

# Making 'the Possible' Possible

**Lise Røjskjær Pedersen**

**Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen**

**Kasper Tang Vangkilde**

**Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University**

I'm a consultant. It means that I have a client. It starts with a dialogue on how to create a path to a new form of sense making. People have their reasons. As a consultant, I want to get them a new road, and then I need to understand where they come from [...] You want to push things to certain levels, push the bars. It is about how far you can get away but still be meaningful. It is about distance; how far can you jump and still be relevant.

Consultant of a Danish strategy and innovation consultancy

Let us begin this paper with a few brief, and rather commonplace, observations. From the phones in our hands to the smells in our cars, everything seems *designed* these days. While it may be a general human capacity, design appears particularly pervasive in modern societies, clearly representing 'one of the major sites of cultural production and change, on par with science, technology and art' (Otto & Smith 2013:2, see also Clarke 2011, Moeran & Christensen 2013). Often, these design processes may appear chaotic or unstructured but, in most cases, they are nonetheless *organized* in the sense of being configured in a certain way (see e.g. Djelic & Ainamo 1999, Moeran 2009). Organization, in other words, 'is an ongoing struggle to impose order, for strategic ends' (Batteau 2000:728, see also Garsten & Nyqvist 2013, Gellner & Hirsch 2001, Wright 1994). And what is more, a broad range of aspects – from health to security, education to welfare, and, importantly, creativity to design – are today *commoditized*, literally turned into a business. In fact, it may be claimed that '[a]ll aspects of *social* behaviour are now reconceptualized along economic lines' (Rose 1999:141, original emphasis, see also Maurer 2005, Miyazaki 2013, 2006, Moeran & Garsten 2012).

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In this paper, our aim is to integrate elements of these broad developments in an ethnographic exploration of ‘the possible’, generally assumed, as in the seminar blurb, to form a ‘peculiar space betwixt and between the present(s) and the future(s)’. Drawing on Lise Røjskjær Pedersen’s fieldwork among consultants in a Danish strategy and innovation agency, we seek to illuminate how ‘possible futures’ emerge not merely through ideation and design activities but through processes of socio-political exchange and positioning, as well as business interests, inside the organization. As design anthropology is broadly acclaimed for its focus on relating, contextualizing, and reframing aspects of design and use (Gunn & Donovan 2012, Kjærsgaard & Otto 2012, Otto & Smith 2013), our purpose is – intentionally polemical – to show that too little attention is paid to the fact that these relations, contextualizations, and reframings are themselves embedded in other relations, other contexts, and other framings in organizations, which often have a commercial objective. We contend, therefore, that ‘the possible’ comprises not solely a kind of fuzzy galaxy of potential futures but the actual and intense efforts that go into *making ‘the possible’ possible* inside a corporate organization.

We are, of course, not the first to emphasize these intricate relations between design, organization, and business; including such issues as structures, profit, power, politics, etc. (e.g. Flynn 2009, Oliveira 2012). However, we suggest that a distinctive kind of ‘scaling’, understood as a particular attention to, or perspective on, a specific phenomenon (Hastrup 2013, Strathern 2004), characterizes the ways in which aspects and notions associated with ‘the possible’ – for instance, the creation of new ideas or potential futures – are explored in design, organizational and business anthropology, among other fields. We begin, therefore, with a discussion of these modes of scaling the possible, before we turn to the consultants and their way of creating new ideas.

