the future of JOURNALISM
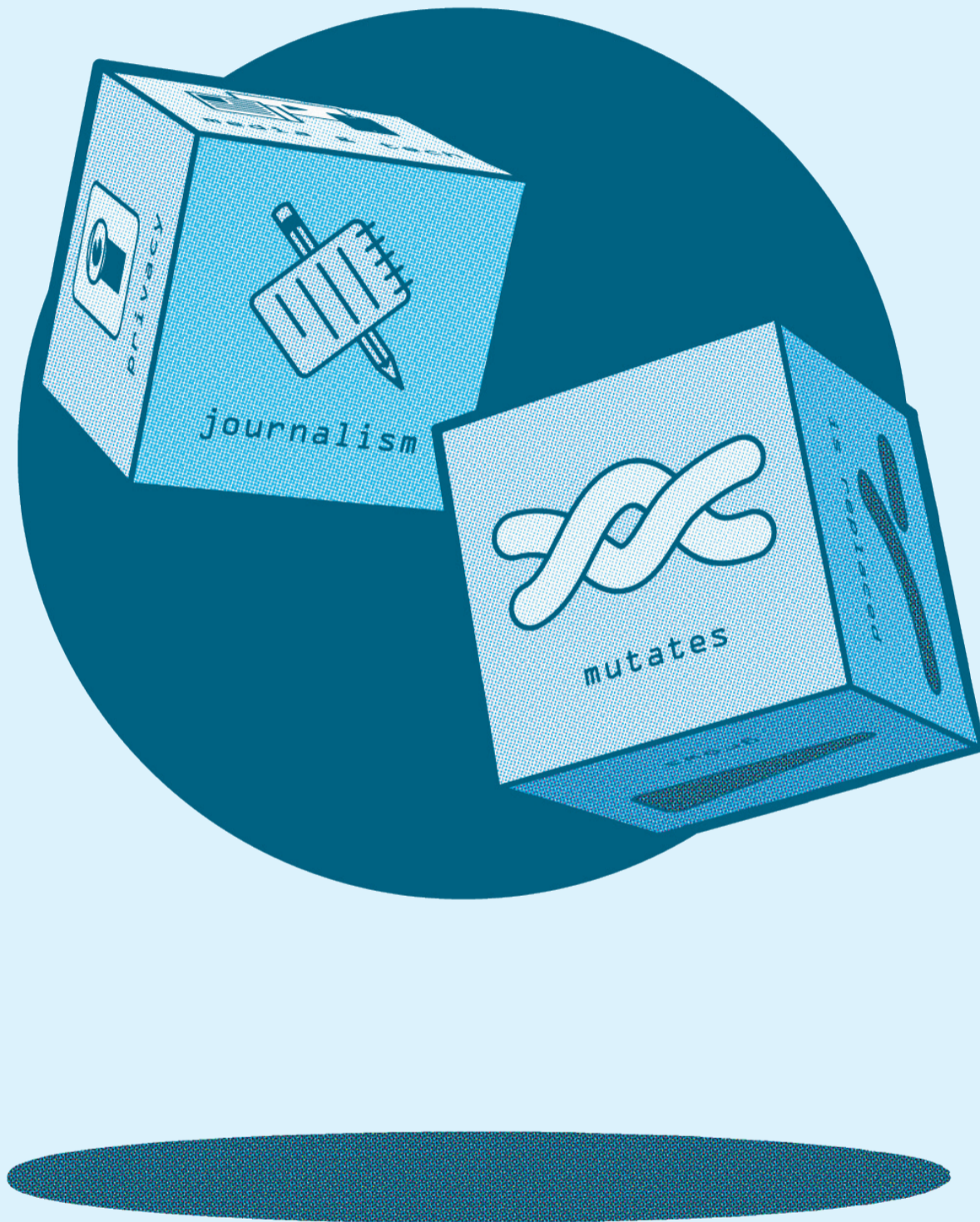

building futures literacy within Schibsted Media Group

Christopher Pearsell-Ross
Diploma Report, Spring 2018
The Oslo School of Architecture and Design

THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

Building Futures Literacy Within Schibsted Media Group

A multi-disciplinary design diploma
(interaction + systemic design)
at
The Oslo School of Architecture & Design

Spring, 2018

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photo: Sarah Bodri

foreword

For me, the most exciting problems design can grapple with are large, muddy, and important. This might sound strange from someone who spent 7 years in a dusty workshop, getting lost in the details of designing and building furniture.

Over my time at AHO I have tried to explore how bridging disciplines and collapsing scales can help us to address wicked problems; how strategic, and yet small-scale and aesthetic, interventions can fuel change.

Journalism is at the heart of several wicked problems. It is a critical part of a democratic society, and yet all of our interactions with it are personal and mediated through objects of one kind or another. It is at the same time both systemic and personal, macro and micro.

At a public lecture at AHO this spring, Cameron Tonkinwise said "There are ways that objects enable transitions." (Tonkinwise, 2018) I hope that the results of this project, in some small way, have done just that, and have illustrated the value of working with an unabashedly multidisciplinary approach.

a note on language

Throughout the course of this project I have struggled with how to describe the people who will ultimately be using future products and services.

Users is a commonly-used word in both UX and service design processes, but doesn't adequately reflect the relationship people have to news media and journalism.

At the same time, reader, listener, and viewer are commonly used in media environments, but are tied to specific types of media, and, like user and consumer, fail to address an emerging two way relationship between the producers and consumers of content (content: another problematic term).

The word prosumer has emerged as an attempt to represent a dual-natured user, but has not been widely adopted outside of DIY and maker spaces.

While it might not seem so important, our language shapes how we as designers imagine and engage with people. This is all just to say that we will need to explore new terms to represent new and complex relationships between actors, across different types of media.
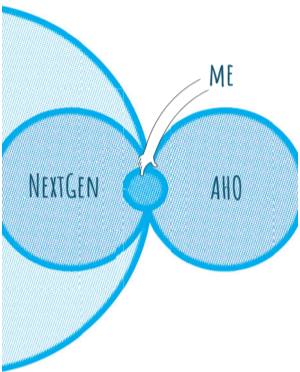
For now, though, I'll try to stick with user and reader, even if they fall short, and people aren't actually reading anything.

This document has been formatted for printing on newsprint, meaning that some colours may appear duller than intended.

All photographs, illustrations and graphics by the author, unless otherwise noted.
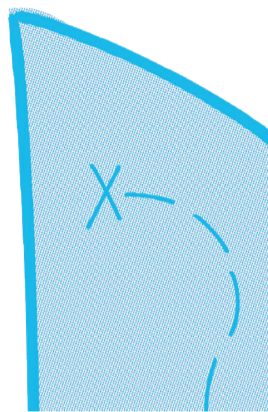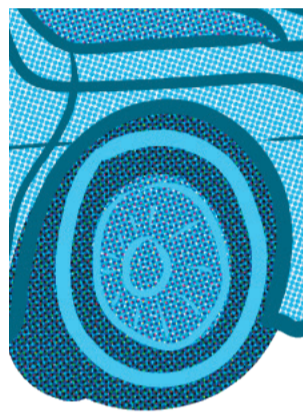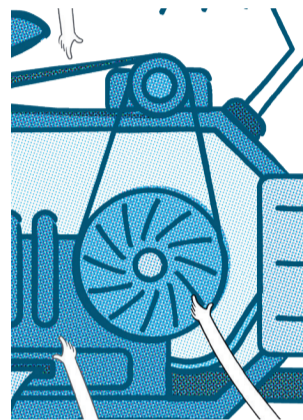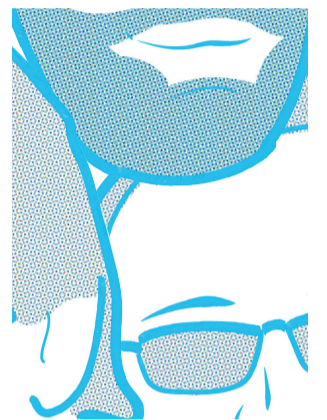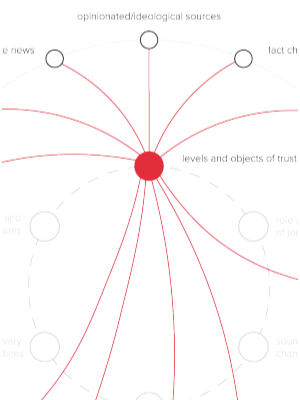
contents

"Farming the Oceans, the Moon and Anarctica." Still from the film *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982)

When we imagine the future of journalism, what images do we see?

"The Newspaper of the Universe - Mars Today - No. 1 in the Galaxy." Still from the film *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990)

LE GRAND PAN

JOURNAL PERPÉTUEL,

FOURNISSANT SIX MILLE TRENTE-CINQ MÈTRES CARRÉS DE RÉDACTION

par vingt-quatre heures.

Prix de l'abonnement : un an, 5 fr.; six mois, 10 fr.; trois mois, 20 fr.; un mois, 30 fr.

Le nombre des abonnés à l'année étant complet, on n'en reçoit plus qu'au mois.

"The Grand Sheet: A Perpetual Newspaper, providing 6025 metres of editorial space every 24 hours." from *Le Monde tel qu'il sera.* (Souvestre, 1864)

background

My earlier experience studying and working with International Studies and Political Science has given me a high-level, somewhat naive view of the role journalism plays in society, and a somewhat dim view of its future.

That naive view is also passionate - I believe in the vital role journalism plays in democratic life, and that to move forward together as a society we need to guide it carefully through the challenging state of flux we find it in.

In the spring of 2017, as part of the Interaction Design 2: Screens course here at AHO, I had the opportunity to work on a project with Schibsted Media Group's NextGen Publishing Products as a partner. NextGen is a team working to imagine and build new kinds of news publishing platforms.

NextGen Issues, a four-week project completed in the Screens course.

That four week project was focused on how to engage younger audiences with the news and journalism in meaningful, useful way. This was real design building the future of journalism. The project was an opportunity to work across scales, addressing systemic issues through small-scale interventions.

The concept I put forward was called NextGen Issues; a modular, atomised news platform designed to help younger audiences get up to speed with complex, evolving stories. I worked with the French election happening at that time, breaking down content into understandable bits.

Working with this team as a project partner was a challenging and rewarding experience, and issues like reader engagement and editorial responsibility were satisfying problems to grapple with. When it came time to plan a diploma proejct, NextGen was top of my list as a potential project partner.

partnership & embedded process

From January of 2018 I have been working as an embedded design student within Schibsted's NextGen team. This means that I have had incredible access to NextGen's diverse staff. For most of the semester I have had my own desk space in NextGen's space at Akersgata 55 in Oslo.

I have had the opportunity to participate in regular team meetings, conduct formal interviews with a diverse range of developers, journalists, designers, product specialists and managers. I have eaten lunch with them, drank beer with them, and gotten to know this team and how they work in a very embodied, intuitive way.

At the same time, I have benefited from having my own work space in the diploma studio at AHO, which allowed me to keep some distance and perspective during critial points of the design process.

Schibsted Media Group

NextGen

AHO

ME
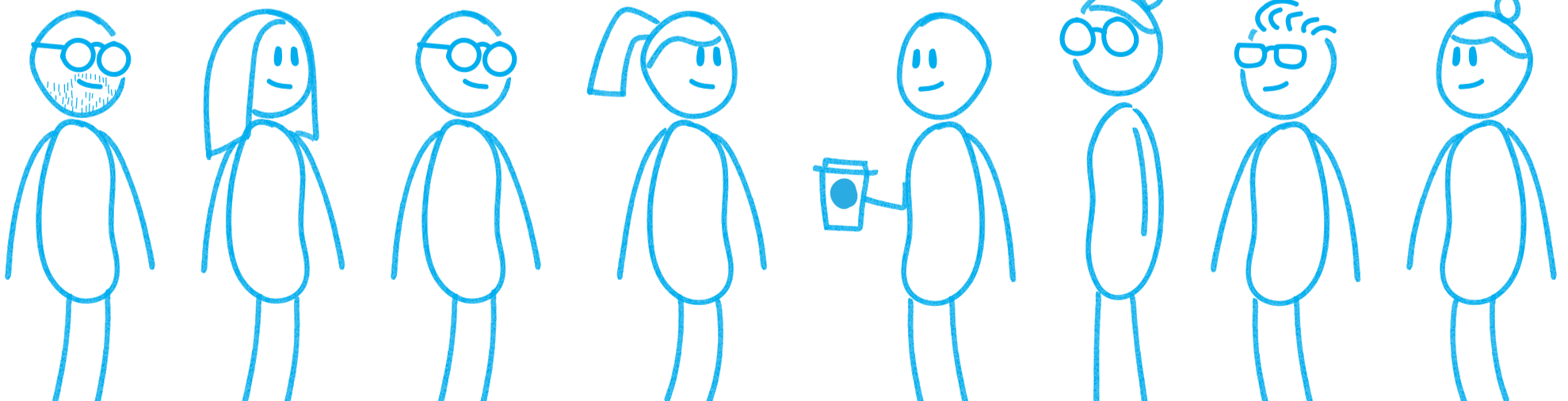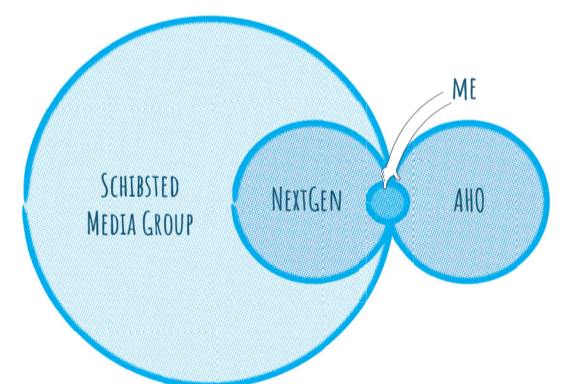
Schibsted NextGen - a diverse team of developers, designers, journalists and product managers

futures studies
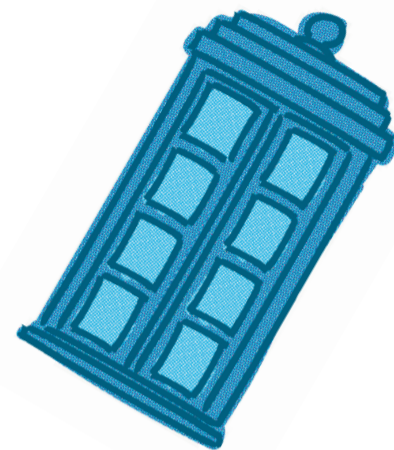
"Futures studies is the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future." (Inayatullah, 2013)

After my initial experience with NextGen, I was curious about how this team worked with the future. As an outsider, what I saw was a team that was founded with a strong mandate to explore the future, but that was now entirely absorbed by the important work of building and improving new products. Could this project help NextGen to look forward once again?

Over the past few years I have taken an interest in exploring ways of thinking about the future. Futures Studies is a broad term for the systematic, study of probable, possible and preferable futures. That study, Marien argues, should be a broad, interdisciplinary study that connects other fields. (Marien, 2002)

At it's foundation are three assumptions, as outlined by Wendell Bell in the book *Advancing Futures:*

"(1) Humans by their behavior constantly shape their natural and social environments and, in so doing, shape their own future, although not in ways that they intend or understand; (2) disciplined and valid prospective thinking can help people shape their environments and their future effectively and responsibly; and (3) explicit and objective moral analaysis can help people responsibly create desirable futures."
(Bell, 2002)

Futures Studies is distinct from the practice of forcasting. In using Futures Studies, we are not trying to predict what will happen, but rather to explore a range of possible alternatives, and to use them to inform our actions today.

Recently there has been growing interest exploring how Futures Studies can be used outside of academic contexts. Researchers, like Stuart Candy, and organisations like SitLab, are experimenting with how we can explore futures collaboratively, emotionally and in felt, embodied ways. They have been playing - often literally - with how we can show each other our visions of the future, and rather than simply talking about them. (Candy, 2010)

← There are different models we can use to imagine time, change and possible futures. If you are interested, check out my 3 favourite:

- the *Futures Cone* (Voros, 2003), which helps us map possible, plausible, probable and preferable futures, with increasing uncertainty the farther out we look.

- the *Three Horizons Model* (Curry & Hodgson, 2008), which suggests futures can be perceived in three parts: our current system, an ideal future, and a transitional system.

- the *Pace Layers Model* (Brand & Saffo, 2015), which divides change into layers of different speeds, from fashion and commerce changing quickly at the top, and culture and nature changing slowly at the bottom.

critical design
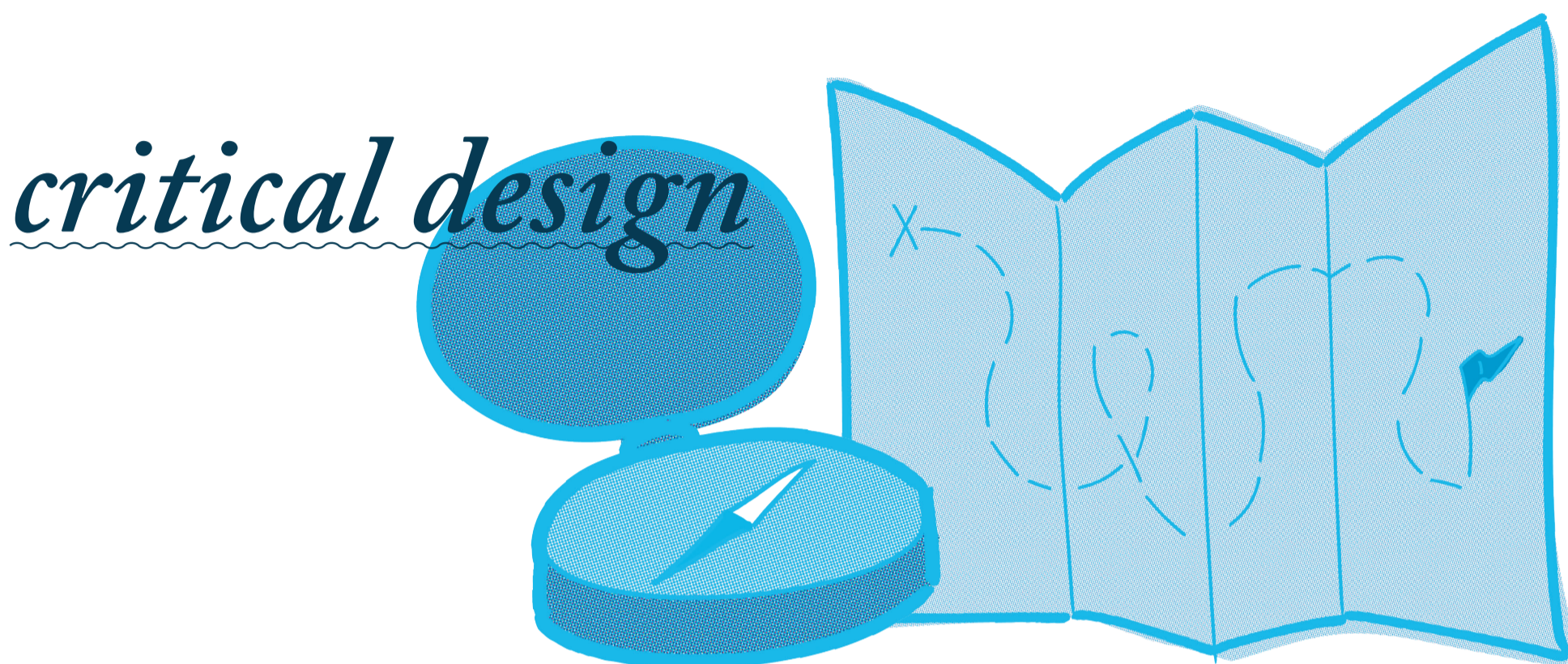
How can we critically engage with a concept like the future, something so inherently uncertain and fluid? In his 2010 dissertation, *The Futures of Everyday Life*, Stuart Candy describes a new futures practice that he calls Experiential Futures:

> This practice can be located at a three-way intersection where futures studies, design, and politics (both theory and activism) meet. It can be approached, and usefully deployed, from any of those angles. Why these three fields? As a human institution, politics is the mechanism by which we collectively make decisions, set rules for ourselves, and deliberately reshape the world... Futures is the discursive community and toolset concerned with enabling visions and possible paths of action to be elaborated, articulated and pursued. Design is remaking the world piece by piece, just on a different (smaller) scale than futures, and frequently with an immediate interface to materiality. (Candy, 2010)

This project is also situated at the intersection of these three fields. But, rather than being an aesthetic experience of conceptual design (an Experiential Future), it hopes to enable others to imagine and work with these futures themselves.

