REMIX UTOPIA: ELEVEN PROPOSITIONS ON DESIGN AND SOCIAL FANTASY

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Figure 1: Still from Melancholia (2011) by Lars von Trier

"DYSTOPIAN FICTION'S POPULARITY IS A WARNING SIGN FOR THE FUTURE" worries renowned author and cultural critic Naomi Klein (2014a). For Klein, human made climate change does not call for adaptation or mitigation; it is a civilizational wake-up call. Confronting the apocalypse is not about "changing light bulbs" - it is about change, about transforming the "social system" causing human extinction, about revolting against capitalism (2014b). Dystopian scenarios do not leave much scope for this. In the face of climatic catastrophe, sci-fi authors tend to affirm the inevitable, leaving room only for either apathy or individualist survivalism, stockpiling food and fuel. Climatic change may be a civilizational wake-up call, one of several possible dystopian futures. How do we as a species confront the threat of global population growth and food production collapsing? Of asteroids and comets smashing into Earth? Of the aging sun inevitably eating its planets? Saving humanity is certainly not about changing light bulbs or other technical fixes. "Dad says that there is nothing to do" the frightened child resigns, as apocalypse is fast approaching in the shape of the planet Melancholia, set on its predestined course towards Earth. In von Trier's film a dramatic galactic dance of death begins when a new solar system emerges in the dark night sky. The Antares system, with its orbiting planet Melancholia, is on its course towards Earth, destined to pass right in front of Justine and her family shortly after her wedding, presenting them with the "most beautiful sight ever". As Melancholia approaches, Justine falls into a melancholic mood, anticipating things to come. As the deadly dance of the celestial bodies unfold, the red star Antares is eclipsed by the planet revolving around it. Melancholia is drawn into orbit by the gravity of Earth and after days of hope and despair it becomes evident that the blue planet Melancholia will collide with the equally blue planet Earth. In the opening and closing sequences of

the film Gaia and Melancholia melt together, leaving no room for doubt that life as we know it will be destroyed. Still Justine comforts the child. "If your daddy says this, then he has forgotten something. He has forgotten about the magic cave." And without hesitation she walks off to the woods together with the child, to build a magic cave that might save them from their destined demise. With this contribution we attempt to build "a magic cave", a blend of utopian-speculative-exploration strategies that deploy an active approach to collaborative future-making. Recognizing that our future may be lost, but that many prospects (Latour 2010: 485) are there to be explored, we combine Latour's compositionist perspective and Dunne & Raby's speculative way of imagining preferable futures (2013) with Ernst Bloch's philosophy of concrete utopias as immanent and open elements of the real existing world (1959). In doing this we ground our argument on speculation as well as materialised design projects realised by the authors or in close collaboration with them.