### Scaling the possible

The complex question of scaling has received increased attention in recent years (e.g. Hastrup 2013, Holbraad & Pedersen 2009, Strathern 2004). On the very first pages of *Partial Connections* (2004), Marilyn Strathern argues that a certain kind of ‘Western pluralism’ (ibid. xiv) underlies the particular mode in which anthropologists tend to organize their ethnographic material; that is, anthropologists generally imagine the

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world as composed of numerous bits and pieces, which bring about the challenge of how to make order out of these multiple, or ‘plural’, data. The widespread solution, Strathern continues, is captured by the notion of scale and practices of changing scale, meaning ‘switching from one perspective on a phenomenon to another’ (ibid.). Thus, the notion of scale is a function of knowledge interest and denotes a *scale of attention*, as Kirsten Hastrup has it: ‘Rather than providing the anthropologist with a fixed frame of reference, the act of scaling is a profound matter of putting a particular perspective to work, and of identifying the complexity of any detail or fragment’ (2013:148). For Strathern, the latter point is momentous. It is *not* the case that complexity is reduced through modes of scaling, but rather that it remains constant and replicates itself at every level. In this sense, by acts of changing scale, one is, in fact, playing a zero-sum game (Holbraad & Pedersen 2009:373). ‘Each single element that appears to make up the plurality of elements seen from a distance,’ Strathern writes, ‘on close inspection turns out to be composed of a similar plurality that demands as comprehensive a treatment’ (2004:xv, see also Holbaard & Pedersen 2009).

Let this brief discussion suffice to point out that the possible may precisely be conceived as a complex plurality of elements upon which particular perspectives can be brought to bear; not, as emphasized, in the sense of reducing its complexity but of perceiving and ordering it in a certain, yet partial, way. In this respect, a distinct kind of scaling, we believe, characterizes how the possible is approached, conceptualized, and discussed in design anthropology and organizational and business anthropology. Here, space allows us only to touch briefly on this issue.

It is generally accepted that the emergence of design anthropology is indebted to various research traditions, not least ethnomethodologically informed design and participatory design (cf. Halse 2008, Kjærsgaard & Otto 2012, Otto & Smith 2013). While these traditions differ in their approaches to design and the integration of users into design – and, by implication, to the relation between design and ethnography – they nonetheless share precisely this focused attention on linking practices of design and practices of use (see e.g. Button 2000, Ehn 1993). Design anthropology, it seems clear, builds heavily on this tradition, perhaps most explicitly expressed when a book entitled *Design and Anthropology* focuses on ‘the building of relations between using and producing, designing and using, people and things’ (Gunn & Donovan 2012:2).

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Indeed, there is nothing wrong about this, and we are sympathetic with these attempts at rethinking and renewing the relation between design and use, including the relation between design and anthropology. Our point, however, is merely that this constitutes a very particular mode of scaling the possible; namely, as a phenomenon essentially emerging through the intersection of contexts and practices of design and use (see e.g. Donovan & Gunn 2012, Halse 2013, Kjærsgaard & Otto 2012).

While this may be fairly obvious for design anthropologists, it is all the more significant to emphasize that scholars of other fields within anthropology, not least organizational and business anthropology, tend to apply a different scaling. In studies on advertising (Moeran 1996), fashion (Vangkilde 2012), and food (Lien 1997), for instance, the possible is seen to emerge not so much through an intersection of design and usage as through social, political, and economic processes and relations inside the given organization. This is not to say, of course, that contexts and practices of design and use are indifferent in these organizations, but rather that, when switching the scale of attention, a set of different aspects comes into view. As Brian Moeran argues in his study of a Japanese advertising agency:

What the PKW case study clearly shows is that, even if a convincing argument were to be put forward that advertising *does* create a ‘consumer culture’ and that it *does* manipulate the minds of consumers, it needs to take account of the fact that the Agency first has to persuade its *clients* that its approach to a particular problem is best. In this respect, it is as concerned with selling a would-be advertiser an image of *itself* as it is of selling consumers an image of that advertiser’s *products* (Moeran 1996:96, original emphasis).

In what follows, we take inspiration in this attention to the client, as we now turn to the strategy and innovation consultants, amongst whom Lise Røjskjær Pedersen has conducted 8 months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2013 for her Ph.D. in anthropology.

