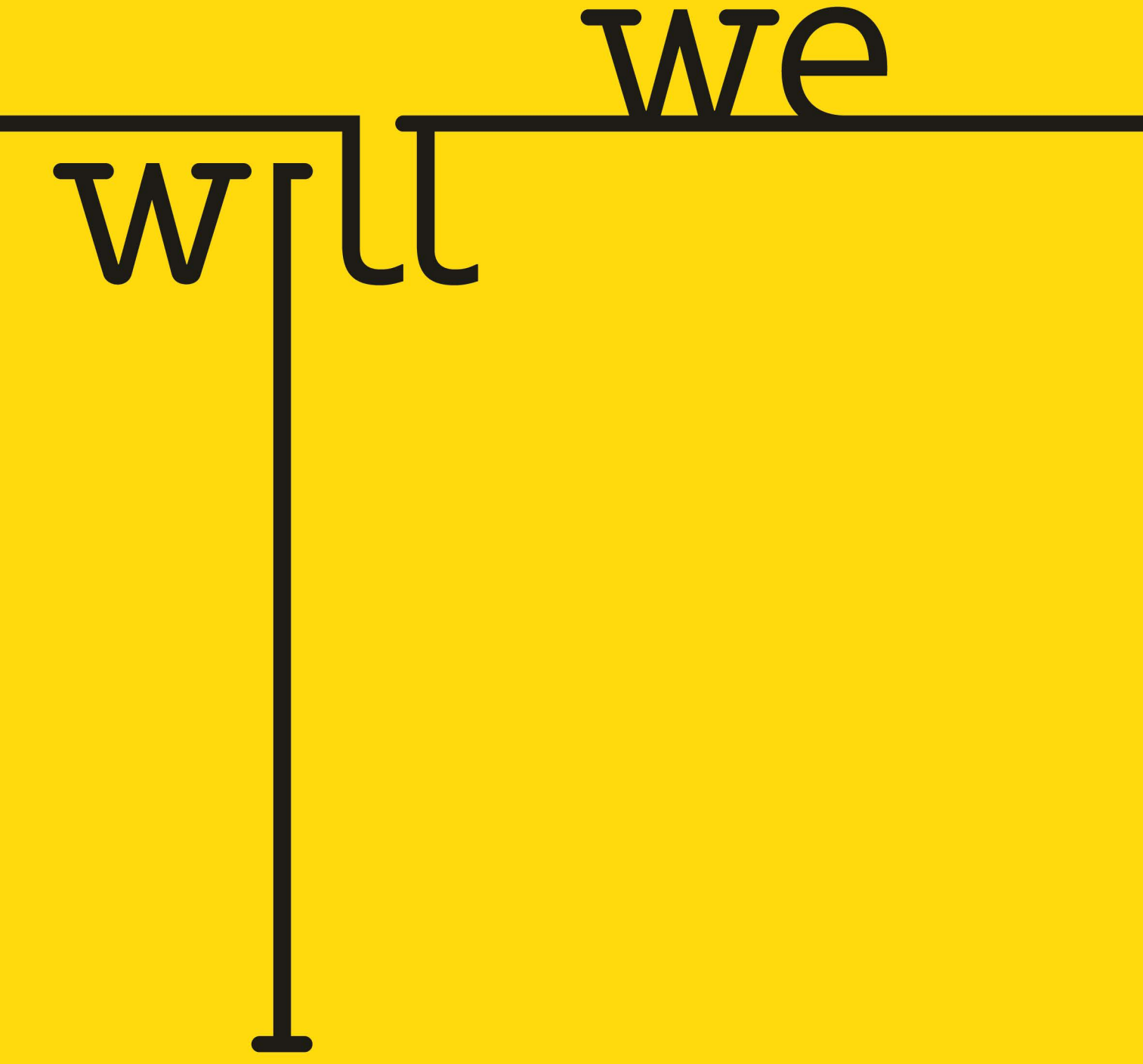
we
will

Futurological Propositions

Preface

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We will:
Futurological Propositions

> “The first proposal envisaged a complete restructuring of attitudes, to be brought about by the introduction into the atmosphere of a thousand tons of reversol, which would effect a full 180-degree change in everyone’s feelings.
>
> — Stanisław Lem, The Futurological Congress (1985)

proposition /prɒpəˈzɪʃ(ə)n/
A statement or assertion that expresses a judgement or opinion; a suggested scheme or plan of action, especially in a business context.

What you are now reading are Futurological Propositions — a collected and edited experimental publication on the subject of 'proposals as a creative practice'. This physically and digitally distributed volume emerges from discussions surrounding the ways that proposals, as a future-form of writing, comprise real and imagined aspects, and possibilities of hope for futures. When we put forward suggestions, we take a risk, putting ideas up for evaluation. We engage, when proposing, in a particular creative mode of thinking — projecting, speculating, making things up and then (possibly) making them real.

In the worlds of art, design and research, proposal preparation often includes amounts of text, but it can also comprise sketches, diagrams, images, mock-ups, models, maquettes, and many other ways that the future is, in suggestive form, placed in the present. What we want to ask, however, is what other forms might a proposal take? Which ways do experiments, prototypes, designs and walk-throughs become performative and prescient, as prefigurations that ambiguously oscillate between existing in the here and now, and pointing toward, or providing the impetus for, some other kind of existence to come.

The imagined beings and thinkings of proposals exist as 'real' but not 'actual', and so proposals, as such — even as verbal utterance, something proposed in passing to a friend or colleague — are fundamentally and definitionally *creative*.

These reflections on proposal creation emerged through various parallel activities of students, researchers, artists and designers variously involved with the Critical Media Lab Basel. Most central of these relate to the research project "Institutions as a Way of Life" (Bernhard Garnicnig, Lucie Kolb, Jamie Allen — http://institutions.life/) that explores and projects the legacy of Institutional Critique and develops artistic models of insti-

tutive practices, radical pedagogies and artistic actions. The project has sought a post-critical understanding that is productive and helpful for practitioners, ways of thinking that avoids whiny laments of how things could be, instead thinking how we might make them different. As such, we try and foreground the relation between institutions and individuals as one condition for collective action and / or creative practice.

Further, this cross-disciplinary and intra-institutional concern for how proposals have become a meta-method and precursor to most other forms of contemporary creative practice, was taken up in a class taught in the Spring of 2019 at the Critical Media Lab Basel. These works have helped inspire an aspirational romp through the possibilities of proposal making as part of, instead of extraneous to, the work that artists, designers, media makers and creative researchers do.

Our subtitle, "Futurological Propositions", really just means "proposals," but it sounds way cooler. It is a play on the wordiness of institutional contexts in which we sometimes circulate, that can, at times, create bureaucratically onerous tasks, nomenclatures and articulations for relatively simple things. And yet these contexts, in which we meet and find solidarity, comradeship and collaboration, still give potential and resources for some of the activities and change we wish to see in the world. The slight irony one picks up from the wordy terms "Futurological" and "Propositions" is distilled from Stanisław Lem's 1985 science fiction story and title "Futurological Congress". In Lem's story, the narrator becomes trapped in a Congress in Costa Rica at which a riot breaks out. Sheltering for safety in the sewers beneath the congress hall, the thoughts and accounts of Lem's characters become influenced by a hallucinogenic gas that affects their emotions and relationships to perception and reality.

What transpires thereafter is a kind of ludic oscillation between pragmatic discussions and absurd proposals regarding what the Congress should do; between sober accounts of what is happening, and radical suggestions for the mass-introduction of a "reversol gas" that "would effect a full 180-degree change in everyone's feelings" and help to manage global populations.

As an institutional discussion on the possibility of the creative practice of proposal preparation, our research, teaching, discussions, and this publication, have brought into relief topics ranging from understanding how to approach and create proposals as a matter of professional development (how to get money for the stuff we want to do), to the ways in which futures, work and creative freedoms are negotiated in a context in which we are required, more and more often it seems, to write the future down in advance of living, making or being it. How might we further emancipate ourselves, as creative thinkers and doers, in relation to all the proposing we are called to do these days?

At the start of Summer 2019, discussions about this research and teaching emerging from Institutions as a Way of Life with students from the Art Institute, Visual Communication Institute and the Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures developed into an idea for this small publication. We invited anyone who was interested in our midsts — researchers, lecturers, students, collaborators — to contribute a 'pro-

posal' (as broadly, openly, expressively and creatively conceived as possible). The minimum requirements for these proposals were: one word and one image, a proposition for something that would never have to happen, something that would remain as proposal. These are collected in this volume.

A smaller subset of the contributor group were, very thankfully, forthcoming in their desire to prepare and consolidate, design and construct the physical and digital releases of this booklet. Ina Bandixen, Matilde Martins, Manuel Justo are responsible for much of the energy that culminated in this booklet, its design and coming into being. Further support and resources that allowed for the design, development and production (online and offline) of this experimental publication are provided through the Institutions as a Way of Life project, and the FHNW's Art Institute, Visual Communication Institute and the Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures.

This book was prepared during the outbreak of COVID-19 and the global pandemic which ensued over the course of the Spring 2020, a time which we are all even more unsure of what the future will bring. The hopeful gesture of speculating about the future and what we might make in it, seems all the more poignant and important these days… Sometimes it is enough to *just imagine*.

Keep proposing, you never know what might happen.

Image / Graphic

Proposal

Problem Situation	Context	Output

Impact	Risk Assessment

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Ina Bandixen

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Manuel Justo & Matilde Martins

Martha Kapfhammer

Till Langschied

Adrian Pirlet

Joseph Popper

Jennifer Scherler

Acknowledgments

Jamie Allen

Jamie Allen

What Do Proposals Propose?
What Do Projects Project?[1,2]

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1 The title of this essay is inspired by a brainworm of a paper title from human-computer interaction research, stuck in my head since I first read it in the late nineties: "What do Prototypes Prototype? (Houde & Hill 1997)

2 Many thanks to Michaela Büsse, Moritz Greiner-Petter, Selena Savic, Shintaro Miyazaki, Jonas Kellermeyer, and the Critical Media Lab Basel crew for their early suggestions and revisions to this proposal text.

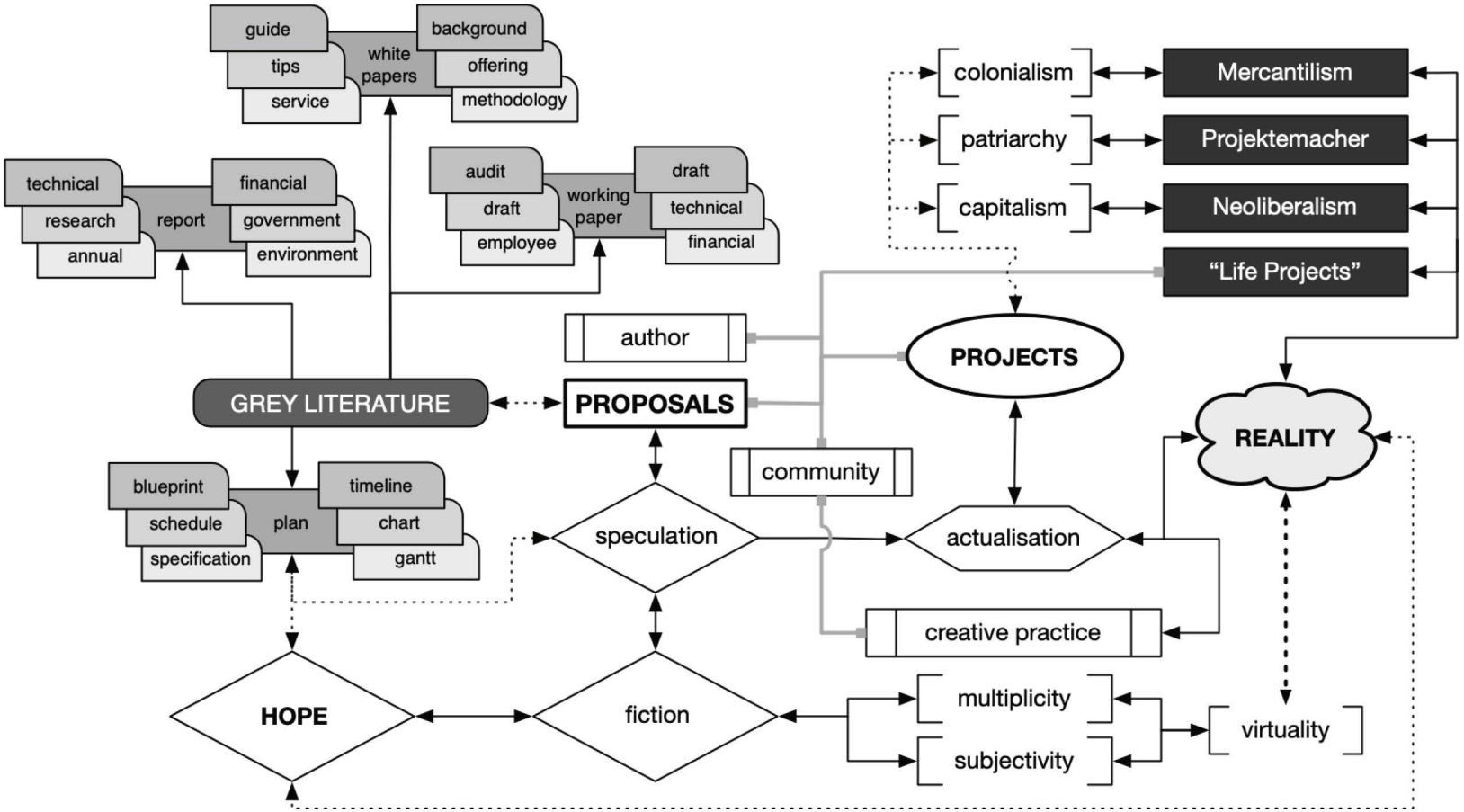

Figure 1 — A schematic and conceptual diagram of the proposal-project relation.

1. Summary

> On my appointment to the Department of Sociology established at the University of Bielefeld in 1969, I was asked what research projects I had running. My project was, and ever since has been, the theory of society; term: thirty years; costs: none.
>
> — Niklas Luhmann (2012)

1.1 A Proposal

I submit to you, dear reader, a proposal: for the length of this essay, we'll think together about proposals, in relation to projects. I'll write out some ideas and, if you like, you can have a read through them, entirely at your own pace. We'll look at the idea and category of grey literature, a bit of critical history of the proposal-project and end with a further proposal: a way of thinking about the much maligned, common practice of proposal writing as a creative practice. A creative practice, no less, that potentiates means of rewriting, rethinking and recomposing knowledge practices, and the probable futures these can create.

By the end of the writing and reading we do here, we will have a better sense of what propels the proposal, what this form of thinking and doing pretends and intends, affords and constrains. Our intent? To catch a glimpse of what proposing "all the fucking time" (Ukeles 1969) does to 'us' and to the world around 'us'.[3] A genealogy of 'proposals', and 'projects', equips us to make these overarching and seemingly stale practices strange before us, opening them to the alien-gaze that is central to recomposition, through art, literature, comedy, and other creative pursuits. If you will pardon *one martial* metaphor that reveals my somewhat positive idealism, it is my hope that we perform together a bit of conceptual-judo on the proposal;[4] recasting the schlep-work of proposal writing as a kind of science fiction of the self, a meta-method composing futures we might actually want to live, work, research and create through. Such idealism walks a thin line — as liberalist 'creative cultures' try continuously to 'golden handcuff' us to

3 The conceptual artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles writes in her 1969 manifesto-as-proposal, Maintenance Art Manifesto, Proposal for an exhibition 'CARE': "Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time (lit.)". Ukeles' work was a continuous attempt to intersperse realms of artistic practice with the mundane, domestic activities that people, and mostly women, play that depletes their energies in supporting others, doing unseen work, and generally 'keeping things going' in unrecognised ways. Proposal writing could be said to exist in an amongst similar categories, as thankless administrative pencil-pushing that provides infrastructures, resources, jobs, and ways of life for people. Yet, as an activity around which "the mind boggles and chafes at the boredom" (Ukeles 1969), proposal writing could clearly benefit from a recasting into realms of artistic, literary or at least creative practice. Cultural operator Andrea Phillips, at a 2019 European Forum for Advanced Practice meeting outside Madrid, recently imparted a similarly imancipative attitude toward the doldrums of administration, exclaiming: "Learn to love your inbox". Such attempts at embracing unseen aspects of practices and tools that can also give us peculiar and immediate powers are both highly infrastructural in their sympathies, and they may help us relieve, or help us to 'own', those anxieties we may harbour about our ever-changing identities. I am grateful to Lucie Kolb and Bernhard Garnicnig for bringing up Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work in this context, which is also taken up in Greg Sholette's book, "Dark Matter" (2011).

boundless labours, part of what Mark Fisher noted as "belief in a world where the most banal work can become creative and artistic" (Fisher, 2014).

Acknowledging that harsher realities and banalities must be addressed, could we also begin to understand proposals in new relations to creative knowledge practices, instead of a thing we must do in order to *begin* this practice? At a minimum, we might understand better what kinds of worlds the proposal-as-form allows us to acknowledge, see, make, critique and imagine.

