



DRONES AND PEOPLE

Our future(s) together

Speculative concepts catalog - January 2021



SETLab

UC Santa Cruz



ABOUT THIS CATALOG

Here, we present 10 speculative drone concepts that focus on promoting play and meaningful social interaction. At the Social Emotional Technology Lab at UC Santa Cruz, we are very interested in **play**, because it's a great way to create opportunities for learning, well-being, creativity, self-expression and social interaction.

We noticed that most of today's drone applications are very utilitarian: helping the police or military to do surveillance, disinfecting surfaces during the COVID pandemic, surveilling agriculture crops... We looked for fun, less productivity oriented concepts, both in the form of commercial designs and academic experiments. We found a few, but not many. However, we found a goldmine of valuable information on how people use drones playfully: there are a bunch of posts on Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, where people show the world how they have fun and create opportunities for socialization using drones.

The aim of our research project was to explore some of these posts, identify the most frequent playful interactions with drones (what we call "*play potentials*"), and imagine how they could help designers come up with new ideas for drone applications that focus on play and social interaction. Posts showing the delivery of whiskey to neighbors, the disguise of drones as ghosts, or Pokémon Go hacks were examples of drone uses we found inspiring. This catalog is our own example of ideas that emerged after a few rounds of brainstorming sessions that followed our social media exploration and analysis.

A WORD ABOUT SPECULATIVE DESIGN

Speculative design seeks to explore possibilities about our futures with almost limitless ideation. It helps us reflect on certain questions, like: *What is missing in our world today? What might exist if certain technologies develop? Which technologies and societal advancements do we need to get there? How do people react to these futures? Are they desirable on ethical, ecological, economical, or societal terms?*

Our ideation was guided by values of play, community building, and meaningful social interaction, potentially opening up avenues for futures of drones aligned with these values.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you accessed this catalog, it means that you can help us in our reflection: we definitely are interested in your opinion about the concepts! Which ideas do you find good, bad, enraging, hilarious? You can leave a comment with your thoughts on the post where you found this catalog, or send an email to apometko@gmail.com. Your opinions will help us improve our ideas and make us think about any issues you highlight!

Alexandra Pometko, Ella Dagan Peled, Ferran Altarriba Bertran, and Katherine Isbister

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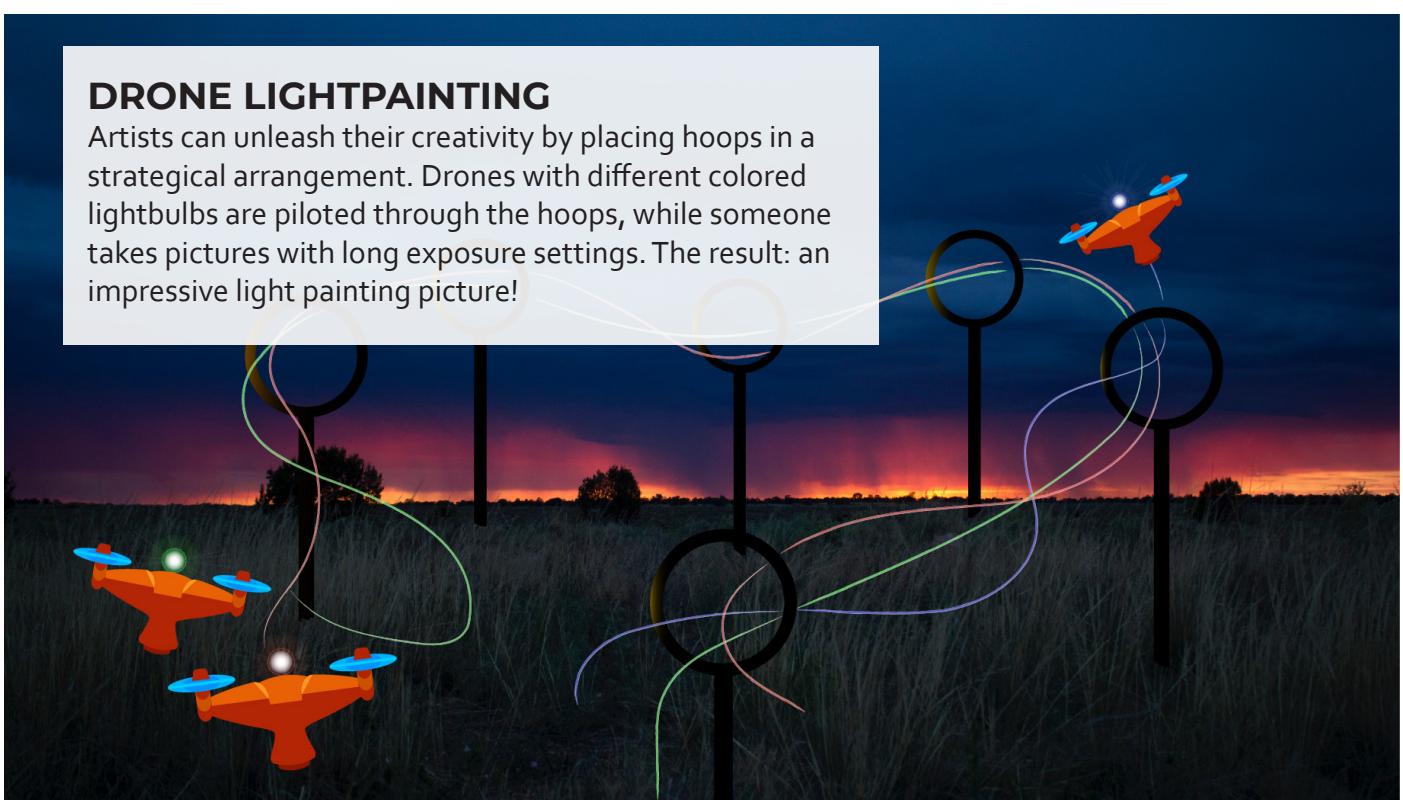
THE CROWD CONNECTOR

