

# From Crisis to Wonderland: Experiential Futures as Physical Narrative

## Abstract

The Crisis - as we understand it - can be seen not just as a crisis of now, but a crisis of imaginations of possible and preferable futures. It is clear that the way things are now is not the way that a feasible, survivable and just future could be. An intricate, interdependent network of crises including the ecological, socioeconomic and political are compounding to show us that the “More of The Same” no longer suffices. We suggest “To hell with more, we want better,” and thus we urge to train our imagination, our ability, capacity and preparedness to think out loud about possible futures.

We propose that experiential futures as physical narrative allow a sensual exploration and immersive experience of possible futures and a discussion of them. The strengths of this approach include the deeper understanding of doing and experience compared to seeing or hearing.

We then investigate attention to detail as part of the immersion and artistic elements, an installation is not just a sketch with a request to the audience to make up the rest, however the aspect of *Mut zur Lücke* allows and encourages further speculation as to the details of that possible future and allow multiple ideas of preferences.

We conclude with an outline of where ongoing research has led us to and the sorts of questions we find most pressing as we deepen our understandings of the strengths of physical narrative for experiential futures.

## Introduction

The Crisis, should we care to call it that, has beset us and is one reaction to an ever growing onslaught of news, interpretation, opinion, propaganda and fake news that fills our media, our minds and our mentality. The Crisis could be one of paralysis, where too many stimuli leave us like a wild animal caught in the headlights of a vehicle thundering towards us. The focus remains on the headlights and the overarching situation remains unknown, our future is being replaced by a collection of focussed dramas and our ability for holistic futures thinking is being destroyed.

Artistic Research, as we undertake it, allows a different, experiential, holistic way of knowing that is not necessarily reduced to simple bullet points, but allows an understanding of a possible future reality in ways that cannot be inserted into a spreadsheet, a soundbite or a manifesto. This paper dives into our holistic, collective process of developing and building experiential futures as physical narratives, an arts based research approach to dealing with the crisis. We also include ideas and insights from our experience with futuring workshops carried out over the past 5 years.

There is a common distrust of imaginations of possible futures. Whether it is the curt “utopian nonsense” dismissal of imagining the way things might be different or the more humorous “People with visions should consult their physician” attributed to German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, the discussion of a future that is anything better than a continuation of what we have now is often unwelcome (Ridley 2011, Albert 2017, Bregman 2017). The dystopian imagination is allowed more easily, often wielded as a warning of change, *Animal Farm* or *Brave New World* come to mind, or just a great place for heroic adventure, whether *Mad Max* or *Elysium*. We know that such simple ideas are illusory; who would have imagined that Dick Tracey's watch phone would be real? But where's my flying car? In contemplating these drifts, we imagine utopia and dystopia as merged states, overlapping desires and problems, challenges and benefits. Utopic for whom? We remember temporary and contingent utopias, whether Bey's (1991) or the dinner party (Andrews 1851). Justice, fairness, equality and other desired social states figure strongly in imaginations. However we must remember, as Mieville (2014) reminds us, that “we live in a utopia: it just isn't ours.”

The politics of prefiguration feature strongly here, as an imagination is just that, while a prefiguration can be so much more. The idea that we can be whatever we have the courage to see is perhaps too utopic for some, creating bubbles of the new in the shell of the old creates space for real, practical utopias to emerge. We are deeply interested in how this allies with prehearsals and other elements of prefiguration (Kuzmanovic et al 2018). We investigate the everyday, the quotidian and the mundane, we ask where do vegetables grow, who bakes bread, how is travel, transport, work and play organised and used, where do we all find meaning in a possible future?

Where is culture in the world? We represent love, laughs, emotional pain, pets, children, the aged, the banalities, entertainment, the underground, teenage angst and perhaps even delinquent geriatrics.

