

1 Introduction: Design Anthropological Futures

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The future is here. Or so it has often been proclaimed by futurologists, scientists and engineers, as the fruits of science labs and cutting-edge technological gadgets are showcased, promising to make our lives more productive and more enjoyable. The public facade of design shows grand visions of future possibilities, yet every imperfect Now is also the concrete instantiation of what was once a vision of a bright future. Envisioned futures, as Bell and Dourish (2007) remind us, tend to differ radically from how they eventually unfold in the situatedness of people's lives. The future is not an empty space awaiting projected visions from an incomplete present; neither is it a predefined destination that we can simply foresee and arrive at in due time (Yelavich and Adams 2014; Mazé, this volume). Rather than seeing the future as a separate space or time, design anthropologists in this book engage with the future as a *multiplicity* of ideas, critiques and potentialities that are embedded in the narratives, objects and practices of our daily lives. In this sense, multiple, often conflicting, futures are *always already here* as part of a continuously unfolding present and past.

Design Anthropological Futures explores futures and future-making from a design anthropological perspective. Here futures are not understood as striking visions created and implemented by scientists or designers, but rather as collaborative explorations of situated possibilities, formations and actions at the intersection of design and everyday life. The term *futures* relates both to the theoretical and practical engagement of design anthropology with futures and future-making as a subject – futures *in* design anthropology – and to the exploration of possible future directions for the discipline itself through such engagements – futures *of* design anthropology. Through various design anthropological investigations at specific sites – from care homes to corporate organizations, eco-homes to museums, Rio de Janeiro to Italy – this book critically addresses a number of dominant perspectives on, and approaches to, futures, including implied assumptions of *singularity*, *linearity*, *locality* and *novelty*. In the following we briefly elaborate on these themes and propose alternative perspectives for a design anthropological approach to futures.

First, 'The future' is often referred to in the singular, using the definite article to

imply that there is only one version. Assuming eventual *singularity* of 'the future', futurologists, for example, tend to look at patterns of historical continuation and change, seeking to determine the probability of distinct future events. Although the established likelihood of a particular future does not rule out the realization of alternatives, it does foreground and authorize one dominant version of the future over alternative, subaltern ones (Mazé, this volume; Drazin, this volume). This idea of a singular future has political implications. As pointed out by Watts, 'telling stories of the future is always a social, material, and political practice. It always has effects; it is always non-innocent' (2008: 188). 'The future' is not only socio-politically positioned and negotiated, it is also culturally diverse and geographically dispersed (Appadurai 2013). Acknowledging that there is no single, neutral and shared future for all, contributors to this book discuss 'futures', in the plural form, as *multiple* and *heterogeneous* versions brought within experiential reach and shaped through uncertainty, experimentation, collaboration and contestation at specific sites of design anthropological engagement. Their concern is with the situated making of particular futures at specific sites, and how they might constitute possible alternatives to dominant perspectives on 'the future'.

Second, particular perception of time, as being linearly structured in past, present and future, permeates dominant approaches to 'the future'. Teleological ideas of the future as progress, for example, presenting 'the future' as an outcome that follows sequentially from past and present, is underpinned by such ideas of *linearity*. Seeing linearity as a particular, historical and cultural approach to time, futures and future-making (Grosz 1999; Jameson 2005; Mazé, this volume), the approaches presented in this book take other points of departure. Some focus on *emergence* and the *mutual constitution* of past, present and future, through practices of design and everyday life. Others engage with futures as imaginary 'others' outside the ordinary and the contemporary – what Rabinow refers to as 'the untimely' (Faubion, Marcus and Rabinow 2008) – from where we might question the taken-for-granted, and speculate about alternatives (Mazé, this volume). Foucault's *History of the Present*, (1995) showed how analyses of the past may be a powerful means of critical engagement with the present. With *Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary*, Rabinow (2007) made a similar, but complementary move, by extending the analytical gaze to encompass the near future, still with the aim of critical engagement with the present. Such non-linear understandings of time and causality generally render the present contingent, and imply that things could be different. In this light, the relationship between the here-and-now and the there-and-then is constantly played out and reproduced through practice (Halse 2008: 22). With this book we seek to continue the development of conceptual and practical tools for inquiry into contemporary phenomena that are emergent and under-determined, and where pasts, presents and futures are closely linked and mutually constituted. One way of doing this is to engage in design anthropological speculations about how things could *actually* – not just in principle – be different.

