Workshop proposal for Networked Learning Conference

Convenors and/or Presenters
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- Dr. George Veletsianos, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Innovative Learning and Technology

Workshop Title
What’s the future like? Speculative Methods in Networked Learning

Workshop Description
The goal of this workshop is to introduce participants to speculative methods and explore their application to the field as a way of imagining potential futures and scenarios for learning, design, and technology. We define speculative methods as “research approaches that explore and create possible futures under conditions of complexity and uncertainty” (Ross, 2018). We aim to facilitate a broader conversation regarding the future of technology and networks in education through the exploration of the use of speculative methods as research methodologies.

Recent years have seen increased interest in and discussion of education futures. Some of the emergent discussions include conversations around how technologies manifest themselves in our daily lives and educational experiences (Aagaard, 2018), and what may be appropriate pedagogies to equip learners for the future economy (Facer & Sandford, 2010). As Ross (2017) argues, envisioning futures also “inform[s] us about what matters now in the field, what issues and problems we have inherited and what debates define what can or cannot be currently thought about or imagined” (p. 220).

Considering that the current state of education, at all levels, is situated within a context of ever-evolving social, cultural, political, and technological shifts, there is a need for networked learning scholars and practitioners to explore various ways that they can imagine and design future potentials and realities. The use of speculative methods enables researchers to ascertain and discern between probable, possible, and preferable trajectories (Bell, 2017) to offer evidence-based guidance when making current decisions related to networked learning, and to explore what may or may not be possible in their own contexts. They also give us tools for taking critical perspectives on the nature of the future itself, and how we think about and work towards particular education futures (Facer 2016). In prior iterations of this workshop (Veletsianos, Belikov, Johnson, 2019), participants appreciated being able to think creatively about the future and identify micro, meso, and macro obstacles to reaching them.

Intended Audience
Individuals interested in critically exploring and designing education futures. These include students and academics (who may be interested in applying this method to their scholarship), and practitioners such as learning designers or administrators (who may be interested in using this method in institutional change-making efforts). This workshop is appropriate for anyone with an interest in designing and developing learning environments, creating new learning experiences, exploring the opportunities and challenges created by new or current technologies, leading conversations at their institutions around potential futures for their programs and departments, and exploring a variety of other potential futures for their work and scholarship.
**Participant Engagement**

The workshop is divided into 3 sections.

The first section will involve a presentation of foundational knowledge necessary for the application of speculative methodologies. Participants will learn about the theoretical background of futures and anticipation studies, types of speculative methods that have been applied to previous studies relevant to educational technologies, and the benefits and limitations of this research approach.

The second section will invite participants to apply speculative methodologies in order to imagine future scenarios for a topic that they are interested in. Participants will be divided in small interest-based groups and will use creative approaches to individually and collaboratively develop and discuss future scenarios. Scenarios may explore educational issues including datafication, privacy, augmentation, presence, interaction, and post-digital networks in the context of global challenges and issues.

The third section is a culminating discussion in which participants will be asked to share what they discovered during the prior activity along with how they could apply speculative methodologies to their research practice based on their current interests. Within this critical discussion we will challenge participants to reflect on their own biases and consider what drives their speculative exploration. We will also invite participants to share any experiences they have had with these methodologies, as well as explore potential difficulties and methodological decisions that may need to be addressed as we implement these technologies.

**Participant Outcomes**

By the end of the workshop, participants will

- develop a foundational knowledge of speculative methods
- develop a speculative scenario
- investigate how speculative methods apply to their own practice

**Workshop Alignment with Conference Themes**

The workshop explores the use and application of an emerging research method in networked learning, and aligns with the following conference themes:

- Theories, methodologies, and design for Networked Learning
- Methods, research design, data and analysis in Networked learning (e.g. phenomenography, social network analysis, ANT and post-ANT)
- Philosophy and educational technology
- Networked learning literacy and agency
- Debates and emerging issues in networked learning (e.g. postdigital education, computational thinking, online activism)

**Workshop Process/Activities (please provide an indication of how long each activity will last)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time in minutes</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; Introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Session</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Round Robin intros</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Presentation:</strong> Share foundational knowledge on speculative methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td><strong>Small-group discussions and activities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
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<td>30</td>
<td><strong>Large-group discussions</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Closing</strong></td>
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References


