

3 Design and the Future: Temporal Politics of 'Making a Difference'

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Futurity

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It is difficult to know what the future holds. The future is by no means empty – it will be occupied by built environments, infrastructures and things that we have designed. It will bear the consequences of our histories, structures, policies and lifestyles, which we daily (re)produce by habit or with intent in design. The future is already loaded with our fantasies, aspirations and fears, persuasively designed visions and cultural imaginaries. Designed things, lifestyles and imaginaries, or 'stuff-image-skill' (Scott, Bakker and Quist 2012), endure, proliferate and occupy the future. By (re)producing things, lifestyles and imaginaries, design takes part in giving form to what will be in the future.

This is sometimes made explicit in design. The future, time, memory and change were themes in *acceptera*, for example, the first manifesto of Swedish Modern design (Åhrén et al. 2008 [1931]). *Acceptera* evoked, in text, image and proposed designs, a modern, or future, 'A-Europe', 'The society we are building for' and 'B-Europe', or 'Sweden-then', fragmented spatially, temporally and socially. Some values, customs, peoples and cultures were portrayed as regressive and stuck in past centuries. It was a manifesto for a specific kind of development, in a predetermined direction, an arrow of time leading to a particular, singular and common future. The politics of this designed future are also explicit in this example – *acceptera* was published by the Social Democratic party, and it has had powerful and lasting effects on the ideological and socio-material construction of the Swedish welfare state (Mattsson and Wallenstein 2010).

Design can be understood as a powerful practice that takes part in giving form to the future, or, as *acceptera* exemplifies, a possible or preferred future. Thus, the future, or futurity, in design may expose relevant issues for design research and design anthropology concerned with 'the possible'.

Futurity is at stake in many design arguments and practices. Assumptions about the direction of time, progression and progress seem to underlie popular design rhetorics concerning 'the new', 'transformation' and 'innovation', for example. Directed action toward preferred futures may even be understood as fundamental to some conceptions of design – for example in the classic formulation by Herbert Simon: 'Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing

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situations into preferred ones' (1996: 130) thereby 'addressing differences between the desired and the present' (1996: 141). Particular ideas or ideals of the future are mobilized by socially- and politically-engaged designers (e.g. Ericson and Mazé 2011) or by 'redirective designers' addressing 'defuturing' phenomena such as climate change (Fry 2010). Possible or preferred futures are explicitly addressed in 'concept', 'critical' and 'persuasive' design practices discussed further below.

Discussions of the future may raise questions such as what can be known about the future, and how. In design research, such epistemological questioning can become preoccupied with the nature and scope of knowledge and recourse to more established ways of relating to such questions from the natural and social sciences. Indeed, if we reason, as above, that the future is not empty and, further, that we can know something about what has come before, then we can know something about what the future holds by studying the past and the present.

But futurity also raises other questions. We can query, for example, an ontology of time structured in the three categories of past, present and future. Indeed, this tripartite ontology can itself be queried as a historically- and culturally-specific assumption, and alternatives can be explored (e.g. Grosz 1999; Inayatullah 1990; Jameson 2005). Within a tripartite ontology, still further questions can be raised in terms of relations and differences between the temporal categories. Contemporary philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, for example, poses a potential of futurity that is given precisely by the ontological assumption that the future is different. It is, categorically, not the past nor the present. Exploring notions of 'the possible' in Henri Bergson's philosophy, she queries the future as other than a 'preformed version of the real' (Grosz 2001: 12). From this perspective, futurity can be a conceptual modality through which it is possible to ask: *How can things be different?*

The future as different is a political as well as a philosophical question. Grosz also queries 'the supervallence of the future' (Grosz 1999: 7), or how the future can have agency and wield power over the present. It is this question that is central to the field of futures studies or research, originally developed in the context of policy planning, which can be understood as engaging the future to inform, understand and/or control the present (Wangel 2012). Futures researcher Sohail Inayatullah articulates: 'every planning effort involves philosophical assumptions as to what is considered immutable and what is negotiable; the significant and the trivial. Thus, every effort to plan the future is submerged in an overarching politics of the real' (1990: 116). The future exposes basic philosophical questions about our assumptions and world-views. That things can be different also raises political questions about what can, or should, change and what difference that makes.

