



Smart Cities, Design Fiction

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Geography, Exeter

- PhD research about future orientation in R&D
- 2009 journal article on ‘vision’ videos
- Recent research & consultancy (EU Capital of Culture 2012)

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Representing ‘things to come’: feeling the visions of future technologies[†]

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Abstract. Visions of the future pervade the development of computing technologies. This paper addresses the production of embodied anticipation inherent to video representations of technological futures. The focus of inquiry is videos produced by HP Labs and Microsoft to illustrate future worlds of technological experience. The principal concern is that these videos, as visual content and artefacts, are performative in their evocation of bodily attunement to prospective technology use. In the first section I analyse the visually oriented logics that situate the videos. In the second section I investigate the evocation of prospective interaction with technologies by drawing upon and developing conceptualisations of affect and the technological unconscious. I argue there is a politics of anticipation of technical futures, understood as the multiple ways in which technological futurity is encoded and

Kinsley S. 2010 “Representing ‘things to come’”
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this talk

- Understanding the ‘smart city’ as a discursive regime
- Exploring ‘design fiction’ as a means of laying claim to ‘smart city’ futures

‘Smart Cities’

Discursive regime

Freights a number of interconnected discourses that justify and perpetuate understandings of ‘smart-ness’ in an urban environment. Including:

- Commercial agenda to sell intelligent infrastructures
- Future oriented R&D agenda for ubiquitous computing
- Emerging systems of technocratic governance

‘Smart’ capabilities

Hinge on sensors, processors & storage/analysis capacities developed in a range of tech. arenas.

Also developed in parallel & in relation to development of imaginative geographies of automation in both work and leisure.

‘design fiction’?

'Design Fiction' describes ways of using storytelling techniques, especially in the form of video, to make speculative design ideas feel ‘real’

Microsoft 'future visions'

Please see the Microsoft 'Future vision of productivity' video, available on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6cNdhOKwi0>

See also Microsoft's 'Office Labs', who created the video:

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/labs/index.html>

‘Diegetic prototypes’

“cinematic depictions of future technologies are what I term *diegetic prototypes* that demonstrate to large public audiences a technology’s need, benevolence and viability”

“Diegetic prototypes have a major rhetorical advantage even over true prototypes: in the fictional world – what film scholars refer to as the diegesis – these technologies exist as ‘real’ objects that function properly and which people actually use”

