

CREATIVE METHODS FOR FORESIGHT

Activating the rigorous imagination for
anticipatory policy?

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OVERVIEW

A short introduction to *creative methods*

A systematization

A case study

ASSUMPTION

Creative futures methods and approaches will continue to proliferate into new arenas including policy development in different contexts (public and private) and at different layers of governance.

WHAT ARE CREATIVE METHODS IN FORESIGHT?

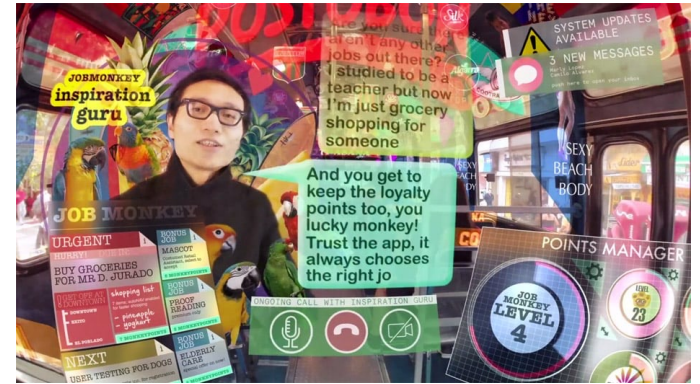
Experiential Futures, Speculative Design, Design Fiction, Participatory Speculation



Marco Janssen – DryLab 2023 (2017)



Ai Hasegawa – I Wanna Deliver a Shark (2011)



Keiichi Matsuda – Hyper-Reality (2016)

IMPLICIT PROMISES FOR THE USE IN POLICY CONTEXT

Creative methods are sexy (creative bureaucracy vs. bureaucratic art)

Creative methods allow to explore different futures

Creative methods engage stakeholders (low threshold)

Creative methods can result in estranging perspectives

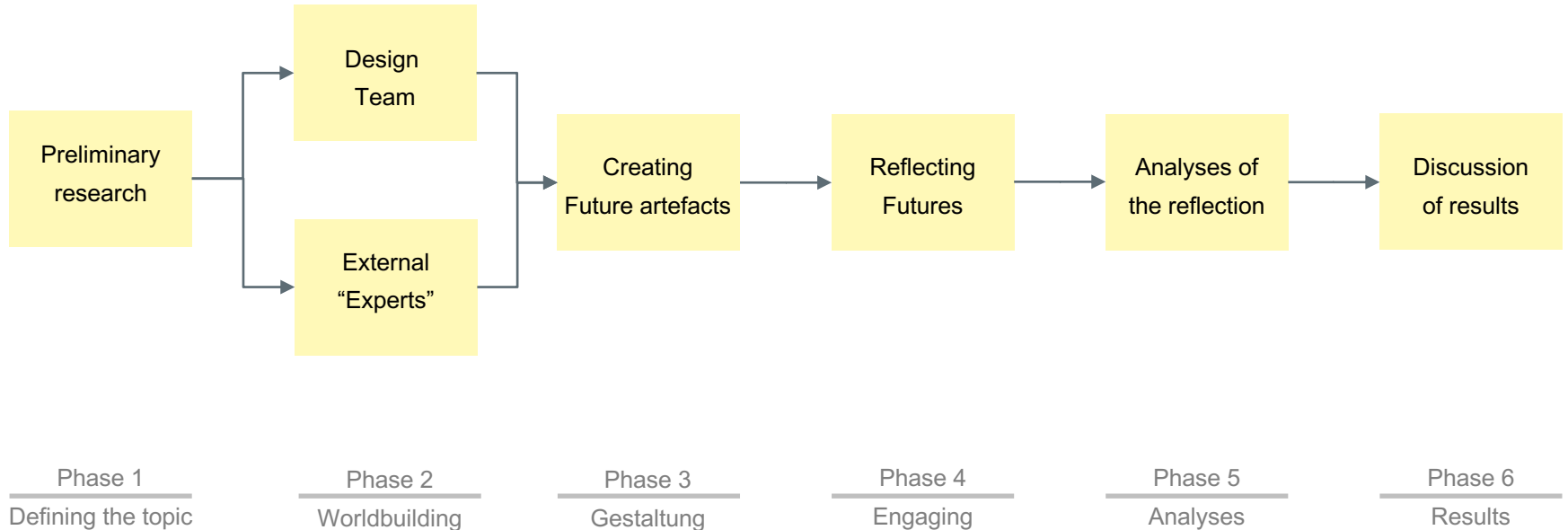
NEEDS FOR AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Need: Reliable and consistent terminology to **describe creative methods**, their outputs, and what they are both **intended to accomplish** and what they are **observed to accomplish**.

