivid socio-cultural context, we have to include Aurelio Peccei, who worked in FIAT as a manager and put his work experience at an international level in the environmental cause, and then broaden his interests in other fields, but always looking at possible futures. From this point of view, there were three fundamental encounters in his life. The first one was the meeting with Julian Huxley, first director of UNESCO and co-founder of the WWF. Huxley sensitized Peccei on the issue of the link between the exponential population growth and the erosion of the natural resources. All the initiatives that Peccei carried out in the following years were inspired by their intellectual synergy, starting with the conferences on environmental risks held in South America (and then in the rest of the world) in the 1960s. The second meeting was with the Scottish scientist Alexander King in 1968. King and Peccei were the co-founder of the Club of Rome in the same year. In 1972 the Club of Rome produced its first Report, edited by the MIT: "The Limits to Growth", maybe the most controversial scientific report in history (Meadows et al. 1972). The third meeting was in 1970, with Eleonora Barbieri Masini, one of the very first women to join the Club of Rome. Peccei was not the only Italian manager sensitive to the theme of the future at the times. We must also remember Pietro Ferraro, who founded the journal "Futuribili" as an Italian version of the French journal "Futuribles", directed by Bertrand de Jouvenel, who was, together with Gaston Berger, one of the leading European theorists of Futures Studies (De Jouvenel, 1964). Anyway, Peccei gave an international imprint, a world level, to his experience, making use of the network of contacts he had created in his work experience. In the many works he wrote over the years (Peccei 1969, 1974, 1976, 1981, 1984, Peccei and Ikeda 1984), Peccei emphasized how human beings were sinning with ὑβρις towards the world they lived in, of which they were nothing but the latest arrivals. This is a short quote from "The chasm ahead" (Peccei 1976):

Since man has opened the Pandora's box of new technologies, which escaped out of

his hands, any change anywhere affects almost everywhere. Dynamics, speed, effort, and complexity of our artificial world have orders of magnitude without comparison in the past, and the same applies to our problems. These, today, are at the same time psychological, social, economic, political, and technical, and cannot therefore be dealt with and resolved one at a time, because they interfere and interact with one another, each having roots and ramifications intricate in all others

It is clear that we could read all this in terms of complexity (Bocchi and Ceruti 1985). Peccei realized that there was not the possibility of analysing the problems, so as their possible causes, one at a time, but only in their dynamism and interconnectedness. And also that the possible solutions had to be analysed in the same way. So considering the population growth, the growth of pollution and the resources erosion, he identified the containment of the population as a possible way to slow down the destruction of the natural environment. In the first Report the Club of Rome commissioned to MIT, "The limits to growth" (Meadows et al. 1972), the data projections (up to the year 2100) are not optimistic about a possible solution. Furthermore, the heavy emphasis given by the MIT report on the need for birth control sparked huge controversy around the world (Barbieri Masini 2001). It must also be said that nowadays not in all societies in the world there is a need to control the birth rate. Indeed, in the Western countries there are very few children. In this regard, Italy is actually facing a true criticality. Starting from the 2021 data on Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Italy, equal to 1.25, together with the data related to life expectancy – 86.5 years for men and 89.5 years for women at birth, as expected in 2070 - the Italian Institute of Statistics demographic forecasts (ISTAT 2021) highlights that in 2070 for each young individual there will be three seniors – and it is the middle scenario: it is not a good perspective. In effect, the TFR is decreasing, albeit at different speeds, in the various socio-geographic contexts all over the world. The ideal TFR, both for humankind and for the natural environment as a whole, is 2.1; neither higher nor lower. It is not an easy target to obtain anyway, considering the different socio-economic contexts in the world.

In the environmental studies field, it should be remembered, with regard to the Italian contribution, also Giorgio Nebbia, one of the co-founders of Italia Nostra. As a training Nebbia was a commodity scientist. He sensed the risks due to waste and excessive consumption of resources, e.g., drinking water, as early as the early 1960s. He dedicated to the topic of sustainable development very important reflections, many years before some topics became the common heritage of the international debate (Nebbia 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1971).

As mentioned in the introduction, between the most important theorists of Futures Studies there is an Italian sociologist, Eleonora Barbieri Masini. Together with the Italian manager Aurelio Peccei, she was for many years the protagonist of an intense activity on futures at a mondial level. Eleonora Barbieri Masini's life is the singular story of an intellectual passion for a research object, the future, that she translated into a tireless action. She dedicated her entire life to building up Futures Studies as a discipline. Without exaggeration or rhetoric, her contribution can be described in terms of *beruf*, in the Weberian sense of the term. Magda Cordell McHale called her "the mother of futures studies", attributing much of the credit for the existence of the World Futures Studies Federation to her energy and



enthusiasm (Stevenson 2006). Born in Guatemala in 1927, she returned to Italy in 1933 with her family, and she graduated in Constitutional Law (with a specialization in Comparative Law). Subsequently, she also graduated in Sociology. Around the end of the 1960s, Eleonora Barbieri Masini was at Irades (Institute for Applied Documentation Research and Studies), a Catholic institute founded by Pietro Pace, who requested her to set up for the Institute a center for foresight studies, the first of its kind in Italy. Until then, Irades had exclusively dealt with the topic of pastoral care in Italy from a sociological point of view.

