

TITLE: The 'Possible'. Enriching communities through thinking.

Qualitative Inquiry in the Anthropocene: Affirmative and generative possibilities for (Post)Anthropocentric futures.

Theme: An attention to civic engagement that fosters community making

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We live in an age where thinking for the common good is often overshadowed by alienation and discontent due to the impact of human behaviour on the planet. Fast paced lifestyles are leading to unsustainable environments that may not be conducive to the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of citizens. In the wake of the wish for a more serene post-Anthropocene life, applications of how we may get to this phase are being actively sought. There has never been a better time to rekindle notions in relation to creative cognition in search for new opportunities. This paper aims to expand on the concept of 'the possible' by focusing on the potential to enrich human experience by exploring alternatives while engaging with the what lies beyond the 'here and now' and to engage with the 'not [yet] here'. Firstly, the possible is defined in the context of post-Anthropocene futures. The presentation moves on to explore how using cognitive processes novel ideas may be extracted with the potential to pave the way for strategies that may lead to a more sustainable approach to how we humans impact our own lifestyles and the planet. This concept invites us to aspire, to think ahead, fantasize, and to wonder. It is time for us to deliberately break free from what we know and what we take for granted and to think of the 'possible'. Secondly, adopting a sociocultural position, this paper aims to explore how the possible may be approached through its embeddedness within human agency and world. A salient factor in this process is the need to reconsider our approach to thinking and to go beyond the actual by exploring the future. Understanding and accepting that nonhuman activity is present at all levels creates a further need to engage with the possible. This could potentially enhance the coexistence with new technological developments, and the subsequent ethical implications that these pose while enhancing civic engagement and nurturing of communities. In the light of need to rethink our future to engage with the possible, we depart from the idea that creative thinking is a skill that can be learned and that it can be used to design new prospects. Creative thinking is a tool that may facilitate our creative cognitive processes to imagine the possible both at an individual level and within, communities. Through the possible, aspirations may become realities. If humans develop the ability to break free with old concepts and engage with the possible a generative mindset could be created leading to engaged communities. These new opportunities that might emerge could lead us to the post-Anthropocene.

Keywords: the possible, creative cognition, mindset, human agency, affordances