As design takes part in giving form to the future, to possible or preferred futures, we need more and critical ways of relating to issues of futurity. Asking *How can things be different?* raises philosophical and political questions. These are questions for design as we aspire and/or claim to 'make a difference' and go about 'changing existing situations into preferred ones' (Simon 1996), 'making things better' (to borrow the motto of Philips Design, Baxter 1996) or 'Massive Change' (as Bruce

Mau proposes, Mau and Leonard 2004). But the future is not merely something that might be known and thus be available for us to determine (or design), a destination that might merely be defined and reached with the right methods. Although the future is not empty, it is open, and this makes all the difference.

In this chapter, I reflect upon issues of futurity for design. I briefly characterize 'concept', 'critical' and 'persuasive' design practices, because they explicitly take on the future by formulating visions, speculating on alternatives and steering toward particular ideals. While important in my own work as a practice-based design researcher, these practices expose issues that I problematize here in terms of futurity. I have (re)positioned my own work over the years, and, increasingly, in relation to futures studies and philosophies of time, as illustrated here through a description of the project 'Switch! Energy Futures'. Suggesting that futurity can be a philosophical and political modality for 'seeing and acting' differently in and through design, I frame two proposals to invite further work in design research and design anthropology.

Design and the Future

The future – indeed, temporality – has only entered substantially into design discourses and practices relatively recently. Design, and other disciplines such as architecture, geography and geology, have long been materially and spatially preoccupied (Grosz 1999). Over the last half-century, however, there has been a shift to design 'beyond the object' with the diffusion of post-industrial technologies (Thackara 1988) and the innate 'temporal form' of (inter)active materials, products, environments and systems (Mazé 2007).

Today, temporal rhetorics of 'change', 'transformation', 'innovation' and 'the new' pervade design. However, other temporal phenomena such as 'chance', 'indeterminacy' and the 'untimely' seem less welcome (Grosz 2004, cf. Rabinow 2008). This implies certain assumptions, ideals, priorities – and political dimensions – in making a difference between what is real now and what is, or is not, desirable or negotiable for the future. Indeed, the 'arrow of time' in *acceptera* was directed not to any possible future but to a specific and preferred future reality with explicit political intent. Recalling Inayatullah, we may query how this and other examples of design may 're-inscribe the power politics of the present instead of the openness or alternative possibilities of the future' (1990: 134). To elaborate further, I point at 'concept design', 'critical design' and 'persuasive design', in which the future is explicitly at stake.

Concept, Critical and Persuasive Design

Notions of concept design, critical design and persuasive design vary widely. These are not fixed or well-established categories in design discourse, since examples are not easily or exclusively identified and terminologies are highly contingent (Mazé 2007), and since positions are continually renegotiated and reframed, for example in relation to more recent tendencies in speculative design and design futures. Here, I evoke these as tropes

through which to discuss ways in which design may aspire or claim to project, challenge and steer the future, often without articulating or addressing political dimensions.

Concept design flourishes in trade shows and world exhibitions, for example in the form of prototypes of the 'ideal home', 'future city', 'concept car' and 'The World of Tomorrow' (e.g. Rydell and Schiavo 2010). In a similar vein, Philips Electronics' *Vision of the Future* and other industrial and strategic design programmes fuse forecasting, sociology and high-tech research in concept designs (Baxter 1996). Concept designs have become central to business strategies, building shared values and commitments, expanding and marketing the 'corporate imagination' within a company, an industrial sector or a target group. Foresight may be essential for industries that depend on a twenty-year lifespan (Gabrielli and Zoels 2003), however such genres go well beyond technical questions of lifespan. Concept design induces desire and (re)produces cultural imaginaries for particular industrial futures.

Allied with art, critical industrial and interaction design¹ produces artefacts that debate futures. Resisting the 'dreams of industry', practices such as Dunne and Raby (e.g. Dunne and Raby 2001, cf. Antonelli 2008) borrow strategies of defamiliarization and estrangement from modernist aesthetics to provoke debate about current norms, 'alternative nows' or 'speculative futures'. Critical designs are intended as 'material theses', physical rather than written critiques, of established models of production and consumption (Seago and Dunne 1999, cf. Mazé and Redström 2009). Designs are crafted, placed and photographed carefully, often in exclusive settings such as art museums, coffee table books and lifestyle or culture inserts in the media. While opposing traditional models of design industry, such designs nevertheless seem to assume and prefer a particular socio-economic niche.