HOW DO WE EXPLORE FUTURE PROSPECTS IN THE SHADOW OF EXTINCTION? According to Fry (2009) the impending extinction of humankind calls for "redirective practices" - "redirection demands design but design rethought and remade" (Fry 2009: 118). For Fry the evolutionary history of mankind is filled with potentials for "futuring" - materials for "the designer as a redirective practitioner" (ibid. 172). Yet he brutally dismisses any kind of utopian speculation, for "visions without means are not what is needed" (ibid. 125). But what if speculative utopianism could be one of the means used for redirective practices? Speculative thinking as an experimenting tool for exploring the gap between the plausible and the possible has been a powerful tool for science fiction writers seeking to explore the entanglement of biologies, technologies, psychologies, culture, politics and social life. Aldiss (1996: v-vii) discusses how he used the "digestive tract" method to dramatise, radicalise and explore the workings out of the Gaia hypothesis by densifying and radicalising its elements. In Helliconia (Aldiss 1996), humans from earth travel to a planet close to the red star Antares to discover a world populated with humanoids and other creatures adapting their physical design to the changing environment. Helliconia (as the planet is named) changes its climate as an effect of its asymmetrical orbit. As Helliconia orbits its two suns, climate changes, civilizations rise and fall and even the biological make-up of the inhabitants of the planet transform. But instead of reverting to "Western philosophy's most cherished trope" of resigning "human societies" [to play] the role of the dumb object while nature has unexpectedly taken on that of the active subject" (Latour 2014: 12), Aldiss lets the planet, its humanoids and cohabitant species unfold their dance of life in a world in which they "share agency with [...] subjects that have also lost their autonomy" (ibid. 5): Helliconia provides an experimental ecology for addressing the prospects of humankind within a non-anthropentic world. On Helliconia the planet is just as important an agent as any of the species inhabiting it. Speculation as a method for extrapolating contemporary social relations, science and technologies - projecting these onto an experimental ecology, has proved a successful tool. For more than a century, sf-writers have used this tool for delivering concise pictures of the world of tomorrow. Their method has also been more broadly embraced in design and social science (Birtchnell and Urry 2013; Dunne and Raby 2013). For Dunne and Raby, designing has a speculative potential that needs to be unleashed. "It is hard to say what today's dreams are; it seems that they have been downgraded to hopes-hope that we will not allow ourselves to be extinct, hope that we can feed the starving, hope that there will be room for us all on this tiny planet. There are no more visions. We don't know how to fix the planet and ensure our survival. We are just hopeful" they note (ibid. 1) in their introduction, and then go on to explore what role design plays in opening up preferable prospects for humankind rather than fixing problems. Shifting away from a problem-oriented paradigm to a paradigm where we can begin to rethink the fundamental norms that underpin our society, design helps us to stimulate and facilitate our imaginations. "The best speculative designs do more than communicate, they suggest possible uses, interactions, and behaviours, not always obvious at a quick glance", Dunne and Raby argue. What is presented through the cases in their book is the designerly move from a conceptual idea to a multitude of design prototypes to explore the overall concept, replacing the question 'how?' with 'what if?'

IT'S ALL ABOUT IMMANENCE. According to Latour, critique "has all the limits of utopia: it relies on the certainty of the world *beyond* this world. By contrast, for compositionism, there is no world of beyond. It is all about *immanence*." (Latour 2010: 475). But what if utopia had a place in the world at hand. What if utopias were immanent? For the philosopher of hope per excellence Ernst Bloch utopias were - if intangible - as real as the catastrophes piling up in front of us. An ethos of "transcending without transcendence" (Anderson 2006). "The real Genesis is not at the beginning but at the end, and it only starts to unfold when society and the present is radicalized, that is, graped by the root." (Bloch 1959: 1628). For Bloch reality is filled with holes. Lacks. Uncompletenesses. It is these vacuums that make time flow. Departing from the top-down projections of the future - the abstract utopias - Bloch contends that the future is already here, in the form of multiple real possibilities embedded in each present living moment. "Reality without real possibilities is not complete. The world without future-laden properties does not deserve a gaze, an art, a

science, more than that of the philistine. Concrete utopia stands on the horizon of every reality; real possibilities surround the open dialectical tendencies [*Tendenzen*] and latencies [*Latenzen*] to the very last." (Bloch 1959: 257-8). In that sense Bloch's utopianism is not a utopianism of a world beyond what exists but simply "a question of realism" (ibid. 256). Capturing the traces of what is not-yet [*noch-nicht*], but could-be, is what interests Bloch, and his work can be seen as a register and vocabulary of such utopian traces. An exploration of utopias not-yet but could-be's. What we suggest, then, is not utopianism as a repository for critique. We need not only philosophize with a hammer (Nietzsche 1998). "With a hammer [...] in hand you can do a lot of things: break down walls, destroy idols, ridicule prejudices, but you cannot repair, take care, assemble, reassemple, stick together" (Latour 2010: 475). The notion of concrete utopias suggests a home for utopia in the world, rather than beyond it. As concrete, magic caves (if you will), enabling us to explore the gap between the plausible and the possible. Through design it is possible to explore future prospects and the concrete utopias they harbour. This is an ongoing exploration where the nuances and knowledge are gained from the active engagements with the real possibilities embedded in materials, people, bodies, networks and technologies.

