

**IMAGINATION**

The importance of creating space for the imagination, what Rob Hopkins from the Transition Town Network calls '**What If spaces**', whether in our own lives, our organisations or our communities.

Imagination is a relational **practice of empathy** that draws us out of ourselves and towards the other. It creates more **awareness of the possibilities** of other worlds and ways of being. Each person is part of a wider system that we cannot control or determine, but we can send out ripples the limits of which cannot be known in advance.

“Imaginative fiction trains people to be aware that there are other ways to do things and other ways to be. That there is not just one civilisation and it is good and it is the way we have to be.”

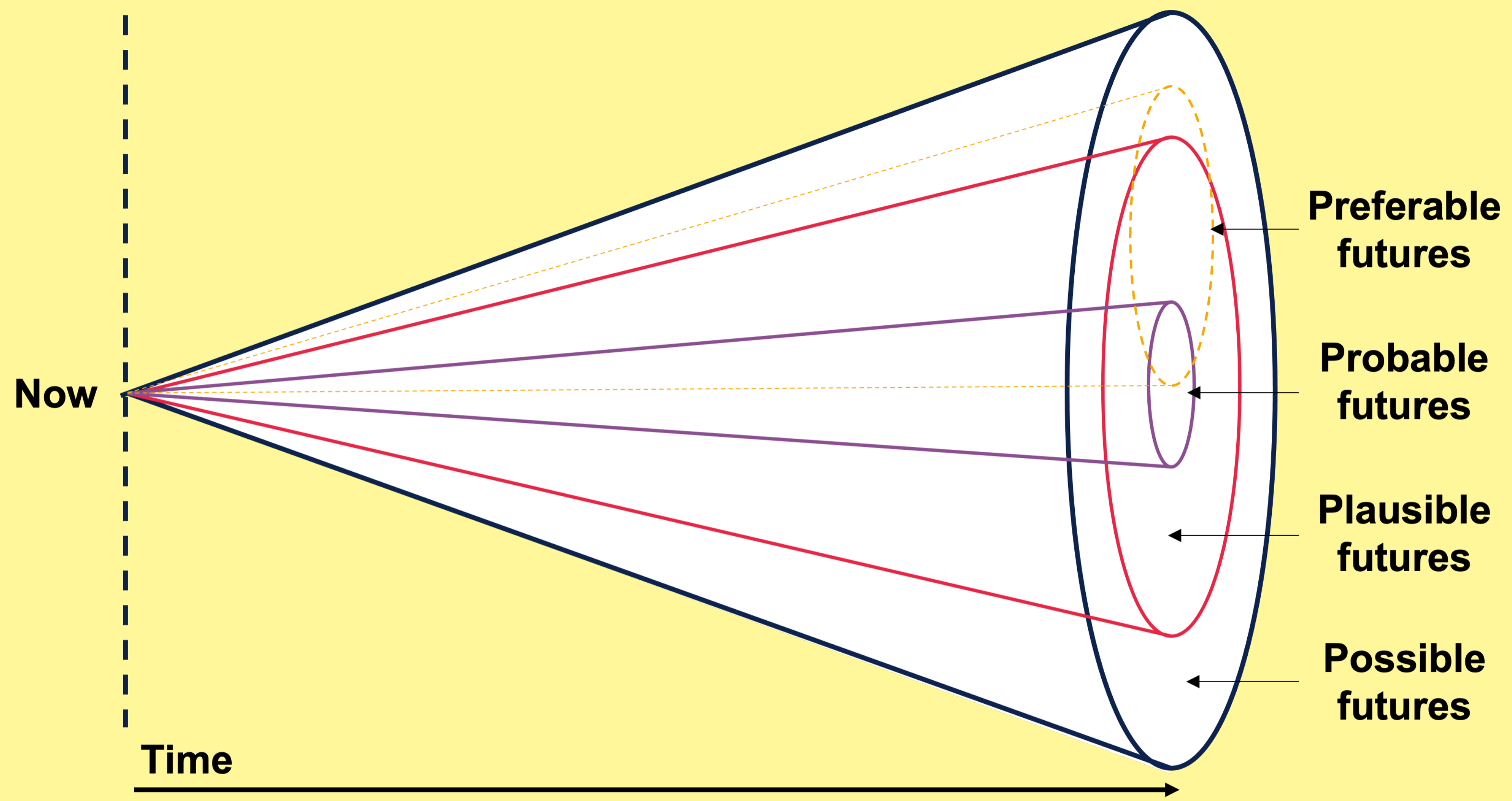
— *Ursula K. Le Guin,*  
*quoted in Worlds of Ursula K.*  
*Le Guin (Arwen Curry, 2018)*

# **SPECULATIVE DESIGN**

The notion of 'speculation' is increasingly present as an approach signalling toward uncertain or possible futures.

The term 'speculative design' was first coined by designers Dunne and Raby at the RCA in the 1990s. They continue to work in this area of 'design as a catalyst for social dreaming'.

Dunne and Raby state that it thrives on imagination and aims to open up new perspectives on what are sometimes called wicked problems, to create spaces for discussion and debate about alternative ways of being, and to inspire and encourage people's imaginations to flow freely.



The futures cone by Joseph Voros: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/vision-and-strategy-toolkit/futures-cone>



The futures cone by Joseph Voros has been critiqued as it leaves out the past and focusses on a settler-colonial perspective of the present.

Instead we can look to what decoloniality scholars call a plurality of experiences of the present and the future as well as collectively defining a preferable future.

# **SPECULATIVE COLLAGE WORKSHOP**

Create a collage, a speculative,  
imaginary composition,  
a visual mash up.

Focus on a problem area that you  
are currently working on and cross it  
with the context of **Food**.

Ask yourself “What if...?”

## **Some prompts to help:**

What is the year?

Where is this happening and what kind of spaces?

How could it be realised?

Is there any technology?

Who is involved?

Why is it important?

**Share your work and discuss the speculative idea/s and what might work or might be problematic.**

**Swap collages with someone and  
write a short fictional narrative  
about what the collage represents  
adding in additional ideas.**

Add extra elements to the collage  
that fit with this narrative.

Consider tensions and contrasts  
between the subject area today  
versus the future.

## **Discussion**

What kind of world does the idea take place in?

Is it possible or improbable fantasy?

Can you foresee any unintended consequences of a speculation?

Could you see an application for speculative design in your work?

# References

**From What if to What Next**, *Rob Hopkins*

<https://www.robhopkins.net/the-book/>

**Imagination Infrastructure event 02, April 2023:**

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDA8mOCcU4Avt7pM99k459aKcaLN1gpPd>

**Moral Imaginations**

<https://www.moralimagnations.com/>

**Collective Imagination Practice**

<https://medium.com/@hannahmcdowall/collective-imagination-practice-imagining-with-the-wild-2396f2125ca1>

**Reimagining the Futures Cone: Past, plurality, and perspective**

<https://rsdsymposium.org/reimagining-the-futures-cone-past-plurality-and-perspective/>

**SpeculativeEdu**

<https://speculativeedu.eu/>

<https://speculativeedu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Beyond-Speculative-Design.pdf>

**Speculative everything design, fiction, and social dreaming**, *Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby*

<https://readings.design/PDF/>