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IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE FUTURES:
ETHNOGRAPHY THROUGH THE CRITICAL AND SPECULATIVE DESIGN WORKSHOPS

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VOLUME 1

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Imagining alternative futures: ethnography through the critical and speculative design workshops

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Resumo

O presente trabalho é uma etnografia das práticas de imaginação de futuros no contexto de três workshops de design crítico e especulativo. O foco é em como a antropologia pode engajar-se com construções de mundos futuros. O presente trabalho também é uma tentativa de explorar práticas da antropologia design e da antropologia voltada ao futuro, onde as antropólogas não apenas observam e descrevem o que já existe como também interferem e colaboram para a catalisação do que pode vir a ser. O principal argumento é que a crise contemporânea do Antropoceno, traz novas e complexas questões que requerem um novo entendimento de agencialidade humana. Por essa razão, o presente trabalho entende que o design crítico e especulativo pode ter um papel importante em explorar futuros alternativos de forma subjetiva. No entanto, para esse papel, as práticas de imaginação de futuros do design crítico e especulativo necessita voltar-se de forma crítica às suas metodologias e abrir suas práticas e seus espaços a uma colaboração ampla e interdisciplinar.

Abstract

The present work is an ethnography of future imagining practices in three critical and speculative design workshops. The focus is on how anthropology can engage with future world making. This work is also an attempt to explore anthropology design and future anthropology, where anthropologists not only observe and describe what is already there but intervene and collaborate to catalyse what could be. The main argument is that the contemporary crisis of the Anthropocene brings new and complex issues that demand a different understanding of human agency. For this reason, the present work understands that critical and speculative design could play an important role in exploring alternative futures subjectively. However, for this role to be satisfactory, the practice of future imagining through critical and speculative design should critically examine its methodologies and open its practices and spaces to a broader and more interdisciplinary collaboration.

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Introduction

This dissertation developed out of a personal concern over the current global emergency, called the Anthropocene, which is often defined as a period where human's impact on the earth brought about changes that reached planetary levels (Steffen, Crutzen & McNeill, 2007). These are precarious times in virtually all domains of life across the globe. It became apparent that our civilisational mode of production – the way wealth is distributed [or not], our modes of governance and the way we produce knowledge – is not sustainable. This gloomy scenario is moving us to a state of increasing uncertainty. As Bai et al. (2016: 352) observed, 'navigating the Anthropocene requires a systematic thinking about the future, as both drives and consequences (intended, unintended, and unanticipated) of societal actions accelerate and amplify, moving clearly away from a sustainable end'. Nevertheless, advocates of the promise of development and progress still hold the authority over future planning. In the midst of this turmoil, we can add a crisis of the imagination that blocks to thinking otherwise. For this reason, it is crucial to reorient our perceptions to be able to imagine alternative futures. Considering this, my interest is in how anthropology can contribute to practices of imagining alternative futures.

In order to pursue a research that addresses the future not as a destination limited to the impossibilities of the present but as a space of distinct, possible arrangements, the notion of 'eventful temporalities' (Savransky et al., 2017: 7) is helpful. According to Savransky et al. (2017), 'an eventful temporality assumes that "contingent, unexpected, and inherently unpredictable events can undo or alter the most apparently durable trends of history" (ibid. citing Sewell, 2005:102) enabling a swerve of possible futures and creative alternatives to be explored and harnessed'. A growing group of authors agree that a change in attitudes, values, in what counts as official knowledge and notions of 'he good life' is necessary if human civilisation wants to respond to the global emergency (Escobar, 2018, Mignolo, 2011; Blaser and De la Cadena 2018; Wahl 2016, among others). At the same time, different understandings of human agency are needed to expand views of the potentials for individual and collective engagement. It was with these notions in mind that I directed my attention to the possibilities or impossibilities of alternative futures. The possibilities or impossibilities of alternative futures, which were made perceptible by cultivating or refusing a sense of linearity and a dependent path to the future.

My fieldwork is based on three distinct critical and speculative design workshops. All three events took place in 2019. The first, called 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy', occurred in June and lasted three days. The second, entitled 'NoSchool', happened in August and lasted two weeks. The final one, called 'NeoRural Future', occurred in September and lasted one week. Within these workshops, groups of professionals from design, architecture and arts, alongside digital creators and design researches, assembled to practice a kind of design that is not associated with the market. Through these events, most participants could break from their regular

professional projects of creating functional work to experiment with design practices as cultural commentary (Drazin, 2012).

The main argument is that, as design becomes a significant site for cultural change and production in modern societies (Miller, 2018), the practice of critical and speculative design emerges as a disruptive channel and a place for defying the present crises of imagination. Nevertheless, critical and speculative design alone is not able to radically change perceptions. I support the need of transdisciplinary engagement, especially between design and anthropology, to release future imagining from stable structures and methodologies and to think of life in anxious times. To think through and beyond the precariousness that boosts our contemporary anxieties, we must consider indeterminacies as devices to imagining the unimaginable.

Imagining futures as anthropological practice

'Future is defined as something that exist or occurs at a later time, which includes both near-term and long-term aspect[s]' (Bai, 2016: 354). Anthropology's engagement with the future is not new. Margaret Mead already focused on the future as a matter of academic interest with the publication of her work 'A Note on Contributions of Anthropology to the Science of the Future' in 1971 (Pink & Salazar, 2017). According to Pink and Salazar (2017), Mead's work inaugurated a unique way to conceptualise the future by 'showing the importance of studying the possible and desired sociocultural futures of human civilization' (ibid.: 6). By the 1980s, an approach to the future called 'anticipatory anthropology' emerged. This perspective, promoted by Robert Textor and Reed Riner, among others, suggested the adoption of anthropological concepts such as 'culture, time, holism and cross-cultural perspectives' (ibid. citing Riner, 1987: 317) to develop research of anticipation toward the future.

By the 1990s, there was an increase in anthropological inquiries that questioned 'how people in different cultural contexts orient themselves in relation to known and unknown futures, and how such futures are envisioned and acted upon' (Pink & Salazar, 2017: 8). Lately, recent publications propagate a greater involvement between anthropology and the future (Pink & Salazar. 2017; Akama et al. 2018). At the same time, authors encouraged social scientists to consider the future as a cultural fact (Appadurai, 2013). As Appadurai indicates (2013), recent subjects of anthropology have been concerned with the present and the world we live in. Despite of that, 'the intellectual infrastructure of anthropology, and of the culture concept itself, remains substantially shaped by the lens of pastness' (ibid.: 285). Yet, as Appadurai specifies, ordinary human preoccupations, such as imagination, anticipation and aspiration, are at the core of cultural activity and thus are configured within the production of future as 'specific cultural form or horizon' (2013: 286).

The importance of anthropology's commitment to the future is to assist in resisting the normalisation of crises that is a characteristic of late capitalism. There is a widespread sense that it

is impossible to imagine coherent alternatives. But is this fate not also terrifying? I borrowed Mark Fisher's questions of 'how long can a culture persist without the new?' and '[w]hat happens if the young are no longer capable of producing surprises?' (2009: 3) as the starting point of my inquiry to explore alternative futures through design practices.

Within the modalities where the future is idealised, and on occasion is ultimately concretised, are the dominant fields within the neoliberal regime that take a governmentality approach[1]. Under such an approach, the predominant strategy to engage with the future is the risk analysis – the calculations and managements of uncertainties (Savransky et al., 2017). Such approaches generate a kind of knowledge that is in the most part based on unidisciplinary works and often presupposes time as a linear arrow of development (ibid.). I suggest that we, as a civilisation, must create spaces to articulate and project alternative mental images. On this matter, this dissertation also allies with ideas that oppose the prevailing notion of temporality as a progressive, linear path, as posited by Bruno Latour (2008) and Martin Savrasnky et al. (2017).

What is most crucial here is that is the idea of 'when specialists hold an authoritative discourse on future, it ends up orienting social practices in the present, whether in the form of engraining expectations about the future or through the very claim of authority on it' (Savransky et al., 2017: 5). In this context, conceiving other forms of dealing with the future has become urgent to overcome the crisis of imagination. Along this line, this text views the future as a contested, negotiable and problematising space. To participate in future-oriented practices, it is necessary to attend to the intricate power relations within and outside of the scope of such practices. Therefore, another objective of this research is to challenge these dominant narratives about the future that address it as something that can simply be anticipated through calculus and the management of risks and uncertainties (Savransky et al., 2017).

Future as design

Another area where the future is nurtured is in design. 'Design is a natural ally for futurity' (Appadurai, 2017: 9). The main justification for choosing the realm of design to experiment with activities of future imagination is that within this realm, 'conceptual and methodological frameworks have to move beyond basics notions of causality and the projection of statistics trends into the future to fully capture the emergence of the present' (Gunn et al., 2013: 17). In this sense, this text considers design as a site for potentialities. Design is fundamental in virtually all human

[1] Within contemporary society, such fields are finance and insurance, of the politics of security and war, the environmental forecasting, regulation and disaster prevention, the scientific and technological innovation and governance and others areas that process governmental and individual decision-making and regulations regarding health, education and everyday life (Savransky et al., 2017).

activity (Wahl & Baxter, 2008). Furthermore, design distinguishes itself by being a practice that acts as a transdisciplinary facilitator among actions, necessities, attitudes and values (ibid.).

As mentioned above, design is a practice present in multiple domains of human and non-human action and is therefore not limited to a single realm of knowledge. Among its several definitions, Akama et al. (2018: 10) remember sociologist Herbert Simon's notion of design, who considered design 'as a desire to change situations to preferred ones, which means that its orientation is always future-focused where "every creative act moves to an outcome that is only fulfilled in a future, but, also, the outcome itself is a product for and thus is part of what produces the future world'" (citing Rosenberg, 2006: 7). Here, I follow Appadurai's (2013) understanding that the production of the everyday life is the result of an enterprise that requires effort and imagination as well as a certain amount of intent.

Despite being a universal human capacity, design had been regarded as a specific realm reserved to a limited area of knowledge. However, within the past few decades, design practice has opened its space for interdisciplinary collaboration. Within this movement, according to Gunn et al. (2013: 5), 'design and industrial communities have generally been more prone to adopt approaches of social research, hereunder ethnography, and to invite anthropologists into their fields (…)'. Often, these collaborations took the form of anthropologists being invited to design studios – it was a one-way move.

In this regard, the present research aims to collaborate with the realms of anthropology and design, specifically in terms of ethnographic practice and the role of anthropology within the context of design practice. In relation to ethnographic practices, this text follows Kim Fortun's (2012) notion of ethnography as technology. In this sense, an ethnography that facilitates the imagination of alternative realities could be considered a technology. For this reason, I suggest here that the collaboration between anthropology and design can assist in alternative future imagining.

The kind of disciplinary engagement between anthropology and design that Gunn et al. (2013) advocate as an emergent field in anthropology studies is called 'design anthropology'. They promote an academic field that combines elements from design practices and from anthropology. These authors consider that this 'distinct style of knowing' as giving rise to the possibility of developing a theory as part of the practice (ibid.). For Gunn et al. (2013), the realms of design and anthropology are not strangers to each other. Anthropology has a genuine interest in design practice since it is a part of human activity and has a role in the process of social and cultural change and innovation. At the same time, design has been aware of the value of ethnographic and anthropological methodologies to better understand the needs and experiences of users and the context in which products and computer systems were used (ibid.: 3).

The ethnographic method has thus been applied in design practices since the 1970s. By the 1990s, there had been a groundswell in applying ethnographic methods in industrial and commercial design. This movement created room for anthropologists, as well as psychologists and

sociologists, to work within these spaces. The main objective of inviting other disciplines into design spaces was to gain knowledge about product and consumer relations. It is necessary to realise, though, that 'actively or through missed opportunities, anthropology has played a part in some poor design, inadequate technologies and exploitative products and services as well as admirable ones' (Drazin, 2012: 246). Anthropology's influence in design has made itself as a commercially valuable interdisciplinary exchange.

Regarding applied anthropology, this dissertation suggests that anthropology can succeed in re-evaluating itself in terms of being a practical discipline. Apart from the contested field of applied anthropology in institutions and in corporate contexts, here the suggestion is directed towards the possibilities of the discipline in contemporary creative contexts. The proposition is of a theoretical and critical contribution where anthropologists join collectives involved in catalysing processes of change. This approach is part of a recent 'turn' to applied research where theoretical scholarship and applied practice are brought together (Berg & Fors, 2017).

For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish the kind of design anthropology that is referenced in the present text. Murphy and Marcus (2013: 252) noted that, historically, the relationship between these two disciplines was dominated by a 'one-sided' emphasis on how anthropology, especially ethnography, can support design rather than the other way around. In contrast, the notion followed here overcame the idea of an interaction primally motivated by ethnography's opportunity to supply data for sociocultural understanding or interpretation.

Critical anthropology *of* critical and speculative design

The main methodological inspiration of this dissertation is the argument developed by Gatt and Ingold (2013) of reconsidering the central role of participant observation as well as an anthropological practice that does not set determinate ends in advance. They propose a kind of anthropology that seeks to correspond with, rather than to describe (ibid.). On this matter, Gatt and Ingold look beyond Suchman's suggestion of adopting a critical anthropology *of* design since this is too limiting and narrows the scope of anthropology in relation to design (ibid. citing Suchman, 2011). Likewise, they oppose a practice of 'anthropology-by-means-of-ethnography' for it is a practice of description, they then promote an 'anthropology-by-means-of-design' as a practice of correspondence rather than description (ibid.).

In the following chapters, I did not always succeed in practising an 'anthropology-by-means-of design', in Gatt and Ingold's term. The trajectory of my fieldwork from the first workshop to the third was also a learning route on how to engage within these encounters. At the same time, most of my approach to the fieldwork followed Lucy Suchman's request of a critical anthropology *of* design. Critical anthropology *of* design also raises significant concerns, as Suchman argues. 'Like anthropology, design needs to acknowledge the specificities of its place, to locate itself as one

(albeit multiple) figure and practice of transformation' (Miller, 2018 citing Schuman, 2013: 140). By the last workshop, I risk saying, I experienced an 'anthropology-by-means-of design' where I found an opportunity to further the articulation around the design practice to experiment with the unfolding present, relocating the inquiries of our group. In this sense, it fits within Gatt and Ingold's (2013) concept of practice that extends the role of the researcher in the field from participant observer to 'participant interventionist'.

The emerging field of design anthropology that Gunn et al. (2013) describe is more oriented to intervene and transform social realities. In this sense, anthropological engagements with design have particular qualities (Drazin, 2012). Design anthropology works alongside design to produce critical cultural commentaries (ibid.). Hence, frequently demonstrative, design anthropology produces knowledge artefacts that are often reflexive commentaries (ibid.). In our contemporary context, design anthropology is a product of a global movement that has raised awareness of the current complex problems and, for that reason, calls for transdisciplinary approaches (Miller, 2018).

'Design anthropologists usually have complex roles and find themselves working (mostly) in multidisciplinary design teams, alternating between being researchers, facilitators, and co-creators in the design process' (Gunn et al., 2013: 18). This aspect of design anthropology was one of the most challenging during my fieldwork. Being a novice in both anthropological and design practices, I found it difficult to cope with all the design activities with which I was supposed to engage while both keeping my attention sharp for informed sociocultural demands and also taking field notes. From this perspective, as I am being trained as an anthropologist and my research project was carried out within the realm of design, I position my practice in the design anthropology field. I also hope it becomes clear that my engagement in the workshops could be viewed as a learning path.

I did not have in any way the ambition to faithfully meet all the requirements within the field of design anthropology, although it was my main orientation. I realised that I had to let go of illusionary expectations to protect myself from disillusionment and frustration. This attitude was decided during the first phase of my research, when I was inquiring critical and speculative design studios for opportunities to conduct my fieldwork. After two months of receiving negative responses, it become clear to me that I should change my initial choice of ethnographic fieldwork and be open to alternative opportunities.

Multi-sited ethnography: the workshops

It is a common stage on the path of anthropological inquiry to define where one's fieldwork will be conducted. Alongside this, anthropologists must negotiate the terms for fieldwork access. In the past, the ethnographic encounter involved a hierarchical relationship, and many ethnographies took advantage of the colonial circuit (Clifford, 1997). Today, many anthropologists

still maintain the focus of their analysis in subaltern groups – in the end, in most cases today, the very condition of subalternity is inherited from the colonial and the capitalist system (Marcus, 1998). On the other hand, anthropologists that must to conduct their analysis in areas where the subaltern's perspective is blurred or inverted find it difficult to gain access to the research field (ibid.). In many cases, the access depends on the anthropologist's abilities. In the case of my request to participate in design practices, this translated into the disposition and specific skills to take on with design projects within design studios and workshops.

Often, design anthropology is undertaken in 'project-based case studies that capture an event or a series of events that constitute a project' (Miller, 2018: 61). 'For design anthropologists, the focus on events is related to their significance as a source of emergent potentially (ibid.: 61). Following this direction, I noted that most of the people involved in the design studios where I was aiming to conduct fieldwork were also involved in critical and speculative design workshops. Most of these workshops offer participation in the form of non-funded residency[2] through application. I saw this as an ethnographic opportunity, as usually critical and speculative design workshops attract a range of professionals that may or may not apply critical and speculative design approaches in their daily professional life. Hence, critical dispositions and disciplinary reflexivity are nurtured within these events.

Ethnography within events such as in *workshops* is not new. Anthropologists such as Criado and Estalella (2018 in the context of #Collexnetwork[3]) already conducted ethnographic practices within workshop*s.* These authors understand that *workshops* can be a rich empiric methodological tool to produce knowledge. On this matter, Akama et al. (2018) offer appropriate support in exploring workshop's theorical and methodological possibilities. Within this perspective, the workshop is where the encounter is planned, and often a 'general rule of a workshop is to have a sense of democratic participation, openness, play, experimentation and learning, nested within a specific context and often achieve a specific outcome' (ibid.: 12). Following the understanding of the workshop as a place of 'creative generation of ideas' and a 'form of praxis (theory + practice)', the workshop provides a fertile ground to analyse of collaboration practices and situated knowledge co-production (Berg & Fors, 2017).

To proceed with my research project, I applied for several critical design workshops. My requirements were twofold: the workshop should meet the critical and speculative design approach without economic objectives, and the organisers and participants should be aware of my intention

[2] These residencies worked as a kind of artistic/creative temporary opportunities where, under previously agreed conditions, participants conduct creative productions of work and the host of the residency provides working facilities, exhibition space, audience, etc.

[3] This was a workshop proposed by these authors in the context of the 15th EASA Biennial Conference in 2018.

in collecting data from these events. I was accepted for three events in three countries: Portugal, France, and Italy. Therefore, this is a multi-sited ethnography, agreeing with George Marcus's (1995) reformative thesis of a multi-sited ethnography as an ethnographic practice that 'follows people, connection, associations, and relations across space because they are substantially continuous but spatially noncontiguous'.

With the purpose of maintaining the privacy of the workshop's participants, the names used in this text are pseudonymous. However, I maintained the workshops' original tittles because these were, in some ways, public events with media records available on the Internet on which I oftentime relied for further resources for this research.

The description of each workshop is as follows:

Workshop 1) 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' occurred in the Portugal city of Porto. This workshop was one of the Porto Design Biennalle's activities. The call for residency was directed to graphic designers, design professionals, and design researchers. I was the only participant with a social science background. Selected participants were asked to commit to the production of posters to be displayed on three Porto subway stations as a 'narrative in the public space'[4]. The posters should reflect participants' design process and discussion on themes involving the means of production within the design practice. The main requirement was to bring the theme of 'critic and political design' and to consider the very conditions of graphic design as a profession and as a practice.

Workshop 2) The 'NoSchool' workshops took place over the course of two weeks in the small city of Nevers in central France. The call for this event addressed digital and material designers and makers, artists, students, and researchers looking to expand their understanding of the social and environmental impact of information and communication technologies[5]. Using a summer school format, it had thirty-three facilitators from the field of critical design, computer science, and arts. What attracted me to apply to this workshop was their intent to disrupt what is perceived as technology by opening up the black boxes of designed technological objects and systems. I was particularly interested in the notion of tearing down the hegemony within notions of technological innovation. Lectures raised awareness of underlining issues related to these topics. From that, participants were encouraged to create [or design] critical and speculative artefacts or digital systems.

Workshop 3) 'NeoRural Future', the last workshop I attended to, with the help of my supervisor, occurred in Rome, Italy, and lasted one week. This was a workshop specific to

[4] According to the informational brochure available on https://portodesignbiennale.pt/pt/event. Accessed on 28 July 2019.

[5] http: //www.noschoolnevers.com/

speculative design research and creation. My dissertation's supervisor suggested this event as it was a unique opportunity to experience with a declared speculative design event, and we would be able to experience this practice together since she was also participating in the workshop. The objective of this workshop was to apply speculative thinking and design practice to generate speculative scenarios for rurality in the near future, or more precisely, for around the year 2030.

As my fieldwork was conducted during these short events, the practices observed and the analyses are not a broad representation of all critical and speculative design practices, but a particular and partial sampling of specific moments in situated places. What all these workshops had in common was their emphasis on questioning socio-cultural tenets rather than developing a product or solving problems. Within each design process, social imaginaries are envisioned, and the imagined future scenarios amplified the participants' anxieties. The role played by these imagining practice – although not offering large-scale social change – is that throughout the criticism of the present, critical and speculative design practices 'compel us to reconsider how the present is futuring (…) and how we may still have a chance to reconfigure [the] future potentialit[ies]' (Hunt, 2011: 44). It is also worth saying that the three workshops functioned as a 'learning and networking event' where participants worked creatively through 'interactive processes of research, analysis, synthesis, improvisation, and invention with the outcome being some form of design artefact' (Miller, 2018: 68).

Uncertainty can be perceived as an imminent characteristic of human existence (Akama et al., 2018). Thus, uncertainty is a form of being in the world. Therefore, it is crucial to create forms of interdisciplinary collaboration that deal with and even open some paths for alternative futures. Correspondingly, Akama et al. (2018) raised an important point that has not only pertains to how to deal with the uncertainty of the world, but how we can produce knowledge through uncertainty. They explore what are the means, the sensibilities and methodological instruments that are capable of rendering uncertainty as technology to produce knowledge.

Akama et al. (2018) use the uncertainty in a deliberate way in the creative process as a methodologic *dispositif* and not as an object for analysis. For them, uncertainty is invoked as an analytical tool. Although I adhere to this notion, during my research, I did not have the opportunity to induce uncertainty. However, I tried to be aware of the uncertainty and its improvisatory and generative potential. I also offer a critical description of how, within the context of the workshops where I conducted my fieldwork, the uncertainty toward the future is negotiated through a predetermined framework where uncertainty is accommodated.

Structure of the following chapters

The structure of this ethnographic presentation is in the form of a constant overlaying of the events depicted here. Instead of separating one chapter for each event, I combined all three

workshops into each of the three chapters. I found that the three workshops shared common elements that were worth breaking down into three major topics: methodology, materiality and temporality.

The first chapter focuses on the methodology that underwent all three events. I argue that throughout a certain system supported by materials, participants reproduce a set of normative skills inherited from product and business practices. Above all, preconceived design methodologies are, I argue, products of a modern rational mode of thinking that prioritises technical functionality. Participants attempted to articulate well-known methodological sets of tools within new categories of arguments. In this case, the workshops' participants acted and responded to philosophical inquiries by adopting pre-existing methodologies for these design engagements. I centred my observation on a particular aspect of the design process and the thinking that follows the research phase within the process. At the end of this chapter, I argue that the described conditioned practice obstructs the generative potentialities of uncertainty.

This following stage of design practice has many denominations – mapping, brainstorming, etc. It is in this phase that hierarchies are settled. Without rejecting design-acquired skills, I join with other authors (Ansari, 2016; Costanza-Chock, 2018; Wilkie & Michael, 2017; among others) and support the need to expand possible roles for design contributions. This suggestion is drawn mainly from Donahed's (2017: 37-46) concept of 'unmapping', which can be understood as a new and open strategy within the design process that proposes 'designers to move beyond simply repeating the formats of past ideas of practices and instead support the construction of new questions in new contexts with new contributions'. New forms of framing within design practice can emerge from the opening the design process. In this sense, anthropology can facilitate the interrelation of viewpoints to bring multiple narratives, concerns and methods that contest the one-size-fits-all of design tools, methods and mapping techniques.