This is a festival drone that projects shapes on the ground so that the crowd collaborates to create them with their bodies. For example, if the drone projects a heart, all participants must take place within the projection so that when the picture is taken by the drone, a heart can be seen from above. Participants can also submit shapes to complete on an app, and trigger fun effects that will show up on the stage, like making a peace sign to make a confetti explosion appear!



DRONE LIGHTPAINTING

Artists can unleash their creativity by placing hoops in a strategical arrangement. Drones with different colored lightbulbs are piloted through the hoops, while someone takes pictures with long exposure settings. The result: an impressive light painting picture!



THE FLYING CITY TRAVELER

The Flying City Traveller is a well known drone wandering around your city looking for people to mess with. Once it finds you, it will follow you around, making funny obnoxious noises. To get rid of it, just stick your tongue out! You can go online to check out the goofy footage the drone has captured, and its path on a map showing how people are networked in a city throughout the week. If you really want to meet the City Traveller, use the app to make it come to you!





THE SECRET LIVES OF DRONES

In a city populated by an ecosystem of peculiar drones, these intriguing entities seem to mostly hangout in places where people are bored, like bus stops. Some of them like to collect shiny trash, others fly in mysterious patterns, while others try to socialize only with certain kinds of people... Spot them at bus stops where their charging stations are and follow them around, you might be surprised!

