



Nordiskt Sommaruniversitet

## CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

### **Cybioses: shaping human-technology futures**

Winter Symposium: March 12 – 15, 2020, in collaboration with Diffrakt - Centre for Theoretical Periphery, in Stolzenhagen and Berlin, Germany

Symposium theme:

## **Prototyping Futures**

### **Invitation**

We invite scholars, artists, students, technologists and other professionals working or writing on future technologies to take part in our study circle [Cybioses: shaping human-technology futures](#), a migratory non-hierarchical group of international researchers.

The aim of the **Cybioses** circle is to bring together theorists, practitioners, and technologists. Together we want to discuss practices of making and the social and cultural impact of future technologies. How can philosophical questions support the development of technologies? How in turn can technological practices and development inform philosophical, aesthetic, and sociological theories? And how can both making and theorizing help us imagining future technologies and their impact on societies? Is it possible to extrapolate from making? Guided by these questions we want to develop a philosophy for makers and a better practice for philosophy.

Our circle takes place within the Nordic and Baltic framework of Nordic Summer University (NSU). Since its inception, the primary aim of NSU has been to provide a forum for experimentation and cross-disciplinary collaboration welcoming members both from within and outside of universities and other institutions.

This time our winter symposium is organized in collaboration with Diffrakt - Centre for Theoretical Periphery in Berlin. We will spend the first three days of the symposium at Seminarhaus Stolzenhagen, about an hour and a half outside of Berlin and then meet in the rooms of Diffrakt in Berlin-Schöneberg for our last day.

### **Theme of the symposium**

In our previous symposia we have examined improvisation, creativity and projection as key practices of shaping futures: when is improvisation required in making or imagining futures? Can creativity be automated? And how can projecting into the future prevent us from repeating and prolonging what already exists today?

For our fourth symposium we want to examine the practice of prototyping. Building a prototype means creating an incomplete sample or model to test an idea. Prototyping usually has two features: firstly, it

demonstrates the feasibility of an idea. Often this occurs by translating conceptual knowledge to experiential knowledge: what has worked in theory becomes visible and palpable and then hopefully works in practice as well. And secondly, prototyping accelerates a production process. The incompleteness, small scale or limited functionality of a prototype allows for an accelerated test. Simply said, the quickest way to build something is to build something else.

Prototyping as such has a long history, departing from older cultural techniques like sketching or outlining. Since the 1970s its application is not limited anymore to the fields of science and engineering but has spread to many other domains of life. In particular, the practice of prototyping has been popularized with the Silicon Valley ideology and its solutionism.”

Throughout our symposium we would like to examine prototyping from our various fields of research and practice. How is prototyping applied in the arts, in theory, in tech and the sciences? And what is the relationship between seriality and prototyping? Departing from this, we would like to discuss the contemporary politics of prototyping and possible alternatives to it—modeling, speculation, analysis, visionary thinking, etc. What is the relationship between prototyping and a neoliberal imperative to creativity? Is the idea of (economic) growth inherently inscribed in the practice of prototyping? Are there practices of prototyping that go beyond growth and neoliberal and solutionist imperatives? In a maker society, are we limiting our ideas and visions by only valuing ideas that can be prototyped?

We would like to test different ways of prototyping as speculative tools for shaping futures and ask: What kinds of futures does prototyping open and what kinds of futures does it foreclose?

### **Proposals are encouraged within the following topics:**

- ethical & philosophical perspectives on prototyping
- prototyping and future technological evolution
- prototyping beyond (economic) growth
- aesthetics of incompleteness / aesthetics of prototyping
- conceptual/philosophical applications of prototyping
- prototyping and inclusion/exclusion
  
- artificial intelligence and prototyping
- computer-aided prototyping
- prototyping in hard/soft/wetware
- future tools for prototyping
- relationships between maker culture and prototyping
- prototypes as means to translate between conceptual and experiential knowledge
  