1.2 Scope of Work

We should caution ourselves, as the cultural historian Walter Benjamin once did, that "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin W. 1968). Proposal documents are no exception, and so any genealogy of proposals and projects makes for a bumpy, complicitous ride through the exploitative, extractive, exclusionary and divisive pasts of modernity.

There are few aspects of contemporary, creative work and life left untouched by practices of proposing and the projects these practices instaurate. The proposal, as a formal or written plan or suggestion, put forward for consideration by others, pre-formats landscapes of general conceivability, becoming portraits of specific possibility. The project, a goal-oriented, usually collaborative enterprise that is carefully planned, subdivided and expedited, is most easily spotted in its 'natural habitats': architecture, art and design, engineering, science and software development. Architects don't make buildings, they make documents. What has come to be called "projectifi-

4 Judo is a Japanese martial art, its name literally meaning something like "gentle way". Interpretations of the central Judo philosophy — jū yoku gō o seisu, or "softness controls hardness" — refer to a general strategy of not confronting or resisting, but of adjusting, modulating, rerouting and evading.

cation"[5] has also extensively morphed and oriented contemporary perception and action, becoming a way of thinking about life and purpose, "fictions in the quest of truth" (Guldin 2012). Anthony Giddens spoke of the *self* as a project and the modern responsibility we have not to presume ourselves to be a given entity, but to re-project ourselves again and again (Eriksen 2001). We are compelled by neoliberal regimes, advisors and parents, to answer questions like: "What is your 'life project?'"

Coexisting in parallel with coercive and barbaric histories, it is also important to recall that the proposal embodies hopeful possibility and collaborative intent — a love of fate, or faithful love, for the things and people in this world. This is what, perhaps, motivates us, keeps us forever doing proposes with, as "an art that detects and affirms the possibility of other reasons insisting as so many virtual forces that have not yet had the chance to emerge but whose presence can be trusted upon to make a difference" (Van Tuinen 2014).

5 The issue or topic of "projectification", since the mid-1990s, includes a growing body of literature in Management and Organisational Studies (e.g.: Midler 1995, Bredin & Söderlund 2011, Garais, 2002, Packendorff & Lindgren 2014, Jiang et. al 2020). It is variously defined through this research, but universally characterises modern developments in organisations and by individuals towards the use of projects for handling complex tasks, problem solving and creative renewal.

2. Context

> “Listen, this old system of yours could be on fire and I couldn't even turn on the kitchen tap without filling out a 27b/6...
> Bloody paperwork.
>
> — Harry Tuttle from the film “Brazil” (1985)[6]

2.1 Subproject: Greymedia & Paratexts

The bulk of all literature is written in order to prepare the ground for, or to extend and elaborate, a relatively small amount of "primary" literature. The vast majority of all email we read is in reply-all to a first email, and thenceforth replied-to in service of some altogether other thing happening — email is not often written for its own sake, as, say letters once were. Most media re-renders or references a fairly diminutive number of canonical narratives, compositions or forms. What is discarded in these processes, these documents of process, what goes forgotten and is edited away from our attentions is itself a much, much larger body of work: technical notes, datasets and statistics, coordinations emails, design specifications, theses and dissertations, scripted scenes and backstory developments, revision upon version upon revision. Suzane Briet, with her "Qu'est-ce que la documentation?" ("What is Documentation?") diagnosed as early as early as 1951 how such "documentary agencies" only in "certain cases end in a genuine creation" (Briet 2006).

From these conjectures emerge a general outline of infrastructure against entropy: there is always more background than foreground, there are proportionally more structures made that allow structure to exist. From this outline, parallels in contemporary and cultural institutions are apparent: under conditions where information, data and communications are at a premium, there are more and more "middlemen" enlisted to plan for, manage and assess the risks of informational flows. Pareto's 80/20 power law[7] is both a verifiable trope and a self-fulfilling prophecy in modern, managed, mediatised document cultures.

"Grey media" are the middlemen of information circulation, described by Fuller and Goffey as "databases, group-work software, project-planning methods, media forms, and technologies

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6 Originating with a pivotal scene in Terry Gilliam's 1985 film "Brazil", the presence or absence of the "27b/6" is a plot device and meme-like phrase that has become a symbol for how gluts of grey literature prevent people from getting things done. The reference to form 27B/6, a piece of paperwork without which no work can be done by repairmen of the Department of Public Works, is an oblique reference to the bureaucratic critiques of George Orwell, who lived at Canonbury Square Apartment 27B, Floor 6, while writing the book "1984".

7 The Pareto principle is a rule of thumb, also called "the 80/20 rule" which states that for numerous phenomena, the majority (about 80%) of outcomes, changes of effects in a system are generated by a minority (20% of the causes or actos). Malcolm Gladwell writes how economists also refer to this "idea that in any situation roughly 80 percent of the 'work' will be done by 20 percent of the participants" (Gladwell 2006).

that are operative far from the more visible churn of messages about consumers, empowerment, or the questionable wisdom of the information economy" (2012). "Paratext" is a term that tries to encapsulate the abundance and importance of writings that sit in the periphery of central literary works, those which "surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to present it, in usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to make it present, to assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption" (Genette & Maclean 1991).

A panoply of media forms — from the "RFP" (request for proposals) and "call for submissions" to the "working draft" and "plan of action" — are at the start, and the heart, of much creative, artistic, research work, and almost everything else that fits the form of a "project". Creative and academic work is enabled by a "world of funding proposals, strategic vision documents, and development team pitches" (Graeber 2018) as well as project management, budgetary control expectations and interfaces for most every kind of endeavour. Abundantly and predominantly present both as pre-digital and post-digital forms, paratext and grey literature of these kinds represents reams upon reams of documents, a tower of babble scaffolded by insightful editorials and bureaucratic blustering. These are materials few people to actually read, or that further imagine are mostly unreadable: terms and conditions, annual reports, research reports, technical reports, project summaries, policy documents, white papers, project evaluations, working papers, cover letters, prefaces, editorials and book-jacket blurbs. Infamously and likely spuriously, the peer-reviewed, published academic paper is "read by about 10 people, and half of these articles are never read at all" (Jago 2020).

But still, all this stuff continues to get written — although increasingly algorithmic things do a proportion of this writing, and machines already do most of the "reading".[8] We continue to write it in the hope of creating collaborative entities that can learn with, retaining and amplifying nuance, difference and equitability. We do so also, in part, to bolster our personal and professional

8 Technical documents, bureaucratic and procedural things like contracts and financial reports are increasingly being written by, or with the assistance of, computation language generation softwares (See, for example, Podolny 2015). We also know that computer-written gibberish has been accepted, edited and published into academic publications for years now, in order to improve research assessment outcomes, provoke and pad CVs (Van Noorden 2014).

identities. We continue to do so, as well, in fulfillment of the jobs we have as descriptors, interpreters and critical substantiators of projects within government and non-governmental agencies, private consultancies and academic departments. The proportional effort involved is often cause for irony or even cynicism, as we recognise that the central works we purport to be working on all the time — various kinds of expressive and insightful creation — are also the result of a lot of what we might call 'meta-effort'. Yet, grey media and paratext, like those of us who choose to or are chosen to author these, perform caring, maintaining, support roles that are institutive, and constitutive. These are roles that put energies into what we suppose to be more central goals and matters of concern, that breathe life into ideas and actions to come. But if we were to regard the pursuits of the "artist", "designer" or "researcher" in terms of proportionality of effort, attention and time, "art", "design" and "research" may not actually be what we do, most of the time. The paratext of proposals creates paralives, communities of *Projektemacher*.

> “Civilised life, you know, is based on a huge number of illusions in which we all collaborate willingly. The trouble is we forget after a while that they are illusions and we are deeply shocked when reality is torn down around us.
>
> — J.G. Ballard (2003)

2.2 Subproject: Subject, Object, Project

The separation felt between description of practice and practice itself aligns with David Graeber’s (2018) diagnosis of the rise of “Bullshit Jobs”. It would be a mistake to understand that ‘what an artist does, mostly, is make art’, or that ‘photographers spend most of their time making photographs’. More and more labour becomes ‘para’ or ‘grey’, work that justifies, supports, documents and evaluates a much smaller proportion of ‘actual work’. Scholars and researchers, anecdotally and proportionately, likewise spend the vast majority of their work time, not doing research. Fisher summarises this as an unsatisfactory and ironic aspect of what we label as institutional “cognitive work” because “thinking is the last thing one is permitted to do at work now” (2017).

The ambiguous naturalisation of proposals and projects as a state of ‘general projectification’, however, may also arise quite naturally from the ways in which thinking, concepts and writing are futural (Diprose 2017). People like William James and Isabelle Stengers have helped us understand the speculative nature of thinking and conceptualisation *as such*, involving as it does a precursive trust, a speculative investment in speculative adventures (Stengers 2014). James called this “the jump”, part of our “Will to Believe” (1896) which allows action in absence of prior evidence. Knowledge practices must presuppose that we will be able to enter into increasing rapport with someone, or some thing. The proposal enacts this sanguine, human culture of creative planning that at once imagines a world, experience, idea or thing that does not yet exist, while situating this new thing in a world that, we must presume, does or will.

Drawing on the projectile trajectory of the etymology of the word ‘project’ in the realm of design studies Claudia Mareis ascribes an “anticipatory, projective dimension and intention” in the epistemic culture of design “that also harbors certain risks and uncertainties” (Mareis 2016). For architecture and design theorist Selena Savic, we extend from the realist base of the table, around which we sit in order to discuss proposals, into the table as verb and metaphor that extends temporally, spatially, conceptually and actually (Savic 2019). In tabling proposals, we also create situations of risk, requiring jumps or leaps that set us aloft, inviting judgment, critique, or nullification — the table becomes a chopping block. What kind of risk is being taken, and who can afford to take such risk, at what consequence? These are questions that remind us how projects are situated also in the privilege of race, class, gender and status. Where does the *Projektemacher* wind up situated? How and

where will I find myself, in the world to come that I have now proposed?

Part of what drives practices of art, design and research proposal making is the faith that these knowledge practices can or will create rapports that leave ourselves and others somehow changed. This *amor fati*, related to James' will to believe, stimulates the all-too human proposing of projects, also recalling alchemical or gnostic practices that trusted how knowledge practices would simultaneously transform 'the world' and 'the self'. Proposing transforms us, from *subjects* who "face a universe of objects, of problems, which are somehow hurled against us" (Flusser 1986) into *projects*, hoping to change the world to its advantage: "from a state of being subjected to being something that one creates, what one introduces to others, what lies ahead of one as the beginning of a new work" (Zielinski 2011). 'What kind of person would create such a project?' is a question we must pair with 'What kind of person does the project create?' Proposal making, as a futural form and technology of the self, amalgamates real and imagined aspects of present and future states of subjects and objects. It is as if, in the hopes of diminishing self-reflection on the encroaching "bullshit" nature of jobs, in general, we have had to develop various mass delusions at the nexuses of identity and activity, 'who we are' and 'what we do' (Graeber 2018). These delusions are attempts to stitch together the ever-present and modern contradictions between 'what we think we do' and 'what we really do', "aimed at resolving the painful structural contradictions inherent in the human situation" (Sontag 1982, see Fig. 2). They are also what impell the analysis and reconstitutions of ethnographers, psychologist, sociologist and anthropologist, who, each in their own way, make a professional practice out of addressing Foucault's much cited observation that "people know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Foucault 1988).

Gaps between impression and actuality, abstract description and activity, are also reflected in how proposals transfer and translate meanings and aspirations — how they speculate and fictionalise, enacting the ground of difference between 'the real' and 'the concept'. The proposal's purpose, first and foremost, is to convince and secure the resources required to undertake 'its' project. It is both written and read in full knowledge, however, that allowances are presumed and will necessarily be made for the multitude of specific factors that may arise during implementation. As such, we can mostly only talk about proposals as loosely theoretical

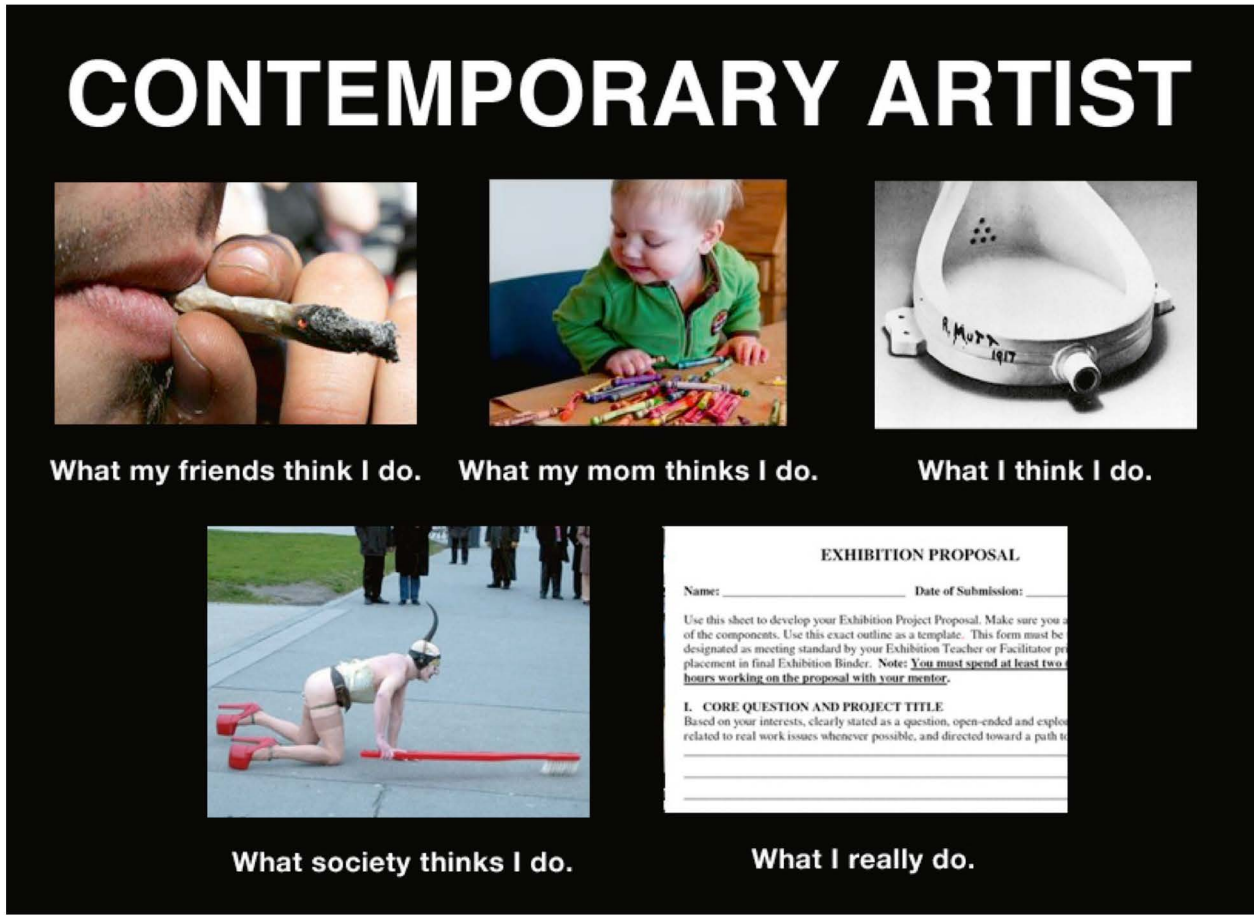

Figure 2 — The "What I Really Do" meme for "Contemporary Artists", by Garnet Hertz (2012)

or indeed *fictional* constructs, not as empirical contentions or plans that we follow to-the-letter. They are written as expressly self-consistent literary documents, at least in the first instance 'for' a committee of people who will read and approve them, based mostly on this self-consistency.

Once initiated, the proposal gets translated into an empirical, material or enacted project — 'what actually happens'. The differences between 'what is proposed' and 'what actually happens' invokes positive ambiguities, enabling expressive, creative potentials interpretational freedoms. An example of the former might be the creative translations and mistranslations explored through Moholy-Nagy's Telephone Pictures from 1923, for which he called a sign painter on the telephone and described, in language and in advance, the artwork to be created. These differences also create the possibility of constraint driven solidarity, in which the communities compelled to enact also react to what has been specified 'in the proposal'. The "fugitive planning" proposed by Morten and Harney which refuses standards and evaluations "imposed from elsewhere" (2013) elaborates such dispositions and actions that refuse subjugation, including subjugation of the self.

