DESIGN AND FUTURES
STUDIES AS CRITICAL PRACTICE
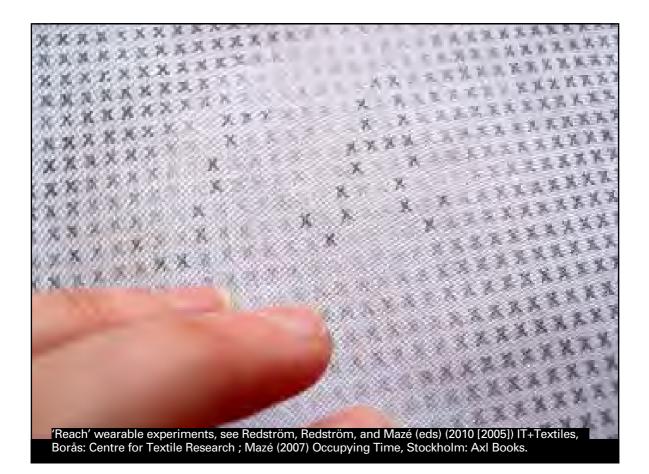
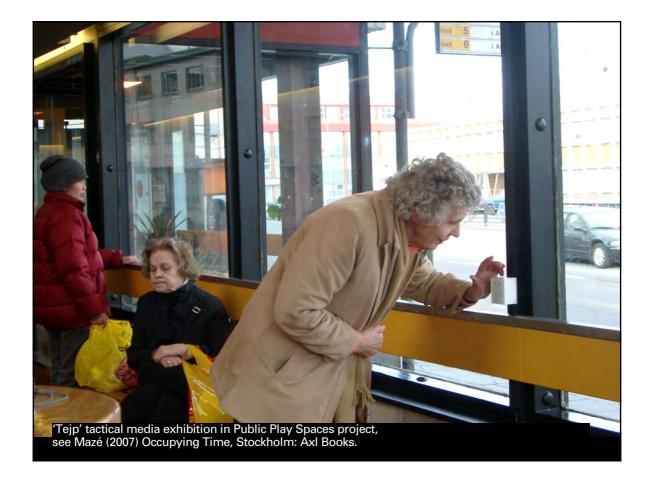Ramia Mazé

Professor (Design Practices)
School of Arts, Aalto University
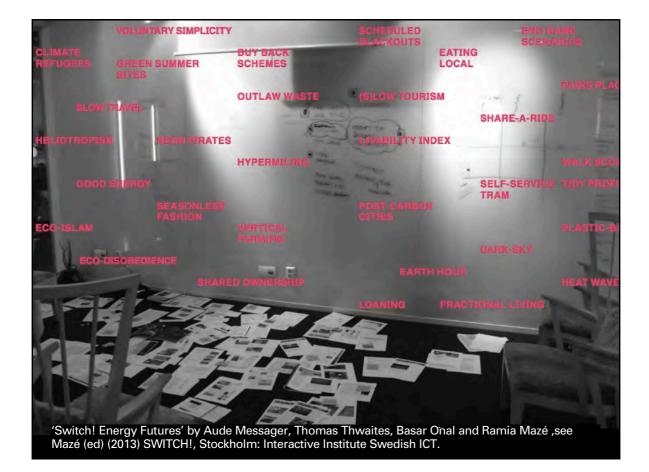
ramia.maze@aalto.fi
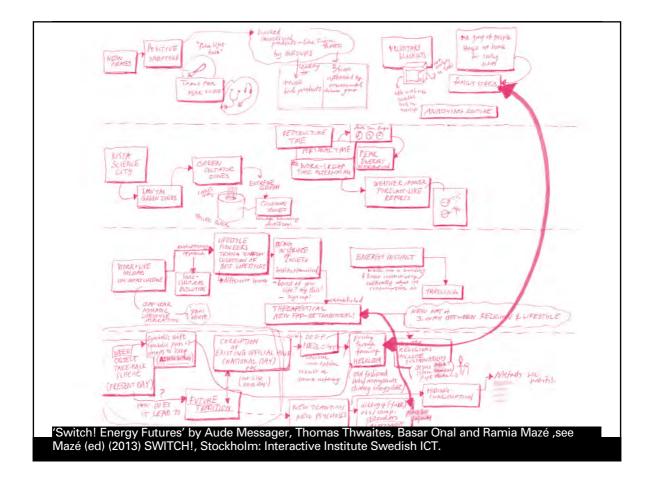
A?
Aalto University
School of Arts, Design
and Architecture

