

Designing digital health futures

Doing undoings in society and anthropology

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Objective

Ultimately, this presentation aims **to fuel discussions on traditional paradigms in anthropology, encouraging a profound exploration of how anthropological analysis shapes the development of sustainable futures.**

The context

Traditionally, anthropological studies have primarily focused on cultural heritage, customs, and traditions, often neglecting the reciprocal influence between current actions and future aspirations. **In scrutinizing the implementation of digital health initiatives in Portugal, I shift focus from unraveling healthcare practices to critiquing anthropology's methodologies.**

While healthcare agents must discard previous help-seeking notions, anthropologists, in contrast, substitute their conventional subject matter with a commitment to envisioning sustainable futures. This intricate process explores how the idealized "ought to be" molds the "being" within social practices, where anthropology holds significance and legitimacy. The analysis sheds light on speculative methods, facilitating hypothetical actions that challenge **established norms in the present-making process.** Both observed and observers undergo transformation through this journey.

The proposal

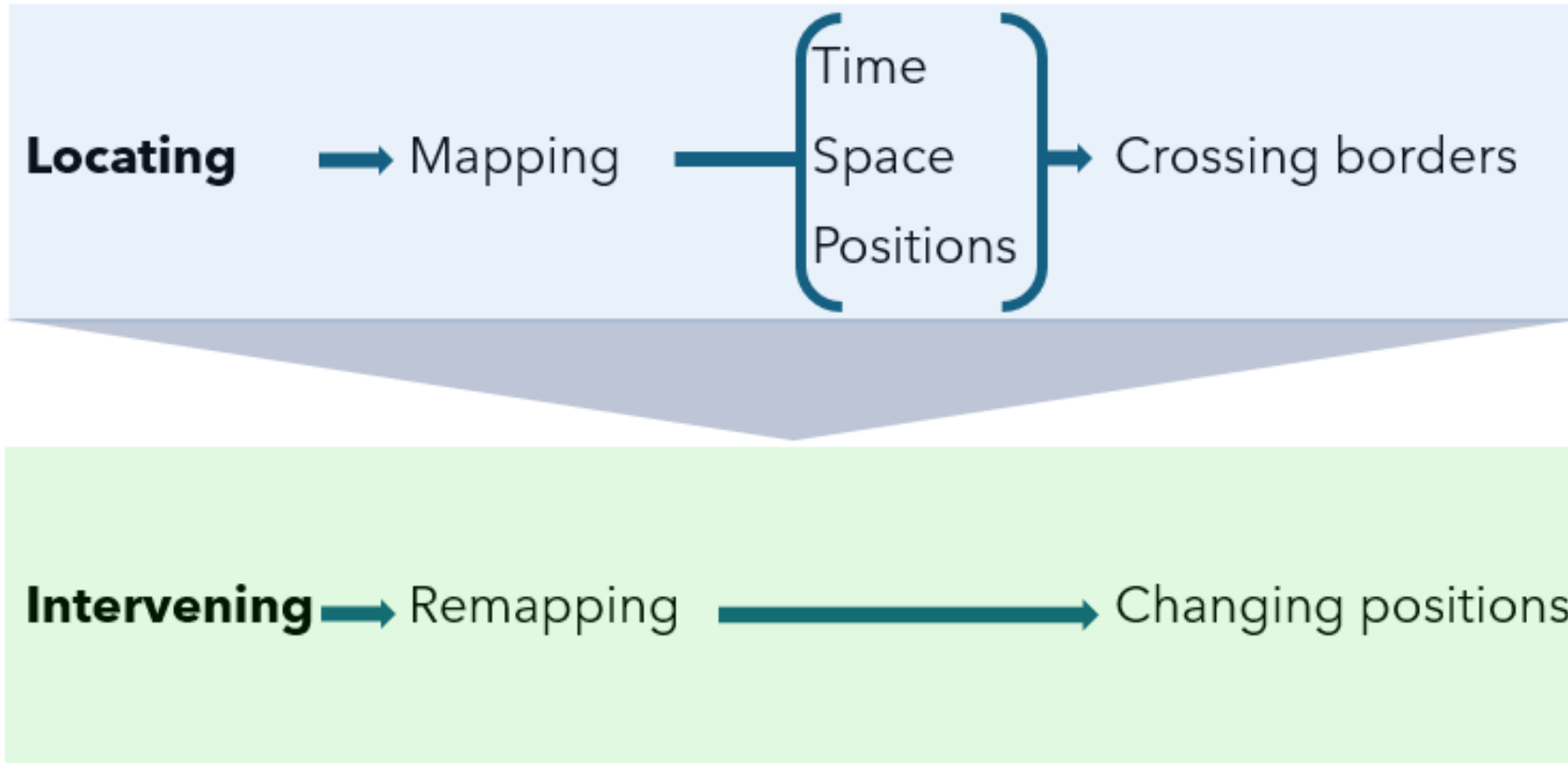
Examining digital health futures in Portugal, this presentation underscores **the dual transformation of healthcare and anthropologists' practices.** It advocates for **anticipatory methods** to address societal challenges, prompting a reconsideration of anthropology's role in shaping sustainable futures.

