12 JUNE 2025 11.30 - 13.00

Panel 1. Imagination and Technoscience: Ethnography of Creative Connections

Convenors:

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Keywords: imagination, methodologies, technoscience, technoscientific practices

Could technoscience and imagination be regarded as two distinct realms of human experience? Anthropologists and STS scholars have highlighted the close relationship and interaction between scientific methodologies and imagination in producing technoscientific knowledge. This panel addresses the role of imagination in technoscience by documenting how scientists, engineers, physicians, and other professionals negotiate technical control with inventive and disruptive elements, such as fantasy, intuition and random thoughts. It aims to document and reflect on the dynamic interplay between imagination and the functional, replicable, and explainable notions in technoscience and how their interaction contributes to scientific production. The panel seeks contributions that examine how imagination shapes experiments, laboratories, and technoscientific practices, transforming "black boxes" into "resonance boxes", which in Latour and Stengers terms, amplifies technoscientific futures beyond the modern ones. We suggest thinking of 'creativity' as a way of doing ethnographies that emphasize the creative/inventive character through which the technosciences negotiate the disruptive sense of the imaginary with the demands of standardisation and control. From the perspective of STS and anthropology, we invite proposals that investigate how concepts of functionality, replicability, and explainability interact with experiences that scientific reasoning cannot fully encompass. How does imagination participate in technoscientific practice and methodology? What other futures become possible when challenging the opposition between the real and the imagined? How do scientists visualize, imagine and think beyond this dichotomy? What does an anthropology of imagination in technoscience look like? How does conducting STS and anthropology within the politics of imagination expand and shape the discipline's practice and theory?

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ID 333 - Reconfiguring technology through the study of film prop: the case of Dr Strangelove and his glove

Nicolas Marechal, Royal College of Art

Keywords: Interaction design, mediation, cinema, performativity

Props in cinema have long been relegated to the background as passive objects. However, their role is more complex, as they exist in various forms—often enacting existing or speculative future technologies and serving as tools that aid the actor's performance. In this sense, props are performative, possessing the ability to generate new representations.

In this paper, I examine the role of Dr. Strangelove's glove in shaping the interpretation of British actor Peter Sellers. In Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (Stanley Kubrick, 1964), Sellers portrays a scientist advising the U.S. president while embodying ideologies reminiscent of wartime Germany. At one point, his paralysed arm involuntarily performs a Nazi salute, as though he has lost control of his own body. This gesture was improvised by Sellers shortly after receiving the glove as a prop to aid his performance. I interpret this as a performative relationship—an attempt to construct a new narrative through the dynamic interaction between actor and prop. Furthermore, in the film, the glove acquires new meaning as it reveals the character's true intentions, exposing him to the other figures in the film.

Through archival research at the Stanley Kubrick Archive, I explore the glove's significance on the set then

use in the film as a framework for the reconfiguration of technology. The implications extend beyond the discussion of an obscure prop in an old film; I argue that the prop challenges our relationship with technology. From an interaction design perspective, the glove serves as a lesson in mediation—demonstrating how objects influence users and, more broadly, how they can be reconfigured as relays within society. This aligns with the concept of transindividual objects, which connect the user to the collective, revealing new ways to rethink the role of technology in human interaction.

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ID 538 - Imagining Together: Sensorial Play and Intergenerational Mental Well-being in Autoethnographic Design

Kristi Kuusk, Eesti Kunstiakadeemia
Paula Veske-lepp, TTK University of Applied Sciences
Azeem Hamid, Eesti Kunstiakadeemia
Zaur Babayev, Eesti Kunstiakadeemia
Nesli Hazal Oktay, Eesti Kunstiakadeemia

Keywords: autoethnography, sensorial play, intergenerational, e-textiles

The UN Human Development Report (1) connects humanity's future to mental health and the ability to cope with global risks, emphasizing the need for preventive approaches to well-being. While research on mental health often focuses on disorders and treatment, a growing body of work suggests that strengthening family networks plays a crucial role in prevention. Grandparents play a critical role in family life, particularly in children's education and care (2). When this connection between children and grandparents weakens, older adults may experience worsening depressive symptoms (3). Digital communication tools, such as video calls and messaging apps, help in maintaining relationships across distances. However, growing concerns about children's screen time and its negative impact on sleep, behavior, and cognitive development (4,5,6) highlight the need for alternative modes of connection that move beyond screen-based interactions.