Third, questions of *locality* and the politics of claiming a privileged space for

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inventing the future are critically addressed. Entrepreneurial startups, corporate innovation labs, even whole areas such as Silicon Valley are often seen as privileged centres of innovation; similarly, science, engineering and design labs are described as privileged spaces for inventing ‘the new’. From an anthropological perspective, Lucy Suchman (2011) has critically questioned this localized optimism and hubris associated with design, arguing instead for the acknowledgement of design as just one among many figures and practices of transformation. From a design anthropological perspective, future-making is not the exclusive territory of the privileged few, but *dispersed* and *circulated* as a part of the social (re)production of daily life (Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard 2014; Ingold 2012; Simon 1996). As science-fiction writer William Gibson once said of the inequalities of access to advanced technologies, ‘the future is already here – it’s just not very evenly distributed’ (Gibson 1999). The approaches presented in this volume are acutely attuned to political issues, socio-economic differences and their effects on future-making practices in *situated contexts*. Challenging political, methodological and epistemological conventions, they relocate capacities for innovation and creativity among ordinary people in their everyday settings – even among animals and among things – in order to explore, practically and theoretically, how futures *are*, or *could be*, conceived and made.

Finally, even the basic assumption of *novelty* is in question in design anthropological approaches to futures. From science and technology studies, we learn that every new invention has its genealogy; it is composed of something more or less old (Pickering 1995), and made in ongoing everyday practices and places (Watts 2008: 187). Anthropologists also critically address ideas of novelty, arguing instead for dynamic and creative processes of social and cultural reproduction (Ingold 2012; Liep 2001). Ingold and Hallam (2008), for example, showed how the perception of ‘the new’ should not simply be taken for granted, but is underlain by a specific distribution and attribution of creative agency, along with a particular linear perception of the passage of time. Likewise, there is nothing entirely new in the design anthropological accounts in this book, only series of *continuous transformations* and reconfigurations, grounded in extended forms of the here-and-now. Yet from time to time we find ourselves in real-world encounters filled with the sense that everything has just changed, moments so laden with possibility or threat that afterwards nothing seems to be the same (e.g. see Binder, this volume; Rabinow et al. 2008).

Taken together, these tensions and perspectives fuel this volume, as design anthropologists engage critically, collaboratively and materially with futures from a position between the speculative and the mundane, between design and everyday life, between pasts, presents and futures. Building on previous developments in design anthropology (Clarke 2011; Gunn and Donovan 2012; Gunn, Otto and Smith 2013; Milev 2013; Smith and Kjærsgaard 2015), *Design Anthropological Futures* moves beyond disciplinary boundaries, to explore design anthropology as a fundamentally transdisciplinary field. In this effort, the contributors do not simply combine, but rework established methods and theories of design and anthropology, allowing new approaches and methodological entanglements to come into view. In some

cases, historicity becomes a key to reconfiguring futuring, the everyday serves as a lab for experimentation, intervention becomes a path of speculative inquiry, and the environment emerges as a philosophical agent. In other cases, cultural imaginaries are challenged by fictions and prototypes, design objects are used to enter conversation *dispositifs*, and non-humans actively raise new social questions.

Together, the chapters provide rich empirical cases and theoretical reflections on design anthropological practices of future-making. In particular, they advance the use of transdisciplinary approaches and concepts while exploring the special relation between theory and practice that characterizes the distinct style of knowing in design anthropology (Otto and Smith 2013). Bringing together young experimental designers and anthropologists, and leading theoreticians engaged between the fields of design and anthropology, the book highlights four key themes that articulate emerging futures for design anthropology as a distinct transdisciplinary field of research. These themes structure the four major sections of the book: *Ethnographies of the Possible*; *Interventionist Speculations*; *Collaborative Formation of Issues*; and *Engaging Things*.

