

Destination Identity: Futures Images as Social Identity

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Abstract

This research explores the role of identity in relation to the social construction of reality and collective images of the future, in that it focuses on the extent that futures images create a social identity, and conversely, the extent by which a transformed social identity creates a social destination. Thus, the paper introduces the concept of “destination identity” in the context of social foresight. It also uncovers the role of the core narrative or national myth of a society in the transformation of national identity and compares identity through the three time frames of past, present, and future. Finally, it explores the capacity this new perception of “destination identity” has to create solidarity and a renewed social identity (as well as issues of compatibility) for a humanity and civilization in transition.

Keywords: Destination identity; Social construction of reality; Futures studies; Images of the future.

Prologue: Sociology of Knowledge and the Social Construction of Identity

The social construction of reality has its origins in the sociology of knowledge, as put forth by Karl Mannheim in the 1940s. Though Mannheim took his cue from Marx, he first coined the phrase “sociology of knowledge” and began to systematically investigate the extent by which knowledge and ideas are affected and shaped by the society, culture, and times that they arise in.¹ Mannheim was principally concerned about the relationship of knowledge to existence. He observed that thinking and ideas were often taken at face value as if they were entirely independent of the social and historical conditions in which they emerge; hence, he proposed the sociology of knowledge as a method of inquiry for determining the relationship of ideas to their circumstances so as to gain a more complete understanding and evaluation of such ideas. For Mannheim, considerations of the emergence of distinctive ideas such as the idea of progress, the image of the future, or the purpose of science should begin its inquiry not as if though that individual had received some startling revelation from God, outer space, etc., but by asking what the social conditions were in which such an idea could appear at that particular time in history. For example, Descartes thought that he had received some dream

or revelation through which he would introduce a new methodology for philosophy; however, Mannheim suggests that instead of taking Descartes' claim at face value we should begin looking at the conditions of intellectuals themselves during the Renaissance in order to understand why Descartes' radical new philosophy emerges (Mannheim, 1949).

To Berger and Luckmann (1966), the sociology of knowledge led to the social construction of reality, stating that that though society seems to be formed by individuals, the "reality" or worldview that these individuals perceive is, in fact, molded by the society and culture that they grow up in, and the society that they subsequently materialize helps to shape the reality of later individuals in turn. Among numerous realities, the one that displays itself as full-blown reality is that of everyday life, based, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) put it, on "the 'here' of the body and the 'now' of present." However, the whole of everyday life cannot be limited to the immediate present, for the "present" cannot be divorced from past and future in that past and future generations, immediate or remote, are interconnected in an infinite variety of ways. Just as the "reality" of everyday life is impacted by its relationship with the past, it also impacts the future in various ways; for example, one can become victimized by loyalties to ancestors, or else descendants can be victimized through the consequences of present actions (Berger & Luckmann 1966). Therefore, society, as an expression of the synthesis of mental and physical realities, carries within itself memories and the push of the past, as well as futures images that pull it forward; hence past and future images of self and others are instrumental in the construction of one's identity.

It is interesting, too, that the construction of identity is precisely the purpose of studies of history, at least as put forth by R. G. Hollingsworth in his classic text on the study of history. Hollingsworth (1946) states that the main reason for the study of history is self-knowledge, that the value of history is that it teaches us what it means to be human, which comes from knowing what humanity has accomplished, what has been established over time; the value of history then is that "it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is" (2015 Kindle edition, p.196).

This criteria for studies of histories can also be applied to futures studies, for one purpose of futures studies is to seek knowledge about and then construct a common identity; that is, how humanity defines its world, nation, and society in its quest for a meaningful life should not only be present-oriented but should be for the sake future generations as well. In fact, this quest for self-knowledge as a way to construct the human identity, as much as it defines what it means to be human, at the same time projects this discovery onto future generations as their common inheritance. Moreover, such a noble quest connects identities throughout humanity, drawing diversity into the common future of one humanity in one world, and it is only in that sense that we can refer to "the" future," that is, as a quest for the integral future within plurality, as that which is "our common future." Hence, by nature, future/futures studies is plural and singular at the same time.