Need: Common parameters that can **guide conversation between client and creatives** to adjust expectations and align visions.

Need: A mode to **assess creative futures methods** and their products that can be transported across projects and instances.

ATTEMPT OF A SYSTEMATIZATION



CASE STUDY: FUTURES GARDEN (2023)

- Part of the FoD FWC; DG for Research & Innovation
- Foresight: Austrian Institute of Technology, Fraunhofer ISI, Futures2all, Futurlab, Institutul de Prospectiva (project lead of the pilot projects)
- Designer: Modem, Normals
- Two topics:
 - Extending human perception to new scales
 - **Dealing with future selves**



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Futures Garden - Blooming Seeds

Pioneering Policy Innovation through Speculative Design

At Futures Garden, we embark on a visionary journey to redefine policy-making for Europe's future. Our unique platform collaborates with leading futurists, innovative designers, and engaged EU citizens to delve into emerging trends and issues crucial for Europe's tomorrow. Our mission? To revolutionize policy creation by intertwining speculative design with creativity, empathy, and analytical insight.

PHASE 1: DEFINING THE TOPIC

- Dealing with future selves
- Horizon Scanning
- Clustering Themes:

Togetherness

Collective healing and trauma integration

Expanded affective ecosystems

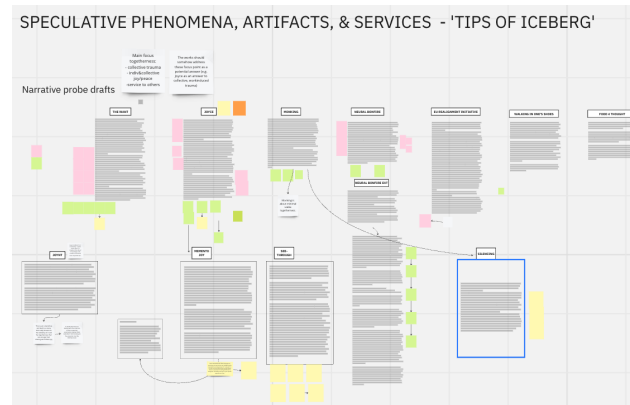
Consciousness expansion

Systemic communication breakdown

A	B	C	D	E	F
1	THEME (U2)	DESCRIPTION	WHAT IS INSPIRING YOU/ provocative question	SOURCE LINK	DATE OF PUBLICATION
2	Decoding animal communication	Scientists are using "digital bioacoustic" - improved sensors and artificial-intelligence technology - to observe and decode how a broad range of species, including plants, already share information with their own methods. Advances in visualization methods that are non-invasive and non-destructive -- for example X-ray computed tomography technologies that study soil's interstices around plant roots -- contribute to revealing the unseen soils (Mairhofer et al., 2014 in Bellanca, 2018). Moreover, the field of soil bioacoustics (also referred to as biotremology or soil ecoacoustics) engages a growing number of biologists in capturing underground noises that may open a window into a complex and cryptic world. Every soil organism produces its own soundtrack. By distinguishing these sounds, soil acoustics stands to shed light on some hitherto unanswerable questions such as: When do plant roots grow? How are plants making use of sound to help their survival? Are predators -- birds, rodents -- listening to the underground sounds? Might fungi be able to register sounds coming from micropredators? What intended signals between soil (micro)organisms are revealed by subterranean vibrations?	Could 'Deep listening' bring us closer to interspecies communication? Could we grasp animal Umwelt - the lived experience of organisms, as opposed to an anthropocentric view of animals/plants 'talking'?	https://www.sciencemag.com/2014/09/16/how-science-is-using-artificial-intelligence-to-communicate-with-animals	2023
3	Revealing the 2: unseen/unheard soils	Date from NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) began returning images in July 2022, and is poised to deepen humans' sensibility of the cosmos and ourselves. The telescope's deep field resolves distant star clusters in unparalleled detail. These images could help astronomers model the 'cosmic spring that led to the formation of galaxies through gravitational mechanisms and life itself. The JWST could also pave the way to realize NASA scientists' long-queried goal to detect extraterrestrial life, expanding beyond microbes on the surface of Mars or in the Venusian atmosphere, which would shrew up a generalised theory of biology and evolution. The apprehension of biographies -- indicators of life in exoplanetary atmospheres -- would demand a reordering, not only of how humans perceive the Universe, but of ourselves as being, if perhaps not lonely, beings within it.	Could better seeing and hearing soils as beaming with life change our relations to soil, our care of it in the long-term?	soil bioacoustics: https://knowabemagazine.org/article/living-worlds/2023-the-soil-we-see-through-is-silent-what-if-it-isnt	
4	2: 'Seeing' the Cosmos	Our own death means the returning of our matter to the soil. Degradation of bodies can be seen as a lively collaboration between bodies and soils. Recently, in Washington state in the USA, a company called Recompose hopes to be the first provider of post-mortem 'natural organic reduction', allowing people to reconnect with the cycles of nature. A head-on contact with a carefully balanced ratio of wood chips, straw, and alfalfa helps decompose a human body within a month, after which the body and its accompanying vegetation are transformed into a cubic yard of soil		https://recomposerecovery.com/en/evolution-why-change-our-mentality-is-key	
5	1/2: re-circulation	There are devices that complement natural sensor modalities (e.g. wearable belts that through touch sense points to magnify details that still allow using an existing sense to convey new information (e.g. tactile perception of a speech, 'hearing' in color)	Could death be seen as an intimate collaboration with the cycles of nature? Could we embrace death as rebirth?	https://recomposerecovery.com/en/evolution-why-change-our-mentality-is-key	
6	2: Expanding human senses		How would the human condition change upon enhancing human senses? How would our relation with nature/Life change as a consequence?	https://www.sciencefocus.com/technology/tyrion-george-fransthuma/	from : Transhumanist revolutions deep-dive