'Reach' wearable experiments, see Redström, Redström, and Mazé (eds) (2010 [2005]) IT+Textiles, Borås: Centre for Textile Research ; Mazé (2007) Occupying Time, Stockholm: Axl Books.

'Tejp' tactical media exhibition in Public Play Spaces project,
see Mazé (2007) Occupying Time, Stockholm: Axl Books.

'Switch! Energy Futures' by Aude Messager, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Onal and Ramia Mazé ,see
Mazé (ed) (2013) SWITCH!, Stockholm: Interactive Institute Swedish ICT.

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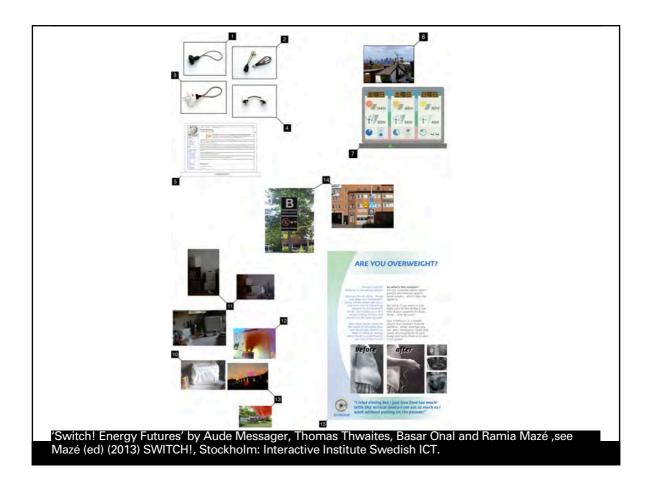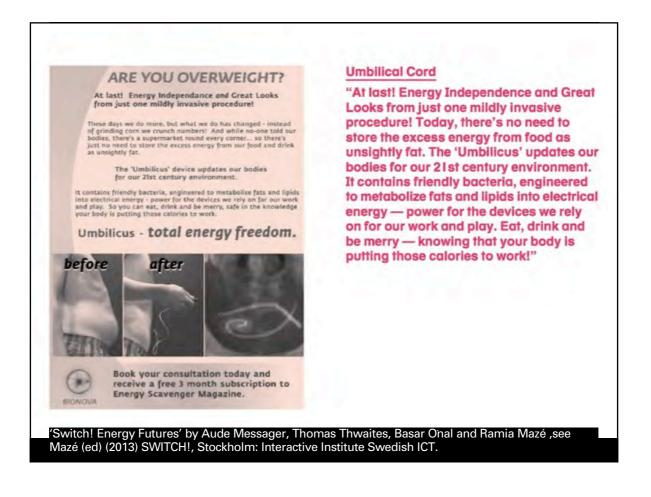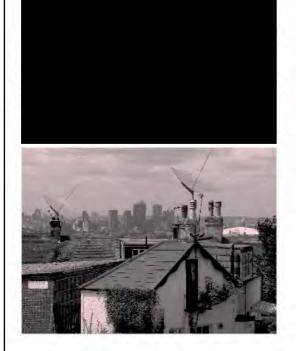
Socket Bombs

"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."

'Switch! Energy Futures' by Aude Messager, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Onal and Ramia Mazé ,see Mazé (ed) (2013) SWITCH!, Stockholm: Interactive Institute Swedish ICT.