I found this concept useful, especially when considering the role of anthropologists that are often invited to design workshops. Conventionally, anthropologists have a fixed role in design practices as providers of social and cultural interpretation for designers. Unmapping then would assist in flattening hierarchies of settled positions to facilitate what Donahue (2017: 44) called 'unity of will'. Adopting a unity of will within the design process can open the doors for ongoing conversations to 'develop new languages, definitions and questions that respond to the questions in a twenty-first-century way' (ibid.: 46).

The second chapter of this dissertation is focused on the artefacts generated from these events, drawing from the concept of *conversation dispositifs* developed by Zoy Anastassaki and Barbara Szaniecki (2016). In accordance with the notion that, within these workshops, knowledge is produced through thinking and fabrication, my aim is to present the workshops' outcomes less as objects for subjects and more as a 'stimulation of subjectivities through the cultivation of images of what society might become' (Adams, 2017: 22). The materials produced as a result of the

workshops ‘communicate and are endowed with the capacity to perform as animate agents imbued with the values of their makers’ (ibid.: 22). On their work, prototypes, designed things, critical artefacts and design tactic can support a critically engaged activity, making space for a redirection of the role of design research and practice (ibid: 127).

The outcomes of the workshops as artefacts contribute to enrich human subjectivities. I hope to demonstrate that the workshops’ outcomes – artefacts – are related to the contemporary experiences of the participants. Most the outcomes from the workshops present imagined futures that follow late capitalism trends – uncertainty toward the professional future and the imminence of global catastrophe. Through the artefact’s materiality, these trends were synthesised in posters, ‘disruptive’ and democratic technologies and speculative future artefacts. From there, the aftermath of critical and speculative design workshops made tangible shared anxieties about the change economy, the current global emergency, and the search for meaningful professional practice.

In the third chapter, I developed an analysis using Schatzki’s (2010) concept of ‘activity timespace’ to describe how different temporalities of the present emerged from each design event. I also used a Stuart Candy’s[6] (Dunne & Raby, 2013) chart of the level of likelihood of the future. Under Candy’s chart of futurity, I could identify that within each collective design process, different imagined futures were envisioned which had an effect on the present temporal orientation. Accordingly, during the workshops, I experienced imagining with the probable future, plausible future and possible future. My observation revealed three distinct orientations of the present: an elongated present, an anticipation of the future, and the suspension of the present time.

The conclusion of this work is a reiteration of the importance of future imagining apart from the dominant models, theories and conceptual frameworks. In this sense, this dissertation perceives a singular opportunity for anthropology engagement with critical and speculative practices of design in catalysing and encouraging hope toward the future. The task for this collaboration between anthropology and design might be to nurture sensibilities that will be needed to face ‘the end of progress’s easy summer’ (Tsing, 2015: 2). This are urgent times – an entrusting coalition among designers, artist and researchers for dissident practices is essential to detour from the ‘deadly discontinuities of the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Plantationcene’ (Haraway, 2016: 137) and to open paths for alternative futures.

Context

Before vaulting into the three chapters of this dissertation, I think it is useful to offer a context to clarify some specific aspects of my research. I share the notion that design is a human capacity

[6] Prof. Stuart Candy is a professional futurist and is an Associate Professor in the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

and a primary source of social order (Appadurai, 2013), and thus, relational configurations between people, spaces, and things can be viewed as result of design. Hence, designed things have some social power. Human beings design through a self-conscious decision process that requires an intentional selection of ideas (Ingold, 2011). 'The ultimate job of design is to transform man's environment and tools and, by extension, man himself' (Papanek, 1971: 28). It is in this same sense that the realisation that design is ubiquitous is everywhere; from the largest structures to the humblest aspects of everyday life, modern lives are thoroughly designed lives (Escobar, 2018). Nevertheless, there are many fields of practices and theory within design developments, and this section is aimed to provide a brief historical context to situate where I located my fieldwork in terms of what kind of design practice my ethnography is about.

There is a wide spectrum of design fields. The most well-known are the fields of architecture, urban and landscape design, interior design, product and industrial design and software and system design, among other domains of the practice. As mentioned earlier, my focus is on a type of design practice called critical and/or speculative design. This is because this kind of design involves the critique of some elements of contemporary society or within the very realm of design practice.

Design as a professional activity is a relatively recent idea (Lawson, 2005). The formalisation of design practice came out in coordination with a process of professionalisation and division of labour that aimed to unify standards of practices in several occupations. According to Lawson, this process marked a shift from an un-self-conscious, craft-based approach to design to a self-conscious, professionalised process that began around 1834 with the inauguration of the British Architects (ibid., 2005: 23). For Papanek (1971), coincidentally, alongside with the Industrial Revolution arose concerns surrounding the design of tools and machinery. This formalisation process is grounded in the Cartesian ontology – 'an ontology that divorces the activity of the mind from that of the body in the world' (Ingold, 2011: 165). In this new realm of design, designers were not craftsman working to make objects but communicators of instructions for making such objects (Lawson, 205). In this sense, the role of drawing came to be crucial; 'drawing has been the most popular way of giving such instructions' (ibid.: 26). It was with the launch of the German design school Bauhaus, in 1919, that 'the craft' turned back to the field of design practice. In its manifesto, Bauhaus – 1919 to 1933 – called for 'architects, sculptors, painters, we must all turn to the crafts … Lets us create a new guild of craftsmen!' (Papanek, 1971: 31).

The established profession of design, based on credited education, created an enclosure for practitioners with design credentials (Lawson, 2005; Miller, 2018). Throughout human history, individuals achieved in making, with a level of success, sophisticated designs while lacking an understanding of any theoretical and standard methodology background. However, the Industrial Revolution provided changes in the rhythm of production in a way that become too rapid for the craftsman's process to cope (Lawson, 2005). Thus, the traditional design I mentioned in the following pages come about within these changes. Traditional design here refers to the practice of

designing ideas and products that can be mass produced and are oriented to the market. Also, traditional design for industrial products relates to the notion where design was strongly concerned with the object, and the design's role was to improve the appearance of products (Miller, 2018). Design thus became a pervasive aspect of modern society (Otto & Smith, 2013: 1).

While product and industrial design became more influential, groups of designers started to focus on more discursive and propositional practices that were oriented to critically engage their contemporary concerns (Malpass, 2017). Rooted in the Italian design tradition, these practitioners aimed to dissociate themselves from commercial gains and engage in critical discourse about the capitalist consumer society (ibid.). According to Malpass (2017: 36), this 'provocative design culture emerged out of dissatisfaction with the role of designer solely serving production and consumption'. It is in this sense that critical design practice is part of a long and diverse trajectory within product and industrial design (Malpass, 2017).

> In a move from orthodoxy, Italian radical designers attempted to create new and unusual experiences with object by using ready-mades from industrial production and incorporating them into the designs of furniture and lighting. This approach moved product design beyond traditional notions of functionality and embedded intellectual value in the work. Looking for material suitable to make commentary, the designers promoted emotional play and symbolism over practical function and refuted assumptions of utilitarianism and consumption (Malpass, 2017; citing Leess-Maffei & Fallan, 2014:53).

Changes in the post-Fordism workforce indicated a shift toward a socially sensitive design (Clarke, 2016). The move towards a more socially and culturally sensitive design can also be considered as a re-evaluation of what design's purpose. It was against this background that the traditional role of design began to be critically regarded by groups of design professionals, students and researchers. Some designers opened spaces for philosophical inquiry and brought design practice to the middle of current debates. According to Clarke (2016), this shift was marked by a move away from the designed objects and outcomes to emphasise on the practice of design itself. The 1970s were a turning point for reflections of the social and ecological role in the design practice of producing commodities (Clarke, 2011). According to Clarke (2011), it was a moment of emergence of a new movement toward critical design where:

> … a critical design culture that sought to strip away the layers of 'false' meaning around commercial products, [and where] indigenous objects, and anthropology came to offer an alternative model of 'non-capitalistic' creativity (Clarke, 2011: 74).

The post-Fordism critical design movements aimed to broaden the discourse of alternative ways of living. For them, the pressing problems of poverty, urban decay, and the pollution of the environment were too urgent to the point that the aesthetic quality of individual objects for private consumption became irrelevant (Clarke, 2011). This group of practitioners noted that the failures of the modern promise of industrial and economic progress had proved deadly. These early critical design initiatives introduced an interest in anthropology and vernacular objects. However, what drew this movement to anthropology was its focus on understanding culture and society. For early critical designer Victor Papanek, anthropology offered the means to analyse his own material culture (ibid.). By applying anthropological principles of analysis, Papanek developed a design criticism of the Western consumer culture (ibid.). Victor Papanek's *Design for the Real World* denounced the field of industrial design as one of the most harmful to the planet. More recently, John Thackara (2004 cited by Escobar, 2018) reinforced the notions that the industrial age distracted us from a whole-system understanding of the world. In simple terms, design is identified as a practice of material and immaterial making, but the significant feature of design is its future orientation.

Unfortunately, this critical shift of design did not hold still. Often, critical design had little reach beyond its own niche. The anti-consumerist and critical movements dissipated and were swallowed by the mainstream, consumer-driven practice. Dunne and Raby (2013) offered some interpretation for the weakening of the 'radical design' of the 1960s and 1970s, as they called it. First, design fully integrated into the neoliberal model of capitalism during the 1980s, and any alternative roles for designers were viewed as economically unviable and therefore irrelevant (ibid.: 8). This was also related to the fact that the mood after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was that there were no alternative models for society. Capitalism had won, and it was the 'end of the history'[7]. In addition, still according to Dunne and Raby (2013), society had become more atomised and individualistic, thus channelling our energies into take care of our own lives and enclosing ourselves within remote groups of similarly minded individuals. And last, the fact that 'the younger generation doesn't dream, [simply] hopes (…) [that] we will not destroy ourselves' (Dunne & Raby, 2013: 9). This is strongly connected to the crisis of imagination that is the core of my motivation for this research, since the current human existential challenges evokes fear and feelings of despair. Fear is known to inhibit creative thinking (Light et al., 2017).

Although the approximation between design and social science date from around the 1930s, with collaboration between management researchers, designers and anthropologists in industrial

[7] 'The end of History' was a term used in historian Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man,* published in 1992. In this work, Fukuyama argues that 'the liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government" and as such constituted the end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992: xi).

setting, it was during the 1980s that the adoption of ethnographic approaches became part of some design communities' practice, specially within the human-computer interaction's (HCI) research field[8] (Drazin, 2012). Under HCI, ethnography functioned to collect data about the experiences and needs of technology users. The introduction of ethnographic methods in industrial and product design limited its scope to focus on analysis with detailed attention, situated actions and observable patterns of human behaviour to later use the collected data to translate abstract conceptual values and inform design practice (Otto & Smith, 2013). Many social scientists have been criticising the implication of this collaboration between designers and anthropologists mainly regarding the predefined role of anthropologists in the process of design (ibid.). They often point to the imbalance of collaboration and a persistent power relation within the corporate settings (ibid.).

Jamer Hunt (2011: 34) underlined that an 'unproblematized incorporation of (often quick and dirty) ethnographic methods into commercial design processes continues unabated, leaving designers occasionally perplexed and anthropologists increasingly nervous about the commercial uses of their own hallowed practices'. Furthermore, other design approaches have sprouted mainly from design professionals, and not strictly from the industrial and computer engineering fields. A growing number of design movements have been involved in value-sensitive design (Light et al., 2017). Such movements recognise the responsibility of design practice in the environment and in society. For example, these value-sensitive designers have taken up environmental concerns acknowledging that bad design decisions have greatly impacted on sea life when design choices favoured the obsolescence of plastic over sustainability (Light et al., 2017).

The movement of participatory design, as Drazin (2012) noted, has become a broad term to indicate a design process based on participation more than from a particular technology. Participation, thus, 'does not require design, but informs it' (ibid.: 250). This design practice aims to support local knowledge by active inclusion in design process to ensure usability and satisfy the needs of stakeholders (Miller, 2018). Despite that, some authors had drawn attention to the fact that calling a design process 'participatory' does not solve the fact that structural inequalities are reproduced within most design processes today (Costanza-Chock, 2018). From what I could grasp during my ethnography – although none of the events were labelled as 'participatory design' but were nevertheless its heir – these inequalities manifested primarily with a universalistic approach on how design process should or should not be.

User-centred design approach is another design movement that welcomes anthropologists to collaborate with ethnography data and inform designing with the user experience in mind. Design practitioners in these contexts apply ethnographic-style observation and even cultural immersion to inform design intuition (Suri, 2011) for commercial aims. User-centred design put emphasises

[8] Human-computer interaction is a field that tries to understand and facilitate how humans engage with high-tech machines in all kinds of interactions (Drazin, 2012: 247).

on using these data to analyse the social and market impact of a product. It is relevant to cite Drazin's (2012:250) consideration that within the user-centred design the 'method can be participatory, but a lot of user-centred design preserves a separation between studio design and fieldwork'. Over the past few decades, design theorists and practitioners have attempted to understand social contexts to deliver better solutions. 'For anthropology, the implication of this shift within the field of design, that lies in the turn from object-centred to user-centred or human-centred design' (Miller, 2018), were there were a increase in the hiring of anthropologists at both large technology companies and design agencies[9].

Lately, the financial crash of 2008 and the current global emergency sparked a revival of the critical spirit within the field of design. Today, there is an ongoing conversation about the role of design in contemporary society and culture that indicates a trend within design to find its 'identity and moral purpose' (Miller, 2018: 47), except that this time, as Dunne and Raby emphasised, 'we live in a very different world now, but we can reconnect with that spirit and develop new methods appropriate for today's world and once again begin to dream. But to do this, we need more pluralism in design, not of styles but of ideology and values' (Dunne and Raby, 2013: 9). For this achievement, design practices demand more dialogic relationships among societal stakeholders. Detachment from the consumer- oriented practice is fundamental for exploring of issues and ideas. In this sense, critical and speculative design are forms of practices that offer space for experimentation with alternative possibilities.

There is an emerging group of designers and interdisciplinary design researchers – drawing from methodological positions in anthropology, design, and philosophy – concerned with the 'social and emergent aspects of creativity in design and the shaping of *things'* (Otto & Smith, 2013: 9). Concomitantly, there is a need to reorient design practices by emphasising new social roles for design operation. It is within this framework, that anthropologists are welcomed in design studios and design workshops.

Both critical and speculative design are part of a broader spectrum within what is known as 'conceptual design', which may or may not be related to the market. 'It became central to business strategies, building shared values and commitment, expanding and marketing the "corporate imagination"' (Mazé, 2016: 40). The larger field of conceptual design is the 'design about ideas' (Dunne & Raby, 2013: 11).

Dunne and Raby coined the term 'critical design' in the 1990s out of their concern with the uncritical drive behind technological progress (2013: 34). Today's critical design approaches are in some way inheritors of former industrial and architecture design. Its intent is to tell stories about human values and behaviours that were neglected in commercial and industrial design practices

[9] http://wayswework.io/features/ethnography-anthropology-and-the-importance-of-both-in-design. Accessed on 15 May 2020.

(Malpass, 2017). For anthropology, critical design offers significant opportunity to partake in critical design studies and practices that reveal, challenge, and intervene in design processes focused on assumed social and economic order. In critical design, objects are employed to raise comprehension of complex issues. Its aim is not at simplification, but 'diversification of the ways in which we might understand design problems and ideas' (Malpass, 2017: 64).

Therefore, it is within these contexts that anthropologists are welcomed in critical practices. Anthropologists are expected to assist in the interpretation of some unseen conditions of the everyday life. Since critical and speculative design often examines the social agency of design, my goal in telling my experience within critical and speculative design process is to bring a wider, more complex entanglement to this practice concerning the 'materials, technologies, capitalism, and culture that makes up the matrix of modern design' (Escobar, 2018). Within these emergent models of design, anthropology and design collaboration might assist in expanding the *affective* function of this domain of design and opening up relations and processes of becoming.

Critical and speculative design are not fixed categories in design discourse and are continually negotiating and reframing their position (Mazé, 2016). For the present work, I focus on the shared critical and speculative approaches of producing 'material theses' (ibid.) or simply, physical critiques. Accordingly, critical design 'provides critique of the prevailing situation through design that embodies alternative social, cultural, technological or economic values' and is translated into materiality (ibid.:28). Critical design often advocates for new kinds of engagement between design and the world (Escobar, 2018).

Speculative design can be defined as a specific form of critical design practice (Malpass, 2017). It is focused on socio-scientific and socio-technical concerns especially on contextual issues that can turn a technology into a product (ibid.). In this approach objects of speculative design aim to draw attention to unnoticed conditions of dominant technological developments and practices in everyday life. Moreover, the realm of critical and speculative design may help people to embrace the idea of realities as plural and always in the making (Escobar, 2020).

Speculative design, for its turn, is a practice where abstract issues are translated into fictional objects or scenarios. One of its aims is to provoke people's perceptions and imaginaries in a tangible way. Through fictional objects, people might unlock their imaginations since these physical fictions are an invitation to 'make-believe' (Dunne and Raby, 2013: 89). Dunne and Raby borrow Kendall L. Walton's theory of 'make-believe" to explain how fictional objects of speculative design operate' (ibid.). According to Kendall's theory, fictional objects prescribe 'imaginings and generate fictional truth' (ibid.:90). Furthermore, "they facilitate imagining and help us entertain ideas about everyday life that might not be obvious (…) They help us think about alternative possibilities – they challenge the ideals, values, and beliefs of our society embodied in material culture" (ibid.).

The significance of speculative design for this dissertation is that it might join forces in countering the crisis of imagination since 'speculative design is intended not to mimic or allow us

to play act but to entertain new ideas, thoughts, and possibilities for an alternative world form the one we and the prop coexist in, what kendall calls "fictional propositions''' (Dunne & Raby, 2013: 92). The fictional elements are closely related to this practice. According to Malpass (2017: 85), speculative design requires an alternative form of thinking to that of dominant technological and design rationality. However, fiction should not be confused with another field of design practice. It is rather a method or a tactic, as Malpass noted (2017). In using fictional storytelling, speculative design helps situate its props or 'conversation pieces' within a fictional context and hence facilitating viewers to "see the world not only how it is, but also as it could be" (ibid.). This means that the designers assume the role of a storyteller and author of fictional scenarios.

What I hope to illuminate is that the kind of design practice where I conducted my fieldwork offers important hints for cultural production and reproduction. Even when these design movements promote an opposition to the current reality, still these contrapositions are still anchored in the dominant, modern-Western mode of existence. Therefore, the dominant cultural patterns are reproduced in the prospect of the future. It is through exploring future imaginaries in critical and speculative design practices that relevant issues are exposed. 'The future exposes basic philosophical questions about our assumptions and world-views' (Mazé, 2016: 38).

Chapter 1 - Design method and thinking and its limits: towards an openness for critical and speculative thinking for alternative future imagining

Design can play a role in social and cultural change by helping to shape the future. Critical design and speculative design practices – that move away from product and technology design – claim to explore ethical and social issues within the context of everyday lives (Dunne & Raby, 2013) as a catalyst for alternative realities and future imagining. This chapter aims to analyse the generative tools and frameworks used in critical design practices.

The interest to know how critical designers apply design methods and thinking has two motivations. The first reason is to understand and learn how designers, in collaboration with each other and with non-designer professionals – anthropologists for example – initiate new imaginaries through their practice. Second, inspired by the concept of correspondence (Gatt & Ingold, 2013), my aim is also to analyse, and if possible, experiment on how design methods can be applied in ethnographic research. Hence, this text is focused on design methods observed during the critical design and speculative design workshops in which I participated during my fieldwork.

My ethnographic process within my fieldwork was characterised by an ongoing maturation of my concerns and the focus of my attention. While I positioned myself differently in each of the three events, my level of commitment was high in all of them. For example, when I applied for a residency at the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, I had little idea of what my role would be, so in this encounter I was more focused on coping with all the activities involved. Later on, I gained more confidence. Furthermore, as the design method was revealed to be very predictable, I had more space for inquiries. In all three workshops, I did not only observe the actors on their practices and processes – I also tried to be actively involved in the process.

That said, before my participation at the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, I did not know what to expect since it would be the first time that I was partaking in such an event. I had no experience in this type of work, so at first, I endeavoured to cope with the rhythm of the process – I did not know at the moment that I was embarking on a path with its own specific methodology and ways of thinking with the adoption of its own toolkit. I started to note that the other participants were acquainted with what appeared to me to be a step-by-step process. For example, during the workshops, the participants were involved in at least three recurrent actions or phases: a research process; a brainstorm phase, where many materials are employed in the process of production. By the time of the last workshop I attended, the method was so predictable that all the estrangement I had felt back in Porto disappeared. Even considering that the three workshops I attended were distinct in their process of organisation, I and the other participants walked through at least those three phases, which I intend to show shortly. While in Rome for the

last critical design workshop, I was able to have a more emancipated look while at the same time feeling comfortable in assuming a more inquisitive attitude.

Most of my analysis here comes from the attention I paid to the way designers worked and used the materials and the objects around them in their critical design processes. In other words, I was intrigued by how designers used drawings skills, collaborative work skills, digital skills, papers and Post-its® Notes. I paid close attention to how they conducted their creative process around those materials. From my observation and active participation in the critical design process, I understood that in all three workshops, there was an uncritical adoption of a closed design method with pre-packaged materials that resulted in reproducing the very conditions from which critical designers in these events wished to break away.

This first chapter offers a description of the design methods and process employed in the contexts in which I participated. The precision and details will follow my own comprehension of what was happening there. My interest during the fieldwork was both to learn how to *think like a designer* and how critical design works to raise questions and incite people to see things differently. The main concern here is to analyse the process where critical designers scrutinise the status and the role of design itself and its clash with broad human concerns.

Design tool kits

A brief framework helps to understand what a design process and methodology is. The design method that is considered and described here is derived from a move toward the professionalisation of design. As mentioned in the previous section, this movement is well illustrated by Bryan Lawson (2005). Lawson distinguished between a 'natural unselfconscious action-based approach' and 'self-conscious and introspective mode of thinking' (ibid.: 19). According to his explanations, we can relate the first approach with a kind of 'vernacular process of design', where no thought on principles is involved (ibid.: 22). Within this vernacular process, traditional craftsmen worked with 'undrawn patterns handed down from generation to generation' (ibid.: 21). The second one is a more intentional process restricted for specific professional categories like architects and designers.

Preoccupation with the definite design method has encountered criticism since the beginning. There were concerns about a closed path eliminating flexibility and sensitivity during processes dealing with a high level of complexity (Ansari, 2015). 'The first generation of design methods were developed in the 1960s with the explicit aim of externalizing and formalizing the design process, demystifying what had hitherto been considered as a largely black boxed process' (ibid).

At the present, with the bloom of branches of design orientations such as social design or design for community – which demand the inclusion of different actors in the design process, design thinking and methodology has been celebrated and adopted by a broad public. Design thinking can be summarised as being a methodological approach – of standardised step-by-step work – for the

development and generation of innovative ideas and/or solutions to complex problems (Iskander, 2018; Ansari, 2016). The most well-known design method and thinking model is the five-step designing process promoted by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University.

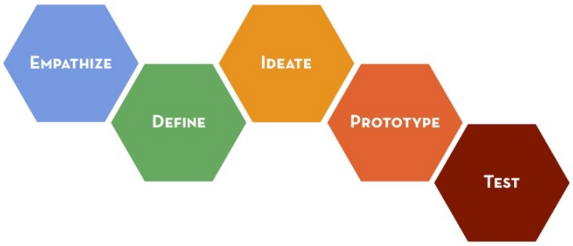

Figure 1 - Under creative common license. Non-commercial attribution – SHAREALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL.

The graphic above is only one design process procedure. Another well-known procedure in the field of design is the Double Diamonds, which was promoted by the Design Consul of the United Kingdom. This process presents itself as a four-step path of design thinking. Despite being promoted as a non-linear process, I found, during my fieldwork, that maybe due to time and resources constraints, designers walk through the design process in a linear way.

