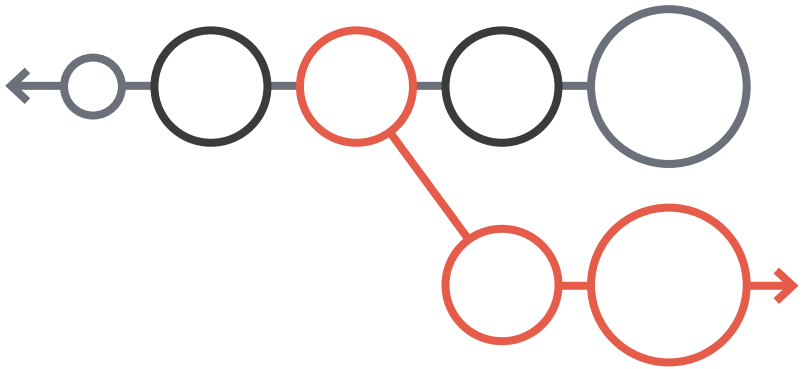
DESIGNING THE FUTURES OF DESIGN FUTURES LEXICON

FUTURES BRANCH-CASTING KIT



Future Branch-casting is a playful retro-speculaction exercise.

It is based on the concepts of back-casting from strategic foresight and branching narrative from speculative fiction.
It builds on the notions of future visions and uchronia, a form of alternate history fiction. This tool invites you to dive into the scenarios of the Lexicon futures and rewrite them.
With this horizon in mind, you are invited to imagine what lead each scenario to happen and how this future could have evolved differently.

The Futures Branch-casting activity is divided in two parts:

Part 1. Back-casting:
You are invited to dive into one of the two design fiction scenarios and imagine the key steps that led to this horizon. To do so, you will have to fill in a timeline by playing with speculations and imaginaries.

Part 2. Uchronian branching:
After having mapped the key steps leading to the given future, you have to decide to change one of the events they previously defined. Then, imagine how this change might impact the initial future and then tell the new scenario through an alternative timeline and scenario showing a new future.

Futures Branch-casting offers two modes:
- **Guided mode**: a format to start smoothly, with a pre-filled timeline, with suggestions of events and dates.
- **Open mode**: a blank timeline, to unleash your imagination!

To help you in speculating and imagining the futures of the Lexicon, you are invited to use the existing Lexicon and other Design Futures Literacies resources from FUEL4Design.

STEP-BY-STEP

SCENARIO SELECTION

1. Select one of the two scenarios: the More-Than-Human Lexicon or the Adversarial Lexicon.

2. Read the scenario and discover the related design fiction.

3. Reflect on this design fiction scenario: What does it make you think about? How could we have arrived at this point? How does this scenario connect with your use of the Lexicon or design practice?

PART 1. BACK-CASTING

4. Start the ***back-casting*** part: choose the *guided* or *open* mode. Print (A3/A2) or draw the timeline template of the selected mode.

Start to work on the four milestones by envisaging what could have happened during each of this moment and that could have led to the design fiction scenario. Write a few lines for each milestone describing what happened. You can describe them factually or tell them as a fiction.

Please remember there is no good or bad answer, you decide what happened.

5. When the timeline has been filled in, choose one of the four milestones that will become your breakpoint. This milestone is where your uchronian branch will start, the event you will change. If you have doubts about which milestone could become your breakpoint, you can choose the milestone you feel could have the biggest impact if it changed.

PART 2. UCHRONIAN BRANCHING

5. When the timeline has been filled in, choose one of the four milestones that will become your breakpoint. This milestone is where your uchronian branch will start, the event you will change. If you have doubts about which milestone could become your breakpoint, you can choose the milestone you feel could have the biggest impact if it changed.

6. Start the ***uchronian branching*** part: now you are going to build an alternative future for the Lexicon. Pick the *branching timeline* and fill in the alternative milestone, as you did during back-casting, but moving forward this time.

7. Arrived at the end of the timeline, imagine and design the new alternative Lexicon future. What does the Lexicon look like now you have changed the course of the history? Tell your scenario with a fiction or a speculative artefact (design fiction).