David Kirby, Manchester University

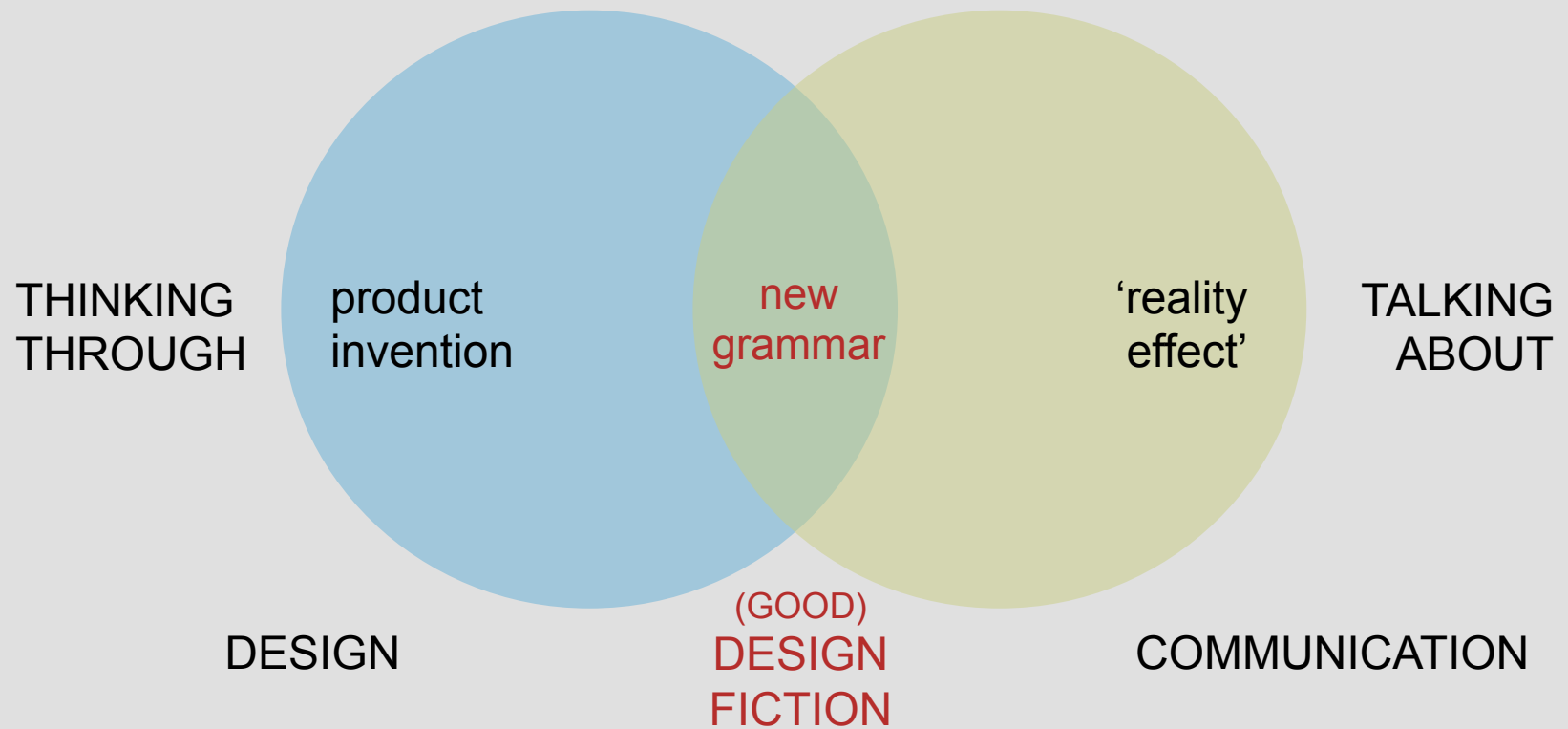
2010 ‘The Future is Now: Diegetic Prototypes and the Role of Popular Films in Generating Real-world Technological Development’ *Social Studies of Science* 40 (1): p. 43

Paratexts

- A “paratext” is “[m]ore than a boundary, or a sealed border, [it] is, rather, a threshold” that “constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction”

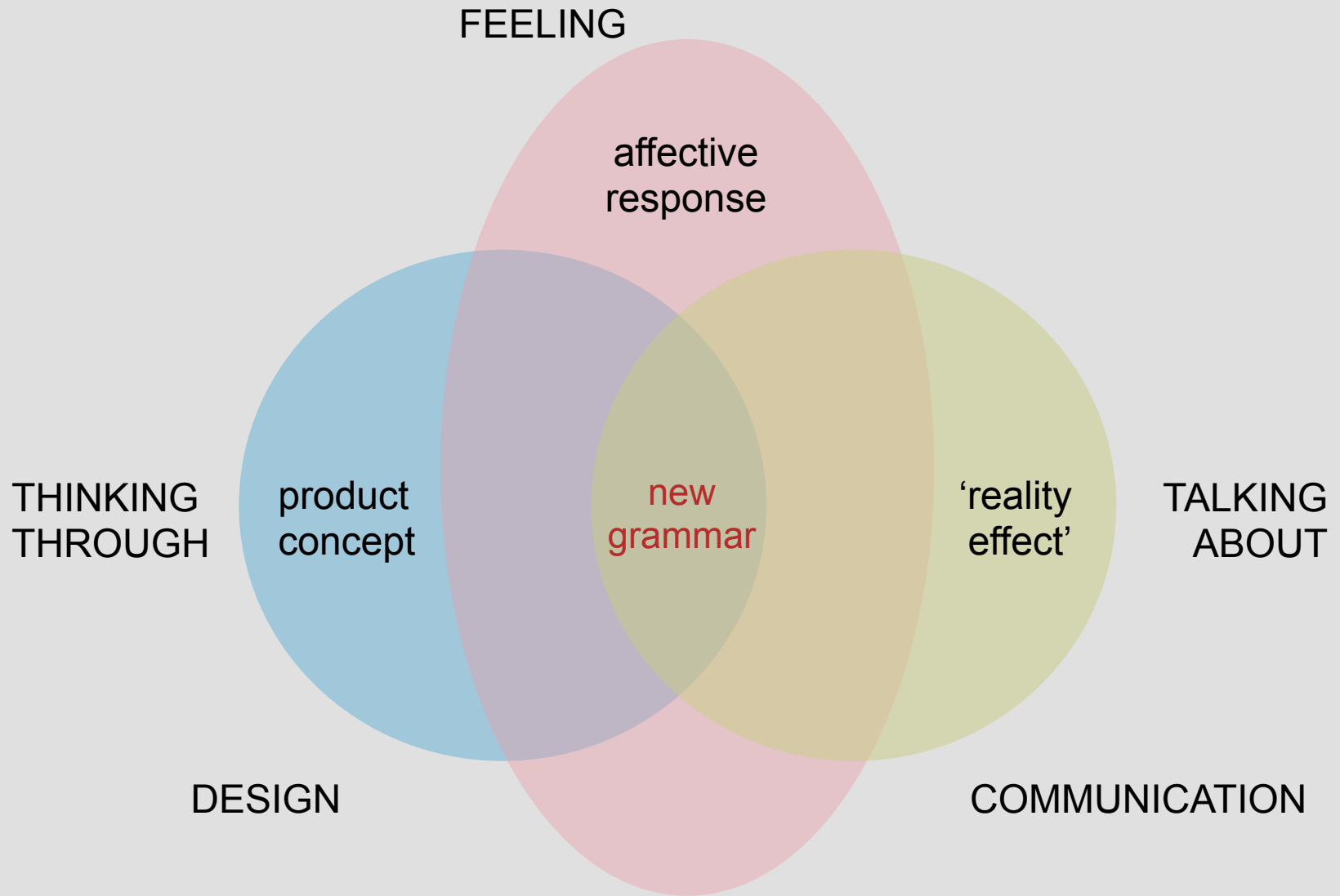
Gérard Genette (1997)