### Detectives of the future

In a recent article in an American business magazine, two partners of a strategy and innovation consultancy define the method of their company: ‘sense making’, they call it. Following the authors, ‘sense making’ is a problem-solving method based on the

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human and social sciences and suited for solving a distinct kind of business problem: ‘the big unknowns’. These denote situations where executives have lost grip of their industry, and where it feels like ‘navigating in a fog’, as the consultants often put it.

Jesper is one of the inventors of the method of sense making and participates in numerous articles, blog-posts, public talks, radio and TV shows, promoting the company and its seemingly unusual approach to business problems. On a grey day in November, he describes the sense making process:

The creative process is about going from pattern recognition to insights. There is nothing creative about pattern recognition. That is pure analysis. That is about systemizing all data into a need hierarchy. But insights are the answer to the original problem – with data integrated. You take what has come out of pattern recognition and measure it against the client’s assumptions, and out of that asymmetry comes an insight, which is a kind of opportunity, a direction. It is risky; you take a risk and a jump. That is what is creative.

In the succeeding account, we follow a concrete project in the consultancy, *the wound care project*, during a couple of hectic weeks leading up to a presentation of preliminary insights and a workshop with the client. We primarily follow David, the project manager, and Thomas, the partner responsible for the project.

### *The double funnel approach*

It is Friday. David turns up around 10 this morning. He is happy. Yesterday’s steering group meeting went well. The client is content about the project’s progress. David has been extremely busy the last couple of weeks managing the wound care project that has been running for about two months now. Next week, the project moves into the ‘pattern recognition phase’, meaning that the unusually large team is brought together to explore and analyse the qualitative data generated during three weeks of fieldwork amongst nurses, doctors, and patients in China and Brazil. The team will be working towards presenting a couple of early insights from the project on a full day workshop with almost 20 stakeholders from The Client across different divisions and countries.

David has thought a lot about how best to structure the pattern recognition so that the fieldworkers will discuss ‘all the good stuff’. And he has an overall plan:

First, I want everybody to tell openly about how it is being in a hospital with a wound. After that, we will focus on the individuals – the doctors, the nurses, and the patients. It's important to talk about the persons and their motivations, before you talk about the activities. If not, we won't be able to understand the causalities behind the activities.

David calls this approach 'a funnel'. He says: 'On the outside towards the client and concerning all the deliverables, the process is a funnel. But it's different on the inside. The inside is barbed.'

David has made several templates to help him manage and capture the many ideas and thoughts that he expects to emerge over the next weeks. One such template is for capturing data that can be showed to the client. This template, however, should be handled carefully. As he stresses: 'One of the products that should come out of this week is a list of all the challenges that the fieldworkers observed in China and Brazil. But I deliberately keep the list out of the analytical process in the beginning. Such a list has a tendency to kill discussions.' David shows an example from another project – a list containing more than 100 'needs' – and he explains how he later transformed it into different categories. He is certain that this will prove to be a valuable tool in dialogues with the client: 'If you don't have the list, then you might end up lacking a lot of details. And details are what bring trustworthiness.'

David seems almost obsessed with form. He has made tons of templates and power point slides; it is time for 'fish catching', it seems. What he will get from this week's discussions is all the stuff on which he will work during the rest of the project. This is why he carefully lays out clues and points of orientation such as templates and lists, and it is also the reason why he is applying a deliberate order by which he, for instance, looks for the users' motivations before their activities.

The clues are his way of knowing that he *will* get what he needs to finish the project; and they seem to fulfil a double purpose: on the one hand, they are a sort of safety net to find a way (and a way back, as we shall show) and, on the other, they consolidate a display that functions to document the route and the links (between pieces of data) that he is continuously making and remaking. In this sense, being a project manager means running the inside and the outside of the funnel in parallel, entailing that David needs not merely to manage the internal pattern recognition but,

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importantly, to build a convincing display of interesting results that can be shown to the client at any given moment. This is why David is so preoccupied with creating preliminary ‘products’ (such as a list), because he works under the premise that everything can change in an instant. The client might call for a status, change the date of a meeting, or, as we shall see, unexpectedly invite themselves to participate in the analysis.