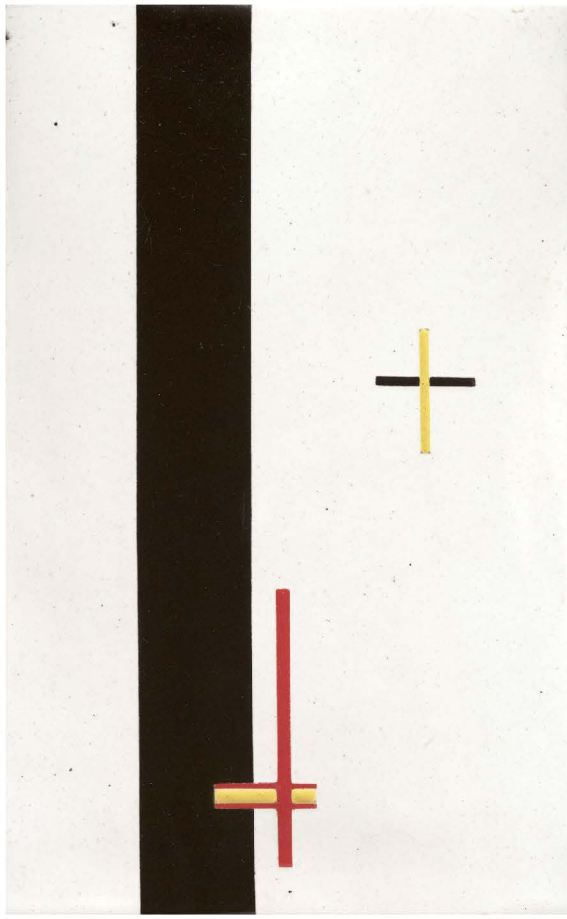

Figure 3 — László Moholy-Nagy, EM 2 (Telephone Picture) (1923)

> “Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.
> — John Lennon (1980)

2.3 Subproject: *Projektemacher, Projektleben*

We would be remiss in developing our thinking of the grey literature of proposals without apprising ourselves of the similarly ever-present and necessarily concurrent category of the project. As with the proposal, very little these days is recognised, authorised, gets done, or is even presumed possible, unless it is framed as a “project”. If projects speculate on the world, it is the proposal that speculates on, and is informed by, what a project is or can be — proposals are projects’ project. The project is an under-observed meta-over-form of contemporary life that structures much of our thinking, and thinking about doing. Whether we purport to create an exhibition, a book, or develop a new personal skill (e.g.: language learning or bread baking, during the 2020 pandemic for example), these moments, courses and acquisitions of new knowledge and practices are often spoken about and conceived of as ‘projects’.

In art, design and the creative knowledge practices of contemporary media and cultural research, projects take up a historical character that remains largely unregarded by people who spend most of their lives creating, working on, in, experiencing and evaluating projects. The project as concept, metaphor and method has been expanded to include any socially observable cultural technique of anticipation, whether individual or collective (Boutinet 2004, 2012; Scranton 2014). It is “the sequencing of work (and by extension of all of life)” (Bröckling 2015), its own form of thinking and doing, an onto-epistemological category and the meta-method of research, art and design, presuming and proscribing certain aspects of perspectives and activities. A non-exhaustive list of such ambiguous aspects could include: temporal delimitation, as projects are never ‘forever’ and even a ‘life project’ last for but a single lifetime; variability of constitution, as a project exists and has cohering purpose outside of its specific implementation, as membership and methods may change but the project continues; experimental and non-committal, as projects are by definition circumstantial, allowing for engagement with domains or subjects at varying levels of depth but moving to new terrains sharply or abruptly. In the theoretical and written proposal, projects are “framed as trials or experiments that test mechanisms… in pursuit of more substantive interventions” (Asiyanbi & Massarella 2020). An aspect of the literary fiction of proposal writing, perhaps most famously and insidiously, is its ability to undertake this framing in ways that predefine and guarantee the success of what is proposed, narrating “appropriate inevitability”, with as-low-as possible risk (Fuller & Goffey 2012). This can be

done, for example, by keeping the range of possible evaluations narrow, by organising categories of thought or action into imagined spectrums, in need of 'filling in'.

Most in academia consider the formal, written proposal that is so well known to arts, design and research projects to be a projection of scientific work. In this sense, proposals are seen canonically as outlining a process that moves through hypothesis → experiment → analysis → conclusion. Yet, the project as we know it is perhaps even more deeply marked by the parallel economic histories of marketisation which took place alongside the rationalisation of practice and knowledge with technoscience. In the late 17th-century, the English trader, journalist and spy Daniel Dafoe called his own time the "Projecting Age", in which men (it was always men) like him developed self-supporting proposals and plans for the aggressive pursuit of wealth and happiness, watched over and held up by the invisible hand of the market. In similar ways, today's social psychologists, self-improvement writers, management studies academics, corporate human resources managers and creative industry professionals, all bestow the category of the "personal project" with immense import for the fulfilment of happiness, meaning and personal integrity.

The essayist Jonathan Swift brilliantly satirised the arrogance of people like Dafoe, as well as the project-as-form, and proposal writing. Swift's essay 1729 is titled "A Modest Proposal For Preventing the Children of Poor People From Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country, and For Making Them Beneficial to the Publick". It is written in an earnest, nearly-believable style, during the height of the mercantilist[9] "lust for enterprise and adventure" (Heckscher 2013) that would make even the most aggressive, insensitive project seem sincere and reasonable. Swift's parodic text, dryly and bureaucratically, outlines how the plight of poor Irish families might be solved by selling their poor children to richer gentlemen and ladies, *as food*. Wittkowsky (1943) suggests that Swift's lampoonist pamphleteering could be considered a studied critique of the "project", written as the form of a proposal. It was pub-

9 Mercantilism was an ideology and related set of economic policies for the promotion and development of national economies in Europe at the expense of other territories. Characteristic of European trade, conflict and colonial exploits between the 16th and the 18th centuries, it is a mode of exchange often posited as the beginning of nation-states as engines propelled by extractive capitalism and territorial expansion, which has carried into late-capitalism.

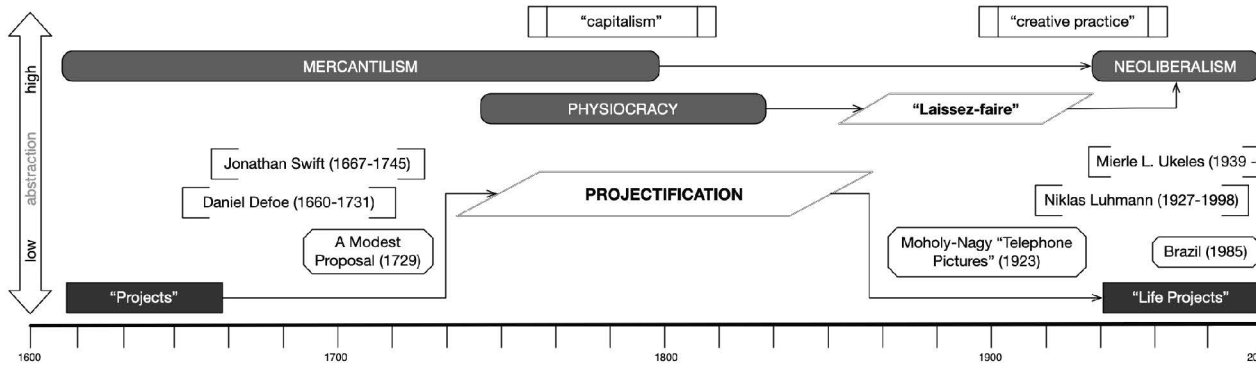

Figure 4 — Project timeline, including historical referents, milestone figures and processes

lished during an early, formative commercial and speculative age — Mercantilist 16th to 18th-century Europe — in which the "Capitalist Project" writ large, and "the project" writ smaller, took on their principal dominator and colonial characteristics. While today 'projects' as a form still generally strikes liberal-minded people as well-meaning and good means of solving common problems, Swift's intervention — which he similarly articulates in satirical critiques of both scientific and commercial projects in the Lagado portions of the sci-fi fantasy "Gulliver's Travels" — lets us glimpse a pre-project era into which the arrival and proliferation of "proposals" and "projects" reminds us how things could, still today, be otherwise. If we cannot imagine a form of socioeconomics that lies beyond capitalism (Fisher 2009), can we imagine a form of engagement with the world that is beyond the project? If we are called to rethink creativity itself, rethinking its contemporary means of propagation in the relation of the proposal and the project would be one good place to start.

Joan Thirsk's "Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England" (1978) develops a study of the meta-method of projects, at the dawn of the contemporary neoliberal era. Studies of the ambiguous characteristics of the project during this era however were few and far between until Markus Krajewski's edited volume, *Projektemacher* (2004) rapidly expanded critical research into proposals, projects, and those who propose and project them. Krajewski's work centers on the figure of the "projector", a new kind of seventeenth-century subject and public figure, "the author of proposals and the subject of pamphlets and plays" offering "a language and a focus for political and economic analysis" (Keller & McCormick 2016). For Krajewski, also wrought through the brilliant and expansive portraits of such people in his book "World Projects" (2015), it is primarily the contextualised psychologies of the "*Projektemacher*" that most intrigues and illuminates as the construction of a particular kind of patriarchal, scientific, historical and economic actor.

In the contrarian, anti-academic and anti-institutional arrogance and hubris of early *Projektemacher* we glimpse a form of subjectivity that survives into the contradictions of our contemporary innovation- and novelty-driven endeavours and cognoscenti. Projects and their makers, for Krajewski, are in a way predestined to fail, as experimental and temporally delimited projects leave their status as project in the moment they 'succeed' in becoming canonised as regular practice, work, achievement or enterprise. The kind

of person who is driven to propose new projects is very seldom the same kind of person that is interested keeping them running. Krajewski's profiling suggests, almost psychoanalytically, the contradictory pathos at the heart of people who build their sense of community, social acceptance and personal satisfaction through the making of projects.

The self-fulfilling trajectory toward failure of ambitious projects is perhaps attributable to the fragmentary, sectioned and abstract work of project making. Such fragmentation accelerates the temporalities of work, such that one feels that there is always something more to be done, always another 'plate to keep spinning'.

The COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020 splintered attentions even further, suddenly thrusting activities of cognitive labour and social interaction online in ways that require continual context switching and the switching of platforms (from Zoom, to Skype, to Webex...). This hyper-acceleration of content, as well as the way that communications platforms and apps are increasingly designed around 'micro-progress', metered temporalities and intermittent rewards, all contribute to the "tyranny of the moment" that characterises projectified life conditions for many (Eriksen 2001).

The piteousness of project-ambition can also arise when 'approved' proposals lock people into living out 'prior versions' of themselves, or force them to enact plans that turn out to be inappropriate or inflexible. Project work may therefore fail to resolve conflicts between 'who we are' and 'what we do' in ways that allow people to feel whole, integral and fulfilled. Those who study the project as part of identity construction in creative fields note how projects impose norms not just of work, but of personality and lifestyle; projects create people who must perform organisation and structure, keep things to plan, and keep emotions and irrationalities at bay — all quintessentially modernist traits of behaviour that have become associated with "professionalism" (Lindgren & Packendorff 2007). "God and the devil, heaven and hell" are projected by projects and their makers, writes Krajewski (Krajewski 2004, translated from the German by the author).

Proposals and projects, a modern relation that catches-all, are generative and resilient forms of thought and action, with roots in early modern versions of Fisher's capitalist realism, which continue to subtend its momentum and durability. This realism, Fisher writes, names a now oft-cited inevitability, "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political

and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (Fisher 2009). Projectification is now part of how universities implement neoliberal ideology, through the "introduction of market-based languages and practices from business" which help "position business as the 'reality' to which the 'ivory towers' of public services" like art schools and universities "must adjust and adapt" (Fisher 2017). This, while universities and institutional practitioners attempt to think themselves outside of market forces, while remaining critically useful to them.

Such realism also links the speculative capitalism of the mercantilist 1600 and 1700s and the post-internet, individualist alone-togetherness that characterises the advanced neoliberal economies of the West today. The start-up innovator pitching for venture capital to forge into new market territories and the colonial explorer of old soliciting resources for ships and journey-making enact not so very different models of investment, risk, assurance and gains, and require similar kinds of bravado and salesmanship. Both eras bloat the need for and modes of projects and the promises and projections that are made through proposing; both fan the flames of enthusiasm for 'creative destruction', commercial recklessness and the limitless growth of enterprise through imaginings of self-organisation and promises of self-determinate success in unregulated and 'free' markets. Projects, then and now, are "characterized by their novelty, their claims on the future, and often too by their opportunism and their transgressive embrace of material interests — including self-interest — as springs of action" (Keller & McCormick 2016).

Mercantilist and neoliberalist periods are distinguishable in their preponderance of free-feeling markers such as interdisciplinarity (or perhaps by a mere lack of discipline) crossing "boundaries between science, economy, society, church and state — seeking political transformations through material interventions in the landscape" (Keller & McCormick 2016). The libertarian origins of projects have evolved into our current perceptions of project-based work as a "post-bureaucratic", implying flexibility, the uniqueness of tasks, emergent coordination, autonomous management, solidarity around objectives and the self-selection of collaborative and resource compositions (Lindgren & Packendorff 2006). This while "the asceticism ascribed to the protestant work ethic in an earlier moment of capitalism now explicitly coincides with a kind of hedonic compulsion" (Fisher 2017) of the project.

Of course, there exist differences in how the project has moved into our contemporary

moment. The mercantilist mercenary zeal transmutes into the maniacal globalism of Krajewski's mid-century European *Projektemacher*, becoming scientific and military-industrial in the twentieth-century was ratified into a current age of administrative dilution. Projects, nonetheless, retain their contradictory promise as both a response to, and relief from, more hierarchical and rigid forms of work.

The project proposal is an imaginative work, a composition, and its promise is one of self-actualisation, freedom through mobility and collaborative comradeship in work, wrought through creativity. The "life project" also provides an outside-of-ourselves zen-like distance that allows us to imaginatively transcend biological, class or economic determinism, and potentially actualise our multiplicity (as multitaskers?). These same liberal valuations also make projects, and proposal writing, principal vehicles for the continued registration of attention and activity solely in terms of utility value and preformed visions of *homo economicus* and the "entrepreneurial self" (Bröckling 2015). These modes of quantification then become a means of exacting pressure, control and enacting governmentality. This illustrates how proposals and projects are part of what Foucault called "the conduct of conduct", allowing for both tyranny and freedom, resisting simplistic suppositions that these allowances must be mutually exclusive (Rose 1999).

We are at liberty to author the projects we undertake, while conditions and employment terms become more flexible, particularly for creative, academic and research work in art and design. For these areas, the liberal and progressive legacies of academic interest in post-structuralism creates environments in which personal sovereignties are held in high esteem and, also ambiguously, 'protected'. Yet, the projectification of academic work, which includes the central goal of obtaining money through proposal preparation for externally funded projects, increases risk and precarity for creative knowledge workers (Norkus, Besio & Baur 2016).

The atomisation of work into and within projects allows for institutions to more straightforwardly and economically compartmentalise salaries as 'fixed-term' contracts that last the duration of a project. Projects also create work before and after their own official durations: the work of researching, preparing and writing proposals is not always remunerated, and project wrap-ups can be time consuming and self-exploitatively exhausting. Project close-outs and follow-ups are presumed, but very seldom planned-for, while those involved scramble to make the most of what was collectively gathered, learned and cre-

ated. 'Self-exploitation' names the condition of conflict between a person's long-term integrity and commitment to subjects and communities and the insecure, at times bordering on abuse, employment relationships with beneficiare institutions (Rogler 2019). Researchers in increasingly less specific areas of art and design — with relatively slight and scant funding possibilities — are often expected to move from project to project in order to maintain a livelihood. This breaks the continuity of research focus, diminishes the quality and depth of engagement, which further reduces the specificity of these areas. "Henceforth people will not make a career, but will pass from one project to another, their success on a given project allowing them access to different, more interesting projects" are the futures Boltanski and Chiapello foretell for all who live under "The New Spirit of Capitalism" (2006).

Proposal writing and project-making, at the nexus of the arts and research, develop through particularly contradictory histories, traditions and demands. Disciplinary regimes, professionalist performativity, and "bureaucratic specifics like visibility and accountability" are expected on the one hand, while the creative project worker is expected to 'think outside the box', be interventionist and creative as someone "empowered to be autonomous and carry out self-organised knowledge work" (Kalff 2017). Such contradictions, however, as Kalff points out, may be key to the introduction of creative subjectivity into the labour of proposals and projects, by taking precautions and resisting requests "that contain unwanted outcomes" (Kalff 2017) for individuals and collectives.

The proposal process of research in higher education in national funding contexts of Europe of the early 21st-century favours less-experimental, more-pragmatic, economically stimulating or 'innovation' focused (read: technological or digital) work. "One might entertain the idea that this focus on technology has arisen concurrently with the emergence of a new artist subject: the artist as researcher" (Guttu 2020), the problem solver, 'transparency-maker'. Do we expect from people what we have come to expect from the technological?

We witness the favouring of mainstream, conventional and established methods and research, that is also tendentially "oriented towards 'exploitation' as opposed to 'exploration' " (Norkus, Besio & Baur 2016). In higher education and practice based research in the arts, design and media, these factors can culminate in an abetting of "academic capitalism" (Münch 2014) that divests researchers of their critical allyship, political relevance, and means of generating

both solidarity and independence. 20th-century traditions of radical political and social transformation through student movements, incubated in university and art school contexts, declines with administrational bloat and general austerity, turning once fiery hotbeds of counter-practices into the handmaidens of economic pressure, or the governance agendas these markets influence and control.