8. Take a moment to reflect on the whole experience:
- How your two futures timelines are converging and diverging?
- Which surprising futures, terms or idioms had appeared when telling these futures?
- How do thoughts and ideas you had while branch-casting can help you in your actual project or practice?

9. If you wish, feel free to share your new scenario as a RENDER of the Design Futures Lexicon. Go to the **Design Futures Lexicon Renders section** to find out how to contribute by sharing your work.

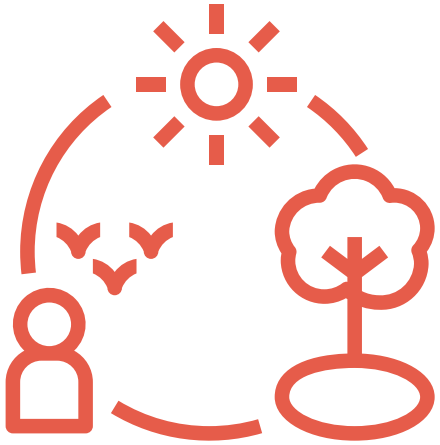
SCENARIO: THE DESIGN MORE-THAN-HUMAN FUTURES LEXICON

In a few years or decades from now…

The Design Futures Lexicon has evolved to help in designing more-than-human futures. The Design Futures Lexicon has become a hybrid collection of elements of “language” from humans, animals and plants. The Design Futures Lexicon articulates these “terms” as a way to mitigate the design of anthropo-centred futures, to integrate the “voices” of other species in the experience of building visions, as an act of mediation of non-human perspectives.

This new Lexicon merge pieces of human and non-human for communications or interactions between members of a same species members, members of other species, and the environment. It goes beyond words and definitions to help in sharing non-human perceptions of the world and its making, with sounds, simulation, smells, videos.

While constantly struggling with its own anthropomorphism, the Design More-Than-Human Futures Lexicon emphasises on terms for interconnections and interdepencies between humans and non-humans in the global ecosystem, as well as in space and time.



BRANCH-CASTING RESOURCES FOR THIS SCENARIO:

Design fiction, the webpage of the Lexicon

Guided mode timeline template

Open mode timeline template

Branching timeline template

F4D+ More-Than-Hum ×

https://www.fuel4design.org/more-than-human-futures-lexicon

FUEL4DESIGN+

MODULES BLOG ABOUT

A LEXICON TO DESIGN MORE-THAN-HUMAN FUTURES

Words, languages and acts of communication to design futures escaping anthro-centred perspectives.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN LEXICON (A-Z)

MURMURATION

- Also called flocking, when a large group of bird flies together and change direction together, intuitively and coordinated.
- An aggregation of thousands or hundreds units adopting a collective behaviour, with any physical contact or vocal interaction.
- A visually harmonised ballet based on three simple rules: separation, alignment and cohesion to create complex and adaptative motions.

EXPERIENCE THIS FORM OF LANGUAGE / TERM:

A VIDEO COLLECTION OF MURMURATIONS

A VR SIMULATION ABOUT EVOLVING IN A MURMURATION

PART OF THE FOLLOWING THEMES AND UNITS

1.3. EMBRACING FUTURES COMPLEXITIES

2.1. MORE-THAN-HUMAN LANGUAGE TO DESIGN INTERSPECIES CARE

3.4. RESILIENCE BY DESIGN

RELATED ACTIVITY

BLENDING AGILE

An activity about **murmuration** and **interdependencies** when facing **futures shocks**.

As a lesson learned from the Covid-19 crisis, we can speculate about switching on and switching off forms of physical, economic or/and social distancing when a species is endangering another. As disconnecting seems impossible, we have to envisage blending agile.
This activity invites to play with **murmuration** to repurpose spaces, products and interactions to create a continuity, with harmony and without contact.

Imagine **design fictions** and **speculative futures** embodying possible or preferable services, spaces or products embodying this notion of blending agile, inspired by **murmuration**.

