



## **Planning the Future of World Markets: the OECD's Interfuturs Project**

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## Planning the Future of World Markets: the OECD's Interfutures Project

In 1975, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched a research project entitled *Interfutures. Research project into the development of the advanced industrial societies in harmony with the developing world*.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the project, initiated by the Japanese government and funded partly by the Toyota foundation, was to investigate alternative patterns of development for the Western economies in a new and interconnected world. What was referred to, in the project, as the advanced industrialized societies were increasingly addressing what Interfutures described as “structural challenges.” Interfutures was appointed at the same time as a group led by the American economist William McCracken. The McCracken report introduced the idea of structural challenges in Western economies, with the purpose of bringing home the argument that the long period of growth and welfare statism was over.<sup>2</sup> While the McCracken group dealt with the prospect of post-OPEC economic policies specifically, Interfutures was charged with reflecting on the need for a new long term strategy for the West, a strategy that could surpass the habitual horizon of conjectural planning and deal with the new phenomenon of uncertainty in a changing world economy. The problem of increasing uncertainty in the world environment would be met by setting out a “long term vision of the major problems to which society will be confronted.”<sup>3</sup>

‘Structural issues,’ ‘interdependence,’ and ‘uncertainties’ were among the many 1970s neologisms that informed the Interfutures group but that also positioned Interfutures in a new field of emergent planning methods and forms of expertise from the mid-1970s on. The literature describes the 1970s as marking a watershed moment and break from the long postwar period: a shock of the global due to the arrival, center stage, of the developing world as actors in their own right; a structural *nach dem Boom* marked by the end of stable industrial growth;

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1 OECD archives, *Interfutures*, 1975–1979. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council through ERC Grant 283706.

2 Paul McCracken, Guido Carli, Herbert Giersch, Attila Karaosmanoglu, Ryutaro Komiya, Assar Lindbeck, Robert Marjolin and Robin Matthews, *Towards Full Employment and Price Stability: A Report to the OECD by a Group of Independent Experts* (Paris: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1977).

3 Interfutures, “Proposed meeting of senior policy officials, draft of the background paper,” 5 February, FUT (78) 3.

a crisis of predictability that shook patterns of national cohesion and social stability; or, as Matthias Schmelzer has most recently suggested, an ideological crisis of growthmanship – the governmental regime par excellence of the postwar period.<sup>4</sup> Interfutures was a key reflection on all of these issues, and of the way that they raised a profound challenge to the historical category of the Western world in an emergent world order that no longer reflected the stability of the Bretton Woods era. As such, the Interfutures project stands as a key record of a 1970s reflection on an open-ended process of globalization that challenged Western notions of hegemony and control. This chapter places the Interfutures group in the context of other groups of research, planning and policy concern that emerged in the 1970s and that were, in different ways, reflections on radical interdependence, such as indeed the McCracken group, the American Trilateral Commission or the Club of Rome. These groups were central Western sites of circulation and definition of the meaning of globality, in the sense of the correct interpretation of the challenges to a postwar world order dominated by the industrial visions of the nineteenth century and by a stable power balance between East and West. In the context of a wider global struggle over the meaning of interdependence, a struggle in which the developing or so-called Third world had for the first time its own arguments, Interfutures demonstrates how these spaces became the sites of a structured Western response to notions of globalization that seemed to run counter to the socioeconomic interests of the Western world. This refers in particular to the radical visions of globalization that emerged from, on the one hand, environmentalism, and, on the other, Third worldism and the so-called New International Economic Order. In line with an emerging historiography, this chapter argues that the Interfutures group carried early versions of neoliberal arguments organized around a dominant notion of the world market, and that its main purpose was to set out a distinctly Western, liberal, and defensive strategy of globalization. This strategy had as its purpose the management of the challenge of interdependence over the long term, so that Western interests could be assured in the future.

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4 Matthew Connelly, "Future Shock: The End of the World as They Knew It," in *Shock of the Global*, ed. Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, Daniel J Sargent (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 337–351, 339; Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011); Matthias Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth: The OECD and the Making of the Economic Growth Paradigm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Raphael Lutz, *Nach dem Boom: Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Bonn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012); Matthias Schmelzer, "The crisis before the crisis: the 'problems of modern society' and the OECD, 1968–74," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 19, no. 6, (2012): 999–1020.

By pointing to the link between such originally defensive reactions to a set of radical world discourses, and an emergent neoliberal Western world view, the argument allows us to add nuance to the prevailing understanding of the genealogy of neoliberalism in global politics since the 1970s. What we call in shorthand neoliberalism was never a clear cut paradigm but should be understood as a gradual outcome of a battle between a set of much larger discourses on the world's future in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> The OECD, an organization that was first created in the context of the Marshall Plan in 1948, emerged in the context of the oil crises in the early 1970s as the “steward of globalisation,” the overseer of a process of global interconnectedness that seemed to threaten the interests of the Western world and that required, therefore, new tools of planning, management and control.<sup>6</sup> Several studies have pinpointed the role of the OECD as a site for the circulation of early neoliberal ideas. These ideas, carried by the high level expert reports circulated by the OECD in the 1970s were different in nature than the first generation of neoliberal thinking that had emerged from the “neoliberal thought collective” of Hayek's Mount Pelerin Society in the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> They were allegedly non-ideological and did not take place on the level of doctrine or political theory. Rather, they were inscribed in pragmatic and technocratic arguments concerning planning and policy tools and showcased as forms of problem solving for welfare capitalist economies. Around such arguments, liberal, neoliberal, as well as progressive economists and planners could gather.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the ideas presented by the Interfutures group stood in close connection to other notions of interdependence. The McCracken report, which included some of the world's most famous economists, became a landmark report not only for its diagnosis of problems hitherto understood as conjectural and structural, and thus having endemic causes within Western industrial economies, but also for the remedies that it proposed: liberalization of labour markets and social systems, a new set of social compromises based on lower expecta-

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5 Johanna Bockman, “Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism: The Economic Ideas behind the New International Economic Order,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 1 (2015): 109–128.

6 Mathieu Leimgruber, “Stewards of globalisation.” Unpublished paper.

7 Dieter Plehwe and Philip Mirowski, *The Road from Mount Pelerin: The Making of a Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

8 Vincent Gayon. “L'OCDE au travail. Contribution à une sociologie historique de la ‘coopération économique internationale’ sur le chômage et l'emploi (1970–2010)” (PhD. Diss, Université Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne, 2010) ; Francois Denord, *Neoliberalisme version française. Histoire d'une idéologie politique* (Paris: Demopolis, 2007); Laurent Warlouzet, *Governing Europe in a Globalizing World. Neoliberalism and its Alternatives following the 1973 crisis* (London: Routledge, 2018).

tions on growth and redistribution, less state intervention and more market mechanisms, and more openness toward global markets.<sup>9</sup> As Vincent Gayon has shown, the publication of the McCracken report settled a central dispute as both Keynesian and monetarist economists agreed on what was essentially a turn to monetarism in the organization's ensuing economic expertise.<sup>10</sup> Ravi Abdelal has shown how the OECD in a similar manner became the privileged arena for the creation of a liberalized framework for the financial markets, and that this framework, designed to foster a global expansion of capital markets, was in fact pushed through by former socialists such as the French premier Jacques Delors, with the idea that liberalization would provide a new market rationality and stability.<sup>11</sup> This turn within the OECD to seemingly apolitical forms of expertise is important because it permits us to add nuance to the historiography of neoliberalism as a project of ideological vanguards, the influence of which was for the most part still very marginal in the 1970s. What it instead brings out is how specific notions of expertise in themselves became the solution for settling an intensely contested process of globalization.

