

Transitional Imaginaries – Testing The LIMITS

Fifth Workshop on Computing within Limits (Submitted 27 May 2019)

Baruch Gottlieb

Studium Generale, University of Arts
Berlin, Germany
baruch@trick.ca

Nicolas Maignet

disnovation.org art collective
Paris, France
contact@disnovation.net

Maria Roszkowska

disnovation.org art collective
Paris, France
contact@disnovation.net

ABSTRACT

This art+science project elaborates transdisciplinary aesthetic and strategies, and seeks to intensify and inform public engagement with concerns related to the LIMITS conference: sustainability, technology and society. Scientific rational thinking has brought us to this critical moment [1], but, as philosopher of technology Vilém Flusser already observed in the 1980s [2], [3], reason alone is no longer adequate for us to grasp our highly specialised accelerated technological condition, we need new synthetic practices which help us engage with the inner workings of our technologically informed world, as well as experiences, providing access, insight and agency into domains of automated scientific rationality, which have become almost impenetrably obscure. As critical *Limits to Growth* [4] demand a new global status quo, new imaginaries are needed to support public understanding of our contemporary technological condition and develop alternative models of sustainable economics at scale. As a response to the prevailing models of endless economic growth as expressed narrowly in financial measures [5], this series of art+science projects playfully and provocatively pre-present desirable scenarios, based on the most reliable scientific data and the most advanced scientific models. This is a pro-active artistic practice, which through presentation, discussion, publication and exhibition of concepts, simulations, eloquent objects, and artistic situations [6], aims to coalesce discussion, and encourage cooperative action across social strata and across borders.

KEYWORDS

Computing within Limits, Limits, Degrowth, Collapse, Anthropocene, Art, Outreach, Speculation, Simulation

PURPOSE

Though it provides an urgent set of discussions and informed calls to transformative action, LIMITS [7], post-growth and post-fossil-fuel-related debates [8] could benefit greatly from being more widely disseminated, grasped, and discussed in better nuance across the diverse social and cultural strata.

1. Stimulate: As a initiative to stimulate the circulation of LIMITS reflexions and notions, we intend to translate, embody, and illustrate some key principles beyond the textual form.

2. Provoke: In order to invigorate a selection of concepts, they will be turned into playful, radical, desirable, and provocative simulations and interpretations.

3. Amplify: Our intent is to share and circulate such artistic outputs so as to amplify the debates within academia and across social strata and across borders.

METHODOLOGY

To operationalize our intentions, we will proceed in a three steps methodology.

1. Search: Identify the main polemics, fundamental notions, paradoxes and new scenarios.

2. Assess: Evaluate existing efforts to address the issues identified in 1, and anticipate extreme or exemplary scenarios.

3. Expose: Produce and propagate simulations, technical images and objects using state of the art academic, technical and artistic methodology and datasets.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The outcomes will be distributed across three layers, allowing to share some necessary blocks for witnessing, physically experiencing, and speculating about desirable transitions.

1. Witness: A theory popularisation toolkit – composed of a series of video clips on fundamental concepts and notions about the transition to decreased dependence on technosphere, decreased use of fossil fuel, and increased need for renewal, reinvention, and reassessment of our value systems.

2. Experience: A physical translation toolkit – composed of artworks in the form of physical objects, that facilitate understanding of the scales (orders of magnitude) and fields of relations (social, technical, planetary) related to energetic transition debates, bringing people together around issues.

3. Speculate: A speculative modeling toolkit – composed of diagrams, visualizations, board games, and interactive models, this series of simulations and speculative scenarios mixing ecological-economics and Earth System Dynamics is considered as a provocative and inspirational discussion-starter for broader debate and critical projections on the future(s).

MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

To succeed in an effective transfer, circulation, and evaluation of the outcomes, three modes of engagement are anticipated.

1. Transfer: A direct transmission through exhibitions, talks, publications (multiple platforms), social media shepherding the concepts.

2. Circulate: An incentive for distribution based on a dedicated online platform optimized for sharing on social media, screenings, and html to print.

3. Evaluate: All the elements, including functioning codebase will be made available in public licence, open-source, and replicable or modifiable for teaching, debate or journalistic illustration purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The three core initiators of this project have multiple previous experiences of provocative popularization of academic and cultural debates. Like *The Pirate Book* [9], *FEEDBACK Marshall McLuhan and the Arts* [10], *OCTO* [11], *R15N* [12], and Disnovation.org curatorial works [13].

REFERENCES

- [1] Bonneuil, Christophe & Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste. (2017). *The Shock of the Anthropocene*. Verso, London
- [2] Flusser, Vilém. (1988). On writing, complexity and the technical revolutions, Interview by Miklós Peternák in Osnabrück, European Media Art Festival, September 1988. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3z05kB_Qt8
- [3] Flusser, Vilém. (1998). *Kommunikologie*. Published by FISCHER Taschenbuch, Germany.
- [4] Meadows, D. H., Randers, J., & Meadows, D. L. (2004). *The limits to growth: The 30-year update*. White River Junction, Vt: Chelsea Green Publishing Company.
- [5] Kubiszewski, Ida & Costanza, Robert & Franco, Carol & Lawn, Philip & Talberth, John & Jackson, Tim & Aylmer, Camille. (2013). Beyond GDP: Measuring and Achieving Global Genuine Progress. *Ecological Economics*. 93. 57-68. 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2013.04.019.
- [6] Disnovation.org (2019, May 26). Curatorial Works. Retrieved from <http://disnovation.org/curation.php>
- [7] Nardi, Bonnie & Tomlinson, Bill & Patterson, Donald J. & Chen, Jay & Pargman, Daniel & Raghavan, Barath & Penzenstadler Birgit. (October 2018). Computing Within Limits, *Communications of the ACM*, Vol. 61 No. 10, Pages 86-93.
- [8] Jackson, Tim. (2009). *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. Earthscan, London.
- [9] Disnovation.org (2015). *The Pirate Book*. Retrieved from <http://thepiratebook.net/>
- [10] Gottlieb, Baruch & Sondejker, Marie-José. (2017). *Feedback #1, Marshall McLuhan and the Arts*. Retrieved from http://westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/17_09_McLuhan
- [11] Telekommunisten (2013). *OCTO*. Retrieved from <http://telekommunisten.net/octo/>
- [12] Telekommunisten (2012, January 10). *R15N*. Retrieved from <http://telekommunisten.net/r15n/>
- [13] Disnovation.org (2018). Curatorial Works. Retrieved from <http://disnovation.org/curation.php>