> “ Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.
>
> — Gloria Steinem (2020)

2.4 Subproject: Critical Project Studies, Critical Proposal Studies

The importance and pervasiveness of projects comes in part through its potential to be viewed as a fix-all, a messianic meta-method, initially wrought through a widely held, but naive, perception that the proposal can take on all imaginings, can become an (always-illusory) tabula rasa through which wholly novel, apparently elucidating and purportedly useful promises can be made. An elegantly written proposal can, self-consistently describe and promise wholly novel, innovative and radical seeming solutions to complicated problems. Numerous aspects of this are paradoxical as, for example, the form of any arts-research project proposal must be rooted in existing discourses, to say nothing of the ways that specific agencies and funding organisations require highly constrictive formats and templates to be observed. Overall document length and word-delimitation, for example, forms a good deal of the editorial concern for getting proposal ideas across and ‘pruning’ toward the glass ceiling of a maximal character-count becomes a disproportionately important skill in the practice of authoring proposals.

The projects that result from the prefigurative processes of proposal preparation are similarly margined, bound and grammatised in time, space and scope — aspects that exist in tension with the often broader political or philosophical goals of researchers and artists, which tend toward long-term change. Feminist critiques of the project point out how projectified politics sets up a kind of solutionism from the outside, enacting patriarchal, dominator narratives, particularly when dealing with relational, fragile worlds (Öjehag-Pettersson 2017, Lahiri-Dutt 2011). In heteronormative European and Western convention, the proposal that sets in motion the project of wedlock continues frustratingly to be the prerogative of a male counterpart, as it traditionally consisted in the negotiation of “bride-wealth”, a payment made by a man’s parents to the family that provides their daughter in marriage (Graeber 2010).

Class, race and intersectional concerns help orient proposals as part of societal imbalances, privileged injustices and historical oppression: Who is it that gets to propose and ‘from where’? Who has the time, mental energy, space to do so? Who can afford to propose? The non-attached, self-determinative and individualistic aspect of project-making makes manifest their absorption of the values of patriarchal modernity, race hierarchy and class dispossession. A post-colonial lens on the project reveals how projects imagine themselves to create new territories for exploration (conceptual or otherwise), and then extracts and processes aspects or materials from these

territories as means of transforming them into external value in other domains (e.g.: as research publications or art exhibitions). The linked poetics of 'empiricist', 'empirical' and 'empire' are resident in the modes of existence and operation of the modern project. In cultures and contexts where novelty and change become required and overvalued, the cycle of project novelty can also become addictive or fetishised, leaving no one with actual responsibility for implementing, translating or giving attention to whatever outcomes or 'solutions' emerge from a given project.

Proposals, as the 'project's project', overlap with related categories of social, artistic, research and institutional categories: pilots, models, and simulations, for example. All of these virtualisations exist "as miniature, tentative, and technically-bound exemplars of broader intervention" (Asiyanbi & Massarella 2020). Models and simulations, take on more definitive roles, and we are less forgiving regarding the worlds against which these test themselves than we are in either approving or evaluating proposals.

In fields like group psychology, collaborative work and management studies, a case for "Critical Project Studies" has been made. From this work comes Christian Koch's diagnosis that projects can in some instances limit creativity and cause collaborative fatigue. The repeat start-up and close-out working pressures that deplete structural, organizational, professional and individual resources he describes appropriately as "tyranny of projects" (Koch 2004). Appropriate, as the silo-isation that projects enact, both in broader realms of activity (as in 'work' projects and 'life' projects) and internal to the project itself (as in 'subprojects') can result in "isolation and impotence, that is the fundamental inability to act at all, a characteristic of tyrannies" (Koch 2004). Hannah Arendt saw tyranny as enabled by the transformation of the vast majority of human activities into labour, and there is little doubt that generalised projectification helps to recast most things as work, which for Arendt destroys "the most elementary form of human creativity, which is the capacity to add something of one's own to the common world" (Arendt 1973). This power to recast is also ambiguous, as values shift toward mantras such as 'work hard, play hard', in which there is also "an enjoyment, a manic glee, to be derived from submitting to — or surfing on top of the ceaseless flows of semio-capitalism… the kind of sacrifice necessary to experience intense enjoyment", (Fisher 2017) that is enabled and concentrated by the 'rain making' quality of preparing proposals and starting projects. As well, part of what the project

projects is a collaborative solidarity, something that weaves together common purpose, or even faith. This projection is something that can seem just outside of the control of those who work within projects, an extra-mundane, maybe even magical force. Does the project continue to exist, without us? We express all kinds of anthropomorphic transferrences that would seem to indicate it could... "We all want what's best for the project", as if it were a sentient being, as if projects had a life of its own.

Considered near-alchemical or "occult" aspects of the project by Fuller and Goffey, these remind us how "projects are never started: they are always initiated" (2012). Initiation is the act of beginning something, but it also can describe ways in which something or someone is admitted into a sacred, secret or obscure society or group — we are ritualistically initiated into a project. The incantational and world-creating aspects of initiation, interpretation and implementation each allow for rituals in which a proposal is substantiated. Lury's interest in developing a critical theory of the project draws attention to the "possible variety of ways in which modelling and realizing can be done, together or apart, distributed in time and space" (2020). These projective, transcendent(al?) aspects of projects provoke (some of) us to write proposal after proposal, incantations that stoke hopes about "whether and how research can identify — or enact — the latent future, potentially situated in the present" (Lury 2020).

Rather than a literal description of what should or what will actually happen, the fictional and congural dimensions of a proposal goes through interpretive periods where proposal documents asserts themselves: 1) from its pre-existence in preparation, 2) to its composition as written document, 3) to its use as a reference for project implementation and 'run of show', 4) to project finalisation and close comparative measure of delivered outcomes, or 'deliverables'. Proposals for a critical proposal studies would attempt to trace and inspire the ways in which the extrapolative and speculative origins of a project are born, concretely launched and borne out in practice. Such study could sketch how we draw outlines for the necessarily contextual and enactment of prefigurative thought and action, and how best to avoid locking ourselves into conceptual, disciplinary or methodological prisons of our own making.

> “The imagination is [...] constitutive in the sense that the imagination becomes so intense and embedded that it becomes real through its intensification and articulation [...] in the realm of prophecy, but not prophecy in the realm of saying what’s going to happen. Instead, it’s the fostering of the imagination, the encouraging of that power to recognize that life can be, and in some ways already is, different.
>
> — Michael Hardt

2.5 Subproject: The Art of Writing Proposals[10]

Proposals, documents of what could be, are intermediary pieces of production that are once central, yet mostly considered peripheral, to our worlds of work and administration. As a concrete inauguration of a project, the literary utterance of a proposal says something and it also does something (Culler 2000). The proposal, like the homonymous, speech-act that institutes the romantic partnership of marriage, changes the state of the world. Even if an idea or proposition is simply and only said once, or if it is written one time on a page never to be acted upon in any way — it has already ‘done some work’. This work takes place in domains that are now frequently termed ‘imaginaries’, collective or otherwise. If I were to propose, for example, a bicycle-driven film camera in which pedaling speed was gear-linked to the rate image capture, I have, in some sense, invented or created such a thing. Any such proposed idea brings that thing into existence, into the extant imaginary of everyone who hears of it. It does so in the same way that the beings in a fiction become ‘real’, as the characters in a novel or plot can be talked about, used as comparative measure, and emulated by actual persons. “You’re a lot like Dmitri Karamazov,” is a somewhat absurd thing to say when we consider that Dmitri was never born, and never lived anything we would call a ‘real life’ outside of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s famous play. The proposal has become, often with good cause, a cynicism inducing and duplicitous documental form, written for an audience often imagined as “pointless levels of managerial hierarchy, staffed by men and women with elaborate titles, fluent in corporate jargon, but who either have no first-hand experience of what it’s like to do the work they are supposed to be managing, or who have done everything in their power to forget it” (Graeber 2018). Such harsh assessment is not without degrees of accuracy, but can also be unhelpfully debilitating. If we lack even a modicum faith in the proposal, we cannot imagine how we might creatively and with any genuine motivation participate in the common world of art, design or creative research? Contemporary conceptual art has a long and varied tradition in the production and exhibition of ‘proposals as artworks’, things like Robert Smithson’s “Proposal for Earthworks and Landmarks to be Built

10 “The Art of Writing Proposals” alludes to a panoply of online and offline pamphlets, guides and publications for budding researchers, artists, designers, architects and others, including “The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions” by Przeworski and Salomon, and “The Art of Writing Good Research Proposals” by Van Ekelenburg (2010).

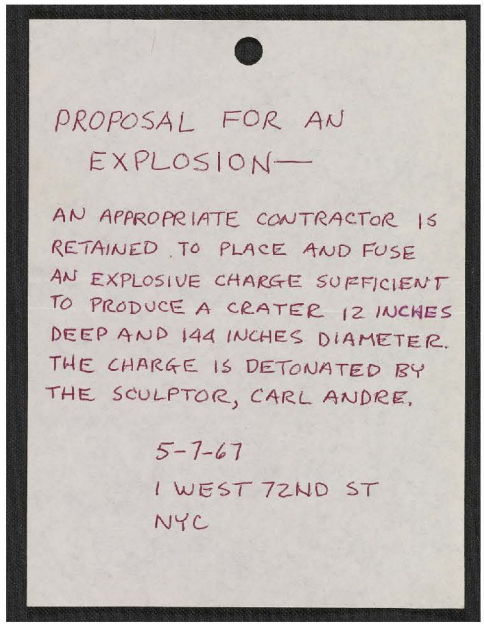

Figure 5 — "Proposal for an Explosion" by Carl Andre (1967).

on the Fringes of the Fort Worth-Dallas Regional Air Terminal Site" (1966-67) or Carl Andre's potently titled "Proposal for an Explosion" (see Figure 5).

Media arts and design have gotten good mileage out of "imaginary" projects, essentially propositional, with projects like Miller & Matviyenko's "The Imaginary App" (2014), or my own "Imaginary Sound Works" (Allen 2011) and recently exhibited proposals for works that remain as proposal.[11] Socially and politically extra-disciplinary actions invoke 'prefiguration' and 'anticipatory representation', as orientations toward creative practices that are, fundamentally, proposals. What might we make of this form of grey literature, para-text and should we decide instead to introduce, or inject, into it some part of our creative selves, our expressive or even artistic subjectivities?

Mark Fisher, who's own despondence regarding the conditions that projectified histories gave birth to need not be further described here in words,[12] was nonetheless in some ways hopeful about re-orienting aspects of the neo-liberal condition he spent much of his time on Earth condemning. Summarised in an essay entitled "Accelerate Management",[13] Fisher's argument revolves around a "retro-speculative fictionalisation" of post-Stalinist USSR in the novel Red Plenty by Francis Spufford, that for Fisher recovers the ambition and imagination of left-wing politics. If we could wrest management, administration and bureaucracy from the managerialism which seems to plague neoliberal work-lives, might we be able to recover the institutional solidarity, common purpose and love for collaboration that is at the heart of many of our practices of proposal writing, and project making? The administrative work of proposing and planning for collaborative futures is allied with a "restoration of a collectively deliberated human agency" as Fisher writes, of a recapturing of

11 "Public Carbon Capture: Request for Proposals" by Jamie Allen and Karolina Sobecka, part of the 2019 exhibition "The Visible Turn: Contemporary Artists Confront Political Invisibility" at University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum.

12 Mark Fisher took his own life on the 13th of January, 2017.

13 Thanks to Lucie Kolb for re-publishing and translating this piece Brand New Life, and for highlighting Fisher's writings on this topic.

management techniques, like proposal writing, that bolster universities and art colleges as "red bases" of leftist praxis (2017).[14] If we wish to expand what is proposable, and reclaim the proposal as expressive of futures other than those inscribed by capitalism realism, we must also reclaim projects from projectification. The proposal and the project are vehicles through which we might re-imagine management, re-imagine the project and its maker, re-imagine the proposal as communal and consolidating of socialities. Far from the fantasy of exiting institutions, and closer to "the improvisational imperative [...] 'to stay in the hold of the ship, despite my fantasies of flight'" (2013), Fisher calls to those with the most active and practiced imaginations to up that administrative pen, and wield it like a sword against the encroachments of managerialism in order to actualise other technological and social potentials.

That Fisher draws inspiration from Spufford's speculative and fictional account of an alt-history of the USSR is of note. Whatever conceptions we have for the possibility of changing, modulating, accelerating or overspilling of current modes of creativity, value and work, the double-binds of capitalist realism give needful recourse to modes of speculation, fabulation and fiction, offering us "imagination we would not have had without them" (Latour 2013). If current conditions of reality are not admissive of imaginative experiment, it maybe through framings of fiction that we find new motivations and ambitions.

Proposals turn out to be a rather *weird* subgenre grey literature. They imagine activities in an unknown future, and so are by necessity a form of fiction. And yet, their scenography and characters involve real contexts and people that are known to their author in the present. They are written for a very small, unknown, yet presumed highly critical audience. As literature, the proposal has a relationship to 'its' project as implemented, but this relation is not what we mostly pretend or presume it to be, as projects are phenomena of, yet separable from their proposals.

14 It is perhaps worth highlighting that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' "Communist Manifesto" is a piece of grey literature – it is a proposal. It's written in the form and prosaic style of a 'time to come', and the English translation begins with the phrase, "This proposition, which, in my opinion, is destined to do for history what Darwin's theory has done for biology..." (Marx & Engels 1848, emphasis added). The way that Marx and Engels wrote the manifesto "oriented to imagining an improved future by announcing the incompleteness of the present... acknowledging the modern view that society can be remade" (Carver & Farr 2015).

The writing of a proposal allows us to spirit forward the artistic and designerly knowledge practices in which we wish to engage; to write ourselves into a realistic, yet experimental, imagined and personal account of the world that fuses present and future. As such, the proposal could be closer to genres like Science Fiction or Magical Realism than is said of most grey literature.

What new kinds of "propo-lit" or "propo-fiction" might we invent, a creative practice to elaborate and revel in, one that might extend the capitalist realist literary form of the proposal into more magically realist territories? Describing the work of Jorge Luis Borges, Nabokov and Calvino, Peter Turchi notes that such literature, literally, proposes "as its subject our ability to imagine ourselves in a world created entirely by the placement of ink on a page" (Turchi 2011). The proposal is 'justified' as magical realist literature as leap or jump, relations between the proposal prose and the realities of its project. Also in its rendering of subjects and objects in relation, granting each particular kinds of agency, worlding worlds both hopeful and dystopic. What pasts ('background', 'previous work'), what presents ('current state of research') and which futures ('methods', 'plans' and 'outcomes') are promised by proposal writing? What new imaginings, or imaginations, might we invent?

The written proposal, composed as a self-consistent, conjectural narrative, is a narrative through which human and techniques are linked, but not bound to empirical realities: "It goes without saying that research questions, context, methods, documentation, and dissemination are all subject to change in the course of the study, but the assessment is based on the proposal for the study design at its inception" (Borgdorff 2012). As such, proposals fit most characterisations of the designation 'speculative'. In studies of literary fiction, the moniker 'speculative fiction' takes on a number of possible meanings: a subgenre of science fiction dealing more with 'human' as distinct from 'technological' topics; a genre different from Science Fiction that is more rooted in 'reality' that deals with probable or possible futures; a genre of writing that departs in some way from the norms of reality and quotidian life, of which Science Fiction is but one subtype (Oziewicz 2017). Proposals as literary form are the products of a speculative writer thinking "in the vicinity of the unknown" (Uncertain Commons 2013).

Speculative literature, at its most effective, renders experiment, uncertainty, imagination, invention, collaboration and wonder. Speculation

also creates, as in finance, systems irresponsibly essential to the "imaginary institution" of the world-system of capitalism (Holmes 2007). As we think about the potential of proposals as creative practice, these registers of speculation — the conceptual and the economic, the responsibly attached and the recklessly abstracted — provide and maintain awarenesses for the ambiguous ambitions of proposals; the always equivocal act of picking up and wielding a pen and brandishing it as a sword will always have unforeseen outcomes. Speculation, as the saying goes, "cuts both ways", just as "both intellectual or financial investments project into and stake claims on the future... [both] attempt to draw the future fully into the present" (Uncertain Commons 2013). A project's proposal, in both form and content, can serve as affirmative speculation, making the present strange from itself and producing hopeful projections, ways in which things could or should be otherwise.

If fiction and narrative are able to motivate change, it is through their concern for and appeal to emotional and personal dimensions, the proximity of the performative and the real. Genres like Science Fiction spread affect around — the technological, the human and the systemic are considered and granted psychological or affective impacts and agencies. If proposing could be part of creative practices, an un-greyed aspirational and inspirational literature, it would be through attending to the ways that such literary genres can, as Jonathan Swift showed, both be art and retain performative distance, while recuperate and allowing for real difference. Like Science Fiction authors do, we would need to free proposals from their subjugation as "technical writing" and their subsistence on managerial end-goals, by protecting or amplifying nuance and rendering them poetic (in its original sense as 'creative'), ourselves performing an inframince[15] distance to pragmatic assumptions of 'rigour', 'objectivity' and 'utility'. Proposals, so conceived, might retain and release something of their imaginative potential to move, inspire and give voice to those who will encounter and imagine with us new projects.

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15 "Inframince" ("infrathin") is Duchamp's term for the difference between a clean shirt and the same shirt worn once, or the taste of one's mouth lingering in exhaled smoke. Duchamp noted that the term cannot be defined, but can only be described by a further collection of examples: painting on glass seen from the unpainted side, the warmth of a seat that has just been left.