It is pertinent to place the notion of the future in this context. Interfutures is of interest to this volume because of its interest in new future-oriented planning technologies through which it thought world relationships might be made manageable over the 'long term,' in other words, over a new horizon of time stretching beyond the conventional horizon of planning systems. In addition, as presented by Interfutures, such tools, which included the much marketed scenario tool, were thought to have a new and global spatial scope, through which they could embrace problems of complexity, interdependence and uncertainty in a world system. A central element of the Interfutures project was indeed that it proposed shifting the gaze of planning from conjectural macro economic planning, toward the setting of long-term strategic goals and objectives. This included an emphasis on shaping shared images of the process of globalization and the diffusion onto the world level of positive images of the world market.

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<sup>9</sup> Paul McCracken Guido Carli, Herbert Giersch, Attila Karaosmanoglu, Ryutaro Komiya, Assar Lindbeck, Robert Marjolin, Robin Matthews, . *Towards Full Employment and Price Stability: A Report to the OECD by a Group of Independent Experts* (Paris: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1977). See Charles S. Maier, "'Malaise': The Crisis of Capitalism in the 1970s," in *Shock of the Global*, 25–48. Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945–2000* (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Gayon, *L'OCDE au travail*.

<sup>11</sup> Ravi Abdelal, *Capital Rules : The Construction of Global Finance* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Interfutures marked a turn here in international organizations as tools, such as scenarios, forecasts and indicators, in which coping with uncertainty and unpredictability by setting out images, expectations and scenarios of development was key.

## The problem of interdependence

Interdependence was a Western term, used to describe a phenomenon of planetary disorder, a shake-up of global power relations and a threat to the category of the industrial world. As such, the term interdependence also served to reiterate Western interests in this potentially messy process. Interdependence as a term had antecedents in earlier postwar reflections on the impact of an emergent *tiers monde* that introduced an element of chaos into world relationships. In 1953, the French demographer Alfred Sauvy, famous for having coined the term 'Third World,' wrote that this new world was defined precisely by its rejection of Western images of the future, and its ambition to create images of its own. Sauvy did so in a context that is not without importance for us here, as a member of the circle of French planners who developed the so-called *prospective* method as a form of long term planning.<sup>12</sup> The *prospective* method would resurface as the method of choice of the Interfutures project, in direct proximity to scenarios taken from American forecasting. The emphasis on interdependence as a process that needed guidance in order to shift from a potentially conflict-ridden state of affairs, into a question of 'harmonious' relationships, was a response to other 1970s discourses on the world economy, which, inspired by dependency and world system theory, emphasized global structures as reflections of profound imbalances between a developed and a developing world, or even as a projection of the Marxist class struggle at the global level. Interdependence could, as Interfutures would suggest, be managed by the active creation of new and "harmonious relations" between the West and the Third World, if methods for such management were found. It was precisely through an emphasis on methods that Interfutures set out the elements of what were to become the dominant Western interpretation of globalization, and arguably, it was precisely as the methods of steering new world relationships appeared that forms of future research found their relevance on the global level.

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<sup>12</sup> Alfred Sauvy, *Le Tiers Monde* (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1956).

Jenny Andersson, *The Future of the World: Futurists, Futurology and the Struggle for the Post Cold War Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2018).

Interfutures sat at the same time as the American Trilateral Commission, appointed to resuture an American worldview broken by the problem of multipolarity. “Managing interdependence,” as formulated both in the Trilateral commission and the Interfutures program, was a euphemism for finding the political technologies and planning tools with which a new confrontational world situation could be pushed toward forms of strategic cooperation.<sup>13</sup> Another shared denominator between the Interfutures group and the Trilateral Commission was the theme of ‘ungovernability,’ a definition proposed by the Trilateral Commission to denote problems of rigidity in Western welfare states and social systems.<sup>14</sup> Both Interfutures and the Trilateral Commission performed a central analytical move as they joined together, in the notion of interdependence, problems of uncertainty in the outside world environment with the idea of uncertainty within Western societies. The latter were understood as having been unleashed by forms of social crisis with roots in Western systems of governance. By joining these two elements of crisis together, both Interfutures and the Trilateral Commission also came to the conclusion that the capacities of the West to meet a transformed world order in which the Third World now had a bargaining position hinged on its ability to draw developing countries into an expanding world market. In addition, Western competitiveness needed to be restored through the reform of labor markets and welfare states.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, ‘interdependence’ was more than a description of a new phenomenon of globality, it was term charged with a heavy historical legacy of Western hegemony and a diagnosis of a situation in which the colonial relationships inherited from the nineteenth century were giving way to a new symmetry in power relations. In this world situation, the meaning of First, Second and Third World was no longer clear.

The Interfutures program defined interdependence as a threefold problem: First, the oil crisis was the final indication that the long period of stability around industrial society was over. Faltering growth rates and new forms of social conflict eroded the basis of Fordist societies. Moreover, the volatility that

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Gill, *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009). Phillip Golub, “From the new international order to the G20,” *Third World Quarterly*, 34, no. 6 (2013): 1000–1015.

<sup>14</sup> Trilateral Commission, *Towards a Renovated International System* (Washington, 1977). Interfutures, Documents concerning the Interfutures program 1977–1980 MAS 80.9, ED 80–11, OECD archives, Paris. Interfutures, *Facing the Future* (Paris: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1977), 179.

<sup>15</sup> “Resume of the Interfutures conceptual framework regarding the Advanced Industrial Societies Rigidities.” OECD archives.

growth rates and price levels had encountered in the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s seemed to mark the end of conjectural market patterns, and introduced a concern with fluctuations in commodity markets that defied predictability and governability. Second, the liberal capitalist economies were increasingly competing with the socialist planned economies over resources, technological development and investment. A relatively stable Cold War relationship was thus changing as both worlds were entering the post-industrial era and encountered similar problems of value and labor change, the skills revolution, and new struggles for energy and raw materials. Third, this process of possible convergence (convergence theory boomed in the decade prior to the Interfutures group) was disturbed through the confrontation with the Third World, which forced both Western societies and the economies of the Eastern bloc to seek new competitive alliances. In the years leading up to OPEC, the Third World had shown that it was no longer content to be the object of development policies, and was increasingly claiming a fair share of world development. This included access to markets for advanced industrial goods, an increased share of world industrial labor, and controls over prices of its raw materials in what to Interfutures was nothing less than a full shake-up of the postwar world order.<sup>16</sup> In summary, world hierarchies were in flux. Interfutures gave expression to this flux as the group proposed a new categorization of the world into the 'Advanced Industrial Economies,' AIS, which included the socialist countries, on the one hand, and on the other, the LDCs of the developing world. Meanwhile, the Interfutures report, published in 1979, foresaw important processes of fracture also disintegrating these new geopolitical categories. The Western world was, in the light of problems such as price fluctuations, wage drift, expanding public sectors, and stop and go policies, at the risk of no longer representing a coherent and unified system of organized market economies. Some countries (France, the UK) resembled developing nations in their reliance on a growing state apparatus and failing macro economic policies. The incoherence in the use of macro economic planning was a threat to a united AIS position that might have been able to meet Third Worldism with a single Western strategy. The core problem with the second category, the developing countries, was of course its new and menacing role as a collective agent in an inverted bargaining game. But Interfutures pointed out that the hope for new and harmonious relations between the Third World and the OECD countries lay in the fact that Third Worldism was not stable and was al-

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<sup>16</sup> Glenda Sluga, "The transformation of international institutions: Global shock as cultural shock," in *Shock of the Global*, ed. Niall Fergusson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, Daniel J. Sargent (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 223–237.



ready breaking up between oil exporters and importers. A number of countries – Iran, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, and Algeria – were contenders for industrialism, while other Third World countries – such as Bangladesh – were basically only the sites of location for Western industries. Japan (the third node of the Trilateral Commission) occupied an intermediary place with its hyper industrialization and increasing reliance on raw materials. Highly energy sensitive, Japan was challenging Europe for oil. With its Western system of governance after 1945 and the direct links between its planning elites and Western networks, Japan was an extension of the Western world in Asia. Interdependence was thus a fundamentally fractious process which posed not one but many problems of coordination, but also the opportunity for strategic alliances if common interests over the long-term could be found. Interfutures' problem was how to reassert the AIS' interests over the long-term by possibly making strategic concessions to the most advanced LDCs for the purpose of protecting long term hegemony.<sup>17</sup>