### *Staging the inside*

It is the first day of the pattern recognition week. The team is gathered in one of the rooms in the stylish office in central Copenhagen. The consultants have labelled the room ‘the wound ward’ and papered it with photos, notes, post-its, and power point prints. This is where ideas are meant to emerge. David goes through the plan of the week. Having explained how he first wants everybody to think about ‘the big picture’, i.e. ‘the big idea’, and then to move into the details in order to make user profiles, i.e. ‘the funnel process’, he tells the team that a couple of people from the client’s R&D division will join the workshop the next two days. A couple of the team members look worried, but David calms them down: ‘we have agreed that *we* run the process, and they are going to just listen. They have to respect our process, and they should not expect any “ethno magic”.’ But one of the younger consultants asks: ‘So how should we be when the client is here? Are we allowed being confused?’. A more experienced consultant replies:

It is very important that you are honest about being confused. We can’t take too much care of them being here. We really need to get all uncertainties and concerns out this week. You should think about the fact that you have done fieldwork for three weeks in Brazil, so your questions will not be stupid.

On the next day, three people from the R&D division join the team. Thomas, a partner in the consultancy and the overall responsible for the project, makes sure to attend to the clients: ‘Isn’t this exciting? We think it is, but there is a long way to go, of course.’ Thomas walks in and out of the workshop, his role being to set the overall frame and explain what is going on inside ‘the engine’ of creating ideas. When one of the clients asks about the open-endedness of the method, he says confidently:

That is how it is. We try to cover it all without concluding too fast. My role as the responsible partner is to try to ask some questions at the research, but it's also to let the thing have its own life. Then at a certain point, I will try to bring in the initial overall question again. It's very much about finding our... or your take on this whole field. But right now, it's about making sure that we understand the users' world.

In a both calm and authoritative manner, Thomas explains the process to the clients, assuring them that the team will eventually make conclusions but that, at this stage, the right place to be for both consultants and clients is inside 'the fog'.

Contrary to Thomas, David has a double role. While being an integral part of the analytical process, he also spends much time talking with the clients, discussing different 'user stories' and comparing them to the clients' usual ways of thinking about products. When one of the clients says that 'there is a huge uncertainty in our organization about who we are actually selling to,' and another client adds that 'it's like we only focus on the types of wounds that we make products for,' David seems content about their reflections. The heavy focus on products (versus people) is exactly why The Client needs help. Picking his words cautiously, David says:

Later today, we will have a session about how people talk about wounds and how they categorize them. That will be pretty interesting for you. There are so many logics about how to make products. From what I've learned so far, there might be a tendency in your organization to say that everything that is needed is better education. The doctors, nurses, and patients just need to know better.

David carefully contextualizes the clients' experiences of the data. He points out that there seems to be an asymmetry between their perspectives on future wound care (e.g. better education) and the fieldworkers' research in Brazil and China. Staging himself as a mediator able to see this gap, he is engaged in creating new ideas, or possible futures; not only in the sense of exploring the world of the user but, importantly, in the sense of drawing the clients into the funnel in order for them to reach the same kind of 'moments of clarity'. Rie, one of the clients, has apparently experienced such a moment:

Wounds are unpredictable ... In these countries such as Brazil and China, there are also other skills. It would be such a shame if these insights from your

research just got lost in all this talk about how different internal stakeholders perceive education ... I think we are maybe starting from a completely wrong place when we think about education.

We might interpret the wound ward with its ‘sticky barbs’ as a kind of lab for exploring possible futures, and inviting the client inside the lab is both risky and full of potential. For what seems to be crucial for the consultants is to make possible that the clients experience their own moments of clarity, which will clarify why it matters to do research into people’s lives in order to create good products; that is to say, why it matters to use the sense making approach.