Ethnographies of the Possible

An often-mentioned difference between design and anthropology is their respective temporal orientations (Hunt 2011; Otto and Smith 2013). Whereas design, as the effort to create new things and solutions, is by definition concerned with the future, anthropology has traditionally been concerned with the analysis of past and present realities. In design anthropology, however, an orientation towards future social transformation is central to shaping the field. This raises epistemological and methodological concerns about how we conceive of what *is*, or *might be*, possible, and how we approach and handle the inherent complexities of emergent futures. What might an ethnography of the possible look like?

As they explore the possible, design anthropologists address differing temporalities, materialities and politics of future-making and their inherent relations to pasts and presents. According to Mead (2002 [1932]), all existence is situated in the present, which is always in a state of emergence. In the act of giving shape to the future, 'we evoke a past that makes this future possible' (Otto and Smith 2013: 17). This does not leave the future open to singular or arbitrary projections, but emphasizes the temporal entanglement of times and spaces, on the basis of which we may imagine and create possible futures. As Ramia Mazé (Chapter 3, this volume) argues, the future is never empty, but 'will be occupied by built environments, structures, policies and lifestyles, which we daily (re)produce by habit or with intent in design'. When we explore 'how things might be different' (Anusas and Harkness, this volume; Mazé, this volume), we thus engage in different ontologies and politics both *in* the present and *of* the possible.

A focus on 'ethnographies of the possible' draws attention to the peculiar and transformative spaces entangled in particular pasts, presents and futures – spaces

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that are highly contested in practice, yet relatively unexplored in theoretical terms (Smith and Otto, this volume; Mazé, this volume; Halse 2013; Kjærsgaard 2011). Design anthropologists engage in reflective and critical *positioning* within these spaces, in order to challenge assumptions and elicit alternative opportunities for the future. Their explorations of ‘the possible’ move beyond linear processes of artefact design and planning, towards more imaginative and speculative processes of co-producing knowledge with diverse stakeholders. Some core questions addressed in this section are: what characterizes the practices and spaces of the possible? How do the processes through which imaginative practices are conceived and materialized unfold? And what are the epistemological and methodological implications of conducting ethnography in a partly fictional space that resists full articulation?

A design anthropological approach has consequences for the ways in which knowledge is produced so as to open up the space of the possible. For anthropologists, this involves defining and inventing the ethnographic field, as well as acting situationally to co-produce various cultural agendas for the future that are not conventionally a part of anthropological research. This raises central epistemological questions concerning the nature and creation of such transformative knowledge. Rachel Charlotte Smith and Ton Otto (Chapter 2, this volume) work towards maturing a grounded theoretical approach to scaffolding possible futures. Focusing on *emergence* and *intervention* as central concepts and orientations for design anthropology, they argue that these concepts may be seen as complementary in a dialectical movement of exploration and knowledge production. Using an interactive exhibition as a research experiment, the authors demonstrate how emerging digital cultures were used as a basis for experimentation, first through a collaborative design process, and subsequently in an exhibition space involving public audiences. Viewing such processes as transformative sites of research and design may allow for the co-creation of ethnographies of the possible in various domains, such as digital cultural heritage or energy consumption (Mazé, this volume).

A design anthropological approach may be used to rethink design in terms of time and futures. Reflecting upon her own design research projects on the everyday use of energy, Ramia Mazé (Chapter 3, this volume) discusses how futurity may take on different representational expressions (forms) and embody different socio-economic models (politics). Mazé uses ‘concept’, ‘critical’ and ‘persuasive’ design practices as lenses for examining, more critically, the forms and the politics of design futures/fictions through interventions in the field. Through such examples it is clear how discussions of ethnographies of the possible are central not only to rethinking the forms and politics of the future, but to critical consideration of ‘ontological politics’ in processes of preferring and enacting one reality over another (Law 2004).

