



# Future Perfect

Dystopia, disruption and alternatives: what we will have to have provided for



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## Abstracts and Participants

### **Manfred Schneider: The Expiration Date of the Future**

We cannot avoid occasionally reviewing the tenability of our concepts of time. Not only food and technical equipment, but also concepts go stale. The nineteenth century elevated the future to an arena of grand promises, entrusting it to philosophers, artists, engineers and the state. Revolutions, avant-gardes and innovations caused all present times to appear worthy of disposal. All past times, however, piling up behind us like the waste of time, were once futures, too. As a result of the constant disappointment with its unredeemed promises, this future has itself fallen into disrepute. Concurrently, biological engineering holds out the prospect of victory over ageing and death, thus the promise of an eternal future. It is time to requestion our conception of time.

**Manfred Schneider** is a literary and media theorist at Ruhr University Bochum. Current areas of work: waste and leftovers, cultural criticism and criticism of science. Published in 2013: "Transparenztraum. Literatur, Politik, Medien und das Unmögliche."

### **Marina Fokidis: South as a State of Mind**

Are we leaving or are we coming? Are we going back or forth? Are we in the past or in the future? Can we change the present? The present? We? I? A system seemed to be collapsing, a system that we thought would stay strong for ever. Until some cracks appeared. And some people dared to ask where are these cracks leading to? Are there alternatives? Devastated by a situation where crisis leads in all fields and senses, we tried not to surrender. Possessed by a spirit of absurd authority (like West/North has been for years) we started to contaminate the prevailing culture with ideas that derive from southern mythologies such as the "perfect climate", "easy living", "chaos", and "corruption". Renegotiating – defining and inventing – the South not as a set of places on the map, South as a State of Mind became our motto with which to face the future in a post-crisis world.

**Marina Fokidis** is a curator and writer, director of Kunsthalle Athena, founding director of "South as a State of Mind" magazine and head of Artistic Office Athens of documenta 14.







### **Michael Seemann: Queryology – The New Order of Knowledge**

Archive, priest and library were the structuring institutions of the old order of knowledge. This structure has changed radically. Today the defining problem is not saving information, but finding and cross-referencing it. A symbol of this change of paradigm is the query, the request for information from a database. The query changes the way we generate and deal with knowledge. In its ongoing development, it is capturing ever more spheres of life, determining our perception of the world as well as economic and scientific knowledge. This is the most important legacy of the digital revolution: the disempowerment of the old gatekeepers. Not they who collect information, but they who provide the algorithms for analysis have sovereignty of interpretation. How can we even begin to understand this new power?

**Michael Seemann** is a cultural theorist, author and blogger. He hosts the [wir.muessenreden.de](http://wir.muessenreden.de) podcast and the CTRL-Verlust blog. Published in 2014: “Das neue Spiel. Strategien für die Welt nach dem digitalen Kontrollverlust”.

### **Silvia Fehrmann: Schools of Tomorrow**

The traditional locus for imparting knowledge and values is the school. Today, the educational system is often geared to the

expectations of the business world – to the exhaustion of all those involved. Can we conceive of the school as something other than a place of disappointment? One hundred years ago, the future of education mobilised the imagination of artists, scientists and progressive educators around the world. “Schools of Tomorrow” (1915) by the philosopher John Dewey was received from Barcelona to Lahore and from Buenos Aires to Moscow. How can the experimental practices of the past be applied to learning in digital conditions? How can the protocols with which machines define our actions be repurposed? And what role does art play as an entry point to new forms of knowledge?

**Silvia Fehrmann** is a literary theorist, translator and head of the Department of Communications and Cultural Education at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, where she is curating “Schools of Tomorrow” as part of the “100 Years of Now” project.