### *Staging the outside*

It is a few days before the important workshop with numerous stakeholders from The Client. The team, David, and Thomas are having a meeting, since yesterday’s steering group meeting did not go that well. Apparently, an issue concerning the overall scope of the project can no longer be ignored. The team has conducted fieldwork in China and Brazil, as well as carried out more than 30 interviews with internal stakeholders in various European countries. The problem, however, is that the client wants a *global* ‘value proposition’, not just one for China and Brazil.

David is frustrated, and worried about the quality of their research. He was not part of agreeing on the initial scope of the project, where fieldwork in European markets was excluded, and where it was approved that the so-called ‘European gap’ could somehow be filled by doing stakeholder interviews and updating a similar study from 2009. ‘We can’t get away with insights from 2009,’ David says. ‘A lot of things can change in four years ... I’m fine with reporting their ideas [the ideas of the clients gathered through interviews and workshops], but if we integrate data from 2009 into this study, then the quality of what we do decreases.’ Thomas hesitates, but makes it clear that the client cannot use a result that is not globally founded: ‘We can’t build a value proposition that is only bottom up. We need to have that overall perspective on how to think about wound care generally.’

It is show time. The consultants need to put together a display which is both believable and fits what they promised in the contract. But David is concerned about the storyline of the preliminary insights. How do they stitch it together in a credible

way? How far can they stretch the data from fieldwork in China and Brazil? And in which formats should they present their findings in order to ‘get away’ with it? In a sense, what the consultants discuss is how to create a convincing link from the future end-goal and back to the (past) data. As Thomas argues, this cannot only be done in a bottom-up way; that is, creating the insights in a forward moving (linear) way from bottom to top. Rather, they need to somehow assemble both pasts and futures in order to build the ground that allows them to present a particular (global) future. Hence, the discussion concerns how to lay the bricks to create a particular stepping stone from where they can *jump* to the conclusion of the global value proposition.

It is Monday morning, two days before the presentation and the atmosphere is hectic. The team has worked all weekend, but the issue of ‘the European gap’ remains unresolved. Now, Line pushes for a solution: ‘Don’t we need to make some decisions here on whether we show data that is global?’. Thomas replies: ‘You know how they are. They only want to hear that it’s global. We can ruin the whole day if that isn’t what we prioritize. They are stuck with this in their heads. They will be sitting nervously with a knot in their stomachs all day.’ But David is still worried:

The most important thing for me right now is that you, Thomas, think about what we do about them [the client] being so obsessed with ‘the global’. I think that it is really hard to crack [...] We need to help with all we can, but it’s hard for me to see how we ‘cut it’ without losing the credibility in what we do. That can easily slip out.

The client wants a particular result, i.e. a particular global future, and the consultants need to ‘crack it’. If they do not work onwards – or backwards, as it were – from the perspective of this future, they will get stuck. But David is unsettled. He cannot see how they can build a creditable link from a global future to the pieces of data at hand. He needs to find the crack that will make *jumping* to a global level possible.

In the afternoon, David meets with Thomas and Jesper, the two partners who sold the project. After around an hour, he returns to update the team:

You know that there has been this thing with the Global versus China and Brazil. What we will do is that we will be heads on with the fact that we don’t know about Europe. We only know a few things from the 2009 study, so they should help us here. We’ll be honest about that.

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This decision to be straightforward with the client, admitting that ‘we don’t know about Europe,’ can be seen as a kind of last minute *jumping*. Trying to cover up the gap by way of linking or twisting different types of data turned out to be too risky, as they could lose their credibility as consultants. Instead, they made a jump by taking advantage of the original scope of the project and holding the client responsible for the missing knowledge on the European markets. The point is, however, that this was done by deliberately turning the client into an expert in European wound care on par with their own expertise in Brazil and China. This sudden change in the relationship between client and consultant, making the former the expert and the latter the novice, is an important defining characteristic of how ideas are created.

