Futuring Perspectives and Practices for Urban Extension

Julie Fox
The Ohio State University, fox.264@osu.edu

Solomon Garner
The Ohio State University, garner.197@osu.edu

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Acknowledgments

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Solomon Garner
The Ohio State University

Extension is well-positioned to engage strategically with urban communities now and in the future. A century of collaboration and proven impact provides Extension with a valuable foundation focused on relevant service accessible to all people; applied science and co-discovery; respectful and inclusive engagement; and commitment to community well-being. An exploration of the literature on the future, from the Extension perspective and from external viewpoints, informs a contemporary approach to focus on the future of urban Extension. An interplay of Extension professionals with diverse community stakeholders and dynamic technologies bridges past perspective and current context with practical methods to address the future. Essential practices for urban Extension professionals include developing futuring literacy, experimenting with innovative futuring approaches, managing decision making as Extension creates the future, and entrepreneurially addressing change throughout the futuring process. Increasing growth and diversity in metropolitan areas present an opportunity to blend familiar planning paradigms with a more emergent model for urban Extension in which change is continuous, and leadership is agile (Doyle & Brady, 2018).

Keywords: futuring literacy, entrepreneurial, organizational development, change

Throughout Extension's history, leadership explored various ways of addressing an increasing urban influence. The establishment of the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) and other collective efforts created momentum and stability as a foundation for Extension's future in urban communities. Addressing the future of urban Extension is more important than ever as Extension leadership progresses beyond COVID-19. The worldwide pandemic provoked unprecedented change, with immediate and long-lasting impacts in all aspects of Extension. With assumptions disrupted, Extension personnel quickly navigated through risks, opportunities, and decision-making during tentative times. In the past century, university leaders have explored the future of Extension but never has the degree of uncertainty, urgency, and complexity so profoundly challenged current plans and future forecasts. While much attention has been invested in considering Extension's future, conducting strategic planning processes, and managing essential short-term priorities during the pandemic, Extension can benefit from better understanding a futurist perspective, further exploring diverse urban contexts, and intentionally improving futuring practices for urban Extension. The following exploration of literature on the future provides options to bridge past perspective and current context with practical methods to address the future of Extension in urban communities.

Past Perspective and Current Context

University leaders have explored the future of Extension for decades (Geasler, 1988). In 1983, the U.S. Department of Agriculture published *Challenge and Change: A Blueprint for the Future* (1983), portraying Extension as a dynamic, innovative, and productive organization ready to change as new opportunities emerged. That same year, a Joint USDA-NASULGC Committee on the Future of Cooperative Extension focused on *Extension in the '80s* (VanderBerg, 1983). This was followed by a number of other efforts such as a Futures Task Force to the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy, which was appointed in 1986, a national Framing the Future project in the mid-90s (Anderson & Bloome, 1995), the Kellogg Commission (1999) *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution* on the Future of State, Land-Grant Universities, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges report, and the book *Land-Grant Universities and Extension into the 21st Century* (McDowell, 2001).

The turn of the century prompted reflection on the past and speculation about the future for Extension and the Land-Grant University, with calls to reinvigorate and renew for distinctive relevance, accessibility, and active collaboration with communities to enhance the quality of life (Bull et al., 2004; Martin, 2001; McDowell, 2003; Spanier, 1999). Extension leaders explored the future of program development (Gagnon et al., 2015), personnel (Argabright et al., 2019; Harriman & Daugherty 1992), partnerships (Harder, 2019), and Extension's positioning and relevance in urban communities (Christenson & Warner, 1985; Fox et al., 2017; Peters, 2014; Ruemenapp, 2017; Young & Jones, 2017). Other themes reflected in the literature on the future of Extension include the influence of disruptive technologies (Astroth, 1990; King, 2018; King & Boehlje, 2000), the need for creativity and innovation (Franz & Cox, 2012; Warnock, 1985), and the evidence of trends (Caillouet & Harder, 2021). Rasmussen (1989) noted that Extension's future relies on the ability to adjust effectively to ensure programmatic relevancy and effective delivery.