Persuasive design for behavioural change aims to redirect norms. In the area of sustainability, for example, ideals, consequences or futures around electricity and water consumption are monitored and visualized in forms intended to educate, persuade, incentivize or even coerce change in perceptions and 'good' behaviour (Verbeek and Slob 2006, cf. Klanten, Ehmann and Bohle 2012). Designed to 'fit' people's bodies and sensory capacities, or cognitive and emotional ergonomics, such approaches steer behavioural change in more or less explicit and conscious ways. Persuasive designs induce self-discipline, regulating, affirming and governing particular behaviours in forms intended to be internalized and reinforced in an ongoing manner in everyday life and social practices (Mazé 2013). While perhaps not always aware or reflexive about the ideologies and policies (re)produced, persuasive designs oppose present conditions and propose quite particular alternatives and futures.

Some Political Dimensions

Concept, critical and persuasive design point at various ways of approaching the future, which I characterize here in slightly over-generalized terms and tropes in order to articulate potential political dimensions. By 'the political', I do not refer to party politics or state sovereignty but, rather, philosophical and analytical uses of the term

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in the social and political sciences. In this sense, I argue that the future, or futures, that are imagined, materialized and intervened by design, represent different perspectives, preferences and, indeed, different realities. This can be understood in relation to what anthropologist and philosopher Annemarie Mol calls the 'ontological politics' of (re)producing, choosing between and multiplying different realities (Mol 1999).

The choices made in concept, critical and persuasive design are far from neutral. Concept design, for example, identifies and selects particular trends and values to extrapolate and amplify in imagined 'ideal' futures of the home, car or city. There are endless socio-economic and techno-material possibilities, and choices are made about which may or may not be identified, reproduced or changed (see Wangel 2012 for a discussion of possible versus preferred or normative futures studies). Choices are normative – they are made from and for particular positions, in relation to specific conditions, contexts and worldviews. Critical designers can be politically blind to how their work is situated and to its political consequences (Prado 2014). Elaborating and multiplying possible futures is an exercise of power, even if position or preference is not articulated or if neutrality is claimed. Not acknowledging or recognizing underlying norms entails that assumptions and alternatives can remain unavailable to others, thus limiting their possibilities for (re)positioning or choosing otherwise.

Relating to futures through design is therefore a political act. Here I should distinguish between issues of morals and ethics – and 'the political'. There are important moral dimensions involved in judgements of what is 'good' or 'better', but there are also profound political dimensions to ontologies and the privileging or subordination of other ways of perceiving, organizing and ordering the world (see Mouffe 2005 for a discussion of the political versus post-political morality e.g. of Latour). For example, persuasive design explicitly establishes moral registers ('good' i.e. as sustainable consumption). It also – politically – (re)orders realities and lifeworlds through materially and spatio-temporally embodied designs that determine what and how others are able to think, react and act differently.

That design is political is perhaps not surprising given accounts of design, architecture and technology as instruments of power, discipline and oppression (Fry 2011; Dovey 1999; Barry 2001; Ericson and Mazé 2011). Design can be understood as a profoundly political act, whether we are reflexive or intentional about this or not. We give form to what and how a particular reality (or future) may be confronted with others (Keshavarz and Mazé 2013). As designers, we may not only reflect critically on the question *How things might be different?*, but open up possibilities for thinking and doing otherwise, including handing over the question to others (as a political act).

Switch! Energy Futures – A Design Example

I have been (re)positioning my work in relation to concept, critical and persuasive design within practice-based design research programmes for several years. An example is the Switch! programme (Mazé 2013b), in which we explored and developed approaches to changing perceptions, behaviours – and futures – of

electricity consumption within six experimental projects. For example, 'Green Memes' are concept designs that visualize electricity consumption within corporate settings, the 'Symbiots' photographic series reverses human-centred design paradigms and social norms in order to facilitate debate, and a 'Telltale' prototype was placed into homes to probe effects upon perceptions and energy-related behaviors.

Within Switch! 'Energy Futures', more specifically, we drew on futures studies to open up new ways of identifying and imagining possible futures of energy production and consumption. We attempted new combinations of futures methods such as environmental scanning, scenario building, role-play, fore- and backcasting with those more familiar in design, such as qualitative interviews and personas, visualization and prototyping, interventions and participatory events (see Figure 3.1). This methodological mix supported us in moving beyond typically incremental approaches to sustainability in user-centred design, which often privilege the current needs of proximate stakeholders within near-future proposals. Our approach implicated familiar and everyday situations, participating stakeholders and existing contexts, but also explored larger-scale and longer-term dimensions. For example, enacting three different scenarios from the standpoints of the diverse personae (based on qualitative interviews and political segments), engaged power and (infra)structural dynamics, socio-economic and ideological distances, conflicts as well as transitions.