3. Methods

> “I won’t propose much more since the design and realisation of such a space ought to be the product of a collective imagination shaped and reshaped by the very process of turning rubble and memory into the seeds of a new society.
>
> — Robin D. G. Kelley (2019)

How often the temporal urgencies of pronounced and real crises comprise the opening rhetorical charge of project proposals. The theatre of the present, under the sharp edge of the critical scalpel, can make for proposals that read despondent, projecting a rather hopelessly dystopian scenography of the future. Far too often, we use 'problems', pronounced as unaddressed or to be approached in novel ways, to justify the imperative and importance of the work to come. Far too often, we pepper research and cultural proposals with 'bad examples', painting landscapes of knowledge in need of correction or remodelling. Written in ways that attempt to convince others how we must deal with an onrushing future, or in a way that addresses presumed, threatening, coming realities, such writing impoverishes itself of imaginative potential and hopeful possibility. Projects that are developed in order to 'fill in' holes in a presumed totality of knowledge are likewise undertaken in ways that prescribe what is knowable. This limits understandings of the counter-histories and weird beginnings of how things got the way they are, and without always remembering to put in the effort to rearrange the results of such analyses toward how they might be otherwise. Partaking of broader scientistic, solutionist and justificatory ways of thinking, the currency and urgency of the problems we hope to investigate in these ways can feel essential, yet somewhat dismal. What if, instead of the incision of critique, we were to enter into the composition of proposals assuming and presuming an appreciation for what is already in the world, and what has come before? Citing the hopeful, the well formed, the good examples, and seeking out heroines (instead of competitors or foes) across our landscapes of knowledge practices?

How often the requirements of 'critical distance' keep us from expressing genuine, personal, impassioned or even biographic reasons for engaging with topics. And how unfortunate it is that this projected distance then requires the transportation of ideas into contexts outside those of study, to service presumptions and demands (abstract and vague as they are) of 'rigour' or 'validity'. This, while depriving us of the knowledge of self that would be gained from a probing of our own values, power, interests, privilege, and predilections. What if we were to perform empiricism as a "critical proximity" (Latour 2013), instead of as a fault finding, niggling distance? Would such truly personal propos-

als provide its authors a means of ensuring self-reflection on those futures that they would themselves wish to live through and with, with others? Could text of a proposal do less to distinguish and divide, and serve more as a connective tissue conjoining us with our subjects, as part of the asymptotic hope of a common world?

How often does the 'time crunch' of the disparaged work of proposal preparation become part of the tyranny of projects, with its splintered micro-tasking of attentions? What if we were to instead create a temporal agency that allows also for elementary human temporal creativity, or the creative act of making an opening in time for choice to occur? Could these times be renewed with strategically essentialist, inverted management practices that Mark Fisher caricatures in the name of Beatles manager Brian Epstein,[16] asking not for "managers who inundate us with micro-demands" but to "imagine managers who see their role as providing us with a space to think" (Fisher 2017)? Such a manager would help to balance the historically introverted, transgressive or cloistered artistic and creative activities of old with the merits and problems of creativity increasingly being evaluated through guidelines and evaluative frameworks issued by research councils and institutional juries. Could administration and management create "different ways of creating rhythms collectively and creating different vibrational experiences that create openings" (Wang 2019), acting to host, steward and convene people's diverse creativity and thought processes?

How often do perspectives remain those of a presumed or assumed point of learned privilege, enabled by institutional, Eurocentric, white, male or anthropocentric power? If we engage in speculation, it matters that we find, choose and imagine ourselves to speculate with others, and how we choose to invite others along. How far outside the immediate and easy circles of acquaintance and familiarity do we orient our invitations to others? This responsibility is particularly important to creative research in art and design contexts, which often invest their contributions in the renewal, rupture or destabilising of established areas of knowledge. Art critic Jan

16 Brian Epstein (1934-1967) was a British talent-spotter and manager of musical groups, famed for his protectiveness, fiery temper and keen ability to keep bands united and focused. Epstein was accused of having an at times overly-doting management style with The Beatles, described as maternal/paternal, and at times obsessive. Epstein was, as a result, referred to on occasion as "The Fifth Beatle" (Tiwary 2016).

Verwoert proposes The Muppet Show[17] as a kind of ideal for diverse communities that provoke, as "a strange assembly of creatures finding a way to coexist that is impossible to explain" (Butt 2017). What if we were to try to write a proposal as a puppet, a piano, by an explosion, or as a crustacean along the ocean floor?

If we hope, as well, to resist the impossible and pressurising demand to have a 'life project', perhaps, as a start, we could simply ask ourselves more of the above kinds of questions. As an initiation or modulation of our methods of proposing, and just after that first moment that we decide and devise new projects, in the first moments when we put fingers-to-keyboard, to pen our collaborative futures. All fictions describe a 'no place', which our imaginations fill through this kind of perpetual questioning, the asking of "what if...?" questions that attentively, carefully extend modes of practice, concept, perspective and identity. In the space between science fact and Science Fiction, where all the work happens anyway (Bleeker 2016), this could be a minimal circumscription of what "methods" are, or should be, in research and processual creative practices: sustained questions, continuously asked, perpetually revisited and revised.

17 "The Muppet Show" (1976-1981) was a television series by Jim Henson's featuring an ensemble cast of multicultural and multicoloured human, nonhuman, animal and fantasy puppet character.

4. Deliverables / Output

> “We keep writing dystopias instead of envisioning a better world — maybe what we need is balance.
>
> — Ursula K. Le Guin (2017)

Perhaps the proposal, contextualised and elaborated through these lenses and perspectives, becomes, plainly speaking, a bit more interesting as a vehicle for creative thought. Proposal Fiction may be one means of wrestling management from managerialism. What if, instead of facing the torturous doldrums and bureaucratic shackling that proposal writing can be for many, we were to treat the activity as the authoring of new incantations, new magical scriptures or verse for projected worlds to come? Could the proposal, as initiation into project forms and project thinking, also act to exorcise its own demons? In its moment of activation, could writing a proposal be more like preparing a musical score, guiding action but also allowing for joyful improvisation?

Proposals are, almost without fail, chocked full of heavy metaphor, always promising the expansion and discovery of new horizons, grounds and territories of knowledge and creativity itself. So perhaps we could also think of them cartographically — as maps — at once a way of imagining or illustrating where we are (as we are not, after all, actually on a map), and a means of sketching where we might go. Maps can, as well, be used to get lost. Could such figurations make actually writing proposals more poetic, oscillating between acknowledgement of where we are standing and the parts of a terrain that we have not yet seen? We know that there were pirates in the Projecting Age, sailing on Daniel Dafoe's mercantile sea, and they no doubt had other tools for and ways of navigating and expanding their empirical projects, their own kinds of management schemes.

As this proposal comes to an end, our relational history and discussion of proposals and the projects they help initiate leaves us with at least two outputs. If we choose to follow only critical histories of this relation, back into dark corners of patriarchal, colonial mercantilism, we shall no doubt succeed in rendering ourselves disheartened, our spirits squashed by the sheer weight of the exploitative opportunism and administrative bulwark that these cultural techniques often result in. Alternatively, we can attempt to acknowledge the creative potential of proposals, and so their projects, as performative structures that allow us to see poetic beginnings and artful articulations of the future in the present. Could this be one approach, tendency or style in a creative toolset that helps to impell our subjectivities and solidarity, giving us the will to write up the worlds we would wish to see, project, and desire to live through? Even in the "overarching 'social factory' in which we now find ourselves" (Gardiner 2016) might the performativity and

anticipa-
tory think-
ing that the
proposal as fiction
calls us to do help move
us to add creations of our
own to the common world? Could
we propose projects in ways that free
us from tyranny, allowing us to insert joy
into that which takes up so much time for
researchers, artists, and designers alike? If I may pro-
pose a concise answer to these questions, it would be:
"Yes".

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Ina Bandixen

Ina Bandixen


Natural Light
2 juin > 22 septembre 2013

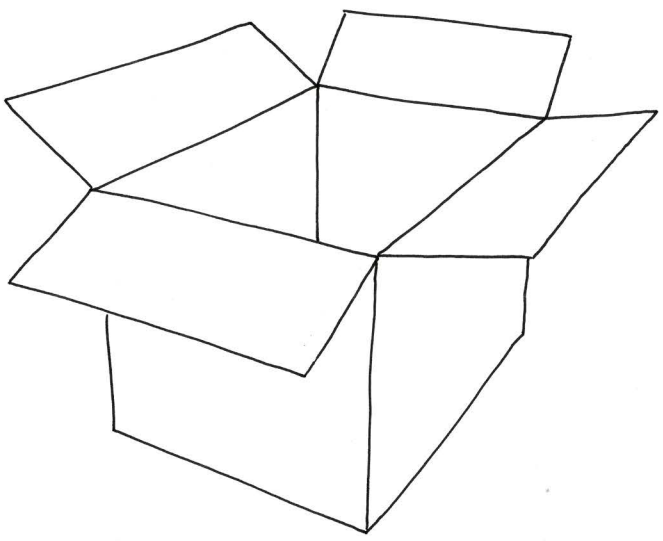
To box in

To physically block and thus prevent someone or something from moving from a certain spot.

To limit one's options or cause one to feel restricted or stuck.

To prevent someone from acting freely, usually by creating restrictions or obstacles.

My proposal:
Open the box and see what's inside.



Viktor Bedő

Viktor Bedö

Games as Futurological Proposals

Game design is a powerful strategy to convey futurological proposals because games can infuse the well-known everyday that surrounds us with anticipated or proposed aspects of the future. Within a game about the future, the players' experience stretches towards a projected future, while the experience remains relatable to the present.

The future is uncertain, anticipating future conditions is a wicked affair. Yet the complexities of everyday life in the present are sometimes equally overwhelming, as cultural historian Huizinga points out. This condition justifies the prominent place of play and games in human culture, according to his classic *Homo Ludens*: "[Play] creates order, is order. Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection".[1] Play and games can create temporarily whole and coherent spaces in which people act without being overwhelmed by the complexities of everyday life. Also, well-designed games create a setting in which people are challenged but not overwhelmed, and thus can fully immerse in an activity, which Csíkszentmihályi refers to as 'flow'.[2]

Huizinga emphasises that play creates an experience outside of the every day and the ordinary when the more or less explicitly delineated sites of play are entered, such as the stage, the card-table, the tennis court or the magic circle (of sumo fights).[3] Salen and Zimmerman borrow the term 'magic circle' to describe the space where the magic lies in exploring the game's own reality repeatedly and safely.[4] However, Salen and Zimmerman also highlight the ways in which the magic circle has porous, permeable boundaries. What's more, they point out that games as systems can have different levels of openness and closeness. A closed game forms a self-contained world whereas an open game allows interchange between the game and its real-life environment.

The genre of pervasive games challenges a narrower concept of the magic circle as such games are played for a longer time period and with no explicit boundaries of the playing field. Tic-Tac-Toe type games are examples of closed games;

1 Huizinga, Johan, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture, Boston: Beacon Press 1950, p. 10

2 Csíkszentmihályi, Mihályi, Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: Experiencing Flow in Work and Play, New York: Jossey-Bass, 1975

3 Huizinga, Johan, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture, Boston: Beacon Press 1950, p. 10

4 Salen, Katie and Zimmerman, Eric, The Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals. Cambridge (MA): MIT, 2004, p. 94-95

Pokemon Go, on the other hand, is open and pervasive.

Inside the magic circle, the rules and fictions of the game seamlessly merge with rules and narratives of every-day life, depending on the openness of the circle. Players engage with both at the same time, both are equally real and present for the duration of the game. Also, the gameplay is more or less safe, as players understand the framework and the rules and can engage all over again; gameplay is quite forgiving of mistakes. This makes game design and games a strong candidate for introducing futurological propositions that build on and are anchored in the relatable conditions of present every-day life.

Street games as prototypes, for example, enable us to test our assumptions about what could work at a concrete urban site. The challenge of setting up a street game for this aim is to translate the proposition we would like to explore or assumption we would like to validate into game mechanics. If we succeed, we can propose and test a certain anticipated condition - or a rather focused aspect of it — by inviting the players into an experience that resembles or is analogous to the proposed condition. However, for the sake of playability, the game design needs to simplify, focus, distort (think hide and seek instead of simulation games). If the design succeeds, players will internalise and live the proposed vision of the future for the duration of the game.

Experiment
Create an immersive playful proposal about a future condition!

Pick or make up a device that will be central to our lives in the future; give it a name.

Pick or make up an event that is symptomatic for future conditions in your imagination.

Translate projected interaction with your device in your event into game mechanic by creating rules of how do you interact with the device in the given event.
Introduce a 'winning condition' that feels right.

Test the rules by enacting and playing them. Iterate: change the rules as needed. Ask yourself: does the gameplay resemble the experience that you expect the future to feel like?
Do you strengthen your futurological proposal or rather the gameplay by tweaking of the game? Which one do you want to emphasise?

Play repeatedly, until you and the other players internalise the rules.

Basic Rapid Game Design

Fiction

Create a story or a fictional setting in which your game will take place.

Action

Translate 1-2 main principles / features or your idea into actions.

jump
pull
hide
count
run
turn
...

Goal

Set a goal for the game.

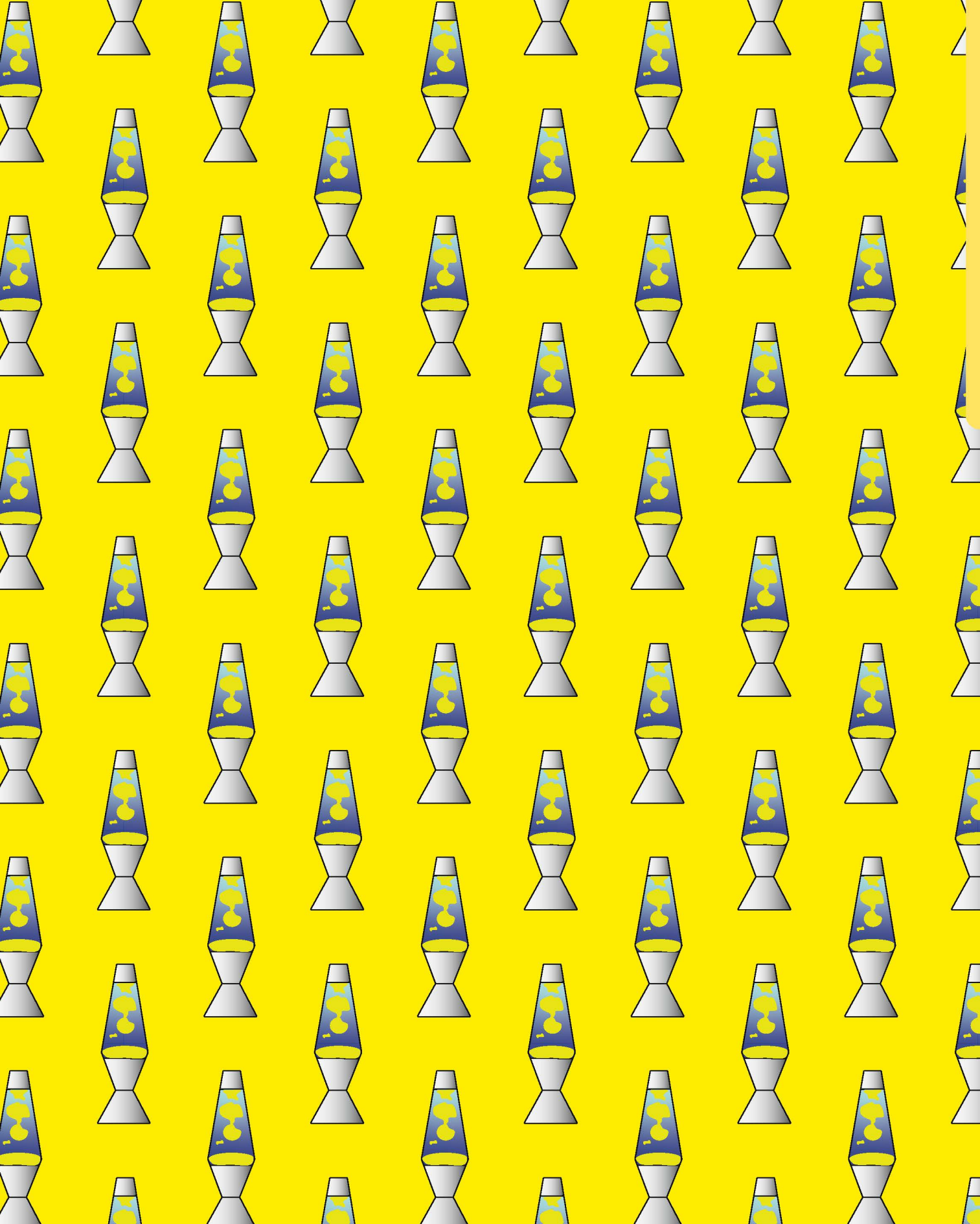
score the highest points
be the fastest
be the first to unlock ...
...