This thesis is a response to the question of futures images in relation to identity; in other words, the research is an inquiry into how images of a common future in the minds of select groups of people create a sense of belonging and lead to the development of social cohesion, which then forms a direction into "the other." It begins with a discussion of the concept of futures images, their contribution in investigating collective behavior/mentality, and their role in the formation of identity. For this purpose, the study brings up and introduces the concept of "destination identity." Metaphorically speaking, this paper examines the similarities of passengers in a vehicle in terms of their common destination rather than other similarities; it considers that society is like a ship moving towards a common destination, based upon its image of the future and cohesive social identity rather than somewhat-fractured / somewhat-shared ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural, and historical identities.

The Role of Images of the Future in the Construction of Destination Identity

Images of the future are defined as shared images that a culture has about the cosmos, God, man, society, the meaning of history, etc., in relation to the future.² Such images suggest a collective consciousness that helps to form identity, behavior, and decision-making, at times influencing expectations, anticipations, hopes, and fears. But what is the value behind such images? Regarding the fact that images can form at the individual and social (global, national, institutional, or even familial) level, the answer to the above-mentioned question in the individual level suggests that individuals who think about the future are more evolved than those who aimlessly live from one moment to the next, with no consideration about tomorrow. In fact, according to D’Alessio, Guarino, De Pascalis and Zimbardo (2003), such moment-oriented thinking is often associated with social problems (such as crime, drug addiction, mental health issues, etc.) while future-oriented thinking is usually considered more beneficial to the individual and society and is often associated with a higher economic/social status, is less prone to commit crimes, and is less likely to engage in high-risk behavior in general.

Socially speaking, images of the future play a significant role in understanding social change in relation to culture, for such images can help overcome cultural obstacles to change. Since most consider change to be a threat to traditional and current affairs, dominant beliefs, and social biases; and because social changes often imply changes in the priorities of life, identity, social relations, consumption patterns, education, retirement, etc., citizens are usually reluctant to accept them. Nevertheless, in such circumstances, because positive images of the future create a sense of destiny-identity for a particular culture, they have the capacity to encourage citizens to accept social change and work towards removing cultural obstacles that might interfere with the collective destination.³

Richard Slaughter (1991), a renowned futurist with a keen interest in social foresight, illustrates how images of the future play a much greater role in our lives than most realize, since understanding the future, regardless of its subjectivity, is generally part of our human nature; we are not able to plan, determine a destination, goal, intention, or create notions without having future perspectives. In fact, as Bishop and Hines (2012) state, “everything has future intent” (p.2). Thus, it is impossible to describe the lives and cultures of people simply by the push of the past, for human life is just as much influenced by the pull of the future.⁴ According to Slaughter (1991), social changes can be viewed as push-pull process between past and future; both act as agents of change – the past pushes from behind while images of the future pull forward from up front; however, as Inayatullah (2008) explains, another component, the weights of the past, are at play as well. While the pushes of the past are the “quantitative drivers and trends that are changing the future,” writes Inayatullah (2008), the weights of the past are “the barriers to the change we wish to see,” while images of the future pull us toward the future. Each agent, the pull of the future and the push and weight of the past, plays off the others, and together they make up the “futures triangle.” (p.8)

On the other hand, Hannah Arendt (1961), in the “Preface” to *Between Past and Future*, offers a different perspective on these agents through a parable by Franz Kafka:

He has two protagonists; the first presses him from behind ... The second blocks the road ahead ... To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way, the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some time in an unguarded moment ... He will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of an umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other. (From a set of untitled aphorisms entered in Kafka’s diary between the 6th of January and the 29th of February, 1920)⁵

