

REPRODUTOPIA;

a mobile exhibition about reproductive technology and the future of families, relationships and intimacy is currently being developed by Next Nature Network, “the international network for anyone interested to join the debate on our future – in which nature and technology are fusing” (NextNatureNetwork, 2019) together with the Athena Institute (VU University, Amsterdam). In light of the vision that emotional responses are informative when it comes to the ethical concerns surrounding technological developments (Roeser & Pesch, 2016; Sardar, 2010), as well as the opportunity design fiction holds to promote reflection on these emotions and the assumptions about progress and the future that they disclose (Heidingsfelder, Kimpel, & Schraudner, 2017; Siune et al., 2009) this exhibition is aimed to stimulate the public debate about the societal impacts of reproductive technologies in the near and far future by providing relatively utopian visions on the future of reproduction.

With a case-study on REPRODUTOPIA – *a speculative family planning clinic in which visitors are welcomed by consultants and invited to create their own future family plan: e.g. do they want to be multi-parents, reprogram skin cells into sperm and egg cells, select and optimize embryos with AI* – we, on the one hand, want to study the values, frames and worldviews of the exhibition visitors “tell us what the desired future of reproduction looks like?”; and on the other hand, want to study which design principles work to encourage fruitful deliberation in order to contribute to the knowledge base on speculative design and deliberation “tell us what in this experience makes you think or feel like this?”. At first glance these aims might seem to go hand in hand yet our pilot study has shown that encouraging imagination might mean letting go of the need to control and measure - studying impact can get in the way of stimulating the processes that create this impact – yet not keeping track of the learned hampers the exchange of knowledge. Moreover, without substantive indications of the relevance of speculative design projects, there might be no budget and no projects altogether.

With our study we find ourselves at the intersection of speculative design and public deliberation. The value of deliberative initiatives is currently being reframed from ‘impacting scientific governance’ to ‘cultivating individuals capacities’ (Davies et al., 2009; Selin et al., 2017) as there is a distinction between small-scale learning and institutional change. In this session I would like to reflect upon the tension between:

- a) the desire for unrestricted, intuitive and creative design and enjoyable conversations [and the small-scale learning this sparks]; and
- b) the desire for measurable impact and the creation of scientific knowledge [leading to institutional change].

Furthermore, I am interested in the performative dimension - as for instance described by Ferrari & Lösch (2017) - of the future envisioned in the exhibition and the tension between this steering capacity of the exhibition and inclusive public engagement.



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