Approaching the future from an extended temporal perspective may help us to conceive of the possible in terms of emergent cultural forms that encompass multiple perspectives on the present. Mike Anusas and Rachel Harkness (Chapter 4, this volume) describe different *presents in the making*, in and through which various

dynamics of time, materials and ecology are reflected in processes of design and making. Considering two cases, one from a UK design studio and another involving practices of self-built eco-homes in the United States, the authors demonstrate how situated processes of making reveal differing perceptions of time: what they call *close-presents* and *far-reaching presents*. Such ‘presents in the making’ are constitutive of different types of sociality of making. The authors argue that they comprise perceptions of time and engagement with materials that may be used in forging a more socially aware and ecologically conscious approach to design anthropology.

Examining the historical dimension of the interrelatedness of design and anthropology, Alison J. Clarke (Chapter 5, this volume) demonstrates how an interest in the space of the possible emerged as early as the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to growing criticism of design and design research. In this period, the shift from historical rationalism and industrial productivity (Mendini 2013) to embracing anthropological discourses of social, contextual and political matters opened up new ways of imagining a transitional future. Unlike the industrial, user-centred focus of ethnography in design, these were activist reactions to global politics (including the Vietnam war) actively negotiating alternative visions for the future. The visionary responses were visible, for example, in dispersed activist movements among design radicals in Italy and Scandinavia, and also in Papanek’s 1971 influential book, *Design for the Real World*. The early activists add to the history of design anthropology and show its varied contributions to imagining and conceptualizing ethnographies of the possible. They remind us that design anthropology is not exclusively captured within the more recent focus on participatory, and human-centred, approaches to research and design.

Throughout this section of the book the need to explore the epistemologies of a design anthropological approach is clearly represented. The extended temporal, political and socio-material frames both alter and create new opportunities for design anthropological research and knowledge-production of possible futures.

Interventionist Speculations

Design practice is centred on intervention, and has a historically established focus on creating change. But anthropology, too, essentially and increasingly, intervenes in the worlds and lives of the people being studied (Hastrup 2003; Smith 2013). In both design anthropology and constructive design research, intervention is increasingly employed as an action research method, allowing new forms of experience, awareness and dialogue to emerge (Ericson and Mazé 2011; Koskinen et al. 2011). In this book, the term ‘interventionist speculations’ is used to draw together and spotlight inventive methodologies that embrace open-ended speculation and concrete proposals for change as modes of inquiry. When we speculate about something, we engage in a form of reasoning that is based on inconclusive evidence. This section of the book is marked by contemplation of issues that are unsettled and thus issues that it is not possible, or even desirable, to know fully. Can the particular

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staging of possibilities be seen as a new mode of ethnographic inquiry into people's concerns, aspirations and imaginative horizons?

In a number of cases, design intervention figures as a research method and as an occasion for knowledge production. Joachim Halse and Laura Boffi (Chapter 6, this volume) lay out what happens when conventional outcomes of design processes – namely material, visual and bodily articulations of new possibilities – are used to raise new questions, and to prompt reflection among participants. The specific speculations of this chapter are of an existential character, as Halse and Boffi speculate about how communication tools might support relationships at the end of life in a hospice setting in Rome. They argue that particular stagings of dialogues around evocative probes, props, and prompts may be seen as an empirical inquiry into what matters to people.

Interventionist and experimental forms of ethnography are also advanced as George Marcus (Chapter 7, this volume) weaves and reframes concepts and concerns from anthropology, design and art practices in the performance installation '214 Square Feet'. Marcus illustrates how varying degrees of awareness of inequality among the privileged were used to engage publics in imaginary scenarios of homelessness among poor working families in Los Angeles. Concepts and theories come into being in the field, and circulate as *prototypes* among diverse publics before they find their way into print at the hands of academic specialists. Marcus argues that these prototypes of thinking, through productive encounters, operate as *research in the world*.