Energy Futures generated five '(super)fictive realities' or 'superfictions', which were articulated through collections of highly-considered and -crafted artefacts and media (e.g. 'conceptual modelling'), including mock-ups and working prototypes, family snapshots and journalistic photos, Wikipedia and YouTube media. Rather than one-liners (which is typical of many visionary images in concept and critical design), these blur between sci-fi and oral history, personal anecdote and reportage, to develop qualities that are nuanced and complex as well as strangely familiar, difficult and socio-psychologically conflicting as well as humorous.

Each 'superfiction' materializes tropes that can be traced within contemporary sustainable development and scenarios of energy futures. For example, while one evokes a technological silver bullet and win-win solution (Figure 3.2.15), a typically 'eco-modernist' trope, others raise issues of eco-disobedience and socio-spatial inequity. One focuses on potentially new cultural forms and communal solidarity (Figures 3.2.10–13), while others suggest increased individuation, austerity and separatism (Figure 3.2.14). While the content varies, along with implied costs, benefits, exclusions and beneficiaries, each is carefully crafted from a first-person standpoint in order to humanize possible experiences, worldviews and realities that are, nonetheless, very different. Since we were interested in opening up, rather than resolving or closing the future, each superfiction is crafted individually and in relation to one another such that further qualities emerge in juxtaposition.

Energy Futures involved the staging of an exhibition that invited – and required – participation in interpreting and making sense of these strangely familiar and potentially difficult realities, through which visitors examined their assumptions, discussed alternatives and declared their own position(s).

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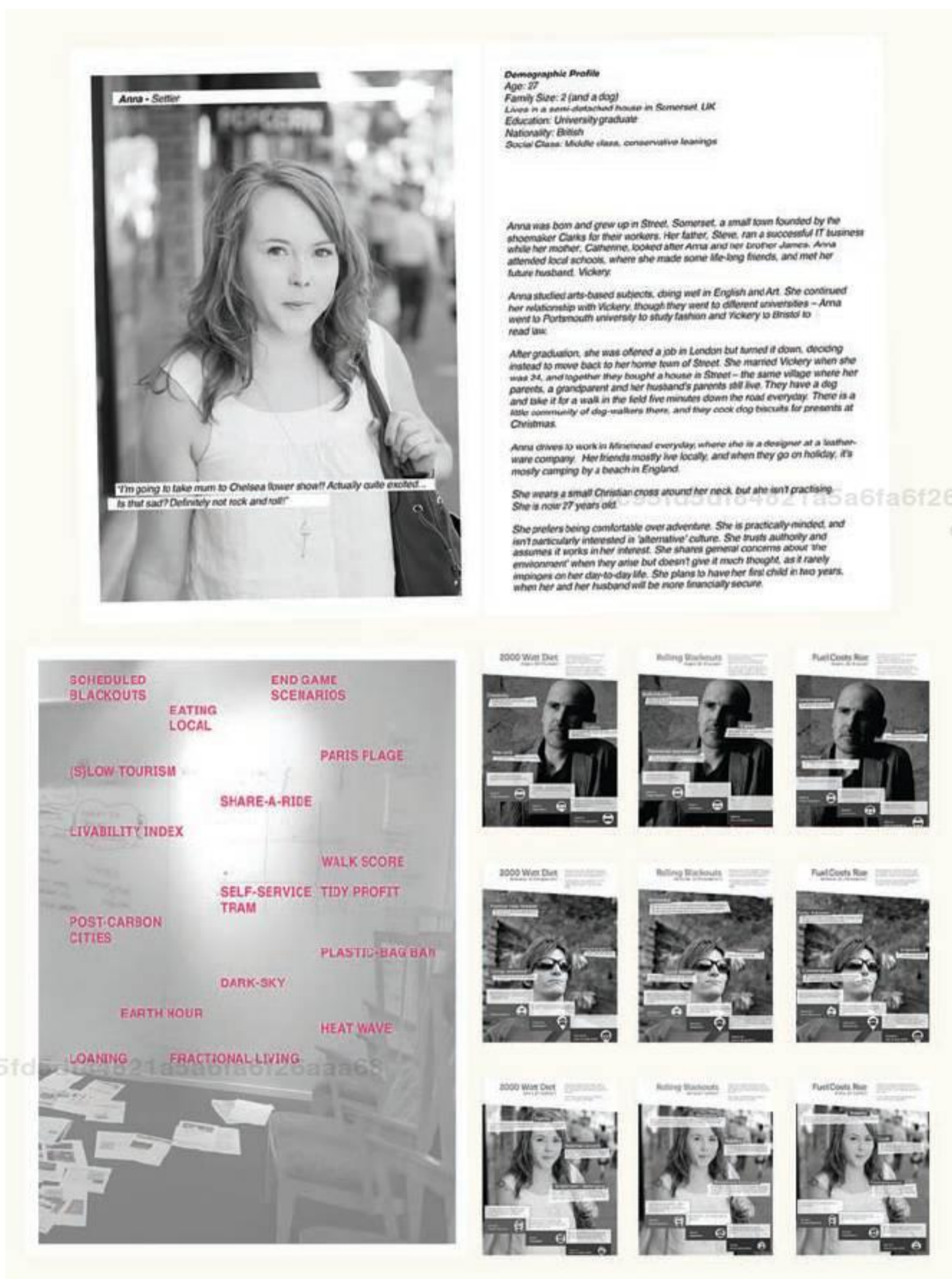