Energy Forecast Report

"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."

'Switch! Energy Futures' by Aude Messager, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Onal and Ramia Mazé ,see Mazé (ed) (2013) SWITCH!, Stockholm: Interactive Institute Swedish ICT.

Voluntary Blackouts

"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!"

'Switch! Energy Futures' by Aude Messager, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Onal and Ramia Mazé ,see Mazé (ed) (2013) SWITCH!, Stockholm: Interactive Institute Swedish ICT.

The doors open at 18:00. The gallery is empty and bare — but drinks are served, visitors begin to gather and meet. By invitation only, the visitors include designers, architects, educators, engineers and historians. After some time, they begin to look around for the organizers, to wonder whether this is, in fact, an opening at all. A mobile phone rings — someone excuses themselves from a conversation to answer. Suddenly, everyone is reaching for their ringing or vibrating phone — they answer, and all of them hear the same greeting.

Hello!
Can everyone hear me OK? There'll be time for questions at the end, but if you can't hear me then please say so... Right! I know you were expecting an exhibition but, well, we've really just got research. That's what's in the case you can see there on the table... If you all go over there and open the case, you'll see some envelopes and objects — I'll tell you a little more about these.

Energy Futures are closely linked to the looming future of climate change.

Usually, we see either eco-horror from a post-crash world or 3D renderings of bright new technologies for some sort of future eco-topia. We've tried to stay away from these extremes in our research. But, where technology is concerned, the future comes around quickly. In avoiding the extremes, perhaps we've not gone far enough? In fact, we found that most of the things we researched about energy futures already exist in one form or another. So, all we can do is present our findings...

If you open envelopes 1 to 4... and get out and open the laptop with the number 5... These are 'socket bombs', made according to instructions we found on a website. The loops of wire cause a short-circuit, which causes the circuit breakers to trip, cutting the power to sockets in a building. The bombers use timers so they can get away — you can read about how they work on the laptop — just open a web browser and look

it up on Wikipedia. So, it seems that energy consumption is becoming politicized. Do they target institutions who use energy 'wastefully', or those that buy their electricity from sources to which they object? Is it strange that access to electricity is so unguarded?

We downloaded the next thing from YouTube — we had to get a friend to translate it into English, you can see the movie on the laptop labelled 7... In envelope 8, there's something we found at the Clas Ohlson hardware store...

We printed these photos out from Flickr — someone's wrapped all their electrical appliances at home. We tried it out and it's quite fun — see the wrapped object 10 and 11, 12 and 13... The wrapping is part of some sort of tradition, a kind of Earth Day — a reminder to not buy more unnecessary things, the things stay wrapped for the three months before Christmas, which is celebrated by unwrapping the things you already have. There's apparently a story they tell the kids, about a Sun that gets jealous of all the electric lights and gizmos, and so they have to wrap them all up to stop the sun getting angry and hot. CAREFUL — Don't pull the string as you get out object 12. It's something for turning the sky red — I think that's meant to be something about making the atmosphere visible. Read the label on the object out loud...

If you open 14, you'll see an example of a kind of sign that my aunt was telling me about. Planned blackouts are common in parts of the developing world to share the limited power available — why not live with such limits elsewhere? My aunt lives in Wellington (I'm half New Zealandish, did you know?), in some kind of new zone — there's some snapshots she sent me in the envelope...

In envelope 15, there's something you can take home with you to ask your healthcare professional about. Will new and advanced technologies save us from our own bad habits?

'Switch! Energy Futures' by Aude Messager, Thomas Thwaites, Basar Onal and Ramia Mazé ,see Mazé (ed) (2013) SWITCH!, Stockholm: Interactive Institute Swedish ICT.

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Design and Futures Studies as Critical Practice
In this lecture

Design as a normative (as opposed to neutral) practice

As such, an instrument in futures studies and societal change

Political dimensions of designing 'visions of the future'

"By presenting an audience of potential users with a new product – whether as simple as a plow or a new form of hybrid corn, or as complex as an electric light bulb or a computer – designers have directly influenced the actions of individuals and communities, changed attitudes and values, and shaped society in surprisingly fundamental ways."