In the morning before the presentation, the atmosphere is nervous. Although being satisfied with the team’s work so far, Thomas, the responsible partner, is still concerned:

It’s not because what we have done is not good. It’s really good! You have seen it. But it’s this thing about our method or process that they are not so familiar with, so they might not be able to see how and why we got to this. The presentation is fairly open as you can see; there are a lot of open points for discussion, and then again we have chosen something out of other stuff. Now we need their input to get on from here. We need to know if it is the right things that we discuss. They are not used to talking about the people whom it is all about. They are used to working with products. But you are always a bit nervous. But I do think that we will be all right.

Thomas is worried. The presentation and storyline are compelling, but the key issue is if the client will ‘buy it’. *Some* things have been prioritized over others, and a number of points *are* left unclarified, Thomas explains. Indeed, the consultants have jumped around to compose a neat storyline for the client, stitching together futures and pasts through acts of jumping. In a sense, this is how they work. This is their method. But will the client be able to see the leaps and links that have been made in order to reach the insights? And, most importantly, are they going to believe it?

Making believe

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These questions lead us to our closing reflections. What the consultants sell to their clients is not merely a product in the sense of a result that comes out in the end of a creative process. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, a distinct approach, ‘a new path’, or a promise of a particular experience: ‘a moment of clarity’. In this sense, what is product and what is process are by no means easily separated, as the process *is* somehow the product that the client buys. This is precisely what makes it hard to distinguish between futures, pasts, and presents when attempting to grasp how ideas are created and the possible explored amongst consultants.

The above account builds on a range of recent anthropological ethnographies and approaches to time and the future in social life (see e.g. Coleman 2009, Hodges 2008, Miyazaki 2013, 2006, Pedersen 2012). Their differences notwithstanding, these authors share an approach to time that is inherently non-linear. Drawing on Bergson (1944[1907]) and Deleuze (1992[1966]), time is understood in the form of duration, conceived by Morten A. Pedersen as ‘a dynamic field of potential relations without beginning or end, from which the present is actualized’ (2012:144). This approach to time is fundamentally anti-phenomenologist, indeed anti-humanist, in the sense that it is not understood to origin in any subjectivity. Rather, the unfolding of time (*la durée*) is what makes subjectivity and intentionality possible (Hodges 2008:411).

While these are indeed complex discussions, let it suffice here to stress that *jumping*, as a mode of creating ideas in a consultancy, should be understood in these terms. It is *not* that the consultants are jumping around randomly nor that they do not have a structure. In fact, as we have seen, templates and lists are crucial. Rather, the point is that *because* the process by which they work (sense making) and the premise of having a client are fundamentally unpredictable, they are remarkably attentive to moments and situations of sudden change. Hence, the consultants are exploiting the sometimes unfortunate (i.e. the European gap), sometimes fortunate moments in order to gradually stitch together the idea. In fact, the ideas being created can be seen as the non-causal outcome of attending to and exploiting particular moments of change.

Interestingly, this mode of jumping seems to overlap with what Pedersen has discussed as ‘jumping from the future into the present’ and ‘living for the moment’ as a way of hope among Youth in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (2012). As he explains: ‘living for the moment involves an exalted awareness of the virtual potentials in the present –

the tiny but innumerable cracks through which the promise of another world shines' (ibid. 145). Adopting the idea of non-linear or, to be more precise, more-than-linear time, and thinking with the notion of 'the virtual' as an inherent potentiality of the present, containing all futures and all pasts in a single moment (ibid.143), we might better grasp how the consultants manage to fix 'the European gap'. As demonstrated throughout the paper, the role of the client plays a constitutive role in how ideas are created in the consultancy. Working in a context where the key objective is to create a solution to a distinct (commercial) problem, the end goal is present at the very outset of a project. As such, the consultants are not so much exploring infinite possibilities but rather looking for *the best* idea within a particular framework and under specific constraints.