The *Turnton Series* (Time's Up 2016) is a prefiguration of a possible future, with the spectre of ocean level rise and ocean ecosystem collapse mitigated by and adapted to by sociopolitical change. Turnton is an imagination of the everyday in a possible future, made experiential by embodiment as a physical narrative. International organisations, small businesses, public spaces, bars, work and play and love and loss feature spread across spoken plays, newspapers, announcements, installation, models and architecture.

Working with large groups of contributors as a form of community creation, in much the same way that the future will need to be created by us all in some sort of collaborative but also uncoordinated and independent way. There is no artistic director of the future, but we have some artistic direction in Turnton. So there is a disjunction here, between the actualities of a real lived future co-created by us all and the artistic representation and exploration of a possible future created by a few under the guidance of a core (very) few who decide what is in and what is out.

This paper is a discussion of experiential futuring (Candy 2010) in the context of physical narrative. We commence our discussion of the roles of physical narrative for experiential futures by discussing curiosity and the way that the general public can re-connect with curiosity and play in artistic contexts. We then talk about the ways in which the experience of curious explorative play leads to different sorts of knowing and logics of discovery, before heading into the realm of details and the necessity of the *Mut zur Lücke*. We will conclude with a few ideas about where our research is currently developing and what problems we continue to investigate.

## Curiosity

There is much ado. About everything. So much is going on that, on so many levels, we are not paying attention, or as Anna Tsing (2017) describes it, we are losing our *arts of noticing*. Whether it is the attention economies efforts to drag our concentration to itself or our inability to open our focus (Huxley 1954), we are not noticing. In the book *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (Tsing et al. 2017), the editors note that "This book argues that, in order to survive, we need to relearn multiple forms of curiosity. Curiosity is an attunement to multispecies entanglement, complexity and the shimmer all around us." Perhaps we need to move away from focus and practice noticing, appreciate connections above objects, chords above notes.

The mountaineer and ecology pioneer John Muir commented that, "When we try to pick out

anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." It is becoming clearer to us, after decades and more of scientific separation which has lead us to an amazing understanding of many of the aspects of the universe, from DNA to subatomic particles, from permutation group theory to cosmology, that the entanglement is perhaps able to be temporarily combed straight or even cut out, but that in the actual world, these entanglements are inviolate and even more important than the singletons that they connect. Not only does everything move when I pick out one thing, but when I pluck it, then everything resonates and it is this resonance that creates the shimmer that defines the wonder and value of the world. Wonder and awe are two ways to begin to appreciate interconnectedness, as the resonance of everything with everything becomes clear, and this is a way to attract attention and interest (Westling 2016). For it is this resonance that is perhaps the singing of angels.

This scientific-technical intertwinedness has given us polio vaccines and HIV treatment, the world wide web and sex reassignment surgery, a collection of powers unknown to earlier generations and considerably more powerful than we have been culturally trained to wield. The power that has emerged from our reductionist scientific analysis and understanding and the resulting technological developments has created a society that enables so many of us to see the world, investigate the outer realms of learning and not just be focussed on survival. At the same time the powerful plucking that we are undertaking has resonated the world away from the shimmer that it had for so many millennia into a new, differently resonant phase that is threatening to shake the entanglement apart. The temperature forcing of greenhouse gasses, the algal growth forcing of high nutrient run-off, the ecological forcing of massive forest clearance, the thermal forcing of the urban heat islands; all of these are at higher levels of energy and effect than the world has been exposed to outside the extinction impulses of volcanoes and asteroid impacts. The shimmer has become a shaking, the chord a cacophony.

The Crisis, as we are experiencing it and as all analyses of it indicate, is of our own making, where *us* is some version of what used to be called the first world. While indigenous communities have lived for centuries or, in the case of the Australian Aborigines (Pascoe 2014, Gammage 2012), tens of thousands of years in a form of harmony with nature, the process of western agricultural civilisation has turned the fertile crescent to desert, stripped the Greek, Italian and other peninsulas of trees and carried on to set the stage for the ongoing sixth mass extinction. It is becoming clear (Bendell 2018, Extinction Rebellion 2019, Kingsnorth & Hine 2009) that we are undermining the ability of our civilisation to maintain itself. One interpretation of events is that we are in the process of a mass suicide, one in which we are not only taking our own lives, but the lives of so

many other cultures and species at the same time.

