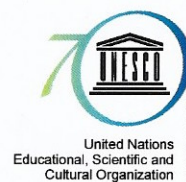




UNIVERSITY  
OF TRENTO - Italy

Department of Sociology  
and Social Research



# First International Conference on **ANTICIPATION**

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Department of Sociology and Social Research

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# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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### *Future Visions from the 1939: Two Different Approaches*

In April of 1939 the New York World's Fair, "Building The World of Tomorrow," opened. From its inception to its closing ceremonies, the Fair promoted one of the last great metanarratives of the Machine Age: the unqualified belief in science and technology as a means to economic prosperity and personal freedom. Many architects and designers were involved in this monumental project: Norman Bel Geddes with his Futurama exhibition, or Wallace Harrison, J. Andre Fouilhoux and Henry Dreyfuss that designed the Theme Center that housed the Democracy diorama and Walter Dorwin Teague with the City of Light.

In the same years the Laboratory of Design Correlation was born at Columbia University (1937-1941). Its founder was Frederick J. Kiesler who, although marginalized as an architect in his time, advanced alternative modern dwelling practices that proved to precede 21st century digital design interests. With his "Man=Heredity + Environment" diagram, he expressed the continual interaction of both the total environment on man and the continual interaction of its constituent parts on one another.

The goal of this paper is to point out two divergent examples of what a "future vision" really means. The first one, that seems to be the more anticipatory in its purpose, showed a near future vision that was very close to the present, its true emphasis, in fact, was on the "new-ness" of ideas, forms, and especially consumer products: it was an antidote to the depression and confusion of the times.

On the other hand, the work of Kiesler was a quite silent attempt to truly understand what was the real impact of new technologies on the human environment. A research that today seems to be an interesting and truly "predictive" anticipation of our contemporary architecture and design orientations.

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### *Anticipation of Future Suffering: Euthanasia and Dementia in The Netherlands*

In the Netherlands, euthanasia is a legal, but strongly regulated practice. The number of requests for euthanasia in the case of dementia is rising, which is accompanied by lively public debates on how and if euthanasia for people with dementia should be made possible. Without advocating any of the standpoints in this debate, this paper explores the request for euthanasia as an act of responding to, and preparing for, an envisioned but unwanted future.

The request for euthanasia by people with dementia is often driven by a view that the end of life with dementia is undignified. In the struggle to preserve dignity at the end of life, many people in the Netherlands who have dementia, explore the possibilities of requesting euthanasia. By doing this, they position oneself as active agents in determining their own wellbeing and dignity at the end of life. A view that is strongly related to modernist ideas of being able to control possible futures beforehand.

Very important in the case of dementia, is that the boundaries people with dementia set for themselves, to indicate the point at which they feel life is no longer worth living or dignified, shift as the disease progresses. Whereas certain situations may seem unbearable beforehand, once they occur people can learn to cope with them. This makes the moment in which euthanasia should be carried out very difficult to define. The request for euthanasia then becomes obsolete. In general, people with dementia are not requesting for euthanasia because they do not want to live, but rather to prevent a process of decay and future suffering. This dynamic is paralleled by the experience that the anticipation of future suffering can cause suffering in the present.

What does this tell us about our capacity to anticipate, and of the images we construct of the future that give shape to this anticipation?

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Further details are available from Project Anticipation, the webpage of the UNESCO chair in anticipatory systems:

[www.projectanticipation.org](http://www.projectanticipation.org)



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