Arendt's (1961) interpretation is that the future is a "weight," with its "burden of expectation, of unknowing, of fear," that contends with the push of the past, and then a third agent in the triangle is the man himself, who realizes his predicament over time (i.e., through "experience") and envisions himself transcending it to act as an "umpire" between the two antagonists in his life - the push of the past and the weight of the future. Though Kafka's "weight of the future" seems contrary to the notion of the pull of the future, perhaps, just like the push of the past carries with it the weight of history, so can the pull of images of the future be "weighed down" by anxieties and fears, and it is only when one becomes conscious of the pushes of the past, pulls of the future, and the weights that accompany both that one can hope to transcend his or her situation in time, and the same can be said for "society" or humanity as a whole.

Images of the Future in the Increasing Complexity of Social Life

Futurists often integrate theories of social change in their perspectives of the future, and many global futurists use conceptual and theoretical foundations, one of which is the concept of images of the future. Generally, those who posit images of the future relate these images to historical actions; in other words, as Bell (1997) puts it, people either try to be compatible with what they think will happen or behave in a way that they believe will shape their desirable future; hence, the most important and fundamental research questions that concern futurists are the nature, origin, and consequences of images of the future. Dator (1988) remarks that futurists identify and analyze different images of the future and investigate why certain people prefer certain images to others; moreover, they are interested in figuring out how the images of the future result in particular actions in the present and how certain actions create a different future.

Rubin (2013) partly answers these questions, pointing out that once an actor or group of actors with similar ideas proclaim visions of the future that contrast sharply with the dominate images of the future held by the power elite, tensions result; consequently, such tensions can be observed in the form of social or political conflicts and legitimacy crises. Based on this observation, Rubin raises two critical questions about the ownership and longevity of images of the future. (p.41) Regarding the first question, for example, Marx contends that ruling ideas are, invariably, the ideas of the ruling class; if this claim is true, might we also ask whether the dominate images of the future in a society are predominately ruling class images, which merely replicate social hierarchies and project the ideals and interests of ruling power into the future? Thus, we ask: Who owns the future? As for the second question, how can we determine whether the images of the future in question are sustainable or else just passing fads that will evaporate (to become "yesterdays' future") within a relatively short period of time? In other words, images of the future must act at a deep, mostly unconscious level, as social myths and metaphors, in order to be an effective "pull" in the long run.

As Kiraly, Pataki, Koves and Balazs (2013) state, whether implicitly or explicitly, underlying theories about society and social change can be found in all considerations of the present or future (p.19). Rubin (2013) draws an analogy between society's living cultures and a hologram consisting of a vast number of details that only make sense in relation to each other and the whole. This holographic process, composed of social and natural events, in addition to human emotions and reactions, is what we normally refer to as "reality." Such "reality" is not static but dynamic, for it has been increasingly changing in terms of complexity and abstraction throughout history; hence, the hologram continually refines and reforms itself over time.

However, these ongoing changes have grown to such level of complexity that it is now difficult for us (particularly the youth) to deal with what Toffler (1970) refers to as "future shock", that is, the overwhelming, changing reality of our environment and future. Hence, even though the complexity of social reality affords us wider range of choices, flexibility, adaptive change, and reorganization, it also brings about greater dilemmas. Since there are different interpretations of the reality and

meaning, a more complex society leads to a higher level of possibility for conflicts of values and interests, which in turn exposes it to more chaos and the increase of unexpected crises. Thus, it is ever-challenging for the youth to be able to build a strong identity in such turbulent times, and it becomes increasingly difficult for them to be able to construct personal images of the future⁶.

How Images of the Future Create Social Value and Power

Perhaps the first sociologist to focus attention to power of images of the future is Frederick Polak (1971). In the aftermath of World War II, at a time when Europe was paralyzed, Polak grew alarmed by the diminished image of the future in modern society. From Boulding's overview (1980) of Polak's thesis, the key to understanding the dynamism of culture and history lies in the understanding of the human capacity to create mental images of the 'totally other,' and the imaging of novel phenomena at individual and social levels can inspire forward-moving intentions; as a matter of fact, all of our daily decisions (individual, family, organizational, communal, national, and even globally) have the capacity to move towards the images of the future that a society possesses.

