

June 11th, 2013 Leena-Maija Laurén

Congratulations to the Destrée Institute on the 75th Anniversary!

May this speech be a tribute to visionary people like Dr. Jules Destrée!

We futurists usually choose the long views!

Visioning forward is important, but the futures also have a past. Which factors in the history, geographical location, geopolitical matters and search for education influenced certain choices made by visionary men? Which developments resulted in the formation of the Committee for the Future? To answer these questions, let us frame the circumstances and describe some history and cases in Finland.

Finns in the North were ruled by the Kings and Queen of Sweden for more than 600 years. After the Russian-Swedish war of 1808-1809 we were an autonomous Grand Duchy with the Russian Empire for 108 years. On December 6th, 1917, Finland became an independent and sovereign state. After WWII, Finland was the only country to fully pay its war reparations to the Soviet Union, which it did by the autumn 1952. The total sum was 300 million US dollars in special gold war dollars, which were of an international post-war standard in the 1938 currency. Some estimates give this sum to be equivalent to some 4.5 billion Euros today.

After the war enthusiastic re-building and forward-looking of the nation ensued. In 1956 Finland joined the United Nations, in 1961 became a Finn-Efta member and in 1966, a full member of EFTA. In most recent times, in 1989, Finland joined the European Council, and in 1995, became a Member state in the European Union. In 1999, Finland joined the European Monetary Union and in 2002 Euro as our currency. Due to the threat of climate change and other factors Finland has taken a special interest in being a member in the Arctic Council for its long-term solution seeking. In general, our country continues her active work as a member of several other international and regional governmental organizations.

Finland was the first country in the world to grant full political rights to all citizens over 24 years of age. This revolutionary decision was taken by the unicameral Parliament of 1906. The following year, there were 19 women elected of the 200 Members. Madame Tarja Halonen (Social Democratic Party) was our first female President, serving the maximum two terms in office during 2000-2012. To date, Finland has had two female Prime Ministers, Madame Anneli Jäätteenmäki (Centre Party) and Madame Mari Kiviniemi (Centre Party). Under Prime Minister and former chair of the Committee for the Future, Mr. Jyrki Katainen (Coalition Party) our current Government is a coalition of six political parties and, in June 2013, the composition is 10 women and 9 men as Ministers.

The population in Finland reached 5.4 million people in April 2013. We have two national languages: Finnish and Swedish. In Lapland the Sami people are titled to use their own languages.

Education and Academia

In the most recent years Finland has become famous for the OECD Pisa results performed by school children of ages 15-16. Being ranked number one in the world education evaluations, i.e. the Programme for International Student Assessments in the years of 2003, 2006 and 2009 certainly requires some explanations. In the 1970s, Finland profoundly reformed its school system. However, our very first school Katedralskolan i Åbo dates back to the year 1276 in Turku (Åbo in Swedish) and, it still continues as the only Swedish language high school in the city. Moreover, relevant here for the nation is that all the teachers in the Finnish school system are university educated. All in all Finland had 20 universities but the amount of universities have been cut and, since the University Act of 2009 there are 14 universities.

Academic studies in Finland started after the foundation of its first university in 1640, the Royal Academy of Turku/Åbo. The first doctoral dissertation was presented in 1641 under the title "Discursus Politicus de Prudencia" by Michael Wexionius (later ennobled as Gyldenstolpe). When the royal funding for the first printing company in Finland was granted, his dissertation was published as a book in December 1642. This beautiful book, written in old Latin, is available online. Noteworthy from a futurist's angle, the main point is that Professor Wexionius divides the past, present and future wisdom into three components: Insight – Foresight – Hindsight.

Emerging issues

At this stage I will describe to you a more step-by-step view to this field of futures studies at the macro-level in Finland. When we look at the current instruments in the field, let us uncover some history in the prospective systems. To understand the existing foundations we need learn about their evolution. Therefore I argue that the past geopolitical issues and the national traditions of the Finnish economic and planning sectors have constructed the past structures and in the aftermath further paved the way to their forward-looking processes in the functions of today.

However, until the 1970s, the traditional economic prognoses based on linear historical developments in various areas had a strong position in the public planning and also in the Finnish strategic frames and systems. When the energy crisis of 1973 unexpectedly appeared, it suddenly influenced the energy situation in the entire world. Afterwards, there were several reservations indicating that the long-term prognoses, which were based on linear and history-based models, were no longer trustworthy, as they excluded uncertainties, discontinuities and risks. That notwithstanding and at all times, a nation is forced to continue to plan and estimate the future developments, due to the fact that most of the decisions we make today do have long-term consequences for many future generations.