While the design intervention outlined in this report is not a piece of conceptual or speculative design in and of itself, there are parallels between Futures Studies, Experiential Futures, and what

Dunne and Raby describe as a process to create "socially engaged design for raising awareness; satire and critique; inspiration, reflection, highbrow entertainment; aesthetic explorations; speculation about possible futures; and as a catalyst for change." (Dunne & Raby, 2013)

This project aligns itself philosophically with their idea of Critical Design. I believe, as they do, that "to achieve change, it is necessary to unlock people's imaginations and apply it to all areas of life at a microscale. Critical design, by generating alternatives, can **help people construct compasses rather than maps for navigating new sets of values**." (Dunne & Raby, 2013, emphasis added)

Critical Design is a normative practice. At the same time as it is grappling with design's capacity to shape our futures, it is seeks to challenge the ideological constraints that limit our vision and progress as designers and as society as a whole. (Jakobsone, 2017)

One of the goals of this project is to enable the inclusion of critical design within existing design practices at Schibsted Media Group. It seeks to help teams break out of their normal mind sets, imagine critical alternative futures, and build new understandings - new compasses - together.
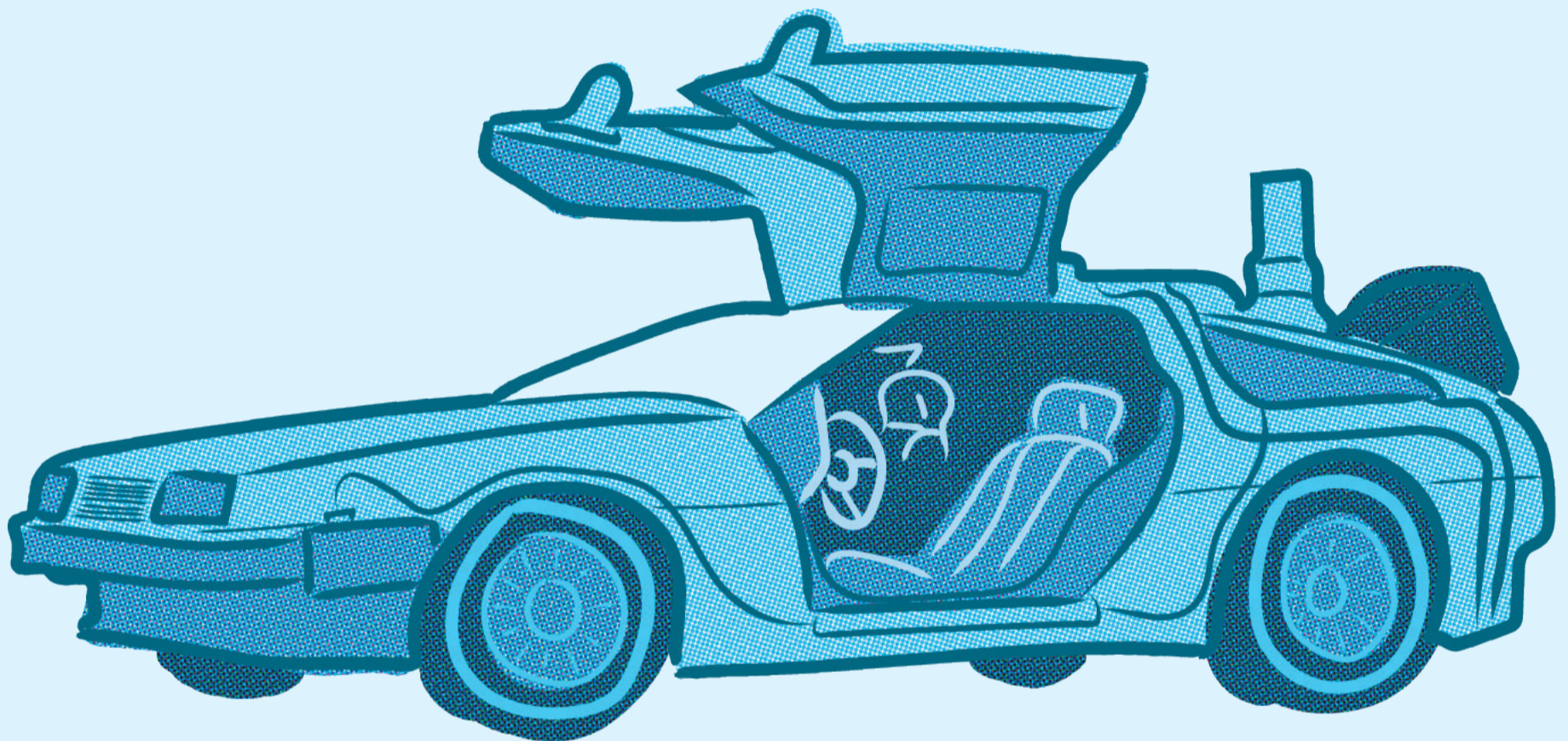
How can futures studies methods be used to imagine alternative futures for journalism?

Navigation Dish: User Research

Engine Oil: Sci-Fi Inspiration

Flux Capacitor: Futures Studies Methodologies

Turbine: Experimental & Iterative Process

Drive Belt: Coffee

Sensor Antennas: Signal Scanning & Desktop Research

Exhaust: All the concepts left behind

Cabin: Embedded Process

Let me tell you about my time machine.

Fuel: Internal Interviews

Flywheel: Systemic Approach

Supports: Tutors & Mentors

Mission LOg: Maps and Sketches

Speculation Drive: Multidisciplinary Approach & Designerly Methods

Supports: External Inteviews

first mid-term

	creation			
1st iteration futures workshop	1st workshop test		2nd iteration futures workshop	2st workshop test

Speculative Illustrations, Fictions & Concepts

Trend & Scenario building

insight

system mapping	uncertainty mapping	actors mapping 1.0

internal interviews (19)

external expert interviews (8)	embedded observations

desktop research	signal scanning

inspiration books

Persepolis Rising	Ancillary Justice	Ancillary Sword	Ancillary Mercy

inspiration TV/film

Travellers	Dr. Who	Gattica	Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency	Black Mirror

Methods & Approach

From the outset, this project has been deeply explorative and experimental in its approach. Starting with a question about methods (how can future studies be used to imagine alternative futures for journalism?), I decided to dive in and explore different methods in parallel. The project has been a continuous process of **inspiration**, **insight** gathering, and **creation**.

Sci-Fi
The true foundation of this project, if you are really curious, has been a nearly life-long love of science fiction. In the late 90s I hit the peak of my social relevance as a founding member of the Star Trek club at school (pictured back row, centre).

Exploring images of the future from

science fiction has helped keep my mind stimulated with possibilities, and, importantly, has provided a cultural and linguistic touchstone for talking about time and the future.

Insights
Building on this foundation is a parallel series of investigations: interviews, desktop research, signal scanning, embedded observations and mapping. Before starting my embedded process at Schibsted I wanted to build a strong knowledge base from external sources.

This was important to me for two reasons: first, I wanted a foundational understanding of media, journalism and the news before working alongside professionals in those fields; and second, I wanted to build a critical perspective on the industry before diving head-first into an embedded process.

To this end I conducted 7 expert interviews on topics related to media, journalism and the news, before moving on to my internal observations.

I also interviewed a professional designer with experience using Futures Studies methods in corporate contexts.

Building on this foundation, I turned my focus to Schibsted. Throughout the course of the project I conducted 19 interviews with a diverse range of people within Schibsted - including young journalists right out of school, product managers with decades of experience at Schibsted, Strategy Directors, data scientists, developers and designers.

As an embedded designer I also had access to meetings, workshops, and the casual conversations that happen over coffee or lunch (and sometimes beer).

I processed the insights gathered by sketching and mapping. This allowed me to build a clear understanding of the critical uncertainties facing the

industry, as well as how Schibsted works as an organisation.

Creation
Parallel to this insight gathering process I explored three futures studies methods: **scenario building**, **speculation** (illustrations, concepts and fictions), and **co-creative futures workshops**.

I pursued an iterative approach to creation throughout the semester, rather than moving sequentially through stages.

Sketching throughout the project also allowed me to reflect on my own process as it unfolded, and helped to build visual metaphors to communicate with.

Finally, in building my delivery itself, I practiced an even tighter cyclical process of iteration and evaluation. The whole process has been a lot of fun.

second mid-term   *delivery*

Futures Compass 1st iteration   1st play test   Futures Compass Prototype   2nd play test

actors mapping 2.0

desktop research

| Terminal World | Revelation Space | Neuromancer | Annihilation (book) | Red Mars |
| Star Trek | Altered Carbon | Blade Runner 2049 | Annihilation (film) | |
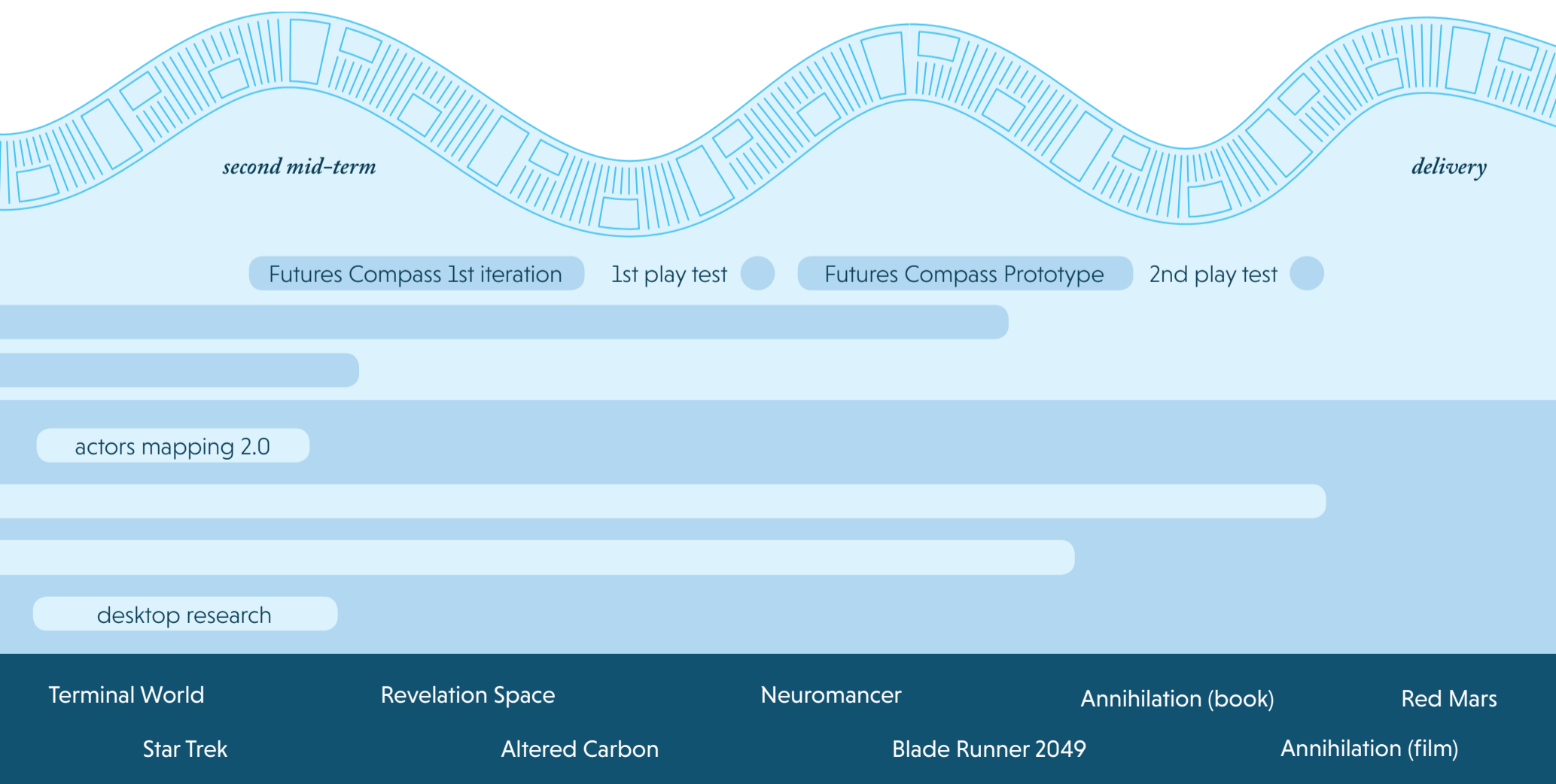
foundational interviews

"Going back to this whole need for more media literacy and education and so forth, hopefully the public will be quite literate about media bias and media sources. So if you are not transparent about your sources and the perspectives that you view the world from, then people will see through it. They will not trust you."

"As for the boundaries of journalism, the boundaries between journalism and other kinds of communications professions are sort of falling."

"With social media, what we have done, is to sort of outsource a core journalistic activity, namely evaluating sources, that's now outsourced to the public, and to companies like facebook."

I came into this project with many assumptions about journalism and the role it plays in society. Over the course of two weeks these assumptions were challenged, prodded and in some cases validated through a series of semi-structured interviews with a group of external experts.

Collectively, the panel's expertise included academic media and journalism studies, design and organisational change within major media companies, audio engineering and production, alternative journalism practices in restrictive contexts, organised labour administration and implementing futures studies methods in corporate contexts.

Throughout the course of these interviews, many common themes and issues arose including: failing business models; the challenges presented by social media and fake news; the evolving competencies and practices of journalists; emerging technologies; editorial responsibility and public trust; issues of privacy and data use; and changing user behaviour and needs.

I present these six core issues as critical uncertainties facing the

future of news, journalism and the media. These uncertainties have formed the analytical framework used to guide my further inquiries and explorations.

What struck me throughout the course of these interviews was the level of agreement about what uncertainties face the industry. Journalism is, in many ways, a very self-aware industry, perhaps because the challenges facing it are so universal and so strong.

While the experts largely agreed on the major issues facing journalism today, many differed on what they felt should be done about them. There were considerable differences in how these experts view journalism as a practice and as a social institution.

Finally, there were differences in how journalism and media companies are perceived and critiqued in different contexts around the world. Of the 8 interview subjects, 4 were Norwegian, 1 was Canadian working the US, 1 was Brazilian studying in Norway, and 1 was an Iranian research fellow in Norway.

Many of the issues facing the journalism around the globe are only just beginning to be noticed in Norway, a country with one the highest news subscription rates in the world. (Reuters, 2017). Things are not necessarily going to stay that way, however.

"It's hard because once you are at the whim of the audience, unless you are really good at predicting what they are going to want, you are kind of stuck. Like you have to do what they expect you to do. "

"I also think that institutional media is -- this is not not news to anybody -- institutional media has obviously been weakened, and there's all these other outlets to get information now."

"What Schibsted makes money from, if you look at the online reports, the quarterly reports, is online classified ads, not journalism."

Jan Olav Eikenes
former designer,
Schibsted NextGen

Thiago Freitas
former designer, MTV Brasil

Chris Berube
audio engineer & producer in
radio & podcasting

Torbjørn Brenna
Sekretariatsleder,
Norsk Journalistslag

Robert Vaagan
Associate Professor,
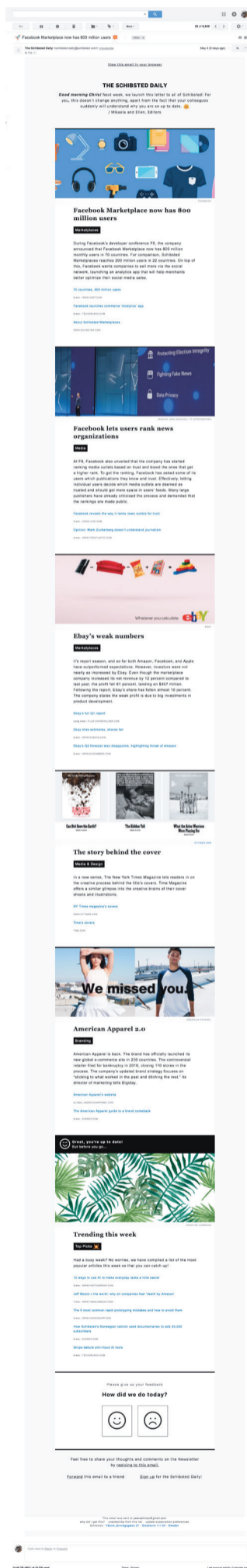Department of Journalism and
Media Studies, OsloMET

Steen Steensen
Professor & Head of
Department: Journalism
and Media Studies,
OsloMET

Paal Holter
Creative Director, EGGS Design,
futures studies practitioner

Banafsheh Ranji
Doctoral Research Fellow, Department
of Media and Communication, UiO

signal scanning + mapping

Throughout the semester I built on the foundational knowledge gained through the expert interviews by doing daily signal scanning: reading and listening to articles, blog posts and podcasts focused on industry news and trends.

During the first month of the project I collected these signals in a spreadsheet, summarising the content and what the signal meant. This was the basis on which I translated these signals into trends.

Throughout this process I found it difficult to separate signals and trends about 'media' from signals and trends about journalist; these fields are highly interrelated, but through my research I realised they are not the same thing.

To try and make sense of things, I started mapping these trends, grouping them together around similar themes and effects. Through this process, these groupings started to mirror the 6 uncertainties identified through my expert interviews.

What emerged was a web of interconnected trends and changes with broad reach throughout the news, media and journalism industries.

Technology trends were bring driven by technological developments and behavioural changes, and vice versa. An intervention in one part of the system would have some kind of effects in almost every other part.

Richard Buchanan might call this a 'wicked problem'. Citing a 1964 report on Horst Rittel's wicked problems concept, he raises this definiton of a wicked problem as:

> "a class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications of the whole system are thoroughly confusing."
> (Buchanan, 1992)

To me, this definition easily applies to many of the specific challenges facing journalism, and to the question of futures more broadly.

Without an actual time machine, we can never know what a signal means, or how a trend will play out over time. Both signals and trends can be misinterpreted, change over time or contradict one another.

Mapping the issues facing journalism in this way allowed me to start asking questions about *why* certain signals or trends mattered; it allowed me to work back and forth from the micro-scale of individuals up to the macro scale of the systems.

← One issue of the Schibsted Daily newsletter, which I received as a beta user for the duration of the semester. The Daily is being built by a NextGen team as a business to business newsletter service, keeping all employees up to date with the news they should know, tailored and summarised for their industry and company. It was an invaluable source of industry knowledge throughout the course of the project.

... it's all connected!!!

signals → trends → uncertainties

six critical

The levels & objects of our trust.

The role & definition of jouranlism in society.

Our changing data & privacy culture.

*un*certainties

User needs, behaviour & context.

The formats, media & technology we use.