Figure 3.1 Sampling from our methods documentation © Interactive Institute Switch! Energy Futures team: Ramia Mazé, Aude Messenger, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Önal

Problematics of the Future as Present

The future is at stake, as I have briefly traced here across concept, critical and persuasive design and in my own work, including critical dimensions as we engage with (re)producing and/or confronting 'politics of the real' (Inayatullah 1990).

In discussions of concept, critical and persuasive design as well as Switch! Energy Futures, however, attention often seems to shift to other issues, such as what can be known about the future, and how. Discussions can get stuck, for example, around epistemological dilemmas concerning what can be known, the limits of knowledge, issues of uncertainty and indeterminability, and the use of design as methods or instruments to know, test and determine future phenomena. Often we end up circling around issues of knowledge and method in the natural and social sciences or instrumentalizations of pathways toward a particular place or time called 'the future'. Such issues have generated a range of responses within my own work and related communities of design research, including (re)connections with and across the social sciences and futures studies.

The basic epistemological dilemma is also discussed by futures researchers, since knowledge in futures studies lacks the empirical basis of other disciplines (or deals with ontological uncertainties, Svenfelt 2010; Wangel 2012). For futures researcher Jerome Glenn, this means that a core question of futures studies is 'What

Figure 3.2.1–5 'Socket Bombing is direct action performed as a protest against excessive electricity consumption. It involves purposefully causing a short circuit in a building's electrical mains or light sockets. Consisting only of cheap and rewired electrical hardware and timers, socket bombs are typically planted to target supermarkets, chain stores and corporations. Incidents have been reported in London, Paris, Istanbul and Stockholm. One group managed to cut the power to the majority of shops in Kista Galleria in Sweden on the 6th of September 2008.' (Mazé, Messenger, Thwaites and Önal 2013: 28)

Figure 3.2.7–8 'And now for the Power Forecast. This afternoon, we'll see some bright sun of about 80W per square meter for around 3 hours, so it'll be a great time to get those appliances working. Things get a bit dimmer towards the weekend with only about 46W per square meter penetrating the clouds, so plan for a quieter Sunday. If you've got the big family lunch planned, you'll have to use dirty power, I'm afraid, as there also won't be much wind.' (Mazé, Messenger, Thwaites and Önal 2013: 31)

Figure 3.2.10–13 'Today, we celebrate our penance. Today we mustn't use power. We know we're not perfect, but we keep on trying. So we wrap our needy objects to resist temptation! And we gather outside and together turn the sky red!' (Mazé, Messenger, Thwaites and Önal 2013: 36)

Figure 3.2.14 'Before, we were living in a kind of fast-forward dream world – our senses constantly assaulted by all the usual so-called 'modern conveniences' – everything wanted our attention. We didn't know it, but we just didn't have time to think. Then, the power went out for a week, and we found we preferred it. So we decided to move to a Blackout Zone that has electricity for only one hour in the evening. Now, we get more sleep, we spend more time together, we're calmer – it saved our family life!' (Mazé, Messenger, Thwaites and Önal 2013: 32)

Figure 3.2.15 'At last! Energy Independence and Great Looks from just one mildly invasive procedure!' (Mazé, Messenger, Thwaites and Önal 2013: 35)



Figures 3.2.1-5



Figures 3.2.7-8



Figure 3.2.14



Figures 3.2.10-13

ARE YOU OVERWEIGHT?