Exploring themes such as evolving practices, envisioning futures, and examining the convergence of the present and future, I advocate for narratives that **transcend mere technological solutions to address societal challenges.**

The approach

To explore the impact of envisaged sociotechnical futures on present behaviours by displaying perspectives and firsthand accounts illustrating how the future influences the present, drawing from 12 interviews with agents involved in designing digital health initiatives in Portugal.

Locating and Intervening*



Making cultural boundaries visible can help people find out where they are positioned, understand how they got there, and perhaps establish the possibility of imagining how things might be otherwise.

(Downey & Dumit, 1997:12)

Doing undoings in society

- **Locating cultural borders**

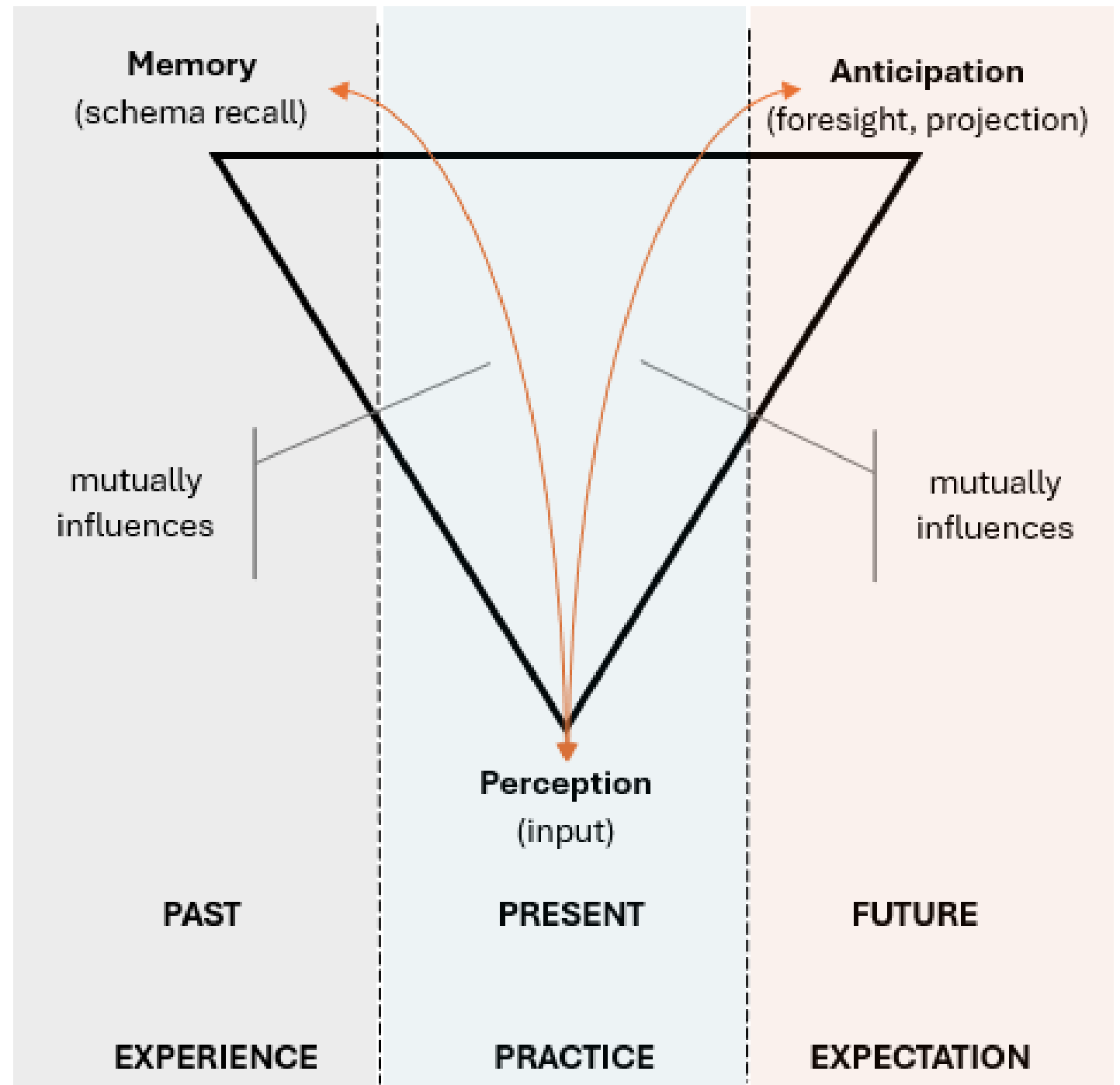
- **Time(s)**: digital health implementation as presente-making
- **Spaces**: digital health plateaus borders
- **Positions**: interests, privatization, hegemonic discourses, sociotechnical lock-in