The early economic studies by the public sector are examples of the transitions in the common traditions and policy-making. In the 1970s and 1980s, a distinct step forward seems to have been taken - from “one economic prognosis” towards “systematic futures studies”.

National developments in the year 1980 were led by The Academy of Finland – the major, national research funding institution, which describes the emerging field of Futures Research in its Finnish report “Promoting Futures Studies”:

- Futures research can be defined essential interdisciplinary research activities aimed to systematically develop scientific methods and their applications in order to evaluate prospective development trends, options and alternatives in a society.
- In futures research, the important knowledge interest is - as in empirical research - foresight but it has an additional interest, namely the locating and revealing of alternative developments and their preferable directions. This pursuit also encompasses the scientific analysis of values in the alternative developments.
- Futures research not only aims to find historical development paths, but also to evaluate discontinuities, emerging new issues and structures as well as their influences. The assumption is that by acquiring knowledge about the future alternatives and opportunities, we may influence the available choices.

In the Finnish forward-looking institutionalisation, a groundbreaking factor was the 1987-1988 Committee for the Academic Futures Research headed by Professor Erik Allardt. This Finnish Committee report to the Ministry of Education, which is brilliantly titled “Change, choices, future. Promotion of Futures Studies in Finland” depicts that the rationale for futures studies is to increase the understanding of the opportunities for change that are imbedded in the existing circumstances, as well as knowledge on the potential consequences of decisions made, and actions chosen in order to broaden the time horizons of individuals, enterprises, governments, NGOs etc., and to become more conscientious when making decisions with long-term effects.

During the 1960s and 1970s much of the news on international developments reached the academic frontiers i.e. several university leaders and researchers in various parts of Finland. It was, however, in Turku that a series of two seminars on futures research were arranged in 1974 and 1977. Inspired by the forward-looking contents of the latter, a task force was formed to promote futures studies and education in Turku. The short-term objective was to improve the situation of the research and teaching. The long-term objective was to construct a permanent entity for futures research on the foundation of the research traditions in and cooperation between the Turku universities.

The Finnish Society for Futures Studies

When the Finnish Society for Futures Studies – a registered association – was established on May 28th, 1980 in Turku, by the recommendation of Government’s Central Board of Research Councils in Finland, there were representatives for 14 Finnish universities as signatory members as well as 23 individual

members present at the remarkable meeting to constitute the Society. Thus it is worth noting here that the association in its foundation has both institutions and individuals, i.e. both the top-down and bottom-up approaches.

During the past more than 30 years, the Finnish Society for Futures Studies has grown to have over 650 individual members and 21 institutional members. It currently operates in 12 active local groups in addition to the Helsinki-based office. On its website, the Society states its main objectives for advancing futures studies and long-term development in Finland

- to develop the material, organisational, and intellectual bases for futures research in Finland;
- to advance higher education grounded on futures research;
- to foster contacts among futures researchers as well as between the researchers and those who could utilize their work;
- to maintain contacts with research institutes and researchers in foreign countries;
- to communicate the latest results of futures research to the Finnish public and to emphasise the necessity of such research.

Since 1982, this scientific Society has regularly published a futures studies journal, FUTURA, for members and other subscribers. Currently this scientific quarterly presents topical texts, such as the latest issue of FUTURA 1/2013 themed “Arctic Futures”. Out of the Society’s publications, worth mentioning is also the Acta Futura Fennica series of academic research and doctoral dissertations. In 2013 the revised 3rd edition of Acta Futura Fennica (number 5) titled “How to Study Futures?” was published. This unique print version with contributions by 20 Finnish authors covers topics such as foundations for futures studies, systems and evolutionary thinking, scenario thinking, futures workshops, expert methods, creative methods for futures scanning as well as an up-dated glossary of concepts and methods. In order to further disseminate the futures knowledge in Finnish an unusual procedure has been utilised: an electronic version of articles, not included in the new book, will be published based on the original 1993 Acta Futura Fennica book and its 2003 edited texts versions.

Under the auspices of the Society the traditional summer seminars on various themes since 1982, the Futures Forum events as well as the biennial Top Ten Futures seminars bring together experts and members to critically view and creatively voice the state of the art and futures developments.

Special endeavours have been to open the membership to young members under 24 years, and organising the Futures Clubs for high school children in liaison with the Italian L’Éta Verde organisation founded by Dr. Aurelio Peccei (1908-1984) of the Club of Rome.

Between the years 1984 and 1999, the Society hosted the Finnish National Committee for the Club of Rome until the year 2000, when it became a registered association in its own name. Twice, the Finnish Committee has hosted the global conferences of the Club: in 1984 and 2004 in Helsinki. Currently, the National Committee has a strong and active liaison via the Finns who are members in the Club of Rome headquartered in Winterthur, Switzerland.