In a more current context, Henning et al. (2014) stressed that Extension's future depends on following guiding principles of continued reliance on research and application to address the grand societal challenges that impact the nation's future, continued relevance and connection with the local community, and Extension's commitment to innovative educational approaches in communication and program delivery. At the 2021 National Extension Directors and Administrators Annual Meeting (2021), a series of sessions envisioning the future as a system without borders included topics about urban programs as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion. A 2021 review of state Extension websites revealed a variety of approaches to planning for the future without evidence of purposeful consistency across the United States. As the world experiences unprecedented change, Extension joins other university and community leaders in navigating through uncertainty and shaping the desired future.

What Can Extension Learn from the Literature on Futuring?

Futuring is an essential competency that empowers the imagination and enhances peoples' ability to prepare, recover, and invent as changes occur (Miller, 2018). A brief historical perspective on the evolution of futuring provides a foundation to explore what's ahead with Extension in the urban context. This external perspective provides useful insights when blended with Extension's internal viewpoints.

The Evolution of Futuring

Futurist manifestos began in the early 1900s with poet Marinetti calling for courage and audacity as he spoke of the future and encouraged others to stop emphasizing the past (Apollonio, 1973; Schnapp, 2009). In a review of the past 50 years of futures scholarship, Fergnani (2019) identified themes such as organizational foresight, past and futures, humanity, environmental futures, complexity, and technological trends. In *Futuring*, Cornish (2004) shared lessons of the great explorers that include preparing for what will be faced, anticipating future needs, using imperfect information, expecting the unexpected, thinking long- and short-term, dreaming productively, and learning from predecessors. The World Futures Studies Federation, a global network of leading futurists founded in 1973, has moved from predicting or forecasting the future based on trends to mapping alternative futures, shaping desired futures, embracing novelty, uncertainty, complexity, and emergence. In the "Evolution of Futures Studies" article in the *Futures* journal, Kuosa (2011) described the initial prediction and deterministic paradigm with mystic explanations, a second paradigm based on military indeterministic futures full of probabilities aims to control and plan, and modeling and systems thinking. Kuosa then introduced new emerging paradigms based on disconnecting from the Western control-based technical thinking and accepting internal dynamic fluctuations, paradoxes, and dialectic thinking. Futuring research and practice continue to emerge, with new possibilities blending competencies and tools relevant in university and urban community contexts.

Futuring Practices

Strategic efforts to imagine and shape the future include game theory (De Mesquita, 2011), drama theory (Bryant, 2015; Oomen et al., 2021), the Delphi model (Mullner, 2019), the ERRC (Eliminate, Reduce, Raise, Create) as used in the book *Blue Ocean Shift* (Kim & Mauborgne, 2017), and other analytical, generative, and group decision-making approaches (Eden & Ackermann, 2021; Mullner, 2019). Analytical methods explore what is likely to happen in probable futures by identifying patterns through trend analysis based on current and past developments, as well as forecasting, which includes extrapolating from available data to see what the evidence suggests for the future (Makridakis et al., 2020). Generative approaches engage diverse stakeholders in scenarios of possible futures to construct shared visions of possible and preferred futures, as well as foresight which uses multiple methods to imagine shared futures. Backcasting begins with a desirable future endpoint and then works backward to

determine a systemic framework for change with a chain of actions that lead from the present to the future (Bibri, 2018). Bouncecasting takes the forward and backward explorations a step further through scenario game iterations to make the promising aspects of the scenarios more likely and to avert or mitigate the negative aspects of the scenarios (Kahan, 2021; Pruyt et al., 2011). With a shared future vision to guide next steps, everyone sees the connections, alignment, pace, and momentum. Gorbis (2019), Executive Director of the Institute for the Future (IFTF), suggested engaging diverse groups of people in thinking deeply about complex issues, imagining new possibilities, connecting signals into larger patterns, connecting the past with the present and the future, and making better choices. With widespread uncertainty about the future combined with the scale, diversity, and complexity in metropolitan areas, an intentional approach to futuring is valuable.

