

Ecologías del

Science Fiction
as Radical Imagination



Futuro

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Science fiction helps us to examine our reality, working with the imagination as a place for creating future possibilities. It enables critical thinking on issues such as living together, energy production, housing, food, health, communication, and forms of government. And it helps us to imagine other possible forms of society beyond dystopia.

By leaving behind the descriptive and mimetic constraints of conformity to the real world, science fiction can depict with great accuracy our contemporary everyday life, whose concrete dynamics and power relations become more evident.

This paradoxical tension between reality and fiction allows us to look at the present from a very different perspective, thus regaining the ability to formulate desires and develop active visions of the future. This agency is almost non-existent in mainstream contemporary discourse, where visions of the future are paralysed by narratives of ecological disaster and feelings of powerlessness against the inconsistent and often authoritarian decisions of governments all around the globe.

“It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”

Mark Fisher

Wars, energy and sanitary crises, authoritarianism, green washing, social injustice, extractivism of material and immaterial resources, neo-colonialism, border policies, new forms of slavery in digital neoliberalism, as well as experiences of ecological crisis in Global South and North alike, coexist alongside space programmes, cities founded in the desert, artificial meat, and animals re-created from DNA traces. All this creates a scenario far beyond the Hollywood version of science fiction.

Instead of seeing sci-fi narrations as anticipations of possible futures, it seems rather that our present is the result of a sci-fi imaginary – but a mainstream vintage imaginary of classical sci-fi, stripped of its critical potential, mixed with neoliberal ideology and all its brand-new techniques. The present seems like the dream come true of a rich and reckless child, who – having watched too many sci-fi movies in the 90s – has enough money to make it all real. Would another kind of mainstream sci-fi imaginary from the 90s have produced another world today? Would a narration based on the ex-

perience of minorities and oppressed populations, indigenous groups, and resisting communities have provoked and shaped alternative visions and different ways of relating to each other as a community (human and other-than-human)?

“We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words.”

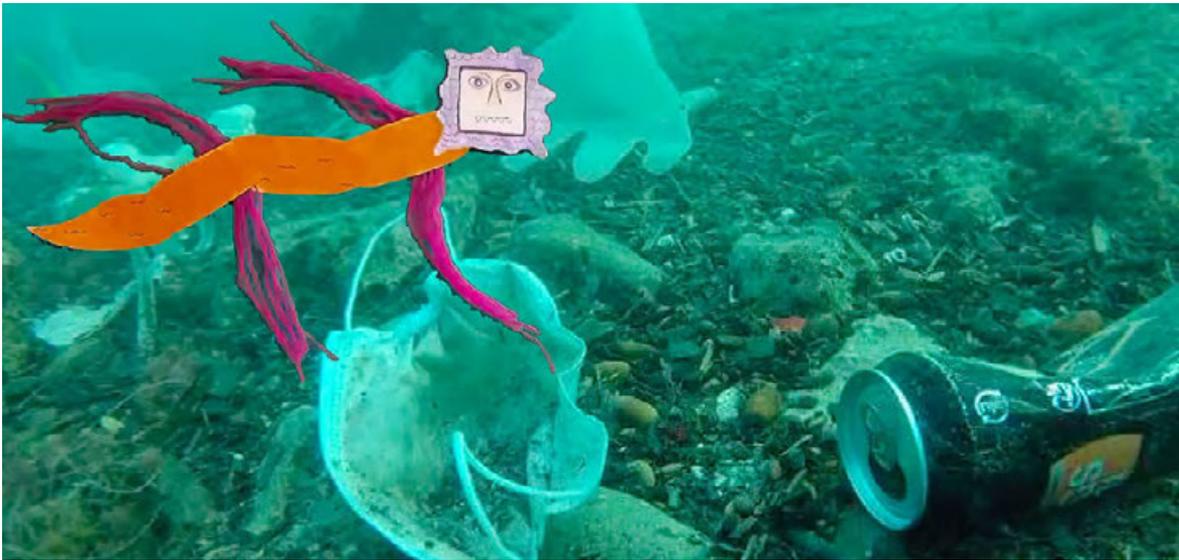
Ursula K. Le Guin

Germany, and Tunisia, stemming from questions around climate change and political ecology, including the need to rethink the relationships between humans, as well as between humans and non-humans. *Ecologías del Futuro* takes the form of a series of collective science fiction film workshops, from which emerge mainly short films, but also texts, comics, and podcasts. Since 2018, we have been organizing projects in rural and urban spaces in Mexico, Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and Tunisia. They have involved children, young people, and adults: students, activists, scientists, artists, musicians, and persons of all ages and contexts, who felt that the topic was relevant to them. We work on the edges – geographical and social – and in network and dialogue with projects that are already active locally.