- definitions and theoretical considerations of and on prototyping
- histories and practices for the production of "originality" and "novelty"
- applications of prototyping in the arts, theory, tech and the sciences
  
- “world building” as a case of prototyping, societal prototyping
- prototypes and speculative design
- failed prototypes / prototyping failure
- relationships between speculation, prediction, anticipation, projection and prototyping

- critical examinations of prototyping as a neoliberal practice
- the politics of prototyping
- prototyping for sustainable futures
- the prototype in the life cycle of objects (prototype–archetype–mass product–waste)
- prototyping as a limiting factor
- alternatives to prototyping – other ways to evaluate or test ideas

## Format of the presentations

We explicitly want to foster exchange between humanities-based researchers, makers, technologists, and artists.

The interdisciplinary discussion of technological futures has yet to find its forms within and outside of academia. Our aim is, therefore, to test different forms of presentation. We encourage participants to briefly present one particular case of, or one particular theory on prototyping. This presentation can take the form of a talk, a short workshop, a lab session or a performance. The individual presentations will be complemented with open discussion rounds and documentation rounds. We are looking for brief showcases limited to 20 minutes. You could either present a particular case of prototyping, a particular theory or material you are working on.

We are open for experiments: collaborative, participatory, artistic, performative – time and space logistics permitting.

## Submission

**To submit a proposal please send via email in PDF format to the coordinators or the circle email below (we will confirm receipt of submission within a day):**

Palle Dahlstedt ([palle@chalmers.se](mailto:palle@chalmers.se)), Rafael Dernbach ([rafael.dernbach@gmail.com](mailto:rafael.dernbach@gmail.com)), Maru Mushtrieva ([m.mushtrieva@gmail.com](mailto:m.mushtrieva@gmail.com))

Circle email: [cybioses@nsuweb.org](mailto:cybioses@nsuweb.org)

1. A written proposal (**max. 350 words**) with a title and descriptive subtitle. This text should include your presentation proposal, its format its duration, facilities you need (e.g., space, technical equipment)
2. A short bio (**max. 200 words**)

It is possible to attend the symposium without presenting. In this case, please just email a short bio.

**The deadline to submit proposals is January 12th, 2020.** The preliminary program will be announced on January 15th, 2019, on [www.nordic.university](http://www.nordic.university) where you can also find more information about NSU and sign up for the newsletter.

## Registration and fee

Students and independents: €100

Those associated with institutions or companies: €200

West Nordic & Baltic residents: €50

NSU covers the costs for basic accommodation and meals for all participants. The registration fee must be paid via bank transfer or Paypal no later than Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

## Grants

Participants should apply to their institutions, Art Councils, local foundations or sponsors to have their travel costs covered. For those not affiliated with an institution or in a precarious economic situation, it is possible after the symposium to apply to NSU for a partial travel refund.

A limited number of participants with low income (i.e. students or independents) can ask to have the fee waived. Subsidies are conditioned on available funds. Please mention in your application, if you want to be considered for a scholarship and briefly describe your situation.

## Important dates:

Submission deadline: ~~January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020~~ January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Acceptance decision and notification: ~~Jan 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020~~ Jan 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Payment deadline: Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Arrival: Thursday March 12<sup>st</sup>, before 12.00

Departure: Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup>, after 17.00

## About NSU

The **Nordic Summer University (NSU)** is a Nordic network for research and interdisciplinary studies. NSU is a nomadic, academic institution, which organises workshop-seminars across disciplinary and national borders. Since it was established in 1950, Nordic Summer University has organised forums for cultural and intellectual debate in the Nordic and Baltic region, involving students, academics, politicians, and intellectuals from this region and beyond.

Decisions about the content and the organisational form of the NSU lay with its participants. The backbone of the activities in the NSU consists of its thematic study circles. In the study circles researchers, students and professionals from different backgrounds collaborate in scholarly investigations distributed regularly in summer and winter symposia during a three-year period.

For more information [www.nordic.university](http://www.nordic.university)