Emerging Urban Perspective on the Future

- Extension has a long history of exploring the urban context, including early 4-H programming in cities, to an inner city article in the *Journal of Extension* (Jones, 1968), the Big City Extension Conferences that began in the 1980s, an Urban Extension National Agenda (Urban Task Force, 1996), and a strategic framework developed by the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL, 2015). Extension must continue to enhance its response to the demographic trend of urbanization (Frey, 2021; Fry, 2020). As Extension considers the future of linking Land-Grant Universities with communities, the urban perspective remains essential. To explore diverse urban perspectives, Extension leaders can tap into sources such as The United Nations Habitat's Urban Agenda for a better quality of life for all.
- The National Association of Counties Large Urban County Caucus (LUUC)
- The National League of Cities, Urban Innovation
- The City Leadership Initiative from Harvard and Bloomberg
- The Future of Cities Conversations YouTube series presented by the Norman Foster Foundation and supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies
- The Urban Complex podcast or Forbes Insights Futures in Focus podcast series

Common themes from these sources include addressing complex challenges, improving quality of life, understanding diversity, innovating for social equity and environmental sustainability, and fostering conditions for a healthy community. In addition to these global and national resources, Extension personnel benefit from connecting with local organizations that are also exploring the future of their urban communities.

Futuring Practices for Urban Extension

A futurist approach moves beyond traditional predictive intentions to developing futuring literacy and capacity; experimenting with contemporary futuring methods; managing decision-

making as Extension creates the future; and entrepreneurially addressing change throughout the futuring process (Bell, 1996; Inayatullah, 2013).

Develop Futuring Literacy and Capacity

In the book *Future Shock*, Toffler (1970) noted that overwhelming complexity, speed, and content of change require learning, unlearning, and relearning. How does Extension develop futuring literacy and capacity? In the book *Transforming the Future: Anticipation in the 21st Century*, Miller (2018) provides a framework with attributes of futures literacy. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has demonstrated that people and communities everywhere can become more futures literate (see Figure 1). According to UNESCO, being futures literate empowers the imagination and enhances peoples' ability to prepare, recover, and invent as changes occur. Additional perspective was added by Häggström and Schmidt (2021), who advocated for empowering youth through futuring literacy, Kazemier et al. (2021), who addressed futuring literacy in the context of higher education, and Mangnus et al. (2021), who connected wicked problems and futuring.

Figure 1. <u>Futures Literacy</u> (UNESCO, n.d.)

Futures consciousness recognizes the capacity an organization or an individual has in five dimensions: time perspective, agency beliefs, openness to alternatives, a holistic systems point of view, and striving for a better future not only for self but for others (Ahvenharju et al., 2018). Futuring capacity to imagine, use, and act upon the future can be developed through cognitive, motivational, and active dimensions (Pouru-Mikkola & Wilenius, 2021). The complexity, reality, and value of diverse stakeholder engagement acknowledged by these authors offer urban Extension professionals an opportunity to learn from and advance future literacy and capacity.

Experiment with Contemporary Futuring Approaches

Before experimenting with futuring approaches, Extension can assess current futuring and strategic planning practices to inform local and state teams on what is working and what improvements could be made for a more agile and inclusive process. Some practices, such as needs (and asset) assessments, advisory councils, and strategic planning may remain, but the methods of engaging stakeholders in the process may change given new technologies and futuring competencies. Rather than planning cycles prompted by anniversaries, funding crises, or leadership changes, urban Extension should engage in ongoing developments. Other improvements could focus on how Extension actively engages diverse groups of internal and external people collectively, such as

- scanning to connect signals into larger patterns,
- imagining and assessing new possibilities that create value,
- connecting the past with the present and the future,
- thinking deeply about complex issues,
- addressing the urban context and urban-rural interface, and
- using a flow of data and stakeholder engagement insights in decision making.

In the urban context, the number of people and signals, the diversity of perspective, and the complexity of scenarios present challenges to engagement in the futuring process. Cities seek to engage citizens as active agents of urban transformation (Caprotti et al., 2017). Futuring should include gathering multiple perspectives about possible diverse futures relevant in the context of cities and moving to pluralistic composites (Pollastri et al., 2017). The World Commission on Environment and Development recognizes the value of people in building a future that is more prosperous, more just, and more secure (Imperatives, 1987). Preparing for and creating the future of engagement with urban communities requires enhanced awareness, agility, and inclusive collaborative strategy.