According to Boulding, Polak implies that historical waves of pessimism and optimism suggest alternative options for end times, in which people can either play an active role in conscious evolution (which involves a spiritual awakening) to realize new civilizational directions or else become passive spectators witnessing a game of supernatural forces. Similar to the "rise and fall of civilizations" theory of the great historian, Arnold Toynbee, Polak (1971) posits that a utopian vision of the future is accompanied by a belief in social progress, and when utopian optimism declines, as it has in late modernity, it leads to the predominance of pessimistic images of the future, which are mingled with a sense of hopeless helplessness in the world⁷. As a result of this decline of utopian futures, the quality of human purposefulness and the capacity to imagine novel futures decreases; in such a scenario, society becomes so compressed and trapped by present time, it loses its dynamism and momentum to realize alternative futures. Such a futureless society is then presented with a grave predicament in the form of an identity crisis, which can lead to its internal corrosion and collapse.

Imaging plays a central role in all work that employs elements of creativity. Such activities imagine the final result, prepare a blueprint, refine the product, and then consolidate all mental images and concepts into a finished product. According to Slaughter (1991), social imaging follows this general pattern too, as it has throughout much of human history ever since ancient times (e.g., the Parthenon, the pyramids, the Great Wall of China); in fact, the reason people often invested labor in the most arduous tasks was due to strong, guiding images that acted as motivating forces to turn the 'imagined' into the real: the right image can act as a social and cultural force that inspires people to carry out massive creative projects (p.500). The way that a dominant image draws cultures in a particular direction is illustrated Figure 1 below. As a central image loses its power, hardly any change is stimulated by that image; thus, a new guiding image emerges in order to avoid a crisis of direction.

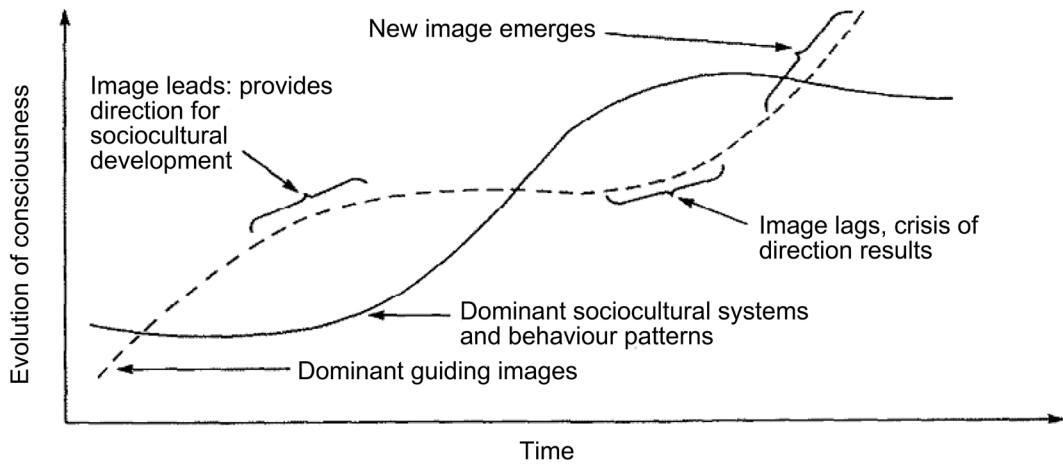


Figure 1. Possible relationship between dominant and sociocultural development (Slaughter, 1991, p. 501)

Slaughter (1991) states that such images may be visual or symbolic and gives examples of inspiring visions of the future in John F. Kennedy's 1962 "Rice Stadium Moon Speech" in Houston, Texas and Martin Luther King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to a large gathering of civil rights supporters⁸. According to Slaughter (1991), the ultimate intention of both speeches is to present a major social goal, often as a challenge, which calls for a huge coordinated effort to realize it, whether social justice for African Americans or grand technical projects for significant cultural goals. Hence, images of future are cultural issues and challenges, in which the pull of the future resolves and creates new social realities, which, in turn, shape our everyday life and identities.