Power structures, systems & business models.

embedded
research

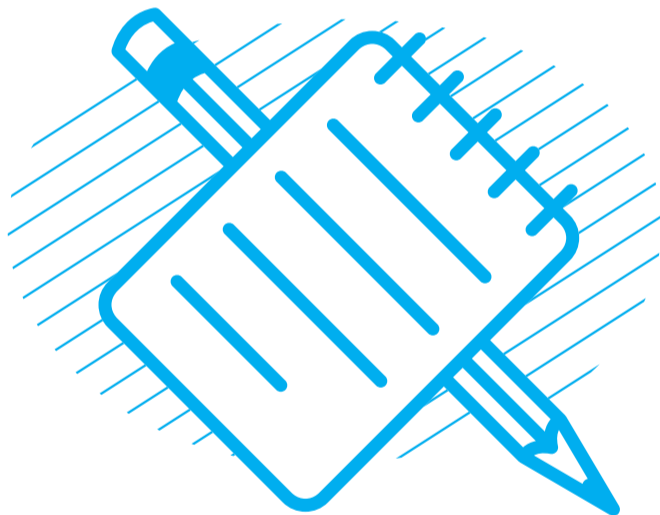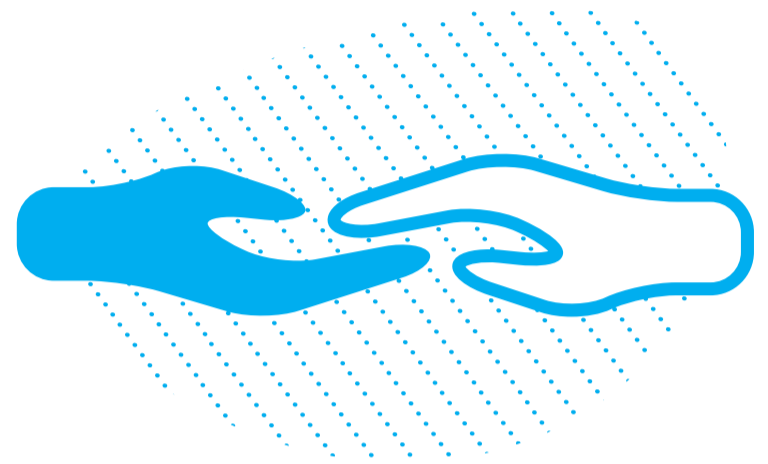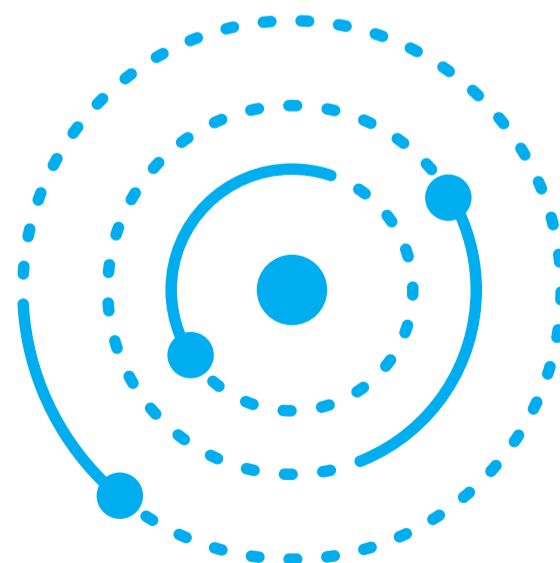They go on to describe the core of ethnographic practice as

"...an attitude toward 'being there' sufficient to experience the mundane and sacred, brash and nuanced aspects of socio-cultural life and, through observations, encounters and conversations, to come to an understanding of it." (Lewis & Russell, 2011)

To build this project I did not want to pursue a traditional designer-client relationship; I wanted to work as an *embedded* designer: working and learning alongside my focus group and my end users.

There is significant potential in working so closely with your focus group: you can build tacit and embodied understandings of what life is like for your users.

Cameron Tonkinwise, referencing Indi Young, talks calls this *practical empathy*: a way of "capturing mental models people are using in their daily lives." (Tonkinwise, 2018) What better way to learn about people's daily lives than to be there when they live them?

Ethnographers and anthropologists practice this kind of research all the time. SJ Lewis and AJ Russell write about embeddedness in anthropological field work as a kind of "being there" (Lewis & Russel, 2011).

They argue that to be effective, embedded researchers need to become 'some kind of team member'; in doing so they need to act reflexively, returning honest insights and findings back to their research group as quickly as possible. (Lewis & Russel, 2011)

There is risk and responsibility in building this kind of relationship, however. Whose interests are you working towards? In this case, this question was complicated by a third factor: being a student.

I had to wear three hats in this embedded process: some kind of NextGen team member, a designer demonstrating professional practice, and a self-interested student.

What I found when I started this process was that this balancing act was not as complicated as I at first thought.

The NextGen team were quick to include me in meetings and were generous with their time, and they weren't demanding with their own interests and agendas towards the outcome of my project.

I also had access to Slack, a workplace messaging service. This allowed me to follow conversations happening throughout the organisation - in other product teams, as well as groups focused on privacy and technology foresight.

At times it was hard to separate my interests, and the interests of the project, from those of the NextGen team. Sometimes, part of building empathy is losing part yourself in someone else.

At times I had to remind myself (or be reminded by my supervisors) that my first priority was to my own project's integrity. At these times I benefitted greatly from being able to set my own schedule, splitting my time between the Schibsted offices and AHO when I needed to regain my external perspective.

The insights I gained working this way were rich and varied and greatly informed my process and the outcome of the project. Being both an insider and an outsider made it easy to build trust, and to ask naive and critical questions. It enabled me to tighten feedback loops, gaining valuable feedback and constantly testing my assumptions.

Again echoing Tonkinwise, working as an embedded designer allowed me to be of service to my users, not be servile to them - in other words, to give them what they need, not necessarily what they want. (Tonkinwise, 2018)

"We need help building Next Generation Publishing Products in Schibsted
Tl;dr—We'll reinvent Schibsted's core publishing products. We want to leap from products being desktop & anonymous by design into an ecosystem of personal & device-agnostic next generation products. We have full freedom and complete access to the biggest publishing brands in Norway & Sweden (e.g. VG), millions of users and huge volumes of content as our starting point."
(Sundve, 2016)

In 2016 Schibsted started the NextGen as an in-house experiment in building new products, with reader engagement as a core goal. NextGen currently has product teams prototyping, testing and developing publishing platforms focused on: semi-automated sports news; daily news updates for younger readers; and tailored business-to-business newsletters.

The VGNext product team

"The vision for all our Next Generation Publishing Products is to deliver and tell news in a way that makes users feel like they have their own personal, intelligent editor." (Sundve, 2016)
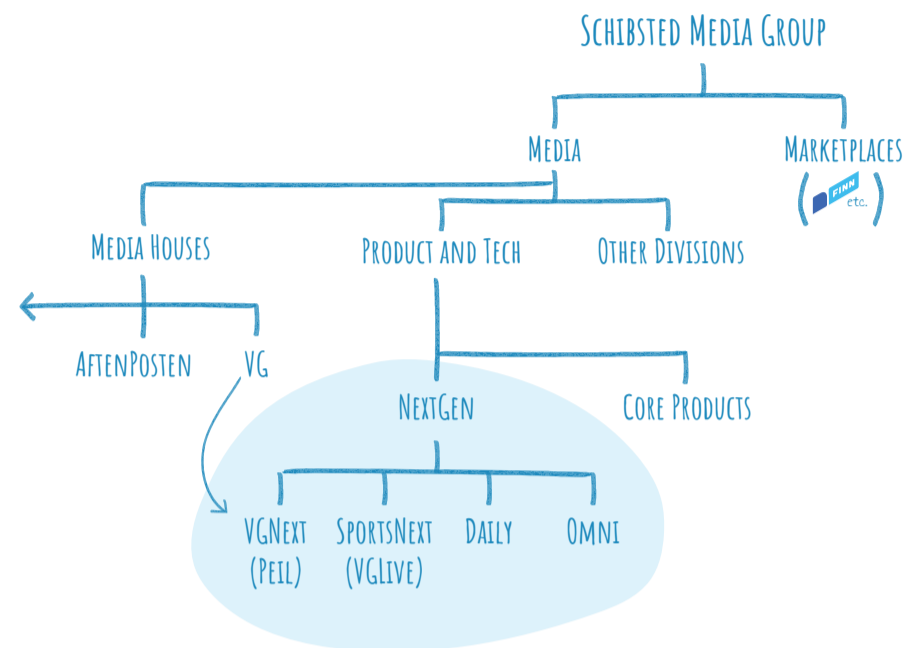
The atrium at Akersgata 55.

Observing a research sync meeting.

Mapping the NextGen system.

defining journalism

"I would have loved to say that's an easy question, but of course it is the most critical question you can ask these days." – Steen Steensen

If I was going to be thinking about the future of journalism, it was important that I understand exactly what it is. Throughout the course of the project I asked the 27 people I interviewed inside and outside of Schibsted how they defined journalism. I got 27 different answers.

Three common themes emerged, arranged as I see it on a spectrum, balanced on the idea of editorial or journalistic responsiblity. These are, journalism as *documentation* (unbiased capturing of reality), journalism as *information* (to inform), and journalism as *criticism*, (holding power to account).

Given all the changes facing the industry, and the seeming fluidity of how we define journalism, and what it is that those "committing journalistic acts" actually do, it became clear to me that the industry needs effective tools for grappling with dynamic change over time.

" 'Beyond journalism' is an approach to journalism that considers it as a dynamic object of study. It points at the permanent instability inside the news industry as well as the structural and structured nature of people committing acts of journalism outside of it." **(Deuze, 2017)**

Journalism means to document reality - both our's and others' - in as unbiased a way as possible.

Einar Otto Stangvik

"...closing the gap between what the society knows, and what it should know"

Geir Larsen

"...objectivity serves power. So you cannot combine being critical and being neutral."

Banafsheh Ranji

... so what do we mean by 'public interest'? Which public, and whose interest?

journalistic responsibility
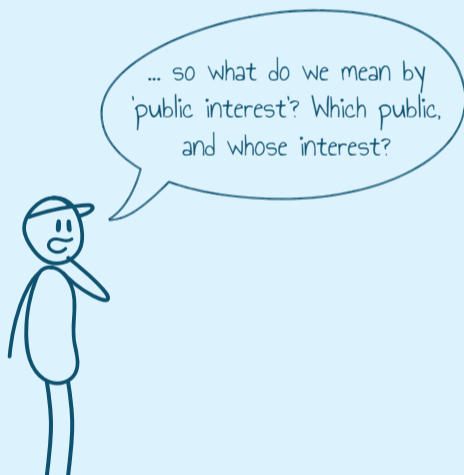
← "The moral imperative of professional journalism, its purpose, and what it requires of its practitioners, we shall argue, is to provide relevant truth telling in the public interest. All journalistic rights and responsibilities .. derive from this single statement of the journalist's professional calling." (Jacquette, 2007)

Building on this understanding, I started thinking about how journalism, and my project is related to the news and media. The way I see things, our traditonal image of journalism is rooted in a time when people who practiced journalism also controlled the distribution of news and information because they had ownership, or at least exclusive access to, the instruments of mass media.

Rapid technological changes, however, have meant that the three concepts of media, news, and journalism are drifting farther apart.

Most people now have direct access to mass media via the internet and smart phones; news is now both publicly relevant information, and what we see on our social media feeds; and journalism is no longer the exclusive arbiter of either media or the news. Now more than ever people in this industry need the tools to grapple with uncertainty and change.

TRADITIONAL 'IMAGE' OF JOURNALISM

"now"

newspapers · radio · cable TV · internet · social media · smart phones · algorithms · machine learning · artificial intelligence? · ???

media

news

journalism

Tech Trends Team

Schibsted Marketplaces ———— FINN etc.

Schibsted Media ———— Product & Tech

VG ———— Editorial

SCHIBSTED MEDIA GROUP

Core Products

NextGen Publishing Products

"Has Mastery and Purpose, but less Autonomy"

"Has Mastery, Purpose, and Autonomy."

"Mission: Secure our position as a destination"

could lead to jealousy or bitterness...

"Use lean methods to discover and innovate."

Hackathons! Creative problem solving and sharing of insights! We need to build bridges!

VG2020   2015

Was an important building block that led to starting up the NextGen Products team, but might not have much influence on teams day-to-day.

"I think I saw the video in my onboarding. Maybe."

HEAD OF PRODUCT

Responsible to their staff, and to higher levels of Schibsted leadership.

Schibsted Stockholm 🇸🇪

Media Leadership Team

"I don't see a lot of these guys - they have a lot of responsibilities and are travelling a lot."

We could do a better job of sharing Peil with the rest of VG. We feel a bit isolated - I miss being a part of a larger group.

HEAD OF UX

HEAD OF ENGINEERING

VG DIGITAL EDITOR
One-on-ones with Editorial Lead. Direct connections to every level.

NextGen Publishing Products

Schibsted Oslo 🇳🇴

Editorial works for VG, but everyone else works for Schibsted.

"One time the whole team went to a Schibsted dinner party, and we work for VG, so we just sort of sat there in the office. It didn't feel great."

this problem has hopefully been resolved

INTERNAL SYSTEM MAP
NextGen

Potential Intervention Champions

Technology Trends Team

Their mandate and role is not well defintd yet.
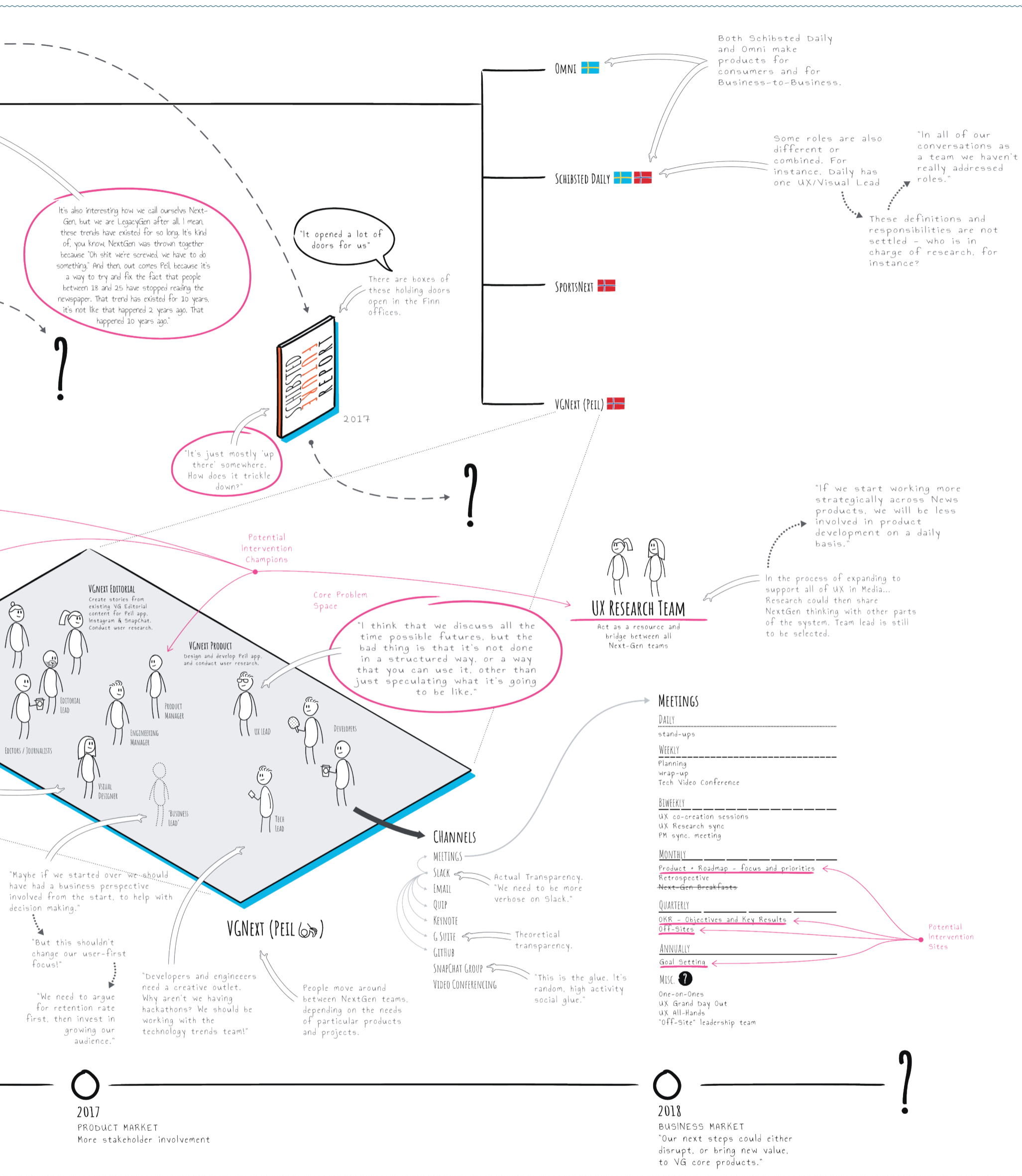
"It's maybe not concrete enough yet, or defined enough yet, but the [tech trends team], they are this link between this short-sighted future of ours, and 2045... But right now they are very focused on technology, and not, maybe, emotions in an automated service. Or not in these intangible, soft-sides, or political, social sides."

NextGen Timeline: **VG2020**
                         2015   2016
                                       PRODUCT SOLUTION
   Independent discovery

This map is the result of several interviews and mapping sessions with the NextGen team. It is presented not as a design object, but rather as a useful tool for capturing insights and situating learnings within the Schibsted System.

Both Schibsted Daily
and Omni make
products for
consumers and for
Business-to-Business.

OMNI 🇸🇪

Some roles are also
different or
combined. For
instance, Daily has
one UX/Visual Lead

"In all of our
conversations as
a team we haven't
really addressed
roles."

SCHIBSTED DAILY 🇸🇪 🇳🇴

These definitions and
responsibilities are not
settled - who is in
charge of research, for
instance?

It's also interesting how we call ourselvs Next-
Gen, but we are LegacyGen after all. I mean,
these trends have existed for so long. It's kind
of, you know, NextGen was thrown together
because "Oh shit we're screwed, we have to do
something." And then, out comes Peil because it's
a way to try and fix the fact that people
between 18 and 25 have stopped reading the
newspaper. That trend has existed for 10 years,
it's not like that happened 2 years ago. That
happened 10 years ago."

"It opened a lot of
doors for us"

There are boxes of
these holding doors
open in the Finn
offices.

SPORTSNEXT 🇳🇴

?

SCHBSTD FUTURE REPORT

2017

VGNEXT (PEIL) 🇳🇴

"It's just mostly 'up
there' somewhere.
How does it trickle
down?"

?

"If we start working more
strategically across News
products, we will be less
involved in product
development on a daily
basis."

Potential
Intervention
Champions

Core Problem
Space

VGNext Editorial
Create stories from
existing VG Editorial
content for Peil app,
Instagram & SnapChat.
Conduct user research.

VGNext Product
Design and develop Peil app,
and conduct user research.

"I think that we discuss all the
time possible futures, but the
bad thing is that it's not done
in a structured way, or a way
that you can use it, other than
just speculating what it's going
to be like."

UX Research Team
Act as a resource and
bridge between all
Next-Gen teams

In the process of expanding to
support all of UX in Media...
Research could then share
NextGen thinking with other parts
of the system. Team lead is still
to be selected.

Editorial
Lead

Product
Manager

Engineering
Manager

UX Lead

Developers

Editors / Journalists

Visual
Designer

"Business
Lead"

Tech
Lead

MEETINGS

DAILY
stand-ups

WEEKLY
Planning
Wrap-up
Tech Video Conference

BIWEEKLY
UX co-creation sessions
UX Research sync
PM sync. meeting

MONTHLY
Product + Roadmap - focus and priorities
Retrospective
Next-Gen Breakfasts

QUARTERLY
OKR - Objectives and Key Results
Off-Sites

ANNUALLY
Goal Setting

MISC. ❼
One-on-Ones
UX Grand Day Out
UX All-Hands
"Off-Site" leadership team

CHANNELS
MEETINGS
SLACK
EMAIL
QUIP
KEYNOTE
G SUITE
GITHUB
SNAPCHAT GROUP
VIDEO CONFERENCING

Actual Transparency.
"We need to be more
verbose on Slack."

Theoretical
transparency.

"This is the glue. It's
random, high activity
social glue."

Potential
Intervention
Sites

VGNext (Peil 👓)

"Maybe if we started over we should
have had a business perspective
involved from the start, to help with
decision making."

"But this shouldn't
change our user-first
focus!"

"We need to argue
for retention rate
first, then invest in
growing our
audience."

"Developers and engineers
need a creative outlet.
Why aren't we having
hackathons? We should be
working with the
technology trends team!"

People move around
between NextGen teams,
depending on the needs
of particular products
and projects.

⬤ 2017
PRODUCT MARKET
More stakeholder involvement

⬤ 2018
BUSINESS MARKET
"Our next steps could either
disrupt, or bring new value,
to VG core products."

?