ONE MILLION UTOPIAS. According to Dunne and Raby the creation of one million (micro)utopias may stimulate and facilitate humankind in imagining desirable futures (2013: 162-3). But are we already too familiar, too fed up with, the small micro-utopias that people carve for themselves in the rough and resistant materia of the real world? The Cult. The Art Project. The Retreat. The substitutes of the creative industries. "Making a futural world within 'the world' [...] is without doubt the greatest challenge to imagination that humanity has yet to face." (Fry 2012: 147-8), and it is an enterprise that cannot rely on the kind of utopianism that "[has] withered as world-transformational ideologies surrendered to capitalist market forces and the pragmatics of everyday life." (ibid. 149). Registering how the great utopias of the 19th. century that we are familiar with "[were] extinguished by a festival of inhumanity and violence" and noting how they were replaced by dystopias, Fry does not invest any hope in utopianism. But what if there was a third position for utopia between the grand utopias of the 19th and 20th century and the micro-utopias built around one person or one groups desires and fantasies. Bloch's utopianism is explicitly formulated as such a position. Throughout art, architecture, popular culture, social projects, humans have always sought to explore and open up cracks in the hard surface of the material world; concrete utopias that resists what is. Bloch uses the notion of nonsynchronicity [*Ungleichzeitigkeit*] to elaborate this . World history is not a linear process. It is an accumulation of failed, futile, unfulfilled or still living but subterranean dreams, hopes and promises; a junkyard, or better, a surplus store with shelf after shelf filled with the wreckage of history; stubborn leftovers from the past, that may (or may not) serve as seeds, as materials for future projects and engagements (Bloch 1962). History does not care what these remnants - these *Latenzen* underneath and besides or outside the mainstream *Tendenz* of seemingly linear time - are used for. They can just as easily be used to construct fascist regimes as for paving the way for more emancipatory, sound or ethical worlds. It is simply a matter how we engage with the legacy. In this way Bloch offers a utopianism departing itself from as well the grand narratives of the 19th century as the micro-utopias of avantgardism and sectarianism. Utopianism as a reservoir for reimaginations, redirections, recompositions. Alternative would-be's and what-if's.

FROM AVANTGARDISM TO MULTIPLE IMMANENT UTOPIAS - utopianism as a tool for imagining and opening up new vistas for mankind. This is an engagement in the materia itself and not constrained within the mental process of imagination. The interest lies in understanding through exploring the potentials of engagements with the world. Within design research this aligns itself with a programmatic approach to knowledge creation (Redström 2011, Halse et. al. 2010, Löwgren et. al. 2014). The program would be the ideals that frame the vision of future prospects, the engagements would be the execution of them. Between the two a dialogue appears in which the engagements inform the overarching program and vice versa. The insights from the engagements therefore force the program to drift (Redström 2011), or to be reframed in a hermeneutic dynamic (Löwgren et al. 2014). This is what Latour (2010) would consider an ongoing process of recompositioning. While the primary agenda of programmatic design research is to acknowledge the inherent exploratory qualities of design practice as research, it is our intention with this paper to put emphasis on the potential of a more speculative gaze, inspired by Dunne & Raby (2013). This allows us to a imagine more freely possible futures and preferred states. Like Dunne & Raby we want to ask "what if" questions that open up new possibilities. But while their speculative perspective unfolds through an overarching conceptual and avangardist approach, we seek a middle ground in which the interest in "what if" becomes the launch-pad for an active, if not aggressive, exploration into the not-yet. In our approach lies a paradox between the aggressive agendas of the designer/researcher and the openness for new understandings as one engages in the materia. Put in programmatic terms this would be considered a rather ambitious programmatic frame, with many ideals of the designer (Hobye 2014a) embedded in it. At the same time great openness for drifting is allowed as the project progresses. Our project may also be aligned with the subterranean history of

Figure 2: Stills from video documentation of Ladies' and Men's Room mixup

design-led activism. There is a latent history of utopian interventions in the border zone between art and design to be drawn upon. A legacy to inherit. Like Fuad-Luke (2009), we see a role for designers to act upon the world; for changing (or maintaining) the existing; for challenging and blocking mainstream tendencies, enabling latent currents to flow more freely. While the avantgarde offers a counter-narrative to dominant design-narratives, it must be moved out of the ivory tower, engaging with real people, real problems, real prospects. "Social movements embody activism by group action - a collective aspiration to maintain or change the existing situation. Those that seek change may be at the leading edge of societal or political change and so would seem to share some similarities with the more maverick character of the avant-garde. Yet, in the blurring of boundaries between one social class and another that occurred throughout the 20th. century, and in the further democratization of channels of influence through the social networking phenomenon of the internet, the primacy of an elitist avant-garde to exert influence has perhaps been eroded. Does the avant-garde still exist in a design activist sense? And if it does, what causes and forms of activism does it favour?" Fuad-Luke (2009: 26) asks, and he continues "the canon of design history often reveals an inwardly focused design culture examining the self, egoism, the design community and its culture, rather than being oriented towards more altruistic ambition for specifically defined social, ethnographic or social causes." (ibid. 48) Remixing utopia calls for material engagements, interventions and disruptions in order to explore plausible, preferable or (im)possible prospects. The designer as activist. (Dis)organizer. Inventor. Subverter. Catalyst. Trickster. Jamming station. Siren.