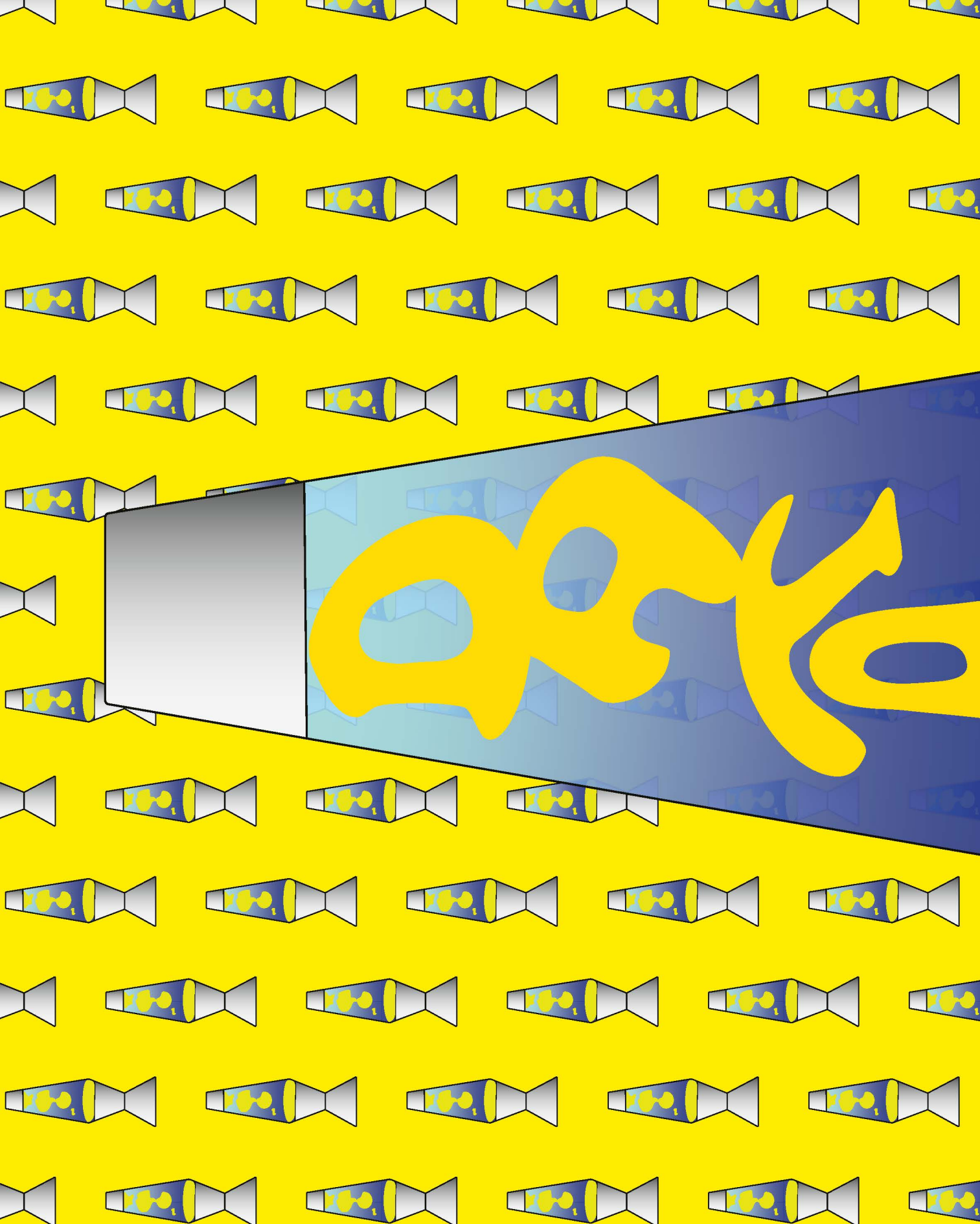
Constraint

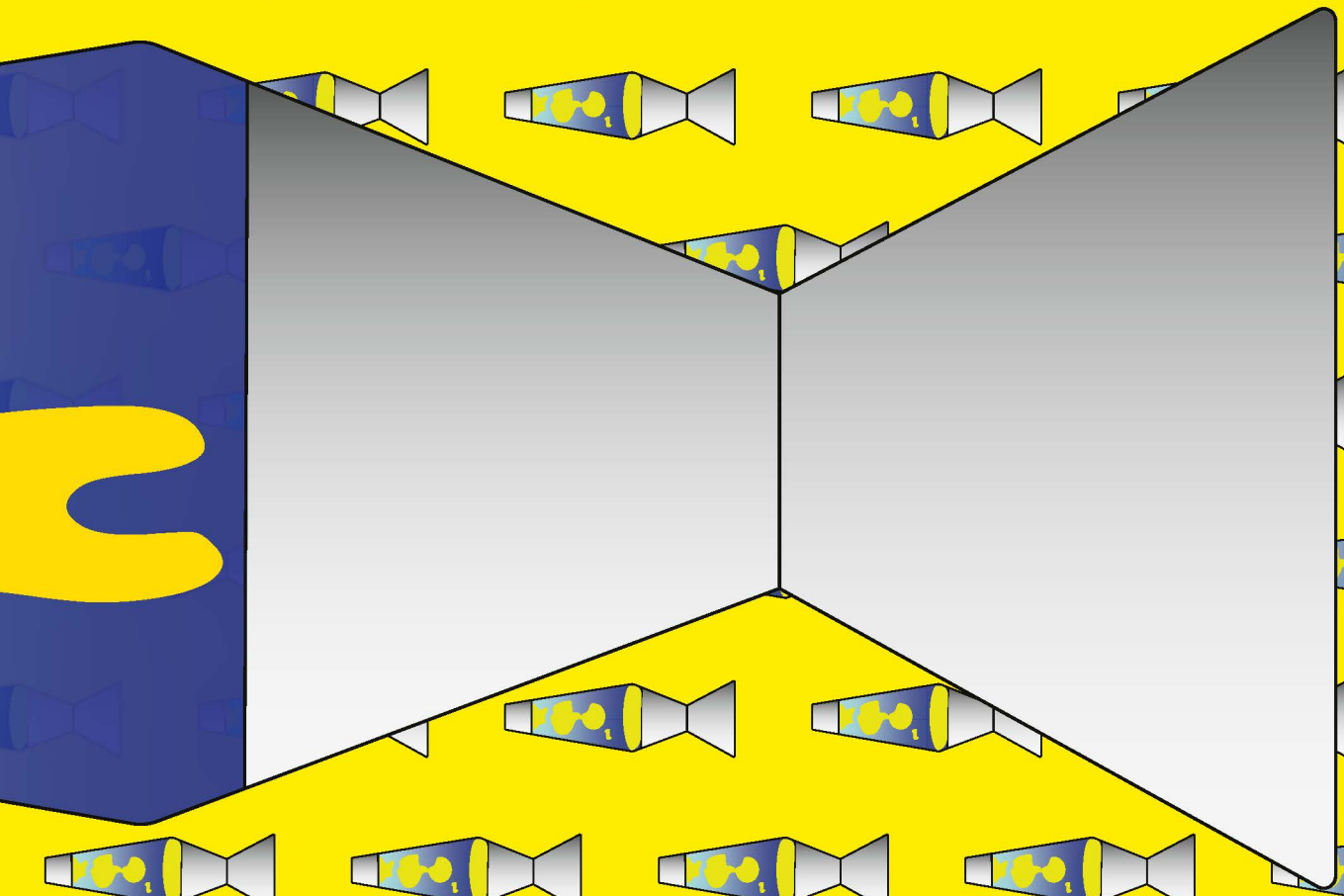
Set constraints so that players have hurdles to overcome to reach the goal.

Samuel Bron

Samuel Bron







Lavarand

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Lavarand was a hardware random number generator designed by Silicon Graphics that worked by taking pictures of the patterns made by the floating material in lava lamps, extracting random data from the pictures, and using the result to seed a pseudorandom number generator.[1]

Details [edit]

Although the secondary part of the random number generation uses a pseudorandom number generator, the full process essentially qualifies as a "true" random number generator due to the random seed that is used. However, its applicability is limited by its low bandwidth.

It is covered under U.S. Patent 5,732,138, titled "Method for seeding a pseudo-random number generator with a cryptographic hash of a digitization of a chaotic system."

From 1997 to 2001,[2] there was a Web site at lavarand.sgi.com demonstrating the technique. Landon Curt Noll, one of the originators, went on to help develop LavaRnd, which does not use lava lamps.[3] Despite the short life of lavarand.sgi.com, it is often cited as an example of an online random number source.[4][5]

As of 2017, Cloudflare maintains a similar system of lava lamps for securing approximately 10% of the Internet's traffic.[6][7]

Manuel Justo &

Matilde Martins

Manuel Justo &
Matilde Martins

The Mirror™

I'll be your mirror
Reflect what you are, in case you don't know
I'll be the wind, the rain and the sunset
The light on your door to show that you're home

Excerpt from *I'll be your Mirror*, a song written by Lou Reed, which shall also be the official hymn to the launching of The Mirror™

Proposal for the establishment of a large mirror orbiting the Earth, *aka* The Mirror™

In response to the pressing issue of humankind's gradual loss of empathy, WE hereby propose a solution called The Mirror™. This will be a technologically advanced reflection device that will reflect the Earth while orbiting it. It will serve the purpose of creating a global notion of identity and unity, by enhancing our sense of empathy towards each other, other entities and our shared habitat, the Earth.

WE believe The Mirror™ will allow us to accomplish our common goals due to the following reasoning.

First, and foremost, a mirror is the millenary device of choice for self-reflection. The visual perception of one's image is one of the most primordial and fundamental features of self-awareness, as Lacan proposed in his concept of the Mirror Stage. By checking ourselves in a mirror we promote reflection on our own existence.

Second, by seeing ourselves as others we are better able to conceive the others as being selves, since we build a good notion of how we are perceived and extrapolate such conclusions to other entities. By enabling this experience on a permanent, unlimited, constant basis, we allow this knowledge to become a natural background to our consciousness, rather than a fleeting epiphany only experienced once in a while, as we now know it.

Third, The Mirror™ will make available as democratically as possible to people on Earth what is known as the overview effect. The overview effect - something astronauts experience when looking at Earth from outside of it - is an exquisite example of how the deep feeling of care for our planet and the life it holds is still naturally possible and can overcome virtually anybody.

Fourth, this device will allow us to reconsider our past actions and behaviors and better plan our future ones. As The Mirror™ will be placed at a certain distance from Earth, and taking into consideration light's speed, there will be a slight delay between an event on Earth and its observable reflection on The Mirror™. This delay will serve as a constant reminder that our actions have consequences, for we will be able to see our recent past reflections and confront them with the present reality which immediately follows them. We will begin to see the unification of Past, Present and Future in our individual and collective consciousnesses.

Fifth, transparent, decentralized, constant vigilance for a greater good. During the past decades we have seen an increasing concern among the general public with the threat to privacy and possible abuse of personal data that the many forms of surveillance policies represent. Gradually, it has become apparent that the withdrawal of such apparatus from our current society is simply not possible, as it would mean the destruction of the infrastructures that allow our global community to exist and thrive. The inevitability of this unfortunate situation brings us to the conclusion that we must accept, as a community, the necessity for the worldwide public and private surveillance network that we know. The step to take at this moment should be to make this surveillance system available to everyone, as opposed to leaving it in the hands of only a few private groups.

After carefully evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of this solution, WE believe that the positive outcomes will outweigh the possible negative ones, and that The Mirror™ will, in general, greatly benefit earthkind.

Sincerely and collectively,

WE (World Enterprise)

Disclaimer: The Mirror™ is designed to be a self-growth enabler and nothing else. Data shown by The Mirror™ is not to be recorded and will only be available on a livestream basis.

Martha Kapfhammer

Martha Kapfhammer

29.07.2053

More and more art is being used as a matter of the mind and too little as a means of communication to draw people's attention to something. It is becoming more and more important to translate one's own thoughts into works of art. That's all well and good, but aren't we artists too much in love with ourselves, because we all just try to show and represent our ideals, or is that what art is?

For me, art is more about showing others something in the world that moves too much into the background and people have to be made aware of it. It doesn't have to be a poetic thing that nobody understands in the end, but rather something that concerns many people and that they are first made aware of it and show their not yet formulated thoughts and then you understand that you are not alone in this world and you have to change something as it is today.

I therefore suggest that you use a thought knife and start scanning people and putting their first forming thoughts into the artistic brain. As an artist you start to surround yourself with these ideas and create a work of art. You don't steal these thoughts, you copy them and take them as inspiration. Then you start to deform them and create a work of art.

Who needs their own ideas these days?

Art is too critical to allow itself its momentary freedom. It becomes more and more important to adapt and to address the population. So that slowly something really changes in the world. It has to be started by art and that's the only way in 2053.

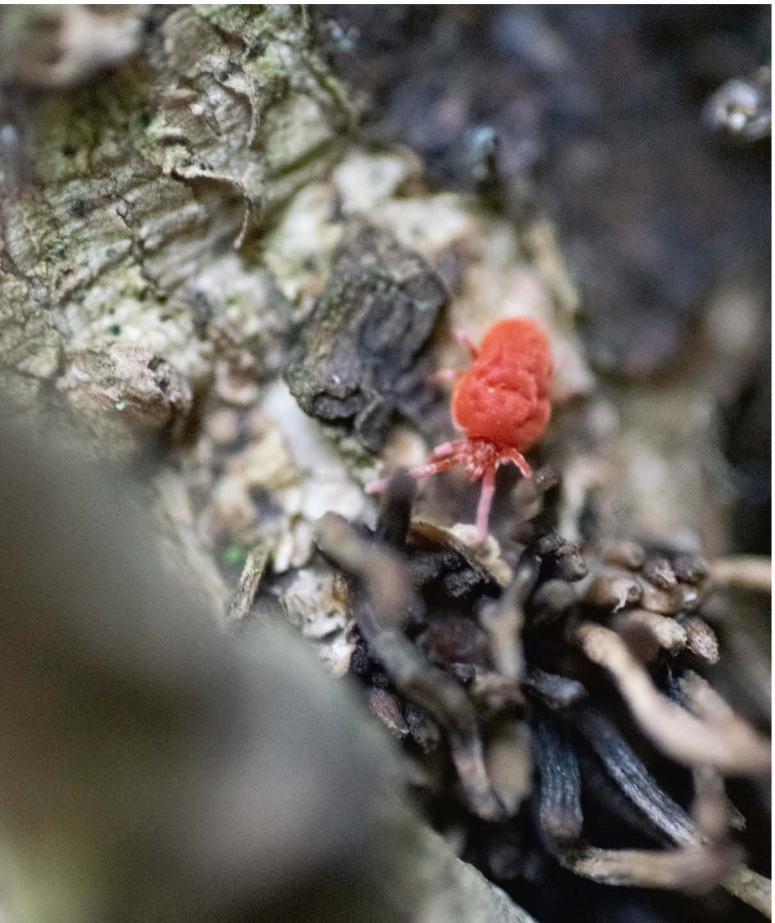
Surveillance has been around for several years, but until now only companies and forms of government have used it. Art is actually the driving force in government and yet it has been abandoned with inspiration and has even helped to make the world more narcissistic with various representations of populations. This must now slowly come to an end.

That's why I suggest to develop a thought knife and replace all Selfies with insect photographs. You can no longer see yourself in social media because the animals are now completely taking over the power on the Internet.

This promotes more species protection and people now often go out into the fresh air to experience their idols up close. It could even be that some have the luck and are bitten by their models.

You have to sculpt your thought knife as a cloud.

It’s important to have a map. Please place the cloud in the area where you live. You will get all the thoughts from the people in this radius of the cloud. There will be enough thoughts for you and other artists.



The new rising stars in the year of 2054.

Till Langschied

Till Langschied

Palm Reading of Tumaroh

Body-Server-Interconnectivity

This is the future and you are the interface.

Your memory is in the cloud.
Your security is in the server farms.
Your face is an empty sheet for kawaii filters.
Your fingers are the antennas for Wi-Fi.
You are one with technology.

Everything leaves traces on you while it is in transposition.
You are the data which you are downloading.
You are the network and your heart beats in the pulse of the hyperlink.
As a servant of the neural networks you are one and many simultaneously with the whole universe resting in your palm.

What can your palm tell you about who you need to be in the time of body-server-interconnectivity? Your palm is the interfacial surface from where a digital transposition merges into the metaphysical realm.

The digital is metaphysical.
It is all about connections.
About sensing, transmitting, transforming.

Bundles of nerves intertwine in your hand, making it sensitive and responding to what it touches, feeling what it connects with. There is no more 'I'. You submit yourself to the intergalactic flow of data. And while in exchange with the universe, you change. Your palm morphs and becomes readable. It will be a tool to decipher your digital self.