A further opportunity to understand what had been done in the world regarding the futures was offered to her by the invitation of Hidetoshi Kato to participate, in October 1970, in the Kyoto Meeting “Challenges from the Future”, the second meeting of what, shortly thereafter, would become the World Futures Studies Federation, in 1973. Unfortunately, Italy was probably not ready for the worldwide opening of Masini’s research activity in the 1970s. Virtually overnight, her Institute in Irades, and the related library, was closed without any explanation or warning, and she could continue teaching and practicing the Futures Studies discipline only thanks to the Pontifical Gregorian University – which technically is not in Italian territory, but in the Vatican. Returning to how the Italian contribution to Futures Studies has touched on issues that are still fundamental today, Eleonora Barbieri Masini gave a fundamental contribution on the topic of women empowerment. If the condition of women has made great strides, especially in developing countries, it is also due to the historical research project “Household, gender, and age” she conducted between for UN University during the period 1981-1991 (Barbieri Masini and Stratigos 1991). It was the results of that impressive research work, carried out in eight developing countries at the time, that convinced the United Nations of the importance of promoting female entrepreneurship in the poorest countries.

### **Conclusions - Futures Studies and the Human Quality**

Speaking of “Italian” Futures Studies is probably misleading: these studies have always been characterized from the outset by a world-class perspective, by an international perspective, by a sense of “network and exchange of knowledge” that never had or wanted any boundary, even in the middle of the Cold War<sup>8</sup>. The paradox of these studies is that many of the topics they dealt with seem to have been at the forefront of general attention only for a very short time: e.g., the waste of food resources, or the waste of water, or the aquifers’ depletion, or the sustainable development. It is enough to reread Giorgio Nebbia’s works (Nebbia 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1971, 1991), or Peccei’s, to have a precious testimony that makes us understand how much time has been lost without finding a solution. Each of these topics – we only recalled a few among the most widespread in the mass media today, have been the subject of Futures Studies for several decades. It

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<sup>8</sup>The strategic position of Italy on the international chessboard was probably the reason why these studies were often opposed in Italy during the Cold War and in 1970s. This was probably due to the Futures Studies vocation of putting the Eastern part of the world in contact with the Western.

is certainly good that these issues are now under everyone's attention. Although, reading the very first issues of the journal *Futuribili* makes it clear that these topics were already under the attention of almost a part of the scientific community in the mid-1960s. Unfortunately, at the times this happened without the political decision makers attempted to any adequate solutions, in Italy as elsewhere.

*Nemo propheta in patria*, it is maybe true: but if the homeland is the world, perhaps society has lost precious time, up to now, by not listening to the arguments of many passionate scholars. They tried to tell that for all human beings there is only one Earth, a small planet with limited resources - and that this planet must be respected, even in the name of those who will inhabit it tomorrow. That means, for everyone, a fundamental thing: responsibility. Or, taking up a topic which was so dear to Aurelio Peccei, it means the need of working on human quality (Peccei 1976). In a world that at the moment seems to be going in a totally different direction, perhaps it is necessary to look again at Futures Studies. And it is necessary to make it with the attention due to a precious instrument of human promotion. Certainly, there are significant differences in interpretations of the way to reach a kind of human promotion, even in Future Studies' context. I am thinking, for example, about the critical issues inherent in the transhumanist theories (Campa 2010), which are widespread in part of the Futurists' community. In my opinion, transhumanism, at least in its most extreme forms, which theorize a passage from *homo faber* to *homo creator* (Pepperell 2003) must deal with one of the basic principle of Futures Studies, maybe "the" basic principle, which is to avoid colonizing the future. This can have very dangerous, maybe unimaginable consequences. I am not sure transhumanist theories can be re-directed to an "only" human promotion. Anyway, in a world that has still not eliminated the war, or any other form of non-constructive pain, where humanity still use the scientific and technological development to destroy, I think the world as a whole needs a more responsible humankind. I am also sure that it needs humankind finds a common agreement on the meaning of what is ethical and what is not. I am sure Futures Studies can help for this – anyway, they should try to do. We have still to work a lot on values like peace and reciprocal respect; the same work is still required to the care of the only planet we can still live in. This is my idea of what human quality should be also today. It does not mean improving the performance of the human being as if it were a machine, but to work seriously on the culture of respect and mutual responsibility dissemination. Anyway, I am sure that working on human quality is still the only way to use science and technology in a positive and durable way. In this historical moment, in which the risk of the disappearance of mankind from the earth seems sometimes tangible, Futures Studies is needed more than ever. They will allow us to look forward to possible futures.

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