Drawing characters that represent real team members was a way to build engagement with the mapping process. When the first iteration of the map was posted publicly, people quickly gathered to find themselves - many then made comments or corrections using post-its. This discussion even moved to Slack, with people sharing parts of the map with team members working in other offices.
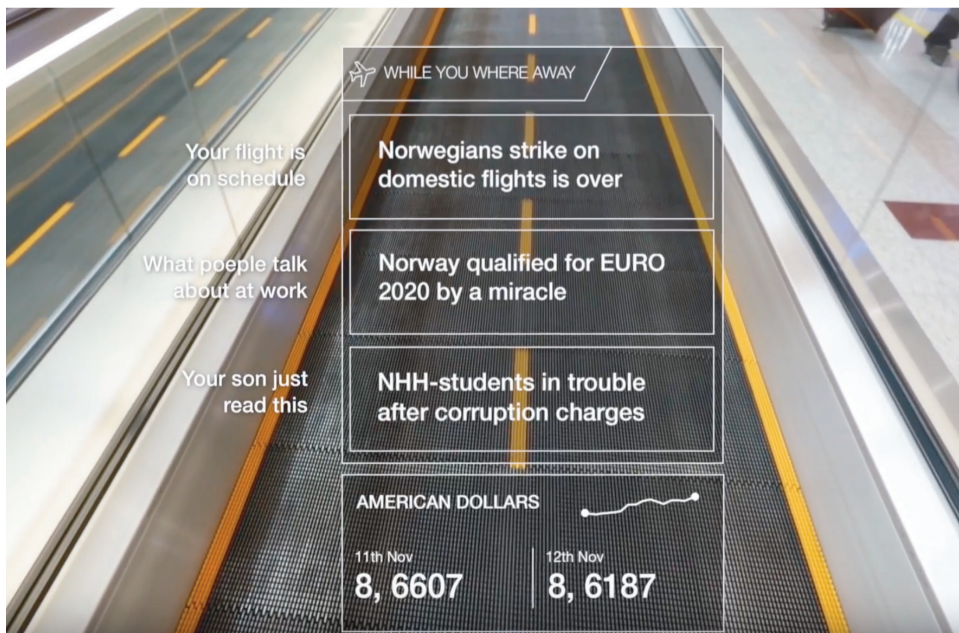
existing futures at Schibsted
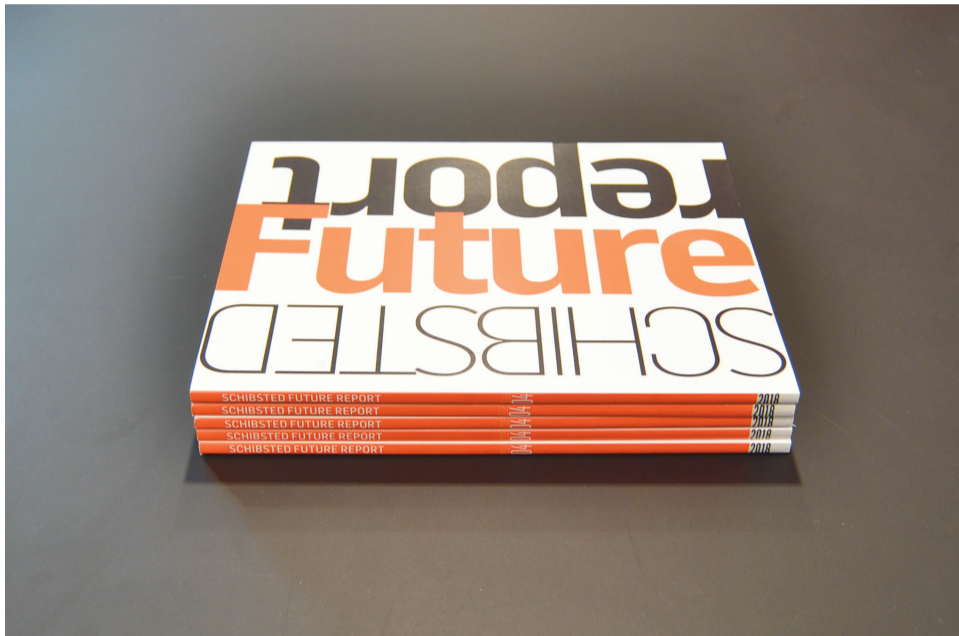
Schibsted Future Report 2018

"The Future is Now"

VG2020 (VG, 2015)

Schibsted Media Group publishes an annual Future Report. Published by Schibsted Communication and edited by the Executive Vice President of Communication and Brand, this is primarily intended as an external facing document used to build Schibsted's image as a forward thinking company.

Well written and nicely designed, it is essentially a compilation of emerging and established trends affecting media business. Divided into three sections (tech, people, and biz), the report presents arcticles on mainstream trends such as automation, artificial intelligence, home assistants, algorithmic content creation and millennials.

"It's just mostly 'up there' somewhere. How does it trickle down?"

- NextGen team member

What this report shows is that Schibsted has the internal expertise to think and write about the future, but that this capacity isn't necessarily directed inwards towards their own teams.

In fact, when I visited the Stockholm office, there was a 3 metre high banner proclaiming "The Future is Now".

Schibsted clearly recognises the value of thinking about the future as a sales or promotional tool - in fact, "Shape a Future Oriented Organisation" is one of Schibsted Media's Key Objectetives for 2018. But how is the company working towards that goal in practical terms?

In 2015 VG released a concept video and report, called VG2020. It outlines a product strategy, putting forward a future concept of VGs core news services as an AI enabled, personal editor.

The report and it's accompanying concept video acted as a sort of concept-car for VG, showing the potential of what the future could be, and describing what the organisation would need to do to get there.

The biggest result of VG2020 was the creation of NextGen Publishing Products. Much of the writing team and advisory group for VG2020 went on to work for NextGen, and now for the Technology Trends Team.

From Insight to Speculation to Insight

I have tried to approach my creative process with the same approach I took to working as an embedded designer: by diving in and 'being there' - by living in that space.

In practical terms, this means that I have been working through creative iterations throughout the course of the project.

By working with these tight iterative loops I was able to translate the insights I gained through the interviews, embedded observations and desktop research into visual metaphors, concepts and scenarios.

These creative outputs would then fuel a new series of questions and possible avenues of exploration.

This constant mixing of methods is something Birger Sevaldson advocates for in his Systems Oriented Design class at AHO, as a way of unsticking thought processes and developing what Tonkinwise has called "a felt approach to systems thinking." (Tonkinwise, 2018)

What follows on the next few pages are scenarios, illustrations, future concepts and speculative fictions. These outputs fueled further inquires and discussions, and ultimately led to a series of speculative fiction workshops.

By sharing these concepts back to the NextGen team, I was also able to start normalising the practice of engaging in 'wierd' speculations, of exploring outside of expected comfort zones. I think that this normalisation of strangeness paved the way for the adoption of my design intervention.
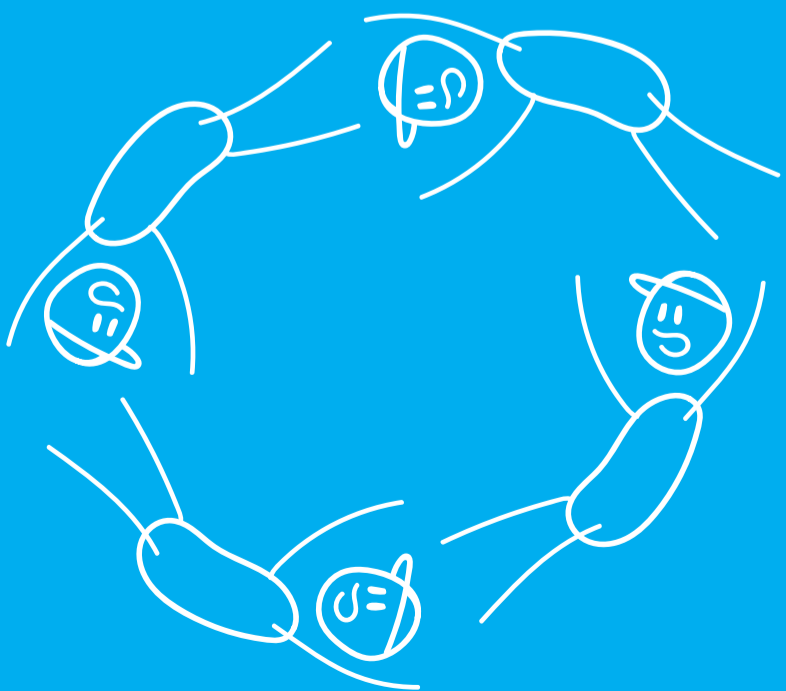
future journalist
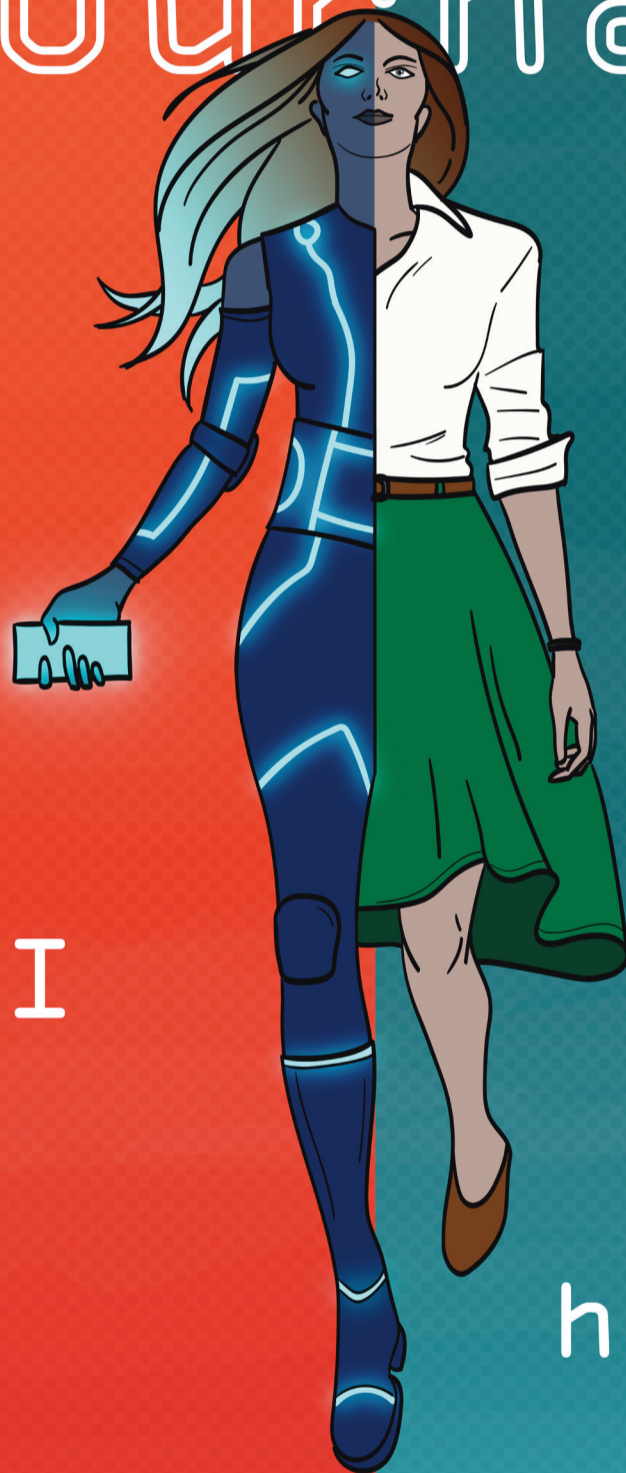
half AI

half human

MEDIA HOUSE 3.0

"In the year 2046 there are editors, but there are no longer any staff writers, which is super popular when I tell journalists this. Generative language bots and personalization algorithms will craft stories for each individual reader, so you will have your own, personalised newsfeed. And because there are so many different opportunities to get content, the value that news brands will continue to provide 30 years from now is that it's vetted, it's content that has accurate data that can be trusted."
(Webb, 2015)

In the aftermath of the HumanFirst movement's worldwide protests in 2046, the world's leading techcorps and governing cybercratic institutions passed the AICA - the Artificial Intelligence Circumscription Agreement.

The AICA set some limited restrictions on Artifical Intelligence research to prevent the development of self-aware machines, while ensuring that new technological developments would still be leveraged for maximum corporate profit.

Most journalists have been laid off and now live on basic assistance. Some still write and pursue stories, although their abilites to earn additional income this way are limited.

Journalists still working for media houses are now divided into two groups: data miners, who program and maintain the algorithms that drive modern news rooms; and story farmers, who look after the algorithms that are busy crafting the stories individual readers will eventually see.

For those companies that successfully managed the 4th industrial revolution, profits have never been higher. Legacy industries that failed to adapt are all but forgotten.

In Birmingham, a hipster subculture reviving the printed paper emerges, facilitated, of course, by Alphazon's AI cloud services. Successful startups have managed to disrupt some businesses, but they are quickly absorbed by the major media and tech companies.

Dramatic investments in new technologies and radical reorganisation efforts made by the major media and techcorps over the last 25 years have entirely reshaped the media landscape.

The public can now access and distribute any content, on nearly any platform, in nearly any format. The big brands have segmented themselves into targeted niches, even if profits are centralised.

The public now expect seamless, affordable and hyper-personalised services across all platforms, with as few subscriptions to manage as possible. The iPhone 19, the last model ever produced, is entered into the MoMA's permanent collection.
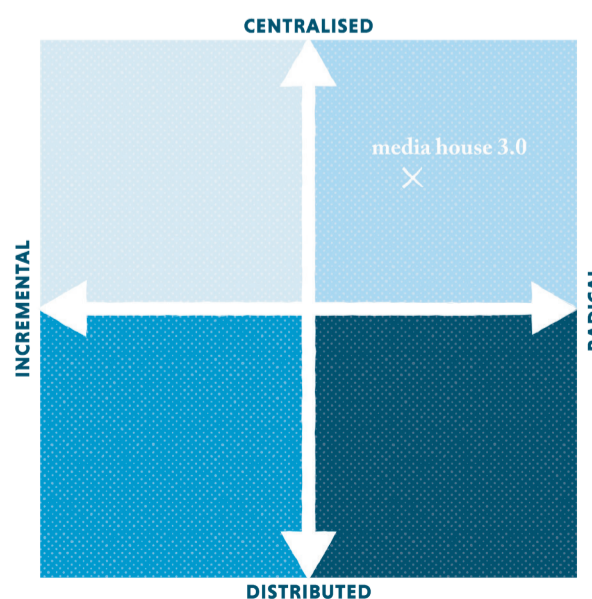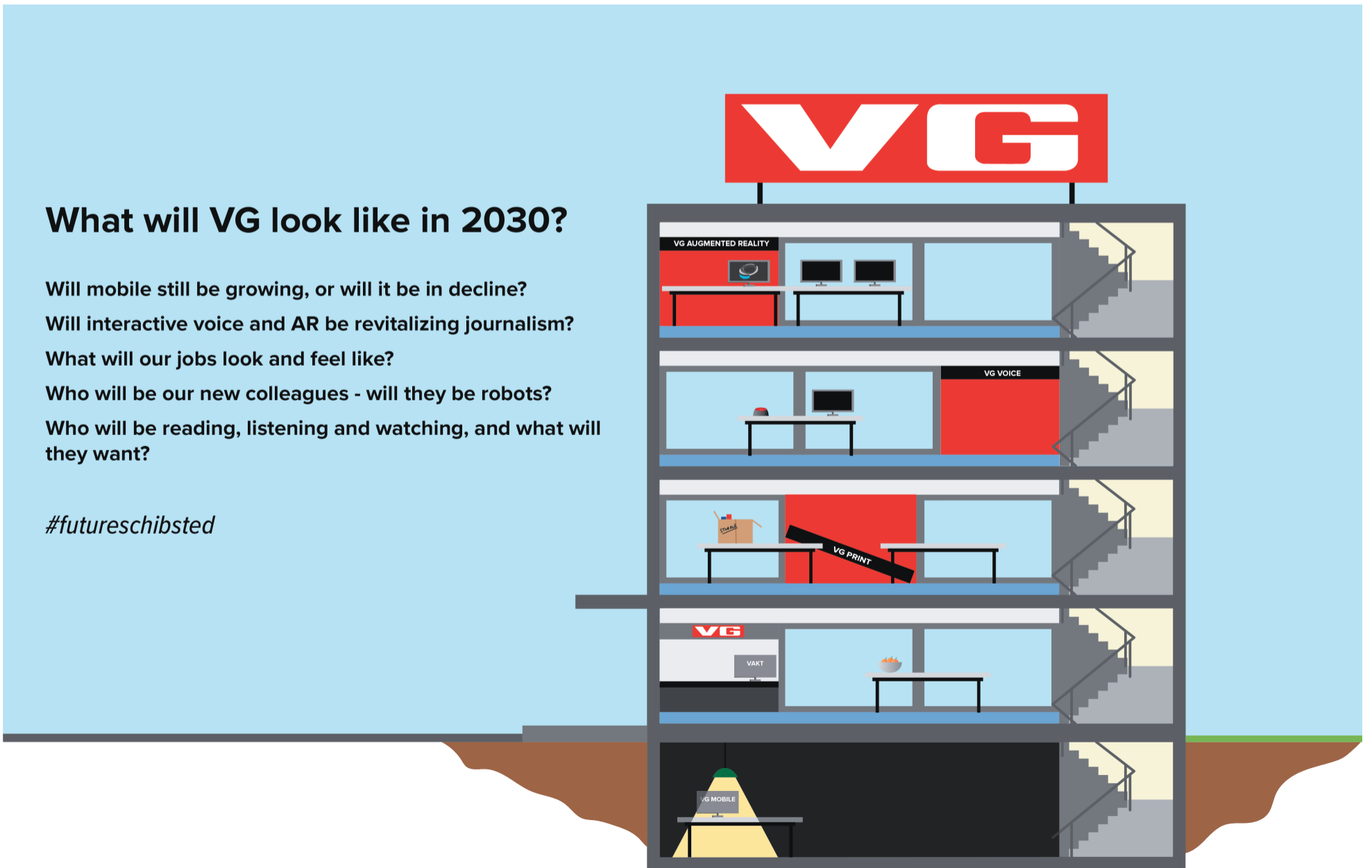
↑ this scenario exists in a world of distruptive innovation and centralised power.

CENTRALISED

media house 3.0

INCREMENTAL

RADICAL

DISTRIBUTED

Augmented Journalist

What will VG look like in 2030?

Will mobile still be growing, or will it be in decline?

Will interactive voice and AR be revitalizing journalism?

What will our jobs look and feel like?

Who will be our new colleagues - will they be robots?

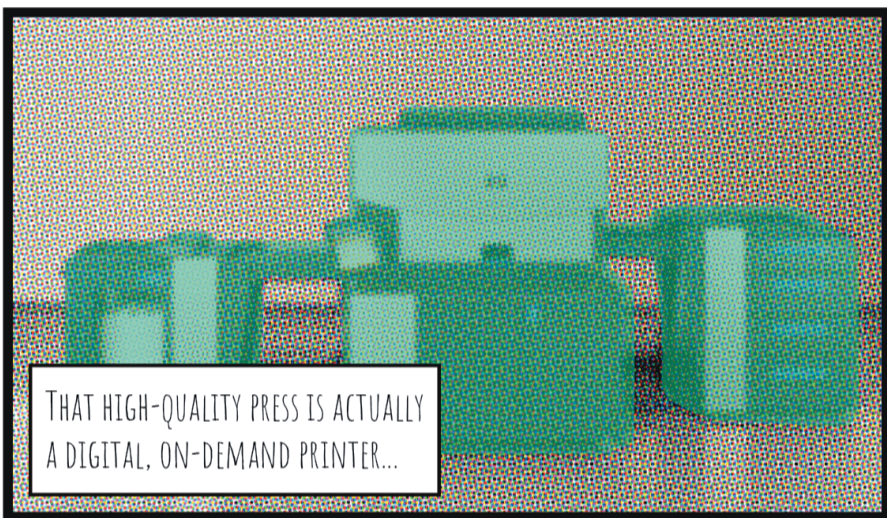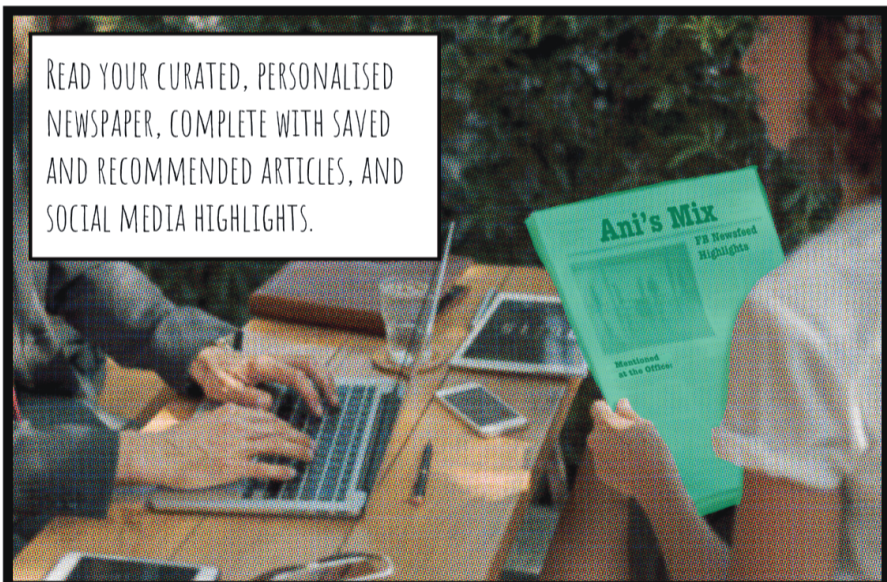**Who will be reading, listening and watching, and what will they want?**

#futureschibsted

VG2030

SAVE ARTICLES, POSTS AND PODCASTS FROM ACROSS YOUR PLATFORMS.