The vision of global challenges put forward by the notion of interdependence was thus one that reflected a highly Western biased conception of changes to world order, and a limited take on globality. The Interfutures group also used the term to refer to a different set of issues that by the mid 1970s were labelled 'world problems' or 'common problems,' and that went beyond problems of coordination between categories and depicted planning problems that could not be dealt with within the frame of the nation state and national planning systems such as those developed during the postwar period. In radical globality discourses, so-called 'world problems' were understood as problems that necessitated common solutions, in other words forms of planning and decision-making surpassing the national, the bipolar or even the transnational level and that could only efficiently take place on a new level of world, for instance in the form of world government, world regulation or indeed world plans. This latter notion – the idea that the entire world system could be planned – was as we will see an idea that flourished along with the many different models of the world economy that marked the first half of the 1970s. In most of these models, problems in the world economy were perceived as shared, or indeed common. The Club of Rome, in many ways a twin project to that of Interfutures but guilty in the eyes of the OECD of the problematic *Limits to Growth*-report in 1972, spoke of problems in the world system using the term *world problematique*, denoting encompassing problems that concerned the world as a whole.

It is important to note, in this regard, that Interfutures dealt to only a small extent with such notions of common or world problems, and spoke instead of

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17 Interfutures, chapter drafts (in particular VI, XI, XIX), OECD archives.

‘problems of development.’ This was a highly conscious choice. The euphemism ‘problems of development’ hid the fundamental tension between discourses affirming globality by arguing that the interests of the whole world required change on the level of the world system, and discourses that either emphasized ‘common futures’ by pinpointing trans-border problems such as environment or armament, or reaffirmed, like Interfutures, the stakes of the Western world and new strategic alliances with the South.<sup>18</sup> Interfutures did not set out to address development as a common world problem of over vs. under development in a systemic whole, as did radical planners such as the Dutch Jan Tinbergen or the Armenian born American systems analyst Hazan Ozbekhan in connection to NIEO debates at the same time (see below). Rather, it addressed development as a set of fractures that challenged the dominance of the industrialized world in a new struggle over an international division of industrial labor. The first of these fractures was the acute crisis in relationships between AIS and LDCs already described. The second fracture was the conflict between resource extraction and nature, highlighted by the Club of Rome-report and directly in conflict with the OECD’s prevailing notion of development as economic growth.<sup>19</sup> The third fracture was more subtle but the most important, as a large part of Interfutures would also cater to the issue of reactions to development in terms of ‘changing socio-cultural values’ and instability within Western nations. The problem of interdependence, in other words, was not a problem of addressing problems common to the world in the interest of all, but rather, a problem of reigning in an emergent new world order so that fundamental categories of the developing and developed world could be restored. By articulating and framing problems of interdependence as problems that could be solved if the interest of each was reasserted, the OECD reiterated the liberal capitalist West as a category under threat of losing its world dominance, but with a historically legitimate interest in maintaining its hegemonic position.

## Planning the world: origins of futurology

Interfutures’ mission was in fact a two fold one, as its work not only consisted in the strategic analysis of a new world situation marked by interdependence, but

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<sup>18</sup> Jenny Andersson and Sibylle Duhautois, “The future of Mankind “ in *The Politics of Globality Since 1945: Assembling the Planet*, ed. Casper Sylvest and Rens van Munster (New York: Routledge, 2015), 106–125.

<sup>19</sup> Schmelzer, *The Hegemony of Growth*.

also in examining which new methods of planning could permit overseeing and managing this new situation. Interfutures was thus devoted from the onset to the question of methods, and to the particular technologies that could transform a global situation of conflict and struggle for resources into one of “harmonious development.”<sup>20</sup> The program proposed using forms of long-term or long range planning, including scenarios, *prospective* and modelling, as its particular method.

Futurological tools proliferated in planning circles in the period from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s. While historians have dealt with the transnational networks of planners in the interwar and postwar era, much less historical research has been devoted to the circulation of concepts and tools of planning informed by ideas of complexity, interdependence, risk and having as their focus the long term from the 1970s on.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, as argued here, this second mode in planning implied a notable expansion of planning rationalities, both with reference to the ‘long term’ as temporal horizon, and to the global scale. Future research, for instance the scenario method experimented with by Interfutures, originated in technological forecasting and Cold War strategy. Both focused on the idea of the ‘long range,’ a category produced by nuclear strategy and ballistic research. From the mid 1960s on, forms of forecasting began to be considered as ways of planning change in non-technological systems, including social organizations and the political system.<sup>22</sup> In the Eastern bloc, the proclamation of the Scientific and Technological Revolution emphasized scientific management, and rehabilitated forecasting as a key planning technology (it had already been used as part of Lenin’s NEP in the interwar period). A decision by the central Party committee for the use of forecasting as part of scientific management in 1967, led to the explosion of sectoral and governmental forecasting activities in socialist economies, and in 1967 and 1968 there were several transnational meet-

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<sup>20</sup> Interfutures, “Mission statement. Description of the research project”. OECD archives.

<sup>21</sup> Patricia Clavin, “Defining transnationalism,” *Contemporary European History* 14 (2005): 421–439. David Engerman and Corinna Unger, “Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (2009): 375–385. David Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, Michael E. Latham *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> On the transfer of planning tools from the military to the civilian apparatus, see Jennifer Light, *From Warfare to welfare* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2002); David Jardini, *Out of the Blue Yonder: The RAND Corporation’s Diversification into Social Welfare Research* (Baltimore: Carnegie Mellon University, 1996); Sharon Ghamari Tabrizi, *The Intuitive Science of Herman Kahn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

ings of socialist forecasters.<sup>23</sup> On the other side of the Atlantic, a national Science and Technology policy which included a much more active role for federal government and a turn to new planning tools such as cost benefit analysis and forecasting began under the Kennedy and subsequently the Johnson administrations.<sup>24</sup> From 1972 on, the debate over future research as a new planning tool also inspired the creation of ad hoc commissions to national planning systems in Europe – the Netherlands, Sweden, France, West Germany, UK – and Japan. These commissions were national spaces but they also functioned as international hubs for the circulation of methods, writing, and forms of expertise. The methods of forecasting, systems analysis, global modelling and scenario analysis laid the basis for new communities of planners, oftetime consultants, who moved between national planning commissions and transnational sites such as the Club of Rome, IIASA, or Interfutures.<sup>25</sup>

Like its more insubordinate twin, the Club of Rome, Interfutures stemmed from a central gathering of planners organized by the OECD in Bellagio in 1969. The Bellagio conference, the theme of which was “Long range forecasting and planning” was called by the OECD’s Science Policy Unit around the theme of ‘problems of modern societies.’<sup>26</sup> As Matthias Schmelzer has shown, problems of modern societies was a euphemism for the concern within parts of the OECD with the critique of growth by the late 1960s and the discovery of both the environmental and social costs of economic development. The OECD’s Science Policy Unit was created by Alexander King, the initiator, with Aurelio Peccei, of the Club of Rome, as part of a turn away from the strict postwar focus on growth within the organization. King used the Science Policy Directorate in order to criticize the standing of the idea of industrial development, convinced as he was that the prerequisites for industrial development were exhausted and that growth based on resource extraction had reached maturity in the Western world.<sup>27</sup> He thought that the Western world had to develop a more nuanced ap-

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23 See Vitezslav Sommer, “Forecasting the Post-Socialist Future: Prognostika in Late Socialist Czechoslovakia, 1970–1989,” in *The Struggle for the Long Term in Transnational Science and Politics*, ed. Jenny Andersson and Egle Rindzeviciute (New York: Routledge, 2015), 144–168. Lukasz Becht, “From euphoria to frustration. Institutionalising a system of prognostic research in the people’s republic of Poland, 1971–1976,” forthcoming and with the permission of the author.