Coincidence or not, the year 1972 was an interesting turning point in many aspects. “The Limits to Growth” report to the Club of Rome was published and Professor Pentti Malaska of the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration was invited to become a member of the Club of Rome. This was certainly a tribute to this visionary futurist, as late professor Pentti Malaska (1934-2012) played the key role in establishing both the Finnish Society for Futures Studies (1980) and the Finland Futures Research Centre (1992).

The Finland Futures Research Centre - FFRC

It was in Turku that the Finland Futures Research Centre, FFRC, was founded in 1992. Today, the FFRC is an academic institute at the University of Turku with a national task to conduct multidisciplinary research and development projects. Current fields of research at the FFRC include foresight, environmental and energy studies, socio-cultural research, consumption studies, bio-economy, security and education.

The annual turnover of the Centre is over 3.5 million Euros, out of which the external project financing is almost 80 %. The FFRC staff of some 60 experts is located in three offices, in Turku, Helsinki and Tampere, - or teleworking. The FFRC Publication series include e-books and e-reports in Finnish or in English.

In the Finnish model, the academic futures studies education has been arranged by the Finland Futures Academy, the FFRC network of national universities since 1998 and international partners since 2002. Presently, a Master’s Degree and a Joint Degree in Strategic Innovation and Future Creation Programmes are offered in English.

In August 2013, the Finland Futures Research Centre will become an academic department after an administrative merge with the Turku School of Economics. Thus during the academic year 2013-2014, for the first time in Finland, students will be able to apply to the Doctoral Programme in Futures Studies.

On June 6-7th, 2013 an international conference “Futures for Food” was organised in Turku, and the next conference on June 11-12th, 2014 will invite “Sustainable Futures in a Changing Climate” to Helsinki. You all are most welcome to visit the land of the Midnight Sun for this futures conference!

The Society for Researchers and Members of the Finnish Parliament - TUTKAS

The forward-looking efforts in the frames and activities of the Finnish Parliament have an interesting historical path. Since 1970 the Society for Researchers and Members of the Finnish Parliament (MPs) - a registered association TUTKAS - has aimed at communication and an exchange of ideas between the active researchers and the MPs in Finland. Monthly seminars with invited expert speakers are followed by panel and critical discussions on science policies, planning, the decision-making and the evaluation of results. The two most recent seminars were on May 29th, 2013 on the theme “Science Policy and its Leadership”, and today on June 11th, 2013 on “Public Sector Research Institutes - reforming the national policy”.

For a wider distribution of this “TUTKAS knowledge”, a series of publications has been placed on the website of the Finnish Parliament since 1980. As TUTKAS was such an incremental factor in the visionary initiative leading to the construction of the first ad hoc Committee for the Future, the following selection of publications is worth mentioning. The early TUTKAS reports in Finnish covered a variety of topics, such as “The Finnish Society - Technology, Work and Futures” (1986), “Is the Futures in the Hands of the Parliamentarians?” (1987), “The Club of Rome: Think Global - Act Local” (1989), “What is the need for Science Policy? Science in Finland in the year 2017” (1997), “Research in High Technology as the Engine of the Society”(1998), and notably “The TUTKAS Futures Seminar” (1992).

A vivid debate followed the forward-looking seminar in 1992 and many turns in the process were inevitable, as it often happens when a futuristic, radical idea is put into the political arena. However, the external push on and the internal interest in the Parliament co-existed, and so the new and globally unique committee was formed with a special agenda of its own: futures.

The Committee for the Future

The Parliamentary Committee for the Future highlights the core of the forward-looking structures in Finland. Let us start with the latest news. On May 22nd, 2013, the Committee for the Future announced the results of its writing competition for Finns on “Black Swans”, and presenting the 16 most prominent articles in a book of some 300 pages. As a continuation of this forward-looking effort with over 100 futuristic essays, all the competition entries will be handed over to the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) for further research and analysis. Another proposal states that this futuristic writing competition ought to be a tradition, organised once during every Parliamentary election period.

The history of the Committee for the Future goes back to the recession years of the early 1990s, when the Council of State and the Parliament had introduced a political dialogue on the long term future options for Finland. The Government submitted the first-ever Report on the Future of the nation of Finland in 1993 and the Parliament nominated the first ad-hoc Committee of MPs to evaluate it. This established a continuation of a procedural dialogue between the Government and the Parliament. The Government submits a Foresight Report to the Parliament once during each electoral period of four years, and it is the Committee’s task to draft the response to it on behalf of the Parliament.