DRONE NAVIGATOR

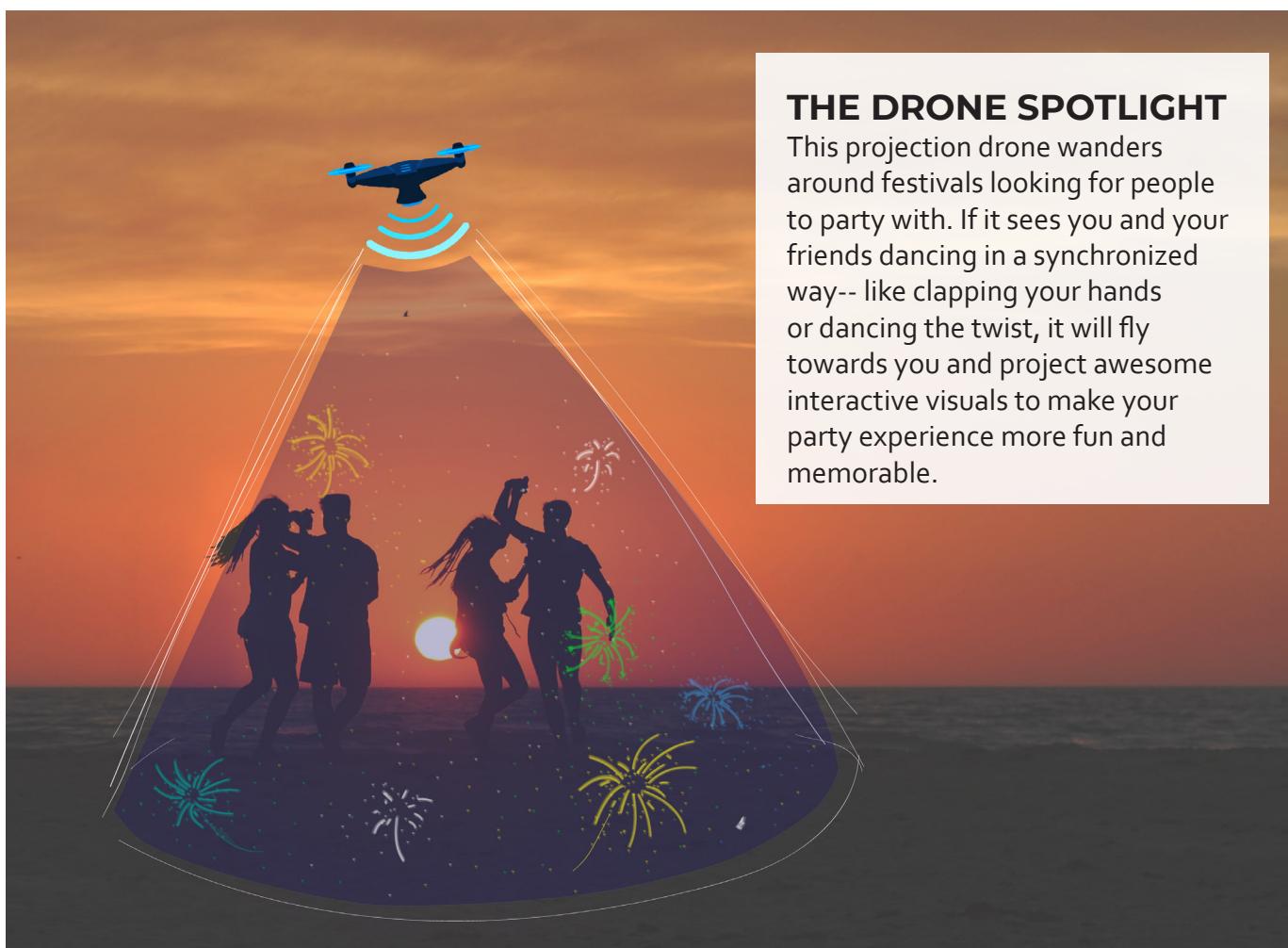
When you feel in a social mood, tell your Drone Navigator to take off so it flies to find another person who also dispatched their drone. When it flies off from your wrist, a GPS is revealed that guides your way to get to know the other person! You can also choose a friend in your contact list who wants to hangout: your drones will guide you to an unexpected location.





SKYSCRAPER COMMUNITY GARDEN

With sustainability in mind, inhabitants of skyscrapers have created community gardens on rooftops. They tend to them by controlling communal drones to plant, water, and harvest the fruits and vegetables. Each condo is responsible for a different part of the garden, but all the food and drones are shared!