The development of smarter and more resilient urban futures relies on the intersection of data analytics and collaborative urban science (Geertman et al., 2017). For a flourishing future, urban Extension professionals can create a sensing and signaling process and community that intentionally draws upon diverse experiences, values, and conflicts to inform research and strategies (Forlano & Mathew, 2014). This is not a process that occurs in silos or is conducted annually or every 3-10 years as part of strategic planning, but an ongoing and collaborative endeavor.

Signals related to elements in *A National Framework for Urban Extension* (NUEL, 2015) can reveal patterns and opportunities relevant to positioning, programs, personnel, and partnerships.

Positioning

The framework called for a significant presence in metropolitan areas to ensure the future of Extension. Sources to inform positioning include the Pew Research Report on Social Media Use (Auxier & Anderson, 2021) and the American Marketing Association 2021 Future of Marketing Survey (Charney & Kawles, 2021), which emphasized the value of respecting privacy and recognized growing consumer acceptance of new marketing technology. According to Forrester Research (Quantcast, 2021), marketers and publishers remain in an adaptive mode as they navigate pandemic recovery and ongoing fluctuations in consumer behavior. In a review of the literature, Bhimani et al. (2019) reinforced how organizations strategically use and leverage social media marketing strategy for connection, interaction, and innovation to achieve competitive advantage (Li et al., 2021). As Extension professionals aim to increase awareness, relevance, and connection in urban communities, it is important to recognize there are many different ways to tell the story of Extension and the Land-Grant mission, but it is only through getting people to see themselves as part of the story that it will be possible to imagine a different future (Ostrom, 2020).

Programs

For shifts related to programming in urban communities, begin by accepting that the term programs in the urban context may not always focus on educational events but can encompass facilitation, project management, advocacy, and relationship building (Ruemenapp, 2018). The people Extension engages with in urban communities are increasingly diverse, and programming incorporates equitable community engagement and culturally responsive education. Due to the scale in metropolitan areas, programs for the public good may focus on bite-sized experiences with Extension, which are delivered through trusted partners, as well as more in-depth ongoing, meaningful interactions with faculty, staff, and students. Education technology, hybrid learning, open educational resources, and micro-credentials are just a few of the current trends (Pelletier et al., 2021). Emerging trends include the Internet of Things, augmented reality, and virtual reality (Mobo, 2021). Urban Extension professionals can explore new ways to engage with community, understanding that some may be consumers, others will be contributors blending local knowledge with the latest research, and others are influencers amplifying unique innovations. Over the next decade, products will yield a full spectrum of services, experiences, and personal transformations (Johansen, 2020).

Personnel

In urban communities, Extension personnel includes a variety of faculty, staff, students, and volunteers working in full-time, part-time, and temporary project-based positions. Prior to the pandemic, Pew Research (Desilver, 2017) reported on the changing workforce, and the National League of Cities published *The Future of Work in Cities* report (DuPuls et al., 2016), noting the influence of technology, pathways for a diverse workforce, new workplace models, and other

factors related to cities as the economic epicenters. Since the pandemic, numerous reports have delved into the hybrid work environment, work-life balance, and employee engagement. Korn Ferry, a global consulting firm, identified the need to reinvent during disruptive change, survive the talent shortage, and be intentional about employee well-being (Korn Ferry, 2022). The Gartner research group encouraged a human-centric design, featuring flexibility and empathy to drive productivity and engagement, along with hybrid workforce models that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (Gartner, n.d.). With a focus on building a better working world, Ernst and Young developed a Future Workplace Index, revealing opportunities to improve hybrid collaboration across the organization. Literature reviews on the workforce reveal the impacts of technology (Singh et al., 2021) and diversity (Seliverstova, 2021).

Volunteers are an essential element of Extension engagement to meet the public need in large metropolitan areas. Volunteering in urban communities is beneficial for multiple aspects of well-being and urban landscapes (Asah et al., 2014; Moskell et al., 2010; Prince et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2005; Yamashita et al., 2017). Volunteer engagement will continue to be influenced by the type and motivation of the volunteer, from students to neighborhood organizers, workplace volunteers, faith-based community leaders, and retirees. Extension can intentionally engage diverse volunteers, understanding their public service motivation, paying attention to shifts in volunteerism (Raposa et al., 2017; Siodia, 2020; Sterling Volunteers, 2021), and incorporating person-organization fit (Costello et al., 2017). As a publicly engaged workforce, urban Extension professionals can learn from emerging trends to create hybrid solutions that fit engagement with diverse communities, volunteers, and partners.