Are you over 25? Bulging in the wrong places? Well you're not alone. As we get older our metabolism slows, which means we naturally burn less of the energy present in our food and drink. Our bodies turn this excess energy to fats, and stores it to be used up later.

But these stores of fat are the cause of unsightly flab, and these days there's no need to store-up energy when there's a supermarket just round the corner!

So what's the solution? For the morbidly obese there's painful and invasive gastric band surgery - which saps the appetite.

But what if you want to just fight a bit of flab without the loss of your appetite for food, drink... 'joie de vivre'?

Our 'Umbilicus' is a simple device that contains friendly bacteria. When inserted into the white metabolite lipids (the cause of unsightly fat in your body) and turns them in to electrical power.

before

after

BIONOVA

"I tried dieting but I just love food too much! With this miracle device I can eat as much as I want without putting on the pounds!"

Figure 3.2.15

Figure 3.2 Five 'superfictions' © Interactive Institute Switch! Energy Futures team: Ramia Mazé, Aude Messager, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Önal



difference does it make?' rather than 'How well do you know it?' (Glenn and Gordon 2003: 8). One way to address this core question is to examine the future as different from a given current situation. For example, a possible or preferred future can be developed, intervened and studied – not only in terms of the knowledge it is based on but in terms of how it can affect the present. For example, its capacity to 'expand mental horizons', 'enhance anticipatory consciousness' and 'stimulate change in the present' (Glenn and Gordon 2003) can be studied using existing or extended methods from the social sciences and design.

In design research, and transdisciplinary intersections among disciplines (e.g. Vergragt 2010; Quist 2007), related questions and methodological extensions have emerged. In my own work, and with colleagues specializing in futures studies, planning and design, we are exploring how concept, critical and persuasive designs can be developed, intervened and studied in a similar way. For example, designs may be deployed within interventions as 'probes' deployed in 'niches' (such as 'living labs') to explore, co-produce or steer towards desired futures that can be monitored and studied in the present through 'learning loops' (Wangel et al. 2012; de Jong and Mazé 2010). This epistemological shift and subsequent conceptual and methodological work has been important for disentangling some questions generated from and arising around our Switch! Energy Futures project.

In this disentangling, further questions were exposed that required other responses. Some of my questions resonate with philosophical and political critiques of predominant predictive-empirical and techno-deterministic varieties of futures studies and searches for alternatives. There are limits to predictive-empirical approaches, for example, in which the future is typically imagined as empty, a particular place or time into which possible and preferred images (whether fiscal, scientific or cultural) are treated as distinct realities that may be reached through linear transition pathways. In such approaches, the question of 'difference' can become merely an instrumental question of technique and method. Critiques and alternatives have spurred the development of 'prospective-action research', 'cultural-interpretive' and 'critical-postmodern' futures studies (Gidley et al. 2009; Inayatullah 1990). These discussions in futures studies parallel my search for developing further philosophical and political inquiries into futurity.

Figure 3.3 'Energy Futures' exhibition event. The doors open at 18:00. The space is empty and bare, there are no hosts, those who arrive may wonder whether this is, in fact, an opening at all. But visitors, including designers, architects, educators, engineers and historians, begin to gather, meet and serve themselves drinks ... Over the course of an hour, the contents of a closed case have taken over the gallery space, an exhibition unpacked and arranged as a narrative of instructions and fictions unfolds. Amongst themselves, the visitors have had to collaborate to unfold and make sense of these. Emerging along the way were a variety of intimate stories and personal opinions, as well as political issues and professional points of view
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Temporal Politics of 'Seeing and Acting' in and through Design

As designers more substantially engage with the future, we also need to engage more fundamentally with ideas and politics of futurity. Contemporary philosophers concerned with temporality and futurity argue that dominant scientific modes or forms of knowing cannot grasp critical aspects of the future, the new, or becoming different, which are better addressed through other epistemologies and philosophies. Grosz articulates: 'If dominant modes of knowledge (causal, statistical) are incapable of envisioning the absolutely new, maybe other modes of knowing, other forms of thinking, need to be proposed' (1999: 21). Art and architectural theorist John Rajchman (1999) calls for another 'art of seeing and acting' than those preoccupied with future causalities or determinisms, prophecy or prediction. Here, I probe some philosophical and political discourses of futurity, starting with two (among any number of possible) frames through which I can also reflect upon how design, including my own work, might offer possibilities for 'seeing and acting' differently.

Future as Outside?