### **Heba Y. Amin: Reconfigured Territories: Urban Topologies and New Technologies**

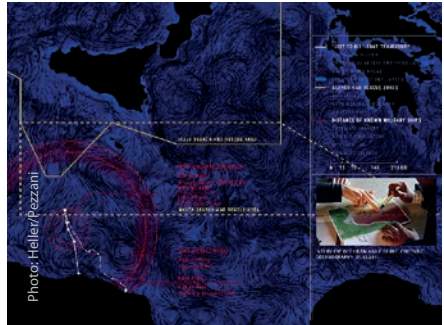
What happens when the events of a revolution unfold online, when internet activity converges with the urban context in ways that may confuse the distinctions between our temporal dimensions? Using Egypt as a case study, this presentation investigates spaces of remembrance in the age of digital communication and investigates how public memory is intertwined with urban topologies and new technologies. It further addresses the works of artists who work with the blurring of physical and cyberspace, utilising new media tools to confront new territorial configurations. What role do artists play in altering the perceptions of future visions of territory? What impact do their visual representations of space have on mobilising people?

**Heba Y. Amin** is a visual artist, researcher and Visiting Assistant Professor at the American University in Cairo. Her “Project Speak2tweet” is presented at the Camera Austria exhibition “To What End?” at steirischer herbst.

### Charles Heller & Lorenzo Pezzani: Liquid Traces – Investigating the Deaths of Migrants at the EU’s Maritime Frontier

Because any trace on water seems to be immediately dissolved by currents, the seas have long been associated with a permanent present, resisting any writing of history. The infinite liquid expanse has equally lead governance to consider the seas as a space of absolute freedom – the free seas. We challenge both these understandings. Through the screening of the video “Liquid Traces”, which offers a reconstruction of the left-to-die boat case in which seventy-two passengers were left to drift in the Mediterranean, we will demonstrate how, by using the Mediterranean’s remote sensing apparatus against the grain, we were able to reconstruct history at sea. We will also chart the way the government of oceans and of human movement across the sea have emerged in tandem, turning the sea into a deadly liquid.

**Charles Heller & Lorenzo Pezzani** are research fellows at the Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London. They launched the Forensic Oceanography research project and co founded WatchTheMed.net.



### Aleida Assmann: The Changing Face of Cultural Heritage

Our heritage is constantly changing as a result of cultural turns and technological innovations. This change is also shifting the coordinates of cultural memory. Whose memory are we actually talking about when we look to the future? Influenced by globalisation, the range of cultural memory has shifted dramatically. UNESCO is the custodian of humankind’s cultural heritage, that is currently called into question as a result of shocking devastation in Timbuktu, Syria and Iraq, among other places. While violent destruction of cultural heritage has a long tradition, the question now is: What is new about this vandalism and what are we in the process of losing? Another scene of de-limitation of memory is the internet, that is said never to forget. Has the accustomed interplay of remembering and forgetting fallen into disarray?

**Aleida Assmann** is a literary and cultural theorist whose main research focus is on cultural memory. The Max Planck Research Award and the Paul Watzlawick Ring of Honour are among her numerous distinctions.

### Helmut Antrekowitsch: Resources, Recycling, Claims

Since the Club of Rome published “The Limits to Growth” in 1972, we have been fearing the end of raw materials. In truth, they are not running out: scarcity is a question of definition, and in fact we are getting better at extracting resources from



ever new strata of the earth. The question is: Do we want to leave behind such a depleted earth for future generations? In this context it is becoming increasingly important what happens to the materials that we have already mined and processed. But recycling and other concepts of sustainability are embedded in global capitals flows. How can they hold up ecologically, politically and economically in a network of strategic dependencies?

The value creation cycle is at the focus of teaching at the Montanuniversität Leoben. In the kiln building, students give an insight into practical research.

**Helmut Antrekowitsch** is head of Nonferrous Metallurgy at Montanuniversität Leoben, specialising in recycling and materials engineering. He was named 2012 “Austrian of the year” in research.

