Your corner of the future(s)

Annelie Berner & Monika Seyfried

TITLE
Anwer:
What's the current societal trend?
What's the dominant and nondominant ideologies?
Are there any challenges, problems, issues going on?

Story:
1/2 - 1 page story, from the first person perspective, with reference to some of the underlying trends (Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Infrastructural) and ideologies of this corner of the future

Visuals:
Abstract or literal to support your story and the layered future you have written about

AND MORE:
What's under the iceberg? Keep track of all of your trends research and world-building answers

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Steps

1. As a group, read your scenario and dream. Each of you highlight the themes and interesting bit(s) that you would like to explore further or expand upon. Share back to your group.
2. Each consider a trend-angles (PESTLI) and circle those that are relevant to your scenario.
3. Share back to the group and as you share, identify what you would incorporate from those trend-angles or what more you want to research from there.
4. In pairs / threesomes, integrate some more trend-angles into your scenario by re-writing the story, but staying within the themes you identified. Share back and choose one version that the group finds most tangible, easy to relate to (this is the future, after all!)
5. Read out loud a few of the Signals and again, identify any that are relevant, interesting to integrate
6. Now check the world-building questions. Try to answer at least one world-building question per section and see if you are able to answer any. If not, imagine!
7. If you haven't done so already, identify the point of view and arc of your story-moment from your future. Half of the group should write and half should identify supporting visuals.
8. Prepare "Your Corner of the World(s)" answers, story and visuals and be ready to present

Story Arc

beginning	middle	**continuing**
who is this person we are seeing through?	what is happening in their lives?	**what is an issue that arises?**

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Political

*this is just a starting point

*use this paper to document your research and decisions about your future

- Political parties are being formed around hiding memories - though this is not public knowledge
- Political disruptors are commonplace and accepted as an alternate party body

Social

*this is just a starting point

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- Your memories can be accessed in social contexts and these memories form your new identification card both to governments and to possible friends or lovers
- Sociality is no longer only human - human
- Human - device is considered a standard form of socialising
- The Other is recognised and we have created enclaves for Them to live
- There is not enough food
- Some museums are now places for the everyday people to store their memories

Legal

*this is just a starting point

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- Others have rights to the same resources as humans do
- Contracts are constantly being signed and approved through interactions between chip implants
- State surveillance is a guarantee - for all states - though Europe considers itself ethical
- The right to be forgotten and to forget is a privilege

Infrastructural

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- We all have passports embedded in us and wave through borders
- Some of us live in space
- Climate change has displaced 1 billion people
- Individuals carry a full family tree on their chips that identify where they belong
- Memory is hardcoded into the chips on the moment of implantation
- Certain undisclosed locations have been designated memory banks for our future selves

Technological

*this is just a starting point

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- More data were created in the past 2 years than in all of preceding history
- Owning objects is a thing of the past. people one join communal services to engage in access to objects
- To build circuits from minerals is highly expensive
- Animal tissue is now harvested for circuitry
- Increased disasters demand serious rethinking of our priorities in deciding what we think of as valuable memories
- Predictive algorithms and artificial intelligence are entirely part of the fabric of how decisions are made about humans, animals and the earth

Environmental

*this is just a starting point

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- Storage is a major pollutant
- The wilderness is an antique term
- The built environment includes submarine cities
- Energy scarcity is such that we have returned to the mentality of pre-industrial age
- Climate change is a given fact
- Mining the earth has almost exhausted the supply of rare minerals
- Flooding is common and extreme weather events have increased reliance on space computing
- The environmental awareness now includes space - trash

World building questions

Use these questions to help understand what things are like in your corner of the world and enrich the scenario

LOCATION

Where are we? Coast, interior? Is there drinkable water? Farm-able land? What is the climate?

TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | BIOLOGY

What is your “Element X”? The thing that makes this different from the present.

CULTURE + IDEOLOGY

What are / is the language of this corner of the world? Dominant religion? Sexuality?

Is the ideology one of collectivity, communality, or every person for their self? Communitarian, anarchist, capitalist, socialist etc?