PHASE 2: WORLDBUILDING

- "Deliberate creation of a storyworld" (J.P. Wolf)
- Using *Narrative Probes* to explore the world, defining neologism, assets of the world and their implications
- Co-creation (experts, designers, other stakeholders?)



21.06.2049

Mobile Body Enhancement Unit hijacked

Visions combined: 2.6 - 3.4 - 1.7

Since the release of the first **MoBEUs**, more and more attacks on the autonomous vehicles are happening. In the first half of the year 2049 alone, 21 units were captured, emptied out and found outside of **Berlin** in the **desert of Brandenburg**.

To this date, it can not be said, how the units were taken out of the city or who was responsible for the deed. **The police** suspects **groups of smugglers** to sell the units to desert people, who desperately **need the body enhancement to survive** in the hostile Brandenburg environment. Further hijacks are expected to happen in the near future, so the police.

Berlin based pharmaceutical **company Bayer**, who owns the vehicles, is sceptical about the future development: "We see a customers need in the flexibility and permanently access to the body enhancement branch. However, if police won't be able to stop the crime, we are forced to shut this project down - or take security into our own hands.", says press **speaker Christian Scheinfeld**.

Example of a narrative probe

PHASE 3: GESTALTUNG

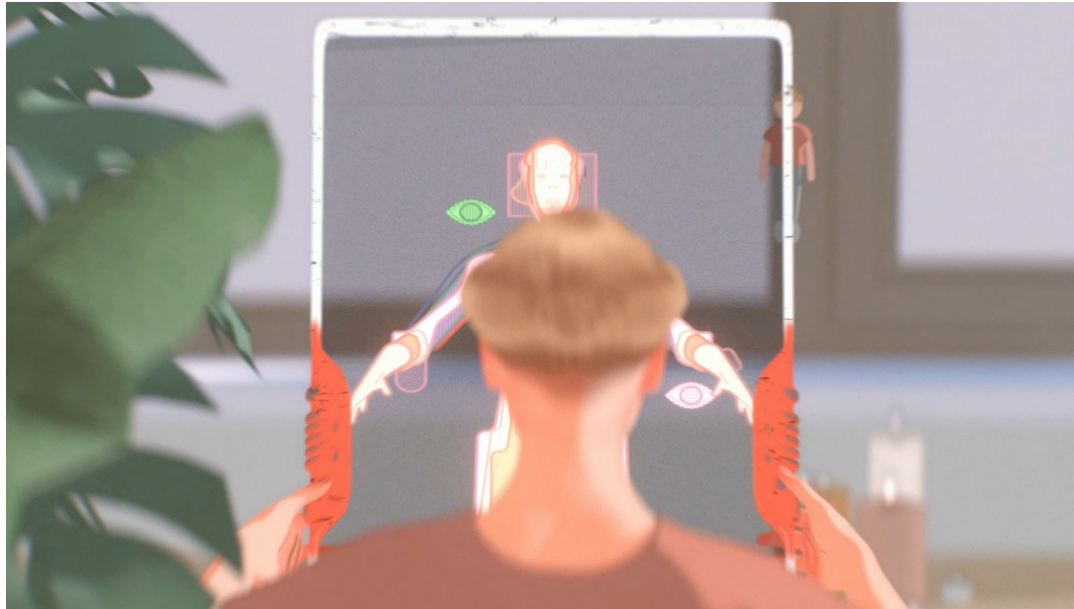
- Different levels of communication, perception and cognition
- Trans- or Multi-media approaches, Performance, Exhibition
Immersive Scenarios/Situations, Artefacts
- **Challenge:** multiple modalities and affordances that different formats bring along
- **Multi-modal framework** that operates at different levels of specificity to help describe engaged modes:
 - Senses** (Sight, Touch, Sound, Smell, Taste) Higher-level
 - Modes** (Perception, Cognition, Emotion, etc.)
 - Context** (Policy Creation, Dissemination, etc.)