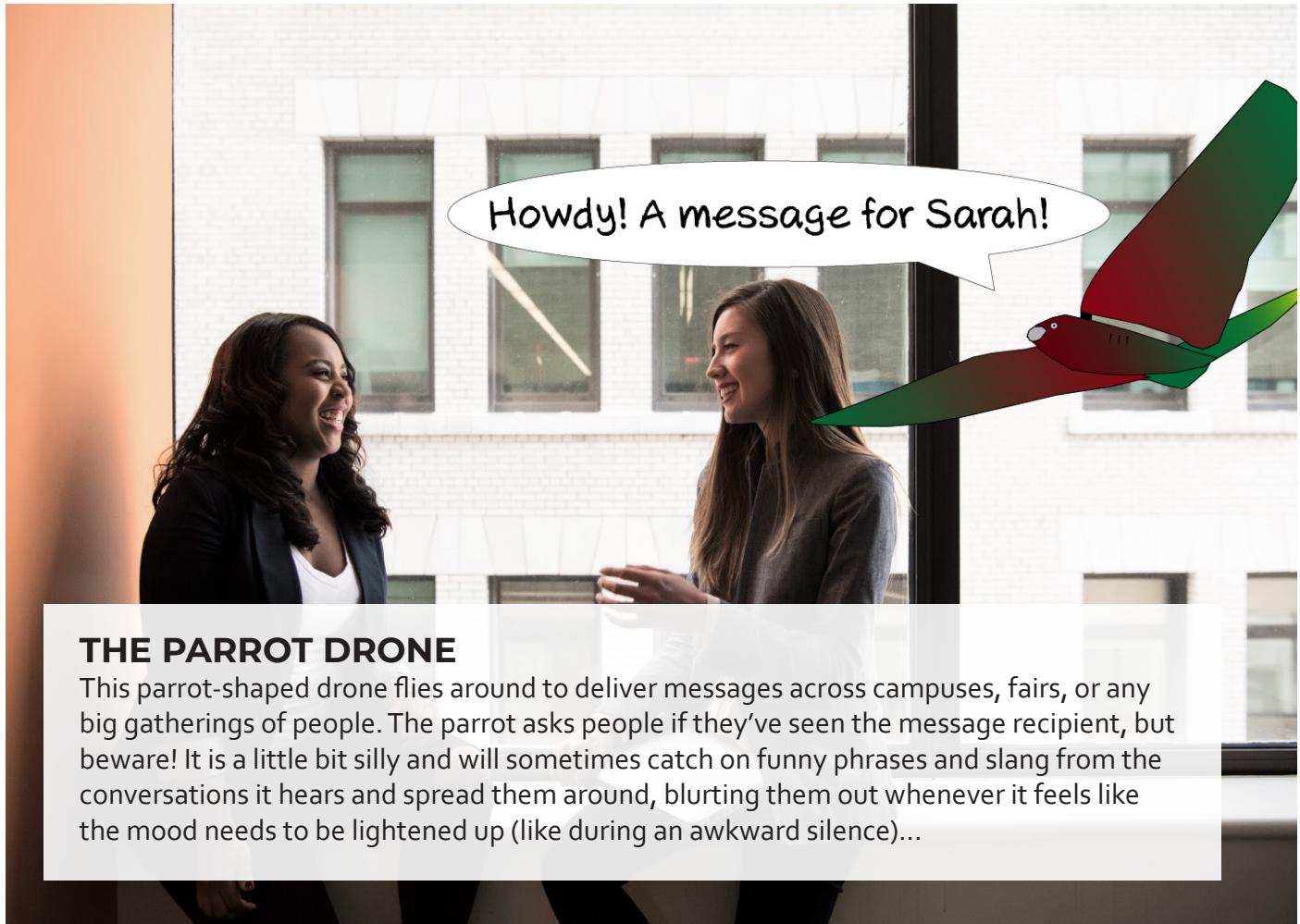
THE DRONE SPOTLIGHT

This projection drone wanders around festivals looking for people to party with. If it sees you and your friends dancing in a synchronized way-- like clapping your hands or dancing the twist, it will fly towards you and project awesome interactive visuals to make your party experience more fun and memorable.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD MAILDRONE