Where do you come from? How are you different from the other nearby communities? How do you get and distribute resources? What are your innovations?

What are the dominant / minority beliefs? Who doesn’t fit in?

INFRASTRUCTURE

What is the infrastructure?

How do the supply chains work now?

POWER

Who has the power? (and to do what, why?) If something / someone has value, are they free, protected, in danger?

Are the people with the most power subjugated to another group, or are they controllers?

What about the governing bodies that we know of now? Are they still around?

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Signals : Bio - Scientific

*this is just a starting point
*add more!

- Researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, have invented a smart contact lens that can instantly focus the eye. It's under development as a future product for an Israeli company called Deep Optics. The idea is based on the eye function of the elephant nose fish. The lens uses electronic circuits and light sensors, which are powered by a solar cell, all built into the contact lens.

- Implant electrodes to improve the ability to retain memories. The neuroprosthetic automatically enhances flagging memory and can aid brain-injured soldiers and people who have had strokes or lost some of the power of recall through normal ageing. An algorithm simulates the pattern that the person's memory area receives when recall is activated - a firing pattern goes from CA3 to CA1. Recreating that signal restores the ability to solidify memories, helping to encode short-term into long-term memory. However, scientists do not yet fully understand this success as there is no obvious organisation in the hippocampus, so why we can stimulate it in this way and get results is unclear.

- Good performance creates longer ripples and vice versa. If you can measure the events and come up with some way to manipulate them, there's the possibility of making that system work better. There's a world of possibilities there. Circuit-based therapeutics for the prevention and treatment of brain disorders.

- In 2004, humans were embedding technology inside of their bodies in order to augment their senses - described as 'cyborgs.' In 2014, a man embedded his bitcoin private key in his hand. In 2027, we are now fully able to process data into chips that can be implanted into our bodies so that we are embedded with any data we want. Chips in bodies is considered a safer way to store data as it is less susceptible to online hacking. The chips can be accessed with any mobile device that has the password for the chip.

- For decades we have been sending out probes to travel to deep space. These probes carry no crew but are packed with recording equipment to send messages back to earth so that we can remotely explore the solar system and beyond. But we have also sent messages with those probes. Messages for beings we know nothing about, who may not receive them till long after the human race is extinct. The most famous of these is the message aboard Voyager, 'Sounds of Earth' also known as 'the golden record'

- Individuals can change hair cells (progenitor cells) inside their ears to augment sound and shape their tectorial membrane traveling waves to tune in to otherwise unheard frequencies.

- We now have an electronic chip that makes memories -> bionic brains. Store, delete, process information. That's our brain. The device that replicates the way the brain stores and loses information using light to control cells in living tissue, typically neurons. Neural connections happen in the brain through electrical impulses. When tiny energy peaks reach a certain threshold voltage, the neutrons bind together and you've started creating a memory.

- DNA can reliably store more information than has been handled before. Scientists encoded computer files totalling 739 kilobytes of hard-disk storage and with an estimated Shannon information of 5.2×106 bits into a DNA code, synthesized this DNA, sequenced it and reconstructed the original files with 100% accuracy. When harnessed, this system has the potential to write arbitrary information into the genome. Scientists recently encoded the pixel values of black and white images and a short movie into the genomes of a population of living bacteria.

- The human brain is made up of billions of neutrons in connected networks. They communicate with each other by using sequence of electrical signals to express different behaviours. Any disruption to these signalling sequences can lead to a loss of these vital neural connections, potentially causing memory loss and dementia.

- To increase mental horsepower so that you can succeed and deliver and make the money you need to make. This can lead to hyperthymesia: an enhanced autobiographical memory with an extraordinary, inescapable capacity to recall specific events: the most intense, emotional charged memories play over and over in your head with the clarity of high-definition TV and never fade. So now memory sticks, and we are unable to forget. Memories cannot fade, emotions cannot become blunt, time does not heal. We cannot avoid remembering.

- Skull transmitted images: for example, the first cyborg, Neil Harbisson, is colorblind and implanted a chip in his brain that processes light through an external antenna and interprets it as vibrations that help himself understand the color around him. Harbisson is able to receive skull transmitted images and has given permission to 5 friends, one in each continent, to send colours, images, videos or sounds directly into his head.