WHEN YOUR ISSUE IS READY, IT IS PRINTED ON A HIGH-QUALITY PRESS

THAT HIGH-QUALITY PRESS IS ACTUALLY A DIGITAL, ON-DEMAND PRINTER...

Today's Papers

MORGEN KAFFE — 105
BISLETT HERALD — 125
YOUR DAILY MIX — 125
CUSTOM MIX — 160
**USE OUR APP TO CREATE YOUR

READ YOUR CURATED, PERSONALISED NEWSPAPER, COMPLETE WITH SAVED AND RECOMMENDED ARTICLES, AND SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS.

Ani's Mix
FB Newsfeed Highlights

Mentioned at the Office
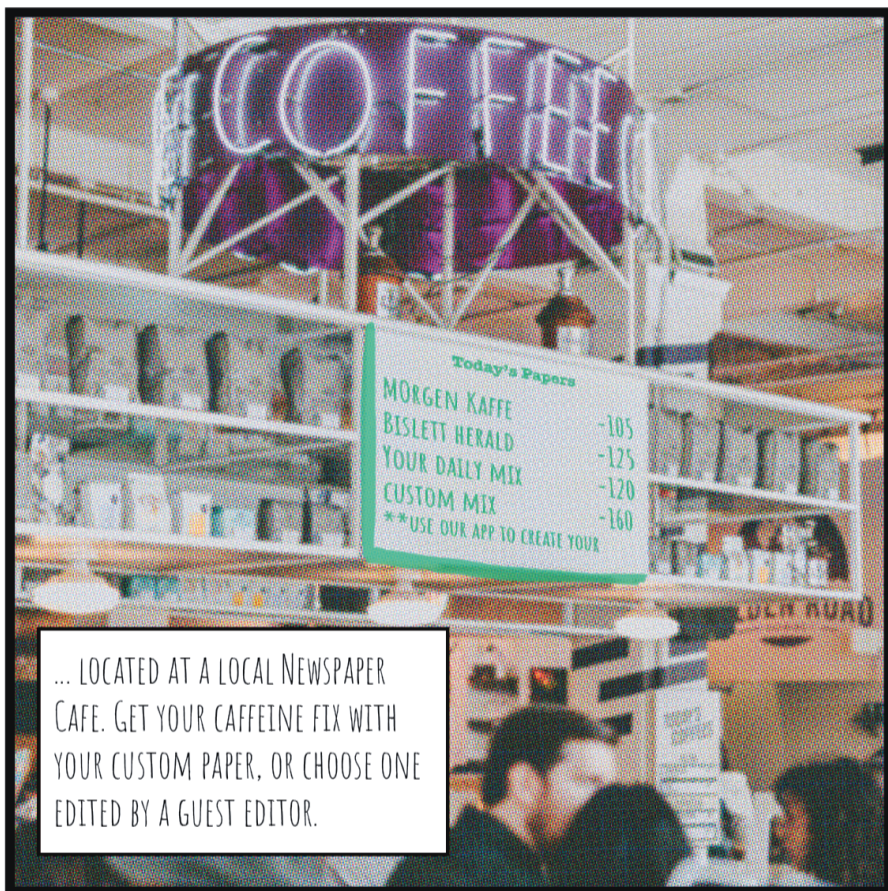
... LOCATED AT A LOCAL NEWSPAPER CAFE. GET YOUR CAFFEINE FIX WITH YOUR CUSTOM PAPER, OR CHOOSE ONE EDITED BY A GUEST EDITOR.

TRADE AND SHARE WITH YOUR FRIENDS, OR FOLLOW EDITORS YOU RESPECT.

The Last Press
a speculative fiction

"Source criticism - this is a concept which is really important, and that is going to be much more important in the future. This has to do with everything associated with fake news, and sort of having the capacity to evaluate whether or not something is fake, or real. That's going to be more important, especially because there are now technologies being developed that make it much more easy to manipulate things." Steen Steensen, in interview.

The multicoloured glow from the screens dances on the water as Michel's foot lands in the puddle. The water is cold, but he is too focused to care. Though none of them see him, the streets are filled with people, making navigating the streets a challenge. He's already late, but he knows the package he is carrying will be worth the wait.

Rushing down the main pedestrian street of this residential unit, Michel weaves between bystanders, some transfixed by the glowing rectangles of colour suspended from the buildings, anachronistic holdovers from a time when displays were fixed physical installations.

Without glasses or implants, he sometimes wonders what they see. Updates from their social networks? Advertisements for their latest identified need? Updates from what passes as the news these days?

What must it be like, he asks himself, to not trust anything your eyes show you? He, at least, could trust The News.

A child, still young enough to be curious, spots him and says to her mother "Look! One of those wierdos in the facepaint!" but she doesn't seem to hear her. His makeup might be fooling the cameras, but he can still be seen by people not lost in in the Augment.

It's a strange mixture of relief and anxiety to really be seen by another person.

Looking at the little girl, he remembers a time when this street was empty at this time of night, everyone home in bed, resting for the next day's work. Since what passes for school went on-demand and Basic was rolled out, the streets have been filled whatever the hour.

The noise of the street softens when Michel turns the corner into near darkness - a forgotten passage between two old walkups. Ducking into a low doorway, out of sight from any cameras, he immediately takes off his robes. They do a good job of shielding his infra-red and body patterns, but the trapped heat is sweltering.

Picking his way through the rolls and stacks of newsprint in the darkened room, he pulls an envelop from the discrete bag he keeps strapped around his hips. It's worn surface and taped edges show a level of care for what once would have been disposable. Paper is hard to come by these days, unless you make it or recycle it yourself. It still has it's uses.

Pushing open a heavy door, a new world of light and sound opens up before him, his eyes adjusting to the cool glow of the LEDs. Somehow the brightness doesn't quite match the mechanical clunks and hisses coming from the ancient, manually operated printing press.

When she sees him enter, Editor Sofia rushes over, welcoming him with an ink-smeared handshake. "Correspondant Michel, did you manage to get it?' she asks.

"It's here."

He carefully tips the contents onto a nearby desk. Real photographs of a protest, developed on silver gelatin sheets, and bundles of hand-written notes in various scripts slide out of the envelope.

"I managed to get sworn and verified statements from 7 witnesses to the police action against the Association of Chartered Accountants' sit-in at the old financial block," he proclaims proudly. "Will it make tonight's pressing?"

"Just in time." she replies, smiling. She carries this Trusted News over to the Typesetters, a row workers arranging tiny metal letters in wooden frames, chanting in unison: "All the news that's fit to print... All the news..."

INTRODUCING EMOTIONCAPTURE

Our automated analytics already tell you everything there is to know about the match. Now our patented EMOTIONCAPTURE™ technology lets you feel what's it's like to actually play it.

It looks like things got... a little wierd.
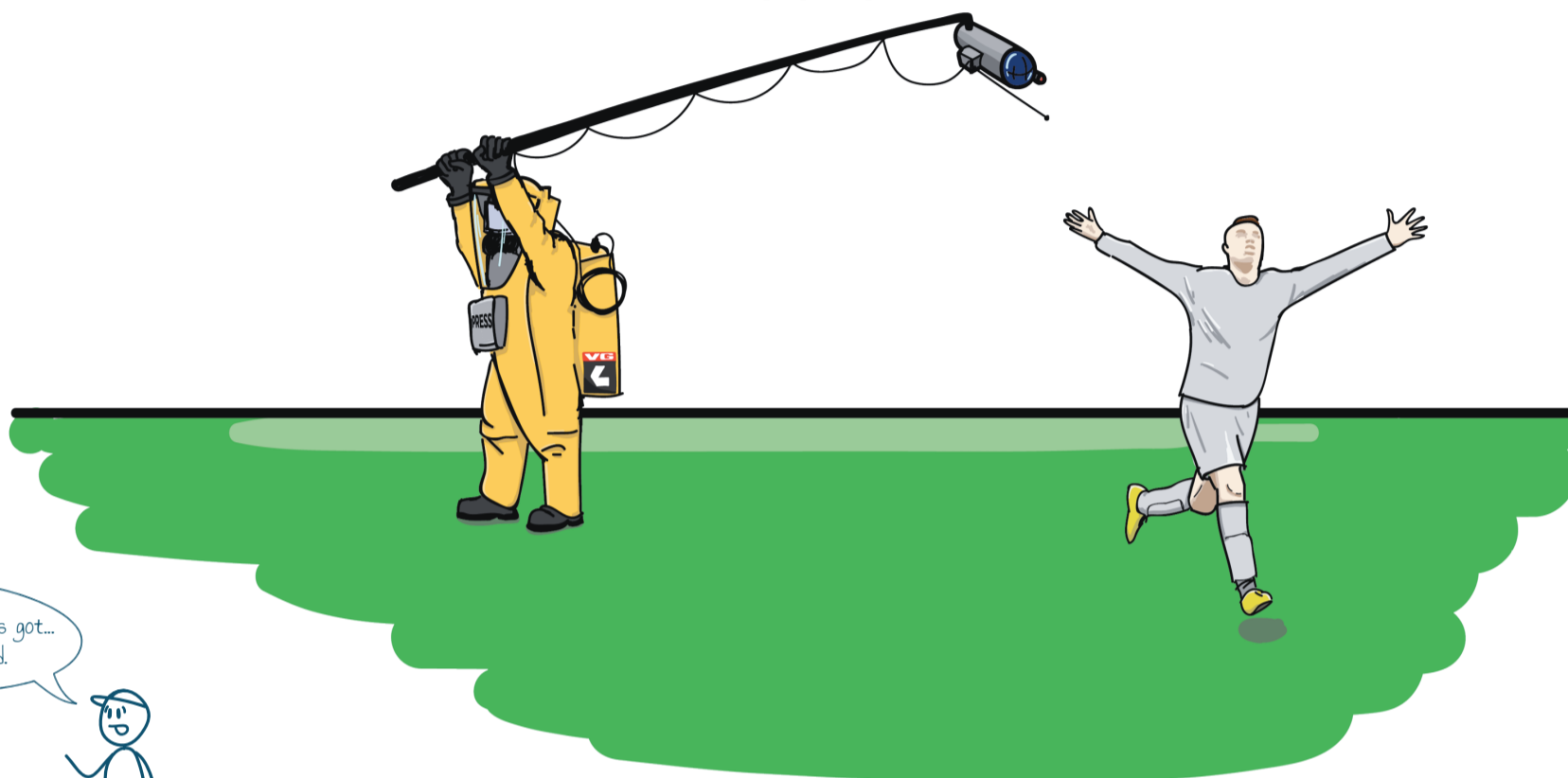
a new service from **VG LIVE**

Illustrations as discursive tools

These illustrations started as a way to practice drawing and to keep creativity flowing during the early insight phase of the project. After sharing a few sketches with folks on the NextGen team, their effectiveness as discursive tools quickly became apparent.

For example, this EmotionCapture illustration triggered several conversations with the SportsNext team about artificial intelligence, automation, and emotion in sports reporting. By injecting a level of 'wierdness' into the discussions the team was having, this illustration was also able to build up some engagement and openness to exploring futures studies methods further.

This experiment also reinforced the central role Slack could play as not only a platform to coordinate with people on practical issues, but also as a place where discursive discussions could start.

Working with creative teams, it was easy to start conversations this way, but the problem remained: how to keep them going, and what to do with the results?

With this question in mind I designed a series of futures workshops to explore how visions could be made actionable.

R: ... we have talked about how we can use emotions in our product. It would be really cool to have a workshop on it.

C: Yeah I'd be very interested to hear about those discussions ... especially as more and more of the publishing process is automated.

R: I think you are starting them now. We have not disuccsed AI on a serious level yet, but I think it's time!
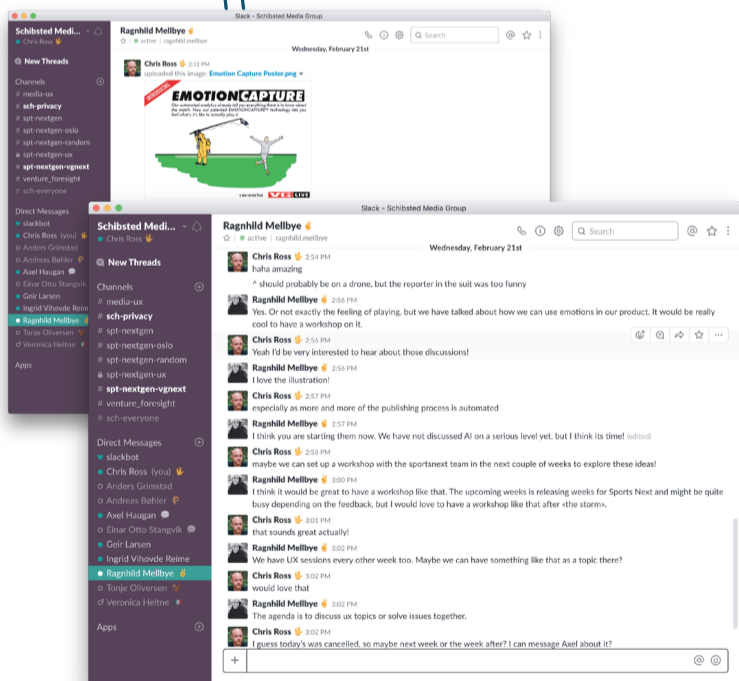
speculative futures workshops

It seems there is a big difference between a workshop and a game

FINN

A major lesson from working as an embedded designer: some of the most productive conversations happen after work over beers.

While talking with a UX designer from Finn (a Schibsted Marketplaces company) at one of these events, we hatched a plan to run a half-day futures workshop with a UX team. Run as part of a monthly team-building program, the team came expecting something explorative.

Divided into two groups, the workshop progressed through 5 stages intended to bridge futures thinking with the design process.

1. Scenario Building
The team drew 3 random trends from a trend deck, and talked together to create a scenario based on the interaction of these trends.

2. Individual Ideation
Next, the teams spent 10 minutes ideating individually, sketching and describing service or product concepts inspired by their scenario.

3. Negotiation & Synthesis
Here, each team member presented their favourite concepts, and the team worked together to choose one concept, or a combination of similar ones, to work with further.

4. Concept Development
On large format paper, the teams sketched and prototyped their concepts.

One team stuck to sketching and working with post-its, while the other added to their sketchs by building simple paper mockups of their concept: an automated cart that transports second-hand materials around mega-cities.

5. Sharing and conversation
Finally, the teams shared their concepts with eachother, and we discussed what they might mean for Finn today. Interstingly, the automated cart concept sparked a discussion about how Finn does not facilitate the buyer-seller relationship very well in their service today.

key findings

☆ Working with such a creative group, used to UX and agile methodologies, meant it was easy to work through such a rapid ideation process. The group felt this would be a bigger challenge with end-users or non-designers.

💡 The speculative futures quickly sparked new ideas. Building concepts on these ideas, and analysing them together in conversation, led to new insights and perspectives on Finn's current service offerings.

🚫📱 People used their phones to explore and document, sharing links and taking photos. They also got lost in SnapChat from time to time.

✏️ The size of the group (7) was too big for one group, but too small for two. I had to act as both participant in one group (after someone left for a meeting), and an overall facilitator. This meant we lost track of time, and the group without me had a harder time following the process.

📄 The workshop materials faded into the background, and participants used other materials. This worked well, but may also have been alost opportunity to communicate the process and build a more creative atmosphere.

💬 While the conversation was stimulating and engaging, there was no follow-up, and way to track the output and effects of the workshop.

The process of imagining alternative futures, and checking SnapChat. Both teams took different approaches to working through concept development. This might be due to different team makeups: one included younger external consultants, and the other more experienced in-house UX designers.

Sharing concepts: a future Finn providing automated infrastructure services, moving reusable materials around mega-cities floating on the ocean.

NextGen

After processing the findings from the first workshop, I developed a second iteration for further testing. Designed with more structure, and an entire stage dedicated to windtunneling and backcasting concepts, I hoped this workshop would make the results of a futures conversation more actionable.

Working with a smaller group from NextGen (two Product Managers and a UX Lead), I tried to guide the group through a more systematic 5 stage process. The goal was to work from trends and pre-defined scenarios, and then through individual ideation.

At this point, we would map our concepts on the futures cone, talking together to identify our preferred future, before working collaboratively on a new design concept situated in that preferred future.

The final round would see us create a roadmap to our future concept, and run an evuaation of the concept's potential costs and benefits.

While the group understood the process intellectually, in practice, the workshop went quite differently. After a lengthy process of getting on the same page, the conversation took a number of diverting and speculative paths.

The group skipped from the first stage

to the 4th, focussing the discussion on a future weather service. Using AI and automated processes, this weather service would know who you are, where you are likely to go and what you would likely do there. By aggregating data from all users, the automated processes could build more nuanced profiles of expected user behaviour.

This concept and the conversation were engaging, but was only loosely related to the mandates of the teams represented at the table.

At the end of the session we spent 30 minutes debriefing the process. Even though it resulted in a fun conversation, this process did not address some of the core issues facing NextGen's use of the future.

The results of the conversation were not captured or translated into action. The trends themselves were interpreted in predictable way; variability and uncertainty were not addressed.

The workshop was successful at sparking a conversation, but as we discussed at the end, starting these conversations is not the core problem NextGen has. It was back to the drawing board.

The plotted worksheets were desinged with futures studies practice explicitly represented, but were too bland and formulaic.
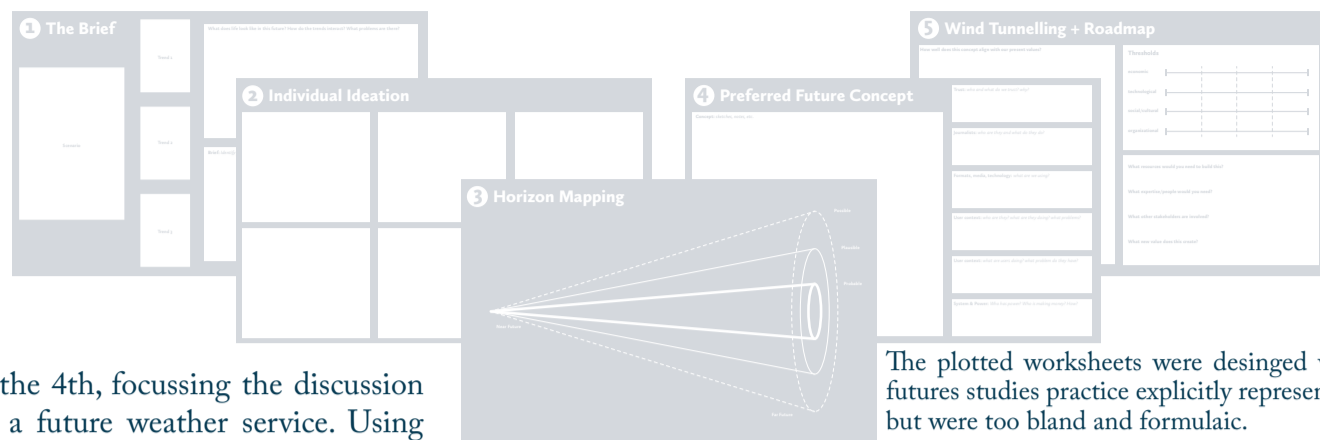
key findings

This group was also used to working creatively quickly, and was even more comfortable with future trends. This made getting into speculative conversation easy.

The process and materials for this workshop demanded a lot of time, and yet were not engaging enough to keep participants moving through the stages.

Relying on plotted material is a critical bottleneck. If the materials are inaccessible or difficult to print, the whole process is at risk. After plotting problems at AHO, we had to improvise with smaller copies of the materials.