An ontological structure for time that posits 'the future' as a place or time apart makes possible our dominant conceptions of history and modernity. It also allows us to posit the future as an outside. The future can be a place or time that affords a perspective, the possibility of looking at ourselves, inside and immersed in the present, from a distance (Grosz 2001). From there, then, we can examine and compare with the here and now. This kind of critical distance is used by Inayatullah to analyse how practices within his field of futures studies 're-inscribe the power politics of the present instead of the openness or alternative possibilities of the future' (1990: 134). From this perspective, concept, critical and persuasive designs might be studied or produced in terms of how an envisioned technology, product or environment could entail different ways of living and organizing a society and/or industry.

Reflecting back on my own work, this perspective could entail a reconsideration of how 'strangely familiar' Energy Futures might or should be crafted. I can look more closely at the choices, aesthetics and placement of imagery, graphics, texts and typography – how do they replicate or reference current and particular lived experiences or material cultures, how may these be crafted to reveal differences between a current situation and a future scenario, within a future scenario or between scenarios? I could query the extent to which societal issues and structures are evident and problematized within or across Energy Futures. Only a few years afterwards, the logics and aesthetics of one superfiction may not be critically distant enough from Transition Town phenomena (Figures 3.2.7–8), while the fully functioning Socket Bombs (Figures 3.2.1–5) still provoke debate about socio-economic structures and effect altered positions in debates.

Seeing and acting towards the future as outside must also be problematized. This ontological structure of time is specific to modern Western societies and

there are many other ways of understanding and relating to time (Jameson 2005; Harding 2009). Further, positing the future as 'a place or time' like the present and the past can imply that the future can be fully known, determined and occupied – such assumptions already dominate predictive-empirical and techno-deterministic varieties of futures studies. As a critical modality, a perspective on the future as outside requires that differences and consequences be identified and articulated, between a present and future or between possible futures. What is in- and outside need to be put in relation to one another – for example, the positions and conditions from which particular concept, critical and persuasive designs are crafted may need to be declared in order that others can 'see and act' also in relation to underlying norms, morals and politics.

Future as Agency?

In contemporary philosophy, the concept of difference engenders a critical modality, in which relations between and among things may be queried and alternatives constructed. Perhaps because it is difficult to know what the future holds, the future has a hold over us. As Grosz recounts, the unavailability of the future to knowledge is what propels us forward; in Hermann Minkowski's philosophy, the future is a mysterious and majestic horizon 'without which we could not continue to live' (in Grosz 1999: 21). Inherently full of surprises, 'newness', unknowns and the 'untimely', the future is a fundamentally active force, it has agency. From this perspective the future does not only surrender to our sciences, control and occupations. To the extent that the future holds surprises, unknowables and, importantly, others or 'future people' who will have the capacity to change us, to reframe our present and rewrite history, the future has a 'decolonizing' power.

For design, this requires us to rethink our own 'will to power' over the future. Our designed 'stuff-image-skill' gives form to the future in many ways – rather than inhibiting us from designing, the agency of the future means that things will always turn out differently from the way we intend them. That we cannot entirely know or control the future does not mean that our concept, critical and persuasive designs should proliferate any old 'vision of the future' or (unsustainable) behaviour. It does not give us license to leave behind questions of norms, morals and politics. A danger, as sociologist Ruth Levitas suggests (2007), is that if our utopias (or future designs) are only the expression of our desires, we risk a perpetual present mode of living with alienation. We need to be even more selective and explicit about our positionality and how our (design) practices open or foreclose other(s) agency, the possibilities for others to 'see and act' in relation and otherwise.

Reflecting on Energy Futures from this perspective, I could further examine how the project's and my positionality, conditions and worldviews in the here and now are expressed in the logics and aesthetics of representations and performances. We could reflect upon the selection, practices, material cultures and voices of others within the environmental scanning, qualitative interviews, personae and role-play,

superfictions and participatory event. Taking this further would require a reconfiguration of my practice to engage more extensively and carefully beyond the here and now of proximate contexts and participants. Considering political scientist Wendy Brown's (1995) 'world-based' (rather than identity-based) political arguments, I can consider the socio-material implications of a shift from 'who I am' to 'what I want for us' and the necessity of more inclusive recognition and participation without the 'indignity of speaking for others' (Rajchman 1999).