Not only are we succumbing to a societal, perhaps even species level slaughter, but suicide levels in specific communities are rising. This is perhaps best seen in the social group most closely dependent upon structured climate, the agricultural communities, with death rates escalating in India, the USA and elsewhere (Behere & Bhise 2009).

Talking about suicide prevention, Louisa Holmes, therapist and supervisor who has worked in mental health and suicide prevention for the last 10 years, commented that “perhaps we are burnt out, detached from meaning and purpose, lacking imagination and curiosity because we are being spoon fed everything.” She could be talking about 21st century society instead of the angst filled teenagers on the suicide support services she supervises. She goes on to speak of compassion fatigue, burnout and boredom that come from a lack of connection, as further factors we see that divide potential lines between suicides and contemporary citizens are slim and translucent.

The methods that she promotes are not always compatible with what we might think of as the usual way to deal with a potential suicide; distraction, compassion, beating around the bush but not mentioning the act itself. One technique that surprises is the diving into an imagination of what the suicide might be like, to delve into the details, bloody and messy and nasty as they might be, in order to allow the caller to reflect upon their ideas and the implications. By thinking through the process of suicide and its repercussions, the counsellors allow a depth of understanding, a removal of the abstract fear and a development of curiosity about what might or might not happen next. And thus the counsellors create curiosity in the potential suicides, that in itself offers something to live for.

In a related vein, Alex and Michaela Davies’ work *Edge of the Present* (Davies & Davies 2019) dealing with suicide pulls out a particular thread. In dealing with their clients, the counsellors cannot offer hope. They cannot say that things are getting better. They might not be. However their techniques rely strongly on the idea that inquisitiveness, curiosity and an interest in finding out what happens next is vital in suicide prevention, tied to being present, open and curious (Pictet et al. 2011).

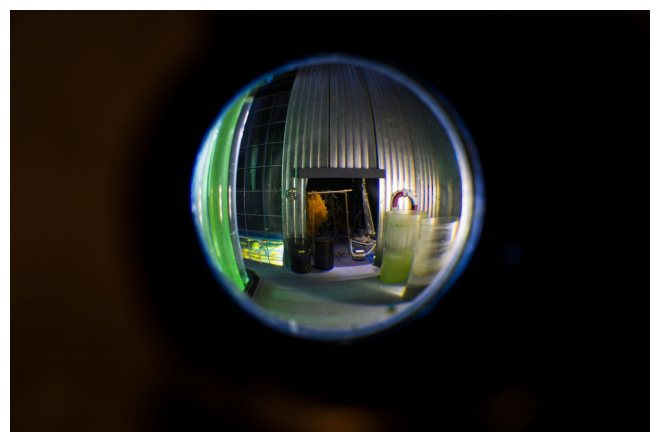
Listening to these ideas, one cannot help but draw comparisons with the malaise of what we see as a contemporary society. We are in a crisis, we all see *Fridays for Future*, *System Change not Climate Change*, *Extinction Rebellion* and their ilk and know that there are a million things going wrong. We are called on to empathise and sympathise and feel compassion for the orangutans of Borneo and other jungles being destroyed for palm oil, the Amazon burning for soy fields and cheap beef, child work, sexual abuse, Chinese slave factories, Thai slave fishing vessels, Pakistani

ship breakers, undocumented labourers in the US and the EU and a myriad others tugging on our heartstrings. If that is not a recipe for compassion fatigue it is hard to know what could be. Debt and the insistent advertised drive to keep up with the Joneses, fear of losing one's toe hold on a career ladder and the necessities of paying a mortgage or artificially heightened rentals, with the gig & platform economies and other rapacious flexibilisations undermining over a century of hard fought labour legislation; can we spell burnout? With filter bubbles reinforcing our belief systems and curtailing the tangential exploration necessary for truly developing curiosity; with children's curiosity hemmed by scholastic expectation, career funnelling and helicopter parenting, universities acting like service providers and employment agencies rather than bastions of learning, knowledge and wisdom; it is hardly surprising we know how to even imagine our own or other's actual curiosity, let alone enjoy it. What if?