Grammar



Adapted from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bergstudio/5431153476/>

Grammar



Affective response

- following Deleuze – affect is simultaneously a physical phenomenon & an ‘impersonal force’ ~ ‘substrate of feeling’ (Connolly 2002)
- prospective experience - emerges from within sets of relations to disclose the creation of potentiality
- ‘trans-personal’ attunement to potential technologies ‘as if’ they already exist

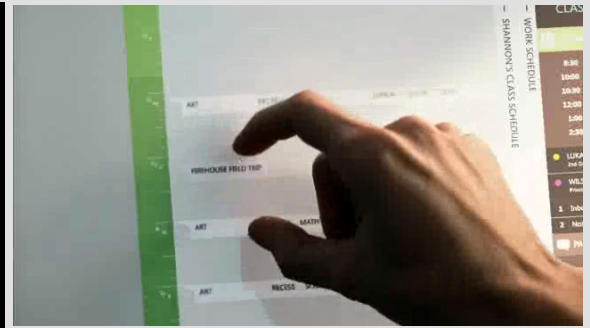
For more, please see: “Representing ‘things to come’”

<http://www.envplan.com/abstract.cgi?id=a42371>

Affective response

Bodies

Touch



Gesture



Anticipatory practices

- anticipatory practices ‘do more than gather the knowledge necessary to know futures’
- anticipatory practices establish the presence of what has not happened and may never happen - an ‘indeterminate potentiality’ (Massumi)

Catalysts for anticipation

- using the future as a tool – idea of the future becomes a thing to be manipulated
- performative anticipation – the representation of the future, seen as an artefact, shapes the present in which it performs

Politics of anticipation

- “Politics is the art of [conditioning] the possible”
— Otto von Bismarck (adapted)
- marking & coding of futurity in practice
- communities of practices ‘institute’ meaning
- apparently ‘immaterial’ discourse of anticipation
given materiality by practices
- futurity is situated in the living present

For more please see: ‘Practising tomorrows?’, PhD thesis

http://www.samkinsley.com/pdf/kinsley_thesis_web.pdf

Alternative anticipation

Please see the ‘Open City’ website for the European Capital of Culture Guimarães 2012 programme to view the alternative ‘smart city’ video:

[http://watershed.co.uk/opencity/commissions/
commission-3/](http://watershed.co.uk/opencity/commissions/commission-3/)

Questions

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