As field sites are prioritized, not only as the primary base of ethnographic knowledge, but as sites of participatory experimentation, they may also become productive dialogic encounters. This is one of the concerns of Zoy Anastassakis and Barbara Szaniecki (Chapter 8, this volume). Anastassakis and Szaniecki take their point of departure in the intense urban transformation of downtown Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the football World Cup (2014) and the Olympic games (2016) have prompted large-scale projects of urban 'requalification'. The authors promote speculative interactions about emerging questions and alternative ways of imagining in this urban environment. Anastassakis and Szaniecki speculate about how impoverished communities might enter into a dialogue about development plans for mega-events in Rio de Janeiro. Methodologically, they propose the concept of *conversation dispositifs* for creating dialogues in and with the city and its inhabitants, about the collective imagining of alternative possibilities (Gunn and Donovan 2012; Hunt 2011) for the city.

When speculation is combined with participatory design and the social sciences, a new mode of exploration can emerge – a kind of cooperative inquiry through which matters of concern are collectively articulated and made available for experience and analysis. Drawing on recent projects involving food, farming and drones, Carl DiSalvo (Chapter 9, this volume), describes the practice of speculative design as cooperative inquiry. DiSalvo and his colleagues speculate on how new surveillance technologies such as camera drones, typically associated with industrial agriculture,

may potentially subvert urban fruit spotting and picking in Atlanta. The author explores how this practice and this inquiry push speculative design to balance the spectacular with the ordinary. This endeavour also challenges us, as researchers, to develop new forms of design representation, enactment and critique.

As delightful as it may be to let the mind wander into imaginative thought-constructions and what-if scenarios, speculative thinking is fraught with the temptation to lose sight of concrete limitations and constraints, or to gloss over very real controversies and conflicting viewpoints. Such para-empirical positioning is generally not compatible with the critical and constructive approaches that have driven the recent development in design anthropology. To qualify speculative thinking about wishful potentials, all the authors in this section share a methodological commitment to embody, materialize and actualize the issues under speculation, in order to make them experientially available as productive empirical encounters for more public scrutiny and experimentation. Thereby, designers, researchers and the emerging micro-publics can employ their various analytical and empirical sensibilities to play with modes of reality.

The interventions presented here are concerned with grounding speculation in the specificities of lived experience. With their differing cases and viewpoints, the authors show great methodological inventiveness in their deployment of material, visual, emotional, and functional articulation of their respective issues. The particular experimental method-constructs include situationally improvised video scenarios built around props and prototypes (Halse and Boffi, this volume); productive encounters, contraptions, and prototypes of thinking (Marcus, this volume); sketching for engagement and conversation dispositifs (Anastassakis and Szaniecki, this volume); and the use of irony and paradox as motivation to investigate and experiment (DiSalvo, this volume). Together, these constitute an array of theoretical and practical constructs for probing emergent realities.

Throughout the four chapters we see glimpses of deep care for the issues in question: from the dignity of meaningful interactions at the end of life, and the politics of uneven access to participation in urban development, to the awareness of inequality among the privileged, and the leveraging of technologies from industrial agriculture to urban foraging. These are not innocent accounts; they actively forge new alliances, while challenging others. Taken together, this section provides conceptual and practical exemplars of interventionist speculation as a promising line of design anthropological inquiry, committed to both crafting expressions of opportunity, and to attending to empiricist specificities of their implications.