Working with pre-defined scenarios was inteded to help focus teams on possible outcomes. This actually put the narrative 'on-rails'. We spent a lot of time getting on the same page about what these scenarios meant.

Even if the process failed, the results of running a test were more than worth the frustration. The critical conversation about the process this failure sparked fueled the reflection and re-evaluation that lead to what would become Futures Compass.

By building up a relationship with my participants as an embedded designer before the workshop, I had built enough good will to make the risk and failure worth it, and enough trust for solid critical feedback.

The first stage of five - discussing trends, and how they might interact in a fictional scenario. Getting everyone on the same page took some time, but resulted in a very interesting conversation.

... still the first stage. This workshop resulted in an interesting conversation about machine learning and weather forcasting services, but didn't progress through the stages as I had hoped.

"

We discuss possible futures all the time, but the bad thing is that it's not done in a structured way, or in a way that we can use it.

UX Lead, VGNext

Building Futures Literacy

It wasn't until I imagined removing myself from the equation that I realised what NextGen needs - the ability to continually go through this process on their own. What I could best offer was not a unique or novel view of the future of journalism; their own expertise makes them better suited for this.

Rather, I could provide a tailored, exporatory approch approach to futures methods, rooted in a deep understanding of place, of context, and NextGen's needs. To do this, I needed some kind of framework for dealing with the future in a structured way.

Futures Literacy is a concept put forward by Riel Miller, an economist and Head of Futures Literacy at UNESCO. To Miller, Futures Literacy is "the capacity to explore the potential of the present to give rise to the future." (Miller, 2006)

He views it as a cumulative capacity: just as children learn to read simple books before moving on to more complex stories, we can learn and develop our capacity to think about the future.

Divided into three levels, Miller's framework for Futures Literacy provides the structural backbone for the output of this project.

First we should develop awareness of change over time. **Second**, we should build "the capacity to overcome the limitations imposed by values and expectations when thinking about the future." And **third**, we should be able to make better choices today, informed by our ability to create strategic future scenarios. (Miller, 2006)

Through my embedded research process and insight work with NextGen, I know that the team is already very much aware of the future, and have started taking steps towards rigorous imagining.

By using Miller's framework as the basis for my design intervention I hoped to enable NextGen to practice this rigorous imagining, and hopefully move beyond it, making strategic decisions today based on a renewed understanding of their values.

> *"FL embraces the profound unknowability and contingency of the future by developing the capacity to imagine and analyse the potential of the present in ways that are more consistent with our present values."*
> (Miller, 2006)

Levels of Futures Literacy:

1. **Awareness:** change happens over time, and we are situated in moments in time.
2. **Rigorous Imagining:** what is possible, what is probable, and what is desirable
3. **Choice:** build on our awareness and insights to act strategically today, in line with the values we prefer.

Summarised from (Miller, 2006)

---

new framing

How could we build Futures Literacy within NextGen?
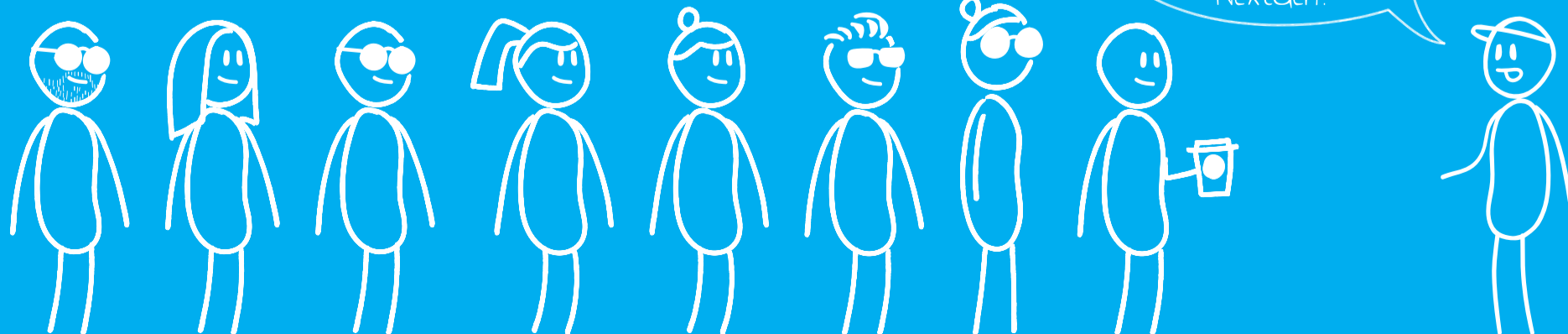
FUTURES COMPA

Futures Compass is a collaborative conversation tool and futures game specifically designed to build Futures Literacy within Schibsted Media Group's NextGen team. It enables product teams to make sense of trends by exploring a range of possible futures.

More than that, it helps teams to integrate their learnings into today's world by imagining what role the team could play in creating future change, and by identifing new goals and actions.

Built on research into existing Futures Studies methods, as well as existing futures and storytelling games, Futures Compass is a playful and engaging alternative for workshops, meetings, and product reviews.

It comes out of a four month embedded design project with Schibsted's NextGen Publishing Products team, and is informed by a deep understanding of the NextGen way of working.

Futures Compass is designed to be used by product teams at monthly roadmap and assessment meetings, quarterly off-site meetings and OKR sessions, and at annual goal-setting workshops.

A flexible and adaptable tool, Futures Compass is also designed to be used in different ways by teams whenever they face challenging decisions, encounter new trends, or have questions about the future of their team, their product, or their industry. Happy exploring! 🚀

ASS

"...a game format or framing can be helpful in and of itself for the futurist facilitator seeking to trigger a hypothetical, exploratory mindset, affording players not only permission to think along heterodox lines, but offering the specific materials of imagination with which to do so"
(Candy, 2018)
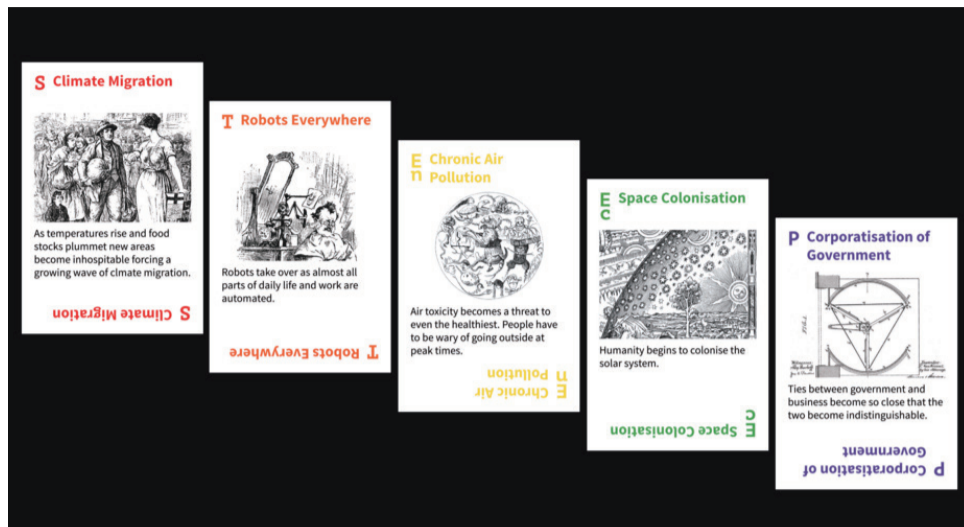
Futures Poker (Strange Telemetry, 2016)
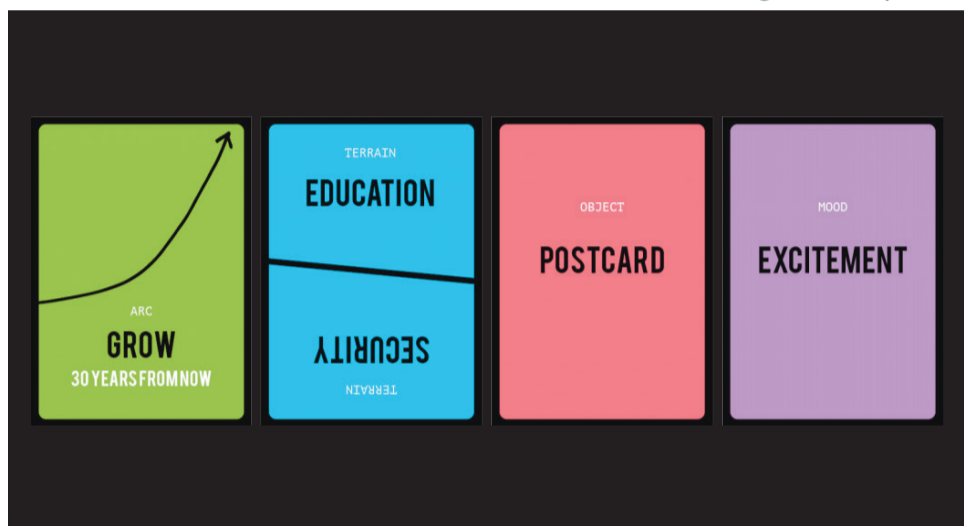
The Thing from the Future (SitLab, 2015)

The Thing from the Future, IFRC Edition (IFRC Innovation, 2018; Candy, 2018)

Impact (Idea Couture, 2016)

precedent: **futures games**

Futures games aren't a new concept: there are a range of examples, some available for purchase, others openly available for download and printing. In researching precidents I identified 3 alternative futures games to explore, representing a range of play styles.

Strange Telemetry, a London-based research company and consultancy created Futures Poker in 2016. It is essentially a deck of trends, grouped into suits that correspond to STEEP (social, technological, economic, ecological, & political) , categories commonly used in trend analysis. The game is played as a storytelling competition, with players receiving 3 random trends, along with a future date and location. (Strange Telemetry, 2016)

The Thing from the Future, released in 2015 by Situation Lab, adds a level of rigour to the trend deck model. It is a speculative design and story telling game based on four suits of cards: Arc, which defines timelines and trajectories; Terrain, which describes the context; Object, which describes the form of the thing from the future; and Mood, which describes the emotions around the object. Prompted by 4 random cards, players take turns describing hypothetical future objects. (SitLab, 2015)

Situation Lab redesigned The Thing from The Future in 2018 for the International Federation of the Red Cross, streamlining the game to three suits, tailoring content for the IFRC, and representing the suits as grammatical elements of probing questions asked to the players. (IFRC Innovation, 2018, & Candy, 2018)

The Thing from the Future and Futures Poker are useful as creative stimuli, driving conversations and opening up our imaginations. But in many ways they are purely descriptive: players imagine future scenarios or products, and then describe those situations to the rest of the group.

Idea Couture's Impact is different. It is a more traditional board game, with turns and rules, winners and losers. It uses scripted Persona Cards, with pre-defined goals, and scripted Impact Cards, which feature speculative future news events that drive change on the board. The goal is to create the ideal conditions for your persona by playing Impact Cards to trigger changes in the future context. (Idea Couture, 2016) By using personas and having players adopt their interests, it could draw the players into the future scenario better than the card games, but at the cost of limiting the scope of our imagining.

The two card games drive our imagination, while Impact shows us how new events and developments can have impacts throughout society. But all three fall short of tying these future speculations to how we can act today, something NextGen identified as critical to their engagement with the future.

Analysing these games through the lens of Futures Literacy, we can see that Impact clearly builds *awareness* of change over time, and so is limited to level 1. The card games also build awareness, but they also apply a level of *rigorous imagining*, and as such are working towards building level 2. What these games don't explicitly or directly enable is the progression to level 3; they don't build *strategic scenarios* to question our values, assumptions or actions today. This is what I hope Futures Compass will do for NextGen.

In exploring the range of precedents available, I also looked at games designed to facilitate storytelling. Hub Games is a UK based company known for their range of creative storytelling games.

Perhaps best known are **Rory's Story Cubes,** a series of dice with icons and images on them used to inspire the narratives of imagined stories. The original set (pictured) features generic images, although co-branded sets are now available featuring cartoon characters and superheroes. The random pairings of images are reminiscent of the trend-deck approach to futures games - random stimuli provoke us to make speculative connections and imagine alternative stories.

Rory's Story Cubes (Hub Games, 2018b)

Building on this platform Hub Games released **Untold,** a highly-structured narrative tool that uses Story Cubes and common plot structures and tropes from TV to set the stage. Working collaboratively, groups of players invent new characters and put them into established contexts, using the Story Cubes and random Outcome and Reaction cards to trigger unexpected conflicts and final resolutions.

The Extraordinaires presents a different approach to creativity by simplifying the design process into three stages. Drawing Extraordinaire (character) cards and Project cards (objects), players create simplified design briefs (i.e. a chair for a pirate), and then draw Think cards for probing questions (i.e. what if it changed shape?).
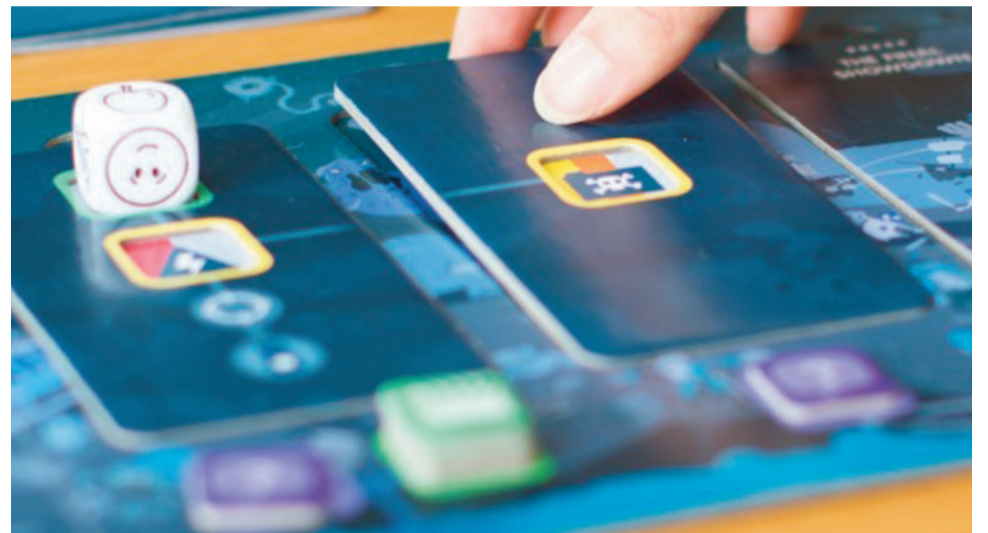

Untold (Hub Games, 2018c)

All three of these games offer robust platforms for generating new ideas. Rory's Story Cubes, with their countless combinations have almost unlimited creative potential, but are almost entirely lacking in structure - the example stories on their website border on the surre. Untold builds that missing structure by adding a layer of narrative sequences and reactions, driving forward a collaborative conversation. The Extraordinaires, by simplifying the design process, adds a level of rigour and process to simple ideative sketching.

One final precedent that I have a long personal history with is Dungeons & Dragons, a game I have been playing for nearly 20 years. Beyond the complex rule sets and strangely shaped dice, D&D offers interesting parallels to co-design workshop processes. It is a heavily facilitated experience, requiring trust and collaboration between team members and demands creative approaches to both context and established constraints.

The Extraordinaires (Hub Games, 2018d)

Importantly a balanced team, aware of their collective capabilities, is critical to successful problem solving and conflict resolution.

Isn't this supposed to be a game about work? Shouldn't it be boring?!

Dungeons & Dragons (What is D&D?, 2018), image from (Think Geek, 2018)

precedent:
story games & role playing

precedent:
engagement design

IV. Toolkit for news games

Design is a process, not a recipe. For newsrooms to start, consider these steps:

1. Identify your story goals

Why are you telling this story?
To inspire empathy, convey information, spark action, persuade, experience a story, explore a system?

What do you want the user to DO?
Share, learn, explore, understand, commit, organize, connect, return?

Which interactive form is best to tell it on each platform?
What will best enhance the storytelling beyond prose or video? Interactive, toy, or game?

2. Build your dream team

Whom do you need for the platforms? Integrate with the newsroom; don't be a separate pod of tech and design folks, or have people working in silos.

3. Workshop it to start speaking the same language

Agree on game verbs (what you want the user to do), how the team will collaborate and editorial goals. How will you make the design cohesive across platforms? Define the product's scope and its business role to know what resources it needs.

4. Project manage

Have one person direct traffic. Have clear goals, benchmarks and timelines.

5. Make a prototype

It's much easier to build a paper prototype, playtest it and adjust it before you sink investment into the real thing. "Make a quick model to demonstrate the idea, and iterate quickly," says AU Game Lab's Lindsay Grace. "People don't always understand abstractly, but they can understand and amend a model."

6. Trust your dream team

Collaborate on vision, but don't try to design by committee. "If you try to do a single panel cartoon and have a single artist creating it with the feedback of eight people, it won't work," Grace says. "Let designers do their thing and run with it." Then iterate with feedback.

7. Playtest it

Adjust. Test it again. Iterate.

8. Stay playful

The bottom line: Is it engaging?

9. Don't neglect the art

Visual design can make or break the appeal.

10. Think about scale

Can the template or platform be used for other stories? Do you need to contract talent? Have someone on staff?

11. Design in an owner

Who is responsible for follow through, maintenance, iteration?

12. Do a post-launch review

What worked? What unforeseen challenges cropped up? What would you do differently next time? Document and share your learnings.

JoLT Workshop, 2015

12   JOLT: A TOOKIT

dream team... but all I am is me!

Over the course of 3 years, JoLT - a team of masters research fellows, media professionals and academics at American University in Washington D.C. - explored how gamification and interactive storytelling could be used to build deeper reader-engagement.

They call the results of their research 'engagement design', (JoLT 2017) and I think they have identified some practices that have a lot to offer the media and journalism industries. That being said, I don't think 'engagement design' is adequately defined or differentiated from existing design practices to stand as a new field or separate practice.

JoLT's research is focused on how journalistic stories can be told through interactive games, but their industry-specific research and insights proved valuable for my own process targetting the people who make those interactive products.

In particular, their Toolkit for News Games, provided a useful (if fairly standard) checklist to follow when designing Futures Compass, and echoed many of the findings that emerged from my own research and iterative development.

"Games give us the opportunity to play with systems. They give us a safe space to embrace ambiguity and to take risks. They offer a playful way to experience an event, discover solutions, create empathy or learn skills."

(JoLT, 2017)

checking the list

identify goals	The overall goal is to build futures literacy. Teams do this in 4 steps: understand trends, explore scenarios, imagine alternatives, and act today.
build a team	A team of one - but working as an embedded designer meant that I had a lot of input, direct and indirect, from my end users.
define terms & scope	Using simplified terminology from futures studies methods together with existing UX and product management terms helped to keep Futures Compass accessible.
project manage	Again, a team of one... but I really benefited from NextGen making themselves available for testing and conversations during a busy time.
build a prototype	Working through 3 iterations before arriving at the final prototype for Futures Compass drove the design forward.
trust your team	As an embedded designer, it is important to be clear about who is designing what. From the outset it was important to me to use the NextGen team as critics and users, not as co-designers. It helped to be able to move back and forth from the AHO studio and NextGen's offices.
play test it	For me this is part-and-parcel of prototyping. Many of the playtests I ran I consider quite successful (one an abject failure), but all of them were incredibly valuable to my design process.
stay playful	Bringing futures studies methods to interaction design, I also took the academic, systematic approach from the literature. Once I fully embraced the game-like qualities of Futures Compass, it started to come together.
visual design	The visual design of Futures Compass has evolved a lot over the 4 play tests. For me, it was important to communicate playfulness while at the same time creating something appropriate for a digital media team.
scale	Futures Compass is fairly tailored to the way Schibsted Media product teams, particularly in NextGen, work. That being said, I think it has broader applicability, and with some small changes could be used in other sectors.
ownership	This is an evolving conversation, but the UX Manager for NextGen and the Technology Trends team are both excited about bringing Futures Compass into the Schibsted toolbox.
post-launch review	Part of continuing the ownership conversation is continuing to run play-tests and reviews of Futures Compass. I plan to continue iterating through the summer, with more play tests with NextGen and the Tech Trends team.