Politics of Future-Making in Design and Design Anthropology

To take on the question *How can things be different?* in design and to claim that design can 'make a difference', I inquire here into issues of futurity. The future is not empty – it is already occupied by stuff, images and skills that design takes part in (re)producing. Design activities, such as those amended as 'concept', 'critical' and 'persuasive' outlined here, orient explicitly toward the future or, rather, possible and preferred futures. A more profound problematization of futurity is required given inevitable impacts on the future, deriving from explicit intentionality toward the future and increasing hegemony of values of 'newness' and 'innovation' in design (and research in general, e.g. Wakeford 2014). Historical examples such as *acceptera* demonstrate profound philosophical and political impacts of design, however today we must seek further examples and beware of nostalgia for the lost Modern horizon of consensus, solidarity and singularity (Rajchman 1999).

I have unfolded various approaches to futurity. Since the future is not empty, we can come to know something about the future by studying the past and the present, drawing on historical and social sciences approaches. At the epistemological and methodological limits of these, further approaches within futures studies address the question 'What difference does it make?' Intersections between approaches draw on sociology, psychology or pedagogy to probe into how visions of different possible or preferred futures can affect change in the present. These kinds of questions and intersections have shaped a range of interdisciplinary research practices, including my own, explored through design-practice-based research collaborations and examples within the Switch! programme.

For design anthropology, such intersections (and examples) expose important potentials. Signalling a more general 'social' shift in design and a 'designerly' turn in the social sciences, intersections among disciplines are generating a range of mixed approaches including more interventionist, propositional and 'inventive' qualitative research methods (e.g. Lury and Wakeford 2012). In particular, design anthropology has emphasized collaboration and co-creation (Gunn, Otto and Smith 2013), through which emerge a potentially new 'style of knowing' (Otto and Smith 2013). Tim Ingold (2013) argues for an anthropology not *of* but *with* design, art and architecture and emphasizes *making* as a way of creating knowledge. Eeva Berglund (2015) elaborates some specifically *future-making* potentials of design anthropology.

From my perspective in design, these disciplinary intersections are crucial responses to the particular epistemological dilemmas of futurity (and, indeed, of design as a specifically temporal form-giving practice, e.g. Mazé 2007).

Still, political questions of futurity linger and the need to further query 'difference'. Political as well as philosophical dimensions concerning the future are exposed in 'concept', 'critical' and 'persuasive' design. As in futures studies, 'an overarching politics of the real' is revealed in design acts of identifying, preferring, imagining and steering toward particular (out of all possible) futures. It was the political dimensions of futurity that we attempted to explore in Switch! Energy Futures – the politics of different futures, and design (future-making) as a political act.

Through making Energy Futures, we also explored ways of 'seeing and acting' in relation to different futures. Through the process (with mixed design and futures methods) and through articulation (in aesthetic and narrative forms), we came to know something about the politics of different worldviews, priorities, competing and conflicting realities. Thus conceiving of the future 'as outside', for example, could be understood as an attempt to deliberately distance the future, to encounter very different realities, experiences and others. In the process (as well as in the participatory event), we encountered futures 'as agency', and the fine line between future possibilities as too different and alienating versus too desirable and as something to appropriate. While exploring the future – which is not empty – we have been struggling with ways of seeing and acting that do not fully determine or colonize the future (or the present), to leave things open for others and, indeed, for difference.

As I have been problematizing futurity in this paper, I have pointed at some (re)connections between design and the social sciences. Potentialities of design anthropology are being forged in addressing common questions – for example, to investigate 'What difference does it make?' as well as new or alternative 'styles of knowing' such as alternative ways of 'seeing and acting' in relation to the future. These are important intersections and foundations of design and anthropology in relation to futurity, which are, in process and in substance, 'in the making'. I resist the entanglement of design and design anthropology in predictive-empirical and techno-deterministic perspectives on futurity. Framing, instead, philosophical and political questions, I argue for a further turn to post-structuralist, participatory and critical futures studies, feminist and post-colonial discussions of temporal politics. The future – not empty but open – should not be merely a design rhetoric, a scientific 'no man's land' or a place/time for occupation by policy, planning and design. Instead we should engage profoundly, and together, in our ideas and politics of future-making.

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Energy Futures documented in Figures 3.1, 3.2.1–15 and 3.3 and are by the Switch! Energy Futures team. Figure 3.1 displays documentation as pages from the Switch! book (Mazé 2013b) for which the graphic design was by Martin Frostner and Lisa Olausson at Medium.

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Note

- 1 While much of my work expands and develops notions of critical practice across contemporary (and some historical) design, architecture and craft (e.g. Mazé 2007, Ericson and Mazé, 2011), here I refer to a narrower niche of practice within industrial and interaction design.

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