



## **Time's Up**

Labor zur Schaffung experimenteller Situationen

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A Future Docking Station:

# **TURNTON DOCKLANDS 2047**



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## ZERO: SYNOPSIS

We think ahead from the world of today to imagine how things could be in 30 years, so that, despite climate change, species die-offs and all the rest of it, you can still summon up the lust for life in the future. *\*Time's Up\** shows how it's done—in full cognizance of the demonstration's incompleteness—in a *\*physical narrative\** set in real space in the lower level of Linz's Lentos Art Museum, a walk-through account of life in 2047 in the Docklands neighbourhood of a fictional coastal town called Turnton.



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## ONE: TURBULENCE

It's been ages since life was boring; in fact, I can't recall the likes of the turbulence we're experiencing now. Crises of all kinds are rocking the mental and material foundations of existence, mainstays that most of us, and even entire societies, had secretly believed to be unsinkable. What certainly has survived intact—for the moment and the foreseeable future, apparently—is the tossed-off platitude to the tune of "unable to cope any more." Yeah, we're beset by a crisis all right, and not just one. There's no need to list them all. Values are tottering, canons collapsing; the power of doctrines and norms is on the wane. Election results in many countries yield a picture of two forces of approximately equal strength pulling in opposite directions. We live in very interesting times, stretched to breaking point. Becoming a doom-and-gloomer is the easiest thing in the world right now.

## TWO: FEAR AND HOPE

On the stock exchange of future expectations the Apocalypse closes at a new record high almost every day. The fear-fueled media stoke up the climate and further satiate their breeding stock by disseminating even more dread. In this fertile soil, the fragile shoots of hopeful images of the future can flourish only with the help of tender loving care and cultivation, and can grow into irresistible dreams, visions and blueprints of a transformed, responsible, mature international society and global economy. Achieving this calls for the right dreamcatchers and tools to make the future into what it used to be not so very long ago: not a threat but a promise. And what this takes is, above all, hope. Action-inspiring hope, as Rebecca Solnit described it in *\*Hope in the Dark\**: "Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope."

## THREE: THE FUTURES

Painting a picture of The Future as such is an awe-inducing task. But since awe is more conducive to dumbfoundedness than to doing something, it's considerably easier and more promising to keep several intellectual options open instead and conceive of the future in plural rather than singular terms. Thus, as futures. Futures are more tangible, more concrete, simpler to manage with respect to the concept and the design, and implementing them is a lot less arduous. After all, it makes it easier to get them off to a good start in life by making small but doable changes in one's everyday life without having to capitulate in the face of the sheer dimensions of everything that has to be changed and necessarily conceding that one individual's contribution ultimately doesn't amount to a hill of beans.

## FOUR: FUTURES THAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED

*\*Futuring\** is the discipline of conceiving futures and enabling them to emerge vividly before one's inner eye. This does not necessarily demand specialist knowledge that can be acquired from textbooks; to a far greater extent, you have to be vitally interested in the world in the broadest sense. And it takes an approximate concept of that future, a concept that combines empiricism with speculation and imagination. And it begins with the simple yet momentous recognition that the future starts now. How we think and what we do today is what the future will produce. That a modicum of pathos resonates in the ever-more-frequently posed question of whether the decisions we make are good for our grandchildren does nothing to diminish its justifiability. In any case, what is absolutely undisputable is that nothing happens on its own. There's no effect without a cause..

## FIVE: OUR ONLY CHANCE

A future world free of crises to as great an extent as possible needs a cause, many causes, changes on multiple levels, large and small. The first of these levels is the individual and, subsequently, the collective consciousness. Every thought makes a difference, at least potentially. Many small differences make a somewhat larger one. And this larger difference is what will have to be brought about if the scenarios of hope are to become reality in this world we live in.

So what futures are we implementing if we change our ways? Ideally those that have resulted from people looking back at the way things were in the 2010s and early 2020s and having concluded that "change was our only chance"—words that became Turnton Docklands' credo.



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## SIX: PHYSICAL NARRATIVES

Since 2007—thus for ten years now—\*Time's Up\* has been engaged in a special form of storytelling: designing and constructing walk-through accounts called \*physical narratives\*. These resemble film sets or scenery on the stage of a theater; the difference is that they entail neither a cast of actors nor any other personnel physically present. Instead, visitors encounter spaces designed with great attention to detail and containing traces of fictitious characters amidst an ensemble of props, objects and media—news-papers, radio or TV shows “that happen to be playing,” letters, diaries etc. Everything on hand is meant to be touched and scrutinized. Every element is a more or less important piece of a jigsaw puzzle that visitors assemble in their minds. The pieces form a picture and tell a story (though perhaps not always the one rendered by \*Time's Up\*). In this sense, the settings for display and narrative configured by \*Time's Up\* have additional spatial dimensions in that they are—or mentally endow—individualized spaces for play and interpretation.

\*Time's Up's\* first \*physical narrative\* told a crime story in \*film noir\* style. Over the years, future scenarios (in a literal sense) have become the collective's material of choice—spaces in which a depiction of the future carefully selected from among many such futures becomes a reality that can be experienced, literally walked through. Futuristic \*physical narratives\* impart a sensory impression of which actions have to be taken now as the motive forces that ultimately effect the living conditions of a life worth living, and thus function as mental tools for change.

