Enacting Futures in Postnormal Times

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Abstract

This article describes FoAM's transdisciplinary, participatory approach to experiential futures. We introduce several practices with a primary focus on “prehearsals” and “pre-enactments”, interactive, immersive situations where participants can experience futures in the present at human scale. We explore aptitudes and techniques that are inclusive of multiple ways of knowing and learning, in order to probe futures from different perspectives, as well as foster engagement and commitment amongst diverse groups of people. We discuss why working with futures is particularly relevant in times of social and environmental turbulence and suggest that a more widespread futures literacy can increase agency in uncertain conditions. We focus on “future preparedness” and “inhabiting uncertainty” as mindsets to be developed alongside a futures practice through experiential learning, using techniques from improvisation, play and meditation. We investigate how experiential futures can extend the field by looking at embodied, multi-modal, holistic explorations of futures. We provide examples of FoAM’s recent works to illustrate our experimental approach to futures, aiming to bridge the gap between future visions and the uncertainty of everyday life.

Keywords: Experiential futures; inhabiting uncertainty; improvisation; Future preparedness; time travel; futures literacy; everyday futures

1. Introduction

We describe a range of approaches to experiential futures as practiced by FoAM, a distributed lab for speculative culture. Our approach to futures and foresight is from an oblique angle, as motivated creative practitioners in socially and environmentally turbulent times. We are particularly interested in finding ways to increase agency in uncertain conditions and see the field of experimental arts and culture as a creative crucible. We prototype futures as artistic experiments and translate experiential learning into forms of knowledge pertinent to the lives of the participants. Exploring the depth and breadth of what if thinking in the context of cultural resilience, we have gradually added futures...
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