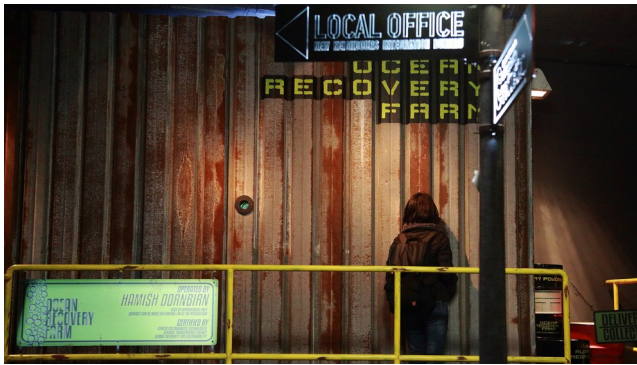
What if we were as curious as a three year old in a garden, and eight year old on a beach, a ten year old getting lost in the school library or their aunt's overstacked bookshelves? Coupling this imagination and openness with a grown ability to reason and moreover, to live the Aristotelian idea that "it is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it" and to imagine possibilities.

The ability to be curious about other worlds, other ways of living, is not one we are trained to develop, outside of the paparazzi pages or superhero films. Since our work with immersive environments and media enriched playspaces (Time's Up 1997, 2003), we have endeavoured to motivate adults to playfully explore. The Turnton series (Time's Up 2016) builds upon these developments to encourage visitors to explore a possible future, to be inquisitive about what happens next. An *experiential future* (Candy 2010, 2019) is an embodiment of a possible future that can be not only seen and contemplated but directly experienced. In this immersive experience, we notice an implicit and almost unavoidable creation of curiosity.

While we cannot explore all our techniques here, one technique that we have found to be of value here is the inclusion of hidden tracks, easter eggs and peepholes. The clearest technique is the peephole: it asks the visitor to have a look inside or through somethings, perhaps a bit less obvious than an actual peephole with a looking glass to look through, perhaps not. The glass versions used in the front wall of the *Ocean Recovery Farm* in *Turnton Docklands*, round black cutouts with flickering lights emanating from



behind, invited a look into a clearly defined peephole. In this the visitors could see a model of the interior of the *Ocean Recovery Farm*, with tanks of model seaweed growing and algae reactors bubbling, a service ship visible outside the door and other accessories for an ocean recovery farm. Similar peepholes were used in the *Microplastic Reduction Lab*, a reversed door peephole giving a fish-eye view of the interior of the lab.



A less clear form of peephole is the invitation to look through something that appears to be a barrier. The *Travel and Thrive Without Borders* kiosk was closed, with its operating hours written on the facade and the rolling window shades down. Between the slats of the shade, the visitor could perceive lights and, if they lent in to look where they should not look in real life, they could peer through the slats to see a screen showing positions vacant in the *TTWB* organisation and a screen showing ships tracks in the *Cargotopia* (Reichl & Olgac 2018) clean cargo speculation.

There is something more comprehensible about the things that we find out for ourselves, along the lines of “I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.” This ranges from the discoveries of scientists about how the world works, the inner structure of an abstract mathematical object or the reasons our friends were acting so strangely. Curiosity and discovery are self-reinforcing behaviours. Damon Gameau (2019), referencing psychologist Renee Lertzman, speaks of the effects of constant negatively charged information that we are exposed to and the way that is neurobiologically overrides our capacity for creative thinking and problem solving. By creating the possibility for curiosity to be lived and some connections to be discovered, we begin to crack the barrier that traps us in a feeling of helpless crisis.