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## SEVEN: LOOKING STRAIGHT INTO THE EYE OF WHAT'S PROBABLE

Painting pictures of positive futures doesn't mean donning rose-tinted spectacles or simply denying inconvenient truths. Global warming of at least two degrees and all its ecological and social consequences are happening now and you can't just tune them out to make them go away. But this could constitute the point of departure for an intellectual exercise underpinned by plenty of facts for the development of the strategies that in 30 years humankind will have used to make the best of the situation prevailing in 2017. In the vision of the future that \*Time's Up\* is positing for 2047, the ecosystem has become unhinged and

everyday life worldwide is plagued by the catastrophic long-term consequences of environmental pollution. Toxic waste and contaminants poison lands and waters. Entire biospheres have collapsed; huge areas of the oceans are dead zones. Due to global warming, which humankind, hampered by political considerations, only went through the motions of combating until the mid-2020s, meteorological extremes had become everyday occurrences. Droughts, flooding and sea-level rise made numerous regions and coastal areas uninhabitable.

Those are the external facts and circumstances that also characterize life in Turnton, an unspecified seaside town whose Docklands neighbourhood, on the occasion of the 2017 Ars Electronica Festival, is being temporarily installed in the lower level of the LENTOS Art Museum in the form of a harbor-quarter market square, a waterfront bar, and the port authority's offices.



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## EIGHT: ANOTHER WORLD WAS POSSIBLE

The ecological dystopia of Turnton 2047, however, is juxtaposed to a socio-economic utopia that is gradually revealed in detail to sufficiently inquisitive visitors to the Turnton Docklands. Neoliberalism is history, the growth mantra has been hushed, and unbridled free trade is a thing of the past. What has instead become reality is what, for decades, had been dismissed as politically, economically or technologically unfeasible and ridiculed as naive.

The revolution in raw materials, energy and transportation has taken off so dynamically that there's no stopping it anymore. Under the stewardship of the \*General Authority for Sustainability\*, the sustainable economy of 2047 serves the common good. The culture of everyday life, production and commerce are obliged to conserve nature, minimize the use of resources and uphold human rights. The mission of the \*Global Transparency Agency\* is to see to it that they stay the course, while the \*Center for Advanced Technologies\* makes the corresponding hardware and software available, as well as those that humankind can use to support the ecosystem's gradual regeneration.

In Turnton this is being done, among others, by one of many \*Networked Oceanic Society Laboratories\*. The voracious undersea organisms bred there decimate the plastic particles polluting the seas. Algae farmer Hamish Dornbirn is looking forward to seeing the last of them; the proprietor of the \*Ocean Recovery Farm\* on the Turnton coast has pioneered the gentle clean-up of polluted beaches and bodies of water.



## **NINE: MIGRATION MANAGEMENT 2047**

Climate-driven migration has long since lost its capacity to frighten. People upping sticks and making a transcontinental or intercontinental move has become a normal social reality that is well-organized by \*Travel without Borders\* and the \*New Neighbour Integration Bureau\*. Now cultural diversity is accounted for on the asset side of the balance sheet. Among the many ways that esteem for new neighbours is manifested in Turnton is the upcoming several-day art and culture festival. \*Celebrating the strength of diversity\* is the theme of this event marking the 20th anniversary of the local \*New Neighbour Integration Bureau\*.

Round number anniversaries aren't the only reason to throw a party. In collaboration with \*Travel without Borders\* the bureau has just received official authorization to convert empty warehouses into public housing, a decision that delights NNIB spokesman Olufemi Badour. Following the necessary renovations, these facilities will provide accommodation for a group of new arrivals who have had to be evacuated from their homeland on a group of islands in the Atlantic.



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## **TEN: NICE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

The chief protagonist of one of Turnton's migratory success stories is Fenfang Lin. One day the marine biologist had had enough of lecture halls and labs, and traded in her academic career for a bar called \*Medusa\*, the hub and heart of the harbor district. Her extensive knowledge of marine flora and fauna serves her well here. In the galley of \*Medusa\* she prepares fancy snacks and creative drinks from everything that recovery farmer Dornbirn harvests in the coastal waters. Lin's ties to him are of a commercial as well as a romantic nature. She has also become strong friends with harbor coordinator Margaret Bloomenfeld, who has made the Medusa her favorite watering hole. Other regulars are the local plant pollinator—she's carrying on the work of her natural counterparts, who unfortunately are almost extinct—and Trashy, The Garbage Baron, who, besides operating the local Upcycling Center, is proprietor of the region's \*Recycled Goods Malls\*, alternative shopping centers purveying an assortment of ecological, fair-trade merchandise. What do you say to that? Sold!

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## **TIME'S UP BIOGRAPHY**

Time's Up (AT), founded in 1996 and anchored at Linz Harbor in Upper Austria, endeavors to expand the conventionally construed boundaries delineating art, technology, science and entertainment, and to dovetail those disciplines. As a lab for the creation of experimental situations, Time's Up models realities borrowed from everyday life and merges them with possible future scenarios to yield narratives that can be experienced haptically, narratives that, in the form of transmedia installations, invite those perusing them to engage in active exploration. For additional information about past and present Time's Up activities, research processes and outcomes, go to <http://www.timesup.org>.