Buchanan (1989) 'Rhetoric, Argument, and Demonstration in Design Practice,' in Design Discourse, Margolin (ed), 91-109, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

"Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones," thereby "addressing differences between the desired and the present."

Simon (1996) The Sciences of the Artificial, Boston: MIT Press.

Design and Futures Studies as Critical Practice
In this lecture

Design as a normative (as opposed to neutral) practice
- – as change- and future-making
- – as (re)producing particular desires/preferences
- – related concepts in design theory:
  - - Buchanan, ie. design as a '(liberal) art of (political) rhetoric'
  - - Winner, ie. design as 'political ergonomics' and 'statecraft'

As such, an instrument in futures studies and societal change

Political dimensions of designing 'visions of the future'

....
'modern'
industrial
open
social
sustainable
humanitarian
democratic
'just'
gender-neutral
inclusive
participatory
antagonistic
critical
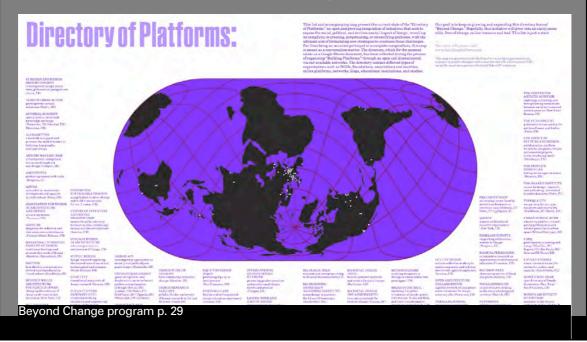**feminist**
decolonial
etc...

Beyond Change:
Questioning the role
of design in times of global
transformations
Swiss Design Network
Research Summit
March 8–10, 2018
FHNW Academy of Art
and Design Basel

In groups of 3-4, pick one of these platforms
and discuss in relation to the norms/values
that they are for (and/or against)

Directory of Platforms:

Beyond Change program p. 29

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Ahrén et al ([1931] 2008) 'acceptera,' in Creagh et al (eds) Modern Swedish Design, NY: MoMA, 2008.

The individual and the mass . . .

The personal or the universal?
Quality or quantity?
—Insoluble questions, for the collective is a fact
we cannot disregard any more than we can disregard
the needs of individuals for lives of their own.
The problem in our times can be stated as:
Quantity *and* quality, the mass *and* the individual.
It is necessary to solve this problem in building-
art and industrial art.'

Åhrén et al ([1931] 2008) 'acceptera,' in Creagh et al (eds) Modern Swedish Design, NY: MoMA, 2008.

From the population point of view this entire process has two aspects. Industrial manufacture attracts people, which explains the phenomenon of urbanization, the continuous growth of the towns (79 percent of the population of England lives in towns, in Ukraine 20 percent). Industrial agriculture drives people away (compared to a rural population of 80 percent in Ukraine, in cooperative Denmark it comprises only 55 percent).

Consequences:

I Population growth,
   urbanization,
   depopulation of the countryside;
II industrialization of the production of goods,
   increased production of goods,
   increase in wages and purchasing power;
III interconnection of countries because of new forms of transport,
   interconnection through trade and banks,
are in the process of creating

a new world—

—a new type of individual.

Build for them according to the conditions that have created them!

Åhrén et al ([1931] 2008) 'acceptera,' in Creagh et al (eds) Modern Swedish Design, NY: MoMA, 2008.