99c futures (Extrapolation Factory, 2016)

PHASE 3: GESTALTUNG

- Design Fiction format: 5 short films, each 1 min long, addressing different aspects of the world



Teaser of Inwards (Normals, 2023)

PHASE 4: ENGAGING

- Different forms of engagement produce different insights:
 - Sharing impressions and associations allow to evaluate the world and elicit attitudes and values
 - Exploring the world further allows to uncover potential chances and challenges

Challenge by Futures Garden

How do you envision a future in the wake of the Inwards revolution?

How to
What futures unfold in your mind? Imagine possible changes for your life, society, economy, ecology, and politics. Share your vision in a concise, compelling statement of a possible tomorrow.

Do's

Don'ts

Name

Email Address

Your Opinion

I agree to Futures Canvas [Privacy Policy and Terms of Use.](#)

PHASE 5: ANALYSES

- Social science perspective on the engagement results
- Process depends on the original research question and goal of the whole activity
- In case of Inwards: Four AI generated scenarios (developed by Christian Rauch)



232 Opinions
611 Ratings


Resulting future scenarios
Based on their ratings, submitted opinions have been compiled into four distinct future scenarios, autonomously generated by artificial intelligence.

Positive Expectations
AI, VR Boosting Emotional Awareness, Well-being

Expected Challenges
Dystopian Future: Technology Manipulates Emotions

Hopeful Dreams
Envisioning a Future Society Focused on Empathy, Not Wealth

Distant Threats
Future Risk: Emotional Control and AI Dominance



AI, VR Boosting Emotional Awareness, Well-being

Based on 67 opinions and 153 ratings. View individual opinions in the Futures Canvas by filtering for the sector "Positive Expectations".

- Future society may shift towards enhanced emotional awareness via AI and VR technologies.
- Improved self-reflection could foster empathy, inclusivity, and stronger relationships.
- Balance might be sought between technology, traditional mental health practices, and nature consciousness.

In the future, society might experience a profound shift towards enhanced emotional awareness and well-being, largely facilitated by advancements in AI and VR technologies. We may learn to understand and control our emotions better, managing our lives more effectively amidst an overwhelming and busy world. This heightened self-awareness could lead to a deeper understanding of our individual and collective needs, fostering empathy and inclusivity, and facilitating the cultivation of stronger relationships.

Simultaneously, improved self-reflection may enable us to communicate more effectively with each other. People might become less reliant on technology for self-understanding, instead opting for practices like meditation and walking. The era of obsessive substance use for numbing negative feelings might diminish. Furthermore, the ubiquity of AI psychological therapy might alter the landscape of mental health, although it would not replace human-led therapy.

Despite the potential of technology, society might equally value non-technological human interactions and traditional practices for maintaining mental health. There might be a heightened focus on responsible and ethical development and deployment of technology. The future could also witness a balance attained between individual and collective needs, leading to a renegotiation of social values. Finally, this inward revolution might catalyze a shift from materialism towards nature consciousness, potentially reducing humanity's problems and encouraging a more harmonious coexistence.

PHASE 6: DISCUSSION

- What is the outcome of such a process?
- Depending on the aim of the project:
 - Dissemination
 - New perspective on a topic
 - Elicited values and attitudes that can become guidelines
 - Visioneering
 - Etc.

TAKE AWAY

- Creative methods sometimes overhyped as a tool for “everything new”
- Creative methods sometimes underhyped as a tool for “making things beautiful”
- It needs a better understanding of the different intersections between foresight, design approaches and innovation policy
 - ... this can only come by doing and reflecting the doing (praxeological research)

THANK YOU!

Fischer, N., & Mehnert, W. (2021). **Building possible worlds. A speculation based research framework To reflect on images of the future.** Journal of Futures Studies, March.(25(3)), 25–38.

Mehnert, W. (2023). **Wording Worlds – From writing Futures to building Imaginary Worlds.** Journal of Technology and Language, Special Issue on Future Writing, 3 (12), Art. 7.

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