Collaborative Formation of Issues

While the romantic trope of creativity and design locates transformative capacities within the individual human being, even representing them as a sort of emissary of the divine (Negus and Pickering 2004: 3–4), it follows from our conception of futures as embedded in our presents that creativity and design, along with innovation and

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art, are inherently *social* processes – if only because these processes must resonate with people’s experiences and perceptions if they are to ‘move the world’ (Lip 2001: 1). In his classic, *Art Worlds* (1982), Becker emphasizes this inherent sociality by focusing on ‘the cooperative networks through which art happens’. As he elaborates, ‘[t]he work always shows signs of that cooperation’ (ibid.: 1). While this focus on collaboration has gained prominence in the field of design as user-centred design, participatory design, co-design, and democratic design have become influential (Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard 2014; Simonsen and Robertson 2013); it also goes to the heart of the field of anthropology, as anthropologists are immersed in concrete contexts of joint activity, learning other ways of perceiving the world by being and studying *with* people, not merely by gaining knowledge *about* them (Gatt and Ingold 2013; Ingold 2008).

In design anthropology, collaboration and participation among a variety of stakeholders, most notably users, citizens, and professional experts, have become points of convergence between the two disciplines – not least because of ethnographers’ ability to mobilize and engage ‘ordinary people’ in professional design processes (Blomberg, Burrell and Guest 2003; Blomberg and Karasti 2012). In fact, following Gatt and Ingold (2013), Otto and Smith argue that a possible new criterion of success could be ‘how design anthropologists are able to correspond and collaborate with people as co-creators of desirable futures’ (2013: 13). This suggestion puts ‘collaborative formation of issues’ centre stage, urging us to explore how such collaboration may unfold. What role, for instance, does the socio-material setup play in how publics gather around an issue? What kinds of framing, scaffolding, and politics are involved? And how do we make the collaborative formation of issues available for scrutiny, not after the fact, but while it is taking place?

One central issue is the very foundation upon which collaborative relations operate: that is, the underlying perceptions and agendas brought to the table by each participant. Collaborative processes are frequently emphasized because of their potential to activate the participants’ different skills and knowledge (e.g. see Ehn 1993; Kensing and Blomberg 1998), not to mention, to allow them to ‘speak for themselves’. But Kasper Tang Vangkilde and Morten Hulvej Rod (Chapter 10, this volume) explore whether this foundation for collaboration might take a different, more ethnographically focused form. Rethinking the idea of *para-ethnography* (Holmes and Marcus 2006; 2008), they experiment with designing a concept of management development in which the managers and employees involved are purposely instructed in basic ethnographic methods, and then encouraged to conduct (para-) ethnographic observations *on* and *by* themselves. Moving beyond mere participation to instilling an ethnographic sensibility in the stakeholders, Vangkilde and Rod reconceptualize the relations and processes of collaboration in design anthropological future-making.

The collaborative endeavours described in this section of the book bring about the much-debated question of the role of the design anthropologist. While current discussions of this question present a variety of roles – from contributing ‘a corpus

of field techniques for collecting and organizing data' (Dourish 2006: 543) to constituting 'a critical holistic and material engagement' (Kjærsgaard and Otto 2012: 179) – they also often search for the 'right' way of being a design anthropologist. Clearly, collaborative issue-formation does challenge the conventional roles of designer and anthropologist. But as Brendon Clark and Melissa L. Caldwell (Chapter 11, this volume) demonstrate, different design anthropological roles may serve different purposes in different situations. Based on their own collaboration across the industry–academia divide, Clark and Caldwell describe how each of them had distinct roles in their joint work in 'innovation labs' for a global food corporation, Clark being the co-creation lead, Caldwell, the academically based consultant. Importantly, their design anthropological contribution emerged in the dynamic between those roles, as the nature of the collaboration blurred the distinction between applied and academic research; above all, because of a shared commitment to ethnographic research as improvisational and emergent.

