

Experiential Futures

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Computational Futures & AI

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what is one thing you are grateful?

what is one thing that you are
frustrated about?

🔗 Computational Futures and AI (Autumn 2019/20)

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Session Times: Wednesday 9.30-1.30 Location: CCI 5th Floor Block B

Introduction

This unit explores the emerging area of machine learning (ML) and its potential impact on culture and society. The unit is a mix of practical tasks introducing ML frameworks such as TensorFlow and seminars that look at emerging practice across the arts and creative industries that employ some level of artificial intelligence. This unit will also explore the centrality of 'the network' to computational experience and how machine learning is extending its scope and reach.

From this exploration we will use your new material understanding of machine learning methods and your developing critical framework to question cultural assumptions regarding artificial intelligence and to speculate in writing about emerging computational futures. This primary aim of this unit is to enable you to look past the hype of 'AI' and develop your critical framework for thinking about computational technology.

<https://github.com/fepegha/Computational-Futures-And-AI>

Experiential futures?!

(what is that?)



To design is to grapple with **'the future'**.

The trouble with **'the future'** is that it doesn't exist.

'The future' is a construct.

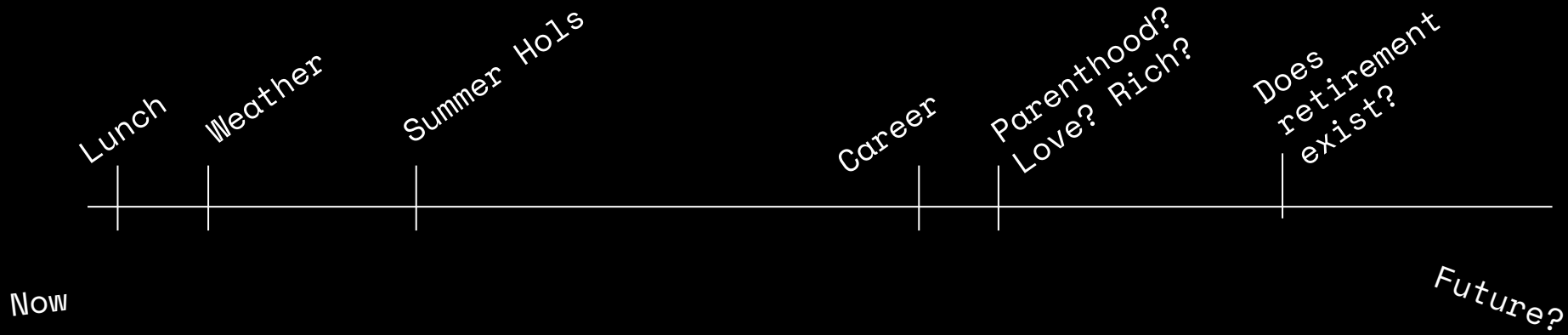
'The future' will consist of assumptions and interpretations carried over from the past.

It will be blended with trends and emerging issues in the present.

It will be influenced through hope and fear.

'The future' is our fantasies and imaginaries projected.

**We think about the
future all the
time!**



Experiential futures

A set of approaches to make alternative futures present.

The design of situations and stuff from the future to catalyse insight and change.

Through the use of design techniques, performance art, new media, and other emerging tools like VR, experiential futurists create spaces for exploration and edification, making new worlds thinkable and, often, makeable.