PRACTICED UTOPIAS TRANSCEND SCALE. "Ladies' and Men's Room mixup" (Carpenter et al. 2008; Hobye 2014a) was motivated by curiosity to challenge limited cross-gender interaction in a clubbing environment. How to approach and engage with each other was undefined or unclear and there were no obvious excuses to do so. This seemed counterintuitive, considering that a purpose of clubbing is to engage socially. *What if we challenge the inhibitors that surround social interaction between genders in a nightclub environment?* The experiment consisted of signs gender-identifying the two washrooms. However, the signs, instead of being static, were electronic and were rigged in such a way that whenever a certain number of people had entered, the rooms would switch gender. As a consequence there would be people with a mixed set of genders in each room - all of whom would consider themselves the rightful occupants and consider the opposite gender intruders. Even though we only replaced two small restroom signs with digital displays controlled by an extremely simple algorithm, it had a rather large influence on the social dynamics of the space. Instead of obliging to the norms of the space, the project gave the participants an excuse to engage socially with each other. The new interactions point towards an unfulfilled need for social interaction in public spaces. This suggests a possible future in which the social barriers of inter-gender interaction are greatly diminished. The implications of the project therefore reach beyond the context of a nightclub and into social interaction in the general public.

BLOW UP ALTERNATIVES. In another global city, Sao Paulo, design takes takes place as spatial wish production. Muda Colletivo's inflatable bubble on the highway Minhocao can be described as spatial appropriation, where the chosen site and the spatial design is both a performative creation in public space, and at the same time a reflective and critical comment on how spatial design normally takes place within gentrification processes and real estate development. Bolha Imobilaria means "real estate bubble". It is an inflatable structure that can only be constructed by the engagements of citizens and by blowing more air into