This abstract presents an ongoing project that employs autoethnographic and participatory design methods to explore how embodied sensorial play can facilitate meaningful intergenerational connection, support mental well-being and cognitive development. Researchers with backgrounds in smart textiles, digital product design and social design delve into autoethnographic journeys to imagine alternative forms of remote interactions. This supports the engagement of children and their geographically distant grandparents through embodied sensorial experiences rather than screens.

Through three interlinked case studies, this research examines different aspects of intergenerational sensorial play. The first case study explores how to involve children and their distant grandparents in the design process of embodied sensorial play. The design researchers involve prompts and sensorial aspects in this exploration while communicating with children and their grandparents through digital means. The design researchers observe their own ideation process getting inspired by the experiences of the participants. The second case study investigates how embodied sensorial play can support intergenerational mental well-being. Here, the focus shifts to the wellbeing of the grandparents while they reflect and imagine their interactions with their grandchildren who live far from them. The third case study looks into how children and their distant grandparents can actively engage in embodied sensorial play. Here the impossibility of sensorial experiences over distance will be explored.

Drawing from Science and Technology Studies (STS) and anthropology, this abstract positions imagination as a central force in technoscientific knowledge production. It argues that by integrating creative, intuitive, and speculative elements into the design process, we can move beyond conventional technological solutions and explore new possibilities for fostering intergenerational intimacy. By transforming "black boxes" into "resonance boxes" (Latour & Stengers), this work expands the discourse on the intersection of technoscience, imagination, and relational well-being.

In conclusion, this research aims to contribute to the anthropology of imagination in technoscience by demonstrating how intergenerational design practices challenge standardized technological approaches towards health and mental well-being. It offers new perspectives on the role of creativity in shaping inclusive and emotionally sustainable futures.

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ID 602 - They Also Call It The Moon: Connecting imagination and technoscience at the LUNA analog facility

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Keywords: imaginary, infrastructure, moon, Europe, analog

In September 2024, the European Space Agency (ESA) opened the LUNA moon analogue facility at the European Astronaut Centre in Cologne. Featuring over seven-hundred tons of lunar regolith simulant, a gravity-offload system and sunlight simulator, its accurate replication of lunar conditions leads European actors to proudly call the facility "the Moon on Earth". ESA expects LUNA to be so relevant that any person or thing bound for the moon in the future will at some point train and test there. With this in mind, the analog promises to be a critical site for exploring Earth-space futures and for studying the interplay of imagination and technoscience. How are moon futures imagined and narrated at LUNA? How do ESA actors envision Europe on the moon? This paper responds to these questions by exploring LUNA as an imaginary infrastructure—an infrastructure that materialises, builds upon, and creates shared visions of desirable futures. Working with document analysis, expert interviews, and audiovisual media, the research studies the material and imaginative conditions of the analog and their dynamic interactions. In doing so, we focus on the lunar regolith simulant (EAC-1) as matter that grounds lunar perceptions in Cologne and shapes many projected lunar activities that are rehearsed on site. We further analyse the ways in which powerful imaginaries both justify the design and everyday operations of LUNA in the present (Messeri and Vertesi 2015) and affectively inform the rich telepresence experienced by the astronauts, scientists, and engineers who stand on its simulated lunar surface (Kerruish 2019). Through a multimodal ethnography that pays symmetrical attention to material and imaginative dimensions, we detect and amplify connections that render LUNA a particular outer space infrastructure and research subject that escapes linear narration (Law 2012). This approach also enables us to study our case from different perspectives: thinking with David Valentine (2024), we question not only how future imaginaries shape the technoscientific practices it houses but what future images do, or can its distinct material conditions support?