How Images of the Future Shape Identity

Very little research has been carried out on the role images of the future play in shaping identity.⁹ Actually, most studies in the field of social identity usually only refer to national and ethnic issues. Since identity is one of the main components of subjective reality, it has a dialectical relationship to society. Through social relations, identity is shaped, remains, changes, or is even reshaped¹⁰. A cursory look at the kind of research carried out in the field of identity reveals that the main emphasis has been placed on similarities acquired from the past. Until recently, this fundamental assumption remained unquestioned; however, contemporary society has become so overwhelmed by information (as bits and blips of various media bombard our minds on a daily basis) that people increasingly become skeptical about the veracity of the narratives they inherited from the past. Consequently, just as one is given (or establishes) a narrative to indicate one's identity in terms of ethnicity, nationality, or religion, counter-narratives emerge from media or from educational sources to challenge these predominate narratives. When narratives compete to shape individual identity, identity can become quite fractured, which then results in people becoming so confused they are unable to attach to any identity-making category. Teenagers, for example, who follow a national identity, might discover the roots of their national culture and language in other nations or at other times discover degrees of mixed ethnicity and hence become puzzled about their identity, chiefly due to the number of alternative identities that have emerged.

Often they will begin to manufacture identities for themselves, no matter how spurious the justification of these may be. As the range of cultural and historical similarities becomes increasingly limited, social identities are turned into personal sub-identities, which proportionately

increase the range of narcissistic, self-seeking natures; moreover, youth can become susceptible to ideological predators (especially online), who are looking for converts for their twisted and fractured causes and visions of the future. As such sub, fractured, and manufactured identities aggregate over a period of time, they tend to subvert the quest for coherent, collective utopic images of the future, which need to be nurtured and fostered in order to emerge, develop, and evolve into integrated visions of the future within a given society or civilization.

That is why in today's society, from theoretical debates in universities to everyday conversations, people often discuss that which they are supposed to avoid (water pollution, air pollution, poverty, unemployment, droughts, etc.), in other words, they are more concerned about social problems rather than the dreams that they have or what they must do to achieve these dreams. It is as if the glorious, collective dreams have died, and we have become conditioned to accept a fatalistic view of the future rather than being engaged in a collective effort to realize a better future for all. This fatalistic, present-oriented, futureless society has already become dysfunctional and dystopic; it is what Didbury (1999) refers to as "the death of the future," and this "death" surely represents the collapse and fall of the given society or civilization, for the society that does not believe in the future and is even actively engaged in undermining and betraying its future, is undoubtedly a self-destructive society, like Cronos devouring his own children. As Polak (1971) asserts, a futureless society is by default in a state of decline, decay, and ultimately, collapse; however, in sharp contrast, a society with a positive image of the future will develop and flourish.

It is also important to take into consideration the relationship of myth to images of the future, for deeply embedded myths are also quite central to identity. According to the causal layered analysis framework, largely developed by Inayatullah (2004), myth and metaphor are present in the collective unconscious and are mostly responsible for the culturally-based core narratives and "imagined reality" of a society or civilization¹¹. They can be discovered at the deepest level of analysis and do not change easily over time but are long-term in nature; in fact, they usually change only through trauma or transcendence. The implications of Inayatullah's (2004) causal layered analysis is that the core myths of societies or civilizations experience only minor changes or gradual evolution during periods of decades or even centuries, but then suddenly, during times of abrupt social or civilizational crisis, the core myths undergo a radical reevaluation and reconstruction, that is, if the society or civilization survives, which is not always certain. For example, as mentioned, Toynbee's (1947) "rise and fall" of civilizations theory is based on the premise that civilizations will either "rise" or "fall" according to their response to a time of structural crisis. We might also add that if the civilization is able to survive the crisis, the civilization will surely be transformed by the trauma in the process, and so its core myth and identity narrative will be transformed as well.