Partnerships

The future of urban Extension focuses on building trust with diverse university and community stakeholders as a foundation for innovative engagement and collaborative action for the future. Partnerships are critical to Extension's success when missions are aligned, roles are distinct, reciprocal resources are leveraged, and impacts are shared. Trusted relationships are especially important in urban areas due to complex networks of stakeholder interactions (Le Feuvre et al., 2016). The number, size, and scope of the partnerships amplify both opportunities and challenges in urban communities. Rather than competing for the same funds or audiences, collaborative efforts can make real impact in metropolitan communities. In urban counties, strategies to support city partnerships add value to county, state, and national networks in addressing the urban context and urban-rural interface.

Urban Extension partnerships shared through national urban Extension conference presentations include multiple governmental jurisdictions, metroparks, science museums, traditional and new media, Urban League, philanthropic foundations, corporations, urban serving universities, immigrant and refugee organizations, neighborhood groups, and other community organizations that reflect the mixture of cultures that are woven together to create a distinctive context for each

metropolitan area. Looking to the future, urban Extension professionals can engage with local urban leader networks, partner through processes such as the Equitable Futures Toolkit, and learn from partner perspectives such as the National Association of Counties Large Urban County Caucus (LUUC) and National League of Cities Urban Innovation. There is no plausible future scenario in which Extension will be successful without fostering partnerships because the needs are too great, the problems too complex, and Extension's resources are too few to go it alone (Harder, 2019).

Manage Decision-Making as Extension Creates the Future

Futures studies and capacity building are intended to assist decision-making during uncertainty (Dreborg, 1996). The Millennium Project identified decision-making as one of the top 15 global challenges facing humanity (The Millennium Project, 2017). With unrelenting uncertainty and complexities of decisions in the urban context, Extension professionals can sharpen their situational awareness, acknowledge decision influencers, recognize decision biases, question assumptions, and learn from decision-making tools such as those offered through the Knowledge Compass. Futuring resources such as the Handbook of Anticipation (Poli, 2019) provide insight into how to make decisions in the present according to anticipations about something that may eventually happen in the future. Informed by complexity science, the Cynefin framework (see Figure 2) has been used as a sense-making tool in strategy management, research, policymaking, health promotion, and leadership training (Fierro et al., 2018; Snowden & Boone, 2007; Van Beurden et al., 2013).
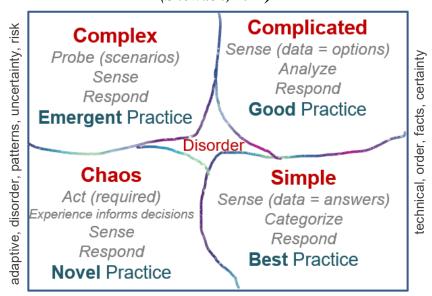
Figure 2. Cynefin Framework for Situational Awareness and Decision Making (Snowden, 2021)

The framework makes the distinction between simple, complicated, complex, and chaotic situations. This clarity makes it easier to be intentional when deciding to apply a best practice as a simple solution, when to gather data for a more informed approach to exploring complicated conditions and options, when to address complexity by engaging diverse stakeholders in scenarios to understand common ground, and when chaos requires immediate action for stability. The Cynefin framework can help guide urban Extension professionals as they create the future. For example, a food system situation may be

- simple and a guide to food programs could help educate and connect people to nutritious food;
- complicated and require more information to understand food system challenges;
- complex and better understood through diverse stakeholder engagement; or
- urgent situations that require providing food immediately, communicating clearly, and addressing the complicated or complex later.

The quality of decision-making is influenced by the number of people involved, the amount of time available, and the quality of information accessible. Accept that much information will be imperfect (Cornish, 2004) and avoid misinformation or disinformation. According to a November 2021 report from the Aspen Institute's Commission (Aspen Digital, 2021), information disorder is a crisis that exacerbates all other crises. Avoid information overload, which does not enrich but impoverishes the decision-making process (Drucker, 2012). All decisions are made with some level of uncertainty. The speed of decision-making needs to exceed the speed of events, wrote General Joe Dunford, then Joint Chiefs of Staff (Garamone, 2017). The future of sense-making and decision-making in urban environments will involve an interplay of multiple stakeholder perspectives and information streams through emerging technologies.