## Logics and ways of knowing

*Futuring* is an annoying neologism, a word that seems to promise much but might deliver little. In its most banal form, futuring is predictions about how the future will be, delivered with some kind of authority, whether academic, political, economic or military. While such proclamations can be interesting, they are too often misused to create either financial interest or political fear, emotions which allow the capture of power and influence and advantage for those who can ride the waves they have set in motion. A more subtle understanding of futuring leads us to forecasts and scenarios, with experts in collaboration investigating how things might develop and creating

multiple scenarios. They are then able to discuss these in collaboration with the organisation concerned in order to plan for demographic changes, technological development, economic turbulence or any of the other factors that can influence the behaviour of that organisation. Whether the oil company Shell or a university, the health department of a small nation or a farmers' cooperative, being aware of multiple possible near future changes and planning for their eventuation is a form of future preparedness. An organisation can only prepare for possible futures that it can imagine. But like the *Nothing can Surprise Us* exercises of the former Yugoslavia (Kuzmanovic & Gaffney 2016), while they prepared for all sorts of invasions from without, Yugoslavia was not prepared to be torn asunder from within.

As Jim Dator (1995) says, “Any useful idea about the futures should appear to be ridiculous” and we have found this to be perhaps true with developments such as the mobile telephone or the Trump administration unimaginable only a short time before they became the new normal. We take the idea of futuring to be a form of “Thinking out loud about possible futures” and prefer to undertake these actions in groups open to see where they will end up. While the workshops and exercises we undertake are exactly choreographed as to what processes will be gone through, we are very indeterminate about where the discussions, the “thinking out loud” can go. Collaborative, open futuring creates surprises. We aim to enable collaborative thinking, a cognitive process in a group that surpasses the imaginations, understandings and knowledges of any one person in the room. One of the principal goals of the process is to create an environment and a mind set where thinking about the future is fun and even funny, where it becomes clear that the future is a place where good and interesting things can happen. Rosa and Bauer’s ideas of resonances (Rosa 2016, Bauer 2007) come to bear here where resonances stimulate our reward systems as opposed to the competitive reward systems that neoliberal individualism stimulates and stipulates. Collaborative thinking out loud is a good example of lived resonance, as the network of discussed ideas and possibilities begin to reinforce one another and shimmer to a deeper level of collaborative understanding. We aim to create a form of *Lust auf Zukunft*, an enjoyable expectation that the future is open, adaptable and worth aiming for. We also remind participants that all ideas of the future are, by definition, wrong and that it is okay to be wrong. Those who dismiss other's hopes for the future are doing it unfairly, as every idea is equally incorrect but equally valuable. Only by consciously imagining possible futures will we end up in a place where we can begin to imagine preferable futures and work towards them. A widespread futures literacy will enable us to more generally speak of preferred futures and to thus to work towards ideas of a good life for all.

One of our general policies in a workshop is that, as far as the time together is concerned, all the



knowledge we need is in the room. There is enough expertise. We say this for two reasons. One is that, by the nature of the self selection process for a workshop, people with interest will participate and will be knowledgeable about what the theme(s) of the activity are. Secondly, we avoid trying to determine too many high level details, as if we were some kind of experts on international finance and development. Rather, we take the rough schematics of a possible future scenario and dive down into the quotidian details of how it will play out for the 99%, for those of us who are, in fact, in the room. For we are all, to a great degree, the world's foremost experts on our own everyday lives.

The *Arts of Futuring* can be seen and discussed as forms of axiomatic exploration, similar to deductive philosophy, mathematics and other inferential research methodologies. Given our understanding of the current world, the ongoing developments and some perhaps almost arbitrary choices about settings, what are the implications in a week, a year, a decade? We collectively imagine and entertain possible futures, we use collective knowledge in order to draw out the implications from changes and the implications of the implications. With reinforcing tendencies, surprise factors and the relentless passage of time, certain things arise. These are tempered with choice based upon preferences and interests, akin to choice about mathematical aesthetics (Boykett 2010) and other non objective decisions. In the process of creating a future and the effort of determining its artistic value and whether and to what extent we can be bothered making it, we begin to make decisions about whether it is worth it. And thus we reflect on the kind of future we could be bothered living in. Because this process is driven by internal logics as well as aesthetic desire, we see it as a form of arts based research.

