

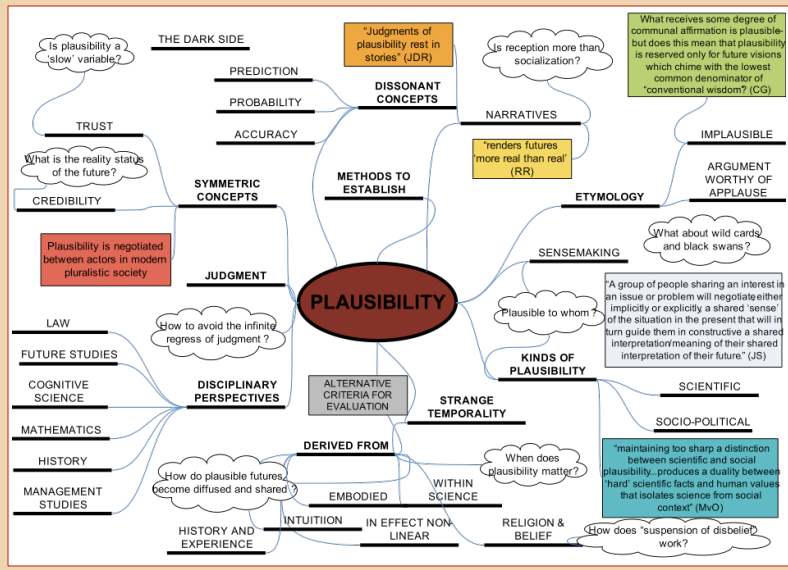
Crafting Research Agendas in Plausibility: The Plausibility Project Workshop at Arizona State University

There are no future facts yet.

At the same time, there is a need to think ahead, to consider consequences, risks, implications of actions, and desirability in the face of uncertainty and indeterminacy.

This predicament gives rise to a question:
How do we assess the quality of *anticipatory* knowledge?

Our normal ways of managing risk and thinking about the future are unsatisfying. Our normal ways of assessing knowledge quality in terms of accuracy, reliability, precision and consistency are problematic. *Plausibility* arises as a viable— though under-theorized and illusive—concept that moves beyond the search for a "factual" encounter with the future.



In November 2009, the Center for Nanotechnology in Society, in collaboration with the Consortium for Science, Policy and Outcomes (Arizona State University) and the Institute for Science, Policy and Innovation (University of Oxford), joined forces with an interdisciplinary group of scenario practitioners, science and society scholars, philosophers

and historians to explore the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of *plausibility*: what is it, why does it matter, where is it evaluated and for whom is it a central value.

Three outcomes emerged:

- Identification of the "state of the art" (concepts, empirical studies) regarding plausibility;
- An accounting for research and knowledge gaps surrounding plausibility;
- Development of a coordinated research agenda.

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