Sketching a Structure

"The design question befomes: how to make a structure more reliably generative of useful outcomes?"
(Candy, 2018)
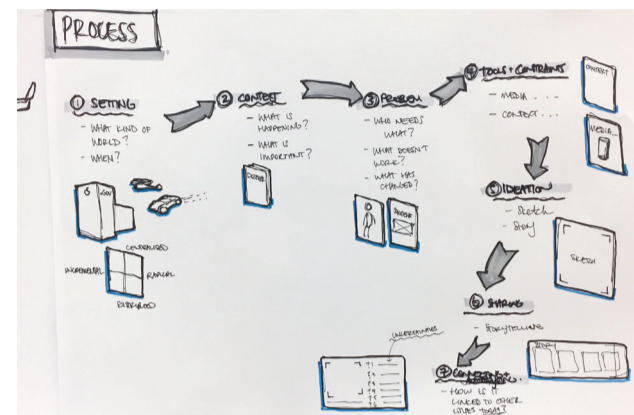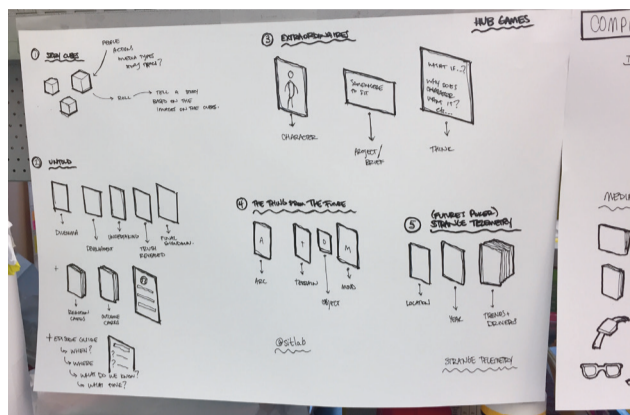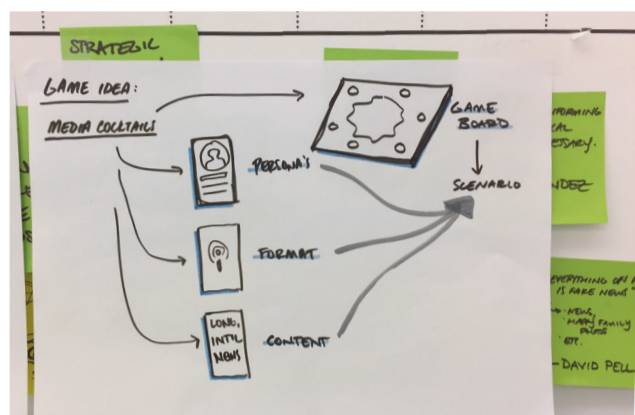
An early sketch of a scenario-building came called Media Cocktails. Players would design products for specific personas, using random formats and content categories.

Catalogue sketch detailing the core physical components of 5 precedent games.

An early workshop structure: work through context and constraints to ideate future possibilities before sharing ideas and discussing their implications for us today.

Structure and flow are critical to the success of any interaction. For Futures Compass, explored existing game flows, and looked for parallels to futures studies methods and design practices.

The precedents I examined were doing a good job of enabling imaginative thought, but what I really wanted to do was create a system for "making basic assumptions problematic." (Inayatullah, 2013)

With this goal in mind, I used the three levels of Futures Literacy (Miller, 2006), as guideposts and assessment tools for the user flows I sketched.

Basic Futures Compass Flow

Scan for signals (indications of change we see today), and identify trends (broader patterns of change) these signals point to.
← *build awareness, Futures Literacy level 1*

Pick a trend: bring in uncertainty by adding a random change.
← *leverage uncertainty*

Create a stories together about possible futures this change could enable.
← *imagine rigorously, Futures Literacy level 2*

Explore different possible outcomes, and how we might react.
← *make basic assumptions problematic*

SOON Identify what we should do today based on what our explorations have taught us.
← *choose, build strategic scenarios, Futures Literacy level 2*
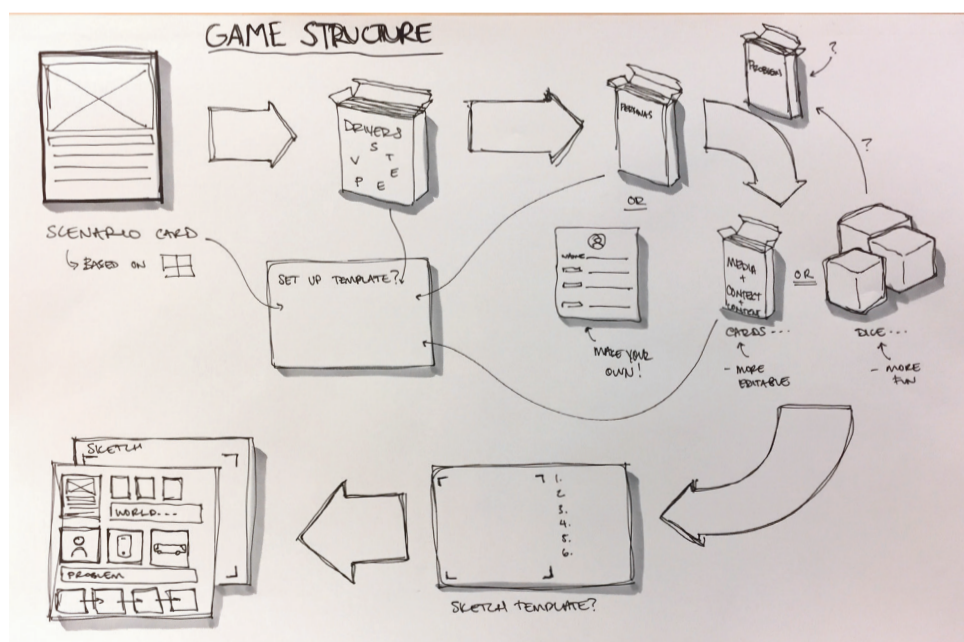
The first sketch of what would become Futures Compass. This concept had a diverse range of components covering most aspects of futures thinking methods. It was complex and highly systematized. I used something similar as the framwork for the second workshop.

The final Futures Compass structure: **pre-flight**, where we set up our game; **understand**, where we look at trends affecting us today; **explore**, where we see what could happen to those trends; **imagine**, where we create a range of possible outcomes; **act**, where evaluate what we could do today; and finally **touchdown**, where we follow up after the game.
*** See the Flight Plan on p. 47 for an overview of the process ***

Play Test:
Paper Prototype

invitation and lead up conversation on Slack

To test the preliminary Futures Compass structure I headed to Stockholm. One of NextGen's teams, Schibsted Daily, is based in Sweden, and so they had less exposure to my methods and approach than teams in Oslo. I hoped that this lack of exposure would help raise critical questions about the process.

In this first test I took a fairly active role as a facilitator. While each member of the team was engaged in the process, I again found myself taking most of notes.

Throughout the session I also noticed that the team seemed to be moving into established social and behavioural patterns: certain people were playing different roles automatically. While this wasn't a barrier to continuing the conversation, I was left wondering what would happen if I were able to shake participants out of their normal habits.

This could be a natural side effect of having an external facilitator and an unfamiliar process, but it highlighted two problems: first, a lack

of clear roles (aside from me as the facilitator), and second, a need for more clarity around *how* the participants should engage with the Futures Compass tools.

It begged the questions: what is worth recording, and how? in writing? with drawings? why would we record the outcomes of this process, and how can these outcomes be used as the team moves on with their work?

These issues and questions aside, the results of this conversation proved insightful for the team. We imagined a future in which AI assistants are replacing journalists, and asked how the team could adapt in that situation.

The group decided that if their workplace was affected by these technological changes, so would their customers workplace. The team then discussed what they could do about this possibility
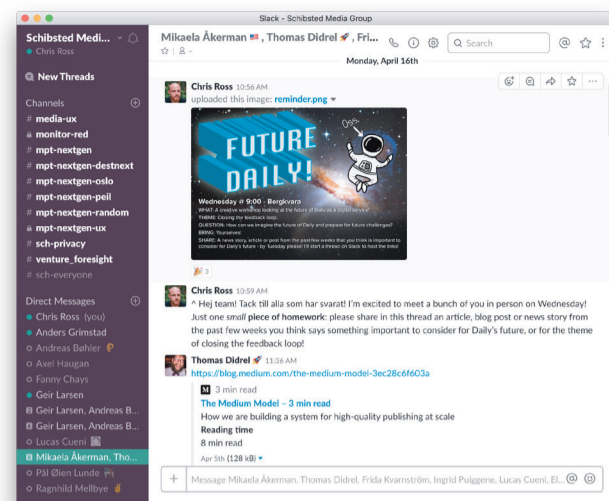
today. One possibility is to hire editorial staff with expertise in organisational development and change management, and position Schibsted Daily not just as a daily business newsletter, but as a trusted advisor on future trends and changes.

The key findings and reflections from this test proved invaluable in developing further iterations of Futures Compass.

Schibsted Daily - System Feedback
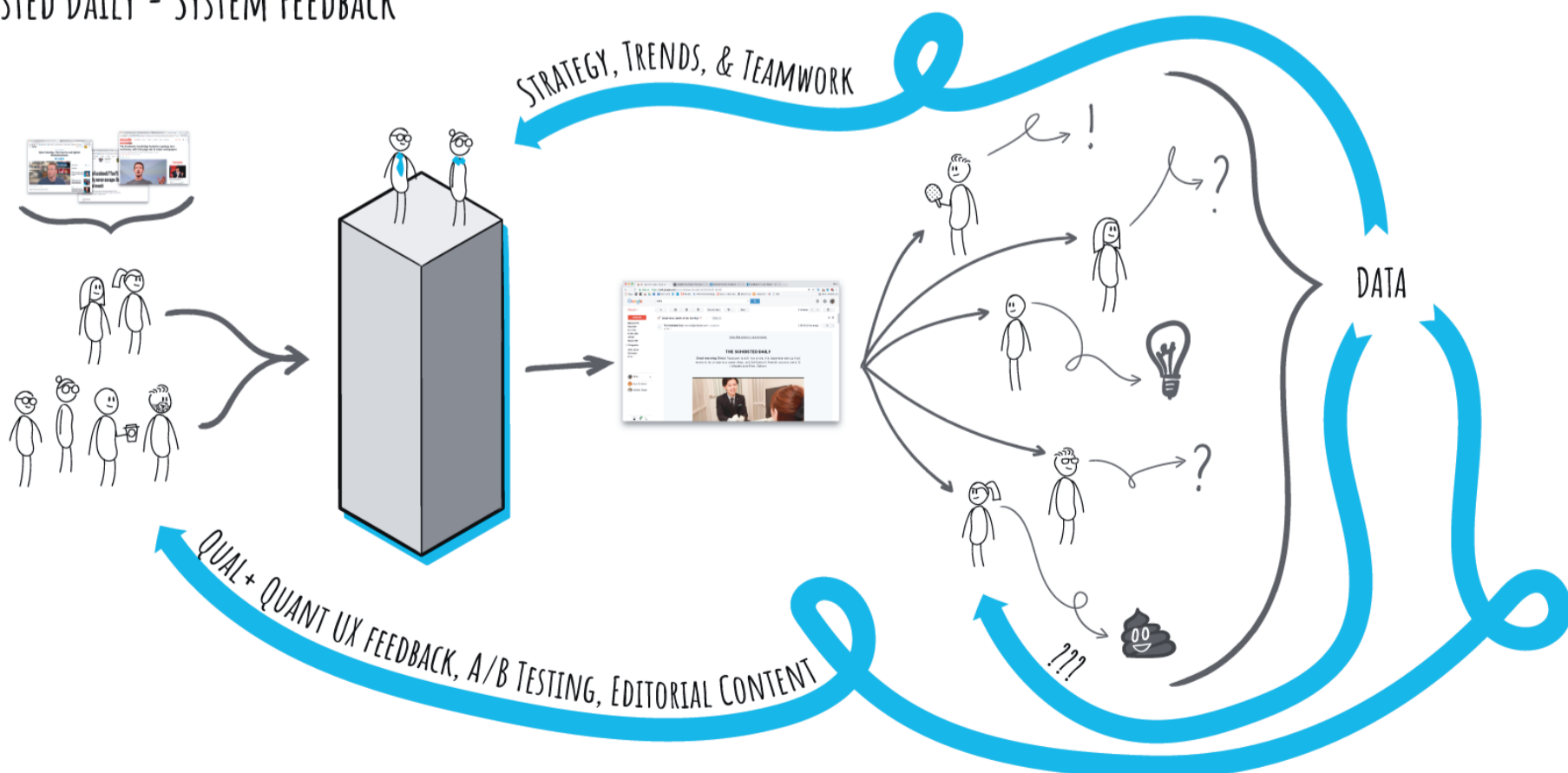
The playtest used this map to set the theme for choosing signals and the focus of the conversation.

The Schisbted Daily team imagines the future of their business model.

"I like the gamification of things, it's much more fun. I really like that it's physical – I want to take it home and play it."

participant

key findings

💬 established social and group patterns went unchallenged

🎲 flow and language from boardgames enables engagement

☕ more than one coffee break is needed!

🚫📱 people have lots of meetings, and try to keep up with slack on phones and laptops during workshops

📷 digital documentation needs to be designed into the process

🎧 it was fairly easy for the team to imagine alternative futures, and to connect them to today's needs

✏️ the group often relied on the facilitator for documentation

✴️ the bright colour was engaging, but the contrast made some parts of the sheets hard to read

⏳ clear expectations about timeframes are great - someone still needs to be watching the time

📄 worksheets or documentation tools are necessary, but there could be more engaging, tangible elements

💡 new ideas and possible actions emerged as a result of the future scenario exploration

the prototype

WORKSHEETS

HANDY BOX
(WITH USB +
TREND DECK)

Futures Compass

🚀 Futures
Compass

COFFEE & SNACKS

NUMBER, CHANGE &
UNCERTAINTY CUBES

OUTCOME CARDS

ROLE CARDS

STAGE CARDS

printed material

2 explore
futurescompass

pick a trend Roll the **Number Cube** to choose a random trend, or pick one together as a team to keep working with.

pick a change Roll the **Change Cube** to find out how your trend will change.

tell a story Using the **Scenario Worksheet**, work together to tell a story of what this future might look like. We call these stories **Scenarios**. Try to answer the 6 uncertainties.

repeat You can keep working with trends, changes and scenarios until you have one or two that the team wants to keep working with, or your timekeeper says you are out of time!

navigator
@picardfan2000

Knows which way the wind is blowing. Keeping the #squad on track and on plan. But it's the journey, not the destination, right? 🌐

one step ahead

economic
Data is Currency

Data is used in place of currency to facilitate exchanges or access services.

Outcome Card
futurescompass

... how could we **amplify**? #getloud

2. explore

Now it's time to take flight and explore some possible futures. In this stage we will use our trends to create simple future scenarios.

ROLES

outcomes

trends

Ways to Play

Futures Compass is carefully designed to guide your team in exploring the future, but it is also designed to be adapted to suit your needs. If something isn't working for your team, skip it, replace it or adapt it.

standard

Great for teams looking for a broad exploration possible futures.

Take a look through the *Flight Plan*, and follow the standard instructions found on the **Stage Cards** and **Worksheets**. After sheduling the session with your team, make sure they have shared their signals on slack at least a day before you play. These signals can be diverse, or related to a specific theme.

focused

Explore a specific trend that your team has already identified.

If your team is facing a specific decision, or has already identified an imporant trend to work with, you can play a Focused round of Futures Compass. In the invitation to the session, include a short description of the specific trend you will be working with, and why it is important. In the Understand stage, you can skip the **Understand Worksheet**, and instead have a short discussion about the trend you are working with.

express

Want to play alone, or more informally?

An Express round of Futures Compass can be used as a warm-up to a bigger workshop or meeting, or as a way to explore the future alone. This is where the *Uncertainty Cube* and *Trend Deck* comes into play:

1. Draw a random trend from the *Trend Deck*.
2. Roll the *Change Cube* and *Uncertainty Cube*.
3. Ask yourself "If this trend changed in this way, what effect would it have on this uncertainty?"

For example, you could ask "If Robots Everywhere were to Grow, what effect would that have on Users?"

Futures Compass
flight plan

Welcome to Futures Compass - a conversation tool that helps your team talk about possible futures, and identify what we can do to prepare today.

Your goal is to journey to the future, discover new insights, and return to the present to share your new knowledge. Futures Compass takes your team through a process of imagining possible futures: *understanding* where we are today, *exploring* potential futures, *imagining* possibile reactions, and *acting* today.

We can't predict the future - but by imagining different possibilities we can help our teams make better decisions today.

> works best with:
> 👥 3-6 players
> 🕐 1-2 hours
> 💬 a diversity of disciplines represented

Getting Started

Futures Compass is a 4 stage conversation, with additonal preparation and follow-up stages. Start by getting acquanted with what's in the box, and by reading through this flight plan.
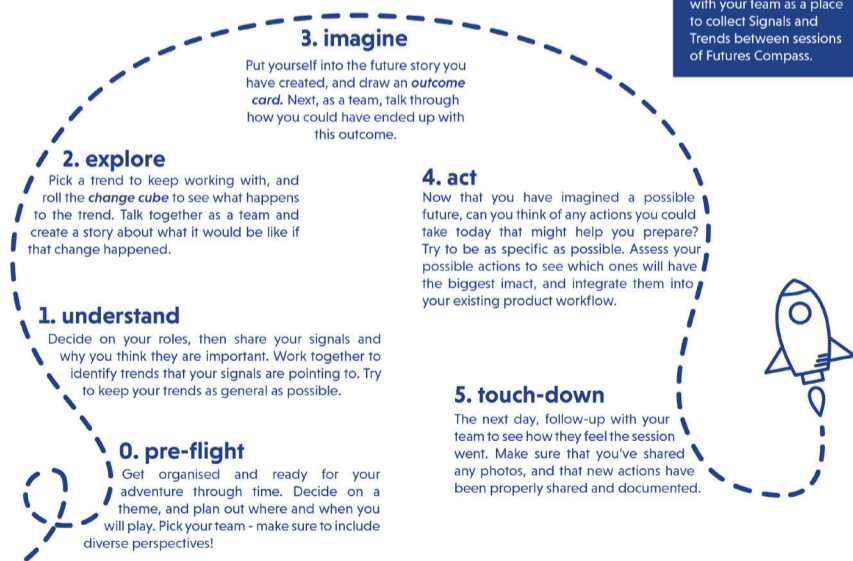
When you invite your team to play, talk with them about what you hope to accomplish together. If you will use the standard style of play, invite your team to share some *signals* on slack the day before you play.

If your team is new to Futures Compass, set aside some extra time at the beginning to go through the process together, and make sure everyone is on the same page. Ready to get started? Grab the *Stage Cards* and a set of *Worksheets*, follow along with the overview.

🚫 a note on cell phones
Cell phones can be distracting, but are also useful for taking pictures and documenting the results of your session. If you find your team is getting distracted, try hiding your phones away inside the game box. The Documenter can keep theirs 📱

Contents

- 📦 **Box** - If you've made it this far you are already familiar with this item. Useful for storing Futures Compass, or cellphones. The lid can double as a coffee tray.
- ✈️ **Flight Plan** - This is the document you are currently reading. It contains helpful tips and details about Futures Compass, don't you think?
- 🔑 **USB Key** - Please don't steal the keychain or use the USB for sharing the latest season of Westworld. It contains lots of useful things, like PDFs of the worksheets, cards, Flight Plan and project report.
- 🗂️ **Stage Cards** - These will help guide you through a session of Futures Compass.
- 🔖 **Role Cards** - When travelling through time, it's nice to know what you are responsible for. Use these to help break out of your normal habits, or as inspiration for your next hallowe'en costume.
- 🃏 **Outcome Cards** - We can't predict the future - believe me I've tried - but we can test out a variety of possible outcomes.
- 📝 **Worksheets 1-4** - These will guide your conversations and help in documenting the outcomes. Print or copy fresh sheets on A3 paper if you run out.
- 🎲 **Game Cubes** - Cubes are futuristic dice. They help bring uncertainty in to the mix.
- 🗃️ **Trend Deck** - Useful as inspiration and in Express sessions. If your team identifies some good new trends, add them here on the blank cards.
- ⏳ **Hourglass** - Okay so it's actually a 3-minute glass. If your team has a hard time keeping to task, the Timekeeper can bring out this secret weapon.

you'll need a few extras:
- tape
- extra paper
- markers and pens
- ☕ coffee and snacks always help 🍪

Uncertainty Cube
(used in Express sessions)

Number Cube

Change Cube

Overview

pro-tip
Start a group chat on Slack with your team as a place to collect Signals and Trends between sessions of Futures Compass.

