



Faculty of Design

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## Playing within Systems for Change (The Art Panel)

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Relating Systems Thinking and Design  
2022 Symposium  
University of Brighton, Brighton, UK,  
October 13-16, 2022

## **Playing with Systems for Change**

### **The Art Panel**

**Ioannis (John) Bardakos**

Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts, Paris 8 University and Athens School of Fine Arts

**Tegan Bristow**

University of the Witwatersrand

**Chris Speed**

University of Edinburgh

**Claudia Westermann**

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

This panel introduces research that challenges, exposes and critiques dominant socio, political and economic systems through playful processes. As the dominant representational traditions of the global north continue to frame people, environments and cultures, this panel offers a timely opportunity to reveal acts of artistic research that 'upend' the imaginary of a common socio/technical system, and recast it through practice research.

KEYWORDS: art, play, systems, ecologies of art, cross-cultural discourse

RSD TOPIC(S): Methods & Methodology, Socioecological Design, Sociotechnical Systems.

## RSDX

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Bardakos reflects upon the circumstances of the pandemic that forced him to rethink the ontology of the artist's studio. Traditionally deeply entangled across actual communities, analogue materials and tools, Bardakos builds a more playful association to that of the astronaut and the cockpit of a spaceship that limits navigation and communication through interfaces. For the construction of such an (astronaut, artist) ontology Bardakos uses metaphors, etymological references, transformed concepts and creative analogies between the actual and the subjective space.

Bristow explores practices that run from a reflection through decolonising methodologies as a cultural response to technology and neo-liberalism, to the significant contributions of the insurrectionary and vernacular as knowledge forms. Unpacked in light of the work titled *School for Vernacular Algorithms*, Bristow explores Indigenous knowledge transfer and the complex structures of intergenerational and technological knowledge as a system made visible through IsiZulu beadwork.

Speed is interested in the role of data-driven technologies that disrupt representations of economic value, and the extent to which they enable social, cultural and environmental values to become surfaced. Speed's inquiry is extended through a playful version of money laundering, a process that is traditionally associated with the dissociation of large amounts of money that have been obtained through criminal activity, and associating it with a legitimate source. Speed (and colleagues) introduce a money laundering hack that 'washes' issues of climate into peoples bank accounts.

Westermann draws on conceptualisations of performative systems for a translation into reflective objects that re-play rather than represent the inclusions and exclusions communities create. She investigates art as conversational technology, encouraging new ecologies of communication through a *Cybernetics of Grace*. Westermann recovers

a scene that Charlie Chaplin conceived for the film *The Great Dictator*. Hynkel, the ruler of Tomania, is shown in his office of imperial grandeur, taking a globe off its stand, throwing it into the air. He catches it and tips it into the air again as a gymnast does with a ball. Chaplin's performance presenting a dictator's globe gymnastics integrates seemingly disparate and opposing notions and resists objectification.

## Structure

**Intro to session** - 5 minutes

**Individual positions from each speaker** - 10 minutes each

**Claudia Westermann**, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

**Tegan Bristow**, University of the Witwatersrand

**Chris Speed**, University of Edinburgh

**Ioannis (John) Bardakos**, Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts, Paris 8 University and Athens School of Fine Arts

45 mins total

**Discussion / questions with audience** - 45 minutes

## References

Bardakos, I., Sourgiadaki, E., & Lioret, A. (2021). Deconstructing the isolated astronaut-artist paradigm. *Technoetic Arts*, 19(1), 171–184. [https://doi.org/10.1386/tear\\_00061\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/tear_00061_1)

Bristow, T. (2022). A School for Vernacular Algorithms: Knowledge Transfer as a System and Aesthetic Algorithmic Encounter. *DIID*, 76. <https://doi.org/10.30682/diid7622b>

Speed, C. (2022, June 16). The future of money as a design material. *Proceedings of DRS*. DRS2022: Bilbao. <https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2022.785>

Westermann, C. (2021). On globes, the Earth and the Cybernetics of Grace. *Technoetic Arts*, 19(1), 29–47. [https://doi.org/10.1386/tear\\_00049\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/tear_00049_1)