Polak (1971) picked up on Toynbee's theory and advanced it to relate to the rise and fall of civilizations to the image of the future as a determining factor. If we consider that the image of the future is very much related to the core myth that a civilization narrates to itself to justify its historical identity, then futurists should inquire whether the core narrative possesses a viable image of the future that can meet the challenges of the future during times of crisis and, moreover, why some societies are able to influence their image of the future and some aren't. Inquiring about the core narrative in relation to the image of the future can offer valuable insight and foresight that can help a society or civilization to anticipate a crisis and explore alternatives for survival and transcendence once the crisis starts to emerge on the horizon, that is, when choices and directions are abundant.

For example, Boulding's (1956) view of the future advocates the development of political theory in ways that support and encourage societies to explore alternative futures and then provide strategies to realize a desired future. To create such commitment towards a sincere faith in future possibilities, Boulding defends those future histories in which strategies are developed to realize imagined perspectives. Such historical routes give us hope to change the future; according to

Inayatullah (2008), these images can shape future historical narratives through the strengthening of belief in future possibilities. Such future historical narratives require social participation, particularly the participation of the young, to develop perspectives on future history. The more plausible the perspectives become, the more they are able to inspire social effort to achieve that future. Thus, through the development of a cooperative identity regarding a common future, historical difficulties and the crisis of identity can be overcome. This exploration of a common identity has its roots in the discovery of collective images of the future, based on core myths and metaphors – what this paper refers to as “destination identity.”

Insights into Identity: Past, Present and Future

The main components that make imagining the future possible are people, their behavior, and their respective and collective images of future. Images are significant since they are important factors in shaping the views of people over themselves and others, which is even more significant in nationalism and the role of national images. Boulding (1956), emphasizes the value and importance of national images (imaging at the national level) in such processes as resolving conflicts and restoring peace. In response to structuralism, he states that our behavior is determined by the way we define the world, not by what we think actually exists.

In the present study, the identity coming from shared public images is referred to as “destination identity” and claims that there are two reasons why destination identity functions better than other types of identities as a framework for managing society, nation-building, and leadership. First, it fosters adaptability to changes in today’s society; second, it encourages a society, particularly young people, to participate in building that identity. For a better understanding of destination identity, a comparative study has been conducted in which identity and identity-making indicators are compared in three time frames of past, present and the future¹².

It seems that the present literature on the concept of identity is mostly focused on inherited or past identity. For example, if we consider the components of national identity to be shared land, historical background, public culture, common memories, myths, and traditions, the identity is culturally inherited in conscious and collective unconscious levels, established at birth and borne throughout life. In effect, within five minutes of birth, your name, religion/sect, nationality, and class have already been decided; hence, a baby born in the Hazaristan area in Afghanistan will be born an Afghan who probably is from the Hizara tribe and is a Shia’ Muslim. The baby does not possess the consciousness to be free to decide about these essential identity factors, which nevertheless determine in advance what group he or she belongs to, regardless of whether the group is beneficial or not. Ironically, people have absolutely no choice in the selection of an identity that they, nonetheless, often spend their lives defending.