Entrepreneurially Address Change Throughout the Futuring Process

As individuals and groups look to the future, the pace of change can leave people wondering how much flux a person can take and how they can slow down disruptive changes, as expressed by Alvin Pitcher of the University of Chicago (Ways, 1964). The difference between embracing and resisting change is rooted in our brain-body hardwiring, with an instinct to survive when perceiving threats and a need to thrive when sensing opportunities (Kotter et al., 2021). Organizations that can adapt quickly to change involve leaders who can both calm those in the survival mode by minimizing fear, anxiety, and stress and develop others' ability to thrive, reducing the noise of unnecessary information, removing uncertainty through transparency, celebrating progress, and giving people agency in decision making during the change process (Kotter et al., 2021). According to Ouedraogo and Ouakouak (2020), leaders need to address

- change uncertainty, a sense of confusion caused by a lack of information or guidance;
- change resistance (Burnes, 2015);
- change fatigue which can intensify with too frequent, too substantial, or poorly managed change initiatives; and
- change cynicism can be detrimental as it links a pessimistic outlook on the success of the change with frustration and blame on those responsible for the change, questioning their motives and abilities to implement change successfully.

Drawing upon social innovation, Extension can help everyone see new realities and grasp how they all can be contributors to creating the future (De Pieri & Teasdale, 2021; Prabhakar & Drayton 2018). Entrepreneurial characteristics that can be applied to addressing change include recognizing opportunities through formal and informal scanning (Morris & Kuratko, 2002), imagining alternative futures (Jungk, 1969), inclusive innovation (Kanter, 1983), and proactively creating value by identifying market opportunities and creating unique combinations of public and private resources to pursue those opportunities that create value (Jacobson, 1992). According to a network of innovators at Ashoka U, changemakers see patterns around them, identify opportunities in any situation, figure out ways to solve problems, imagine new realities, organize fluid teams, lead collective action, and continually adapt as situations change for the good of others. These are many of the same literacies for futuring as identified by UNESCO.

There are a variety of theories and models for change, many that reflect similarities to equilibrium models, such as Lewin's (1958) model of unfreezing, moving, and freezing and Gersick's (1991) conceptualization of change as an altering state between stability and upheaval. More dynamic models of organizational change integrate concepts such as innovations as catalysts for change and continuous learning that addresses the interaction of the organization and its environment (Greve & Taylor, 2000). Popular models include Hiatt's (2006) ADKAR model with an individual perspective for change in business, government, and community; Bridge's (1991) transition model, which acknowledges endings, a neutral zone, and new beginnings; Kotter's (2016) 8-step process that begins with creating a sense of urgency and focuses on the importance of gaining buy-in; the change process designed by the Association of Change Management Professionals (ACMP); and many other models, tools, and techniques (Cameron & Green, 2019; Stouten et al., 2018).

Regardless of the model, process, or characteristics, there is value in approaching change intentionally and respecting that people experience futuring and change differently. Change readiness is multi-dimensional and influenced by several factors such as past experiences, current context, cultural influence, and organizational context (Armenakis et al., 1993; Gigliotti et al., 2019; Kirsch et al., 2012). The Change Style Indicator (Musselwhite & Ingram, 2003) helps individuals and teams better understand preferred styles and navigate change along a continuum of

- conservers who value clarity, predictability, and incremental change;
- pragmatists who honor the past while analyzing and adapting to new circumstances; and
- originator change agents who are comfortable with fast expansive change for greater effectiveness.

Navigating change flows from cognitively anticipating and acknowledging opportunities for change; addressing emotions related to change; exploring stakeholder complexities and options to support change; implementing the learning, support, and other actions to support change; and evaluating change as part of the process of emergent continuous organizational change.