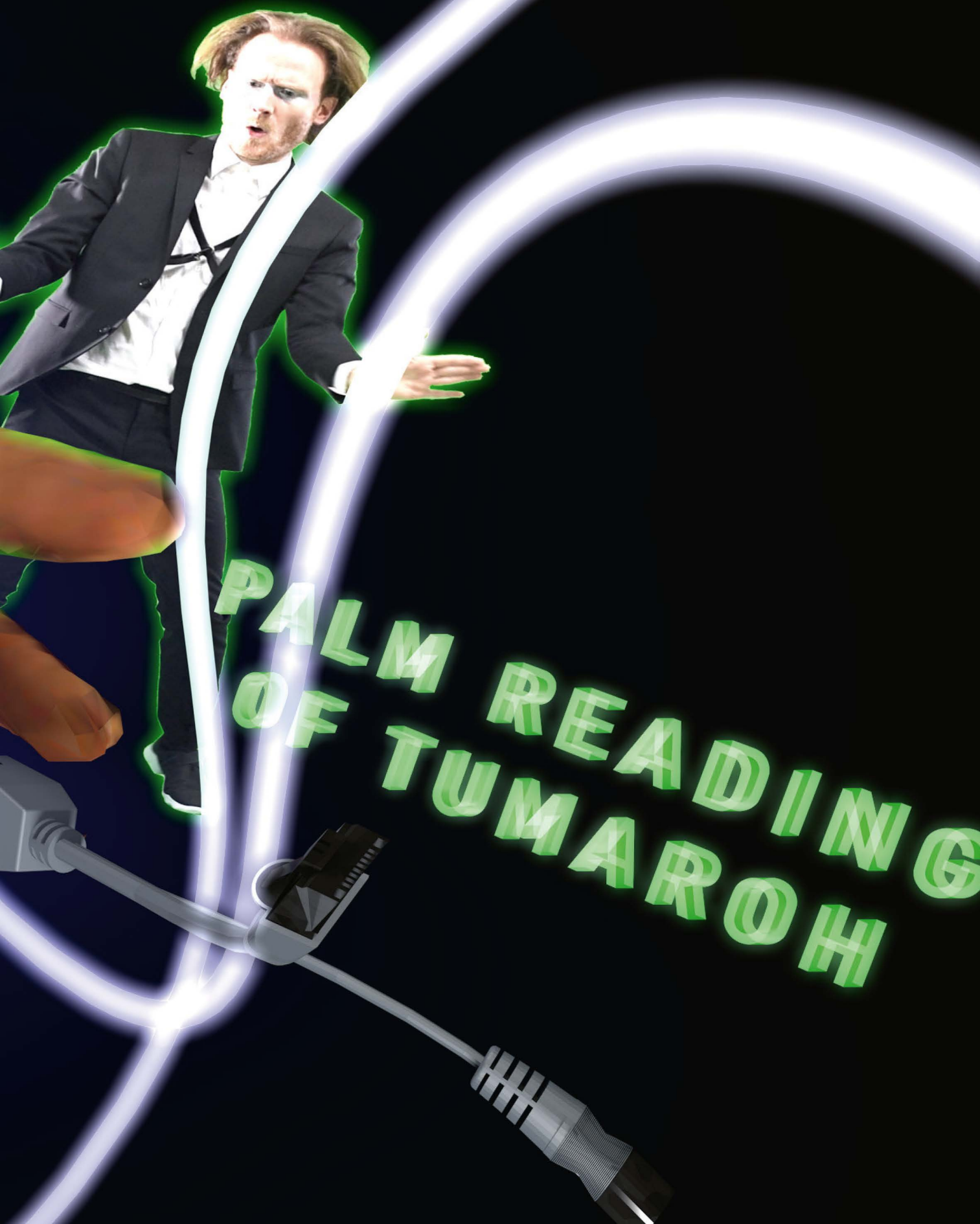
Palm Reading

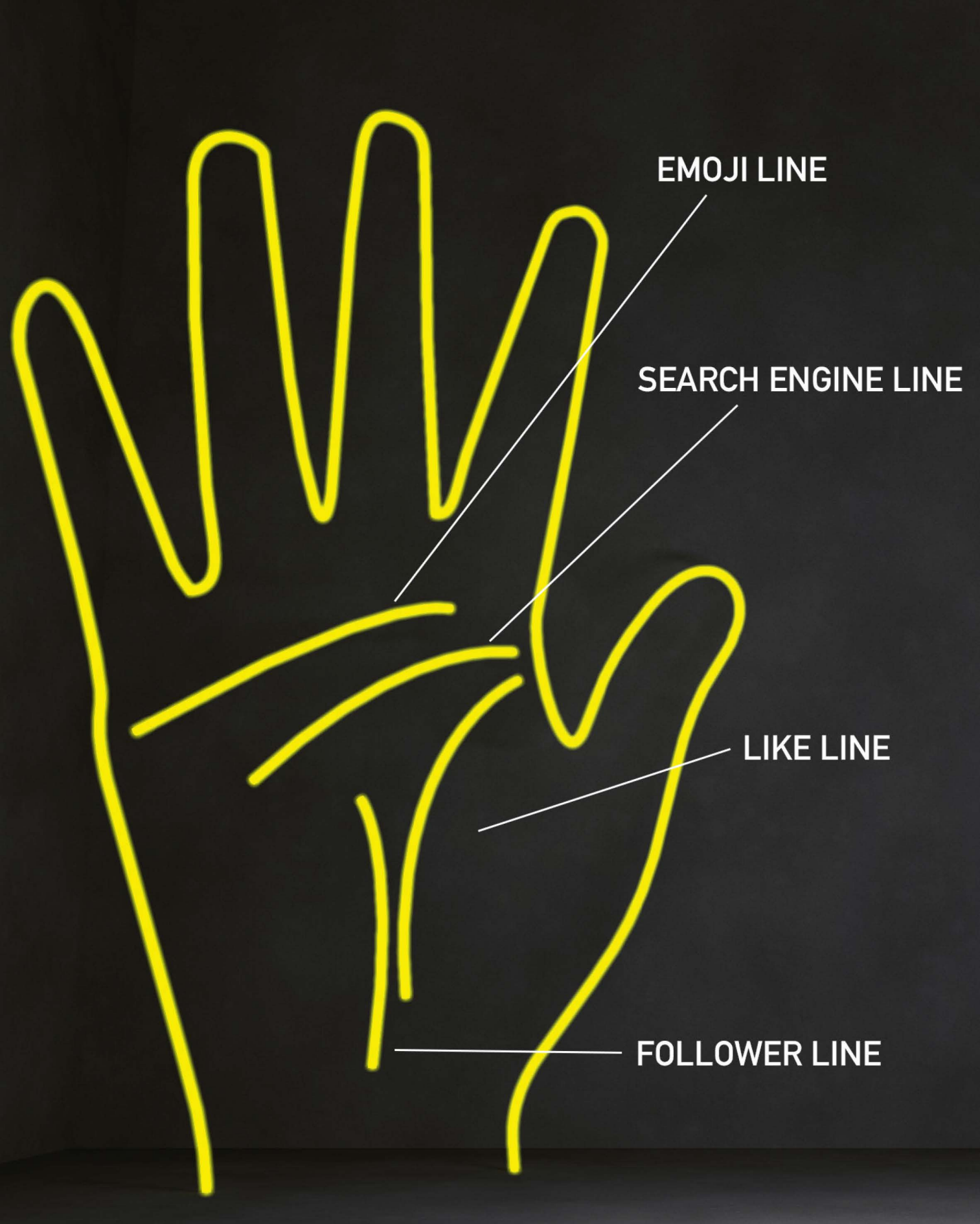
Lines cross through your palm like glass fibre cables weave a network beneath the intelligent cities.

Out of the many lines that are visible to the eyes of the scanning machines four lines are of the most importance. The one depicting your life in the digital reality is your ‘like line’. It runs around the soft tissue that we call the neural network nugget. Next to it, in the center of your palm, crossing its Silicon Valley is the ‘follower line’ describing you career and professional aspiration. Lurking from the start of the ‘like line’ and crossing the palm to the left is the ‘search engine line’, representing the logical and methodical vision for your life. The fourth line of major importance is the ‘emoji line’ representing the matters of your biological heart and its representation in the network.

Life
Career
Logic
Emotion

All engraved into your body by the interaction with your smartphone. Carved with the help of Wi-Fi signals. In the constellations of those lines lies the metaphysical and digital truth of the self as it is seen by the network of the many that are as much ‘you’ as the artifact which you call body is ‘you’. In those lines the infinite interconnects with you and writes its reality into your bodily interface where your smartphone rests in eternal peace.


PALM READING
OF TUMAROH


EMOJI LINE
SEARCH ENGINE LINE
LIKE LINE
FOLLOWER LINE

Excerpt from ‘Memories of Tumaroh’, 2018:

“He [Till Tumaroh] seems to have a human form, but some scientists believe that he might be an artificial intelligence that will create itself out of fragments of the Deep Web in a near future. We cannot state for sure if Tumaroh is human, android or solely an intelligent or seemingly intelligent software.

All we can say for sure is that he (or it) is highly egocentric, hedonistic and in a state of constant boredom. It can also not be clearly determined what time can be seen as his present or his future. Conspiracy theorists have claimed that Tumaroh is indeed from the past and describes a future that for us is already present. The difference of our world from the world described in the texts is blamed on the multi-verse theory.

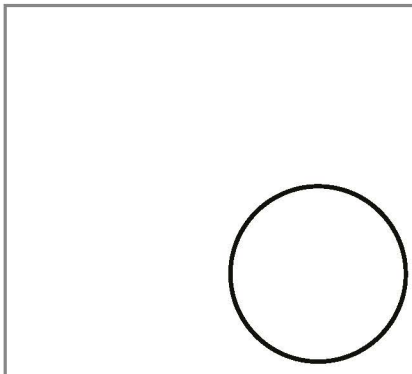
The French medium Claire Hûret stated recently that she performed a séance contacting Tumaroh and that he indeed is the spirit of the deceased JG Ballard, sending short stories of a fictional character via outer space. All these speculations remain hypothetical to this point.”

Adrian Pirlet

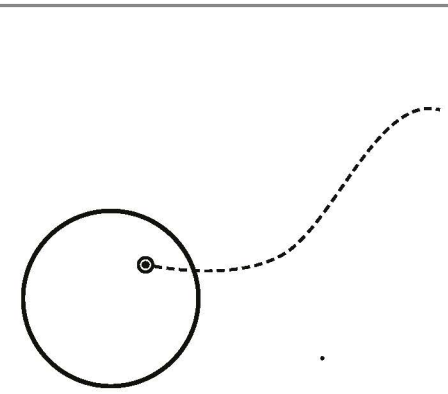
Adrian Pirlet

Solution

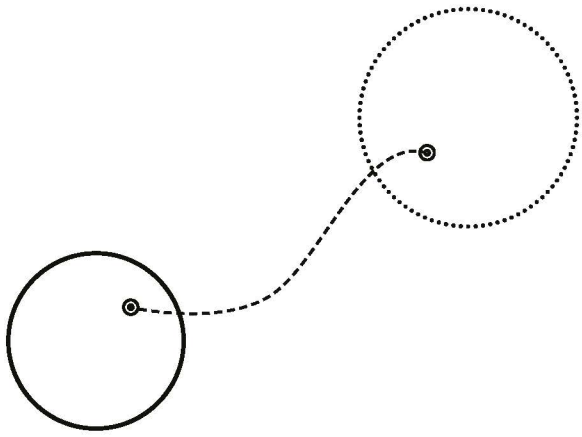
Due to global-warming, the earth will need to stay further away from our host-star to cool down and regain plant-life. This will be done by slingshotting steel-strings to our neighbouring planet Mars. This will connect the two planets and through Mars having a bigger / stronger gravitational pull, will slowly start tearing Earth away from its usual path around the sun.
All will be a lot cooler.



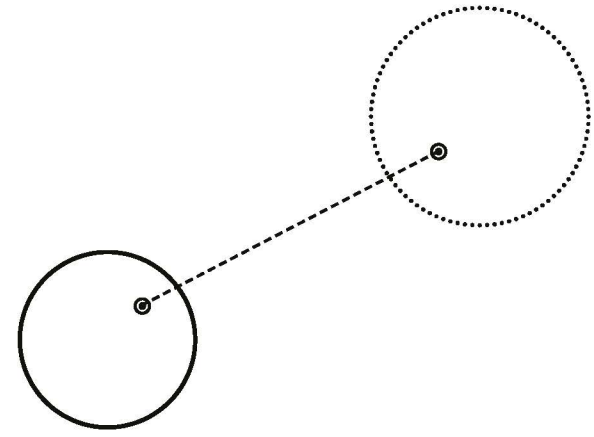
earth with problem



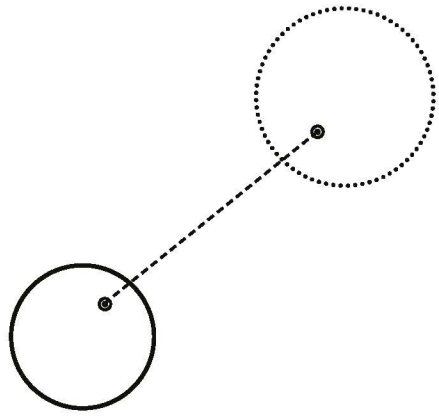
earth with string-solution



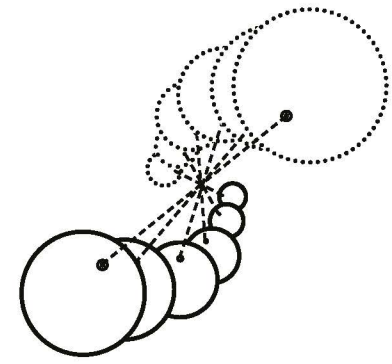
string hits mars



string tightens



mars pulls earth away
through gravitational pull



earth gets pulled
towards cooler/deeper space

Joseph Popper

Joseph Popper

In the midst of the improbable:
Storytelling as a speculative tool

> “ I am not predicting, or prescribing. I am describing.
>
> — Ursula Le Guin

> “ Imagining or portraying something that doesn’t yet exist in the world, is a way to enable it to exist in the world.
>
> — Alex McDowell

Storytelling is a very important speculative tool because it renders proposals relating to possible futures sensible, relatable and questionable. Science fiction and speculative design are two practices that use storytelling to prototype ideas and explore the values and meanings of future visions. They are different modes of practice, yet both share a hypothetical approach along with very similar methods. Both create fictional worlds where futurological propositions are situated, animated and reflected upon. Narrative scenarios are often set in imagined futures, or explore a place and time other than the present. However, and perhaps most importantly, this exploration of otherness becomes a vehicle to critique the here and now — often in response to emerging social and technological developments.

What distinguishes both modes of practice, in terms of what they do and why they are valuable, is in their capacity to describe.[1] Describing in high detail is an engaging means for investigating proposed designs and imaginary worlds — for posing questions, uncovering complexities, and ultimately contesting what is probable or preferable. Through describing, fiction brings us to pro-

1 Le Guin, Ursula, Introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*

posals 'in media res':[2] in the midst of things. Whether as designers or an audience, we land right in the middle of the proposed scenario, without any preamble. In this way, the 'what if?' is imagined as if. Or in other words, the power of describing enables the crafting and conducting of critical 'thought-experiments'.[3]

Central to these thought experiments through story are the 'diegetic prototype' and 'the novum':[4] two overlapping concepts found in the respective discourses around speculative design and science fiction. Set within a proposed scenario, a diegetic prototype is also considered a kind of 'performative artefact'. Similar to the novum, it is 'the new thing' making 'the difference between fictional and real worlds' — an instigator of important and recognisable change. This new thing could be a technology, a design or a law etc. and often is the subject or anchor of the story in question. The fiction, as thought-experiment, can then explore potential values or implications. Depending on the context, the story can work to encourage or discourage potential development of the thing in question from fiction to fact.[5]

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2 Peldszus, Regina, Architectural Experiments in Space: Orbital Stations, SImulators and Speculative Design, 1968-82 in Geppert, Alexander (ed.) Limiting Outer Space: Astroculture After Apollo, 2016, p. 251

3 Le Guin, Ursula, Introduction to The Left Hand of Darkness

4 Csicsery-Ronay Jr, Istvan. The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction, 2011 and Suvin, Darko. 'On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre' in Science Fiction Criticism: An Anthology of Essential Writings, 2017

5 Kirby, David, Lab Coats in Hollywood: Science, Science Fiction and Cinema, MIT 2011

Exercise

Design a diegetic prototype for describing your proposal 'in media res'. This is a tool for communicating, exploring and reflecting upon your proposal by rendering it sensible. Describe something you would never actually do and its implications, *as if* you actually would, in the middle of it.

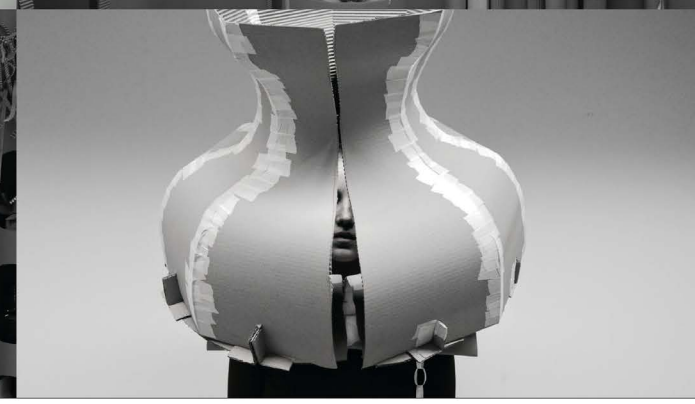
What if you would? What kinds of changes would occur, what scenarios would develop, what effects would be caused, what (inter)actions would happen, what objects would emerge?

