The Tools and Methods towards Liberatory Joy: Research Through Faraoyść

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How do you imagine alternatives if you either don’t have the space for it, or are being restrained from imagining? Faraoyść - the shared emotion of joy liberated from systems of oppression, which creates a portal towards possible new realities - is a method that facilitates the imagination of alternatives to our current reality currently determined by what is known, what is assumed, and what stops one from imagining. We created and developed tools to cultivate and evoke faraoyść that involved poetry writing, culturally-specific storytelling, music, co-design, and the action of naming the self and objects. These tools resulted in a collective emotional intelligence and emergent worldbuilding that helped participants materialize speculative objects and co-create stories. As researchers, our tools were developed through our design principles which require being invited by a community seeking to unlock their capacity to imagine alternatives, and co-designing with them. Faraoyść aims to empower, and gives specific tools for those who search for new ones. These methods co-create concrete utopias that are rooted in historically situated struggles, and are done through the lens of serious play. We share our process of developing these tools and methods in constant conversant collaboration around a roundtable.

Faraoyść, alternative worldbuilding, speculative design, imagining

About the Authors

Nour Abou-Jaoude is an experienced freelance creative strategist, with a deep commitment to systems change and the futures of our societies. Growing up in Lebanon, she had to learn from a young age how to inspire and create with limited resources in innovative and efficient ways. Throughout her life and career, she learned to navigate multiple barriers and boundaries through storytelling. Her unique experience gives her room to design for the complexity of societies in a compassionate way. During her time as an Art Director in Leo Burnett Beirut, Nour successfully led an integrated, 360-degree campaign to abolish article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, which stated that a rapist was exonerated if they marry their victim. As a result of the media pressure exerted on parliament by her campaign, the code was abolished. She graduated in 2021 with an MFA from Parsons, in Transdisciplinary Design and acquired skills such as service design, and speculative design. She speaks three languages fluently (French, Arabic and English) and found that the act of translation between these three
languages reveals hiccups and dislocations in the systems that surround her and therefore gives her room to design for change accordingly.

**Julia W. Szagdaj** is an experimentalist, transmedia artist, and researcher who believes imagination should start from the heart. An immigrant in the English language. Selected as YICCA 2020 finalist with her work “Accentful American Anthem” which imagined a world where speech becomes more multicultural and inclusive, representing various linguistic patterns, poetic irregularities, ways of story-singing, and emotions. She has a background in non-profits, humanitarian organizations, and social businesses, winning a lot of recognition for her social start-up “RezerwujSport” (e.g. “Gryfy Dolnośląskie”, “EU-EXCEL”, “Sport UP! 2018”) aiming to introduce technological solutions to public schools in Poland. She graduated in 2021 from Parsons School of Design with an MFA in Transdisciplinary Design. Currently, she works as a researcher and systems consultant at UNDP and is involved with other activists in fighting for women’s rights in Poland.

**Anna Lathrop** is a futurist and transdisciplinary artist whose work lies at the intersection of alternative worldbuilding and justice. She also works in theatre as a director and producer, and the co-founder of Groundwater Arts - a citizen-artist collective working to reenvision American arts and entertainment through a climate-justice lens. When not doing any of the above, she is also a painter. She has consulted and presented at UNESCO Futures Literacy Summit, Patagonia, ADX 2021 Conference, and is a mentor in the Emerging Scholars program at Design and Culture Journal. She is also a teacher in the Strategic Design and Management (BBA) program at The New School. She received her MFA in Transdisciplinary Design from Parsons School of Design at the New School in 2021, is a member of the Impact Entrepreneur Fellowship, and a recipient of the John L. Tishman scholarship.