99c store, 2013

The Extrapolation
Factory

<https://extrapolationfactory.com/99-Futures>



The Museum of the Future

TellArt/Dubai Future Foundation

<https://www.tellart.com/projects/museum-of-the-future-machinic-life/>

**How does this help
us?**

Content through the course

Artificial Intelligence as a cultural concept

Machine learning frameworks for creative computing

Computational futures and the network as a
critical lens

Essay's focus

A Speculative Method for an Imaginative AI

Brief history on future studies



Early civilisations
Plato

Thomas More's
Utopia

The
Renaissance

Jules Verne

H.G Wells

RAND

Burst of
foresight as
a corporate
concept

early 380 BC

1516

1300
-
1600

1860s
and
1870s

1901

1941

1970 to present

Future studies

Futurology

Foresight

Futurist

Strategic Foresight

Horizon Scanning

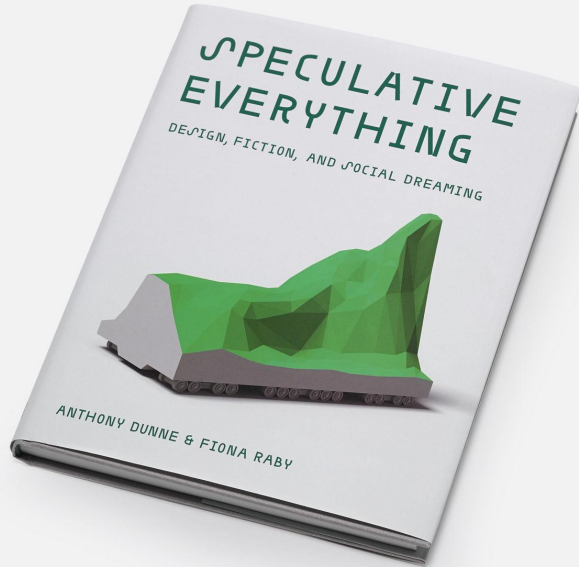
Scenario Planning

Futuring

Futures & design.

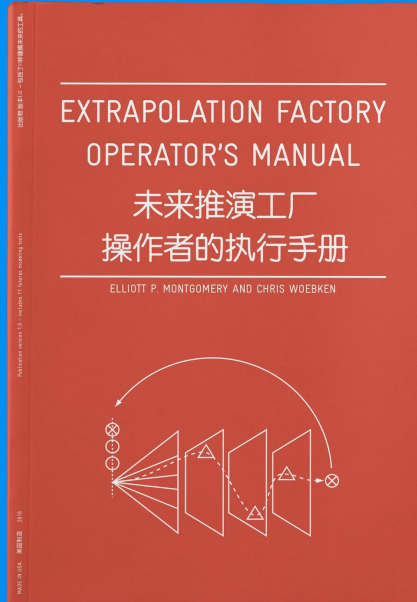
Design futures
Speculative Design
Just 'Design'
Critical Design
Radical Design
Design Fiction

**Design allows us to
explore these
futures.**



Speculative Everything Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming

Anthony Dunne & Fiona
Raby



Extrapolation Factory Operator's Manual

Elliott P. Montgomery
and Chris Woebken.



Anab Jain
Superflux Co-Founder

Why we need to image
different futures

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Superstudio

**Supersurface: An
alternative model for
life on the Earth**

For MOMA (1972)



No Phone

<https://www.thenophone.com/>

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/nophone-usa/the-new-and-unimproved-nophone>

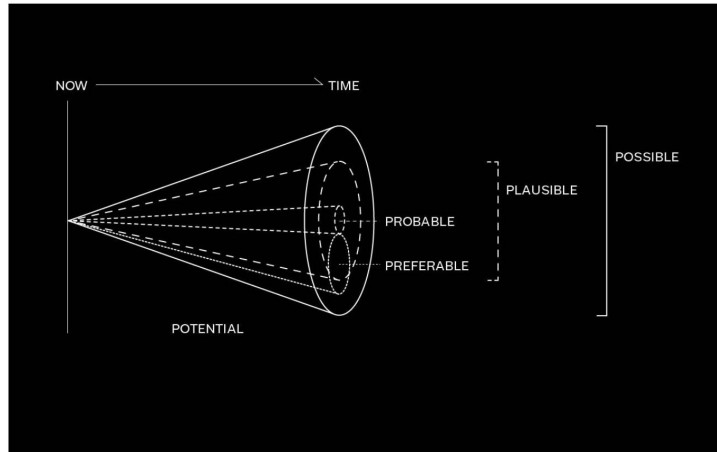
Criticisms

Future-Oriented Design



i make stuff.

Jul 31 · 12 min read



Alex Fefegha

Future-Oriented
Design

Medium blogpost

Common critiques

1. design fiction does not engages the public and enables debate which are grounded in the analysis of actual events.
2. design fiction concepts can be impossible to understand, academic and hard for people to connect with
3. design fiction has been criticised for dramatising '*dystopian scenarios*,' and its principles rooted in the fears of a wealthy, urban, western population and failing to engage with existing social problems.