Underlying collaborative engagements is the ever-present issue of the politics of collaboration. This is not just a question of whose voices are heard but, more generally, of the particular assumptions framing the collaborative engagement. It is nearly unthinkable to be *against* collaboration, which shows how collaboration itself has become an ideological construct, and perhaps is even at risk of becoming a new tyranny (see Cooke and Kothari 2001). Although such broad issues are not addressed in detail here, Kristina Lindström and Åsa Ståhl (Chapter 12, this volume) engage with the 'politics of inviting' by proposing a shift in what design anthropologists invite to, and when. While it is a common practice to invite stakeholders to participate in designing artefacts and solutions to be used in the future, Lindström and Ståhl argue for the value of inviting to co-articulations of *issues* that emerge in the ongoing use of, and engagement with technologies. In such 'designerly public engagements', people are not invited to solve problems or represent issues of living with technologies; rather, these issues *emerge* as distinct compositions of the dynamic between the invitations, the participants, the researchers, and the materials. Thus, the politics of inviting essentially frame (but do not determine) the collaborative formation of issues.

Finally, collaborative processes do not merely bring together different stakeholders, but are also entangled in different temporalities. While it may be discussed whether Papanek was right in his claim that '[a]ll that we do, almost all the time, is design' (1984: 3), it is evident that design work always happens in the wake of previous design, as Adam Drazin, Robert Knowles, Isabel Bredenbröker, and Anais Bloch point out (Chapter 13, this volume). This raises the question of how a pre-designed world is reworked to create both continuity and change, which is explored by Drazin et al. in their discussion of an installation exhibited at the Bauhaus in Dessau. Focusing on cleaning and archiving, they argue that futures do not belong exclusively to designers, as the 'heritage of the future' at the Bauhaus is collaboratively created by different stakeholders who negotiate what is dirt, what is heritage, and what is something else. The authors suggest that design anthropological work

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should help a design-interested audience to see how their own approach to futures is essentially entangled in such past materializations of visions for the future.

Overall, the focus on collaborative issue-formation explores how the inherent sociality – or collaborative nature – of design anthropological future-making may unfold in various ways, influenced by specific relations, roles, politics, materialities and temporalities.

Engaging Things

In the coming together of design and anthropology, a major point of convergence is the embodied and material engagement with ‘things’ in social and collaborative encounters. Within anthropology, the recent ‘material turn’ has placed particular emphasis on the agency of objects, the affordances of materials, and the interplay between humans and non-humans. As a result, we have seen an increased interest in ‘things’ and the making of things as objects of, and for, anthropological research (Ingold 2013; Henare et al. 2007; Miller 2005). Within design and design research, the growing sensitivity to processes of collaborative making has raised questions about what is accomplished in design practices, and about the status of the material artefacts that these practices produce. Binder et al. (2011) have proposed that design collaborations should be treated as socio-material assemblies of humans and artefacts. They suggest the notion of ‘design things’ to capture what is accomplished in design as these assemblies form and evolve as a gathering around matters of concern. What constitutes a thing, and how things participate and become concretely engaged in practices of design anthropology, is unfolded in this section of the book. The theme, ‘Engaging Things’ refers to both the practical engagement of things as *tools* for collaboration, exploration and experimentation in design and research practices and to the engagement *in* and the fascination *with* things as *objects* of design anthropological inquiries.

How speculative objects may be engaged in productive friction in real-world settings to challenge and influence future-making practices – practically, politically, and epistemologically – is explored by Mette Kjærsgaard and Laurens Boer (Chapter 14, this volume). Here, the authors outline potentials for the development of a more critical form of design anthropology in parallel with a more engaged and situated approach to speculative design. Based on empirical examples of critical-design engagements with practices of urban development in Denmark, the authors suggest an approach based on situated and critical material engagement (Boer, Donovan and Buur 2013; Kjærsgaard 2011) that brings together speculative and mundane practices of future-making, in the field as well as in the design studio. Such an approach extends design anthropology (beyond ethnography) towards a more critical material engagement with the possible, while moving speculative design beyond the critical object itself (Koskinen et al. 2011). This (also) allows things and objects to take on new forms and agency in exploratory research activities.