Concerning present identity, one aspect of cultural awareness is that it makes people confront the roles expected of them, roles often associated with gender, age, or profession. A role might be related to the individual’s skills, knowledge, and personal preferences; for instance, one can choose to be a dentist, football player, or a religious person and then begin to identify with the culture surrounding that choice of profession. Also, family relationships necessitate roles of child, parent, or spouse; furthermore, social relations such as student, worker, citizen, or a friend also contribute to identity. Gender roles, as well, are given from birth to play a central role in our lives. Aging levels respectively involve specialized training for the roles associated with the age, such as how an old woman gets dressed, what kind of language and expressions a young person uses, how middle-aged people are supposed to behave, where each age group spends leisure time, etc. Therefore, identity is composed by different roles one plays at different periods of time in one’s life. Role identities vary from personal to social, depending on various contexts; obviously, these can overlap.

Concerning the future and destination identity, though, what components of an unrealized future

is common among individuals within a society? If we can answer this question logically, it can be considered a shared identity-building factor among individuals of a particular society. Various images of the future compete with each other and then connect as a composite “winning” future, which creates solidarity and adherence among believers. At an organizational level, for example, images of the future of an organization (typically structured hierarchically) are usually determined by top management and then sent down to lower levels of employees in the organization. These images, if accepted, can act as driving forces of the organization, for they cause all staff with different backgrounds, nationalities, and religions to move forward to achieve the shared goal given to them in form of the vision of the future for the organization.

At the national level, such images of the future are often considered as modes of utopian thought. Helder Kamara once said that as long as a dream is individual, it is nothing but fantasy, but when a dream becomes social, it will become reality¹³. Utopia is a type of reaction to the current situation, based on the progressive assumption that “a better time than right now” is possible, that is, as an imagined, desirable future, which is shared by a community. The present research calls this type of identity “destination identity,” as the common feature among those who possess a shared image of future. Figure 1 gives a brief comparison of identity in three different periods of time.

Table 1. Comparison of identity in three periods of time

	Time period		
	Past	Present	Future
	Inherited identity	Roles identity	Destination identity
Examples of identity building indicators	Shared history, nationality, ethnicity, race, background, religion	Family, classmates, job, gender	Shared goals, shared images, shared ideals
Key features	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An imposed identity that is impossible or at least very difficult to change. It is usually accepted, its weaknesses overcome, and its strengths emphasized. 2. Since these identify factors are given at birth, normally (for the most part, that is), they cannot be changed. We members of human society inherit this identity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To some extent, people participate in creating this identity since personal elements interplay with social identity. 2. Role identities are influenced by the past and future; however, the range of effects involve the fusion of personal and social dimensions. (For instance, the female identity in a male dominated society is heavily influenced by a patriarchal social system; within this framework, it is almost impossible for her to envision herself as a politician in her personal images of the future.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Destination identity is active at both conscious and unconscious levels. 2. It is quite fluid and is based on the most progressive trends within a society; however, at a mostly unconscious level, it is based on the myths and metaphors that form the core narrative. 3. People in an open society collectively participate in creating destination identity. 4. Shared destination visions increase the chances for a pluralistic, peaceful coexistence of that society.

Conclusion

As Inayatullah (2008) states, just as a geographer creates a map of physical space or a sociologist structures social space, a futurist's job is to map time. For those who understand who they are, moreover, "when" they are, these maps are of great utility; according to Inayatullah, maps created by futurists can also help decision makers make better decisions or create new maps. Futures images are a fundamental feature of these maps. When people possess images of the future, they start to realize them in their own lives. While some of these images are personal, others are clearly social and common. A number of these futures images act at a conscious level while affecting the decisions, selections, and predictions at an unconscious level. As Thomas Lombardo (2008) illustrates in his study of the history of foresight, thinking about the future is a fundamental trait of human consciousness and evolution. Whether consciously or unconsciously, it's what we do in order to manage our lives. As Popper remarks, the future is open: objectively open; we are always choosing, and then we act in a way that one day our best predictions will have the possibility to come true¹⁴.