Common critiques

4. design fictions that are being debated will only be accessible to a minimum percentage of the world's population, but also that those who won't have access to it will likely be exploited to make that reality happen, one way or another

Mitigating the criticisms

Ways to mitigate

1. acknowledge the fact that the future is not a fixed destination, but one which is constantly shifting and unfolding space of diverse potential.
2. acknowledge that achieving this potential is by understanding that every individual experiences the world differently, based on their personal, geographic, social, and economic standing in the world.

Ways to mitigate

3. acknowledge while creating an image of the future may broaden people's imagination for what's possible, it can also really narrow their perception of what's possible or what their options are.

4. acknowledge when creating for possible futures must be a diverse and inclusive process, rather than one of a monolithic and presumptive nature outlined by its critics.

Break

Exercise

We are going into the field of Camberwell College
of the Arts...

I need you all to explore ethnographic
experiential futures...

I need you all to create some for me...

I don't care how...

A Field Guide by Stuart Candy and Kelly Kornet

ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPERIENTIAL FUTURES

INSTRUCTIONS

1

MAP: Inquire into and record people's actual or existing images of the future (e.g. possible; probable; preferred; a combination)

- Choose an individual or group to work with: scale could vary from personal (e.g. Greyson, Making the Futures Present) to large groups such as a neighbourhood (e.g. Candy & Dunagan, Foundfutures Chinatown), company, or country.
- Select a suitable time horizon for inquiry (between, say, 10-50 years).
- Images of the future may be elicited via formal and face-to-face processes such as Textor's Ethnographic Futures Research interviews (e.g. Kornet, Causing an Effect).
- Alternatively, less formal processes could be used, such as unstructured interviews (e.g. Foundfutures) or direct observation (at a corporate strategy conference for instance).

2

MULTIPLY: Generate alternative images (scenarios) to challenge or extend existing thinking (optional step, but recommended)

- Here you may choose to diversify the researched images of the future through generating alternatives, such as by complementing the usual EFR categories by adding 'unexpected' on top of 'expected' (e.g. Making the Futures Present).
- This might be done in collaboration with the research subjects or by the futurist/researcher herself.
- Omit if primary research goal is to deepen existing futures (e.g. Causing an Effect) or if diversity of original inputs meets requirements (e.g. Situation Lab/Extrapolation Factory, 1-888-FUTURES).

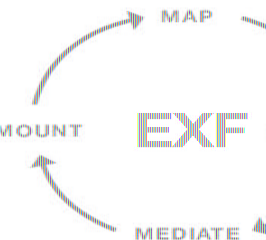
MATERIALS NEEDED

- An individual, group or culture whose images of the future you are interested in understanding, surfacing and deepening.
- Media for the creation of rapid and/or high-fidelity prototypes.
- This may be 2D (video; animation; digital images; print matter, even pen and paper), 3D (basic construction materials; found products/objects to hack), or 4D (live performance).

3

MEDIATE: Translate these ideas about the future/s into experiences: tangible, immersive, visual or interactive representations

- This step is about moving from vague ideas about the future to more specific ones. You could use a tool such as the Experiential Futures Ladder to get from a Setting (scenario concept) to a Scenario (particular hypothetical), and onward to ideas for 1:1-scale Situations or Stuff (artifacts).
- You may opt to serve as a 'facilitator' such that participants produce their own materials (e.g. 1-888-FUTURES).
- Or, you may serve as a 'designer' and do the translating yourself (e.g. Causing an Effect; Foundfutures).
- A hybrid approach is also available; co-creating artifacts or prototypes with the participant/s (e.g. Making the Futures Present).



4

MOUNT: Stage experiential scenario/s to encounter for the original subject/s, or others (or both)

- In steps 3 and 4, for impact consider diegetic integrity (realise and polish in the finished product fidelity to the hypothetical): how would this thing/scene really look/feel if this future were happening?
- The experiential scenario/s may be shared in a relatively scripted environment like a public exhibit (e.g. Causing an Effect) or a workshop (e.g. Making the Futures Present).
- Alternatively, the encounter could be staged on an unsolicited basis, such as a 'guerrilla futures' installation in a city street (e.g. Foundfutures).
- Mixed contexts of encounter are also possible, such as the post-future artifacts in the mail or online (e.g. 1-888-FUTURES).

Present

**Class done.
You are free!**