SCENARIO: THE ADVERSARIAL DESIGN FUTURES LEXICON

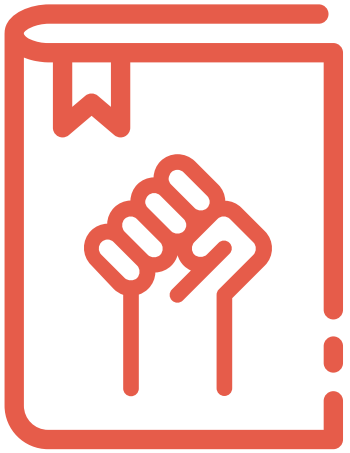
In a few years or decades from now…

The Design Futures Lexicon has been repurposed by a group of activist design researchers and designers.

This future has seen the automation of the act of designing futures by intelligent learning systems, then massifying the use of futures design.

In response, the Design Futures Lexicon is used as an adversarial tool against the automated generation of futures. To escape the risks of monolithic and controlled futures, the designers from *The Unflatteners* collective have imagined new uses of the futures design terms to glitch and rewild futures.

As for the original version, themes, activities and tools can be found in the Adversarial Lexicon, to learn how to render frictional futures and design radical alternative tomorrows.



BRANCH-CASTING RESOURCES FOR THIS SCENARIO:

Design fiction, the webpage of the Lexicon

Guided mode timeline template

Open mode timeline template

Branching timeline template

ADV. FUTURES DESIGN ×

https://adversarial-lexicon.design

ADVERSARIAL DESIGN FUTURES LEXICON

THEMES / CASES / TOOLS / NON-MANIFESTO / ABOUT

A LEXICON TO UNFLATTEN AND REWILD AUTOMATED FUTURES DESIGN

The rise of automated design of futures has led to flat, polished, generic renders of a single and monolithic tomorrow.

Be it driven by artificial intelligences, faux-mated solutions or hidden digital labour, these automated design processes have cancelled plural and weird futures.

We are on a journey to unflatten, glitch, rewild futures and their underlying imaginaries. To do so, we have repurposed the Design Futures Lexicon from the FUEL4Design project to become an adversarial tool.

+ READ OUR NON-MANIFESTO

THEMES AND RETHORICS OF UNFLATTENING

1. USING TERMS TO UNDERSTAND WHY FUTURES ARE FLAT

2. USING TERMS TO ASSESS THE FLATNESS OF FUTURES

3. USING TERMS AND LANGUAGES TO UNFLATTENED FUTURES

4. USING TERMS TO SPREAD UNFLATTENED FUTURES

CASES OF UNFLATTENING

GLITCH IN THE SMART CITY

Injecting adversarial inputs from the LEXICON to glitch the automated design of 3D renders for the future smart Gejeong District.

OPERATION TERMS-INATOR

A non-contest on using the terms from LEXICON to design non-militarized and alternative futures for AIs.

+ SUBMIT YOUR ACTIVISTY

FIERCELY BROUGHT TO YOU BY **THE UNFLATTENERS COLLECTIVE**

GUIDED MODE: TIMELINE TEMPLATE

2020

Release of the Design Futures Lexicon from F4D

2022

A NEW POLICY OR LAW

IN A FEW WORDS:

2023

A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

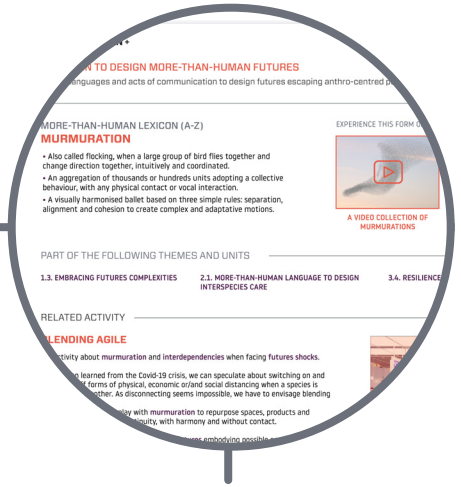
IN A FEW WORDS:

2025

A CLIMATIC EVENT OR SHOCK

IN A FEW WORDS:

2027



SCENARIO:
THE DESIGN MORE-THAN-HUMAN FUTURES LEXICON

GUIDED MODE: TIMELINE TEMPLATE

2020

Release of the Design Futures Lexicon from F4D

2021

AN ECONOMIC DISRUPTION

IN A FEW WORDS:

2024

A TECHNOLOGICAL SHOCK

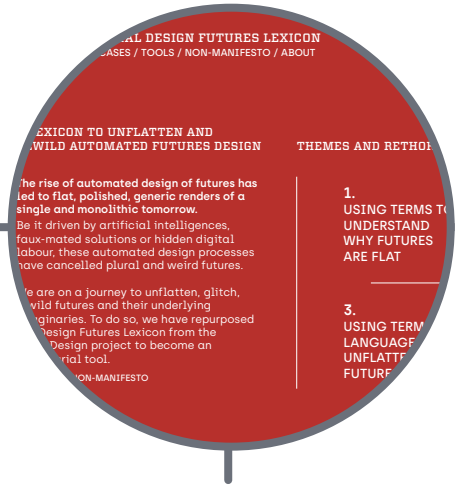
IN A FEW WORDS:

2025

THE RISE OF A LEADING FIGURE

IN A FEW WORDS:

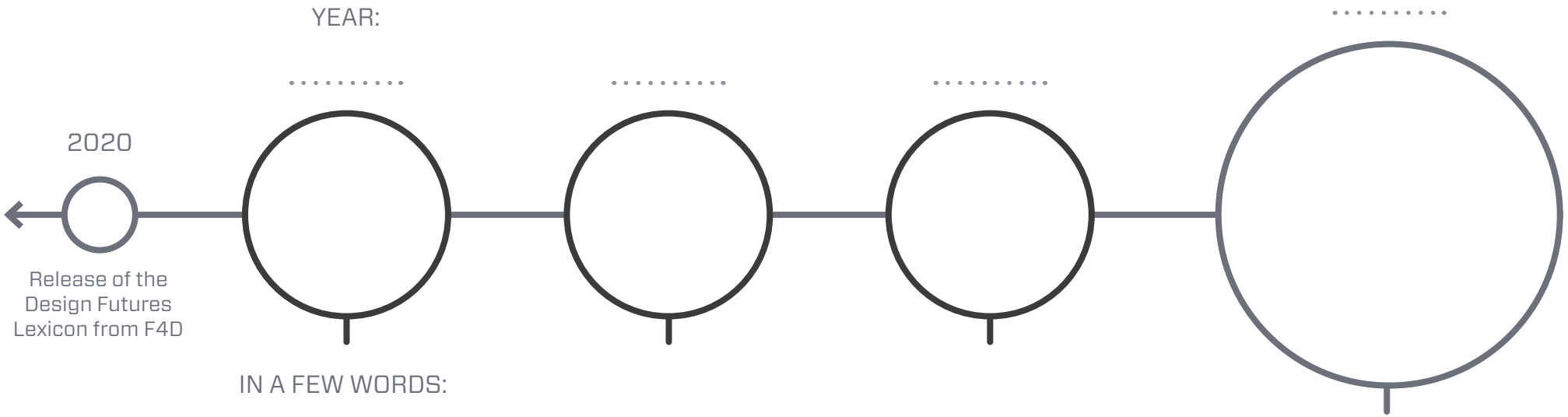
2026



SCENARIO:
THE ADVERSARIAL DESIGN FUTURES LEXICON

FUTURES BRANCH-CASTING KIT

OPEN MODE: TIMELINE TEMPLATE



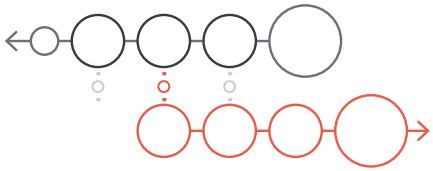
IN A FEW WORDS:

YEAR:

EVENT IN A FEW WORDS:

DESIGN THIS ALTERNATIVE LEXICON:

HOW TO ASSEMBLE TIMELINES



FUTURES BRANCH-CASTING KIT

BRANCHING TIMELINE TEMPLATE