For the current electoral period, 2011-2014, the theme chosen by the Government is “How Finland is equipped for Success in a Changing World – the Finnish Sustainable Growth Model in a Changing World”.

Based on this theme the current Operational Programme of the Committee for the Future was composed in the autumn of 2011 and includes the following parts:

1. Sustainable Growth – A project in three stages to produce ten concrete measures for sustainable economic growth. These proposals will be provided not only for the current Government but also for the future Programmes for Government. The final stage will have measures and policy-related recommendations for our country.

2. An Inspired Society – A study to examine the relations between social environment and enterprising.
3. Acquiring New Knowledge – A project and study on how to make Finland the most competent nation in the world by the year 2020.
4. Can the Welfare Society Endure? – A four stage project to collect expert views, where after the top themes are chosen to build a model for the future of Welfare Finland and, finally, all this ensured by a socially sustainable growth.

The cross-cutting sub-projects to these four Operational Programmes cover also the following methodologically relevant themes: (i) Crowdsourcing; (ii) Black Swans; and (iii) Radical Technologies.

Looking back to the historic steps in the influential and external national infrastructures, there is an interesting story. After the reform of the Finnish constitution in the year 2000, the status of the committee changed as it became permanent with 17 MP members. As its main task is non-typical for a standing Parliamentary Committee, it is sometimes called the Think Tank inside the Parliament. The Prime Minister is the corresponding minister to the Committee for the Future and this is well in line with the duty to support the high-level Government-Parliament dialogue. In Finland, the Prime Minister chairs also the Research and Innovation Council.

The Committee for the Future has had another pioneer role when it launches the forward-looking methods and training in the Parliament for MPs, experts and groups involved in the legislative planning work. Moreover, the Committee continues to actively initiate and manage projects of futures research, foresight evaluations and technology assessment, but it also seeks to cooperate nationally with the Academy of Finland, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES), the Finnish Innovation Fund (Sitra) as well as academia and various research centres, ministries and institutions.

Technology Assessment, the study and evaluation of new technologies, has been the core task of the Committee since its beginning. In the European context the Committee is a full member in the European Parliamentary Technology Assessment (EPTA) network. The EPTA partners advise European Parliaments on the possible social, economic and environmental impacts of new science and technological developments.

Finnish Foresight Networks

Another multi-partner public foresight network called FinnSight2015 was organized during the years 2006-2007. Thus, Finnsight2015 was a study on the fields of science and technology of Finland in the 2010s, and a joint foresight project of the Academy of Finland and TEKES. The change factors impacting on business, the industry and Finnish society were studied by 10 panels, each with 12 experts, focusing on the chosen core areas. An e-report was published in English at the Academy of Finland.

The National Foresight Network is one example of current collaboration between many partners in Finland. The foremost aim is to be a forum for discussions and coordination. The core group is composed of public institutions that themselves have on-going foresight processes. Its second aim is to challenge the foresight practitioners in their thinking, learning and training. Nationally, Sitra is the

coordinator and, in addition, it invites to public sector organisations, particularly business sector representatives and NGOs, to join these efforts. This is a truly active online network, which regularly publishes relevant foresight-related news, a monthly question, a monthly topic for discussion plus their updates, and news trends in a visually viewer-friendly way.

The Foresight Bloggers invited to the network are 18 professionals in the foresight field who write about their latest observations and emerging ideas. All key words in these thematic foresight areas are listed and ranked, and an emphasis is put on the particularly eye-appealing layout. Thus, when you open the website, a colourful trend map is continuously co-created and re-created, constantly moving on your screen.

Government Foresight

As the Prime Minister's foresight group the current method of networking was founded in 2007. It was particular to the previous parliamentary period, but the network setting continues. Its duty is to link the ministerial foresight processes and coordinate them by using procedures such as seminars, visits, expert hearings, meetings, and thematic conversations.

Today, this interministerial network is a forum for discussions, cooperation and exchange of information relevant to futures issues. The anticipation done by the Finnish ministries serves their own strategic, administrative and policy planning as well as the decision-making of the Government.

In this presentation it has been shown that, institutionally, Finland is moving onwards from its early Think Tanks and discussions. I would like to quote Professor Malaska's visionary definition many years ago to make the point here, "Doing Futures Studies is making of the futures"!

One recent example in Finland of "making the futures" is the discussion which has been opened to all and perhaps this can even be called "an open movement towards 2030.fi". It is a spin-off from the current Prime Minister's foresight process, in which TEKES has taken the coordinating role of experimenting and pushing "Finnish foresight culture" forward. For many this is the first time when the entire forward-looking process has been opened to the public in Finland. Thus all interested parties are invited to the foresight website www.2030.fi or to participate in the social media to proactively contribute to the writing of the next Foresight Report.