By creating experiential futures as a physical narrative that explores the lived experience of everyday people in everyday futures. These experiential, physical narratives unite the properties of experiential futures and physical narratives (Candy & Dunagan 2017, Time's Up 2013). We are building models of possible futures as experiences, an arts based research process that involves a lot of intuition and subjectivity along with discipline, so as not to fall into stereotypical or standard ideas about possible futures (see Dator above).

There is the whole artistic problem of creating a future that is comfortable shoes and lots of time spent drinking tea and reading books, or any other comfortable, realistic life, that is not about dealing with "interesting times" in some heroic adventurous future story. Like creating a film about Jim Morrison, there is a lot of effort spent talking about the rock star and very little about the tedium and normalcy of a lot of reading, a lot of writing, a lot of everyday life. To what extent are we happy telling stories, creating physical narratives of the mundane, the quotidian, when people want stories about the exceptional? Perhaps there is a Proustian bargain here, to explore the

everyday and the apparently trivial. For it is like the joke about the husband happy to make the big decisions, politics and the like, while his wife makes the little ones, like jobs and everyday life; the most important areas of our life are most directly shaped by our decisions in everyday life. This is an area where every one of us is an expert and where our morality and ethics rebound on us most directly. The crisis has us thinking about the future as flooded coasts and heatwaves, but also retirement planning, possible pets and mortgages, about celebrations and anniversaries, for this is where we create the meaning in our lives. The disjunction between our imaginations of The Future writ large and the actual future we think we will live in are immense (Toffler 1993). Bridging this gap between the large scale changes underway and their implications for everyday life, the interplay between these and the emerging resonant shimmering between connections everyday is the field we endeavour to explore. This is perhaps the most fundamental way of knowing, the way we design and create our everyday, away from the emotional highpoints of adventure. So here we aim to elucidate the details of possible futures and make them experiential, an embodiment of a possible revolution of everyday life.

As we discussed above, it is this shimmering resonance of the interconnectedness of everything that brings our worlds to life. When Hartwood Rosa (2016) talks of *Resonances* as a tool to deal with the unflinching acceleration of the world, perhaps this is the field he is investigating. Not the resonances of exact replicas moving and harmonising in synchronicity, rather the resonances of a part with another part, the harmonic resonances of shared experience from one father to another despite their cultural and linguistic differences, the resonances of food, laughter or discovery that transcend the differences that are all too heavily shored up in the identity bases of contemporary commercialisation and consumerism. The resonances of the surface of a lake where the shimmer of ripples responds to localised differences across distant similarities (Gooley 2016) indicate something more interesting than the large scale resonance of swells crashing into the shore across a homogeneous sea. For this large scale resonance is the resonance of marching boots and perhaps even fascism (Thomä 2016) while we consciously and determinedly stick with the resonances of the partial with the particular, the resonances of understanding across diversity.

We utilise resonance as an invitation, and the variety of offered resonances corresponds to the variety of invitations that we wish to make. A visitor is attracted by an object in space, approaches and interacts, gaining new aspects of that object outside the direct resonance that it enticed them with. These new factors create new possibilities for resonance, both with other objects and systems in the space as well as narratives, personalities and understandings of a possible future. With this gentle, paced growing of resonant possibilities, the visitor is invited to find new and deeper

imaginations of the possible future.