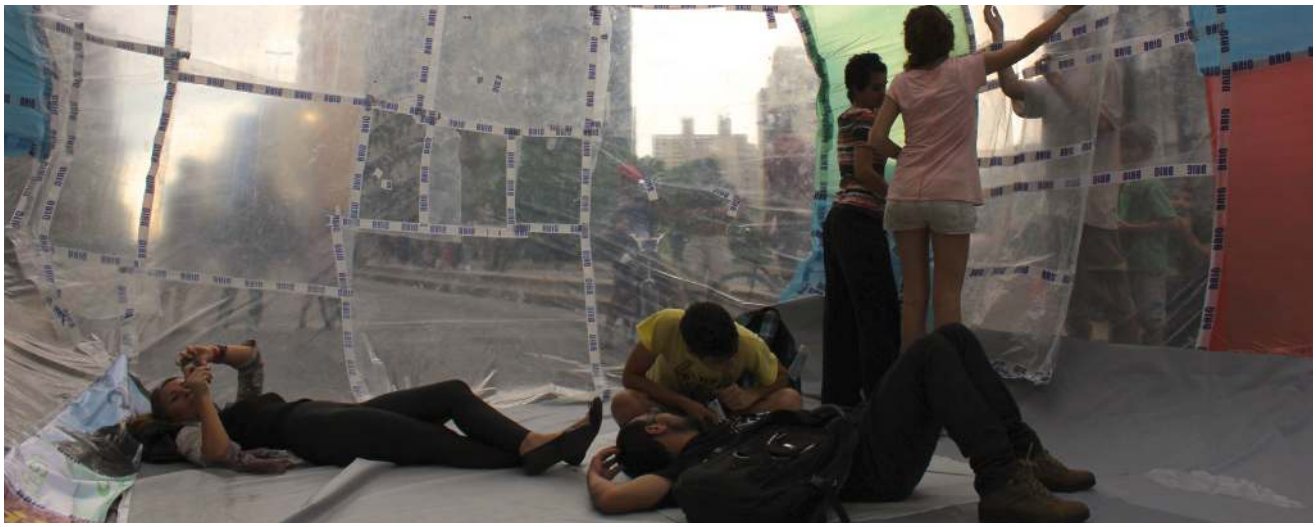

Figure 3: Muda Colletivo's inflatable bubble

the structure. Thus it symbolically imitates the process of real estate development and urban gentrification but is, at the same time, a micro-utopia suggesting an alternative, collectively constructed bubble. By reclaiming urban space for other uses, aesthetic experiences and spending time - contemplating, reflecting, doing nothing - in a highly accelerated urban environment based on economic growth, consumption and finance, the very porosity and temporality of the bubble is in itself a provocation. Made of reclaimed materials collected from a recycling station, it questions the material consumption of the city of Sao Paulo, but at the same time it replaces material consumption with immaterial values. When the inflatable structure allows citizens to temporarily enjoy public space in the highly traffic polluted downtown area of Sao Paulo, it becomes more than temporary design. As Oswalt, Obermeyer and Misselwitz et al. (2013: 276) note, claim strategies often take place on two levels "[F]irst in the sense of wish production, that is, the awakening of the idea of a different, more desirable development in the midst of the public, and second in the practical implementation of that idea from the very beginning. However small, symbolic, and temporary these single steps may be, they are nonetheless still capable of sparking a social dynamic in which more and more actors participate, so that the project keeps evolving." Thus, the design relates to affective and spatial communications that are easily spread and multiplied into other territories. Muda's spatial appropriation inserts a pneumatic porous bubble within the existing urban economy. First, it is a critical comment on gentrification processes. Second, it replaces functional urban space with sensory and aesthetic alternatives allowing for shared experiences. Third, by blowing design skills and aesthetic expression into the bubble, the designer sparks a social dynamic in which more and more actors participate. Despite the fact, that the "bolha" is a temporary alternative, it becomes more than reflective wish-production: It materializes as an act of doing and communicating. Through a materialised wish production, the bubble is a cave for aesthetic reflectivity; a temporary space that may realize micro-utopias in the existing city by remixing spaces, reclaiming waste and junk-spaces into design. The designed bubbles easily spread as a means of spatial transformation. They are no longer a durable design but become humble, yet affective, tools for thinking urban design alternatives. As Holert suggests, "Given that everyone is affected [...] by the neo-liberal abolishment of everything, it appears that small-scale endeavours of solidarity, however networked, which work around the disciplining effects of capital (and of anticapitalist politics as well), developing humble ways of altering and improving inherited designs, are not the worst option available at the moment" (Holert 2013: 51). *What if we rethink design as noise communication spreading ideas of preferable futures?*

EXPLORING FUTURE POSSIBILITY SPACES ALTERNATE TO CURRENT SOCIETAL TRENDS.

illutron is a collaborative interactive art community centered around an 800 m2 barge in Copenhagen harbor (Hobye, 2014b). The founders wanted to explore the potential of a shared workspace for the sake of creative collaboration itself. *What if we could create a community exploring the aesthetic qualities of interactive technology, driven by curiosity?* This deviated from the market-driven economy that dominated around 2007. Housing prices were skyrocketing and it was economically infeasible to rent or buy property centrally. Little room was left for such a non-economically-viable project to survive. To solve this problem they bought a large, old, rusty barge and placed it in the harbor - by moving offshore the project transformed from absolutely insane to somewhat feasible. Now, eight years later, the project is still alive and is one of few creative environments in Copenhagen that has survived as a non-profit community without ties to more formal funding structures. The deliberately unformalized structure of the barge has allowed the