The future as a collective exercise of imagination

How to provoke a shift away from dystopian visions in order to take back the agency of imagination and its subversive and transformative power, thinking of the future as a collective exercise of imagination? This is the central question of our project, *Ecologías del Futuro*.¹ It is a nomadic project born between Mexico,





Our work is mainly addressed to those who have limited access to cultural resources and where the re-appropriation of narratives of the future is particularly necessary. Guided by the principles of popular education, we work with a horizontal approach based on sharing knowledge and tools. Our approach is clearly situated, looking at ecology from a decolonial, intersectional, feminist, and pluralistic perspective, shifting the epicentre of gaze and narrative away from the Global North.

Who will live here in 300 years?

Through artistic practices related to moving and still images, sensorial exercises, and experiments involving sound, body, and voice, we explore desires, dreams, and fears. In doing so, we aim to develop a critical and active vision of the present, and to collectively reflect on the ecological, environmental, and political landscapes of the future. We aim to reshape the commons by restoring space for utopia starting from concrete models already active in present days. During the workshops, we collaborate to produce handmade short animation and video films, as well as the accompanying soundtracks. The participants develop,

write, and realize the collective story before shooting the film, always collaboratively. We work with the most easily-accessible tools available: open-access applications, toilet paper tripods, handmade special effects. The starting point of the workshops is the exploration of the place where we are, and the formulation of simple questions: what will this place look like in 300 years? Who will live here? In what kind of habitat? What will gender and sexuality be like? What will people eat? How will they produce energy, how will they move, how will they communicate, how will they govern themselves?

The basis of this process is an exchange on individual worlds, individual wishes for the future, and the question as to of what kind of society we live in. We begin by observing and listening to the world around us, to become aware of our cohabitation with other living beings, trying to understand how the different forms of dwelling are interconnected and interdependent. We learn together and exchange readings, films, images, and ideas. We think about the question of points of view, and changes of scales and perspectives.



Rethinking the world we live in

The films produced during the workshops feature viruses, pirates, pink dogs, and other mutants that cohabit with other beings. They are silent, or they mix languages and other forms of communication. They often start from a catastrophic situation caused by disasters generated by climate change. They include scenes about beings who escape from authoritarian universes to build other worlds.

They leave many questions open. The visions of the future they explore are not necessarily univocal, and can be based on cyclical timeframes, questioning the idea of a linear conception of time as a prerequisite to think about the interconnection between our present time and the futures we desire.

(Re)telling, changing the narration and the narrative, and inventing new stories, means reappropriating the production of the imaginary and offering new, more complex, transversal, and plural visions of reality. Science

fiction, then, is not only a mirror or a tool for critically reflecting reality; it also has an enormous potential to transform reality itself. *Ecologías del Futuro* is a way of rethinking the world we live in, as well as its prevailing dynamics. Storytelling is a practice of common reflection and an exercise for struggle and resistance. It is one of the most urgent political tasks to reappropriate – mediated through the moving image – the narratives of the future.

Endnotes

- 1 The collective is international and interdisciplinary, consisting of different people and groups: Francesca Cogni (DE-IT), Lucia Cavalchini (MX), Hafid Velasco (MX), Tuline Gülgönen (DE-MX), Matteo Carli (IT), Kitti Baracsi, kollektiv orangotango (DE), Collectif Corps Citoyen (TN), and others. The project has collaborated with various partner projects and institutions in Europe, North Africa, and Mexico, such as Stadt von Unten, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Kubinaut, Prinzessinengarten, Gemeinschaftsgarten Tempelhofer Feld, Schles27, Verein Gutshaus Ramin, Gridas Napoli, Festival Animasivo Mexico, Goethe-Institut Mexico, Huerto Roma-Verde (Mexico City).

Further reading

ecologiasdelfuturo.net