As Elisa Giaccardi, Chris Speed, Nazli Cila, and Melissa L. Caldwell (Chapter 15, this volume) demonstrate, things may intentionally become tools for critically exploring, conceptualizing and influencing future-making practices, through what the authors describe as a ‘thing perspective’. Drawing on a project – ThinkTank – deploying an Internet of Things related to household items and appliances, the authors demonstrate how a combination of field studies, object instrumentation, and machine learning may enable design anthropologists to listen to what *things* have to say about their use, reuse and deviant repurposing. Here, intelligent cameras attached to coffee cups, kettles and refrigerators operate as autographers, which, through automatic image capture invoke everyday temporalities in which non-humans create shared futures with humans (Bleecker 2009; Giaccardi and Fischer 2008). The authors discuss the potential of seeing things as co-ethnographers, opening up experimental approaches, articulating design spaces and potential futures based on non-human perspectives. This is not simply about seeing *more*, but about seeing *differently* through ‘things’. Here, things serve as critical prisms through which we might engage in design anthropological issues from a non-anthropocentric perspective.

The interest in the non-anthropocentric is a further point of convergence between design research and contemporary anthropology (Callon 2004; Kohn 2013; Tsing 2015), which Tau Ulv Lenskjold and Sissel Olander (Chapter 16, this volume) also address. Challenging the inherent privileging of the human-centred perspectives of design and anthropology, Lenskjold and Olander explore *interspecies relations* between elderly residents of a care home and wild birds in the surrounding area. Inspired by the ‘ontological turn’ (Holbraad 2009) and constructive design research (Koskinen et al. 2011), they engage speculative design objects in what the authors call a material-experimental practice. Arguing for a re-calibration of the relationship between design and anthropology, they suggest a more deliberately experimental form of design anthropology that embraces the ontological engagement of its own practice. Along the same lines, they propose that constructive practices, and what the authors call *material speculations*, must be understood as full-blown modes of inquiry in their own right. Such arguments reposition the engagement with things. From being something, which can be anthropologically reflected upon, things become sites through which we may experimentally attend to human, as well as other-than-human, encounters.

The role of things in experimental, collaborative and imaginary design encounters is also addressed in the final chapter. Here, the emphasis is less on the thing itself, and more on the way that issues and people are brought together in performative and collaborative engagements with things. In this chapter, Thomas Binder (Chapter 17, this volume) retraces what he calls *moments of encountering the possible*: that is, moments where imagination and experimentation suddenly come together in new forms of reflection on the future. Drawing on work with a design laboratory approach to participatory design (e.g. Binder et al. 2011; Lanzara 1991; Ehn 1988), he demonstrates how moments of encountering the possible grow out of

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the staged design anthropological encounter as a mutual experience of becoming, between knowledge, agency, and material issues – of ‘thinging’ (Binder et al. 2011; Latour and Weibel 2005) entering emerging landscapes through ‘the things we do’. The author argues that such moments are engagement with things, which come into being through the collaborative encounter. For this reason, they cannot be planned or controlled, and, rather than being moments of reflection, ‘breakdown’, or accomplishing a goal, they are moments of flow and becoming, moments that bring different worlds within reach.

Together, the chapters in this final section of the book explore how things and the making of them become engaged in matters of social, material, political, or epistemological concern. The ‘things’ encountered in these chapters are somewhat out of the ordinary, designed to create friction, provoke debate, elicit insights, spark reflection, materialize understandings, and explore alternatives through engagement in and with specific sites of research. They are also, to some extent, critical objects, as they directly or indirectly challenge the status quo by facilitating other types of encounters, conversations, and imaginaries, and by giving a voice to people, things, and animals otherwise marginalized by design and research projects.

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What stands out in the four sections and themes described above is a renewed curiosity about our ways of living as being contingent, constructed, and transformable. Together they show how material, theoretical, and methodological experiments can open new spaces for insight and social change. Most of all, they demonstrate how future-making is part of everyday, emergent, collaborative, and political practices of shaping and defining possibilities.

Through specific encounters, we sense the methodological and epistemological challenges and potentials of contemporary design anthropology, and glimpse the contours of possible futures for this transdisciplinary approach to knowledge production and change.

Futures are now. Let us engage.

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