- **Intervening remapping cultural borders**

- **Questioning times**
- **Remapping borders**
- **Changing positions** (and dispositions)

Time

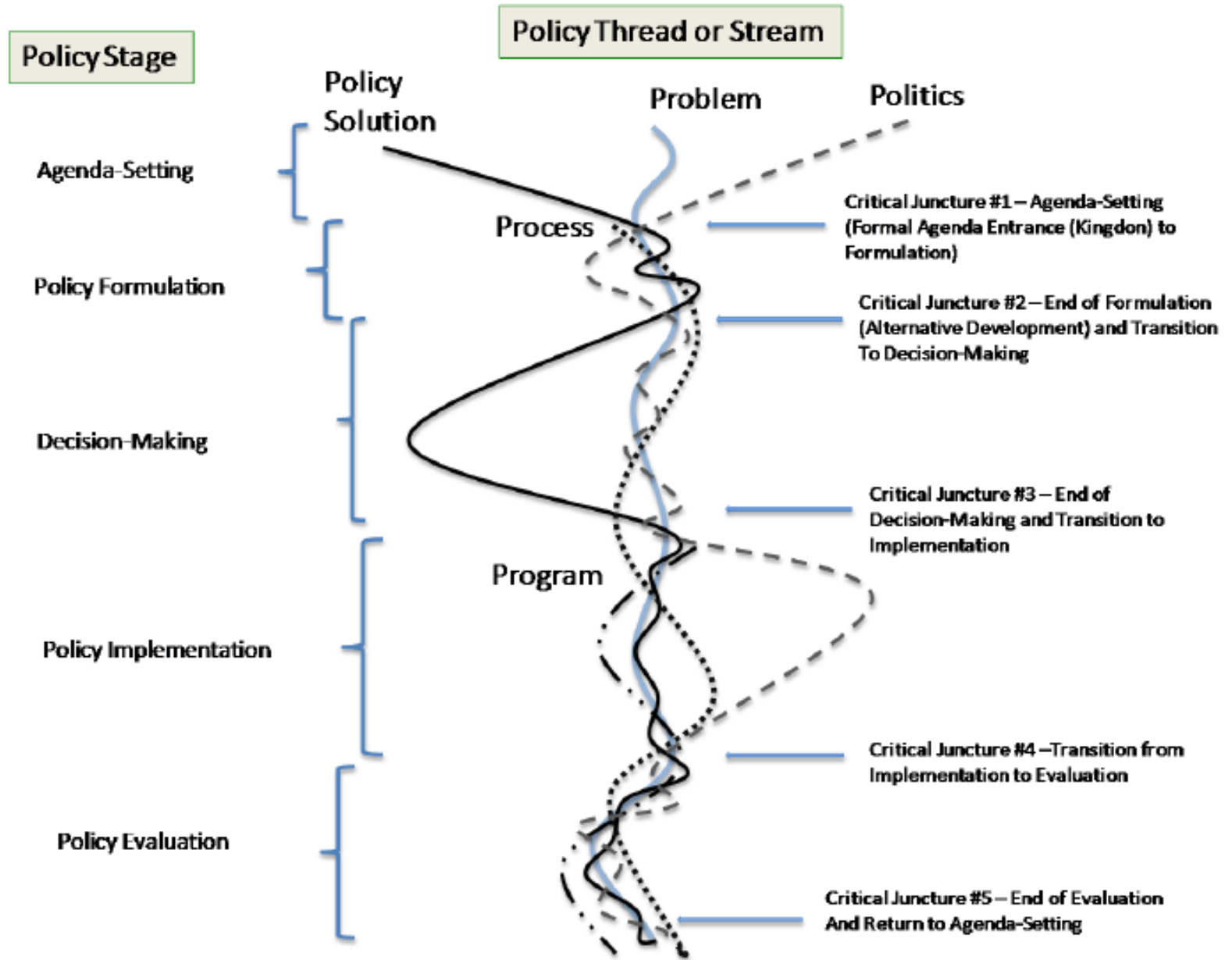
(Gell 1992; Koselleck, 2004)