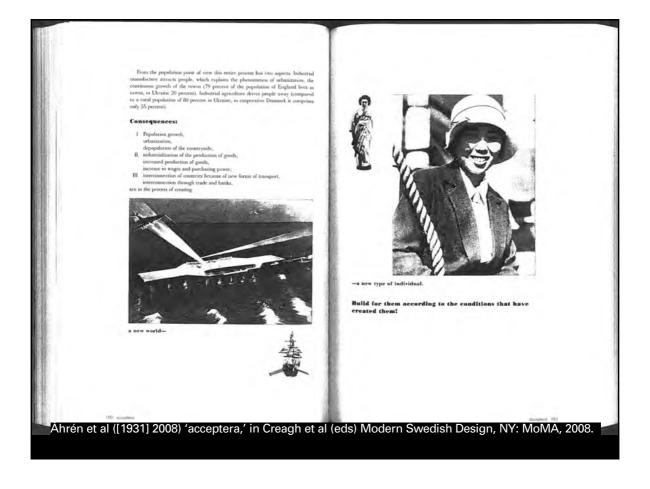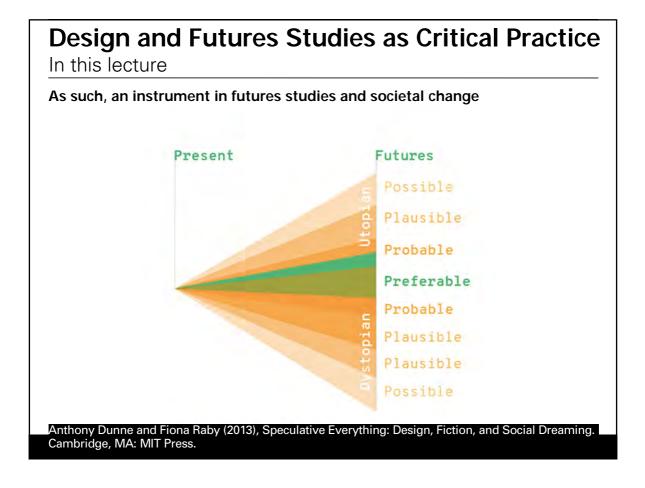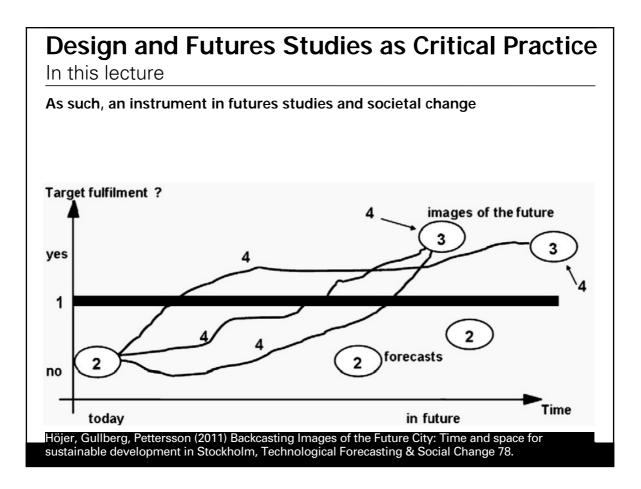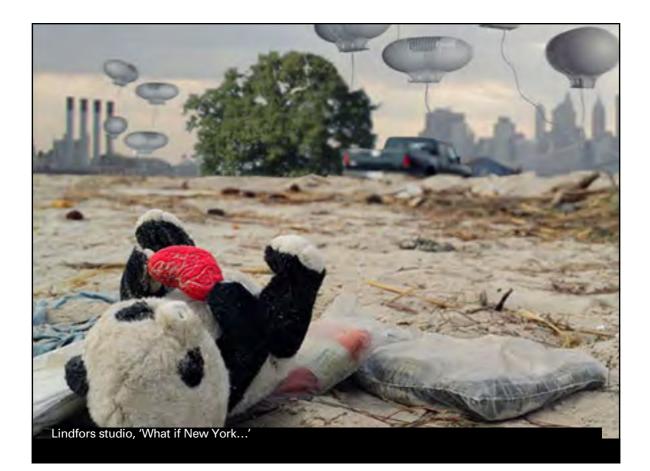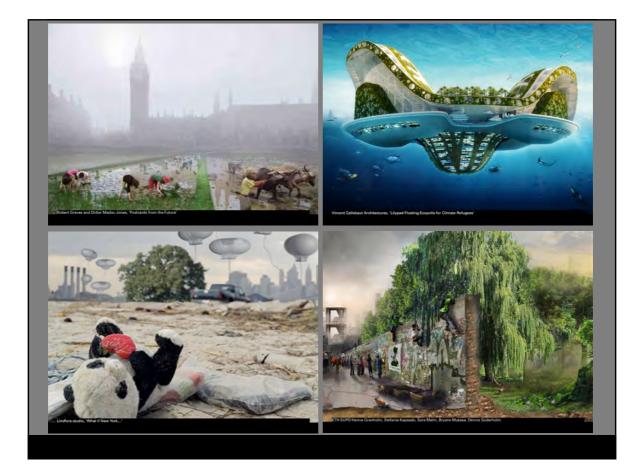# Design and Futures Studies as Critical Practice
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As such, an instrument in futures studies and societal change