Context factors into the change experience. One instrument used to assess the context for change is the Situational Outlook Questionnaire (Isaksen, 2007). The well-tested Situational Outlook Questionnaire measures people's perceptions of the climate for creativity, innovation, and change. The single biggest challenge is to adapt fast enough to match increasing uncertainty and complexity (Kotter et al., 2021). With the increasing complexity and volatility of the future, navigating both forced change and chosen transitions is a competency needed by all Extension professionals, especially during the stress and disorientation of change.

Conclusion and Discussion

Becoming more future-ready, Extension can facilitate multi-stakeholder foresight processes, engage in excellent customer and employee experiences, and move from transactional to more strategic marketing and operations with intelligent technology, talent, processes, and data (Sharma & Mody, 2021). While certainty or stability may seem elusive, urban Extension professionals can build trust and engage with other equity-minded change leaders as advocates for addressing inequities in the access to and experiences with Extension (Costino, 2018; Hakkola, 2021).

The future well-being of people living and working in urban communities and the future of urban Extension improve through the development of futuring literacy and inclusive capacity building. To continue building on Extension's understanding of and approach to the future, a more thorough literature review and applied research could be coordinated through national networks. Looking to the future, questions facing Extension include

- how to continuously co-align University Extension with the dynamic urban environment using A National Framework for Urban Extension (NUEL, 2015);
- how to invest financial, social, and political capital in urban communities to fulfill the Extension mission;
- how to integrate urban context into the fabric of Extension using futuring approaches in support of rural, suburban, and urban residents and workforce; and

- how to blend familiar planning paradigms with a more emergent model in which distributed leadership is agile and change is continuous (Doyle & Brady, 2018).

Extension can lead the way in moving beyond discussions of urban problems and solutions and toward a more generative future-oriented space of speculation informed by a holistic understanding of the everyday lives of citizens, including their neighborhoods, memories, hopes, dreams, and aspirations (Forlano & Mathew, 2014). Extension is well-positioned to respectfully explore alternative futures with non-linear combinations of social and technological processes (Urry, 2016). Looking ahead as futurologists, urban Extension professionals can honor the aspirations and traditions established by Extension's founders while building authentic, reciprocal relationships with urban communities and implementing novel approaches that integrate technology and human interaction (Balestrini et al., 2017) for value creation. The future of urban Extension depends on consistent commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion that creates a sense of belonging with clients, faculty, staff, students, volunteers, advisors, and partners. University leaders play a significant role in addressing urban issues through strategic approaches that address immediate priorities while systematically futuring to continuously co-align University Extension with the dynamic urban environment.

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Julie Fox, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor with The Ohio State University College of Food,
Agricultural & Environmental Sciences (CFAES). Fox serves on Ohio State's Extension
Leadership Team as Director of Strategic Initiatives and Urban Engagement. She is a former
National Urban Extension Leaders steering council member. Please direct correspondence to
Julie Fox at fox.264@osu.edu.

Solomon Garner is an Ohio State University graduate student in the College of Food,
Agricultural, & Environmental Sciences (CFAES), Department of Agricultural Communication,
Education, and Leadership (ACEL). He serves as a Graduate Research Associate with OSU
Extension, Strategic Initiatives and Urban Engagement.

Acknowledgment

Resources

Futuring

Aspen Institute Commission on Information Disorder.
    https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs%E2%80%8C/com%E2%80%8C%E2%80%8C
    mission-on-information-disorder/

Bob Johansen Trilogy of books
- *Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World*
- *The New Leadership Literacies: Thriving in a Future of Extreme Disruption and
  Distributed Everything*
- *Full-Spectrum Thinking: How to Escape Boxes in a Post-Categorical Future* features
  a new mindset to consider

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The Millennium Project. https://www.millennium-project.org/
> The Millennium Project is a global participatory think tank established in 1996 under the American Council for the United Nations University. The group published 19 editions of *The State of Future*, established a Global Futures Intelligence System, and created tools for exploring multiple futures.

UNESCO. *Futures Literacy*. https://en.unesco.org/futuresliteracy/about

VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity)
> *VUCA* was introduced by the U.S. Army War College (Gerras et al., 2010; Magee, 1998) to describe a turbulent environment. The VUCA model has been applied and adapted by businesses and academia (Baran & Woznyj, 2021). It has even been flipped when Johansen (2012) proposed that the best VUCA leaders are characterized by vision, understanding, clarity, and agility.

Urban Context

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