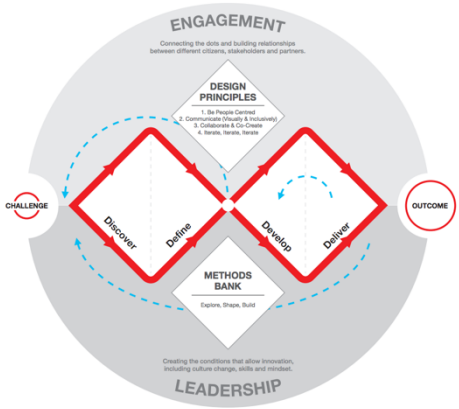

Figure 2 - Design Consul 2019. Non-commercial use only.

The workshop I attended in did not made explicit the kind of design method we would be applying. Nonetheless, the implementation of a linear, step-by-step process consistent with these two approaches to design thinking was apparent. I could identify at least three phases common to all the events I attended. For example, during the first day of the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, our facilitator showed the phases we would follow. After we watched an introductory video, this was the arrangement he showed to us as the direction for this residency:

Figure 3 - Extracted from handout materials for the 'Post Millennial Tension: design and democracy' workshop. Non-commercial use.

This linear design process was recurrent in the following workshops. Knowledge in these kinds of creative processes was part of the decorum, and for lay people to participate in collaborative critical design events such as these, it helps to first get familiarise oneself with this procedure. Still, I was surprised as soon as I realised that in all three workshops, we followed these standardised linear schemes. Critical and speculative design usually promotes itself as a channel of free ideation and creation through the language of design. Within the critical design discussion, there is the idea of a design activity that challenges narrow assumptions (Dunne & Raby: 2013). Despite that, much to my surprise, the critical design events described here had done little to address its own method critically.

Methods for recognition

Returning to the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, the first of the three, we walked through the briefing of our work. As mentioned previously in the introduction, the objective of this residency was to produce graphic posters, which would be installed in three subway stations in Porto, Portugal. These posters had to reflect the conditions of graphic design practice from a 'critical design or political design'[10] perspective. Our facilitator's briefing concentrated on the hidden relation of the design work and the production of things. This has to do with design credibility and design responsibility and, as the facilitator stressed, 'what designers say they do and what they actually do'.

From that, we started discussing about which means of productions we would focus our work on. Our facilitator voiced his intention to produce a map of various means of design production. In his own words: 'These are the software, hardware, graphic tools, network infrastructures, printing companies, inks, (digital) distribution companies, broadcasting channels, social media networks, and the private and governmental organizations who provide schools and exhibitions spaces, etc., that produce value'. He believed that by understanding how graphic design is produced, it might

[10] As indicated by the curators of this Biennale in: https: //portodesignbiennale.pt/en/curators/event/design-systems. Accessed on 5 February 2020.

be possible to learn something about how this process is 'organised, dictated and integrated by contemporary capitalism'.[11]

My lack of experience in design processes at this moment prevented me from recognising that we were entering into a distinct and identifiable set of activities within the design process. Our facilitator instructed us that we should individually choose a form of production and then research and map the means of production. At the end the day, each of us – the participants - would have 15 minutes to present our research. This activity was what I now identify as the research phase. I was investing much of my effort into the conversation, and this phase was comfortable to me because it resembled several academic roundtables I had attended. I cannot tell if it was my interference, but we spent a considerable amount of time discussing the values of design work itself, if designers have a social responsibility and, if so, if this social responsibility affects designers' creativity. The two professors seemed happy with the conversation, but I stared to perceive that the other participants were becoming anxious to 'start the work', as one participant said, as well as the discouraging comment made by another participant: 'Hah, but these are too complex issues; we should not lose by delving into these questions'.

In the meantime, things were taking a different path when it was again our facilitator once again stablished 'the problem' that we would address. As our discussion was converging on the figure of the designer, we were to brainstorm on 'how designers are disciplined through family, school and the work environment'. From this moment on we entered in a design thinking phase that appeared well-rehearsed by my colleges in this workshop. This second phase is sometimes called *mapping, brainstorming*, or any other name that marks the shift from the research phase to the sharing phase, which utilises materials like white boards, Post-its® Notes, coloured markers, images, etc. During this phase, designers use drawing skills and materials to map and create a visual board to display the information they collected during the research phase.

During the mapping phase of the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, each participant received a permanent marker pen – I followed this behaviour, but I had no idea what I was supposed to do with it. Using the craft paper placed on a big table, our facilitator drew a circle and wrote the words 'social', 'education', 'personal' and 'professional' around it. From that, participants wrote words or ideas gathered from our individual research. We spent the second day of this workshop researching and then writing on the paper what each of us thought linked the popularity of design to romantic ideas of creativity, innovation and novelty.

[11] From the facilitator own words.

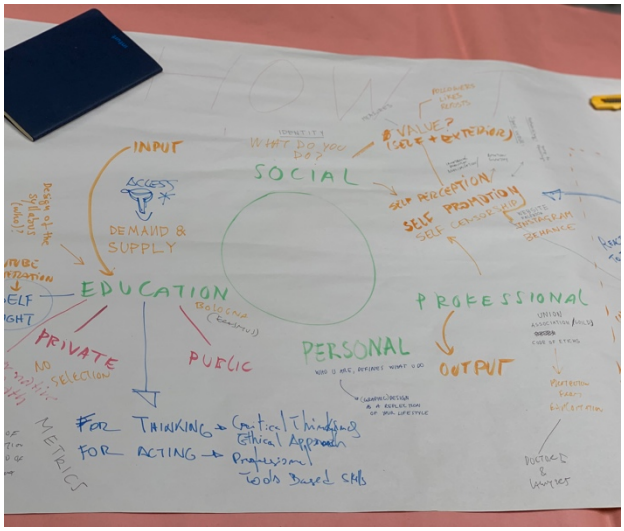

Figure 4 - Craft paper drawn on the table at 'Post Millennium Tension: Design and Democracy' workshop. Photo by the author.

Then our facilitator asked us to think about 'power statements' using our map as a reference. During this activity, some doubt and a discussion about which language we should use on the posters emerged. Fabio, a self-entitled artist/designer, 'polymath author', 'critic explorer', 'curator of people and minds' among other descriptions, proposed that we first think on who we wanted to address and wrote down four possible audience: the general public, Portuguese design students, Erasmus design students in Portugal and tourists and peers/design professionals. Based on that, and as all the participants were native Portuguese language speakers – except for our facilitator, who was from Netherlands – all the participants, including me, concluded that our posters should be written in Portuguese. However, our *facilitator* was concerned that he would not be able to "assess" the messages since he did not understand Portuguese. Also, he argued that the Biennale would be attended not just by Portuguese designers but by an international design community, which is why much of the events would be presented in English. Following this, along with the decision of who to address, most of the participants after a long discussion agreed to deliver the messages in both Portuguese and in English.

I was confused by the fact that the posters we were creating were not intended for the general public. I asked what the purpose was of placing the posters in a public space, like the three subway stations in the second biggest city in Portugal. The workshop facilitator explained to me that because our workshop was featured in the Porto Design Biennale, and we were discussing specific design issues, we should aim to address to the design community to evoke questions from this professional community while at the same time challenging assumptions about design professionals in both the general public and in the design community. I was not convinced – first because, in my mind, it was then a waste of time to even pass through the "research/empathize" phase, and secondly, mainly because the money to realise this workshop – for materials, printing, lunch for

the three days – was provided by both public and private institutions, I felt should offer something to the general public and taxpayers. In my mind, we owned some accountability.

During the course of the production of the posters, another question was raised. Participants started to contemplate the necessity of offering some context to the viewers. Barbara, a Portuguese designer/artist, argued that what we were doing had to do with explaining things to people. She strongly supported an 'external platform to explain to people the context, something that would explain to people passing on the subway station that [the posters] relates to the Biennale; otherwise, people will see something that they will not understand'[12].

This suggestion was disputed between Barbara and Lourenço, a design professor from Portugal. For him, there was no need to explain anything. His opinion favoured on letting the viewers be free to interpret the porters as they pleased. But Barbara was determined to include some explanation so viewers would know those posters were related to the Porto Design Biennale. I asked the group if there is, within the design process, any conversation to consider what comes after someone reads the message [the posters]. I added that this pertains to the responsibility that we discussed at the beginning of our meeting and is something strongly asserted within the critical design realm.

At this point, Valadas, the organiser of this residence and also the owner of the studio hosting this workshop, came to settle this dispute. In what was a very rare intervention and participation from his part, Valadas told us that we should not think about 'side material' to explain the context since the city would be covered with propaganda promoting the event during the Porto Design Biennale. He also added that he did not see it as an exhibition but as an intervention. For that reason, he did not support on any contextualisation because 'it would empty the sense of intervention'. He concluded that it is an art/design work that few will be interested in anyway. Considering this, I was confused and felt unable to give any contribution to this debate since, at that time, what made sense for me was obviously the wrong direction for the other participants. It started to come to light the fact that our critical design practice would work as an instrumental mobilisation [that] tries to make critique meaningful by directing it to those who contribute to the culture being critiqued (Kjaersgaard and Boer, 2016), that is, the designer community itself.

I was not convinced of the purpose of exposing our work on such a popular public space if the messages were self-referential. It just did not make sense to me since, in my opinion, it would be more reasonable to expose our posters within the Biennale environment. I must pause to note here that the previous conversation did not enter the design process. The flow of the activity was upended, and these confronting issues were not expanded within the materials that supported the design method. For me, this says something about what counts as resources worth entering the design method frameworks. Besides that, although we reached an apparent agreement on both the

[12] In the participant's own words.

language and our target public, a great portion of these decisions were influenced by our facilitator. Also, the participants did not partake in the following stages of the process in this specific event. Our facilitator took charge of the very final decision on the posters. The attendants of this workshop did not participate in the process of materialising the posters and finalising their look.

This weak democratic process resulted in a moment of conflict in the last day of this workshop. My disorientation grew bigger during the following up e-mails exchanges. At first, I thought that some of the disagreements that manifested during these e-mails exchanges were due to the lack of communication skills needed to display, in a comprehensive way, the value systems within design works. However, I realised that the concerns were actually due to a lack of personal recognitions for the workshop's participants.

For the duration of the research phase in this workshop, we talked a lot about the effort designers must invest in their portfolio and how a career in design is more like a self-enterprising business, and also, 'because it is a highly competitive realm, the chances of unionization are scarce' as one participant stressed. In this manner, as she continued to describe, 'the market is changing; there is no rule in design, so most of the time professionals have to work on their credibility as a designer more than thinking on the social responsibility of the designers'. Hence, the result of this critical design workshop would be used to increase the participants' collections of works on their social media platforms, as one participant – a design student – revealed. Considering this, we – the workshop's participants - treated these matters as something exterior to the practice in which we were about to engage.

Now, as an afterthought, I learned that during the research phase, designers use the elements of design along with an understanding of context and materiality to construct meanings (Donahue, 2017). For this reason, a true dialogue was needed to first settle some expectations. What I mean is a reflection exercise on the participants' personal concerns. But because of the timeline of the design method, which followed a deterministic order of things, the aforementioned attitude is undervalued.

My understanding of Critical Design stems from Dunne and Raby's (2013: 35) notion of 'testimonials to what could be, but at the same time, [critical design] offers alternatives that highlight weakness within existing normality'. On the other hand, when it comes to the methods, critical design fails to identify divergent views and objectives within its very process. This was the first flaw I could identify when participating in this first workshop. From the moment one enters the design process as a group, participants start to work with standardised tools that obscure ambiguities and block opportunities for confronting deeper issues.

The mapping phase is a problematic one. During this event, we had to reduce complex reflections into single words or statements on the craft paper. By choosing definite categories in association to the statements – even when this can be moved from one category to another – it insinuates connections to pre-stablished categories. This activity limits an ongoing analytic

engagement that could bring other elements into the process. When I realised that the discontentment with the results had more to do with lack of personal recognition – the attribution of some kind of authorship in the final work – than with improvement of our material/communication devices, it became apparent that this was a topic not involved in the process. We did not have chance to honestly situate ourselves in our own positions and specific agendas.

The participant who was most concerned by the lack of recognition was Fabio. When I asked him what it means to be an artist designer and everything else that he claims to be, he answered that he does not need to work with other people's concepts. He is free to put his own concepts into his works. Maybe, this could have been something brought into our work instead of being a topic restricted to lunch time. Fabio insisted on a form of acknowledgment after the workshop. When he finally understood that there would be no additional material, his tone became upset and subtly insulting. In an e-mail exchange, he said he was quite happy with the content chosen for the poster – as we had many. Fabio continued the e-mail saying that the messages chosen were intense and strong and that is why he was suggesting that all the participants to take advantage of the 'opportunity to elaborate on the referential and curatorial content for some support material'.

Fabio criticised the prevalence of 'the graphic result as the only solution' while 'all other parts of the ecosystem where obliterated by the same endemic/endogamic practices of a pseudo intellectual elite talking nothing but muted words to one another'. His irritation was also due to the fact that the only feedback given by the other participants, during the follow up e-mail exchanges had to do with the posters itself and the installations – what he called a typical behaviour of 'designers being designers'. His upset e-mail finished with him suggesting a 'recognisable event' for a 'gathering to acknowledge the participants and co-authorship of the exhibitions' materials'.

For me, the lack of conciliation was surprising mainly because this was a hidden aspect that I would encounter in the following critical design events that I attended. I was most frustrated by the realisation that, instead of engaging with design critically and denouncing the circumstances of work within the design field, all the political criticism was put on second plane in favour of personal intentions. During the lunch time on the second day, of our workshop I asked the participants about their motivations to take part in this workshop. Eve, a Brazilian graphic designer working in the fashion industry, told me that she had a great admiration for our facilitator's work and wanted to know and work with him. For her, having her names and our facilitator on the same design's work would add value to her career. The other participants' answer were similar – most of them were there to have a chance at having their name related in some way to the Biennale. I could not help but think of the oddity in acting according to the very way that our work in this workshop was trying to denounce and criticise.

This is one aspect that I also noticed in the following workshops, that despite the combative rhetoric, the workshop's participants were reproducing the same reasoning we were supposed to

subvert. Design method encloses practitioners in a one-dimensional activity with no room for detour. Design method misses the opportunity to engage people directly with what Sean Donahue (2017) calls 'unity of will'. For Donahue, design practice can be used as a catalyst to initiate, facilitate and support new kinds of conversations (ibid). For this to happen, design practice and its methods should be considered a "conversation space" and should also consider the very design practice as a mode of knowledge production (ibid).

By supporting a unity of will, again citing Donahue, people involved in design practice and method can, at least, have a chance to acknowledge specific agendas, interests and concerns, as well as our own position – be that hosts, facilitators, participants, designers or non-designers. From there, participants can identify different social structures within the design process. Structures that reveal the limits of participations, access to resources, prominence of particular participants and subjugation of others (Donahue, 2017). More crucially, by automatically jumping from the research phase of the design method – either the brainstorm phase or mapping phase – those elements brought during research phase are cut off in favour of a pre-determined problem that is external to the feelings and wishes of the participants of a specific event.

It took me quite a long time to realise that the call for collaborative critical thinking in the events I attended was no more than a opportunity for designers to try to secure a place in the late-capitalist economic dynamic. From my perspective, this is an element that greatly explains why the designers I worked with had an intransigent loyalty to the design method. Since professional designers are supposed to master the design process (Lawson, 2005), it made sense for the designers in these workshops to showcase their ability to develop a critical design output from these methods. It was a way of displaying their abilities through the design process, and at the same time, these designers can show they are well prepared for the 'new [media] hype of the new economy' (Gaspar, 2013: 238).

According to Gaspar (2013), this 'new media hype of the new economy' is part of an idea of progress where the economy would be based on knowledge and ideas. This has to do with an idea where the progress continues in an immaterial direction 'associated to a projection of a dematerialized world' (ibid). From this perspective, the participants' devotedness to the design method is way of distinguishing themselves as a professional class for immaterial production. This is where my scepticism lies: can critical design be a force for cultural change without a reflection on the design method and process as a universal tool kit for critical and immaterial production?

The place for anthropology within design methods

The second workshop I attended, called 'NoSchool*',* seemed more promising. Let us remember that this two-week event was designed as a hybrid between learning, residency and research and was aimed at students, artists, designers, makers, hackers and educators who wished

to further their skills and engage in critical research and discussions around the social and environmental impacts of information and communication technologies[13]. Therefore, I expected to encounter professionals that would be more concerned about their/our collateral social and environmental impacts of design work than with simply promoting themselves. This expectation was unwise since it would influence the direction of my analysis. Either way, I did not consider this back them and just came to realise this anthropological fault when receiving the first comments from my supervisors. Nevertheless, I believe my analysis can still offer some light on the issue of recurrent paths in critical and speculative design practices.

As stated earlier, the 'NoSchool' workshop lasted for two weeks. Most of the first week was designated for the *facilitators'* presentations – there were about 10 lectures/presentations during these two weeks. I could identify the presentation part as an element of the 'research stage' presented in all the design process I participated in. At the 'NoSchool' workshop, all the participants were involved in the same 'research phase', meaning that we were all together for this part and just later in the week, organisers and facilitator*s* started dividing people into workgroups. Participants were offered the chance to join a workgroup that fitted their interests. The workgroups were divided into hardware, network, instructables, art and publication. Each workgroup was linked to specific projects. For example; the hardware workgroup was oriented to produce materials from discarded objects; the network workgroup worked on creating local network hotspots; the instructables workgroup's task was to produce a manual so any person could reproduce some of the hardware objects created by the hardware workgroup.

Since I did not attend these events with a pre-determined goal in mind, I told Jim, the organiser of this workshop, that I would be joining the publication, the hardware and the arts workgroups all together and would decide as I go – Jim agreed with this idea. I soon realised that the groups themselves were divided into smaller groups of two or three. As the workshop continued, I discovered that in reality, most of the participants went to this event already with a preconceived idea. The people that felt the most out of place were those from a social science background. We were three in total: Emma, a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy, Olivia, who was researching the 'maker culture', and me, the only anthropology student.

The realm of critical design is one of many movements that aim to add sensitive values to design. This is not a new venture. Back in the 1960's, Victor Papanek launched an influential work called *Design for the Real World,* where he calls for design accountability. Papanek's book was one of the first works on critical design and one of the first to demand high social and moral responsibility from the designers. *Design for the Real World* is still greatly important for critical designers, and, as I could witness, it is a must read within these groups. In all three workshops I participated, Papanek's book was cited and celebrated.

[13] http: //www.noschoolnevers.com/. Accessed on 11 February 2020.

Accompanying this notion of the designers' social responsibility is the need for a better understanding of society. In this regard, as introduced in the context section of this dissertation, there had been a demand for social scientists to turn design into a creative and innovative practice oriented to the 'true' needs of society. It is in this context that we, professionals from the humanities and social sciences, find ourselves encouraged and welcomed in design studios and workshops like the ones in which I was accepted in. In such circumstance, anthropology came to be the preferred ally for critical design. Gunn et al. (2013) argue that what captures designers' attention towards anthropology is the opportunity to bring context theorisation and cultural interpretation to the design process, mainly through ethnography.

However, this enchantment with ethnography is very problematic, mostly because, as it appeared to me, ethnography is deemed to be merely a tool for the first phase of the design method – the research phase – and is also meant to create an 'empathetic connection' to the people that will be affected by the design solution. After this first stage of the design process, organisers, facilitators and fellow participants struggled to keep the non-professional designers involved in the process. This difficulty, surprisingly at a 'participatory, democratic and collaborative' activity, arose from assumptions and settled expectations of the role of anthropologists in these events.

In an interview, Allyson, a creative technologist participating in the 'NoSchool' workshop, indicated the place of social sciences for her work in this event. According to her, she was most excited for this workshop because it offered 'this really nice super-layer of theoretical consideration'[14] that came from anthropology and philosophy's ability to challenge assumptions and values. In other words, also from my fieldwork experience in the first two workshops, the position of anthropologists within the design method is to make visible what is invisible, ask pertinent questions and define social problems, [while] designers are dedicated to developing solutions to problems[15]. What my social sciences colleagues and I experienced was what Gaspar (2013) also noted in her ethnography: 'a tension between description and creative/innovation' and, as one of her informants explained, 'the analysis stage is just instrumental to the synthesis' (ibid.: 201). Accordingly, anthropologists are just one more instrument together with the computers, papers and Post-its® Notes. Hence, Emma, Olivia and I ended up feeling unfit and lost during the rest of this event – this translates to a full week.

Despite this burdensome circumstance, we managed to fill our time with some productive activities. Emma started to work with the publication group. Her job was to summarise all others' work for a booklet description of this event. She abandoned the workshop within three days from

[14] Video recorded interview by all participant in this event and publicly shared at: https: //vimeo.com/361068688

[15] https: //blog.antropologia2-0.com/en/the-value-of-anthropology-in-design-thinking-2/. Accessed on 11 February 2020.

the final exhibition to participate in a sport event in the Pyrenees. Olivia split her time between making beetroot tint for the printer – which one group from the critical maker division was creating; although no one ever tried it – and getting to know more in depth the lovely little city where we were spending these two weeks. I stayed with the critical making group and latter with the art group and worked on two projects. One was to fix an old toy for one facilitator's daughter, which I enjoyed greatly. The other was to disassemble another old, but perfectly working toy to use its music functions in an old painting.

I was perplexed by the missing criticism within our practice after all the presentations and discussions about the social context of design products and its impacts on society and on the environment. I was not comfortable in destroying a working toy to make an *art piece* for the sake of the *vita activa*[16] of making, of designing things into existence (Tonkinwise, 2017). My fieldnotes are filled with expressions such as 'where is the critique in this project?' and 'why do I have to destroy a working toy to create a piece of *bad critical art* that will later be disposed of into the trash, increasing even more the sources of pollution?' 'Is it not the antithesis of creating new relationship with design?'

Early in the second week of this workshop, all the participants gathered to visit a recycling plant; the last one without a non-mechanised process in France. Alongside our guide's explanations of the recycling process, I and some other participants, in short but frequent occasions, expressed feelings of apprehensions while on this visit. For example, one participant brought the notion of designing for collapsed scenarios and what this could implicate. For instance, as this conversation went on, it implicates new attitudes toward the existing infrastructure, a sense of inheriting and dealing with the built infrastructure and the notion of degrowth and scaling back.

For me, these conversations implied a concern about the global level of unsustainable material production and consumption. Thus, I assumed that, as a candidate of a master's in anthropology, I was in tune with 'the native perspective'. But I was wrong. Later on, when we moved on to what can be identified as a mapping or brainstorm phase, it seemed that I missed something. I did not understand the urge to produce. Therefore, my disquiet and inquisitive attitude provoked some tension between me and the other participants. For example, one participant, Megan, was working on making speakers from everyday objects using copper tapes. I asked her how her final object would draw attention to our relationship with the material world and would relate to all the worry we had spent a week talking about. She responded to me that fusing crochet and sewing skills to create electronic objects was her topic of interest. But what I asked was in which way her object – as a critical object – captured and transmitted cultural criticism.

The talking with Megan made me feel frustrated for two reasons. First, as it was revealed later when sending this dissertation draft to my supervisors, I was failing in my field work to

[16] Hanna Arendt (1998).

understand the native point of view, as expected from an anthropological work. And, personally, back at the time of my fieldwork, I had the feeling that I was being treated each day as an outsider. I now see that my fault was to insist on focusing my perspective on the evidence instead of investing more in the ethnographic techniques.

Yet, my perception from this workshop and the previous one, is that critical design still follows a close linear design method that assigns specific roles to designer and anthropologists or other non-designer professionals. Like what occurred in the previous workshop in Porto, here the configuration of the design method made it difficult to include non-designers in the process. More than that, after reflecting on my experience, like the examples shown earlier, critical design processes applied a very conservative method based on pre-determined activities, like mapping through the simplification of concepts. It seemed that when one enters the design process, there is no way back. Design method rules, and there is no choice but to cruise through all its phases, and in doing so, there is no space for further analysis or research.

I believe that, in some way, my companions in these workshops wanted a more just future for our planet and society, as our conversations and the whole theme of these events implied – and I will not deny that I too had fallen blindly for the critical design charm – but I cannot miss the opportunity in helping demystifying the messianic claim that 'design [its methodology as the design thinking] can help change the world' by critique and alternative future imagining (Papanek, 1971). This rescue discourse surfaced in Victor Papanek's work, when he raised the quest of critical thinking about design practice as a 'powerful tool with which man shapes his tools and environments (and by extension, society and himself)' (ibid.) and had been advanced by designers committed to resituate their practices of design within a commitment to facilitate social change towards a more sustainable future (Tonkinwise, 2015). Nevertheless, besides the good intentions, when designers involved in critical design practices cannot free themselves from their devotion to design method, they are reproducing a modern logic that they are unable to criticise.