## Levels of Detail, authenticity, the Gap

It is known in the area of narratology that real stories are often far too fantastic, that good stories contain narratives truths that cannot or only rarely happen in real life, and real life contains far too many synchronicities to be believable as a story. We have come to realise and recognise authenticity as problematic. The general public do not know what a bank heist actually looks like, or the inside of an algal harvesting plant, but we all do have ideas from media that can be used to make the experience intelligible to the audience. It is more important to invite the visitor to an exhibition into an interaction by presenting them with a clear and recognisable situation with which they can readily relate. The invitation can be as important as the content, for if the visitor does not deviate from their path past the objects, they will pass by and experience nothing. In the resulting experience we then embed further avenues and indicators that connect to other objects and sub-situations within the environment, encouraging the visitor, now that they have accepted one invitation, to indulge in a deeper interaction, to move to and enjoy another.

In these moments of interaction, we have observed to be fundamental that the visitor does not encounter a barrier in the level of detail, that there is a solid and well worked out, well built object, media and interaction. This installative robustness encourages play as the visitor finds themselves on solid ground, able to trust the world in which they find themselves. We have come to refer to these as the *pillars* of an installation, the solid, well designed, well built foundations that hold the experience up like the roof of the Parthenon. It is, however, impossible to build a complete and immersive, borderless experience, a copy of an existing or imagined reality, and it is not welcome. The two and a half dimensional feeling of the *Medusa Bar* in *Turnton Docklands*, with furniture built in flat surfaces with white pencil lines was as convincing as a real wooden bar filled with authentic detail could have been. However the clear investment of the artists of the space was apparent and invited and supported the audience to similarly invest time and effort. When picking up the 32 pages of the *Turnton Gazette*, the reader was invited to read as deeply as they wished, as the newspaper was complete from the date to the crossword puzzle, with cartoons, obituaries, culture, news and opinion. There are myriad such examples of deeply detailed work in the environment.

However, immediately adjacent to these detailed objects and situations were massive gaps. In the *Medusa Bar* there was no mention of currency, no prices. The only countries mentioned in the entire installation were Ghana and the Peoples' Republic of Canada. These and many other



conscious omissions, from place to race, religious affiliation and political structures were developed out for a number of reasons, but mostly the gaps were there in order to enable and encourage the visitors to base their understandings of the world upon some of their own ideas without contradiction, to encourage discussions around these themes. In these cases, we were interested in leaving the question as to the existence of monetary union in the EU open, which the use of the Euro, the Guilder or the Catalan Peseta would have destroyed. We were moreover interested in leaving the question of the existence of the European Union itself open, or whether it had expanded or contracted, but also questions of cryptocurrencies, alternative currencies such as time dollars or the corporate currencies such as the Libra. This we have termed the *Mut zur Lücke*, a German expression that literally means “The courage of the gap” and reminds us that it is not important to know or define everything, but to allow uncertainty to remain.

The worlds which we create and make experiential are not homogeneous. Like our world, they are filled with differences and variation, with local flavour amidst globalised culture. It has been a challenge and will continue to be, to bridge the gap between the desire for an authored, artistically coherent world and the fact that any realistic image of a possible future may and must include

incoherencies and contradictions. One of the ways that we have approached this is to involve a huge spectrum of contributors. The world we inhabit and will continue to inhabit is not built in a top down fashion, but bottom up, with all of the chaotic, unpredictable, surprising, liberating happenings that make this world and hopefully any future world a vibrant, thriving place to live.

In this we are confronted with an array of questions, like how to include other voices, the rebel, the insurrection, the preferences for other, how to flirt, to fall out of love, to seek revenge for apparent or perceived nastiness? Who are the Dieselpunks of a solarpunk future? The smart-arse Störfaktor people? We require a spectrum of persons and personalities, for it is important and supportive when the visitor to the experiential future can recognise themselves in one or other of the characters, to be able to slip into a possible future and imagine themselves in a world that is familiar yet new.

For it is not the job of an everyday futurist to say how the world should be, for such single visions lead to the type of Utopia that Mieville mentions, that Pinochet and Mao have demonstrated the folly of. While we cannot build a utopia for all, perhaps we can have something utopic for many. As Oscar Wilde says, a map without Utopia is not a map worth using, as a decision that has an orientation towards what would be utopic, towards a better, fairer, world is not a decision that is being well made. Inclusive Futuring is a method to integrate many perspectives, and only a widespread futures literacy (Miller 2007, 2011) can afford us this apparent luxury. For it is not a luxury, but a necessity, if we are to collaborate in avoiding a crisis and creating the world in which we want to live.