The ability to imagine different futures is fundamental to human consciousness, so when a society is able to properly control the future in line with its shared goals, it can provide many solutions to overcome social dilemmas and crises. Paradigms can be proven obsolete, values can be reevaluated, and divided groups can be integrated in line with shared collective images. The future is unlimited, and contrary to present time, we can actively participate in creating it. In fact, our ability in creating alternative futures develops the foundation for optimism and the power of change. It is impossible to deny shared history, religion, background etc. in the creation of social identity; however, this research reveals how shared images of the future play a valuable role in the creation of social identity. The first point is that contrary to the notion that identities originate merely from historical similarities, they also originate from collective myths and metaphors in connection to images of the future, which are fluid and flexible; hence they are malleable, and once people become aware of them, they can consciously participate in social critique and reconstruction of these images of the future and achieve a new identity. Peaceful coexistence among different ethnicities and races in some newly established countries can be offered as evidence for this. What has come to indicate social identity in such societies is the transformed collective myths/metaphors, the newly formed shared goals, and the socially constructed alternative futures that emerged as a result.

The creative potential for the process of building images of the future and the richness of cultural sources have hardly been tapped into; once they are, a rapid transition into a sustainable future is still possible for all. Thus, despite all the great difficulties and crises on the 21st century horizon, the conclusion that we draw is not a pessimistic one; rather, our common future really is worth fighting for, and this realization alone has tremendous power to shift humanity towards a new direction. It is both possible and desirable to positively transform society through a deeper understanding and further development of destination identity. Destination identity includes identifying those aspects of images of the future that can help build new identities, to create and expand on shared public images on the basis of shared values and expectations, while focusing on redefining identities based on shared images of the future.

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Endnotes

1. Mannheim (1949) states that the thesis of the sociology of knowledge "... is that there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured"; hence, what the sociology of knowledge seeks is "... to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of an historical-social situation out of which individually differentiated thought only very gradually emerges. Thus, it is not men in general who think, or even isolated individuals who do the thinking, but men in certain groups who have developed a particular style of thought in an endless series of responses to certain typical situations characterizing their common position" (pp. 2-3).
2. See Polak (1971)
3. See Son (2013)
4. In a speech before the World Congress of Philosophy in 1988, Popper explains that it's "... not the kicks from the back, from the past, that impel us, but the attraction, the lure of the future and its attractive possibilities that entice us: this is what keeps life-and, indeed, the world-unfolding" (p.20).
5. See Chaudhuri (2017)
6. See Rubin (2013)
7. For a more extensive analysis of Polak's views of utopia and social progress, see Morgan (2012) and Morgan (2015)
8. JFK's 17 minute long speech briefly outlines the scientific and technological progress of modern times and then goes on to describe exploration of the moon as the next step of such progress, as the new scientific and technological challenge of the future. Similarly, MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech, also around 17 minutes, offers a vision of the future in the form of MLK's dreams and hopes, expressed as one day that he will be able to witness human rights and equality become a living reality in American society. He repeats "I have a dream" several times during the speech.
9. As for studies relating images of the future to identity, one exception worth noting is that of Markley and Harman's *Changing Images of Man* (1982). For instance, in the chapter "Economic Man: Servant to Industrial Metaphors," the authors critique the "possibly obsolescent premises that typify the recent industrial era," and "Premise Six" states that, for economic man, "individual identity and success in life are to be measured by material possessions acquired and/or occupational status achieved"; hence, consumption has become the measure by which one discovers and expresses identity. (p. 55) Moreover, the authors contend that the industrial

dynamic may be "... self-limiting as it runs up against the limits of world resources, as it no longer provides people with a sense of self-identity and meaning, as its structure reaches a point of increasing instability and vulnerability" (p. 58). In Chapters 5 & 6, Markley & Harman attempt to construct an "adequate" image of humankind as well as "an integrative, evolutionary image of man" pp. 112-161.

10. See Berger & Luckman (1966)

11. For more on the core myths of the nation-state and "imagined communities" in general, also see Anderson (2006).

12. See Figure 1

13. For more on this see Godin (2000).

14. See Slaughter (1991), p.18.

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