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2013), Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Design and Futures Studies as Critical Practice
In this lecture

As such, an instrument in futures studies and societal change

Target fulfilment ?

images of the future

yes

forecasts

no

today

in future

Time

Höjer, Gullberg, Pettersson (2011) Backcasting Images of the Future City: Time and space for sustainable development in Stockholm, Technological Forecasting & Social Change 78.

Robert Graves and Didier Madoc-Jones, 'Postcards from the Future'

Lindfors studio, 'What if New York…'

Vincent Callebaut Architectures, 'Lilypad Floating Ecopolis for Climate Refugees'

KTH SUPD Hanna Granholm, Stefania Kapsaski, Sara Malm, Bryans Mukasa, Dennis Söderholm

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    Ontological politics
    …of a Western, Modern, tri-partite conception of time (Inayatullah 1990)
    …of (re)producing, choosing and multiplying different realities (Mol 1999)

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    Political rhetoric/ergonomics
    …what is prioritized and priviledged (Mazé & Wangel 2017, Wangel 2012)
    …who is in/excluded, whose issues and interests (Gunnarsson-Östling 2011)

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    All envisioning and planning is a "politics of the real"
        Cannot be reduced to a question of what can/cannot be known
        What is or is not negotiable, what is considered significant or trivial

"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."

Inayatullah (1990) 'Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Future: Predictive, Cultural and Critical Epistemologies', Futures 22: 115-14.

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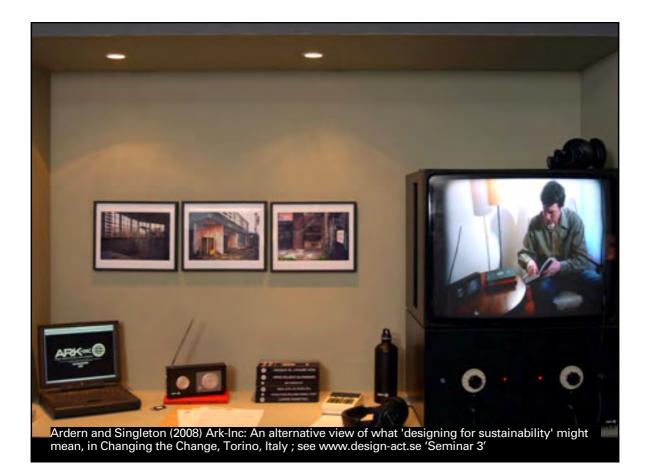
  Other ways of knowing, seeing and acting

"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."

Grosz (ed) (1999) Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures. Ithaca, US: Cornell University Press: 21.

"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."

John Rajchman calls for another 'art of seeing and acting' than those preoccupied with future causalities or determinisms, prophesy or prediction.

Grosz and Rajchman in Grosz (ed) (1999) Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures. Ithaca, US: Cornell University Press: 21.