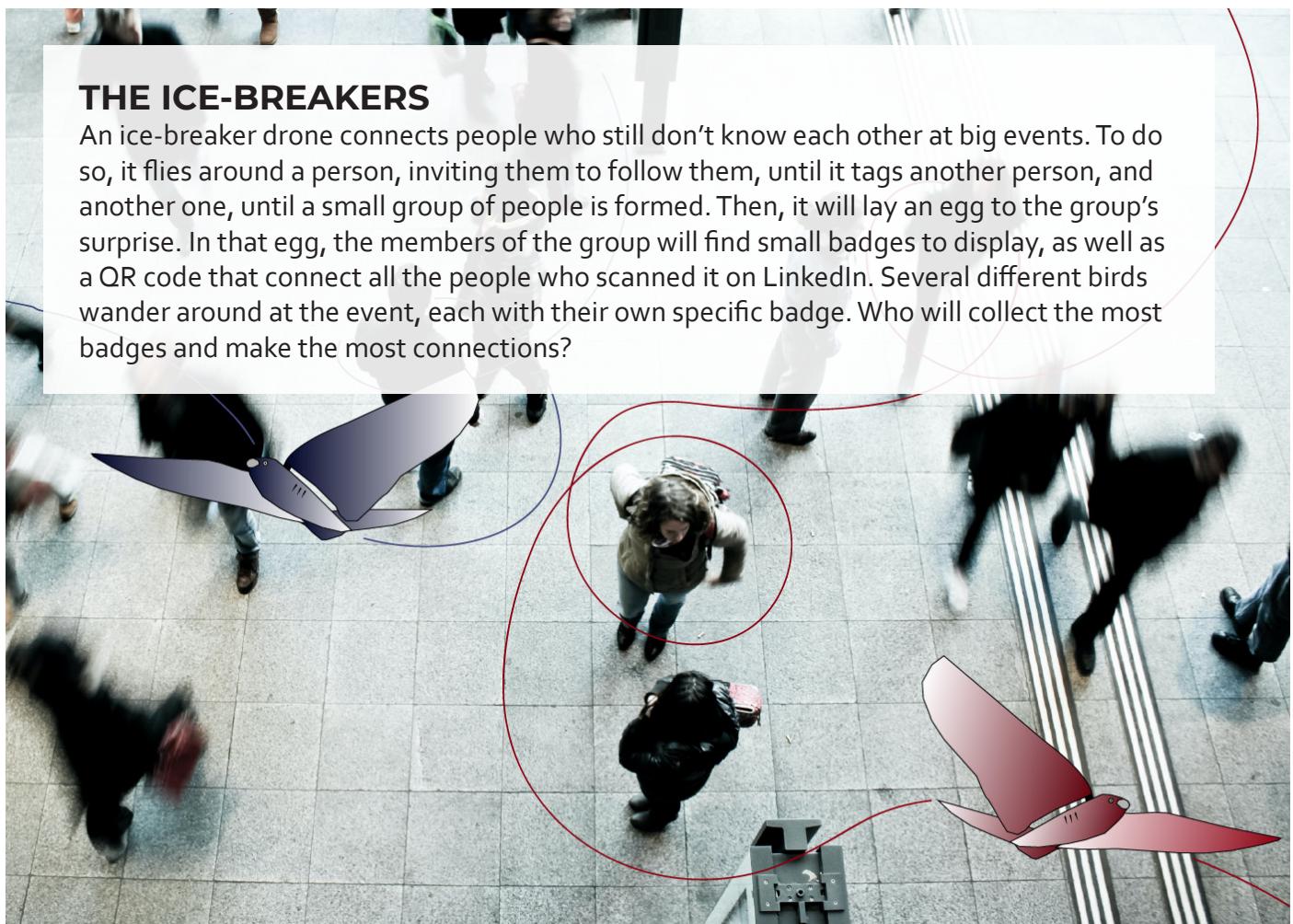
The neighborhood maildrone is like a friendly mailman who ties communities together by delivering messages and happy surprises within closely located houses. It is communally owned, so anyone can request its services-- life if you're missing some yeast or want to donate a basket of cherries you picked from your garden.





THE PARROT DRONE

This parrot-shaped drone flies around to deliver messages across campuses, fairs, or any big gatherings of people. The parrot asks people if they've seen the message recipient, but beware! It is a little bit silly and will sometimes catch on funny phrases and slang from the conversations it hears and spread them around, blurting them out whenever it feels like the mood needs to be lightened up (like during an awkward silence)...



THE ICE-BREAKERS

An ice-breaker drone connects people who still don't know each other at big events. To do so, it flies around a person, inviting them to follow them, until it tags another person, and another one, until a small group of people is formed. Then, it will lay an egg to the group's surprise. In that egg, the members of the group will find small badges to display, as well as a QR code that connect all the people who scanned it on LinkedIn. Several different birds wander around at the event, each with their own specific badge. Who will collect the most badges and make the most connections?

CREDITS

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DRONES AND PEOPLE - OUR FUTURE(S) TOGETHER

Original ideas and design by Alexandra Pometko, Ella Dagan Peled, Ferran Altarriba Bertran, and Katherine Isbister, from the SET Lab at UC Santa Cruz.