In this respect, the unveiling of the conservative character of design method had been called by a number of authors[17]. In her ethnographic account, Andrea Gaspar already noted the presence of an 'epistemic asymmetry' that establishes a differentiation between experts and lay people that are characteristic of modern logic within conceptual design practices (2013: 180). What Gaspar found was that, even when the distance between designers/producers and users/consumers is supposed to be broken, the modern dualistic and asymmetric relationship is reproduced through the hierarchy between analysis and synthesis – which in this text is referenced to as the research phase and the subsequent hands-on stage of the design process.

Furthermore, what my experience demonstrated was that even when designers invite user/consumers or professionals from other areas, they still do not know how to dissolve this

[17] Andrea Gaspar (2013); Ahmed Ansari (2016); Natasha Iskander (2018) to mention a few.

hierarchy. Take for example the case described earlier in this section where, after the research phase, participants with a social science background were not included in the following phases of the design practice. This can also be cause during these events lacked a discussion on how design processes reproduce social inequalities – such as hierarchies placed by levels of education, by how well-known one is, between male and female, gender or sexual orientation and even racial bias.

These design methods and practices thus do not uphold their co-collaborative and democratic claims, as the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop and the 'NoSchool' workshop example showed. In the first case, the design method failed to be democratic since the participants did not have the opportunity to engage in the final stages of the process and settle personal agendas which led to frustration and angry e-mail exchanges. And even when the second event promoted itself as subversive, it failed to fully include non-design professionals, maintaining the conservative model of creativity and authorship related to a modernistic logic (Gaspar, 2013) that critical designers eagerly criticise. I do not believe that this happens intentionally. However, I found a very weak willingness to detour from the safe path of design method. Such a fact is problematic, but it can also be an opportunity for anthropology to engage even more in these practices to help create new frameworks that are not tied to rigid methods.

Maybe, it is within this gap that design can benefit more from collaborating with anthropology. If designers set aside assumptions about anthropology being synonymous with ethnography, anthropologists can help un-map[18] the design method and collaborate to create unique, shared, creative experiences. This can lead to a practice of anthropology in correspondence to design that Tim Ingold (Gat & Ingold, 2013) anticipated, which was what the one I sought when applying for these events but had not succeeded. As Costanza-Chock asserts:

> (…) good intentions are not necessarily enough to ensure that design processes and practices become tools of liberation, and to develop principles that might help practitioners avoid the – often unwitting – reproduction of existing inequalities (Costanza-Chock, 2018).

The relation I make between these experiences and the claim that it is necessary to critically examine design methodology is to show how closed it is and the necessity to expose the limits of critical design when it is done through an apparent collaborative practice using today's step-by-step design methods. It is important to be open to alternatives to the methodological rules. For example, ones that recognise and truly welcome the values and innovative potentials of collaboration instead of the step-by-step path and sequential use of material tools – Post-its® Notes,

[18] *Un-Map* is a term used by media designer Sean Donahue (2017) to describe strategies and techniques for full engagement in the design process.

white-boards, software, etc. Furthermore, it is worth to point the prevalence of modern-Western values such as notions of development, socio-technical innovation and epistemic authority within the politics of design practice. Additionally, and more critically, this highlights another issue in the design method: its role in the continued modern-Western epistemological power by using the artifice of pre-settled materials and a given method and calling it a universal way of doing things.

Design method, as I experienced it, relies on a range of materials and assumptions that, as Iskander stressed (2018), 'turn the everyday ability to solve problem into a rarefied practice, limited only to those who self-consciously follow a specialized methodology'. Hence, design method and thinking reinforce the status quo. Tristan Schultz (2018) concurs with this notion and goes further, saying that 'when designers design with our designerly tools, methods, and mapping techniques, [designers] risk un-mapping plurality'. And, because of this, this practice – the way it is now being disseminated – is ill suited for evoking critical thought and communicating on the most complex and urgent problems facing society today. Considering the context of this dissertation, design method within critical design practices fails to allow space for alternative narratives and alternative possible futures.

Therefore, when during my filed work I saw how we [workshops' participants and me] routinely moved from one phase to another uncritically, it appeared to me that this particular active framework does not allow new potentialities to emerge. Once it is a closed path of a 'step-by-step march through a set of stages' (Iskander, 2018), it set a deadline limiting participants to come together to engage, exchange ideas, understand each other and maybe, detour form linear orientations. At the 'NoSchool' event, I did not feel prepared to jump to the next phases of design process. Jim was putting some pressure on me to decide what I was going to 'make'. After all, I did not want to bring a new object into being because this was the opposite of what they themselves made me reflect on during the first phase of the workshop.

What if we speculate about speculative design methods?

The way I understood it, the design method does not provide critical design enough means to 'pose questions, raise thought, expose assumptions, provoke actions, spark debate, raise awareness, offer new perspectives, and inspire' as it is supposed to do (Dunne & Raby, 2013: 43). Mainly because it is attached to specific historical and material practices that produce narrow inquiries, which leads to narrow narratives. On the other hand, speculative critical design pledges to do so by presenting issues as fictional speculative products – instead of critical communications – to explore ethical and social issues within the context of everyday life (ibid). Therefore, when I applied to participate in a speculative critical design residency/workshop – which my supervisor suggested to me – I had less faith in the design method but expected to see a critical practice through speculation, one able to resist a future predicted and speculated by other authoritative realms, a

future other than a plausible one. One of the lectures from the third workshop stated that 'critical speculative design provides a space for young designers to deconstruct the different mechanism that exist within design practice'.

The call for the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop was to imagine and design possible and preferable future scenarios for rurality for five pre-selected locations: Caselle in Pittari, Italy; Lushoto in Tanzania; Arjeplog in Sweden; Chernobyl in Ukraine, and the Moon. We consisted of forty participants divided into five groups. One facilitato*r* was assigned to each group, and each location was assigned to a group through a drawing. My group was allotted Lushoto in Tanzania. But, as it is the convention, we all gathered in a room to listen to presentations as a warm-up.

The inaugural talking was delivered by one coordinator, Vincenzo, and focused on the issues of changes in rural environments in the near future through 'the impact of global phenomena affecting our planet, like climate change, immigration, new technologies, energy issues, the mutation of cities and work and the transformation of economies'. His talk had a worrying tone similar to the previous workshops. Then, the next speaker, Tommaso, took the stage. He was a cyber-digital culture researcher. His main topic was speculative design telling techniques, which he explained, include 'the suspension of disbelief", 'creative imagination of future', and 'interpretation of futures'. It also must involve elements of design fiction, which is the construction of fiction narrative influenced by science fiction, as I came to know.

Unsurprisingly, I could recognise a whole set of repetitive practices rooted in the design method. As part of the design method routine, we started on the first stage doing what the organisers of this encounter indicated for us to do: research changing trends in Tanzania. Although, as one participant of my group in 'NeoRural Futures' latter reckoned, there was no concrete methodology or set of tools for our practice yet, the participants started applying the design method to which I was becoming used to. The details were as follows: my design team started to extract the information gathered individually from the Internet – about trends of changes – and transferred it to descriptive Post-its® Notes. We did not have enough Post-its® Notes so we placed the board on the floor and started using pieces of paper as replacements for the Post-its® Notes. We then combined and recombined the used Post-its® Notes and the pieces of paper under general topics on the board. The general topics were repeated topics found during the research phase like water scarcity, energy and land grabbing from foreign funds, among others. The purpose of this activity in the design method was to create a map, a mental/mind map. Thereby, we created a 'trend map'.

My team at 'NeoRural Futures' made me feel comfortable enough to bring some questions to the table. First, I refused the use of the Post-its® Notes - like in the previous workshops – not because of any environmental impact, but because in my view it fosters a throw-away behaviour that encourage overconsumption. But, for the first time, the people I was working with wanted to know more about my concerns. I tried to communicate as clearly as I could my disappointment with this way of doing things – the method we were using, the design method and thinking. I ask

then if it was obligatory for us to work this way, as everybody in the room was walking through a set of activities and resources.

At the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop I was lucky to be combined with design professionals that are engaged in broad social issues. My team was composed of six graphic designers, most of them working on social related issues such as social design, transition design and critical design. Our tutor was Cassandra, a graphic designer, who was working with critical data and interested in feminist theory. Perhaps, because most of my team members wanted their work to be critically and socially informed, I found within this group an open space to detour from the rigorous design method.

We spent considerable time discussing the ethics of our assignment. From this conversation, Esteban, a designer working in the realm of transition design, suggested that we write down some thoughts that came up during our talk. We then took turns in voicing out some of our concerns. One phrase that surfaced from a compilation of others was the following: 'how can we imagine a future for other people without putting our own desires and limitation of imagination?' The concern of our group was not to be seen as 'neo-colonisers', as Esteban expressed.

Our assignment soon became a burden since our discussion lead again and again to the conclusion that such a task was impossible, and even the attempt could bring implications outside of this workshop – my teammates were worried because our work would be available on the Internet and even with the best intentions, it could be misinterpreted and damage their career. Emily, a graphic designer, related to me that she was having a 'crisis'. She was questioning her professional choices and did not see her work in the design profession as a meaningful one. Design was losing its nice appeal. Emily went for a walk for the rest of the second day of the workshop and was only seen again the next morning, more willing to work again. By this time, the organisers were concerned that our group had not move on from the research stage. The pressure to produce was strong.

From there, our team decided to produce a sarcastic piece. Our critical speculative object was a 'Massai spear' that the user had to throw on the floor to have 6G Internet connection. As it is common in speculative design, the object is presented within a fictional narrative. In this sense, our designed object was meant to be used by locals and the digital nomads that would be living in Lushoto by 2030. But this object was not created by our team, but by a fictional character we called Alex (we decided to pick a gender-neutral name). We got rid of the responsibility of being neo-colonialists by presenting a work made by an imagined critical speculative designer – Alex. We included in [his/her] work everything we were criticising and could go wrong with such a task. It worked as a meta critic of design. We called it 'We did something for Africa' because this is what Alex thought she/he was doing. But after the delivery of her/his work, Alex was harshly condemned by an anthropologist called Victória Turner on a real time Twitter exchange. This led Alex to reflect upon her/his work and to have a career crisis similar to the one that Emily had.

My team did not fall to the pressure to move on through the design method. Our product ended up being our reasoning process. We spent so much of the work talking and sharing insights from critical studies, decolonial and feminist theory, that our mental process become our final project. At the end, we received some positive feedback from the organisers. One of the organisers classified our work as one addressing a pressing issue within the critical speculative design realm with very strong critique and called it 'a useful project that can resonate in the current realm of critical speculative design as knowledge'.

In this last example, most of my team members were receptive of deviating from the 'under-speculation' element[s], the 'pre-ordained' way problems should be addressed in [this] event (Wilkie & Michael, 2017). For this reason, we opened up an opportunity for other entities that are not apparent to emerge. In the case of the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop, this happened when in our encounter, we allowed ourselves to dissent from determinate ends requested in advance by the workshop organisers. My group in this event did not remain confined behind the design ego mask and allowed their – and my – vulnerabilities and insecurities to manifest.

Conclusion

The outcome of these manifestations of vulnerabilities, of the unapologetic dissidence, in my perception, can be related to what Tim Ingold proposes as the "correspondence" approach of anthropology practice (Gatt & Ingold, 2013). A corresponding approach to anthropology is the one that does not describe or represent [the world], but answers to it (ibid). Moreover, in my experience in the 'NeoRural Future' workshop, designers and I [the anthropologist] unlocked a space for dialogue and found an alternative way to carry on. In the end, the product of our critical speculative design practice was a dialogically designed 'anthropological artefact' (Gatt & Ingold, 2013). Gatt and Ingold (2013) define a dialogically designed anthropological artefact as one that 'arose from and through the collaborative learning process of fieldwork'. Hence, our work on this event can be considered as a 'tangible trace of the working of correspondence' (ibid).

I had little time to talk to my teammates about how design methods, and more importantly, its technique and materials work against alternative future imagining. But I reckon that during the second day of the workshop, I had a chance to express my feelings about the material elements of the design method we were using to construct the scenarios we were supposed to create. I explained that I had attended other critical design workshops and was intrigued by the repetition of the method in each of them. And now, again, as soon as we were given the signal to start, people began to arrange themselves around the board and the Post-its® Notes. I told them I did not understand why we had to take this path or use this method to generate creative innovations if there is an immense

range of design solutions[19] that do not require this closed route that ended up reinforced a kind of epistemological authority, and one way of doing things.

Luckily, my moaning was received with acceptance, and Esteban even mentioned something that I cannot recollect now about Arturo Escobar's book *Designs for the Pluriverse* that pertains to the theme of giving space to other ways of doing things. Furthermore, now in retrospect, this matter can be related to what Ansari (2016) argues on 'design method [being] a way of thinking that supresses and marginalizes local [or no-designers'] knowledge, thought and expertise', especially on its final stages. Also, as Ansari (2016) argues, design tools and methods are charged with political and cultural views – 'these methods are not culturally neutral'. Therefore, the whole design process is framed by a predetermined global north worldview.

> Design thinking thus becomes a means to extending the colonial matrix of power, what decolonial thinkers like Mignolo and Anibal Quijano have identified as the global Western hegemony over system of economy, sovereign authority, subjective and knowledge under the rubric of growth and development – it becomes a way of thinking that suppresses and marginalizes local knowledge, thought and expertise (Ansari, 2016).

The talk with my teammates ended with a rhetorical question: what changes do we – as a group in this event – have to make to avoid designing a world using a pre-given frame from the global north matrix of power? In my view, we had to think about this if we did not want to be seen as neo-colonialist, as Esteban worried. At that time, neither my teammates nor I had an answer to this. We did what was within our reach at that moment. And I admit that from this moment on, lead mostly by Esteban, my partners put a great effort to come out with a creative idea. Still we were again stepping up to the mapping/brainstorm phase of the design method. Be that as it may, I now realise that there are some alternative directions. Such alternative directions would need to address systemic inequalities and biases and would allow alternative arrangements.

Months after I finished my fieldwork, I exchanged e-mails with some of the workshop's organizer and participants. Encouraged by my supervisors, I exposed parts of my unfinished writings and conclusions with them. Many did not return my e-mails, which was understandable due to the fact that these attempts at contacts were made in a context of global turmoil due to the pandemic of COVID-19 pandemic, where most are trying to cope with life under lockdown and social isolation. At the time I write this text, the pandemic crisis was still present, but I had received a few responses. However, these few responses gave satisfactory answers to this chapter's issue.

[19] Ansari (2013) gives an example from the Muslim and Indian sub-continent. There, there are a local designers and design schools working on recovering their own design traditions and creating new local ones.

The prevailing subject in these e-mail exchanges was my conclusions about the prevalence of a standard method in critical design practices and the lack of criticism in the very use of the same routines and performances. Valadas, the organiser of the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, very generously told me that the materials are not the object of investigation within critical practices. The emphasis, according to him, is on how politicised the process can be. For him, critical design does not engage critically with the methodology itself but is concerned with politicising the method. For me, this is the very challenge that critical design should overcome.

Another response was from Aricia, a 'NeoRural Future' workshop attendee. She told me that, in her opinion, critical and speculative design is not a defined method but rather a way of thinking with materials. Accordingly, the materials available to you also define the way of thinking. She reminded me of the lack of materials and limitations back on the workshop we took part in and how the insufficiency of materials put limitations on the creative process. She concluded attesting that the material used are some kind of a tool to help you speculate. But for me, again, this is an unseen issue. I still find it is the weakest aspect of critical and speculative design practice. I intent to keep these conversations open for further debate.

Perhaps what is needed is a pluriverse of methods generated by the many unique entities arranged round a determinate design event. This requires great collaboration efforts that do not seem to exist in today's design method and practices. Besides that, academic institutional context does not offer alternatives to design students outside the 'universal' design method and process. For this reason, to promote alternative epistemologies, saying things in other ways and with other interlocutors, is a challenge for both design and for anthropology. A vitally important argument of this dissertation is that alternative futures imaginings are just possible if we succeed in creating the conditions of its own irruption in the middle of the current system of knowledge production (Moraes & Coelho, 2013).

For anthropology, this involves resisting the demands of modern epistemology 'that incite us [anthropologists] toward a disposition to be attentive to practices that make worlds even if they do not satisfy our [modern] demand to prove their reality' (Blaser & de la Cadena, 2018). One daring example is Andrea Gaspar's eventful pedagogies. In her 'laboratory in visual anthropology', she uses with her students the effect of the idiotic, its disruption of a taken for granted normality, to rise questions of what is considered normal and other issues (Gaspar, 2018). By being open to emergent events, it is possible to challenge what it means to act within a set of skills, methods and, in the case of anthropology, research imperatives (Oliveira, 2018). As Gaspar also explains:

> ‘Although the idiot cannot be predicted beforehand, it is not just accidental. Cultivating the coming into being of novel and unexpected events should not be seen as just another form of conceptualism; it is a (context-dependent) pragmatics’ (Gaspar, 2018).

In summary, design methods and thinking limit the potential for critical thinking and future imagining because it blocks the rise of alternative potentials that stem from connections and collisions within critical design events, whether due to bias, economic pressures, blind spots or other personal reasons. Maybe, the value of an anthropology-by-means-of-design (Gatt &Ingold, 2013) lies in exposing these inconsistences of the design method and deliberately engaging participants in a process of generative interpretation that even may only be visible in retrospect. Iskander (2016) calls this approach an ‘interpretive engagement’, but it can take many forms from promoting idiotic encounters (Gaspar, 2018) to a correspondence among the everyday lives of people in an event, as Ingold suggests.

I suspect that critical design misses the opportunity to transgress, and it has much to do with designers’ dependency on a closed and limited methodology and thinking. Nevertheless, I still believe in critical design for alternative futures. Yet, for critical and speculative design practices to develop alternative and innovative views of the world and the future, it is imperative to dethrone design process gatekeepers and to allow for engagement at the same level (Iskander, 2018). This means resisting the closure that is so characteristic of completed design thinking solution (ibid) by, if feasible, promoting an ongoing engagement for collaborative reassessment and radically opening the design process.

Chapter 2 - Artefacts of anxieties

This chapter is focused on the way the artefacts produced in workshops capture late capitalism's anxieties and feelings. The main question is how the materiality of the artefacts exposes the participants' shared late capitalism experience. For instance, shared worldviews that informed the designed outcomes at the events analysed here also might be grasped. I formulated my arguments following Molotch's (2011) idea that by focusing on the object produced by those who propose (or enact) changes in the local material world, useful information about society can be generated. In this sense, objects are seen as a kind of prothesis of our own mind, and therefore we can consider that 'things can be a way to elicit cultural information' (ibid.: 107). Thus, the workshops' outcomes, as a realised imagined future or prolonged present, can reveal something about the worldviews and present experiences of the participants.

The relationship between worldview and design is mutually reinforcing (Wahl, 2016). Despite that, the following analysis is more an attempt to grasp what the produced objects can tell about the participants' experience in society than a closed proposition. The suggestion here is to perceive the co-created final products designed in these workshops as a tangible blueprint of feelings about the world. Additionally, I suggest that an after examination of the materials produced in these workshops might facilitate reflexive interventions.

In this section, I explore how the participants' shared present experiences, influenced by specific worldviews, translated into objects. My attempt is to link the participants' shared social imaginaries to the critical and speculative design outcomes that arose from future imagining practices. By doing this, I argue that specific social contexts are exposed through these artefacts and therefore reveal specific futures imaginaries in these critical design workshops. The approach behind this analysis is the understanding that 'how we see the world influences the real or perceived needs that inform our intentions' (Wahl, 2016) and, thus, our design choices.

Market-oriented design processes produce and reproduce lifestyles and imaginaries. Thus, design takes part in giving form to what will be the future (Mazé, 2016). Critical design and critical speculative design, in contrast, aim to provoke reflections about current norms within the production of artefacts and general design practices. Within my fieldwork, many artefacts were produced to debate the condition of graphic design as a profession and its future; to denounce design practices that induce objects desires and its obsolescence and disinterest, and to speculate about desirable and non-desirable futures. From the workshops' outcomes, it is possible to infer some particular ideals of the future.

Within the workshops where I conducted my fieldwork, the unfolded, shared future imaginaries pictured a hostile social and environmental future. These imagined futures, represent different perspectives, preferences and, indeed, different realities (Mazé, 2016). The opening presentations within the workshops reinforced future imaginaries by showing images, stories and

narratives of a world in crisis and the display of particular features of todays' pressing problems – which differed in each workshop, as shown in the previous chapter. Thus, still agreeing with Mazé (2016), the choices made during the design process are far from neutral. I argue that critically revisiting the workshops' artefacts, critical and speculative designers and anthropologists can assess assumptions derived from our [designers' and anthropologists'] social positions, contexts and worldviews. As a result, this assessment might allow the recognition of underling norms and the exploration of alternatives that could have been overlooked during the design process.

Anxiety: The precarity of professional life

It is a common thought among non-designers hat purpose of the design work is to design a single object. However, during my literature research and ethnography, I learned that critical design translates critical thought into materialities (Dunne & Raby, 2013). I put the word 'materialities' in the plural form to stress that the outcomes of critical design and speculative design represent more than singular objects. Often, the end result comprises the object per se, a text or booklet for publication, and involves an exhibition. The workshops I attended did not detour from this expectation. In all three events described in this work, participants produced not only designed artefacts but text documents and exhibitions. However, for the purpose of this chapter, I decided to focus on the final artefact – the posters themselves.

Returning to the first workshop, 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy', anxieties related to the contemporary modalities of production motivated all the process of designing the posters. Participants were uneasy concerning the shift of models of work – and model of being – and these anxieties toward this shift manifested in the workshop's outcome. It naively surprised me; once I believed that designers – and other creative and technology professionals – were the most prepared for the new contemporary 'immaterial' commodities.

Gaspar (2013) exposed this conundrum as an ambivalent feeling about the new intrinsic flexibility within the culture of innovation and creativity. According to Gaspar, the struggles she observed among her informants were the hardship to conciliate their values – freedom, professional autonomy, mobility – with the constraints that this freedom entails – uncertainty, risk, the impossibility of planning life (ibid:213). The 'end of an era of stability' (Gaspar, 2013) was also pointed out by Bruno Latour:

> '(…) the present historical situation is defined by a complete disconnect between two great alternative narratives – one of emancipation, detachment, modernization, progress and mastery, and the other, completely different, of attachment, precaution, entanglement, dependence and care (…)' (Latour, 2008: 2).

At the Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy workshop, the posters we produced displayed this new, professional self-anxiety where designers must invest in themselves and assume that failure reveals the inability to adapt and deal with uncertainties and changes. In this context, I found that social network platforms play a significant role in this anxiety. When talking to Dianne, a participant of this workshop, she told me that every designer she knew, famous or not, had a profile's accounts on social media. Social media is a business tool where designers can post photos of their work for free and hope their photos received enough recognitions , or likes, to differentiate their work stand out from other designers.

Within online social media or networks, the Instagram® is an 'important tool to present yourself and your work' as Dianne stressed. 'Instagram® is where everyone is', she continued. 'By posting on the Instagram®, designers can convert viewers into clients'. It also changed the way graphic design reaches the public and set the rhythm for a new 'post-print era'. Most of the participants of this event, and as far as I can recall, of the other ones, are registered in this online social network. Still, the issue of 'being on' Instagram® or not, occupied considerable time during our research phase.

Aside from being a useful tool for a designer, the Instagram® also is a boosting for career anxiety. During a group talk, on the second day of our encounter, someone mentioned that for a designer to be considered active, she or he should have at least ten thousand followers on this platform, so building one's 'following portfolio' is part of the career plan for designers. Also, in this conversation, Joanna mentioned that it is 'really important to learn how to navigate and build yourself as a designer on the social media platform'. This implies comparing one's content with other designers and consistently posting content.