Figure 4: illutron collaborative interactive art studio

members to experiment on their own terms on many different kinds of projects. The value of the project lies largely in the by-products that have spun out of the free thinking format. The platform has enabled many groups to freely experiment with their approach to complex matters like interactive art installations, new technologies, cultural activism and new ways of sharing knowledge about technology. Although it is impossible to quantify the impact we are now starting to see, a few patterns emerge: Because of the creative approach to technology, most universities, design, and art schools in Denmark have at some point had illutron members teach classes and hold workshops. The largest home made submarine in Northern Europe was finished and docked at the barge. The first prototype space rockets for the citizen driven space program Copenhagen Suborbitals were built in the hull of the barge. Many of the members are now active participants in art collectives and projects as technological specialists. The FabLab at Roskilde University employs many members from the illutron community, because of their rather unique ability to bridge the gap between hardcore technology innovation and the humanities. Originally, a free mooring grant was justified by the premise that illutron could breathe new life into a rather dull part of the city. The rather loose definition of what this meant gave illutron enough freedom the shape the place themselves. However, around 2013 the grant expired and it was concluded that there were no place for the barge in the harbor. This was a partly a consequence of the quay being sold to private owners and partly because expensive waterfront apartments had taken over most of it, leaving little room for a rusty barge to lower the market value. By being the first movers to breathe energy into an abandoned post-industrial area of the city, illutron became part of, and subsequently surplus to, gentrification. On the bright side, given the eight year track record, parts of the municipality have made earnest attempts to find a new place for the barge. In this dialogue the tone has changed somewhat from external justification to acknowledging the qualities of the project itself on its own terms. The previously aggressive stance of trusting the members to find meaning through their own curiosity has started to resonate as something that, given time, creates value on a societal level as well.

SPATIAL UTOPIAS AND DIRECT ACTION.

Occupy Gezi was initiated as a direct protest against capitalist urban development in Istanbul, and in particular the intentions of the city administration to transform Taksim Square and Gezi park from a public square and green park into a commercial space. The protest against urban development and commercial interests had been going on for years in Istanbul, but were directly addressed during the protest, where the occupiers of Gezi park demanded that Gezi Park should remain a park, and should not be re-developed under the name Artillery Barracks. By means of politically informed street art, urban interventions, performances and the camp-occupation of the park, where activists created alternative self-managed, autonomous social spaces such as community kitchens, housing for the homeless, shared libraries and workplaces and cooperatives, they proposed spatial alternatives. Similar to other urban social movements reacting to the design and planning approaches in the neo-liberal city, the Gezi protests have fostered a process where the place occupations have moved out into the various multi-cultural neighbourhoods of Istanbul. What was initially a reaction against commercialisation of public space, quickly became a plethora of alternative socio-spatial designs all over the city. A practice engaging “a unified multitude” (Adanali 2013) that was able to distribute alternative spatial productions. Was Gezi an utopian multitude of diversity comparable to the nonsynchronicity of Bloch? At least it is worth noticing that Gezi park is not only a critique of the capitalist and neo-liberal city, it was a temporary manifestation of a nonsynchronous space and micro-worlds in the city. Similar to other protest camps, it produces spaces

Figure 5: Occupy Gezi

and claims territory (Feigenbaum, Frenzel & McCurdy 2013:193). Reclaiming urban territories with aesthetic and horisontal means of organization, the Gezi park movement showcase a spatial practice that ignites larger networks of spatial alternatives. A spatial practise where urban spaces are produced organically and horisontally and involve the re-creation of infrastructure, social institutions and cultural production by other means. Practiced utopias are key for protest camps because "they allow participants to experience a dilemma that can be solved only in practice" (ibid. 226). However, the protest camps also raises the question: what is the role of design? Despite the fact that many of the Gezi activists were urban planners, designers, artists and architects, the gezi camps illustrate that the value of spatial production lies in temporary and porous characteristics. In the words of Margit Mayer, maybe urban design is not the solution, so what happens if we choose "not to design"? (Mayer 2010: 49). However, to reject design is not the point. Instead we must ask, what if we regard design as direct action and a tool for change - an approach to urban transformation that invites spontaneous, emergent and autonomous actions? Here Holert is more affirmative to design when he wishes to transform design "into a discipline of un-disciplinary moves and motions, into a practice of possibility and articulation of becoming" (Holert 2013: 51). *What if we regard the designer as a spatial activist, disturbing and transforming the close relation between economic urban development and urban design by orchestrating spontaneous and emergent processes in the city?* (Samson 2010, 2014)

ACADEMIA AS A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENT.