24 Light, *From Warfare to Welfare*, 160 on.

25 Egle Rindzeviciute, *Power of System* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

26 Matthias Schmelzer, “Born in the corridors of the OECD: The forgotten origins of the Club of Rome, transnational networks, and the 1970s in global history,” *Journal of Global History* 12 (2017): 26–48.

27 Schmelzer, “The crisis before the crisis.”

proach to problems of industrial development if capitalism was to survive. This included harnessing the forces of science in better ways and picking up the competition over productivity with the socialist world and the US, as well as developing methods of planning that drew on the so-called policy sciences, the scientific approach to planning that had emerged as part of systems analysis or Operations Research in the 1950s and 1960s. The Bellagio Declaration expressed the OECD's wish to concentrate Western nations' efforts in planning, and stressed the need that Western nations develop forms of long-term forecasting that could help them manage the long-term effects of development in and on their social structures, deal with possible value conflict, and establish priorities for policies.<sup>28</sup>

The Bellagio meeting gathered many of the forecasters and consultants who had been active in spreading the tools of future research. One of these was the German-born engineer Eric Jantsch. Jantsch wrote a much read report on planning and technological forecasting in 1967. It presented the idea that technological change could be actively governed and planned for the benefit of welfare societies and that the unintended consequences and cybernetic feedback loops of new technologies could be forecasted, so that the system of economic and technological change was in actual fact a malleable, controllable entity. It introduced the idea of the *long range*, to a European public of planners. The report also proposed that human values and value reactions to industrial and technological processes were among the things that could be planned and foreseen as systemic feedback functions. This was no small point in the aftermath of 1968 and turbulent years in European societies marked both by anti-nuclear protests and labor market unrest.<sup>29</sup> Jantsch edited the 1969 volume from the Bellagio conference, and in 1972 published *Long range policy and planning* which circulated widely amongst European, American and Japanese planners (and was also translated into Russian and prefaced by Dzhermen Gvishiani).<sup>30</sup> Another participant at Bellagio was the former RAND strategist and software engineer Hasan Ozbekhan. Ozbekhan designed the first model for the Club of Rome, meant to address a 'global predicament' by stressing interdependence in a world system.<sup>31</sup> At Bel-

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<sup>28</sup> Eric Jantsch, *Perspectives on Planning: Papers from the Bellagio Conference* (Paris: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1969).

<sup>29</sup> Eric Jantsch, *Technological Forecasting in Perspective* (Paris: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1967).

<sup>30</sup> Jantsch, *Perspectives on Planning*.

<sup>31</sup> Hasan Ozbekhan, *The Predicament of Mankind: A Quest for Structured Responses to Growing World-wide Complexities and Uncertainties. Original Proposal to the Club of Rome* (New York: Club of Rome, 1970).

lagio, Ozbekhan presented his 'general theory of planning,' which argued that the world could be considered to be a holistic system, and that this system could be planned in order to work towards an overarching value, such as for instance human development or environmental balance. The 'critical problems' of the world could be solved, if the world future was not treated as a problem of prediction, but as a normative problem of setting out an image of what an ideal world future would be like. To Ozbekhan's mind, this had to be about the envisioning of ideal states such as a world without hunger, and an end to the dichotomy of over and under development.<sup>32</sup> Ozbekhan is an example of the radical use of systems theory in forging radical visions of a better and more rational world by the late 1960s and 1970s. But Ozbekhan's model for the Club of Rome, which explicitly incorporated the variable of Western value change as a precondition for a new world equilibrium, was never used and the *Limits to Growth* report published in 1972 was based instead on Jay Forrester's World 2 model, initially designed to monitor the flow of goods in commercial warehouses in Boston harbor.<sup>33</sup> The Interfutures report made use of some of Ozbekhan's ideas but translated the idea of a world system with an ideal future objective into a completely different concern with the future interests of the industrialized nations and the necessity of maintaining the 'market image.'

## From systems analysis to world consultancy: Jacques Lesourne and the MITRA group

It is clear from this argument that Interfutures did not represent future research as such, nor an engagement with the more radical attempts to use future research as a way of engaging with globality that existed at the same time. Rather, Interfutures represented a very specific Western take on the world's future. This take needs to be understood in the context of the rationale of the OECD and its mandate to oversee the process of globalization, but in addition, it was a view directly influenced by the conditions of material production within the Interfutures group, by the scenario method used, and specifically, by the use of consultancy. As argued, future research represented a widening of the repertoires of planning, and the extension of the scope of planning rationalities both in

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<sup>32</sup> Hasan Ozbekhan, *A General Theory of Planning* (Santa Barbara: Systems Development Corporation, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> Elodie Vieille Blanchard, *Les limites à la croissance dans un monde global: modélisations, prospectives, réfutations* (PhD Diss., Paris, EHESS, 2011).

space and time. To this it might be added that future research also involved new forms of circulation, in particular of management techniques, between the public and the corporate spheres. Future research had origins both in military planning, and in the planning entities of large multinational, predominantly American, corporations such as IBM, Kodak, Bell laboratories, Lockheed, Kaiser Aluminum, or the Swiss Battelle Industries. As such, it had direct links to the idea that market mechanisms in various ways could be used as a method of steering and as a complement to plans, but that market activities also required a precision of operational objectives, goals, and processes. In the Eastern bloc, future research was part of a new reform communist toolkit which included management science and systematic forecasting.<sup>34</sup> In the West, future research contributed to a growing industry in indicators of long-term developments in technology and prices, but it also reflected a market metaphor in that it drew on emerging forms of consultancy. Transnational organizations after 1945 put in place new forms of mobility of expertise, as experts moved from national to international planning entities and back again. The growth of the multinational corporation, in the Cold War era, fostered a new kind of mobile expert which was that of the consultant in matters of strategy and decision, who facilitated the interface between corporations and public decision-making bodies on both the national and transnational levels. The OECD's *modus operandus* with expert groups privileged the use of consultancy, as in many ways the UN-system and the European Community did. Consultants could be academics, on leave for shorter missions, but they could also be professional expert-strategists whose origins were not in academia but in contract-seeking agencies with a mediating role between corporations and national or transnational organizations. As a form of expertise, consultancy enabled new forms of circulation between national and transnational spaces, and forecasting, scenarios, models and forecasts were all technologies that were, from the mid 1960s on, carried by consultancy. Consultancy also created a specific mode for the translation between planning technologies taken from public sectors and decision tools taken from the corporate world. Interfutures mobilized a number of consultants, including the French planner Bernard Cazes, the British sociologist Andrew Shonfield, and the American sociologist Daniel Bell, all of whom were prominent within the field of future research and forecasting (both Shonfield and Bell wrote central books on forecasting and planning in post-industrial society). It was directed by yet another

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<sup>34</sup> See Kott and Sommer in this volume.



er consultant, the French systems analyst and *prospectiviste* Jacques Lesourne.<sup>35</sup> The method used by Interfuturs, the scenario method and *prospective* analysis, was a product of consultancy and the circulation of expertise between decision-making in corporations and forms of public planning. The scenario method had been invented by the nuclear strategist Herman Kahn, first at RAND and then at the neoconservative Washington thinktank, the Hudson Institute. From there, the scenario method was transferred to simulations of domestic developments in the American context (in particular in the field of value tensions and race relations). Kahn also sold a package known as 'Corporate Scenarios' to leading corporations, and in the early 1970s, the French systems analyst Pierre Wack brought the scenario method from the Hudson Institute to Royal Shell, as a means with which to oversee uncertainty in oil markets and reserves.<sup>36</sup> The scenario method, which aimed to actively invent or script possible futures, was closely related to another method which influenced the field of future research from the mid 1960s on, French so-called *prospective*. *Prospective* was brought into the Interfuturs group through Jacques Lesourne and was essentially a form of decision science that developed in the large French public companies, in particular the SNCF but also the private Saint Gobain. It was to a large extent a consultancy activity that began in the so-called Clubs that grouped together business leaders and politicians, and *prospective* was a key element in the introduction of economic forecasting, business cycle theories, and labor management in France.<sup>37</sup> As such *prospective* is highly indicative of what Francois Denord has described as French neoliberalism, a strange alliance between French planners, engineers, and leaders of public and national industries.<sup>38</sup> *Prospective* was integrated into the French *Commissariat au Plan* in the mid 1960s. After 1968, its focus became that of considering the impacts of revolutionary value change on French society.<sup>39</sup> Both scenarios and *prospective*, in other words, where methods with an ap-