In conclusion,

In Finland, we have multiple institutions that are relevant to the long-term forward-looking studies and public strategic planning. For this country presentation, I have chosen the following: TUTKAS (1970-), the Finnish Society for Futures Studies (1980-), the Finland Futures Research Centre (1992-) and the Parliamentary Committee for the Future (1993-) as well as some of the national foresight networks.

These are some observations and a short review on the institutional infrastructures of public foresighting. From its first informal meetings and discussions, over the past 40 years, Finland has developed a more or less structured forward-looking process. The pioneer actors of the forward-looking activities were

first professionals, experts and academicians, then practitioners and researchers, and today all interested can be participants in multiple processes. The openness, and the interactive and instant methods of communication have become an inseparable part of the systems and instruments. More systematic and institutional structures have emerged, and the current instruments aim for a better coordination of the many public fora for foresight exercises in Finland.

Finally, my personal thank you for the honour to present this speech to you. This was an oxymoron to begin with and one personal collection of the Finland Futures Research history!

My best wishes for the Institute Destrée to celebrate this jubilee today and may it have a futuristic target - the 100th Anniversary!

Literature References:

Muutos, valinnat, tulevaisuus – tulevaisuudentutkimuksen edistäminen Suomessa. Opetusministeriö. Komiteamietintö 1989:3. Valtion Painatuskeskus. Helsinki. /In English: *Change, Choices and Future – Promoting Futures Studies in Finland. The Ministry of Education. Committee Report 1989:3.*

Tulevaisuuden tutkimus Suomessa. Pentti Malaska – Mika Mannermaa (toim.). Oy Gaudeamus Ab. WSOY:n graafiset laitokset. Juva 1985. /In English: *Futures Research in Finland. 1985.*

Eduskunnan Tulevaisuusvaliokunnan synty. Kansalaisaloitteesta vakinaiseksi valiokunnaksi. Aalto-Lassila, Arja (2008) Pro Gradu-tutkielma. Helsingin yliopisto, Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta. Maaliskuu 2008. /In English: *Establishing the Committee for the Future. From an Initiative by Citizens to a permanent Committee at the Parliament. A Master's Thesis by Arja Aalto-Lassila at the University of Helsinki. 2008.*

Revamping the Work of the Committee for the Future. Tiihonen, Paula. Publication of the Committee for the Future 7/2011. Parliament of Finland. Helsinki. 2011.

Miten tutkimme tulevaisuuksia? Osmo Kuusi – Timo Bergman – Hazel Salminen (toim.) Tulevaisuuden tutkimuksen seura ry. Acta Futura Fennica No 5. 3:s uudistettu painos. Vammalan Kirjapaino. Vammala 2013. /In English: *How to study futures? The 3rd revised edition of Acta Futura Fennica No. 5 by the Finnish Society of Futures Studies published in 2013.*

Electronic Foresight References:

<http://www.aka.fi/en-GB/A/Academy-of-Finland/The-Academy/> The Academy allocating research funding

www.ffrc.utu.fi Finland Futures Research Centre and Finland Futures Academy

www.futurasociety.fi The Finnish Society for Futures Studies

<http://web.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/parliament/committees/future.htx> The Committee for the Future

www.sitra.fi The Finnish Innovation Fund

<http://www.aka.fi/en-GB/A/Decisions-and-impacts/Foresight/FinnSight2015/> FinnSight2015

www.foresight.fi The National Foresight Network

www.2030.fi Open process for the Government's Foresight Report 2030

www.clubofrome.org The Club of Rome has a National Committee in Finland since 1984

www.tekes.fi The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation

<http://web.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/eduskunta/organisaatio/kansanedustajat/tutkas/index.htx> TUTKAS

www.valtioneuvosto.fi The Government Foresight Network

Electronic History References:

<http://www.oecd.org/pisa/> the Programme for International Student Assessment by OECD

<http://www.helsinki.fi/yliopistonhistoria/english/royal.htm> Building the Future Since 1640

<http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/vanhat/vk/wexionius/> Michael Wexionius Academic Dissertation 1641

http://yle.fi/elavaarkisto/artikkelit/suomen_sotakorvauksilla_rakennettiin_neuvostoliiton_tulevaisuutta_82075.html#media=82077 The National Broadcasting Company YLE programme on WWII war reparations

http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/koulutuspolitiikka/Hankkeet/Yliopistolaitoksen_uudistaminen/?lang=en The Ministry of Education and Culture: University Act 2009 and University Reform effective in 2010