I remember that, still during the second day of this workshop, one participant who is also a design professor at the University of Coimbra, lamented how his design students viewed design as an end by itself and not as a process of thought. His commentary quickly provoked the intervention of another participant – Dianne, who was also a design student - who blamed the students and young designers' focus on the final product on the glamourisation of the design profession. Young designers are eager to maintain a consistent production rhythm to showcase on social media and secure professional opportunities that many do not maintain a reflective process of thought. This was when our facilitator – a well-known graphic designer – added to this conversation the theme of values and stereotypes in the design profession that is fostered by 'this culture of display' brought on by social media networks, mainly the Instagram®.

When our facilitator raised the question of using the Instagram® or not, the response was mixed. The two student participants noted that for them this social network offered a 'free' platform to show their work, see what other designers are doing and connect with potential clients or job opportunities. At the same time, these two students stressed the pressure they feel to keep a rhythm

of Instagram® posting in a kind of digital production that was practically impossible to achieve and maintain; this pressure was one cause of a constant anxiety.

Our facilitator then proposed to us an exercise based on an online workshop platform called 'Precarity Pilot' [20]. This exercise comprised of analysing the values and the stereotypes within the freelancer economic environment. He started with his personal account on his own career situation. He asked us what was needed for one person to reach 'the conventional understanding of success'.

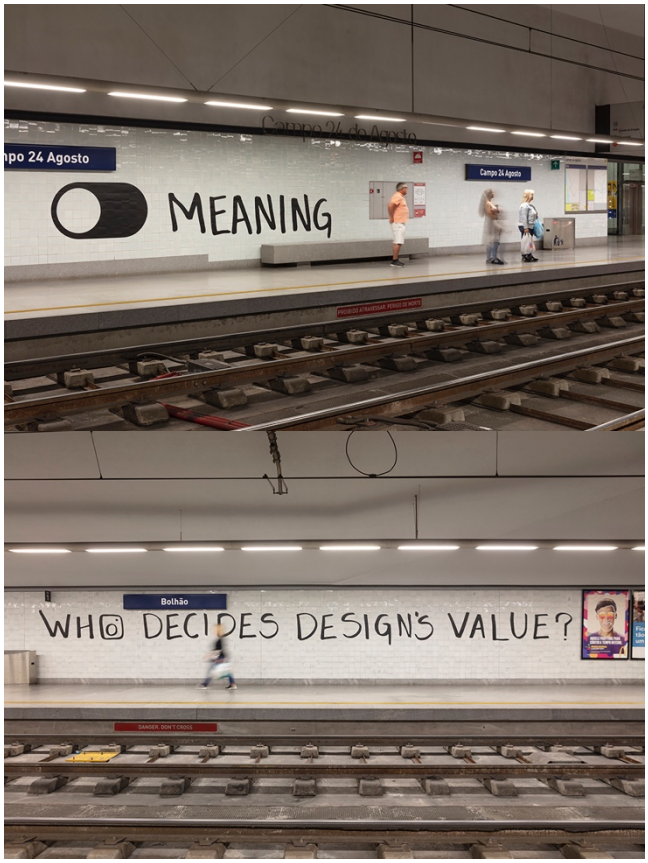

Figure 5 - Photos are from Inês d'Orey for Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy'.

[20] *Precarity Pilot* 'is an online platform and a series of nomadic workshops that aim at addressing in inventive ways issues faced by precarious designers'. https: //precaritypilot.net/

The designed artefacts produced in the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop illustrate the difficulty to achieve the standard norm of success. The aesthetics choice is recognisable by design professionals and the general public that is familiar and engaged with social media, specially the often-mentioned Instagram®. They also serve as a conversation dispositif in terms that Anastassakis and Szaniecki apply in their work. Drawing from the foucaultian concept of *dispositive,* Anastassakis and Szaniecki found a way of acting inside very complex power relations through conversation dispositifs.

In the case of Anastassakis and Szaniecki (2016), their conversation *dispositifs* worked to draw attention to imposed city projects in the context of rebuilding infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro for the Olympics. According to them, they relied 'on conversation *dispositifs* to build multilateral and horizontal processes (between private and public powers and between citizens with designers among them) and especially transversal processes without distinction between nature and society, human and non-human' (ibid.). Along the same line, the posters produced during the Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy workshop reflected the late capitalism forces that dictate power relations leading to the career anxiety observed among participants of this event.

During most of this workshop, themes around the precarity of the design career were recurrent. Our facilitator's introduction set the mood for participants to start producing the posters. It was on the second day of the workshop when participants were discussing the design stereotypes and the values that foster the difficulties of a design career that our facilitator succeeded in making us all – the participants – speechless for a couple of seconds. He expressed his frustration with his career and with the capitalist systems in general. He told us that what frustrated him was the fact that he did 'everything he was supposed to do within the rhetoric of success'. He graduated and got a design degree, pursued higher education, published a book and a couple of wining graphic design materials and landed a position as a lecturer at a University in Amsterdam. Nevertheless, he could not afford to rent an apartment close to his job and relied on shared living. 'What more is necessary?'

The posters produced at this workshop depicted the vicious traits of designers trying to fit into the norms that define success in late capitalism, for example, 'having an ongoing, serious and dedicated online presence and a [infinite] process of self-construction,' as stated by one participant. It might be here – in having the chance to think outside the professional realm – that this group of critical designers find a breathing room away from their professional crises. It is through critical design practices that they can re-think design values beyond the dominant success framework. When our facilitator proposed that the participants to check the 'Precarity Pilot' webpage for inspiration on how to think critically about the systems involved in design and particularly in the design profession, he stressed one question: 'could I affirm myself by going with my design practice beyond what is valued by the market, clients, design magazines and heteronormative society?'

Hence, the workshop and the posters created a dialogical space between their non-critical design Monday-to-Friday design work practices and critical design. During this workshop, participants did not opt rehearsing alternative professional existence, the posters we produced left other potentialities open. For the group in this specific event, the other potentialities emerged from sharing the ways their practices add to the value systems being criticised here.

Anxiety: living with technological waste

At the 'NoSchool' workshop, the artefacts felt in the categories of artistic alternative technologies to counter the techno-enthusiasm and show a detour from the idea of linear progress, always developing for better technology. Through the artefacts in this event, the critical image of the present modes of life materialised in a manner where the overlooked aspects of our material and technological daily lives are reconciled. Moreover, the future might become almost tangible when showing their vision of what might come after the collapse of the capitalism and its hyper-consumerist society.

More than producing solutions for the issue of the impacts of technology on society and on nature, the artefacts produced at the 'NoSchool' workshop displayed habits and standards of living tied to its participants. Agreeing with Arkhipov (2011), 'everything is made in a certain place, a certain time, and is the product of a unique, coincident set of level of necessity'. Following this thought, factors that influence 'self-made objects are: the thing's level of necessity; the creator's professional skills, educational level, cultural fluency, and income; existence and availability of substitutes; place of residence (urban/rural), climate, the level of involvement of the creator's country of residence in the global economy; etc' (ibid.).

These factors also were considered in the 'techno-disobedience' and criticism at the 'NoSchool' event. Julien, one of the tech-artists that oriented the workshop, made a distinction of what he called 'topology of dis-novation practices'. He identified specific practices of dis-novation but stressed that the practice takes many hybrid forms. According to his account, the first is the practice that emerges from necessity. This happens when there is lack of financial or material resources, and it is practiced due to the very urge of survival. We can find this first 'type' of 'dis-novation practice' in the Cuba practice of fixing things to meet one's needs.

There are also the political 'technological des-obedience practices'. These are the practices that seek to dissent from authoritative models and/or regulations, for example, the work of Tega Brain called 'Unfit Bits'[21]. In this project, she and collaborator Surya Matu 'hack' a Fitbit® pedometer by installing it on a bicycle wheel so the device register steps even though one is not waking. Her work is produced in a context where employers give fitness trackers to its employees as part of wellness programmes. The

[21] http: //tegabrain.com/Unfit-Bits. Accessed on 22 April 2020.

highlight of this procedure is that insurance companies use these data to determine who is eligible for premium health insurance.

Furthermore, there is a practice where the official function of a technology and its constraints are questioned and redefined. During this event, the type of practice that best translated into the final projects and artefacts was the deconstruction of the official functionality of objects, mainly obsolete 'useless' ones. Take the project in which I was involved, for example. At first, me and my 'advisors' for that project had an old painting canvas. Usually the viewer's place in relation to a painting is a passive one. A painting viewer has an observational place in this relation. Also, when the art style of a specific painting canvas is *passé* or outdated, its value also decreases. Within the life cycle of old painting canvas, there are usually two fates: the junk yard or the thrift store. Nonetheless, my group decided to repurpose this relation to reanimate this old object, giving it more 'alive time' before its final fate: the junk yard.

Figure 6 - The author and her workshop advisor. Photo by Ben Guilon.

For our final project, Guido, one of my advisors for this project, handed me an old, but perfectly functioning toy. The toy had the function of teaching kids the sounds of some animals. We disassembled the toy to use its electrical circuits to make the painting canvas to produce an elephant noise. We also took advantage of a couple of holes in the canvas to insert six red LED lights, so when the viewers press the buttons we had affixed to the canvas, they wound hear an elephant and see the flashing red led lights. At the exhibition, this piece made people smile.

For Jim, one of this workshop's organisers, the purpose of practicing creative hacking is to foster what he called "*l'obsolescence de perception*"[22]. According to him, through the creatively recycling of technology, producers and viewers of the artefacts are spurred to contemplate the life cycle of technological materials. Also, he stressed that this reflection is important when considering the very

[22] I chose to maintain the term in the original language because it is a term that I had not heard in other languages and is mentioned by Jim as 'a concept I [he] like[d] to call'. The literal translation is 'the obsolescence of the perception'.

concept of the future of technology. His approach to creative recycling is the affordance of the technological objects as a medium for thought. As Jim again mentioned, this critical thought through practice implies the deconstruction of the late capitalist belief of unlimited technological growth. At the same time, he believed that the artefacts encourage producers and viewers to think on the life cycle of an object beyond the limits of their official utilitarian purpose.

Jim's vision of the artefacts produced in critical and speculative design correspond to Guido's own notions of why these practices are important. For Guido, as he continued to say during his presentation, when artist, designers, hackers and so on, start to redirect their practice away from 'the glorification of innovation'[23], this group of practices builds a strategic position in the 'political agenda of technological innovation'. He also said that critical and speculative artefacts displaying deviant speculations and absurd situations work to '[raise] discussions, debates […] and [motivate] the emergence of critical practices'.

Guido, in his discourse, insisted on the notion that 'technological innovation is an ideology'. From what I could understand, technological innovation works as an ideology when it is used as a tool for political and economic propaganda for fostering the rhetoric of 'a positive discourse of infinite growth'. From this perspective, the outcomes of the 'NoSchool*'* workshop operate as a counterargument for the 'techno-digital euphoria' that this group criticised. The critical and speculative artefacts function as an introspection concerning the imagining of alternative futures that does not come from framing problems as challenges waiting for technical solutions but rather looked for intervention.

Throughout the 'NoSchool*'* workshop, the assumed techno-optimism took another turn when participants envisioned different future worlds. From what I could grasp, this group of creative hackers and designers practiced their critical design alongside the statement: '*les nouvelles technologies créent de l'obsolescence et des déchets'*[24]. This deduction reinforces what might be the role of the artefacts produced in critical and speculative design.

Another final project that caught my attention was the one produced by Allyson. In her project, she explored a permanently damaged motherboard. Her work in collaboration with others addressed the impact of technology on nature, as the disposition for this workshop. To do this, she walked through the street of Nevers, France, and collected those flowers and plants that grew between the limits of footpaths and streets. The final artefact, according to her account, is intended to 'provoke contemplation of reductionist binaries', for example between what is artificial and natural.

[23] Using Guido's own words.

[24] 'Technological innovation creates obsolescence and garbage' as Jim uttered in his native language.

Figure 7 – Photo of Allyson's motherboard by Ben Guilon for the 'NoSchool' image gallery.

Usually, the motherboard is the most expensive part of a computer. Allyson's decision to use this piece is deepely emblematic for me because it speaks to the very arguments of this specific workshop. Remembering again Jim's words again, the whole intention of creative hacking and designing new critical objects out of obsolete or 'broken' ones – that were once very expensive and valuable in the past but now were surpassed by 'better', newer technology – can initiate a conversation about what we do with our own technological devices back home. Plus, as stressed by Pedro, another participant that works with making art out of unrepairable objects in Brazil, stressed, extending the lifecycle of a designed object 'gives them dignity' and maybe, this practice can change the perception of obsolescence.

Another issue raised from the artefacts at the 'NoSchool*'* workshop was the notion of transparent technology. This idea came from the practice of opening up material devices to recover the still-working components and also to just see what these devices look like from the inside. By exposing the inner side of ordinary objects, the participants of 'NoSchool*'* workshop aimed to draw attention to the range of materials on it as well as its 'not so ordinary' composites and from that, maybe lead to the consideration of what populates our material world and the amount of resources we are dependent on nowadays.

Regarding the artefacts at the 'NoSchool*'* workshop, it is their materiality that functions as an argument. The artefacts, again remembering Guido's words, 'through their deviant fiction and speculation, create a disturbance and [concurrenty] propose radical alternative social models'. In addition to that, both Guido and Jim shared the view that the oddity evoked by artefacts made out of our everyday materials also sparks disorientation as to how people view their relationship with objects and how their designed forms enter our everyday experience. Notably, what participants of the 'NoSchool' workshop do has nothing to do with technophobia[25]. It is quite the contrary, as 'it involves a deep understanding of technology or even its active use' as Guido noted. Accordingly, most participants of this type of critical [technology] design encounters have a deep understand of digital technology – both software and hardware.

[25] Fear, dislike, or avoidance of new technology.

Today the main counterforce to the 'technological innovation ideology' is within the field of ecology – and its many ramifications such as eco-feminism, deep ecology and the likes. The organisers of this event believed that their critical production adds another viewpoint to the groups that challenge 'the mono-discourse of technological innovation'. However, here again citing Guido's words, 'what distinguishes critical design practices from ecology activism is the material/artefactual focus as the medium of an argument'. According to another participant, it is a 'material way to materialise the deep issues concerning the impact of technology on nature and on society'.

In summary, the artefacts that participants produced as critical design not only say about participants' view of the future – a dystopian future where humans must deal with the waste of a technological civilisation – but also expressed the anxieties of our time: the anxiety of having to live out of 'the trash of the Anthropocene' where 'we will have to be prepared for exaptation'[26]. Future imaginaries are materialised in the act of giving new functions or disrupting previously designed objects. When I asked Adeline, a designer and tech-artist, who was also Guido's professional partner, why the objects seem to communicate that we are heading to a dystopic future, she told me that she did not see it that way. Instead, she saw hope in a post-capitalist future with the prospect of people being more autonomous in relation to the use of technology. She added that the techno-critique makes the 'black box' visible, allowing awareness of 'its long scale and global impacts". The 'NoSchool*'* workshop's projects stage and offer a 'kind of dramatisation'[27] for disruptive creative practices towards ordinary technologies and the ideology of technological innovation.

Anxiety: how can designers imagine future scenarios without filling it with their own value systems?

Within the speculative design realm, the produced artefacts aim to be thought-provoking by expanding alternative future narratives and exposing its implications. The artefacts produced during the NeoRural Futures' workshop should – as the organizers asked – function as means for debate. The artefact produced by my teammates in this workshop – as it will be shown – follows one of the principles of critical and speculative design practices, which is to expose of the blind spots and the implications of design choices, as stated by one of the organisers of this event. In addition, according to Dunne and Raby (2013), critically designed artefacts should be able to influence the viewers' mind by appealing to their imagination as well as engage their intellect.

[26] The process by which features acquire functions for which they were not originally adapted or selected: www.dictionary.com

[27] As said by Guido when talking about the 'standardisation of concern'. Which is, as I understood, the role of technological innovation in normalising dominant systems of values and producing homogenic notions of reality.

Figure 8 – Photo by the author.

The photo above shows an (allegedly) 'Massai spear' equipped with a DIY 6G router. On the right side of the 'Massai spear' there is the 'designer's home office'. Together, the 'Massai spear' and the 'designer's home office' compose the critical and speculative piece. The 'designer's home office' is an important element for this project because it was there that viewers could view the fictional designers' choices. Participants in this project wanted to explore the outcomes of an (allegedly) well-intentioned but poorly informed design work.

This staged scenario works as a mirror for designers to consider the unintended consequences of their works, as well as the social, environmental and ethical implications of their design choices. As I learned from my teammates during this event, usually designers are so enchanted by technological solutions that it is easy to overlook negative future impacts. Despite that, speculative design practices produce speculative artefacts to imbue images of what society might become if one specific path is taken. In speculative design, the object is a means of 'meaningful visualization to make sense of complex information'[28]. From what I could perceive, critical and speculative artefacts work as a new vocabulary for thinking via both making and being exposed to these objects. Similar to the previous events, at the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop, the produced object scrutinises contemporary technological ways of living.

[28] Estelle Hary in an interview for the *SpeculativeEdu* project on 3 March 2020. Available at: https: //speculativeedu.eu/interview-design-friction/

In the case of the speculative designed artefact for this event, it exemplifies a possible scenario where many signs of the present are examined. It approaches late capitalism trends and beliefs, as well as a particular developmental direction. For example, the idea of the millennial generation having to change residency due to a culture of 'nomadic work' in late capitalism is represented by a fictional 6G antenna made in accordance with the local culture – a Massai spear in a region of Tanzania. In addition, the artefact represents the contemporary work experience where it is imperative to have broad access to the Internet connection as a consequence of changes in the types of jobs where the dominant means of production is an Internet connected computer.

In our project, we deliberately projected the millennial view of what is considered necessary in a completely different context that might not have the same worldview. In the end, this workshop project was centred on two issues. One was the very bias within our generation of what basic infrastructure should be: in this case, high-speed, universal Internet availability. The second is the issue Natalia, – one of the organisers of this workshop, proposed – that of dealing with a very existential condition, which is the fallibility and unintended consequences of designers' choices. For this 'Massai spear', as with the other workshops' outcomes, the focus of the artefact is less its application but its implication (Dunne & Raby, 2013).

This introduces another issue that occurred to me just in hindsight: although we can say that there was an effort by the workshops organisers to aggregate a diverse cohort – this was mainly expressed in the calls for participation – there was a uniform substance of what constitutes everyday experience, meaning that there was not much diversity within these events. Most of the participants of theses workshop shared in some degree the same worldviews – me included. In this uniformity of the shape of 'normal' contemporary life lies a sameness in one's approach to existence (Greenfield, 2018). According to Greenfield, it is easy to perceive a sameness in the texture of the everyday. For Greenfield, the uniformity of life is an ongoing process boosted by 'a small number of commercial enterprises whose size and concentrated technical competence now spam much of the terrain of the ordinary experience'. 'Since it is getting more difficult for people to equip themselves with modern technology without being subjected to the totalising influence of these few [big] tech-company, most of the contemporary life is distinguished by shared tastes, priorities and assumption grounded in the Silicon Valley tech-culture [where] multiple technical capabilities woven together in combination' (Greenfield, 2018).

Accordingly, the starting point for future imagining in the events I attended was this received norm from the process of 'colonization of everyday life by information technology' (Greenfield, 2018)[29]. It is from late capitalist anxieties[30] that participants try to address in a meaningful way the

[29] 'Colonization of everyday life by information technology' is the condition where ordinary experience is measured, monetized and gives form to power relations (Greenfield, 2018).

[30]Timothy Bewes (2002) calls *reification* the ultimate form of social and cultural anxiety of late capitalism.

manners in which technology informs our daily lives. Philosopher Achille Mbembe (2013) had also noted this latest trend of neoliberal development. According to his writing, the present stage of capitalism – and its neoliberal ideology – is marked by a fusion between capitalism and animism. This merging leads to the universalisation of the 'black' condition (ibid.). This is achieved when in late capitalism the systemic risks black people were historically exposed to are now being extended to 'all subalterns' – disenfranchised and working-class people around the world.

In this sense, within the critical and speculative design artefacts, the late capitalism anxieties are extended towards an object-oriented thinking. In the event I described here, the outcomes explored, manipulated and probed the implications of mass technical production and innovation, as well as gave a tangible dimension to the late capitalism trend of ascribing a market value on everything. What is sought through the expositions of the final projects is to expand the mode of practice past the definition of designing for functionality or for aesthetics for the aesthetics sake [31].

Conclusion

Upshot in critical and speculative design do not set any possible future route but are merely suggestive of the various choices of the kind of future people wish or refuse to bring into being, that being by producing short statement posters, disrupting the official function of a technology or imaging a future through fictional objects based on current trends. Even though the shown artefacts communicate distinct scenarios, they coexist in the present and depict multiple future trajectories that also could occur together. At the same time, participants must face – in some cases – our shared late capitalism anxieties.

Also, critical and speculative artefacts provide a response to the feeling that most of the people do not have any agency in helping shape future worlds. Mazé's (2016: 49) notion of 'the agency of the future' is helpful here. This notion considers that, although "things will always turn out differently from the way we intend them', and we cannot entirely know or control the future, 'this does not mean that our concept, critical and persuasive design should proliferate any old vision of the future or (unsustainable) behaviour' (ibid.: 49).

For designers Elio Caccavale and Tom Shakespeare (2017: 25), critically designed objects 'do not just promote social innovation, or functional or stylistic enhancement, but prompt the viewer to think differently or to ask questions'. In this sense, the objects produced in these workshops create a space for performing a possible future, as Vincenzo stressed at the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop. For him, the future does not exist; 'it is a performance that can happen in different ways'. The importance of the materiality of the critically designed object is that, in speculative design cases, designers present

[31] I draw this argument from Guido's statement. He spoke that there is this notion of the artist/designers being the 'communicator for luxuries'. And for him, in the artistic domain, artist/designer role is the opposite. The task is to explore and challenge the constructed desires within technological innovation.

to people fictional products, services or systems from alternative futures so people can engage with them as citizens-consumers (Dunne & Raby, 2013). Often, the future imagining is based on trends in the present, so the artefacts can also work as awareness objects. Critical and speculative artefacts can bring a sense of urgency to issues that people often did not find pressing enough because they are not visible yet.

A good example of this is the work of the *Design Friction*[32] working group on data practice and surveillance on present and future urban living. In their project, they speculated on the growing trend of integrating artificial intelligence into urban infrastructure by processing city dwellers' data. Their designed object was a 'disobedient wearable' where citizens could collect and resell their personal data to repay debts. Here, the designed object acts as a piece for a narrative, a speculative future scenario. The object gives the context for thinking on preferable or not-so-preferable developmental paths.

This insight may guide us to the concept of the context as an object (Appadurai, 2013). For Appadurai, designers design context for objects that are later sold as single objects (ibid.). Hence, designed objects are at the same time objects of contexts or partial context for other objects (ibid.). Thus, the critical and speculative design projects provided context as objects with social potential. In the case of the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop posters, the context was more revealed than created. This workshop exposed the participants' shared views of the contemporary work precarity as a context of late capitalism conditions.

The 'NoSchool' workshop final projects also reflected on the late capitalism conditions but this time its artefacts created a context of disturbance and agency to counter the homogenising Silicon Valley global design. And, at the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop, 'physical fictional' artefacts – or the assemblages of artefacts – are a context of mental interactions that encourage the viewer [and designers] to actively engage with deeper issues (Dunne & Raby, 2013). It is at the same time an 'invitation to make-believe' (ibid.: 63).

Furthermore, the workshop's outcome displayed here set boundaries for possibilities as its speculative scenarios often consider the ethical implications of particular futures based on specific cultural groups. Within the three workshops' final projects, the starting point was influenced by the life conditions shared by the participants, for example, the increasing ubiquity of technology in people's lives. Although technologcal advancements have reached most corners of the world, it is also well known that the distribution of technological innovation is not even. Technological literacy is still a privilege for the few. Hence, these few technological literates drive the thinking standards for imagining the future in these events.

Besides that, the worldviews that mobilised their world-making projects is one of the technological singularities of the future. This is related to a dominance of the techno-centred narrative about of the future. Lanzeni and Ardèvol (2019: 122) already noted that both the 'maker scene' and the

[32] https://speculativeedu.eu/interview-design-friction/ accessed on 9 April 2020.

'market scene' share a common understanding of the future, 'which is both rooted in the ways they develop technology and make technology development possible'. It is significant that in the events described here, the future still has a strong technological presence. The technologies and systems – designed things – that participants of the workshops criticised were constitutive of their imagined futures. In addition, through the artefacts produced in these events, liess a backdrop where the ideal of a universal digital-technological literacy is not challenged.