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35 Jacques Lesourne specialized in labor market issues and also became the editor of *Le Monde*. Biographical note, Interfuturs archives, and Jacques Lesourne, *Les mille sentiers de l'avenir*, (Paris, 1981). Jacques Lesourne, "L'exercice Interfuturs, réflexions méthodologiques," *Futuribles* no. 26: 20–38. Walter Michalski, "The OECD Interfuturs project revisited twenty years later," in *Decision, prospective, auto-organisation. Essais en l'honneur de Jacques Lesourne*, ed. Walter Michalski (Paris, 2000), 318–331.

36 Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013). John R. Williams, "World futures," *Critical Inquiry* 42 (2016): 473–546.

37 Jenny Andersson and Pauline Prat, "Gouverner le 'long terme' La production des futurs bureaucratique en France," *Gouvernement et action publique*, 3 (2015): 9–29.

38 Denord, *Néolibéralisme*.

39 Groupe 1985, *La France face au choc du futur* (Paris: Commissariat General au Plan, 1972).



parent focus on the social, on monitoring values and forms of uncertainty resulting from value change and potential unrest.

Lesourne was well familiar with *prospective*. He was an engineer and management consultant, who as the author of a number of books on business management and planning had introduced key elements of econometrics and business cycle theory in France. In 1958, Lesourne created a consultancy firm SEMA (*Société d'économie et de mathématiques appliqués*) which worked in *prospective* analysis, econometrics and information management.. At the time that he was recruited to Interfutures, Lesourne was centrally placed in the futurological field as assistant director to the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, IIASA, and president of the French *Futuribles* association.<sup>40</sup> But in the 1950s Lesourne had also ventured into global consultancy through SEMA's international branch, METRA, which worked on exporting systems analysis and management consultancy to key countries in the south, in particular Morocco, and which had as its particular market niche the aim of helping French multinationals maintain relationships with the former colonies after decolonisation. As demonstrated by Christian in this volume, France, Britain and Belgium reacted against the volatility in commodity markets by the early 1970s by strengthening their ties with former colonies and setting in place systems for price negotiations on primary materials. At the same time, the former colonies, and particularly those on the path of industrial development, became interesting markets for European technological solutions in communication and finance. SEMA-METRA continued to work on strategic advice for French investment banks and companies in North Africa, the Middle East and Iran.<sup>41</sup> In 1975, SEMA became METRA Iran, specialized in providing systems analytical tools for the management of Iranian oil production. Anglo-Persian Oil had been nationalized by the Mossadegh regime in 1951. In 1977, SEMA-METRA produced a report for UNIDO analyzing actor strategies of the Third World and the "future consequences of achieving the Lima objectives" (the Lima objectives were voted in 1975, see below). The re-

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<sup>40</sup> IIASA was a central site for the development of global modelling from 1972 on in particular in energy and world resources. Egle Rindzeviciute, "Purification and Hybridisation of Soviet Cybernetics: The Politics of Scientific Governance in an Authoritarian Regime," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 50 (2010): 289–309.

<sup>41</sup> Manfred Pohl, *Handbook on the History of European Banks* (New York: Edward Elgar, 1994), 249. From 1962 on Sema Metra published a periodical on investments and branch structures in Middle Eastern and African economies, *Cahiers Sema*. See "Le développement international du groupe METRA," in *PCM, Revue publiée par l'association professionnelle des ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées et des Mines, Les entreprises françaises à l'étranger* 68, no. 10 (1971): 93–99.

port drew on the prospective method that Lesourne was at the same time experimenting for *Interfutures*.<sup>42</sup>

## Overcoming limits: reshaping international order

The Interfutures group, and in particular Lesourne, used scenarios as the method for constructing a vision of interdependence that protected key Western interests, and with which it could also reject alternative visions of a new world order and in particular those coming from the *Limits to Growth* report, published a year before OPEC sent oil prices searing, and the RIO-report, written by Jan Tinbergen for UNITAR. RIO codified the theme of a New International Economic Order (NIEO).

*Limits to Growth* was based on computer models produced by a team of computer analysts and systems programs under the direction of Dennis and Donatella Meadows at MIT. *Limits* sent a shock wave through the industrialized world with its projection of an “overshoot and collapse” scenario.<sup>43</sup> The report was publically marketed and spread in ways that were strategically oriented at catching public attention, its models and scenarios also intended to work as triggers of the global imagination and to raise attention about an ensuing environmental collapse. As Matthias Schmelzer has shown, the publication of *Limits* created profound tensions within the OECD.<sup>44</sup> The Club of Rome, a group of industrialists and planners under King and Aurelio Peccei (another world consultant, having worked for the Olivetti foundation in Abyssinia) was the creation of the OECD Science Policy Unit as part of its search for a broader idea of planning, capable of embracing common problems and negative feedback loops. But the final message of the report, projecting a future determined by the tension between population and finite available resources and prophesying the end to capitalist development was a little hard to swallow for an organization devoted to protecting the economic development of the Western world. Interfutures was, as Schmelzer shows, a central component in the OECD's attempt to save a fragilized growth paradigm from the mid 1970s onward, by accepting the idea that environmental problems needed to be managed, but by reiterating the importance of growth to lasting social stability in the Western world and by a new insistence on the role of market mechanisms. Interfutures was appointed at the same 1975 Ministerial

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<sup>42</sup> “Industrial development in the Third world. Actor's strategies” (SEMA, METRA International, 1977).

<sup>43</sup> Vieille Blanchard, *Limites à la croissance*.

<sup>44</sup> Schmelzer, “Born in the corridors of the OECD.”

meeting that launched the McCracken group and its theme of structural adjustment. The meeting “put an end to previous debates about the problems of modern society by reaffirming without any qualifications the pursuit of growth as the key responsibility of governments.” The ministerial meeting in 1975 included a new emphasis on market mechanisms, as planning and welfare statism were now understood as incapable of overcoming the endemic problem of stagflation.<sup>45</sup> The formulation ‘in harmony’ in the description of the Interfutures project was a core rejection of the idea of physical boundaries to growth: it referred not only to a reconciliation of interests with the ambitions of development of strategic countries in the Third World, but also to the idea that the physical limits to development as posited by *Limits* could be overcome with less than life altering changes in industrial strategies. In fact there were deemed to be no physical limits to growth. The Interfutures group acknowledged that Mankind was entering a critical stage in its relationship to the ecosphere. But it rejected (as did the McCracken group) the idea that there were physical limits to growth: “The question of physical limits is *not of the form frequently proposed*.” Limits to industrial development were not found in natural resources, but identified instead in a range of other factors and in particular political phenomena such as the protectionist stances motivated by forms of Third Worldism and nationalism, or, importantly, the range of ‘socio cultural factors’ standing in the way of industrial growth in the advanced capitalist economies.<sup>46</sup> By socio cultural factors was meant the kind of ‘psychological’ protests against nuclear energy and environmental effects of industrialization that the Western world had witnessed since the late 1960s. Addressing problems of growth meant addressing these sociocultural factors. This included reigning in social struggles so that competitiveness could be restored and cycles of wage expectations broken.<sup>47</sup>

It is unfortunate that the existing literature has not made the links between the environmentalist message of the Club of Rome, the rise of Third Worldism and NIEO, and the ensuing ideas of interdependence in the Western world. These three debates were not isolated, but part of a great conflict over the world’s future that makes little sense considered in isolated pieces. Indeed the relevance of Interfutures only stands out if we consider it as a set of counterargu-

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<sup>45</sup> OECD Ministerial meeting 1975, “The imperatives of growth and cooperation,” 28 May 1975, quoted in Schmelzer, 317.