## **Conclusion and Further Work**

We are living in a time that seems to be filled with crises, one piling atop the last until the whole crisis edifice seems ready to topple on us all. We stand, eyes aghast, like a wombat caught in the headlights unable to look away, paralysed into inaction. We contend that the actual crisis that has befallen us, as a society, is the crisis of the imagination. On one side we cannot imagine that these looming crises will actually arrive (climate change weather caused famines and societal breakdown) and we cannot imagine anything other than a broad stroke dystopia if we avoid it (a drastic reduction in cheap flights or consumer goods).

We have found that the creation of experiential futures in the form of physical narratives lends itself to breaking down some of this crises. The everyday life of people in a climate and system changed world, as we have been exploring over the past few years, represented not as a climate fiction storyline but embedded into an experiential, encompassing physical situation, seems to allow other ways of knowing to emerge.

The creation of large scale immersive installations of this nature, like the creation of the actual future, is a work of massive collaborative effort. Like the way of the real world, the ways of living in a possible future are varied and personal. Through collaboration and effort, we also see the question of levels of detail arise and can report that on one hand, a high level of attention to detail enables the visitors to immerse themselves deeply and well in the world, while semantically adjacent gaps are unproblematic, allowing each and every visitor to imagine and discuss the details as they see fit.

One of our objectives is to enable, enhance and elucidate curiosity in the visitors. A lack of curiosity can be perceived in many corners and is possibly a fundamental problem with the world that is enabling many of our crises, especially the crisis of imagination.

Our ongoing work revolves around looking at what we have discovered in the existing series of works and to research the possibilities that arise. As we are investigating ways of making whole future scenarios experiential in physical space, we see the following directions as valuable for further work.

- The creation of communication tools that encompass futures speculations and scenario development for various age groups, interest levels and time spans. We have had good experiences with groups from school children to pensioners, but have seen that the spectrum of ways to reach these people is much broader than our existing expertises.
- The flow of people in space. As we aim to enable curiosity, we need to enable and support visitors in finding things that pique their curiosity initially and then opening up new ways of looking at other elements on the space based upon what they have discovered.
- The use of game, theatre and film techniques that are known to work, applied to physical narratives. We have made use of techniques such as the establishing shot, the recurrence of objects and elements, dynamic game sound and know that there are many powerful techniques that can be re-used to create powerful experiences.
- Awe and similar feelings as a way in to the world. We have observed that the feeling of being in a special space heightens the attentions of the visitors and brings them to look, feel and think more closely and fully.
- Trust, immersion, letting go, suspension of disbelief as techniques for visitors to fall into a more playful, exploratory and imaginative state of being.
- Entry, Exit and attention guidance are strong questions, as the visitors are relatively free to move within the space and to move as they wish. The arrangement of elements in space, the creation of sightlines, proximities, implied and explicit choreographies, distractions, detours,

hidden tracks, peepholes, wormholes, dead ends and seclusions all allow the visitor to dive deeper and playfully explore the environments more.

- Techniques to get feedback, whether actively or passively, from visitors to an experiential future. While we often act as anthropologists observing the visitors in the designed space, we also end up in conversations and discussions with visitors. Structuring feedback in order to find out important and relevant aspects for future iterations.

As we keep falling into new futures, with every hour, day, year and decade being a bit further along, we know that all visions of the future were wrong. They are both more quotidian and more unbelievable that we ever could have expected. As will our future be. Our future is not decided elsewhere, not can we completely determine it. But we can have *Lust auf Zukunft* and we can be engaged in making those decisions and plans that edge us, slowly but surely, towards favoured futures. Only by imagining possibilities of the world we want to live in and thus being aware that there are choices to be made, can we all help move towards a preferred future. One for all of us, not just a select few.

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