Space/Position

Five policy process "streams" performed by policy entrepreneurs

(cf. Mukherjee & Howlett, 2015)



Categories	Subcategories	Indicators
Utilization (26 references)	Access (16 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the relationship between citizens and healthcare services (participation; monitoring; prevention; early detection; well-being; quality of life) • Adoption of technologies (cultural change; habit change) • Citizen-centred care • Reduction of geographical constraints (telehealth; telemedicine)
	Capacitation (7 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratization of access • Validation of information • General literacy • Digital literacy (of citizens and healthcare professionals) • Comprehensive health education
	Inequality (3 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Info-exclusion • Social exclusion • Geography

Categories	Subcategories	Indicators
Reconfiguration (22 references)	Management and governance (11 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation (certification; co-payment; smart public procurement) • Data economy • Healthcare unit management (optimization of management processes; resource allocation) • Company management (new production methods; inclusion of other specialists)
	Inventiveness (7 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological advancement (invention; innovation) • Technological employment (human resources)
	New medicine (4 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalization • Humanization • Medical Profession (training; hybridism)

Categories	Subcategories	Indicators
Evolution (21 references)	Social innovation (8 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Intergenerational dialogue • Active aging • Age-Friendly Environments • Responsibilisation
	New collaborative arrangements (7 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation • Multidisciplinarity • Consortia
	Biocommunicability (6 references)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical interoperability (data infrastructure) • Social interoperability (service integration; interaction between stakeholders) • One Health • Cultural diversity

Doing undoings in anthropology

- Future(s) as an object of research
- Expectations and imaginations as concrete practices
- Experience as only one part of practices
- Practices as multitemporal forms
- The future in the present as an approach to intervene in innovation projects
- The anthropologist as a present-maker through future imaginations
- The anthropologist as an influencer in future(s) designing
- Including anticipation as a means of anthropological implication in future-making

Final considerations

- Present behaviors, although not entirely shaped by past and future influences, reflect past experiences and contribute to future outcomes. Conversely, critically examining present behaviors necessitates an analysis of historical facts and future projections.
- Locating cultural borders is crucial to understand what is at stake, who advocates what, and who resists hegemonic inclinations.
- Locating cultural borders is paramount to unveiling the deep play beneath the manifestation of positions.
- Crossing borders is the natural domain of anthropologists.
- Remapping cultural borders is a privileged way of influencing futures designing.

- Changing positions is a response to the question, "What are we busy doing?" while keeping actors aware by bringing figures of anticipation to the table
- Incorporating the future into anthropological studies can transform our understanding of current practices, which are shaped by both experience and expectation.
- By introducing anticipatory figures into discussions, anthropologists enable others to consider the potential future outcomes and implications of their present actions. This approach keeps the discourse dynamic and promotes a proactive understanding and shaping of the future.



Thank you