<sup>46</sup> Interfutures, FUT (77)S, 9 May 1977. “Midway through Interfutures. A first assessment of world problems. Intermediary results of the Interfutures research project phase A and B,” Interfutures Main issue paper 79, 7. OECD archives.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.; Manpower unit, Documents concerning the Interfutures program 1977–1980, MAS (80) 9ED(80)11. OECD archives.

ments to much more radical visions in a wider debate on the world future. The *Limits to growth*-report spawned a global controversy about the uses of modelling, which was technical on the surface but in fact concerned the very idea of world order.<sup>48</sup> The neo-Malthusian framework of *Limits* opened the door for a radicalization of the development debate: if the resources controlling world development were finite within fixed planetary boundaries, then the struggle over the rights of exploitation of these resources was acute.<sup>49</sup> This problem transposed, in a way, the nineteenth-century problem of the class struggle to the level of the world, which Interfutures recognized in its own analysis of a postwar global division of labor.

The Interfutures report has to be understood here as a key building stone in the monumental rejection of the *Limits to Growth* report after 1975, and in the gradual transformation of the apocalyptic arguments of *Limits* into an emphasis on management and sustainable development. These rejections came from different camps. The idea that there were physical limits to growth was unacceptable not only to prevailing Western notions of capitalism, but also to socialist ones. On the initiative of the Romanian president Nicolae Ceaușescu, an alliance of Romanian and African socialist forecasters challenged *Limits* by arguing that post-industrialism and the Scientific Technological Revolution made the resource dependency taken for granted in the model irrelevant by replacing natural resources with intellectual ones. A world of learning and creativity had no limits. The *Limits* report was, they argued, a product of a limited Western capitalist imagination and a “bourgeois futurology.”<sup>50</sup> Other models accepted the idea of planetary limits but challenged the way that models partitioned the right to development between the developing and the developed world. The most important intervention here was the so-called Bariloche-Report, written by the Latin American Fondation Bariloche and deeply influenced by dependency theory. The Bariloche-report argued that *Limits* was an erroneous representation of events, as world catastrophe was not an impending scenario but already at hand with two thirds of global populations living in poverty. Rejecting the idea of a static equilibrium point in the system, the Bariloche-report proposed using modelling in order to answer the question of how a dynamic system could be made to meet what the model referred to as the ‘basic needs’ of human populations. Covering global needs in the model required a total reorganization of the world economy and international order, in fact a new system that moved beyond both capitalism

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<sup>48</sup> Andersson, *The Future of the World*, forthcoming.

<sup>49</sup> See Elke Seefried, *Zukunft. Aufstieg und Krise der Zukunftsforschung* (Munich: de Gruyter, 2016).

<sup>50</sup> Majdi Elmandjra and Mircai Malitsa, *No Limits to Learning* (Bucharest: Club of Rome, 1974).

and socialism and allowed estimates of human needs to determine the rate of production within environmentally sustainable limits.<sup>51</sup> This would be the message of RIO, written by the Nobel Prize Laureate and World Bank economist Jan Tinbergen for UNITAR.<sup>52</sup> In 1973, the so-called Group of 77 of the non-aligned countries met in Algiers to follow up on the Third World forum held during the 1972 conference for the environment in Stockholm. The Third World was concerned that the problem of the environment would take attention away from problems of development.<sup>53</sup> The Algiers conference launched the New International Economic Order. NIEO was voted by the UN General assembly in 1974. The following year, the Lima conference of UNIDO set the goal for the developing countries to obtain a 25 percent share of world manufacturing.<sup>54</sup> NIEO led to interpretations in the Western world of the UN as the arena of a new and militant form of Third Worldism that threatened to overthrow the existing economic order.<sup>55</sup> The core concern of the NIEO was the right to self reliance, to a choice of one's own economic and social model which to most meant a version of socialism, and a share in what was projected as a new global division of industrial labor (see Christian in this volume). NIEO economists attacked an international division of labor destined to reproduce a global proletariat. They also rejected so-called cascading, by which the developing world could not access the high value added part of production dependent on some of its key minerals.<sup>56</sup> Some miner-

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51 See Sam Cole, Jay Gershuny, and Ian Miles, "Scenarios of world development," *Futures* 10, no. 1 (1978): 3–20.

52 Jan Tinbergen, *Reshaping the International Economic Order: A report to the Club of Rome* (New York: Club of Rome, 1976).

53 Mahbub Al Huq, *The Poverty Curtain: Choices for the Third World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

54 UNITAR, *A New International Economic Order: Selected Documents 1945–1975* (New York: United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 1976). See also UNESCO, *International Social Science Journal* 4, 1976, devoted to the NIEO; Mark T. Berger, "After the Third world? History, destiny and the fate of Third worldism," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2012): 9–39; Arif Dirlik, "Spectres of the Third world: global modernity and the end of the three worlds," *Third World Quarterly*, 25, no. 1 (2012): 131–145; Nils Gilman, "The new international economic order: A re-introduction," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 1 (2015): 1–16; Sibylle Duhautois, "Un destin commun? Etudes sur le futur et formation d'une conscience globale 1945–1989," (PhD Diss., Centre d'histoire de Sciences Po, 2017), chapter 4.

55 UN Charter of the economic rights and duties of states, and Declaration of the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and cooperation among states in accordance with the charter of the United Nations, 1974. GA resolution 3201, 1974.

56 Samir Amin, "Self reliance and the New International Economic Order," *Monthly Review* 29, no. 3 (1977): 1–21; see Christian in this volume.

als – aluminium, bauxite, iron – were singled out in particular as targets of cascading (these were also at the center of attention in the Interfutures report). In 1974, following the NIEO and the incorporation of principles such as ‘unjust enrichment’ in the UN Declaration on International Law, Jamaica shocked world markets by nationalizing bauxite. European countries reacted through the so-called Lome convention, giving former African, Caribbean and Pacific colonies privileged access to European markets in the hope of preventing collective protectionist stances.<sup>57</sup>

The RIO report followed the conceptions of the world as a systemic whole put forward by planners such as Tinbergen or Ozbekhan, and rejected the distinction between developed and developing world in favor of a perspective on the world as a whole. This was reflected in the production of the report which brought in two experts for each chapter, one from the developed and the other from the developing world. The report argued for the need for an entirely new international architecture aimed at promoting peace and development and providing for basic human needs. This included giving Third World countries control of their own resources, pooling the world's material wealth including capital and technology, and developing an overarching notion of the common heritage of Mankind. RIO also gave OPEC an increased role in new global financial institutions and foresaw equal representation of all nations in something called the World Treasury. UNCTAD would be transformed into a World Development and Trade Organisation dominated by the Third World, and complemented by a World Bank and a World Technological Development Authority which would aim to close the technological gap by lowering the prices for Third world countries' access to knowhow.<sup>58</sup>

Historians and development scholars have shown how the NIEO gradually failed, after 1976, as a Third Worldist attempt to collectively challenge the rules of the postwar economic order. Faced with Western resistance and in particular by American monetary extortions by the late 1970s, the attempts at mobilization demonstrated by OPEC broke down. Third Worldism in the UN system prompted the US in particular to create an alternative structure of international organization in the G7.<sup>59</sup> Interfuture was as much a part of this rejection of NIEO as it was part of the mounting rejection of the Limits report, and the value of the

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<sup>57</sup> Golub, “From the new international order to the G20”: 1005.

<sup>58</sup> In 1974 the World Bank was given a new target to work for the eradication of basic needs. Corinna Unger, *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990* (Amsterdam: Springer, 2016).