- [I]t appeared that there was no limit either to the capacity of S.'s memory or to the durability of the traces he retained. Experiments indicated that he had no difficulty reproducing any lengthy series of words whatever, even though these had originally been presented to him a week, a month, a year, or even many years earlier. In fact, some of these experiments designed to test his retention were performed (without his being given any warning) fifteen or sixteen years after the session in which he had originally recalled the words. Yet invariably they were successful.

Signals : Socio - Technological

*this is just a starting point
*add more!

- Soldiers wanted to locate enemy tanks. They could't see them as they are camouflaged, but a machine can, by distinguishing between the forest without the camouflaged tanks and the forest with the camouflaged tanks. The minute difference can be detected by the machine but not them.

- More will analyse data at the cloud and run mixed complex data sets. Most store data on premises. Close proximity of storage and processing is essential if you want to analyse data locally with the memory.

- While tech is not necessarily changing our brains, it is a massive request for our attention spans. Now you can immunise yourself against distractions. That used to be you, turning off Facebook notifications or moving gaming devices out of your reach. Now it is a SloBot, who slows down the notification streams and slows down your ability to respond quickly.

- Electronic immortality: you can upload your memories and thoughts to an android who continues to live on as "you" after you die. But in that case, your future self/ android would be owned by the company on whose cloud you put your data, as in, potentially enslaved.

- A memex is a device in which an individual stores all his books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to his memory.

- But we have to also consider that the CRISPR technology can be used for things like enhancement. Imagine that we could try to engineer humans that have enhanced properties, such as stronger bones, or less susceptibility to cardiovascular disease or even to have properties that we would consider maybe to be desirable, like a different eye color or to be taller, things like that. "Designer humans," if you will.

- The algorithms made an entirely new photo out of these where both people are smiling. This made a moment in history that did not exist. Increased complexity that threatens to put us into a weird place. When the computer beats the human at chess: with DeepBlue you could understand how the machine made the decision. With AlphaGo, there is a nonhuman intelligence and we do not have the understanding of how it makes its decisions. We are starting to build machines whose operations and thinking we cannot understand. AlphaGo and GoogleBrain decide what you watch on YouTube. There is a concrete and causal relationship between technology and the society built on top of it.

- OK, but what does one do with it? … [N]ow that I have all this power - a mechanical golem that will never forget and never let me forget whatever I chose to - what do I choose to remember?

- Memories can be erased, if you want to. If you want to keep them, you have to protect their physical existence in a local object.

- The externalization of memory not only changed how people think; it also led to a profound shift in the very notion of what it means to be intelligent. Internal memory became devalued. Thanks to the plummeting price of digital storage, the increasing ubiquity of digital sensors, and better artificial intelligence to sort through the mess of data we're constantly collecting, it's becoming easier and easier to capture and remember ever more information from the world around us.

- The stakes can be high: Artificial intelligence makes it easy to synthesize videos into new, fictitious ones often called “deepfakes.” “We'll shortly live in a world where our eyes routinely deceive us,”. “Put differently, we're not so far from the collapse of reality.” Deepfakes are one way of melting reality; another is changing the simple phone photograph from a decent approximation of the reality we see with our eyes to something much different. It is ubiquitous and low temperature, but no less effective. And probably a lot more important to the future of technology companies.

- To foster convivial tools, Illich proposes a program of research with "two major tasks: to provide guidelines for detecting the incipient stages of murderous logic in a tool; and to devise tools and tool systems that optimize the balance of life, thereby maximizing liberty for all." He also suggests that pioneers of a convivial society work through the legal and political systems and reclaim them for justice. Change is possible, Illich argues. There are decision points. We cannot abdicate our right to self-determination, and to decide how far is far enough. "The crisis I have described," says Illich, "confronts people with a choice between convivial tools and being crushed by machines.”

- THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213 th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General. Some things about living still weren't quite right, though. April for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that clammy month that the H-G men took George and Hazel Bergeron's fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.