Dunne and Raby argue that "Universities and art schools could become platforms for experimentation, speculation and the reimagination of everyday life" (2013: 31). One such attempt has been started at FabLab RUC, Roskilde University. The lab occupies about 500 m^2 filled with machinery for rapid prototyping - laser cutters, 3D printers, CNC mills, electronics workshops etc. Technology gurus are on hand to enable users to realise their designs and ideas and innovative thinking is encouraged. Initially serving the humanities and technology bachelor programme at the university, the lab is now open to all students, researchers, businesses, inventors and locals. By offering free access to modern rapid prototyping and opening academia up to the world, the lab is an incubator for the way of thinking introduced in this paper. It empowers students, researchers and others (Padfield et al. 2014) to construct both physical props and conversation pieces to create active agendas around alternative future scenarios, and functioning prototypes capable of actually forming the surrounding society. This deviates with the stereotypical picture of academia as an *ivory tower* housing passive, analytical observers of society, communicating mainly through highly specialized texts. The lab is not directly tied to specific classes or formal research programs, instead it enjoys an autonomous role, transcending institutional boundaries and extending into society. This leaves greater room for non-problem-driven design exploration with little prior justification. *What if we empower academia to use prototyping as a part of their engagements with real world contexts.* Academia as a habitat for DesignLabUtopias facilitating multiple speculative, explorative, yet materialised projects. One such project is "Mimir" - a giant 6x6x6m 3D printer which can print houses in concrete - pushing the state of the art of the technology and exploring the potentials of large scale rapid manufacturing. Constructing a giant 3D printer is pushing the limits of traditional analytic academia - by providing new real-world possibilities, it invites multiple stakeholders to use it as a conversation piece for their own discussions of the future.

THE MAGIC CAVE IS A STRANGE CAVE -

almost an anti-cave. It is lacking the crude, protective, rounded walls of a rock cave. No dim light to reflect shadows on its walls - far removed from Plato's allegory

Figure 6: The giant 3D printer by Fablab RUC

where a chained group interpret the flickering reflections and shadowy projections on the walls. It has no walls, but can easily be composed of found materials. It is a porous but flexible and open construction that can be reorganized and put up where needed. In that sense it shares similarities with inflatable bubbles, barges and protest camps. The humans in the magic cave are holding hands, but are looking through the walls directly into the face of the coming catastrophe. A space of impermanence, temporality and transparency. Yet a material space that may ignite larger transformations. As dwellers of the magic cave, we need not only "utopian thought for an anti-utopian age" (Jacobs 2005) - we need to build and explore "possible futures by transcending [...] the boundaries of an existing design paradigm" (Fallman 2008). The many concrete and practiced utopias immanent in the world are thus generative towards "what might be" (Gaver 2012), rather than making statements of "what is". Put in the language of Latour "we want matters of concern, not only matters of fact" (Latour 2010: 478). Switching gender signs on restroom doors is not a long term solution for gender interaction, but can show a way towards greater potentials in perceived gender norms and their implications. Similarly, barges, blown up bubbles and protest camps offer alternatives to current societal tendencies, questioning city planning by offering temporary free-thinking spaces. Those spaces are immanent to their surroundings as they use the existing layouts (harbour fronts, squares, parks, infrastructure) as the venue for performing concrete utopias; practiced alternatives. We suggest to "remix utopia" - to reclaim such latent material layouts and social fantasies as they emerge in the world. In doing this we use the concept of design in a dynamic sense - it is the active process of recomposing and dispersing. We contend that a special obligation rests on those who are able to approach the world with an avantgarde optic - whether they are artists, intellectuals, designers or bureaucrats. They possess the means. They hold privileged positions. It is their duty to point towards alternative futures in whatever contexts they may be, even when it takes the form of an innovative, almost aggressive stance, challenging current tendencies. This is not a question of academics, bureaucrats and designers in search of a cause for changing the world. There are plenty of dangers lurking on the horizon, demanding action to be taken. Reasons for concern. Causes for change. We posit that academia has the potential for becoming a transformative agent, through material practice, in the construction of alternative futures already immanent as real possibilities in the world. The takeaways from such engagements may be repackaged as shareable knowledge contributions in a more traditional academic form; they may also find their way into other sorts of manifestations and performative actions. The future may be dark and eerie, a bottomless pit. But if you've got the urge... Let's submerge!

CREDITS

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Bolha Immobilaria: Muda Coletivo. Photo. Kristine Samson.

Occupy Gezi. Taksim Square. Photo from www.reclaimistanbul.com / Yasar Adanali.

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