<sup>59</sup> See in particular the special issue in *Humanity, Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6, no. 1 (2015).

Interfuture group's work lay in the way that it presented a different image of the world's future, in which the core elements of a global division of labor between commodity producing nations and industrial actors was preserved. The final report, published in 1976 as *Facing the Future*, was a mirror image of RIO's description of a fundamentally transformed world economic order, and the report also directly regrouped the themes introduced by the NIEO (which developed from a set of statements in 1973 and 1974 to a set of actual negotiations between the developing countries and the Western world): commodity prices, in particular minerals and oil, technology and technology transfer, the monetary order of the Bretton Woods system including debt and currency prices, and the international division of labor between commodity producing and industrialized countries.<sup>60</sup> In Interfutures' own narrative of a new economic world order, only the Western world maintained an advantage as the main manufacturer of industrial products, and what the report referred to as new and 'harmonious' relationships with the Third World depended not on a reconfiguration of this system but on integrating the industrializing nations of the third world – India, Algeria, Iran – into a 'shared' vision of a growing world market. Such an emphasis on a growing world market can be put in the perspective of the *Limits*-report, which of course foresaw a firm limit to capitalist accumulation. Interfutures also dismissed RIO's conception of shared world interests – arguing that RIO did not take into consideration the needs of the Northern countries and that its conception of the world was therefore biased. The idea of a World Plan was understood as an unacceptably bureaucratic (socialist) conception that neglected market mechanisms. Market mechanisms, Interfutures proposed, would instead need to be given a larger space in Western economies in the coming decades.<sup>61</sup> This rejection of planning often returned in the Interfutures report, which was concerned with how market mechanisms could be protected for the long term, and with how they could be used in order to solve possible conflicts between short and long-term issues in policy planning. As Christian shows in this volume, in the years 1971–1976, forecasting became a key tool of UNCTAD in order to plan the development of commodity prices; from the mid 1970s, the socialist countries also attempted to consolidate relationships with the Third World by forecasting trade relationships and prices; and from the mid 1970s the EEC also engaged in forecasting as a way of stabilizing commodity prices. These forms of forecast were different in kind than the idea of a World Plan that informed RIO, but they were also different from the argument that would be put forward by Interfutures and that fa-

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<sup>60</sup> Interfutures, "Searching for a new order of the world economy," draft. OECD archives.

<sup>61</sup> Interfutures, Newsletter, summary of the RIO report, July 1977. OECD archives.



vored the use of scenarios as a way of creating 'shared' and 'harmonious' images of the world economic future.

## Scenarios: a method for managing world relationships

The actual scenarios proposed by Interfutures followed directly on the recommendations of the McCracken group. The main issues paper produced by Lesourne in 1978 focused on two scenarios, one in which there was growth in the Western world that went through a process of rapid structural adaptation, and one in which this world encountered an enduring stagflation scenario followed by an escalation of social conflicts. A conflict-ridden Western world would not be able to put up a united front toward the Third World.<sup>62</sup> It was however not only the message of these scenarios, but also the use of the scenarios as method for shaping forms of opinion and decision-making that was important in Lesourne's work for Interfutures. While *Limits* and *RIO* were circulated widely, intended for global publics, the scenarios created by Interfutures were written by expert consultants, and also included the creation of a specialized public of targeted decision-makers and experts of the world community. Interfutures worked with a motley crew of consultants strategically recruited to inform the group of developments in the developing nations,<sup>63</sup> but also to spread the message of the Interfutures report of the necessity of a long-term harmonious strategy to decision-makers in these nations. In other words, consultancy was a form of expertise chosen not only in terms of its input, but also to form the basis of a form of circulation which was part of the notion of shaping a positive image of the future. The importance of actively shaping this positive image led to the choice of scenarios as method, and to the rejection of computer modelling, which was accused of leading to deterministic representations of static trends. Interfutures (in fact Jacques Lesourne) argued that scenarios contained a dynamic and normative element. Through this dynamic element, they could be used to actively influence social relationships within Western societies as well as between the advanced industrialised world and the developing nations. To Lesourne, scenarios were, like systems analysis, a way of managing Third world re-

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<sup>62</sup> Main issues paper for the meeting of senior officials, Paris, 2 February 1979.

<sup>63</sup> I have not been able to find a complete list of these in the remaining archives.



lations.<sup>64</sup> *Prospective*, he argued, was a method that allowed for the evolution of dynamic situations and focused on actors and governments as actively creating strategies of cooperation or conflict that shaped the future of the 'system.'<sup>65</sup> A normative vision of the future could be chosen, and communicated through prospective analysis and scenarios to decision-makers in this system.

The methodological pertinence of prospective analysis and scenarios had also been indicated by the conclusions of the McCracken group, in which it was suggested that a shift from the conjectural developments that had hitherto been the focus of economic planning to structural and long-term issues that could not as such be planned had to be accompanied by a new concern with the analysis of fundamental 'trends and developments.'<sup>66</sup> The McCracken group came to the conclusion that the instabilities in Western economies due to price fluctuations had rendered the macro economic models that had been used through the postwar period of Keynesian management inefficient. The idea of the Interfutures project was therefore to move beyond conventional modelling and economic planning to examine 'numerous trends' and in particular those driving up inflationary prices. This provided scenarios with yet another purpose, because preeminent among the trends driving up prices were, as argued both by McCracken and Interfutures, value revolutions and 'unsatisfied aspirations' in the developing world as well as within the West.<sup>67</sup> Fluctuations in commodity prices, raw materials and currencies were understood as based on irrational sentiments and psychological reactions in the developing world, adding to social tensions in the West by pushing prices up and in their effect on protectionist modes by governments, organizations and interest groups in Western societies.<sup>68</sup> Among the major obstacles targeted by the McCracken group were thus competing social claims and expectations, as well as a lack of preferences for economic growth in terms of the critique of growth that Western societies had witnessed since the late 1960s.<sup>69</sup> Echoing contemporary developments in eco-

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<sup>64</sup> Jacques Lesourne, "L'exercice Interfutures, réflexions méthodologiques," *Futuribles*, no. 26: 20–38.

<sup>65</sup> Interfutures, chapter II, draft, world models. OECD archives. *Facing the future. Mastering the probable and managing the unpredictable* (Paris: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), 4–5.

<sup>66</sup> Letter to Paul McCracken from Emile van Lennep, 15 April 1976. Summary of discussions at the 4th meeting of the steering committee 20–21 October 1977, FUT M (77)3. OECD archives.

<sup>67</sup> *Facing the Future*, 7.

<sup>68</sup> Draft to the McCracken report by Assar Lindbeck. Undated, OECD archives, McCracken folders.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum, second meeting of the McCracken group, 22–23 January 1976. OECD archives, McCracken folders.

nomic theory toward the idea of rational expectations, rising prices were defined as “a psychological problem which depends on expectations.” This was, to the McCracken group as well as to Interfutures, a deeply problematic situation that forced the need for governments to deal with such rigidities by opening up to more flexible relationships with the developing world.<sup>70</sup> Managing such value problems, defined as the real challenges to growth, hinged on a new element in planning: the capacity to set a positive image of the future that would help ease conflict and induce cooperation. “The more the OECD governments can lead the public to share a constructive vision of the future, the greater will be the ability of these governments to implement sets of consistent long term policies.”<sup>71</sup> Decision-making needed a ‘positive’ message that brought home the message that possible physical limits in natural resources over the long term could be overcome by political, social, and institutional adaptation. The “method should include economic, social and political elements and provide the basis for the scenarios.”<sup>72</sup> Through scenarios, psychological aspects of structural challenges could thus be dealt with.