In my fieldwork, the imagined futures were creatively engaged with an urban dwelling culture where technological literacy and DIY retrieved the hope to live on a 'damaged planet'[33]. I wonder if there are other ways of materialising future imagining or, as Tsing suggests, if 'there are other ways of making worlds' (2015: 155). I also wonder if the ominous contemporary trends and the perception of late capitalism's debacle can generate an even more disruptive future imagination that presents a rupture from the very sources of late capitalism anxieties. This is not only my personal question, as this was also raised during one of the fieldwork events where one group – at the 'NeoRural Futures*'* workshop – kept reflecting on the 'difficulty – maybe impossibility[?] – to imagine the future without projecting our own subjectivity on it'.

This does not mean that there are not groups of designers seeking alternatives to the technologically centred worldview. In fact, some participants in the workshop analysed here considered ways of seeing the world other than from the current analytical strategies – trend identification and so on. I met Kaffi during the 'NoSchool' workshop and spent most of my lunch break talking to him about his vision of projects for African smart cities. And again, I now realise that one of his critiques on smart city projects was the very belief in a technological saviour of the future for cities across the African continent. According to him, these smart cities – mainly expensive Chinese city projects that would leave these regions with massive debts – do not foster 'smart people'. And worse, often smart city projects tear down the community life that has been at the core of sociality throughout most African communities. Moreover, his work's approach uses a concept of 'low high tech' to promote local knowledge and foster 'smart citizens' that can develop their own technology.

However, at the 'NoSchool' workshop, this approach was not considered. I believe this is because most of the people in this event assumed that we were already dealing with low-tech technologies – old technological objects – that in other contexts are the opposite of low tech, they are still valuable

[33] See the work of Anna Tsing (2015) *The Mushroom at the End of the World: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins.* Princeton University Press. In this work, Tsing calls for new modes of attention on what kind of human disturbance human beings are capable to live in. This new attention is called 'the arts of living in a damaged planet'.

indeed[34]. Still, the artefacts produced during the course of my fieldwork display the value systems shared by the participants. Most participants corresponded to a [global] urban generational denomination called Millennials. Millennials are individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Smith and Nichols, 2015). 'They are called Millennials because of their closeness to the new millennium and being raised in a more digital age' (ibid.). But this label cannot be universal for all people in this generation. Millennial's characteristics – and their anxieties - do not comply with the fact that for example, currently, 75% of people in Africa are still offline[35]. This is attributed to a lack of basic infrastructures such as grid electricity, high data costs, and household income levels, among other factors[36].

The absence of diverse worldviews, however, presents an opportunity to bring together design and anthropology to interrogate critical and speculative techniques through intervention in possible futures scenarios. For critical and speculative design to be able to shift from a single narrative of the future, it is necessary to 'enable the creation and sharing of multiple stories and other imaginary productions, from every cardinal point in our multipolar world'[37]. For this aim, critical and speculative designers and anthropologists must attend to the human shared capacity to build futures imaginaries.

[34] If we take the case of the means to access the Internet in Brazil, for example, 49% of those who have Internet connection have it through mobile phone. When people do not have a notebook or a desktop computer this has implication for the type of digital abilities people develop. Comitê gestor de Internet no Brasil (2017).

[35] https: //www.geopoll.com/blog/african-millennials-myths-reality/

[36] Idem.

[37] https: //www.plurality-university.org/about/. Accessed on 27 April 2020.

Chapter 3 - Emerging presents in future imagining practices

> 'The mystery of time is ultimately, perhaps, more about ourselves than about the cosmos' (Carlo Rovelli in The Order of Time).

Uncertainty towards the future can generate many effects. Among them, there are hope and despair. During my multi-sited fieldwork, I had the chance to play with the openness of the future and experience the same openness aspect of the present. This chapter examines three significantly different orientations towards change and time. We, 'all of us on terra'[38], are experiencing a present time that shows itself as liminal, as a time of the end of what we may perceive as the normal world. And conjointly, it is a critical time to understand how we are going to endure all the changes that are already taking over in our present time. Bryant and Knight (2019: 25), citing Heidegger (1962), associate the question of being with what one strives for, what or how one is trying to be and for the sake of it, how one acts and what one does. Collective views of the future are what will awaken the present (ibid.), give it a temporal orientation and provide a plan of action. My research revealed three temporal orientations of the present: an elongated present, the anticipation of the future, and the suspension of time.

These three particular orientations of the present unfolded from an exercise of future imagining at the three distinct critical design workshops already described in the previous sections. From here, I draw from three different types of potential futures presented by futurologist Stuart Candy, cited at Dunne and Raby' work (2013). In their adapted diagram, there are different levels of likelihood of the future: the probable future describes what is likely to happen, the plausible describes what could happen – this is the space for planning and foresight alternative near-future – and last, the possible future that link today's worlds with the suggested one (ibid: 4).

The relation I could make between future imagining in the three critical design workshops and the different temporal orientations of the present that surfaced in each of them, was that, when working with a probable future, the temporal orientation of the present was elongated. That was the case at the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop. In contrast, when working with a plausible future, the present was advanced to a future stage where the practice simulates the future that is already here, a temporality noticeable at the 'NoSchool' workshop. And finally, when the work was to speculate on possible futures, time was suspended to give room to a hiatus, a gap where speculative (sometimes fictional) scenarios flourish. This suspended time came forward during the practice of speculative design at the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop. In the realm of the possible and fantastical, 'the gap emerges as fruitful site for speculation' (Bryant & Knight, 2019: 85).

[38] See Donna Haraway's work 'Staying with the Trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene'.

As theoretical companions for this enterprise, I intend to draw from Rebecca Bryant and Daniel Knight's notions of temporal orientations. Their examination considered different ways in which perspectives of the future may orient our present (Bryant & Knight, 2019). From this approach, this section will explores how the different temporal orientations of the present emerged from views and collective imaginings of the future in three distinct 'activity time-spaces'. The exploration of these distinct temporalities of the present points to an important element during the process of design: that 'different processes of making may invoke or at least encourage different perceptions of time' (Anusas & Harkness, 2016: 55). Also important for this text is the perception 'about the role of the view of the future in shaping temporality [and what it] may tell us about the ways that we act together in our orientation about the future' (Bryant & Knight, 2019: 2).

However, I intend to extend this notion and include the 'activity timespace' element to my analysis of diverse temporalities of the present. Since imagining the future entails perceptions of the conditions in which one is experimenting, it is bound to the singular situation and circumstance of people and places. In this manner, certain contexts yield particular future imaginings that may orient the temporal orientation of the present. Having said that, the concept of 'activity timespace' developed by Theodore Schatzki assists my attempt to explain that distinct temporal orientations emerged from these three organised interpersonal relations and practices in which I participated.

For Schatzki, 'activity timespace' is a non-objective unified time and space (2010). Schatzki, influenced by the work of Heidegger, who treated human existence as acting in a worldly context and claimed that the meaning of existence is temporality, confronts the 'Cartesian conception of human being as something encapsulated in an inner sphere standing over against the world' and considers existence 'centrally [as] being-in-the-world' (ibid: 26). For instance, I am concerned with how both the alternative imagined futures and the different temporal orientations of the present emerged in the 'activity timespace' of our collective design process. According to Schatzki (2010: 40) 'the time-space of human activity consists in acting toward ends departing from what motivates at arrays of places and paths anchored at entities'. And, as Schatzki continues:

> 'Although human activities occupy positions in objective successions and although people have long regulated their activities by reference to periodic processes such as lunar cycles, animal migrations, the seasons, the turning of clocks hands, and radioactive decay of cesium atoms, people inherently come toward and depart from in acting. Similarly, although human activity ineluctably negotiates the objective spatial features of things, it intrinsically institutes and is attuned to place-path regions. Temporalizing and spatializing are inherently of and human activity and life' (Theodore R. Schatzki, 2010: 40).

In addition, here temporality, agreeing with Ingold, entails a perspective that contrasts with the notions of chronology (2011: 194). It is something that emerges from 'activity timespace'. Critical and

speculative design workshops offered a fertile ground to explore alternative ways of being as 'activity timespaces'. These are sites for experimental and subversion practices that greatly detour from the conventional outcomes of the design process. These events are considered here as the 'site of the social' as conceived by Schatzki and referenced by Bryant and Knight (2019). As these authors states, 'a site includes physical space but goes far beyond that to include all the other orders of people and things that are associated with human activities' (ibid.: 17). 'The social orders that define such sites are arrangements of peoples, artefacts, organisms, and things that "hang together" within a particular domain' (Bryant &Knight, 2019: 33).

Furthermore, as Ingold notes, 'from mutually attentive engagement, in shared contexts of practical activity, lies the very foundation of sociality' (2011: 196). Within the workshops where my ethnography took place, the collective engagement with future imagining shaped the perceptions and our temporal orientation of the present. Anusas and Harkness called this phenomenon a 'different present in the making', which is, as mentioned above, when different perceptions of time give rise to distinct processes of making (2016: 55).

Additionally, as this proposition also has implications for the modern temporal framework in both anthropology and design, this analysis will benefits from Bruno Latour's classical exposition and critique of the modern constitution of temporality (Latour, 1993). Latour explains that in the modern constitution, the moderns allegedly senses time as 'time that passes' constantly, 'abolishing the past behind it' (ibid: 68). His conclusion, that 'modern temporality does not have much effect on the passage of time', has practical applications on the present research once, in one of the temporal orientations, the present was elongated, challenging the assumption that time is constantly passing. In this respect, this text agrees with Rosenberg and Harding (2005: 8) on the limits of the progressive chronotype and the fact that 'the future in the modern West is not the empty category that it is supposed to be'.

Most important for this section is that the dominant linear temporality has never been exclusive in Western societies (Abram, 2019). Similar to what anthropological research had demonstrated in non-industrial societies, the future – as well as the present – 'has different scales – natural, global, social or personal – that are not congruent, and just as in the non-Western societies of an earlier anthropology, modern people imagine futures associated with ritual or ceremonial cycles (Christmas is coming), future in our own biochronology, and varied as well as conflicting visions of a predicted or desired future' (ibid.: 75). Therefore, this text questions the notion of a global community experiencing the same coordinated temporality.

The question of time in anthropology

Despite the promise instigated by the critique of representation of the1980's, the question of time in anthropology remained much unquestioned (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2006: 356). That means that much of anthropological discussion on temporalities is expressed in terms of opposition to the western-European

specific attitude to time. In this regard, this text agrees with Tim Ingold, when he states that 'there is nevertheless a sense in which none of us are westerners, and that the challenge that non-western perspectives present to Western modes of apprehension exists at the very heart of our own society' (Ingold, 201: 323).

Even though the inattention in recognising that the present consists of multiple possible presents, albeit uncommon, this perspective has been developed lately in the realm of anthropology. For example, the anthropologist Simone Abram remarked how the 'different temporal horizons of the future' reveal 'very different means of conceptualizing both a static future of the imagination, and a dynamic trajectory between now and then' (Abram, 2019: 61).

Therefore, if we can say that much of the things that appear obvious are indeed the responses of our bias, to infer that there is a coherent unity of temporality among modern western-European groups seams ambiguous. Following this concern, this section aims to analyse how a diverse approach to the future, anchored in modern-Western dominant worldviews, directed our design practices and resulted in different temporal orientations of the present. In the end, it is suggested that a research engagement, the correspondence type that Ingold promoted (Gatt & Ingold, 2013), with the emergence of particular present temporalities, may be advantageous to shape social awareness of intentional acts for paving alternative, more desirable futures. It is an effort to explore what made those peculiarities possible and intervene in the space of the possible.

Our modern contemporary lives are regulated by the dominant temporal logic of capitalist production (Ingold, 2011: 326). We coordinate our lives around the standard 'sidereal' or 'astronomical' time form (ibid.). The assumed notion that we are living in a coordinated framework of time obstructs the exploration of potentially different present temporalities in tune with the human experience. For anthropologists and designers, it reveals an opportunity to undertake what Bruno Latour calls 'an inquiry into modes of existence' (Latour, 2013). It is paramount that anthropologists remember that the contemporary sense of shared time as a progressive and continuous flow is a modern fabrication. Also, like the notion that the 'old certainties about cognitive universals and cultural particulars' had been 'deconstructed or exposed as fallacies of modernism' (Gatt & Ingold, 2013: 140), the present text may contribute to influence anthropologists, designers and the general public to pay more attention to the subtle ways dominant worldviews may rule future worldmaking.

The future, different from the other modes of temporalities, is characterised by the inability to know with certainty what is to come (Bryant & Knight, 2019). And this very distinction shapes 'perception of the familiar of the everyday life' (ibid.: 19). This distinct approach to how the 'now' was temporalized in the three distinct workshops that I participated in, resembled an overlapping of temporalities that struggled to adhere to the traditional modern temporal regime.

Imagined futures haunt our everyday lives in the present, and, being them utopian or threatening, these particular futures call upon us distinct postures and, in some cases, specific procedures that, as it is demostrated in this text, may manifest certain temporal orientations. Methodologically, this work

adopted the notion of uncertainty as a technology to research temporality's generative process (Akama, Pink & Sumartojo, 2018). The intention here is to look back at the multiple forms of orientation to the present brought by uncertainty in an imagining future practice, as an element for the emergence of temporality.

The arguments exposed here were developed from periods of fieldwork carried out within the three situations of critical design practices, as mentioned in the previous chapters. I will explore each of the three localised encounters as a microcosm of imbricated temporalities. The goal is to demonstrate that within these distinct situations of critical design practices, different temporal orientations of the present emerged. It complies with a similar research carried out by Mike Anusas and Rachel Harkness (2016), who identified different temporal orientations of the present revealed during their engagements. But in the present case, the fieldwork was carried out in different design-oriented contexts, called critical design, and with different outcomes.

According to Bryant and Knight (2019), anticipation is one way of addressing the future and is a specific temporal orientation. We navigate among diverse temporal orientations during the course of our everyday lives (ibid.). Anticipation of the future is a primordial attribute in design discourse. However, within specific political, socio-material frameworks of design processes, other temporalities arise. Curiously, the indifference in the context of design processes in the matter of temporality, predominated in all three design workshops. Also, even though all design practices in which I engaged in were anthropologically informed ones, I found it extremely difficult to engage my research companions in reasoning on assumed evidence of future scenarios. By an anthropologically informed process of design, I mean those situations where both design and anthropology are engaged in a convergent effort of each learning from the other (Halse, 2013).

At the same time, understanding how the future is imagined, which are the worldviews that give form to a collectively imagined future and how this directs actions, can help us to discern several aspects of the present. At the beginning of my fieldwork, this was where I intended to focus on. However, near the last days of my field research, I realised that although during the process of design research, both in thinking and practice, the critique of modern and contemporary life was a constant in our endeavour, we had never questioned the assumptions of humanity living in a simultaneous time framework. The result was that in none of the three events had we payed attention to how we situated ourselves at the present moment. And this, in my view, has some implications to both anthropology and design research and practice.

By mentioning an attention to our present moment, I do not mean the reflexive exercise of perceiving one's existential reality, the placement of one's body, 'bio-graphically and geo-historically in the colonial matrix of power' (Mignolo, 2011) – although this an essential practice in both anthropology and design processes. What is defended here is to attend to the relationship between the uncertainty of the future and the modes of action that give shape to perceptions of the present and unfold non-linear temporal orientations. In the circumstances of our design process, the participants – including

me – took the present for granted. The temporal analysis of our moment was neglected due to our unquestioned assumption of time as universal, with isomorphic character. In this sense, the absence of discussion about the present simply reproduces the modern-Western belief that we all experience time the same way, the present *here* is the same *there*. But each context provided a different present orientation.

Uncertainty as a 'motor' for critical and speculative design imagining

Once my fieldwork was completed – in a physical sence, since I am still in contact with my research companions – I tried to make sense of the pieces of the compiled fieldnotes and started to focus on the different ways future imagining has in modelling distinct temporal orientations of the present. The aim is to comprehend the equivalence of specific views of the future and the distinct practical engagement of the present. For this effort, I explored the approach to uncertainty as a technology for research, as promoted by Akama, Pink and Sumartojo (2018). According to these authors, engaging uncertainty within methodology means to 're-figure it as a methodologic device instead of considering uncertainty as an object of study' (ibid.: 43). In focusing on the generative quality of uncertainty, and the different socio-cultural situations that might drive us, it means that uncertainty might be thought of as a technology of the imagination as well as of experience and actions (ibid.: 46).

'Uncertainty, in design, is very often experienced and understood alongside others, and in relation to their views, goals, orientations and capacities' (Akama, Pink & Sumartojo, 2018: 35). Within the three collaborative projects in which I was involved, uncertainty was the starting point for the designing process since outcomes were difficult to predict in the early stages of the process. In some way, design methodology is believed to assist designers in dealing with uncertainty. However, non-obvious situations or matters that were not considered quality resources to include in design process were overlooked. Yet, all three workshops shared a similar view of the future, marked as uncertainty and seen from the modern-Western dominant worldview. From there, we started our process by reflecting on the images of the future displayed at the beginning of each workshop. Most of the references were common in each workshop. All three events were familiar with the anthropological works of Bruno Latour, Tim Ingold, Wendy Gunn, Rachel Charlotte, Tom Otto and Lévi-Strauss, among many others.

Such introductory presentations worked as a collective agreement on the view of the future. It was not that every participants had exactly the same picture of the future, but the presentation might have served to reconcile divergent points. In all three workshops, there was a prepared lecture with that utilised of screen devices – televisions connected to a computer or a projector – where the facilitators and organisers displayed PowerPoint slides mixing text, photography and videos. On the screens, the result of previous research on how our mode of living – the modern-Western model – was conducting the planet towards imminent calamity. Overall, the tone was grim.

Unwanted future

The recurrent concern observed during my fieldwork in these workshops was the concern about design's role in today's global crisis and the very future of design as a discipline and as a career. This subject arose during the first day of my fieldwork and became a persistent topic through the following events. For example, the very theme of the Porto Design Biennale 2019 – the context where the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop occurred – was dedicated to the "*Post Millennium Tension*" where curators intended to confront:

> (…) the tensions of the new millennium, the first edition of Porto Design Biennale seeks to analyse the current disciplinary configuration of design. The reflection on the one hand takes into account the historical perspective and tension relationships, between remoteness and closeness, contemporary design and the model of modern design that was in effect until the end of the millennium; on the other hand, it is important to identify and evaluate the forms and functions of design produced in the first two decades of the current millennium, as well as to reflect on the social efficiency of design and the new connections that arise from the economic, technological, political, cultural and environmental situations (José Bártolo, chief curator of Porto Design Biennale 2019).

With this prompt in mind, organisers of the Porto Design Biennale of 2019 proposed a 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop to think about the systems where design is produced – both designers and design products – and how design practice and culture reinforce and feed these systems. For this workshop, six people were selected to participate: a design couple that preferred to call themselves 'authors' instead of designers because, as they told me, they were in a position where they work by themselves through individual creative processes; two academic male professors; one graphic design master's student; one graphic designer working for a fashion company in Brazil and me, the only one with a background in the social sciences. For this activity, Noah – a graphic designer known for his political activist posters and publications – was assigned as our facilitato*r*.

Uncertainty in these workshops, is engaged intentionally to 'create fertile spaces for orienting how we intervene in our world' and can be conceived as a "reflexive technology in itself" (Akama et al. 2018: 40). But, unlike the use that Akama et al. suggest[39], here uncertainty is something brought from the outside. Still, uncertainty is also viewed as a generative technology, as proposed by Akama et al. (2018). Furthermore, uncertainty had enabled the unfolding of views of future that generated a rage of present temporal orientations. Therefore, in the context of the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and

[39] On their work, uncertainty is produced intentionally in the workshop ambience.

democracy' workshop, a sense of disempowerment affected the participants. Uncertainty towards the future had an extreme affect[40] that reflected beyond our final product.

The prompt talk at the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop displayed a despairing and possible future for design professionals by highlighting the ambiguous relationship between design practice, capitalism, ecological disasters and the future of work. This communication stressed that the very design system was strongly linked to the capitalist system and its mode of production. For example, in this introductory talk, the facilitator noted that, like during the Industrial Revolution, where industrial workers were disconnected from their means of production, the same happens with [graphic] design. While we all agreed on the fact that we are witnessing a shift from the material era to a non-material/post-material period, we also recognised that designers still need physical infrastructure to engage in their work. At the same time, design work relies on the software that designers must either buy or subscribe to. For example, most designers need utilise software such as Adobe, which sells products for multimedia and creative work. One product from Adobe can cost around $25 USD per month, and a designer usually requires two or more separate programmes to complete her or his work.

At the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, our main discussion converged upon how designers are produced in contemporary, neo-liberal contexts. The very promotional text for the Biennale exhibition portrayed a crisis momentum for design that extended to the whole society as a context of populism and far-right emergence and the age of the post-truth[41]. Our group identified several factors that connected the inability to comply with one's own value and the design practice for the market. One of them pertained to the expectations carried by those who intend to pursue a design education. In summary, design students expect to gain practical proficiency and competence, and often dismiss classes that are about the process of thinking.

It is worth considering that this subject was very sensitive for the whole group, especially for the two design professors that started discussing on the impact of the Bologna Process as a recognisable shift in the quality of design education, mainly in Portugal, where they were from. The two professors lamented that, due to this movement, the requirements for students to take theory classes decreased. Before the Bologna Process, they argued, theory classes had a greater sense of importance and the practical classes were optional. Nowadays it is the contrary. According to them, theory is as important as the construction process itself. As Professor Tomas (a participant) reminded us, 'design is a process of thought'.

[40] See Kathleen Stewart's 'Ordinary Affects' for her notion of affect as a public feeling, as something that animates a 'circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes and disjunctures'.

[41] https: //storage.googleapis.com/assets.portodesignbiennale.pt/2019/09/documents/8f0907a5.pdf. Accessed on 22 December 2019.

The Bologna Process was one of our first topics, and from there we began to experience a sense of vulnerability and anxiety fuelled by an imagined possible future where designers will have to endure precarious professional lives. In general, when people think of design, often what comes to mind is the idea of creative production, of innovation and novelty, the final product. For individuals looking for formal design instruction, this notion is also fed by social influence (class, family, education, and the professional life). But, as the two professors stressed, behind a final product there is a concept or concepts. Concequently, they must negotiate theory-conceptual contents alongside the practical skills training expected by the students. From this discussion, our group agreed that the concerns of the two design professors involved a broader worry about employment and competition. In the end, despite the arguments of social responsibility of the design work, students want practical skills for recruitment, and this is strongly tied to a neoliberal-capitalist system that promotes a business-as-usual approach in a time of global crisis. We identified that these issues are closely related to the idea of a Post Millennium Tension theme proposed by the Biennale itself.

On our first day, the workshop's facilitator proposed that we focus on the means of production required for designers (graphic, in this case) to work. With the task of producing a graphic design work to induce a reflection on the traditional form of conceiving 'design systems', our venture was prompted by the theme of our workshop, which proposed that we visualize, think, and deconstruct our ideas on the modes of production of graphic design. During this workshop, recurrent themes emerged, such as the precarity of the design work, misconceptions about this profession, and the overall conditions of formal design education in Portugal. All these questions came as factors that could compromise designers' values and thus diminish a critical orientation towards design practices.

The means of production in graphic design, I came to know, consist of many elements such as software, printing tools and physical space filled with working materials like white boards, papers, lots of Post-its® Notes and the like. Still, during the first stage of the design thinking for this workshop, the group agreed to focus on the character of the designer itself, since, as expressed by one participant, 'the most important mode of production in design is still the designer'.

The uncertain approach to their own career may convey some degree of auto-censorship and can intensify career anxiety and other emotional disorders. Within the design realm – mainly in critical design – it is clearly that it is necessary to reconfigure the purpose of design practice. The effort to reassess the values on which design was built implicates the necessity of reconsider assumptions of the quality of design tools and methods. Pragmatically, this process seems to be problematic for design practitioners who struggle to find new meanings for their activities while still having to cope with their individual goals.

As Dorst (2008), a design researcher noted, design practice is being changed by the influence of our age. The pre-eminence of a global catastrophe, the awareness of the failure of our way of living, of our social system, are changing professional design practices. We are witnessing a prominent emergence of design practices oriented to create sustainable alternative products and infrastructure. All

this causes designers – and all other activities in my opinion – to question their own practice if they aspire to face these complex challenges. The result of such a reflection exercise may transform the very role of the designer and design practice and bring new meaning to what is now considered a design career.