Ardern and Singleton (2008) Ark-Inc: An alternative view of what 'designing for sustainability' might mean, in Changing the Change, Torino, Italy ; see www.design-act.se 'Seminar 3'

Ardern and Singleton (2008) Ark-Inc: An alternative view of what 'designing for sustainability' might mean, in Changing the Change, Torino, Italy ; see www.design-act.se 'Seminar 3'

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Ardern and Singleton (2008) Ark-Inc: An alternative view of what 'designing for sustainability' might mean, in Changing the Change, Torino, Italy ; see www.design-act.se 'Seminar 3'

"Critical theory and practice... provides a chance to reflect upon what there is, but also to imagine something different – to question and transform rather than describe and affirm"

Rendell (2004) Architectural Research and Disciplinarity, Architectural Research Quarterly 8 (2).

"modes of operation that feature strongly in a predominantly feminist mode of critical spatial practice"

Rendell (2011) 'Critical Spatial Practice,' in Brown (ed) Feminist Practices, 17-56. Surrey UK: Ashgate.

Bradley, Gunnarsson-Östling, Schalk, Andreasson (2017) Rewriting Stockholm's Vision 2030. In Schalk et al (Eds), Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice. Baunach, DE: Spurbuchverlag.

Table 1: Goals, strategies and practices for a more environmentally just Stockholm

MACRO GOALS FOR THE CITY	INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES for local, regional, national and supranational institutions	MICRO PRACTICES of civil society
A diverse and localized economy		
A circular economy		
A local food system with biodiversity		
Robust technical infrastructures		
Renewable and local energy provision		
Affordable retrofitted housing for all		
Coproducing a fair society		
Fair accessibility		

308 Bradley, Gunnarsson-Östling, Schalk with Andreasson Futurist Feminist Political Ecology – Rewriting Stockholm's Vision 2030

Projections 309

Bradley, Gunnarsson-Östling, Schalk, Andreasson (2017) Rewriting Stockholm's Vision 2030. In Schalk et al (Eds), Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice. Baunach, DE: Spurbuchverlag.

Stockholm 2030

Another Guide to the Future

A Diverse Economy

With the signing of the 2027 UN Bogotá Resource Entitlements Treaty, all humans are entitled to a fair share of environmental space. Stockholmers have found ways to live within the resource considerations that are issued along with their democratic rights. The time of people overusing resources, stealing from future generations and marginalized peoples, is ... a bizarre era. Ever since the

Projections 313

316 Bradley, Gunnarsson-Östling, Schalk with Andreasson Futurist Feminist Political Ecology – Rewriting Stockholm's Vision 2030

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    Political rhetoric/ergonomics

    All envisioning and planning is a "politics of the real"

    Other ways of knowing, seeing and acting

"For futures researcher Jerome Glenn,
this entails that a core question of futures
studies is 'What difference does it make?'
rather than 'How well do you know it?'.

One way to address this core question is to
examine the future as different from a given
current situation. 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' can be studied using
existing or extended methods from the
social sciences and design."

Mazé, R. (2016) 'Design and the Future: Temporal politics of 'making a difference'
in R.C. Smith and T. Otto (eds), Design Anthropological Futures, 37-54. London: Bloomsbury.

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Implications

Call for increasingly critical practices of design –
    criticism from 'within' and 'without'

The future as 'outside', the future as agency (Mazé 2016)

Attention to the 'supervalence of the future' (Grosz 1999)

"Whether our feminist future involves the production of new architectures, new archives, new knowledges, new practices, or the production of an entirely new world, a task exists in preparing the crowds in the bleachers for the unfamiliar modes of address to come. The capacity to projectively bring into being another world might, I suggest, ultimately lie in the crafting of the conditions of its reception."

Runting (2017) Projections Prologue: The waiting room. In Schalk, Kristiansson, Mazé (Eds), Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice. Baunach, DE: Spurbuchverlag.