The final report of the Interfutures project proposed five different possible scenarios for the OECD world until 2000, based on the different factors (derived from the NIEO structure) that had been considered.<sup>73</sup> But the main issues paper produced by the group to a high level meeting of senior officials at Chateau de la Muette in Paris in 1978 only focused on two central scenarios. The first was a new growth scenario, in which the rigidities of Western nations were handled through a rapid adaptation of values and a ‘conscious drive’ towards new patterns of output and consumption. Scenario two was that of enduring stagflation, with a dual fragmentation of advanced societies, and prevailing conflicts about the distribution of national income that also rendered the Western world incapable of putting up a united front toward the Third World.<sup>74</sup> In order to push the situation from scenario two to scenario one, Interfutures emphasized the role of governments in “attacking the psychological basis of present problems” and “replacing the prevailing negative attitude toward the future by a positive one.” Education and other forms of public opinion should be used as ways to shape long-term preferences that avoided competing social claims, and also explained to Western

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<sup>70</sup> Interfutures, Meeting of senior policy officials, draft of the background paper, 5 February 1978, Fut (78)3. OECD archives.

<sup>71</sup> *Facing the future*, 195.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Interfutures, chapter draft, ix, “Scenarios of world development”. OECD archives.

<sup>74</sup> “Main issues paper for the meeting of senior officials,” Paris, 2 February 1979 FUT (78)7. OECD archives.

populations that the interdependent relationship with the Third World set limits on consumption and redistribution. Scenarios, it was suggested, was a key method for enlightening both national policy makers and their electorates about structural challenges and the need to address them through a coherent long-term strategy. This idea of scenarios as a new form of planning that not only set objectives of development, but created positive images of development, also came from the McCracken report, which ascribed a new role to governments in terms of constructing positive images of the future that might wear down negative feelings and influence “creative and energetic people grasping opportunities.” Such positive images would increase the “social willingness to accept the continuing adjustment of economic structures.”<sup>75</sup> “Instead of the real danger of introducing rigidities in dealing with crisis, AIS have potentially enormous capabilities of influencing their futures if they develop forward looking activities and sustained efforts to influence the future in positive ways.”<sup>76</sup> While the McCracken report had the interior workings of the Western nations in focus; Interfutures applied the same logic to relationships with the developing world. By creating positive images of the benefits of a long-term integration in world markets through cooperation with the AIS, the protectionist stances of OPEC could be averted, and the Third World divided into those nations remaining in a basic needs approach, and those who might through industrialization become eventual members of the AIS.<sup>77</sup> As full members of an expanding global market, the latter could be expected to take an increased responsibility for the functioning of this, as well as for carrying the ‘burdens of development.’ It was therefore essential to create positive images of development that could be shared by populations in the West and strategic parts of the Third World alike and “consolidate areas of common interest.”<sup>78</sup> The scenarios were a communicative tool for this, as was the use of consultants and strategic communication meetings set up by Interfutures with policy makers both in the West and in the developing world, through which the scenarios could be spread.

The emphasis on ‘sociocultural factors’ came from the original Japanese proposal to create the Interfutures project.<sup>79</sup> The Japanese delegation, led by Saburo Okita, head of the Japanese Overseas Fund, was concerned with the value reac-

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75 Ibid; McCracken report, “The origins of the present problems.”

76 Interfutures, “Mid Term meeting, Summary of Conclusions.” OECD archives.

77 See Rudiger Graf, “Making Use of the Oil Weapon. Western Industrial Countries and Arab PetroPolitics in 1973–1974, *Diplomatic History*, 36, 1 (2012): 185–208.

78 Chapter 3 draft “The evolution of international relations”; Summary of conclusions of the 4th meeting of the steering committee, 20–21 October 1977. OECD archives.

79 Letter by the Japanese government to the Secretary General, 9 May 1975. OECD archives.

tions to the high postwar growth rates that could be observed in the Western world. They drew the conclusion that Japan, with its extreme levels of industrialization in the postwar decades and anticipations of a leap into a post-industrial economy, ran a high risk of similar developments. Saburo Okita had a background in futures research as the former chair of the Japanese futurological society (several members of the Japanese OECD delegation had emerged from the futurological society, including Yoshihiro Kogune and Yoneji Masuda). The futurological society was directly associated to the Japanese Office of Technological Planning and a central overseer of Japan's industrialization process, and it also seems to have had a link to the Institute for Information Society, which planned the transition into post-industrialism.<sup>80</sup> As a correspondent of, in particular, Daniel Bell and Bertrand Cazes, Okita was very familiar with futurological tools. The specific focus on socio-cultural factors as something that could be systematically analyzed and anticipated and thus planned was outsourced within the Interfutures group to a particular project draft written by the Toyota foundation and referred to as the 'Japanese project.'<sup>81</sup> The Toyota proposal was tightly focused on the relationship between quick economic and technological change, and value reactions, which were linked to the problems of stagflation in the Western world, through changes in demand and a new governmental impossibility of satisfying expectations. The proposal identified a failure to realize a welfare society as the source of a new structural contradiction between economic and technological development, on the one hand, and human satisfaction, on the other. The aim of the Toyota proposal was thus the 'systematic identification of the main factors of socio cultural background to be introduced into the analysis of future consumption and production patterns' and the integration of changing motivations of individuals and groups. The final report to Toyota was entitled "Changing value patterns and their impact on economic structure" and listed excesses of the welfare state and new, conflicting social demands as 'structural challenges' and 'ridigidities' in Western market societies that could be anticipated and managed through scenarios.<sup>82</sup> These themes of the Toyota proj-

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**80** Interfutures, "Note by the secretariat. New elements and their policy implication in AIS." 16 May 1978. OECD archives.

**81** Folder 212779, letter from Oshima to Lees, 24 December 1975, and Memorandum, 12 December 1979, signed Oshima. "Proposed financial contribution from a private foundation to the Interfutures project, note by the General secretary," 24 May 1977, C (77) 89. OECD press release, 28 January 1976. OECD archives.

**82** "Proposed financial contribution from a private foundation to the Interfutures project. Note by the secretary general," 24 May 1977, Annex A, "Changing value patterns and their impact on the economic structure, a report to the Toyota foundation," 8 January 1979.

ect had also gained in significance within the Interfutures project as a whole, as a summary of discussions in 1977 decided to focus more on values as the main problem of the ‘manageability’ of AIS economies.<sup>83</sup>

## Conclusion

The Interfutures program, lost in the dust of the less than transparent OECD archives, was a strategic reflection on how to close a future window opened by the emergence of a set of alternative discourses on globalization. It was a key carrier of the proto-neoliberal worldview – emphasizing the need for structural adjustments of welfare statist structures in the West, an image of a growing world market as a shared strategic interest of the Western and the developing worlds, the existence of sociocultural reactions and values as the main obstacles for growth – that by the mid 1970s was taking over within the organization. A few years later the OECD became an active diffuser of such ideas into the global environment.

The idea of the long term played a key role in these proto neoliberal discourses. As shown here, Interfutures stemmed from a desire within the OCED to find a new method of world management, which allowed for an active influence on world relationships and also permitted the organization to fend off at least two of the organization’s disastrous images of the world’s future, presented in *Limits* and the RIO report. Scenarios were such a method, and offered both the possibility to put forward partisan responses to alternative images of globalization. As such they represented a hope for a new governmental mechanism that could shift from the national to the global focus and allow OECD nations to act as global players.

This chapter has pointed to another key aspect of this Western resistance, namely, the way that the reaction to the alternative visions of globalization pushed by the Third World led to responses in the West. These contained two elements: the willingness to accept certain countries in the Third World within an extended category of Advanced Industrial Societies, and the conclusion that meeting the challenges from these in a new international division of labor would require significant changes in the social structures of Western economies. In this narrative, the link created both by Interfutures and the Trilateral Commission between forms of upheaval in the world environment and forms of social crisis within Western societies is crucial. Restoring competitiveness de-

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83 “Summary of discussions,” 13–14 October 1977. OECD archives.

manded, both in Western countries and in the surrounding world, re-establishing positive images of development and in particular, of a creative and flexible world market. It might be argued that the role of tools such as scenarios and long-term forecasts was exactly to stabilize expectations around this world market, and entrench them in national governments and publics.