In a discussion of the becoming of bodies, Rebecca Coleman writes about the difference between 'the possible' and 'the virtual', which may further illuminate these processes of creating ideas in an unbounded-yet-bounded way. Referring directly to Deleuze, she writes: 'while the possible refers to an infinite series which is realized – everything is possible and can be made real – the virtual refers to a series which is, in some way, structured and determined [...] possibilities of becoming are limited and fixed in particular ways' (2009:51). Following Coleman, the virtual thus constitutes a finite set of possibilities and, in this way, accounts for the limitations and restrictions of what becomes actual (ibid.). While the consultants collect data and create insights by somehow moving forward in an improvisational and bottom-up way, they are also piecing together bricks of knowledge and information in a manner that is *more-than-linear*; jumping by way of being actualized from the virtual, as it were. Jumping, then, is the actualization of the virtual through the inherently unstable relation of consultant and client. What drives the creative processes, in other words, is the management of relations, and this finally brings us to the point where we wish to end our argument.

For the consultants, it is imperative to keep the client happy; 'when a client is in the house, it's show time!', as they often say. While they can come up with highly innovative ideas, what really matters is if the client *believes* in it – and this, we argue, is the tricky part, which both guides and challenges the consultants in all aspects of their work. As the partner whose words opened this paper further explains:

The birth of creative ideas is about psychology. It is hard. But the true creative

act is how you get people to believe it. How the story works, how people obtain ownership of the story [...] How do you integrate the perspective of the client in the creative act?

The consultants create stories through connecting pieces of knowledge; not only from the world of the users but also, and crucially, from the world of the client. And they evaluate or measure their creative success on whether or not they have made the client believe. This is a paramount criterion. This is what makes the consultants jump, look for cracks, and stitch together pasts and futures in order to find a credible road back to the future of the client, so to speak.

In the introduction to their edited volume *Design Anthropology. Theory and Practice* (2013), Ton Otto and Rachel C. Smith emphasize that design anthropologists ‘have to develop ways to include the anticipation and creation of new forms in their ethnographic descriptions and theorizing’ (ibid. 12-13). In this respect, they point to the challenge for anthropologists to engage in processes of designing and intervening in those social and cultural contexts which they typically merely describe and analyse. This, they point out, ‘is in many ways a large leap for anthropologists’ (ibid. 13).

While this is indeed an intriguing vision or project, not least when assuming a non-linear notion of time (as the authors do by referring to G. H. Mead) and the idea that the future and the past are to be understood as emergent capacities of the present (ibid. 17), something additional might be gained by exploring the capacity of the leap itself, not that dissimilar to jumping as explored in this paper. To understand how new ideas, or ‘the possible’, emerge through creative design processes for particular ends, it might be valuable to look into how different disciplines (e.g. design, anthropology, business), conventions (e.g. social science, natural science), and agendas (e.g. social, political, commercial) intersect, and how different actors involved in these processes are *leaping* in order to assemble ‘the new’. Consultants, who work across disciplines and conventions to create paths for newness, may thus have, at least, some things in common with the design anthropological project as outlined by Otto and Smith, who consider collaboration across, and by virtue of, differences to be a central feature.

Based on our ethnographic account, we suggest, in other words, that leaping or jumping between different times (futures and pasts) might be understood as inherent to creative design processes. And we contend – somewhat polemical perhaps – that a

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key aspect slightly overlooked in design anthropology concerns the fact that outcomes of design processes (ideas, products, experiences, etc.) are to be presented somewhere and to someone. Obviously, they do not happen in a nutshell. Quite the contrary, what seems mandatory is that design processes are ‘cut’ at a certain point and that the many interpretations and experiments with design and use are stopped in order to give rise to communication, evaluation, and, in some cases, implementation (see also Oliveira 2012). Switching the scale of attention to the consultants and their way of scaling the possible, as it were, makes it clear that the client is ubiquitous, forming a constitutive part in the creation of new ideas. Leaping, jumping, linking, and cracking are different ways of *making believe*; a paramount aspect, we claim, of creativity and design. We all have an audience.

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