3. imagine
Put yourself into the future story you have created, and draw an *outcome card*. Next, as a team, talk through how you could have ended up with this outcome.

2. explore
Pick a trend to keep working with, and roll the *change cube* to see what happens to the trend. Talk together as a team and create a story about what it would be like if that change happened.

4. act
Now that you have imagined a possible future, can you think of any actions you could take today that might help you prepare? Try to be as specific as possible. Assess your possible actions to see which ones will have the biggest impact, and integrate them into your existing product workflow.

1. understand
Decide on your roles, then share your signals and why you think they are important. Work together to identify trends that your signals are pointing to. Try to keep your trends as general as possible.

5. touch-down
The next day, follow-up with your team to see how they feel the session went. Make sure that you've shared any photos, and that new actions have been properly shared and documented.

0. pre-flight
Get organised and ready for your adventure through time. Decide on a theme, and plan out where and when you will play. Pick your team - make sure to include diverse perspectives!
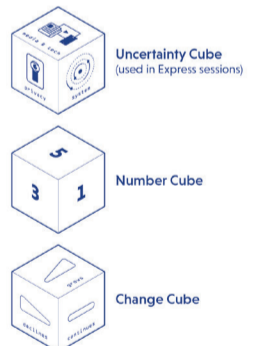
signals
Signals can be articles, stories or events happening now that might have something to tell us about the future. Their effects are usually limited to one group, company, industry, or part of society. They can be weak or strong, and are sometimes sorted into STEEP categories: Social, Technological, Ecological, Economic & Political.

trends
Trends are broader tendencies that can effect society as a whole. They are the patterns that signals point to. Sometimes trends contradict each other - we call these *counter-trends*. Groups of similar trends can be collected into *mega-trends*, which have a broad reach and the power to reshape the world.
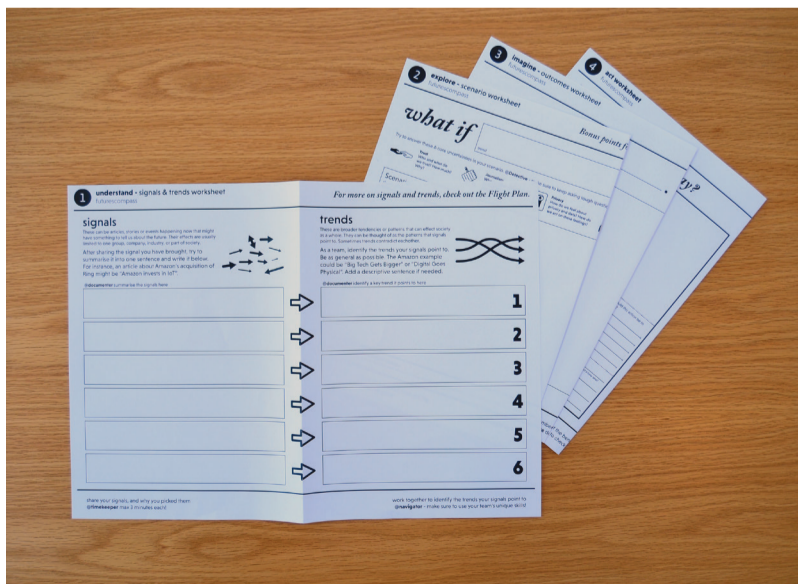
COFFEE & SNACKS

WORKSHEETS

NUMBER, CHANGE & UNCERTAINTY CUBES

HANDY BOX WITH USB BACK-UP

OUTCOME CARDS

ROLE CARDS

STAGE CARDS

Box

Constructed from birch plywood, the packaging has compartments specifically sized to hold the elements of the game safely. It is delivered in a printed canvas bag (not pictured) so it can easily be carried to play sessions in the office or at off-site events. Extra materials such as markers, paper and post-its can fit in the bag as well.

The design of the box itself is simple, with keyed-mitre joints for simplicity and durability. It was intended to be remeniscent of well-made wooden toy sets, and was left un-painted or stained to contrast the colourful printed materials.

Stage Cards

These form the main touchpoint used by the Navigator in keeping the game moving. The pre- and post-play stages are indigo, corresponding to the peripheral materials in the game (Flight Plan, Hourglass, and Trend Cards).

They graphically correspond to the worksheets, and any materials used in a stage (Role Cards, Outcome Cards), are printed in the corresponding colours.

All of the graphic materials in Futures Compass are designed to be reminiscent of existing media formats, as a way of subtly building familiarity. The Stage Cards are modelled after instagram posts.

Role Cards

Taking inspiration from de Bono's 6 Thinking Hats (Six Thinking Hats, n.d.), 6 roles are available for use in Futures Compass. Three typical roles are the **Navigator**, tasked with keeping the group on task and on topic; the **Documenter**, who makes sure notes, sketches and photos are being taken; the **Timekeeper**, and the who keeps the conversation moving on schedule.

3 other roles were included, the **Astronomer** to think big, the **Scientist** to think small, and the **Detective** to balance the rest and ask critical questions.

These design and tone of voice for these cards was modelled after twitter profiles.

Worksheets

4 worksheets corresponding to the 4 core phases of Futures Compass play. Printed in black and white on A3, these are consumable components, with printable PDFs stored on the USB key.

Futures Compass is intended to be portable and accessible to play - this meant no plotted or large format components could be used (NextGen hires out all of their large format printing).

The sheets are designed around two narrative questions: If a trend changed, how could we react? And, what should we do today?

Game Cubes

Constructed from birch wood, the cubes match the material and laser engraving of game box. The three cubes are the **Number Cube**, which functions as a normal dice to pick random trends, the **Change Cube,** which picks random changes affecting trends, and the **Uncertainty Cube,** which is used in the Express version of Futures Compass play, and corresponds to the six core uncertainties facing journalism identified in my research.

As these need to be rotated 5 times in the laser engraver, some centreing issues remain in the production process. This problem should be resolved for future production runs.

Outcome Cards

Used in the Imagine stage, these cards provoke the players to challenge their assumptions by suggesting different possible outcomes their team may face in a give scenario.

Modelled after tweets, these cards ask questions like "... how could we fail?", "how could we adapt?", & "...how could we collaborate?"

These cards are designed to break players out of the established narratives we tell about ourselves, and to draw the teams into the speculative scenarios as actors.

Trend Cards

Like the Uncertainty Cube, these cards are used in the Express version of Futures Compass play (see Ways to Play on p47).

These are a collection of 8 trends in each of the STEEP categories: social, technological, environmental, ecological and political. Modelled after instant messages, include the STEEP category, trend title and trend description.

Blank cards for teams to modify the deck themselves are available as printable PDFs on the USB key.

USB Key and Hourglass

These extra components are the only elements included in the kit that have been purchased as-is.

The hourglass is a 3 minute timer designed by HAY. It can be used to time the 3 minute windows in the first round, and sequentially to time the 15 minute windows suggested in following rounds.

The USB key contains printable PDFs of all the print material included in Futures Compass so that teams can print the Worksheets as needed or replace lost components. Ideally this USB key would have limited storage (or be formatted as read-only), to make it less attractive to borrow. It is attached to a key ring and engraved tag to identify it.

colour palette

Futures Compass is made up of stages, most with their own worksheets and card decks. A bright and colourful palette was chosen to help coordinate activity throughout these stages, and to maintain a fun and game-like feeling.

Indigo: supporting material, such as the flight plan, trend deck, hourglass and Pre-Flight and Touchdown stages

Bright Blue: Understand, including role cards

Green: Explore

Mustard: Imagine, including outcome cards

Tomato Red: Act

material choice & laser engraving

There were a number of reasons to choose birch wood (both solid and plywood) as a core material for Futures Compass. First, birch is an accessible material that both looks and feels warm. With the glossy, brightly coloured printed material and the playful graphic elements, the wood box adds an unpretentious quality, reminiscent of children's toy sets.

Birch is also durable, and works well as both a sheet material (for the box) and as a solid material (for the game cubes). It is easily engravable using a laser cutter, with higher fidelity and finish quality than most 3D printed materials, while at the same time remaining warm and inviting (when compared to plastics).

Finally, my years as a furniture designer and craftsperson meant that I could quickly create a high-quality, finished product without outsourcing production.

Typeface

Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque

Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque
Niveau Grotesque

The typeface for Futures Compass needed to be accessible, warm and in some way unique. I wanted to avoid common modernist or humanist font faces, while finding a font that filled a similar role. Niveau's strong geometric shapes and felixibility with weight made it attractive. The *almost* serif on the capital **N** and angled ascender on the lowercase **t** add some extra character.

Graphic Expression

I identified several requirements for the graphic expression of Futures Compass. First, it had to be playful, with game like qualities. Second, it had to pull people into a simple narrative, taking them out of their normal work-day mindsets. Third, it had to be clear and graphically simple, so that images would be easily readable printed at different scales. Fourth, it had to work in black and white, two-colour prints and in laser engraving. I conducted a series of tests with the laser engraver at AHO to determine the ideal line widths, scales and level of detail that.

To keep the images relatable, and to maintain a the simple and playful tone of Futures Compass, the icons and symbols reference emojis and existing iconography. Illustrating the abstract concepts represented in the game (such as mutation, replacement, privacy, and system) was the most rewarding challenge, and required several iterations to create legible icons. That being said, I decided to include descriptive words on the game cubes themselves to make sure that the images were interpreted as intended.
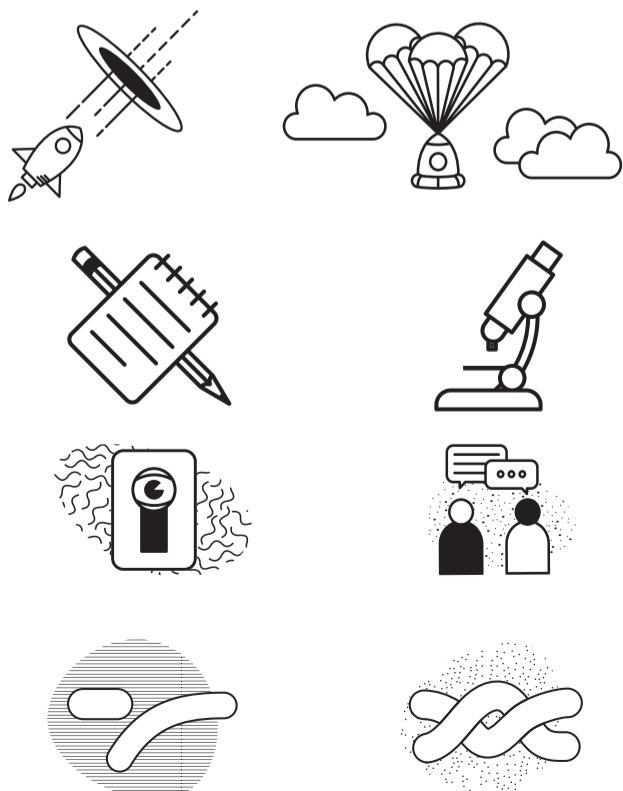
play test with Peil

Following the feedback session with SportsNext, I facilitated a full play test session with the Peil team over 1.5 hours. 2 of the four participants were familiar with the futures studies approach I had been using throughout the project, and had participated in tests of earlier prototypes.

I participated as an 'expert player', able to answer questions or provide hints when needed. Otherwise, the group was presented with the closed Futures Compass box and left to figure things out for themselves.

While assigning roles did help, this team didn't take to the more stylistic roles (detective, scientist and anstronomer) as quickly as they did the formal roles (documenter, timekeeper and navigator).

Having one dedicated documenter was an effective way of ensuring documentation happened, but it could be that this is limiting other participants'

"We're missing something here"
(participant gets up to fetch post its and markers)

abilities to affect later stages of the session, or feel that they are being fully heard. At one point, one of the participants was clearly unsatisfied not being able to write or draw for themselves:

This issue could be tied to facilitation style - some language in the Futures Compass materials encourages the documenter to involve other team members, but this wasn't emphasized during this play test.

There were also some minor issues with the casual langage on the Role Cards. One phrase - "one eye on the prize" took a second read before a participant with Norwegian as a first-language understood exactly what was meant.

The transition between the Imagine and Act stages was slow, and required some added facilitation. One participant suggested including 'wrap-up' summaries at the end of each stage so that everyone could review what has already been talked about before moving on to further development.

This test was highly instructive: I learned that the core structure and flow of Futures Compass does work as intended and that the visual expression of the game aligns with it's message. However, further refinements and testing, particularly of the worksheets, will be necessary before the final implementation at Schibsted.

key findings

"The difference between this version and the earlier workshop we did is huge."

With some small hints from the facilitator, the group was largely able to make sense of the materials themselves. At times there was some confusion about whether to follow the Overview in the Flight Plan, or to use the Stage Cards.

The addition of the hourglass enabled the timekeeper to keep the discussion moving. It performed better than timers on a phone, in part because the whole group can see the passage of time.

"The Tech Trends Team should be doing what you've been doing."

There was a debate about whether to continue with the trend and random change first identified; a major trend (alternatives to visual interfaces) that the team is concerned with 'disappeared'. Without an experienced facilitator to push the group past roadblock, a fruitful discussion about unexpected and undesirable futures might have been missed.

"We need to play it a few times to get comfortable. But it's like any boardgame, there will always be at least one person who knows what they are doing."

Transitions between stages could be better facilitated by the Role Cards and Worksheets. With such a deep and wide-ranging conversation, some participants asked for a 'parking lot' for ideas, or visual summaries of the discussion so far, as tools to keep everyone on the same page.

feedback with SportsNext & NextGen's Head of Design

"Getting out of our thought patterns is big job, and it's so hard."

NextGen Head of Design

As a lead up to further play tests with the SportsNext team, I ran a 30 minute show-and-tell style feedback session with the entire team, and the Head of Design for NextGen.

Together we walked through the process of creating and playing Futures Compass. The level of critical engagement with the material was not as high as it would be in a full play-test, but the team responded well to the overall goals, process and execution of Futures Compass.

NextGen is currently reviewing their core values and ways of working, and the discussion turned to how Futures Compass could be a useful tool in examining these topics. The game is not explicitly intended to grapple with values or principles, but with some further exploration I think it could be easily adapted to work in this space.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of this review was the level of engagment and excitement the designed materials generated. It didn't take long for SportsNext members to grab cards and start reading, or rolling the dice.

As a team that talks a lot about future trends (like automation, machine learning and voice assistants), SportsNext was able to reflect on what structured way of working with the future embodied in Futures Compass.

Without playing the game, or getting into the details, this conversation tended towards positive feedback. I am looking forward to play testing with this group and gathering some more reflective insights. It will be important to test whether it really does help them to test their assumptions.

"It forces you to agree on the basic assumptions before you take it to the next level."

participant

"We should be doing this every week. This is our core role, or a big part of it. We should be paying you."

"I loved the dice, you can quote me on that."

"I like it because it's clear and understandable, the process makes sense. You could sell this. Companies would buy this for a full day workshop."

implementation

A natural home for Futures Compass would seem to be with the Technology Trends team in Schibsted Media Group. This new unit of 4 was started in 2017. It currently focuses on collecting and digesting technology trends, and sharing those findings back to the rest of Media. Focus so far has been on blockchain technology, augmented reality and audio interfaces, such as those found in smart home assistants.

I would like to see this team's capacity grow to include more facilitation and speculation. Coupling art and design expertise on the one hand, with solid grounding in technology and social trends on the other, this team could evolve into a *Future Trends* team. They could play a role

similar to the one the UX Research team now plays within Media.

After starting out as a small team of UX researchers planning, running and synthesizing user research for the product teams within NextGen, UX Research has grown and evolved into an in-house consultancy serving all of Media. Instead of doing, UX Research now facilitates, educates and supports teams in doing their own research.

If, in defining their mandate, Technology Trends could follow this lead, they would be ideal owners of Futures Compass and other tools and methods for building Futues Literacy within Schibsted Media Group.

> *"What if the Trends team organised monthly game and beer nights? They could invite different people or teams, and run games. It would be great for the teams and for the Trend Team's work."*
>
> *UX Lead, Peil*

Review with Tech Trends Team

One of the final tasks for this project was to test my findings and assumptions about how Futures Compass should be used, and who should own it. This led to talk directly with Technology Trends team.

Sitting down with the Technology Trend Manager and a managment trainee working with the team over lunch, we talked about their emerging mandate, and reviewed the Futures Compass process.

Mandate
As a new and growing team, Tech Trends does not have a clear mandate. It is something they are discussing every day. They are one of the only teams that sit in Group - that means they report to Schibsted Media Group, and serve both Marketplaces and Media divisions.

As the Schibsted organisation is so large and diverse, this seems to make finding a core mandate difficult. Currently, their process is to research trends, provoke thought through presentations, build buy in for using emerging technologies, and then support teams in prototyping with those technologies.

In this space the team finds it hard to prioritise which trends to focus on, and they end up focusing on mainstream trends. Right now, they

don't feel they have the necessary skills or expertise (development, UX) to support the prototyping process.

Futures Compass Ownership
One of the main challenges the Tech Trends team faces today is "how to challenge people with what trends mean." They are also grappling with inactivity, and expressed interest in tools that help other teams take action, saying "We need tangible tools - it's a big challenge."

Overall, Futures Compass was well received as a tool that would support the Tech Trends team in facilitating conversations throughout Schibsted.

One issue we talked about was the general applicability of the tool; whether the process is too tailored for NextGen's way of working, and whether the process could be applied to very specific questions about single trends.

Echoing Peil's UX Lead, the team suggested hosting games nights with snacks and drinks as a way of building engagement.

Next Steps
Together with the Tech Trends team, we are planning another series of play tests for June 2018, with one being run for the Trends

> *"One of our core challenges is engagement. This would be an awesome tool to facilitate... It would be good for us as trend researchers to explore with others, and to see what the possibilities are."*

Team themselves, exploring possible futures for their yet-to-be-defined mandate.

If this series of tests is successful, I would like to produce a final iteration, ironing out some production details, and perfecting the flow and worksheets.

If adopted by the Trends Team, I would then deliver several copies of Futures Compass and providing some facilitation training. 🚀

final reflections

At the beginning of this process, my goal was to provoke thought and raise awareness of futures studies within NextGen by creating a speculative concept of a future service.

Through my embedded, intuitive and explorative processes, however, I realised that this approach was not what NextGen needed most.

By taking a systemic approach, and moving back and forth across scales and methods, I feel that I was able to identify a strategically important place in the NextGen system to intervene.

I want this project to have a lasting contribution and relevance. By normalising the practice of engaging in speculative futures, and by providing the tools do so constructively, I think Futures Compass succeeds where a speculative concept could not.

This project would not have been possible without the patience and engagement NextGen showed with me throughout my embedded explorations. By taking taking risks together, I think we have built new knowledge and have contributed to improving the NextGen way of working.

For me, my experiences with this project have only highlighted the importance of systemic perspectives, explorative processes, and deep user insights to the design process, and to creating the futures we desire.
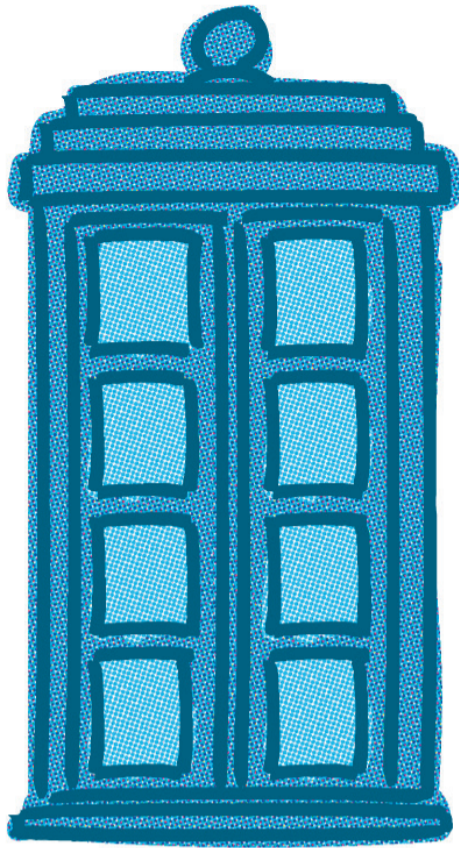
acknowledgements

To everyone here and those I've forgotten to list - thanks! This project wouldn't be here without you.

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"People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually, from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly wobbly... timey wimey... stuff."

~ The Doctor ~