Internet Alchemy

Transformative narratives at the intersection of human rights and technology.

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Pepe Borrás / @PepeBorras

Digital media expert, creative strategist and two-time founder at the intersection of business, technology and society.

Current focus:
Reimagining philanthropy in the digital age.

Internet Freedom Festival

Pioneer nonprofit for the development of diverse, inclusive and safer spaces for the collaborative advancement of human rights in the digital age.

Human rights defender network +140 countries.

In +100 blog posts and articles about surveillance, George Orwell's *1984* was the sole literary metaphor employed.

– PEN America (2014)

TECHNOLOGY

Why Should We Even Care If the Government Is Collecting Our Data?

Kafka, not Orwell, can help us understand the problems of digitized mass surveillance, argues legal scholar Daniel J. Solove.

Wrong emphasis:

Surveillance (information collection)

vs.

Storage, use and analysis of aggregated data (information processing)

A growing majority now views our online privacy as a crisis

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Which of the following comes closest to your view of online privacy?

June 2018 → 51%

March 2019 → 58%

The privacy threat is a crisis, and we need to force companies to change.

46%

Online services are essential, and we all have to accept some risk.

38%

Data: SurveyMonkey online poll conducted March 5-6, 2019 among 2,122 U.S. adults. Total margin of error is ±3.5 percentage points; Poll methodology; Chart: Chris Canipe/Axios

Is privacy a crisis?
Majority said "yes".

Would you pay for services that respect your privacy?
Majority said "no".

Source: Crazy/Genius – "Why Should We Care About Privacy"

Narratives shape our world as much as technologies and policies.

Privacy affects the **power relationships** between society, corporations and the institutions of the modern state.

Privacy Misconceptions

~~Individual~~ Social harm

~~My~~ Our data

~~Me~~ Us

Privacy as an Environmental Issue

The overexploitation of our privacy is akin to the overexploitation of our natural resources.

<u>Drawing from Environmental Best Practices</u>

- Data Conscious / Environmentally Conscious.

- Label amount of data pollution generated by tech platforms.

- Keep track of how much data waste we are producing.

- Educational data waste reducing programs at school.

BEYOND PRIVACY

Zamchick

oriented digital tools

Tech Giants' Power to Shape Society

1. The power of large web companies comes from their ability to <u>direct attention</u>, the fundamental currency of the media world.

2. The victory of the U.S. and Chinese models has a strong tendency to make <u>other models seem impractical</u>.

3. We <u>rely on the word</u> of the tech platforms.

"Our solutions <u>cannot be limited to asking</u> these platforms to do a better job of meeting their civic obligations – we need to <u>consider what technologies we want</u> and need for digital media to have a productive role in democratic societies."

" […] this <u>failure of imagination</u> means that we are ceding the future of the internet to the companies that have already taken power."
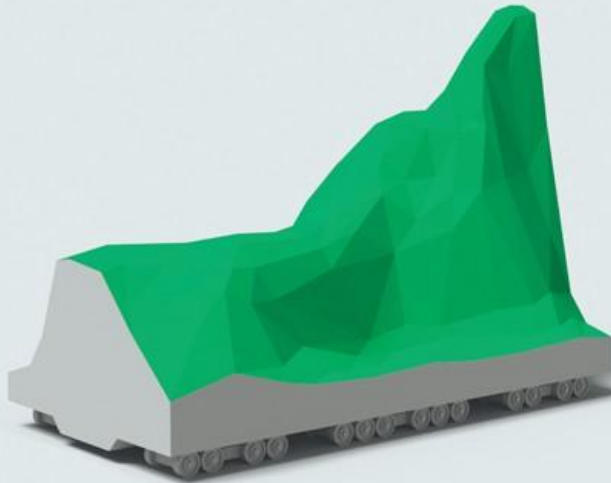
REFLECTION

Reimagined Digital Domain

- A 1% tax on highly surveillant advertising could generate a $1–2 billion annual fund to support public service digital media.

- A non-surveillant advertising network could directly challenge existing market leaders.

- We can own our data, and share it with the application we want to use.
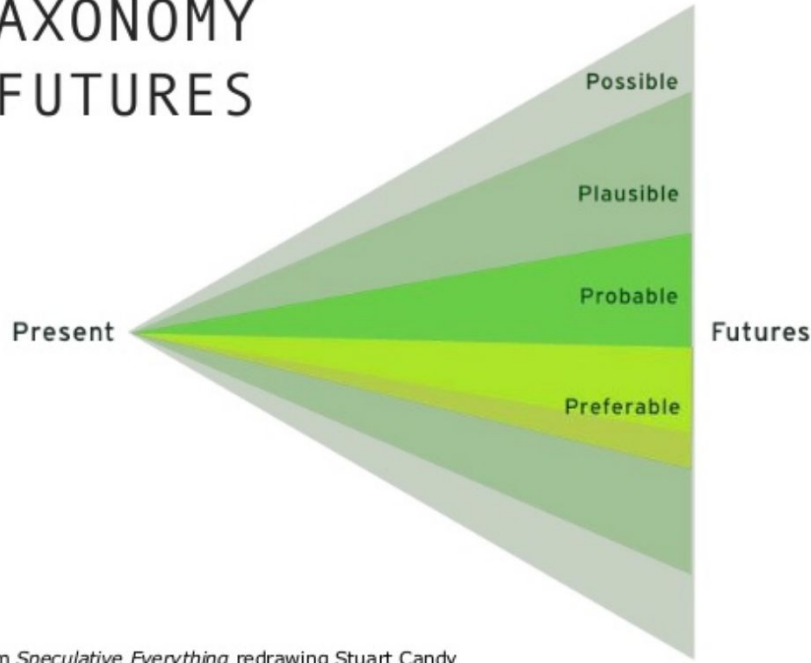
SPECULATIVE EVERYTHING

DESIGN, FICTION, AND SOCIAL DREAMING

ANTHONY DUNNE & FIONA RABY

" […] thrives on imagination and aims to <u>open up new perspectives</u> on what are sometimes called *wicked problems*, to <u>create spaces for discussion</u> and debate about <u>alternative ways of being</u>, and to inspire and encourage people's imaginations to flow freely."

A TAXONOMY OF FUTURES

Possible
Plausible
Probable
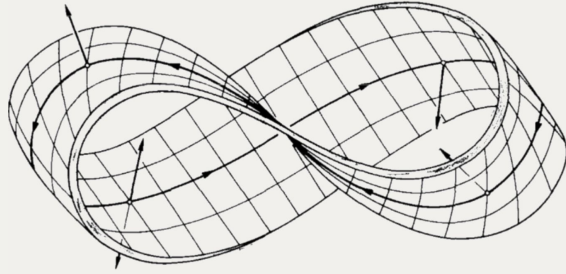Preferable

Present Futures

Redrawn from *Speculative Everything* redrawing Stuart Candy

- Provocative vs. Predictive / Prescriptive

- Futures are lenses used to better understand the present: what we want and don't want to see in our future as a society.

<u>Narratives are Transformation Tools</u>

Narratives have the **alchemical ability** to catalyze the collective transmutation of our present into our desired future.

Problem Solving $\longrightarrow$ **Problem Framing**

Technology has a great power to ***transform*** society.
Narratives have a great power to ***move*** society.

We need better questions to generate better solutions.

Inspire inquisitiveness.

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