Despite the subtle implicit rhetoric of individual glamourisation and the romanticised notion of this profession, designers are still formed by design schools that reinforce and replicate an established pattern of what is about what a designer should be and do. Design is a professional activity, and as such, designers are trained to design for specific purpose (Lawson, 2005) in exchange for something valuable to them. As a matter of concern, very often, the person considering pursuing this profession has this expectation of acquiring professional skills so they can be ready to enter the labour market.

At the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, the feeling of grief in relation to the future of the design career permeated our discussion, which influenced the direction of the process from the very beginning to the end. The possible future seemed so unwanted that uncertainty generated anxious responses loaded with apprehension and restlessness. The participants were so overwhelmed by the uncanniness of our present (Bryant & Knight, 2019) that the present seemed to remain. In this 'activity timespace', the present 'felt particular elongated, even inescapable, while the future may be already breaking into the present' (ibid.: 195). Most importantly for this dissertation, when facing this probable future, the view of the forthcoming time, observed from our group, was the one of the increasing ephemerality of their work, a loss of professional prestige and growing criticism. Using Knight's arguments on anxieties and expectations, the workshop's discussions enhanced the feelings that our 'futures were being held hostage' (Bryant & Knight, 2019: 90) – especially a designer's future, but we could extend it to other professional groups. The way critical designers – and this specific group of graphic designers – kept themselves actively involved in their present – a time that threatens their own – was to make design as critical as possible, and as much as their professional position allows. The kind of future our group was envisioning for designers and for the graphic design profession, from questioning the modern project, was the prospect of reframing from big corporate propaganda and engaging their work in social and environmental issues. But such an adaptation was difficult to realise since designers in this workshop did not know how to combine individual career expectations, self-financial support and this new ethics into the design.

The temporal present orientation was that of a 'lengthening of the relationship between future and present' as Bryant and Knight (2019: 34) recognised in a time of crisis. The 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop was characterised by an elongated present that also 'seemed uncertain and anxious' (Bryant & Knight, 2019: 44). Daniel Knight (2019) found a similar temporal orientation to the present in his research on times of crisis in central Greece. His account showed that a time of crisis brings a kind of 'uncomfortable comfort with the present and a fear of what lies over the futural threshold' (ibid.). Yet, according to Knight, the future – for people among where his study took

place – is not a desirable place, and the result is that 'people are trapped in a permanent present with an increasing inability to project imaginations for potential futures' (ibid.).

As Dorst stressed (2017: 10), 'designers do not just design; a major and crucial part of design practice consist of a long list of meta-activities'. Within this list of activities are the creation of the environment in which designers work and the approaches to design situations, as well as the role they will take in the design process. According to these meta-activities, Dorst mentions, I wondered how designers can combine critical design practice – with its effort oriented towards complex problems like social change, justice and climate change responses – with their personal values and the necessity to financially support themselves. The discussion of the values contained in design as mainly self-centred settled with a sense of resignation that we identified as one cause for social afflictions like career anxiety.

Anticipation of the future

Within the context of the 'NoSchool' workshop, it was possible to identify a kind of 'anticipation orientation' towards the future. According to Bryant and Knight (2019), to understand anticipation on the level of the collective it is useful to grasp how dimensions of time – in our case, a time of crisis – influence specific responses. Contrary to the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, the case of the 'NoSchool' workshops indicated that a time of crisis may be perceived as a shortening of the relationship between the future and the present (ibid.: 34). In that event, the uncertainty and future imagining evoked a sense of disruption of the present.

The expectation of a planetary collapse had filled the collective imaginations of many individuals that, in some degree, started to reorient their action in the present. For many people now, they are not concerned with the matter of how the future will take shape but with how close this future is and how prepared we are for it. For the 'NoSchool' workshops, this reorientation comes from the modern-western ways of living by promoted actions that recondition our relation to materialism and consumption. This requires disclosing the social and environmental impacts of information and communication technologies as well as material objects.

During the 'NoSchool' workshop, the emergence of a specific collective way of addressing uncertainty stemmed from not only imagining how the future would look like but also by creating a version of the present where the future prospects have already taken shape. From this standpoint, there was the presence of the future increased by a shared sense of the present as liminal, the present as a limitrophe moment. The practices that took place in 'NoSchool' workshop anchored our group in a distinct present temporality.

Within the conjunctures of the 'NoSchool' workshop, daily activities started with a theoretical presentation around subjects related to issues of pollution, human rights, hidden bias in technological developments and in material and physical design. Jim, the coordinator of the workshop, launched our

two weeks of meetings with a long presentation on the production of technologies and its need for transformation. Planned obsolescence was a repeated topic on the following morning's theoretical presentations. As a routine mentioned earlier, the 'NoSchool' workshop introductory talk also mostly focused on the means of production. But contrary to the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, here the tone was a more proactive one. After denouncing the flaws of our technological dependence (both physical and digital), some alternatives were proposed. For example, to deal with racist and sexist digital technologies, it was found to be important to create teams that represent the diversity of the population by promoting open source software that people can improve or change it. For the case of materially designed products, the DIY movement was cheered.

All this, I believe, helped to get us ready and on the mood to 'make art with/for/against technologies', as Jim said in the first day's introduction. From this point, we were encouraged to think of alternative ways of creation and consumption by considering critical making with e-waste, repairing and creating art with trash. One of our first projects was to build a communication device. We had only one rule, that our devices must include digital – Arduino[42] – as well as analogical elements. The objective was not the object but to make us think of alternative ways of communication, for example, in the event of a natural disaster. The whole point was to develop a more reliable communication device, other than the mobile phones, using radiofrequency.

With that in mind and filled by a view of plausible future rife with hardship and violent repression, our group decided to build a communication device to use in a street riot situation. Basically, our device worked to communicate the presence of official repression forces by using a smoke detection. The front demonstrator would light a cigarette and place it near her smoke censor; the censor would detect the smoke, and, from that, a signal would arrive to other demonstrators in the back of the street protest. Ultimately, our device did not work at all, which made us apprehensive. Our acting become desperate and a sense of responsibility for other people's lives worsened our dynamic. I asked to one of my team members if he had ever attended a demonstration before: he had not.

Instead of simply imagining how the future would be, our shared 'activity timespace', fuelled by this particular view of a plausible future, produced a temporal orientation of the present as if we were experiencing hardships in the now. By picturing the future as prospect of a dystopian reality, our group's imagination grew over perceptions of capitalist collapse and post-growth economy. During our critical design process, we were presented with a concept that I learned as 'collapse informatics', which for our group can be explained by a voluntary downgrading of the complexity of civilization in face of a collapse scenario.

Our view of the future at the 'NoSchool' workshop applied such a strong pressure that we brought and lived that future in the present. Even though in our 'activity timespace' not all participants shared

[42] Arduino is an open-source hardware and software single-board microcontrollers and microcontroller kits for building digital devices. https: //www.arduino.cc/.

the same level of awareness and sensibility to the mentioned issues, the level of practice engagement was high. Despite that, our making process intended to create disruptive, interrogative, disobedient and 'adversarial design' products that challenged our digital cultural routine. Repurposing obsolete technology and e-waste recycling served to generate the perception of living in a scarce environment.

The co-created temporal orientation of the present might have some relation to a 'collective anticipation action' (Bryant & Knight, 2019), filled with a sense of the future being made now, to meet concerns about e-waste, discarded materials, obsolescence (planned or not), 'dead' and 'zombie media', maintenance, repair, recycling and art production from ultimately useless materials. Here I recognized much of what Bryant and Knight (ibid.) conceived as anticipation actions:

> Collective anticipation is one that tries to forestall or alter the coming event that is itself expected to transform the life of the present (…) anticipation relieves the anxiety of uncertainty, giving us a sense of *What we should do* (Bryant & Knight, 2019: 43).

By focusing on a series of creative making workshops, the 'NoSchool' case potentialised the emergence of a temporal orientation that sustained our collective engagement to this same distinct present orientation. Even the term 'bush', used by numerous anthropologists to portray the secluded place where traditional rituals take place, was mentioned to represent our 'timespace'. One of the workshop facilitators, Kaffi, explained to me that this kind of space – makerspaces, FabLabs, etc. – were a kind of 'bush' to create community. In this way, the NoShool's workshops – as well the other two – can be seen as liminal, betwixt and between (Turner, 1967). This was also because all three workshops were a safe space in the sense that most of the participants were clear of professional responsibility and accountability. It seemed that in our design process, the relief of dealing with the 'real world outside' encouraged the emergence of a distinct temporal orientation. Kazubowski-Houston (2019: 216 citing Amira Mittermaier 2011: 13) even identified this type of liminal space as one 'that shifts the attention from observable, material realities to the emergent, the possible, the prophetic, the visionary'.

Upended present

While the matter of a diverse temporality orientation has been gaining its space in anthropology, the approach of the future as another object of analysis still endures in many anthropology studies concerning with the future. The above analysis of my fieldwork did not diverge from this. Nevertheless, the question of recognising many temporalities is problematic among designers I worked with. During my fieldwork experience, we reserved little time for reflecting on what kind of temporality we were collectively immersing ourselves in. For example, Vincenzo, one of the workshop's organisers, when giving the brief for the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop, explained to us that we should go through a

creative imagination of the future. While asking for suspension of disbelief, Vincenzo suggested that we do not invent anything from scratch: 'we are pulling things from society and [this can be] problematic in a way that it can define what one can imagine'. In addition, in the course of the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop, we were advised to research trends online that would indicate a direction for speculative imaginings of future scenarios. This by itself indicates a reliance on the universal linear temporal framework.

What Vincenzo was saying was for people to use their past and present knowledge to make inferences of what the future might be. Even though, in the three workshops, there was a proposition to avoid standard frameworks of thinking about the future – especially within the speculative design rhetoric – this attempt was not successful once we were using a modern approach to time. Such forms of temporality, that assume a universally ordered passage of time, compromise an understanding of the possibility of overlapping of temporalities, while future imagining and the future scenarios correspond to our present everyday experiences. For instance, as Latour (1993) mentioned, as we are strongly attached to the modern temporal framework, our creative and critical reflection operates within the notion of a coherent forward time arrow.

This was very intriguing to me, as I had once expectated to enter a design process that would allow us to abandon historical anchors and let our imaginations flow. At the 'NeoRural Futures' inaugural talk, a proclaimed cyber- and digital-culture researcher affirmed that 'Speculative [Critical] Design is a form of questioning scientific and technological progression'. Therefore, our critical and speculative thinking processes was conducted in the form of conjecture, built on from clues, traces and some past and present evidence rooted in the very scientific and technological progression that was being criticised.

For example, the 'NeoRural Futures' workshop's briefing oriented our group to look for trends, things that were curious, peculiar or innovative about the place wherein we were assigned to create the speculative and fictional future scenario. Later, I realised that this may indicate how we were tied to the modern timeframe and, therefore, greatly limited in the creative process. This constraint might be addressed by reconsidering some of the design knowledge and method structures. 'The thinking tools available to designers depend heavily upon the knowledge structure of the discipline [and] that plays a role in the design project' (Dorst, 2017: 35). I addressed this issue in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Also, what I came to realise later on was that we struggled to tackle what kind of 'now' was sprouting from our 'activity timespace'. It could have helped us to take into account for Latour's critique of modern temporal regimes that establishes how all contemporary belongs to the same temporality.

> 'Modernizing progress is thinkable only on condition that all the elements that are contemporary according to the calendar belong to the same time. For this to be the case, these elements have to form a complete and recognizable cohort' (Latour, 1993: 73).

However, to be able to realise the layers of temporalities, it is important to make design methods more flexible. Design methodology and process apply modern-linear strategies and attitudes in relation to the future. But, as Pink et al. (2019) have remarked, we struggle to dissociate ourselves from a modern temporal framework within these same design processes. Latour noted, years ago, that the idea of 'time as an irreversible arrow, as capitalization, as progress' is a modern temporal regime (Latour, 1993: 69). And here, I believe, lies one known contribution anthropology can offer to design thinking and practice. Using Latour's own words:

> 'Anthropology is here to remind us: the passage of time can be interpreted in several ways – as a cycle or as decadence, as a fall or as instability, as a return or as a continuous presence' (Latour, 1993: 68).

I am not saying that anthropology has entirely abandoned, once and for all, the traditional modern temporal regime. Bryant and Knight (2019: 7) addressed this issue when they pointed out that most of the time anthropologists, when thinking about the understanding of time, tend to use 'a uniform, homogeneous conception of [modern] time against which other, "traditional" times are measured'. And they continue its argument by citing Munn (1992), who noted that 'much anthropological thinking about time has centred on other people's time-reckoning or other temporalities' in which they add that this is meant to document ontological differences when there are different forms of 'how time can be reckoned, felt, and understood in ways that are different from our own' (ibid.).

As the philosopher and physicist working in quantum gravity, Carlo Rovelli (2018: 8) reveals that 'what we call "time" is a complex collection of structures, of layers'. Under a speculative orientation to the future, the 'now' in which we were living was not one of anticipation. We were not partaking in any anticipation practice. Also, we were not stuck in the present terrified by a very near possible and particular uncertain future. To help make sense of the temporal orientation of the present, we can draw from Rovelli, who sustains that there is not a 'present defined globally' (2018: 19). And, as he continues, 'an objective global present does not exist. The most we can speak of is a present relative to a moving object' (ibid.).

Similar to the other two workshops – 'Post Millennum Tension: design and democracy' and NoSchool's workshops – at the Neo Rural Future, the act of imagining the future by mapping present tendencies was part of a closed methods of design that resulted in a paradox between the openness of imagining alternative futures and the confines of this methodology. The future, in the context wherein I was engaged in, was imagined through a process of path dependency (Savransky, Wilkie & Rosengarten, 2017). Following this logic, our modes of future imagining presuppose time as a linear succession. In this case:

> ‘Resisting the modern arrow of time matters because it enables us to consider temporality as it is formed through its own pattern of becoming rather than through the imposition of a preformatted geometry. It matters, moreover, because it enables us to pay attention to, and experiment with, the very *processes* of crumpling, folding and ‘tearing’ time, and not just to their culmination’ (Savransky et al. 2017: 4).

Bearing prospects of a dreadful future

It later surprised me, later on, how distinct the notions of the ‘now’ revealed throughout the approaches to the futures in each context were, even though the views of the future were very similar. Perhaps, in these workshops, if we had broadened the range of temporality in terms of method, if we had stripped free from the dominant temporal framework, we could have been able to attend to the ‘now’ that emerged from our practice. Since thinking about the future is a means of thinking through existence (Abram, 2019: 77), then another issue arises, the one related to dominant worldviews, privilege and politics. This pertains to questioning dominant worldviews that shape the image of the future. The predominance of modern-Western worldviews limits the images of the future from a privileged perspective and prevent alternative futures from emerging.

The future lies, in the cases explored here, as a dystopian vision of the modern-Western way of life. In these views, the ghosts that haunt the future are the planetary catastrophe and automation and/or the loss of professional prospect in Western societies. It turns out that the disruptive effects the workshop groups envisioned for the future is a reality in many communities around the globe. The future horizon is limited by a dominant model of living. Indeed, struggles over resources is, and has been for a long time, the only reality experienced in many societies. What is the concern here is, is the endangerment of the modern Westerner’s lifestyle.

From this worldview, which shapes the image of a future that is already the reality in many places, uncertainty provides ‘ways of considering and approaching what is possible and emergent’ (Akama et al, 2018). For anthropological research, it enables the interrogation on how, by attending to uncertainty, linked to a specific worldview of the future, distinct temporal orientations of the present develop. From that, together with our research companions, corresponding with the world to answer to it (Gatt & Ingold, 2013: 144), offers the possibility to intervene and change the possible future to create alternative ones, as was the case at the ‘NeoRural Futures’ workshop.

In this case, our group was more willing to address the ambiguities over practices that are labelled as oriented by critical design. Following what Bryant and Knight (2019: 79) outlined about speculation as a pause, an interval, a gap where speculation arise, here the temporal orientation grown out on this workshop was presented as a gap, when we pause the present a little to make connections between the past and the future. But more importantly, the present is suspended to try to make sense of the inability to anticipate or surrender.

Moreover, as I realised during the workshops, locating the past and the future was also an exercise of locating oneself in the geographic matrix of power. For example, we were asked by the organisers to ask 'what if' questions and wonder 'how the world will look like in 2030' in a pre-chosen Africa region. The problem with this type of inquiry is that people can envision a scenario of the future that other people are already experiencing. And this does not necessitate going farther south. People are already living in a dystopian environment in Europe itself[43]. The emerged shared perspective, in our group, grown from our specific creative task, was that this was a pointless enterprise. I was fortunate to be partnered with a very diverse group, where the majority had some level of social criticism background, and our temporal orientation sprouted in the very first group discussion. When we looked at the other groups, it seemed that everyone was on their path while we suspended time in the face of the impossibility to carry on with that project.

To take advantage of the diversity of possibilities of temporal orientations of the present, it is necessary to attend to how all elements presented in critical design workshops – materials, perspectives, knowledge, space, worldviews, future images, temporal orientations of the present, etc. – are juxtaposed. This requires attending to what grows out of the collaborative encounter, especially, in our interest, in term of temporalities. Design anthropological encounters 'invoke a landscape of time and spaces that extends both back toward the past and forward beyond the horizon of the present' (Binder, 2016: 267). I would go further and include that it enables the manifestation of alternative present temporalities, other than the dominant universal conviction.

In summary, the specific temporal orientation of the present would added to the 'Knowledge pieces' (Kjaersgaard, 2013) for both design and anthropology. Here, this enterprise strongly agrees with a type of inquiry that 'moves forward with people in tandem with their desires and aspirations' in a kind of relationship called by Ingold 'correspondence' (Gatt & Ingold, 2013: 144). Moreover, as the concept of 'correspondence' is bound to the potential of 'anthropologists [that] are able to correspond and collaborate as co-creators of desired futures' (Otto & Smith, 2013:1 3) it is worth to referring to the hardships of finding openness in the design workshops.

Prospect of a future-oriented anthropology

The third workshop I participated in opened the possibility for me to experiment with intervening together with teammates to 'generate insights concerning everyday phenomena' (Akama et al. 2018: 2). I had the chance to focus on liminal stances that are often oexcluded from both the design and

[43] For example, the life of the people at the *Maio* neighborhood few kilometers from the gentrifying city of Lisbon, Portugal. https: //www.vice.com/pt_br/article/j57aa4/fotos-da-vida-no-bairro-mais-barra-pesada-de-portugal. Accessed on 23 February 2020. Or on other migrants neighborhoods across Europe where people are marginalized and constantly being profiled by local police.

ethnographic processes. This was strongly evident when our group received the assignment to create an object that should work as a ‘archaeological object from the future’. We sensed an uneasiness to go forward with our task since most of the members were unconformable, but two of us did not mind jumping into the design method to start creating our future scenarios. This was an unexpected situation, where uncertainty redefined the course of our action. Despite that, our group started working to completing our assignment.

We realised that during the research phase, we had created a ‘treading board’ and a ‘imagination board’ that illuminated even more our own world views. We divided the found future trends between the ones that would lead to dystopian and utopian futures. Two of our team-members were ready to carry on and speculate future scenarios for other people and contexts using any theme from our ‘treading board’, but the rest of us were not convinced that this was the right move. Yet, we did not know how to sresolve this challenge. By this time, Esteban had already drawn what I previously identified as the early mentioned design process called Double Diamond diagram on a paper. I was unable at that time to recognise that we were experiencing unwelcome uncertainty, which some of my teammatesattempted to manage.

I remember that at this moment, Cassandra was silently observing how the most engaged people had drawn, on a piece of paper, a circle on the table corner while the rest of us – who were also not convinced of where this activity was leading – occupied a passive, spectator position. Cassandra then asked for our attention and told us that she was not ‘feeling that we [were] fully collaborating’. This, she believed, was because often within a working group ‘the English-speaking white males usually occupy a power position’. She finished by asking that every members, one at a time, say something about our project. I recognise that I do not remember what each of us said, but I took note of Esteban’s concerns about the beliefs that technological solutions can solve societal problems. For him, this was problematic since another more complex issues could be overlooked.

As mentioned in the first chapter, I was particularly worried about our project and its possible outcomes. So, when it was my turn to say something about the project, I told my colleagues the root of my frustration. I told them that I had attended others critical design workshops and that this one seamed the most promising one, but, to my surprise, here we were again, acting as in a ritual that was by now – for me – predictable. I continued telling them that I did not believe that following this step-by-step methodology would help us in dealing with the deepest issues that for me – and for the broad realm of Critical and Speculative Design – have to be brought up for reflective thinking and acting.

Cassandra and Esteban seemed to strongly agree with my thoughts, even adding the problematic issue of assuming that ‘the future is inhabited with more and better developed technologies’. I was asked by the two members of my group – the ones that wanted to start creating during previous research stage – what to do then. My answer was that I did not know how, but we should focus on the ethical issue. From there, most of the group members agreed, and we stopped the regular design process to only discuss about everything that could go wrong with the completion of this project.

One of the supporting materials handed out to every workshops' attendees was a document called the 'Cheat Sheet for a Non- (or Less-) Colonial Speculative Design'. Participants were supposed to consult this document in order to avoid mistakes when speculative designers 'disregard issues of race, class and gender privilege within Speculative and Critical design projects and publications'[44]. My group reserved some time for each member to read this document, and afterwads during a group catch-up meeting, we found ourselves at an impasse. For the remainder of the day, we attempted to address the issues presented by our Westernised views about our assigned locality – Lushoto.

We formulated a list with some questions that hindered out project:

- Can we speculate about other future realities?
- Is it better to act well-intentioned on an uniformed opinion than doing nothing?
- How much knowledge about today is required to speculate about tomorrow?
- Can knowledge ever be neutral?
- Is speculation possible without projecting one's own desires or fears?
- What is the difference between colonising the land and colonising the mind?
- Is there a grey area between inspiration and colonisation?
- Does speculative design have a role outside its own sphere of discourse?

Since we were in a moral-ethical dilemma and found this task difficult to execute, our group determined that we had to decide if we were to abandon the whole project and say goodbye to Rome or if we were to detour from the original task and create a meta-criticism of the whole speculative design enterprise. Most of the members in this group had some knowledge of the design concept of 'not-designing' (Tonkinwise, 2017), which says that 'not-design[ing] is also a kind of designing; it can be proactive, a deliberate strategy to un-design'. In this way, refusing to design is also an act of design. We chose the last option, and, as shown earlier, our unceasing conversation converged into an unwillingness to create a speculative objectification of our own standards. Our only way out was to parody '– our own – stereotypical speculative designers from [a] certain background', as explained by one member[45].

Here, I identified my practice fieldwork as interventive, since I was able to correspond and collaborate with my team members to co-create alternative futures. For this case, a future that detoured completely from expected form given in the design practice. Our collaborative action involved not only

[44] The same document can be found here: https://medium.com/a-parede/cheat-sheet-for-a-non-or-less-colonialist-speculative-design-9a6b4ae3c465.

[45] The presentation and part of this project exhibition can be viewed here: https: //www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=743808469376686&ref=watch_permalink.

visions of future worlds but also a generative engagement to act in the present to generate an alternative future.

In the collaboration between design and anthropology, the former can benefit from the way 'anthropological analysis of the future (can) offer means to disaggregate the ways that the future is of concern to different people at different times, in different ways, and enable us to see how particular futures may become dominant for shorter or longer moments, or how particular future appeals in certain context' (Abram, 2019: 74). For my ethnographic process, this experience put me in contact with what Akama et al. (2018) & Pink and Salazar (2017) promote as 'future making in design anthropology' and 'future anthropology'. For these authors, contemporary ethnographies are also practiced through 'the interventions we undertake with people to generate insights concerning everyday phenomena' (Akama et al. 2018: 2). The above example shows that during this event, the anthropologist not only observes and registers what is happening but also intervenes, disrupting the course of the design method. From there, together with my colleagues in this event, we gave space for alternative futures to emerge.

Conclusion

‘My time is now’ (Mãe Stella de Oxóssi).