### **Tessa Giblin: Stretching the Human Imagination**

Earth is riddled with signals that terrestrial timekeepers use to tell the story of our planet while they carve up geological history. Whether rigorously evidenced or fantastically envisioned, change is upon us. The globe is warming. Icebergs are floating. And we have stockpiles of nuclear waste that will outlive us 3,200 times over.

We find ourselves on the cusp of a new epoch defined by humankind’s influence on the planet. But deep into the future of this Anthropocene, the sites where nuclear waste will have been buried 240,000 years before, will still need to be marked with warnings. But how can we communicate across a chasm of time that dwarfs human existence? What forms, materials or “things” harbour meaning that can communicate beyond language, sign and memory? This presentation will look at selected artistic approaches to these questions, as well as the artefacts and monuments that inspired them.

**Tessa Giblin** is curator of this year’s steirischer herbst exhibition “Hall of Half-Life”, and curator of visual arts of Project Arts Centre, Dublin.

### **Madeline Ritter: Movement as Memory: On Memory Culture in Dance**

Physical dance knowledge and skills are passed on from one generation to the next, from one life-world to the next, from one body to the next. For unlike the other arts, dance has no uniform methods of recording for handing down. Although there are dance writings, choreographic notations, and of course images, the actual dance event – as the performance of movement – cannot be passed on. Its context, the social effect, however, remains readable. This is the starting point for the possibilities – and instruments – of a contemporary art practice. It is a mission to engage in a constructive handling of dance heritage. At the same time, no other cultural practice confirms the possibilities of collective and complex memory as strongly as dance: nothing is lost in the history of bodies.

**Madeline Ritter** is a cultural manager and dance curator. She has been heading the dance promotion programmes of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (DE), Tanzplan Deutschland and Tanzfonds Erbe since 2004.



### Stefan Heidenreich: Liberating the Future from the Burden of Wealth

The great wealth accumulates from demands made on the future. It does not consist of mountains of unused coins in McDuckian gold vaults, but of payment obligations that are financialised, collateralised and reborrowed against. Under the pressure of this sold-out future, our expectations have changed. We no longer hope for progress. What remains are reforms – neoliberal reforms – i.e. cuts, austerity and more pressure. It is time to liberate the future from the burden of wealth. The economy as a whole sets itself the task of distributing goods and work; it is a matter of optimising networks of relations and transactions. Since we began tracking all transactions online, noting them down as data, a solution to this task without the need for money has become conceivable – which spells the end of the wealth regime over the future.

**Stefan Heidenreich** is an author, theorist and art critic. Together with Ralf Heidenreich he published “Mehr Geld!” (2008) and “Forderungen” (2015).

### Christian Schwägerl: Technature and Time

The Anthropocene idea forces us to reconsider time relations: action on the geological time scale has become part of our new everyday life, whether we are exploiting resources millions of years old or creating living beings that can outlive human existence. Technology and its consequences are becoming omnipresent, creating a new form of nature – technature. The coevolution of the human being and technology has also entered a new stage: while we remain reliant on technology, for the first time technology has become conceivable without human beings. How do we reconsider the question of preserving, shaping, destroying and creating from the perspective of the Anthropocene? And how are traditional boundaries between culture and nature, subject and object being changed by a new conception of technature and time?

**Christian Schwägerl** is a science journalist and biologist. He is cofounder of the “Anthropocene Project” at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, and cocurator of the Anthropocene exhibition at the Deutsches Museum in Munich. Publications include “Menschenzeit” (2010), “Die analoge Revolution” (2014).

39%

theory

32%

expedition

16%

future model

14%

discussion

### Venues

**Heimatsaal im Volkskundemuseum Graz**  
Paulustorgasse 13a / 8010 Graz

**Montanuniversität Leoben / Impulszentrum für Werkstoffe**  
Roseggerstraße 12 / 8700 Leoben

**Porubsky Halle Leoben**  
Einödmayergasse 31 / 8700 Leoben