

# Forum and Reviews

# Cultural and Creative Industries

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# The Practice of Anticipation as a Skill for Designing Possible and Preferable Futures

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At the beginning of May, 2024, a series of floods struck the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. It is now the end of May, and we are still waiting for the water to go away.

Our governors were taken by surprise. However, this was a widely announced tragedy. In 1941, a flood left deep marks in the memory of the city of Porto Alegre and for a long time the collective imagination assumed that another flood would come sooner or later and there was a discussion about what infrastructure and measures would be necessary. Even so, the city

advanced along the riverbank (and beyond it through land reclamation) expanding the airport, trains, highways, stadiums, building administrative centres and entire neighbourhoods with extensive government and business investment. In the hope of containing the waters in case of another flood as severe as the one in 1941, a complex was built consisting of the Mauá Avenue wall with 14 floodgates, 68 kilometres of dykes, and 23 pumping stations.

In recent years, in addition to the memory of the great flood, there have been several



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Fig. 1-2  
Casa de Cultura Mario  
Quintana. © César Kieling

local and international signs of the impact that another event of this magnitude would have on a city which had grown even larger and more complex. A few years earlier, floods with considerable impact in other cities and even in some neighbourhoods in the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul gave advance warning of the scale of the challenge that would arise. In 2023, three floods struck the state, causing 75 deaths. Today, we are experiencing this flood, which is greater than the one in 1941, and has caused at least 157 deaths. The complex did not work.

Similar episodes are happening all over the world. In 2023, the floods in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy offered a preview of the complexity of dealing with an event such as this one that simultaneously cast a large area of countryside, cities, and entire metropolitan regions in an immediate and long-term tragedy, in which the ability of human beings to adapt, trained for millennia, is subjected to sudden stresses of change, also due now to unpredictable climatic conditions.

In all these examples, in addition to the most essential human urgency, what is not anticipated carries with it a serious social and economic cost. And efforts to reverse the impact of these events come at a much greater cost than would be necessary to avoid them - in addition to the other benefits that early efforts could bring to life in our cities.

In this framework, the Cultural and Creative Industries Days Brazil 2024, initially scheduled to be held in Porto Alegre from June 18th to 20th, faced several unforeseen changes. The programme for the event, one of the focuses of which was precisely the discussion of future scenarios, included the arrival of several researchers from Italy, Colombia, as well as other Brazilian states. In addition to the impact on daily life and the direct engagement of the event organisers in volunteering efforts, a series of uncertainties instantly arose regarding the arrival and stay of participants from outside the city, as the city's infrastructure will continue to be impacted for months. But this undeniable setback reinforced not only the solidarity of the researchers involved in CCID Brazil 2024, but also their common purpose to share

local expertise and best practices for collecting knowledge and the premises for writing a collective manifesto.

In line with this purpose, these preliminary reflections are undersigned collectively because the dynamics of thinking and projecting futures, and practising anticipation, are something that needs to be experienced and developed collectively. This perspective develops from a logic that aims to empower people about what they want for themselves, their families, friends and communities. Therefore, this open contribution is also an invitation to anyone who wants/desires to rethink the ideas and actions that concern the reconstruction of the city of Porto Alegre, the state of Rio Grande do Sul and, of course, their futures.

To do this, we need to talk about the present, because yes, it could have been anticipated — and in a way it was by many people and earlier studies. If this present we are experiencing could have been anticipated in advance, what was left out of consideration for so many people to be impacted in such a destructive way?

The climate crisis is a fact and adds to other crises. However, the relationship of consonance and convergence between these different crises, which mark our daily lives and are a global phenomenon, has been constantly neglected by almost everyone, and, mainly, by those who obtain the rights to represent and decide for us.

The effects of this sum of global crises and neglect produce effects that are local — hyper local, in fact. We are experiencing this collectively and it seems like we don't have the tools to deal with it all. Realising the destructive force of the sum of these systemic crises involves looking at many layers that overlap and become confused in a tangle of invisible webs, yet still exercise a very concrete action in our lives. Interpersonal relationships, trust in sociocultural and political institutions, experiences in social communities (whether mediated by technologies or not), the search for new paradigms of growth (or degrowth), infodemic and its corrosive effects on global democracy, the new stage of the market and capital (even more exclusionary and virtual), the lack of equity whether social, economic or gender etc., this constellation of elements not only



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Fig. 3-4  
Porto-Alegre, Destrito.  
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Fig. 6

Fig. 5-6  
Porto-Alegre, Praça da Matriz (after). © César Kieling



Fig. 7

Fig. 7  
Porto-Alegre, Praça da Matriz (before). © César Kieling



Fig. 8

Fig. 8  
Volunteer kitchen.  
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adds to the climate crisis, but also imprints other results on its structure, in a logic that ends up feeding back to all crises at the same time. The consequences include the plurality of systemic instabilities, which also have devastating effects on our shared emotions and sensibilities, and, of course, the impact on each person's mental health. Uncertainty about the future(s) slowly erodes our ability to (re)imagine and transform our city, our state, our Planet and, of course, ourselves.

That said, this text seeks to present a proposal to undertake a reflection on the process of (re)designing futures: demanding access to knowledge for each of us that allows us to carry out transformations that are also systemic and at different levels, at the same time. Our futures can no longer be territories colonised by visions that were created on the basis of desires that do not include everyone, and that do not converge on sensibilities that are not based on domination and/or exclusivity as values managed by the current state. General things. Furthermore, we also propose (re)designing our relationship with technologies, calling for the construction of a relationship that is not based on technological determinism (which so characterises the imagination of the so-called New World); but, in opening up possibilities based on access, democratisation and awareness of collectivised technical-scientific knowledge.

Ultimately, we are talking about establishing other paradigms for the reconstruction of our city, our state and our Planet. There is no way to contain nature, since we have already altered entire ecosystems so profoundly, impacting changes that can no longer be neglected. So, why not (re)build by seeking to embrace the elements underlying the climate crisis and, thus, establish other means of assimilating its effects and the effects of different crises? This may be a radical proposal, but it is radically urgent to find new and different ways to preserve nature and our Planet. This proposal could be the beginning of another relationship with the future(s), collectively participatory and effectively proactive, making anticipation a practice as common and routine as eating, writing, reading, communicating and expressing ideas and opinions. After all, if the future cannot

be postponed, practice in anticipation can empower people and give them the knowledge necessary to know what to do, who or what to count on and, of course, who to hold responsible when future presents do not include collectivised and shared visions.

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