Creative resistances

It is repetitive to say that we are in a precarious time. The analysis presented in this work draws from the acknowledgement that design ‘is always future-making’ (Yelavich, 2017: 12). Thus, design decisions – communications, objects, systems, etc. – play an important part in shaping our world. In the field of design, critical and speculative design provide a refuge for experimentation to feed the imagination of social futures. In this sense, this genre of design could operate on a subjective level to unlock the power of imagination from dominants perspectives of present realities and from what is disseminated as the only path towards the future. However, the main point here is to acknowledge that critical and speculative design must expand beyond its reliance on outdated frameworks, and old approaches (Donahue, 2017) and preconceived assumptions of interdisciplinary collaboration. By considering these issues, together with a more radical, democratic approach to practice, I argue that critical and speculative design can be used to imagine – even in a propositional logic – more radical alternative futures.

I have described three critical and speculative design workshops. The critical and speculative design practices in which I was involved complied with the base principles of these practices, which aims to dispute the notion of design as politically neutral and never demanding. Most important here is the notion of a practice that wants to make visible its capacity to engender agency (Yelavich, 2017). For this purpose, critical and speculative design requires a list of elements in order to conduct this practice. And, as I have shown, even anthropologists are a part of this list.

In the process of future imagining, the workshop’s attendees used prompts to reflect on both past and present experiences. What emerged from this thinking-through-doing practice was a heterogeneous view of the impacts of the late capitalism fostered by the growth of pervasive technologies, the process of automation and technology’s impact on the environment and our society. Peter Frase (2016) once called these ‘the twin anxieties of our time’. According to Frase, this is a contradiction between the fear of ‘having too little’, due to the scarcity promised by the climate emergency, and the fear of ‘having too much’, where technology foster ever-growing automation that would ‘free’ the economy of human workers.

It is through this practice that some designers find a way to distance themselves from the market-driven practices of designing for consumption. At the same time, it is a courageous and risky venture since it is difficult to finance critical and speculative design because it is a practice that does not produce for the market. This explains a little why critical and speculative design – especially the latter – have a ‘more muted, understated or niche role, blending with other practices or being confined mainly to a few

higher education courses' as stated by Julian Hanna within the context of the *SpeculativeEdu*[46]. To some extent, participants of these critical and speculative workshops have the possibility to express their reactions to the inexorable late capitalism process that has been evolving today more than ever. It is a force that makes some believe that there is no way out, that we are trapped, and it is within this same situation that these workshops offer a place for experimentation, where participants can be adventurous and materialise their dilemmas into artefacts.

Escaping the methodology trap

The present research also reserved special attention for the material configurations within critical and speculative design practices. It highlighted the significance of a set of techniques and mode of actions inherited straight from design method tool kits used in corporate and business settings. I also pointed out that this is not a new concern mainly among academics in the realm of design studies (Iskander, 2018; Ansari, 2016, 2018; Tonkinwise, 2015). Without rejecting or minimising current design methods, the proposition to carefully attend to standardise these processes and methods may potentially inhibit, or at least compromise, the creative process.

The problem I seek to highlight is the incompatibility in using 'fundamentally conservative' and rational methods (Iskander, 2018) to generate sociological imagination. Even when these methods are used in a collaborative process of thinking – which was the case in the workshops where I conducted my fieldwork – it is still a structured process developed within specific historical and material practice contexts. Because I nevertheless recognise the potential of critical and speculative design in offering alternative narratives, it is relevant to begin looking toward an 'epistemic pluriversal' direction (Abdulla, 2018; Escobar, 2018). Thereby, when critical and speculative design bring different ways to approach society, to radically challenge the dominant chronotopes[47] that act in the subjective realm, it might be able to unleash itself from contemporary modern-Western thought.

When analysing the creative process within these workshops, I learned that the way participants organised their thoughts was strongly bound to an instrumental mode of design. Because this is a linear and closed framework of thinking, it posed an obstacle to the inclusion of what seems an ordinary routine of the design process. For example, I cited earlier in this text Donahue's (2017) notion of 'unmapping' to suggest the possibility of integrating what might be considered outside situations. Still

[46] '*SpeculativeEdu* is an educational project funded by ERASMUS+ and by the European Union programme for education, training, youth, and sport with the aim of strengthening speculative design education by collecting and exchanging existing knowledge and experiences whilst developing new methods in the field of speculative design'. Source: https: //speculativeedu.eu/about/

[47] Philosopher Mikhail Bakthin (1895-1975) coined the term 'chronotope' to describe the narrative form and evolution within the theory of the literary.

Following Donahue (2017), I agree with the necessity of engaging in confrontational exchanges and making visible the social agendas and positions to foster what he calls a 'unity of will' within the critical and speculative design method. This might 'support designers who want to address expanded social relationships […] This is particularly true for those directly confronting issues and relationships of power, access, authority, gender, race, socio-economics, and the multitude of agendas and affiliations in a global context of policy or systemic engagement' (ibid.: 43).

In this matter, anthropologists could offer useful collaboration to extend the scope of social and contextual research in the design process. But because of the defined place given to anthropologists within design process, the chance to promote additional space for ongoing conversation to include more resources into play is wasted. I argued that when participants are willing to move beyond settled positions and straight routes of action, radical alternatives emerge. For this to happen, there must be an openness to dissent from the linearities of the standardised design methods. In the same manner, it is also important that the anthropologists – with the risk of exposing the weakness of the present research – also be able to free themselves from their own expectations and the limitation of the anthropological method, the ethnography.

It is in this sense that I follow the propositions of some authors that promote and encourage dissident and speculative academic practices (Gaspar, 2018; Mignolo, 2009; Moraes & Coelho, 2013). Among them, Tim Ingold (2018) calls for anthropologists to join with "the forces that give birth to ideas and things, rather than seeking to express what is already there". For Ingold, anthropology is a practice of education, and 'to practice participant observation [one needs] to join in correspondence with those whom [she] stud[ies]' (ibid.). To move towards academic dissidence, one benefits from understanding that the sciences and the academic disciplines are unstable compositions that are not protected from dissolutions and redefinitions (Moraes & Coelho, 2013). Accordingly, I see a space for mutual collaboration between anthropology and design in their praxis, research and pedagogy by looking to other directions from "the ideas and methods taught by the holders of material and epistemic power' (Cali, 2018: 98).

This daring movement can be seen in the work of Estalella and Criado (2018) with their concept of 'epistemic partners' as a new type of relationship and new form of engagements in the fieldwork – which emerged out of an assumed norm and form of ethnography – where 'anthropologist conducting fieldwork in distinctive sites populated by "epistemic communities" such as public institutions, activist collectives, artistic spaces and laboratories, have engaged in intensive examination of their research practices and methodological engagement'. Or the teaching experiment of 'eventful pedagogies' done by Andrea Gaspar (2018) as well the work of Mariza Periano (2014), who consider the discipline of anthropology the result of a permanent intellectual association thus, on personal accounts of intellectual exchange and discursion. For example, the personal account from designer researcher and anthropologist Mahmoud Keshavarz:

> ‘While living in Europe, I had a hard time understanding universal analysis and theorization of white Western scholars. Often posed as universal facts without bodily locations […]’. (Keshavarz, 2018).

Form-giving anxieties

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I sought to show that the suggestive workshops’ outcomes revealed the shared late capitalism anxieties shared among the participants that simultaneously provides a sense of agency in relation to their fears and uncertainties. One aspect highlighted in this part was the thinking standards for imagining the future. I learned that there is a dominance of the techno-centred narrative about the future. I argued that designers with whom I interacted in the workshops mobilized their imaginations from the point of view often associated with millennials, an urban generational group that as a considerable level of technological literacy in Western societies.

Anxieties towards a global collapse and the uncertain path of professional occupation informed the process and outcomes of the events where I conducted my fieldwork. On the course of my ethnography I perceived that the ‘enchantment of innovation’ (Jiménez, 2008) has been fading – especially among the participants of the events I attended. Creative, contemporary work practices – the focus of this dissertation – were hit hard by the last financial crisis of 2008. Gaspar (2020) pointed out the impact of this crisis on the reconfiguration of career paths in creative and innovative fields, noting that what is expected from them is to be prone to adaptability through a rhetoric of *flexibility* – which in turn is nothing more than accepting precarity as the new norm of professional life. In a similar context, for the events described here, alternative futures were imagined through animating anxieties into critical objects. It was also through these workshops that participants tried to make sense of their vulnerabilities by interpreting their surroundings.

These anxieties are not reserved to the creative professionals, like the ones who partook in the workshops. Stengers (2018), noted that the current era of ‘neo-management and its imperative of flexibility’ – borrowing from Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing, what might be the fate of most of us who will have to endure a ‘life in the ruins’ – recalls that ‘the question of how to live in the ruins is now raised everywhere’. And Stengers adds, with regard to reclaiming ideas in the ‘academic ruins’ that, although ruins are not a safe place, it can “also be alive with partial connections […] that demand a capacity to learn from and learn with, and to care for what has been learned from’ (2018).

Therefore, the idea of ‘unexpected collaborations and combinations’ (Haraway, 2016) might help with the task of living in ruins, not only in regard to co-producing knowledge but also to generate further imaginative alternative shapes of the world. In this sense, the collaboration between anthropology and design could be the one capable of bringing new stories to ‘times of urgencies’ (Haraway, 2016). If it is necessary to abandon the unidirectional, modernist understanding of technology, as proposed by

Viveiros de Castro and Danowski (2018), it is also necessary to review the separation of expertise, each one isolated in their expected realm of practice.

In this sense, the present analysis may contribute to the proposal for a critical anthropology of design that aims to formulate a more critical design practice, one that also considers ethnography as a creative process (Gaspar, 2013). Furthermore, ethnographic research within critical and speculative design workshops can offer a complementary information to open other possibilities within anthropological methods, for example, to the anthropological study of collaboration and collaborative environments where larger social concerns are identified. In the case of the events described here, the outcomes produced from the practices of critically addressing our conjectural future – the one promoted by the dominant discourse of techno-social development – challenge our material beliefs giving them alternative perspectives. For anthropological methods, this provides fertile grounds for engaging inquiries in specific contexts.

Fluid temporalities

The last chapter aimed to show the different temporal orientations of the present that emerged from views and collective imagining of the future in the workshops attended in. I described that there was a level of shared view of the future as a dreadful prospect of the collapse of the Western way of living and its abundance. The focus of the analysis was to call attention to forms of future imaginations and the possibility for anthropology to engage with time as promoted by Bryant and Knight (2019). For this reason, I agree with other authors that promote an interventive/inventive collaboration among anthropology and design also by examining how future imaginations 'awakens the present' (ibid.). According to Bryant and Knight:

> [It] entails a reorientation of the discipline from being to becoming, from structure to agency, and from social institutions to the hope, planning, practices, and action that project those into the yet-to-come (Bryant & Knight, 2019:193).

Three temporal orientations to the present unfolded through the practice of future imagining. To better frame the different kinds of potential futures observed during my fieldwork, I used the diagram of likelihood of potential futures developed by futurologist Stuart Candy. I worked with three future categories from Candy's diagram: the probable, plausible and possible futures. However, the application of the diagram was to guide the observation of the collective imagining of the future in the three events and is not a closed framework. Thus, different orientations of time reflected and even mediated critical design processes. Shared images of the future emerged during the first phases of the processes often by invoking assumptions of life in past and contemporary life and the participants' own prior experiences.

As Anusas and Harkness (2016) already noted, distinct perceptions of time are mobilised in different process of making. Despite that, I recognise the existence of blurry boundaries between these temporalities, and they are not sealed in a pre-setup category. In this context, within the active time-space of each workshop, the shared perception of present conditions contributed to the distinct perceptions of the temporality of the present. I observed that the views of the future were very similar among most participants in the three events, but each imagined future unfolded in distinctly.

Accordingly, the different orientations of the present revealed throughout the events were strongly related to the levels of uncertainty experienced by the participants. In the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy' workshop, participants imagined a dreadful future, and their reaction to it was to elongate the present in response to the overwhelming hardship awaiting them. At the 'NoSchool's event, the action in the present was oriented by a similar view of a future of never-ending crisis. Participants were encouraged to have a more agentic position by 'hacking the given future' and acting out an alternative plausible future. The responses for 'NoSchool's participants was to use technological skills with techno-criticism to bring to the present alternatives to life after capitalism's collapse. I argued that during this event, the future sense was brought to life through the 'collective anticipation action' (Bryant & Knight, 2019).

Although in this part I focused on the future as an imagination in the present, I also tried to present an experimentation of interdisciplinary future making. Through resisting the design methodology to allow the development of new imagines and practices for alternative futures to emerge. I consider that the last example from the third chapter is a collaboration to the anthropology of the future that correspond with research partners to intervene and generate alternative futures.

Alternative futures through anthropological and design practices

I had focused on the contextualities of perceptions of uncertainty in future imagining practices, drawing on 'anthropological insight that individual actions occur within meaning systems that are ineluctably historical and collective' (Escobar, 2018). This mean that participants of the workshops had a level of shared values and perceptions of uncertainty related to the participant's ways of being-in-the-world. Mary Douglas and political scientist Aaron Wildavsky noted that 'social principles define the types of dangers to which societies pay attentions' (Bai et al., 2016 citing Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983). Whatever the future might be, and it is – of course – impossible to confidently predict it, what the imagined futures in the workshops had in common was the criticism of the current socio-economic system, but most importantly, the people with whom I conducted fieldwork wanted to experiment with a distinct attitude towards the very practice of design. This attitude involved exposing, challenging and disrupting 'original' commitments behind the traditional design decisions. Those kinds of design decisions that are motivated by the satisfaction and the creation of new wants and desires. In addition, by taking part in critical practices, these professionals can find a way to attend to the social, moral and

environmental responsibility that Papanek (1971) requested almost fifty years ago by and that many designers still have difficulty upholding. The participants tried to achieve that also by creating conversation dispositifs (Anastassakis & Szaniecki, 2016). Besides that, in a workshop environment, participants are drawn to evoke their anxieties as well as renew their possibilities and hope.

For the emerging field of design and anthropology (Gunn at al. 2013), this attitude entails to reconsidering the intrinsic values within both disciplines. This implies to reassessing not only design's emphasis on innovation, but also what concerns critical and speculative design in order to expand the definition of 'technique or technology' and include more sociotechnical categories (Viveiros de Castro & Danowski, 2018). The potential of the collaboration between anthropology and design is the creation of opportunity for 'cultural insurrection' (ibid.) against the persistent reproduction of the ideology of innovation, as Nicolas, a workshop's participant, believed.

For the part of anthropology, the present dissertation aimes to add to proposals for rethinking ethnography practices, as suggested by Rabinow and Marcus (2008), specially within the studio studies (Wilkie & Michael, 2016). Studio studies emphasise the processuality and relationalitiy of design practices within a range of configurations and dispositions of competency under a hierarchical distribution of labour (ibid.). In contrast, workshops are particular collaborative events that have been conceptualised as a 'catalyst when producing knowledge, new ideas, network and inspirations' (Berg & Fors, 2017). Besides that, workshops have been unattended in social sciences and in anthropology research.

That is why I believe in the importance of making room for what is generated within design workshop's engagements. That does not mean this ethnography succeeded in being a creative power within the workshops. As previously said, much of the process of this work was also a learning process. Therefore, I learned that, although the people I worked with in these events had a very heterogenic background, we are all under the same systemic crisis: a design professional crisis, academic crisis, global crisis and the worst, the crisis of imagination, in which accounts for the impossibility to imagine a response that does not subscribes to the dominant techno-singlular view of a plausible future.

Critical and speculative collaborative design practices might, indeed, entice on us – the participants and/or viewers – with the capacity to imagine other possible realities, freeing us from reductive ideas of what can be brought into reality. At the same time, anthropology, as an inquisitive and attentional practice (Ingold, 2018), has the potential to join forces to give birth to ideas and things – rather to seeking to express what is already there (ibid.). This demands that anthropologists turn their eyes back to the discipline, again in an inquisitive way.

Isabelle Stengers (2018), distinguishes what she calls 'the agents of modernisation' and 'the modern practitioners', the first being 'the servants of the machine' and the later the ones 'captured by,

but liable to betray the destroying machine'[48]. In this manner, the encounter among designers, anthropologists and other stakeholders, as 'servant[s] of the machine' willing to betray it, might work to alter our notion of what is possible, thus, activating memories and imaginations regarding the way we have learned the codes of our respective milieus (Stengers, 2018). This requires abandoning the idea of settled places, where one informs another, within these encounters.

For the joining of forces to happens, it is necessary a mutual reflection of both critical and speculative designers and anthropologists. For the design party, their expectation for associating with anthropologists should be reconsidered beyond their presumptions of ethnographic know-how, which is limited to delivering contexts of social and cultural interpretations. And for the anthropologist, we must be committed to 'bring things forth into fullness of presence, to put them "on the table", to free them from the determinations of aims and objectives' (Ingold, 2018). Following Ingold (2018), this means bringing to bring others into the field and corresponding with them.

I must acknowledge that this is not an easy task, especially for an inexperienced candidate to be anthropology candidate like myself. As shown in this work, my fieldwork was also a learning process where I began by first trying to make sense of the apparent external elements while also being confused as to how to best apply the notational conventions – of ethnography fieldnotes. By the final workshop, I had the chance to taste other potentialities within anthropological work. I believe that these other potentialities came from the fact that, as I became more familiar with the customs of critical and speculative design methodology, I could enter the midstream and travel among my fellow companions – critical designers – following convergent lines of interest (Ingold, 2018). As Jeanne Favret-Saada (1990) said in her work with peasantry witchcraft in France, I let myself 'be affected' and, like her, I accepted being a partner. This implies facing my vulnerabilities and my own existential issues.

> 'This encounter […] can provide an opportunity for ethnography to revise its own 'cultural' assumptions regarding anthropological practice […]. The relationship between ethnography and design can be potentially more transformative […]'. (Gaspar, 2013).

Concerning the anthropology's role in these activities, I follow Berg and Fors's (2017) pertinent critique of the 'so called idea generating workshops'. Like them, I agree that following a step-by-step workshop's methodology can, in fact, be counterproductive. Berg and Fors (2017) then propose the workshop's encounter as a cultural improvisation where the material and intellectual are like open doors between different stakeholders. In this context, anthropology might bring its capacity to challenge exclusive starting points while also acknowledging different sensibilities to the encounter. One of the anthropology's goal might be, together with fieldwork companions, to work towards a reconfiguration

[48] Stengers (2018) characterises the global 'powerful protagonist' or the dominant global West as a 'hegemonic machine'.

of what counts as knowledge by activating shared relations among holders of diverse knowledge (Strathern, 2018).

In this regard, the kind of workshops where I conducted my fieldwork play an important role in questioning back the dominant narrative and its arguments that posit imagining alternative futures as worthless and a waste of time because the obstacles are real and impenetrable. The dominant narrative of 'the destruction machine' – to use Stengers term – built a myth that there is no other way to the future. It is so ingrained in society's imagination that 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world then the end of capitalism'[49]. My fieldwork occurred within circumstances of imminent turbulence where opportunities like in the workshops I attended provided spaces for 'creative resistance' (Haraway, 2016). According to Haraway, 'creative resistance' occurs when 'people everywhere [find] themselves profoundly tired of waiting for external, never materialising solutions to local and systemic problems' (ibid.). The creative resistance shown here took distinct forms. In the case of the 'Post Millennium Tension: design and democracy', it was an immersion into the ongoing contemporary process of the precarisation of work conditions and the growing impoverishment of the working-class population. Over the shared vision of the future, what grew was an unpleasant future prospect, one that the participants do not crave its coming.

What I could conclude from the present work is that it is essential not just for critical and speculative design but also for the realm of anthropology to diversify its tools for thinking. There is an impasse that must be overcome, which is dealing with the crisis of a particular civilisational model (Escobar, 2018) through modes of thinking from the very same failed model. I do not offer a final proscription in this regard since I believe that it is within the specific 'activity timesapace's' conjunctures that paths of personal and collective action take form, not by neutralising differences but by exposing them to the surface, taking advantage of this as a fertile ground for detouring paths of linearities.

Afterword

As I write this text, the world seems to be falling apart. I and many others around the world, have been following orders for social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the scope of our current situation, some authors argue that we, as a civilisation, are posed in a decisive moment. For some, it is the chance for new social configurations of where the future is an affirmative[50] possibility. For others,

[49] Mark Fisher (2009). *Capitalism Realism: is there no alternative?* Zero Books, Winchester.

[50] Here I borrowed the use of the term 'affirmative' as counter to nihilism and resignation from Clive Dilnot's *Reasons to be cheerful, 1, 2, 3 …* (Or why the artificial may yet save us)*. In.: Yelavich and Adams (2017) *Design as Future Making*. Bloomsbury, London, 3rd edition.

the reality is a hunting ghost, promising to most of us who will survive, a 'economic mega-crisis' or worse, a 'barbarism with a human face'[51] (Zizek, 2020).

> Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to 'normality,' trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.[52]

In the very first sentence of the book '*A World of Many Worlds*, Blaser and la Cadena (2018: 1) cite a fragment that says: *'Unless there is a global catastrophe – a meteorite impact, a world war or a pandemic – mankind will remain a major environmental force for many millennia'*. What strikes me is the thought that a few months ago, global catastrophes seemed imminent but still to come. Now that the beast is here, what daunts me is that, while many people across the planet are locked down in their homes – though most do not have this privilege – it seems that the once-terrified fate of a society succumbed in pandemic madness is now our reality. Will this nightmare lead to a more collaborative imagination practice? Will we have the opportunity to redesign the social, to change failed systems?

According to Blaser and la Cadena (2018: 3), the 'hegemonic world is now sensitive to the plausibility of its own destruction in a way that compares, at least in some ways, with the threat imposed on worlds sentenced to disappearance in the name of the common goods of progress, civilisation, development, and liberal inclusion'. And these were the concerns shown by my colleges during my fieldwork. However, considering that within these workshops there were, at some level, people from diverse backgrounds, we were not able to think of a future that did not take 'our world' as a model for what is to come. I wonder if the time has come to refuse any practices that cancel the emergence of many alternative futures.

I hope to have shown that critical and speculative design aims to respond to the current changes. It can offer a getaway to what Isabelle Stengers calls 'hegemonic-order words' which are 'rationality, objectivity and universality'. However, without addressing deep political dimensions, critical and speculative design risk reproducing dominant cultural pattern within imagined future scenarios. Worst, it risks remaining enclosed in a particular socio-economic niche, never reaching past art museums and coffee table books (Mazé, 2016). Now we are in trouble. It is urgent for people who are willing to abandon the 'destroying machine' to be creative and imagine outside our current condition. In the realm

[51] Contrary to an 'open barbarism [of] brutal survivalist violence', a 'barbarism with a human face' is a barbarism welcomed and legitimated by expert opinions.

[52] https: //www.yesmagazine.org/video/coronavirus-pandemic-arundhati-roy/. Accessed on April 23, 2020.

of critical and speculative design, anthropologist among others should consider opening up to the practice of the 'pluriverse' – the practice that considers a world where many worlds fit (Blaser & la Cadena 2018). It is with their 'pluriverse' concept in mind that I wish to further my anthropological journey. It requires one to be 'attentive to practices that make worlds even if they do not satisfy our demand (the demand of modern epistemology) to prove their reality' (ibid.).

In some sense, this pandemic disrupts the divide between nature and culture, in the same tone that exposes the fragilities of what Nicolas insistently mentioned: the ideology of technological innovation. Here, alone in my isolation, I wonder where are the Silicon Valley 'smart devices' that could be able to resolve the COVID-19 mathematical problem? No algorithm could deal with such a global emergence[53]. Our public leaders divide themselves between denialists and realists, but on the ground, no one knows exactly how to handle this pandemic. Maybe, it is time to start looking outside the current epistemic regime: 'the threat posed by the Anthropocene [might be] an opportunity (…) to reconsider the material-semiotic grammar of *the relation* among worlds' (Blaser & la Cadena, 2018:4). The task is not to predict the future but to open space to reflect on the kind of future people are imagining and to better understand where we are placed in the present and how it allows us to fancy one future in regard to others.

[53] *'The pandemic shows that the US is no longer much good at coming up with technologies relevant to our most basic needs'*. On: https: //www.technologyreview.com/2020/04/25/1000563/covid-19-has-killed-the-myth-of-silicon-valley-innovation/. Accessed on 26 April 2020.

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