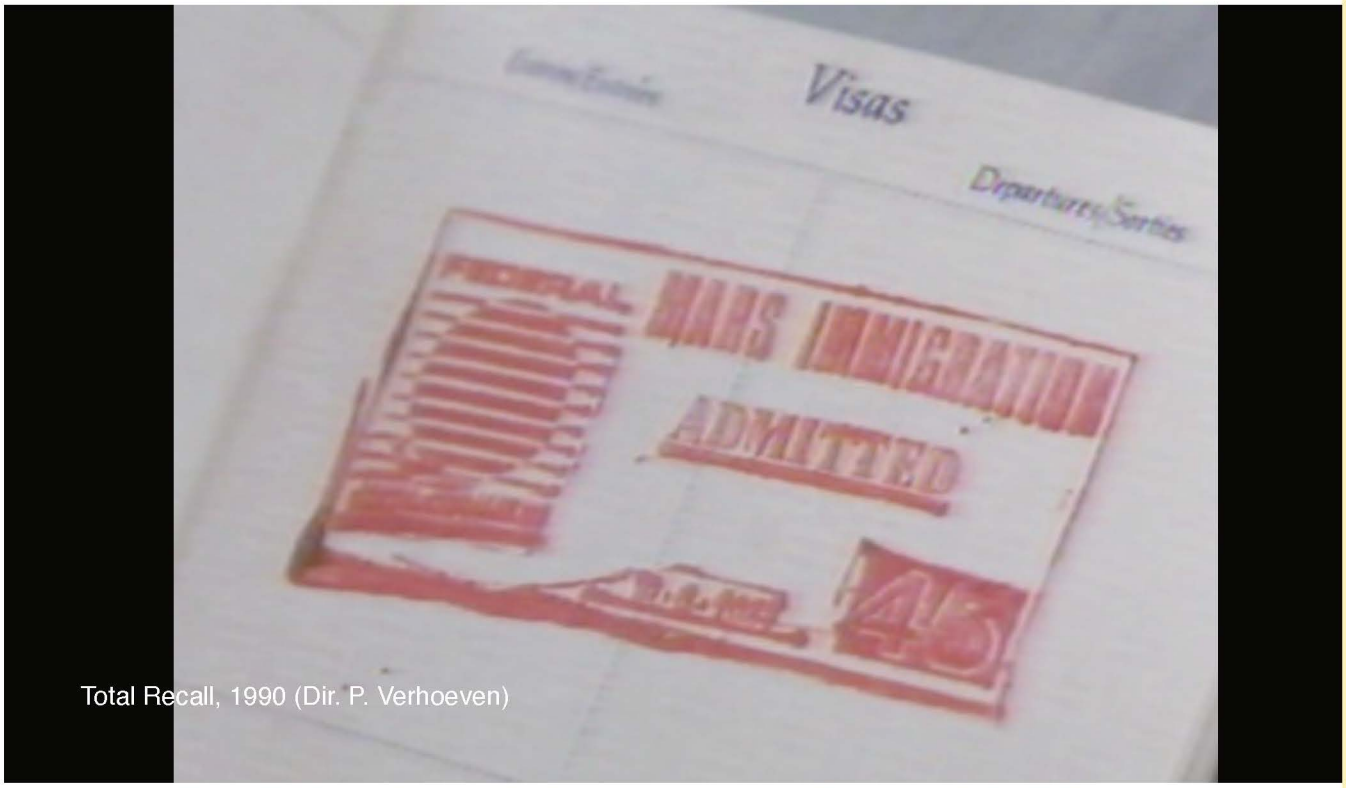
Futurological Propositions

In the Midst of the Improbable

Storytelling as a Speculative Tool

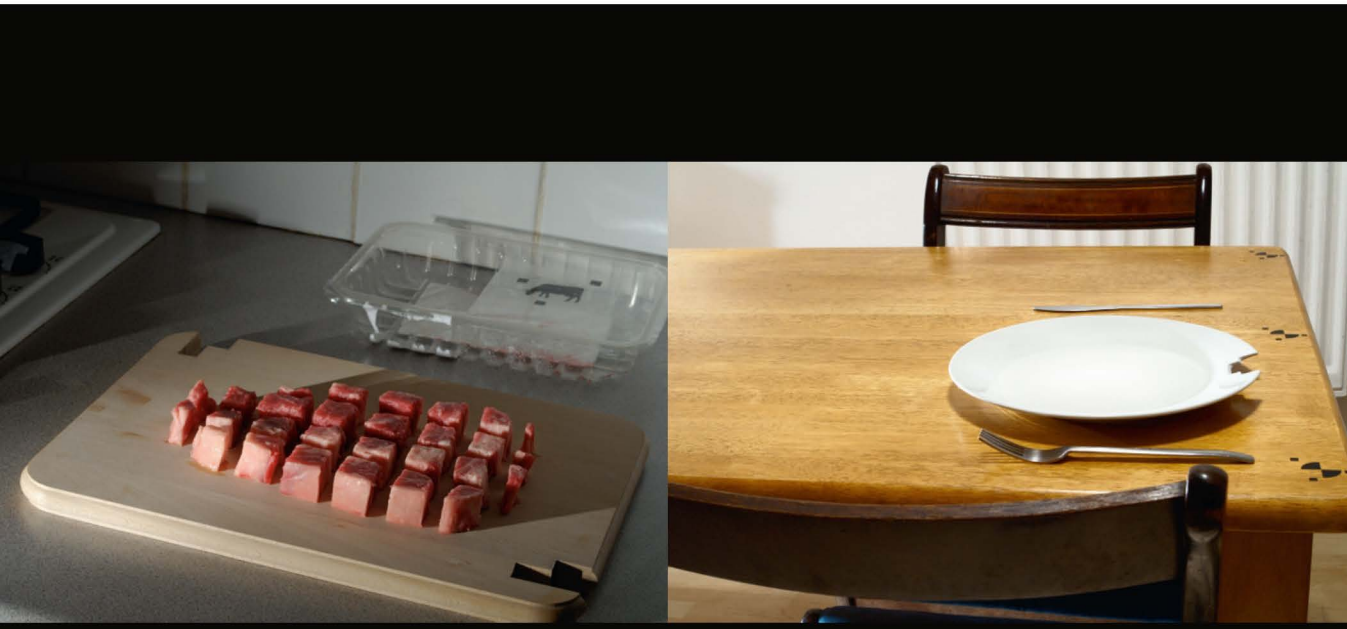
Reimagining Outer Space
Workshop at HEAD, 2019
led by Joseph Popper and Sitraka Rakotoniaina





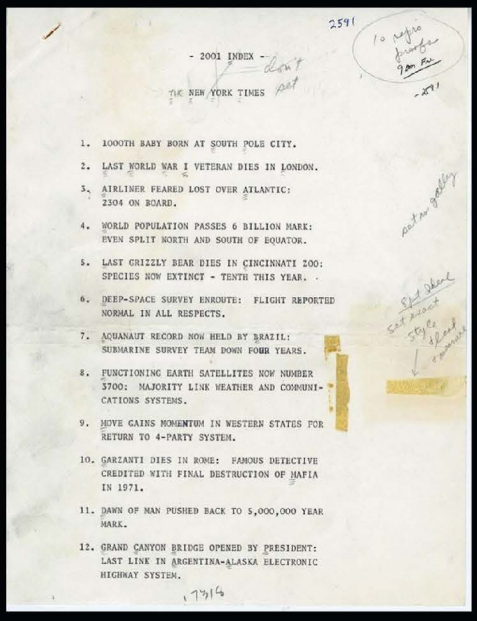
Total Recall, 1990 (Dir. P. Verhoeven)

They Live, 1980 (Dir. J. Carpenter)



With Robots, Diego Trujillo Pisanty (2011)

2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968 (Dir. S. Kubrick)



- 2001 INDEX -

THE NEW YORK TIMES

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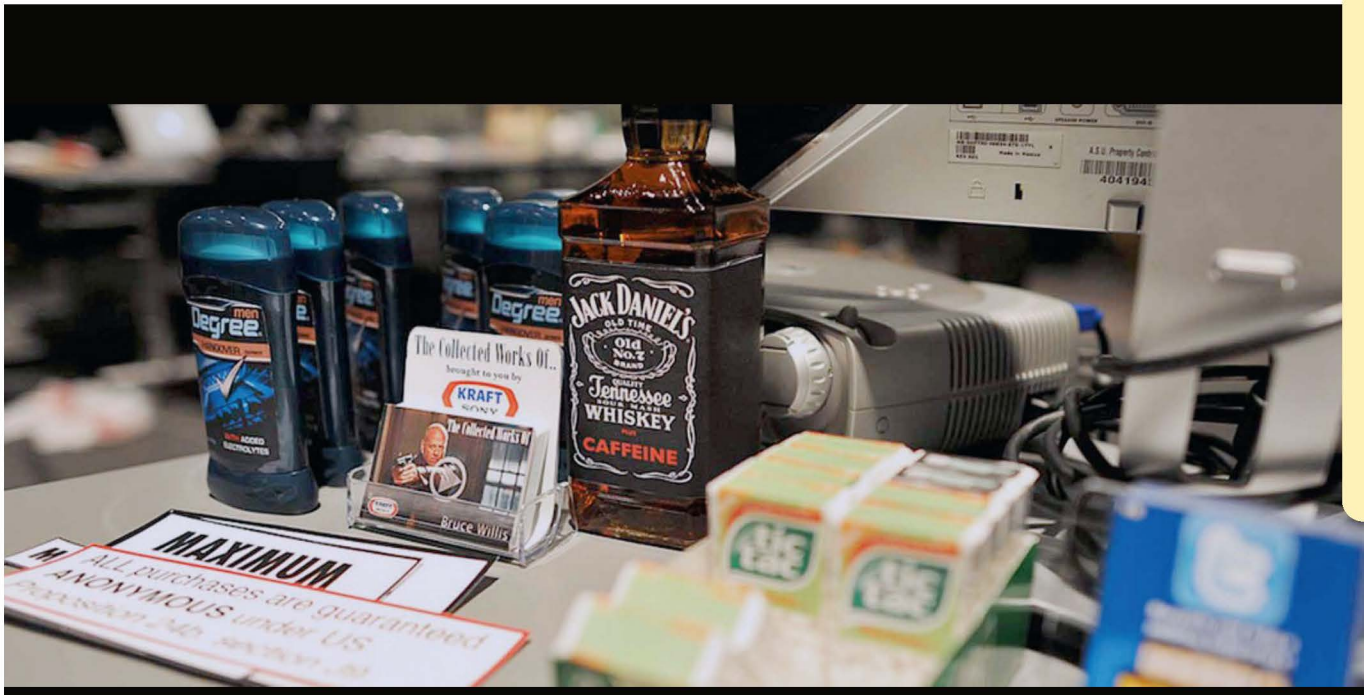
2. LAST WORLD WAR I VETERAN DIES IN LONDON.
3. AIRLINER FEARED LOST OVER ATLANTIC: 2304 ON BOARD.
4. WORLD POPULATION PASSES 6 BILLION MARK: EVEN SPLIT NORTH AND SOUTH OF EQUATOR.
5. LAST GRIZZLY BEAR DIES IN CINCINNATI ZOO: SPECIES NOW EXTINCT - TENTH THIS YEAR.
6. DEEP-SPACE SURVEY ENROUTE: FLIGHT REPORTED NORMAL IN ALL RESPECTS.
7. AQUANAUT RECORD NOW HELD BY BRAZIL: SUBMARINE SURVEY TEAM DOWN FOUR YEARS.
8. FUNCTIONING EARTH SATELLITES NOW NUMBER 3700: MAJORITY LINK WEATHER AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS.
9. MOVE GAINS MOMENTUM IN WESTERN STATES FOR RETURN TO 4-PARTY SYSTEM.
10. GARZANTI DIES IN ROME: FAMOUS DETECTIVE CREDITED WITH FINAL DESTRUCTION OF MAFIA IN 1971.
11. DAWN OF MAN PUSHED BACK TO 5,000,000 YEAR MARK.
12. GRAND CANYON BRIDGE OPENED BY PRESIDENT: LAST LINK IN ARGENTINA-ALASKA ELECTRONIC HIGHWAY SYSTEM.

2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968 (Dir. S. Kubrick)



Corner Convenience, Near Future Laboratory (2014)

Diegetic Prototypes | 15 mins Exercise

How can fictional artefacts describe, explore and examine your futurological propositions?

Diegetic Prototypes | 15 mins Exercise

Design a diegetic prototype for describing your proposal. Describe the thing you would never actually do and its implications, as if you actually would, in the middle of it.

This is a tool for communicating, exploring and reflecting upon your proposal by rendering it sensible.

What if you would? What kinds of changes would occur, what scenarios would develop, what effects would be caused, what (inter)actions would happen, what objects would emerge?

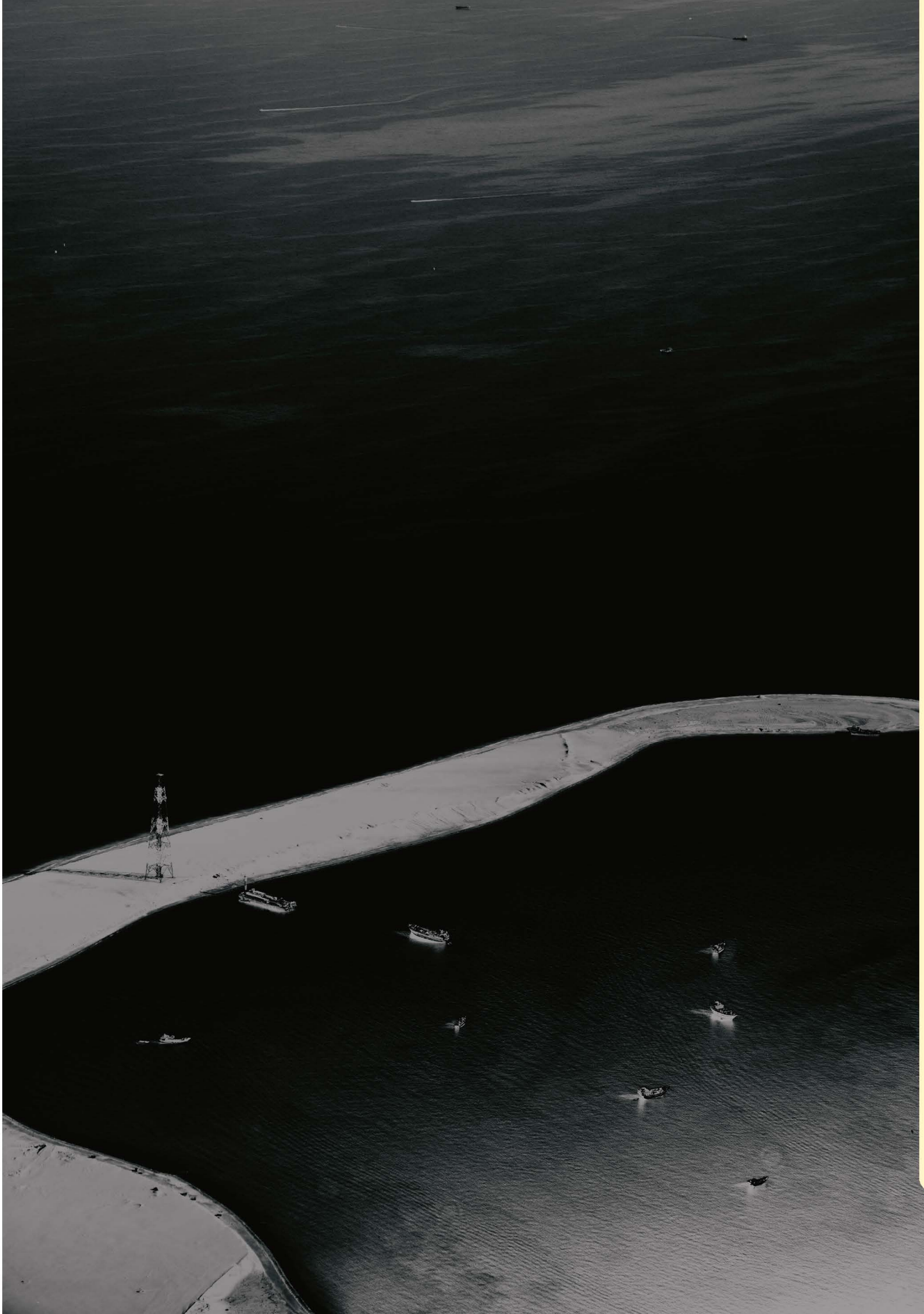
Jennifer Scherle

Jennifer Scherler

Through a proposal we are not only formulating an idea about one specific thing, an invention, but we also imagine (and most importantly enable others to imagine) a world where said proposal would work, hence always proposing an alternate reality.
It is therefore advised to thoroughly consider possible outcomes of the proposed scenario as we, or those after us, will have to live through the reality enabled by the proposition.

It is important to raise the question whether we should publish and communicate (all) ideas we have. Whether their implications can ever be fully understood and considered or if we are always a proposing into the blue.
If they generally enable more growth or if their destructive potential is higher.

This is a proposal to treat proposals with great consideration.



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