

Futures of Care in Digital Education

Prof Felicitas Macgilchrist

School of Educational and Social Sciences,
Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg (Germany)



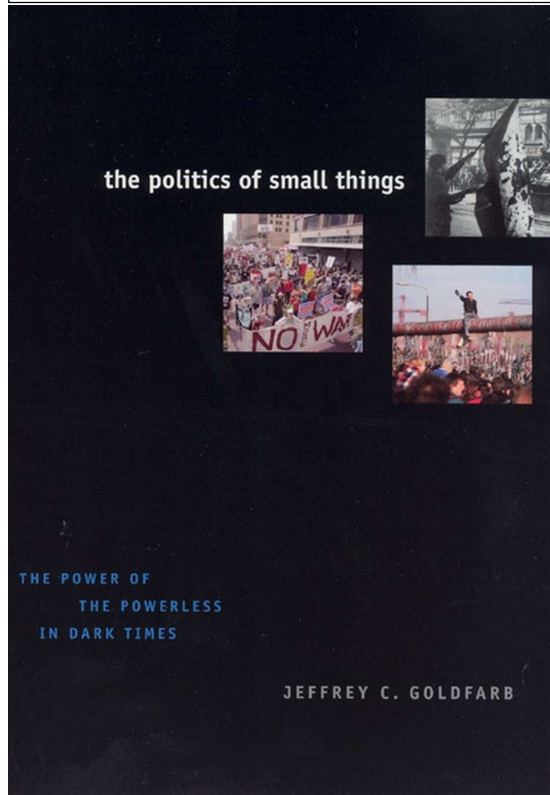
2nd Annual Public Lecture Series

BEYOND STANDARD SCRIPTS

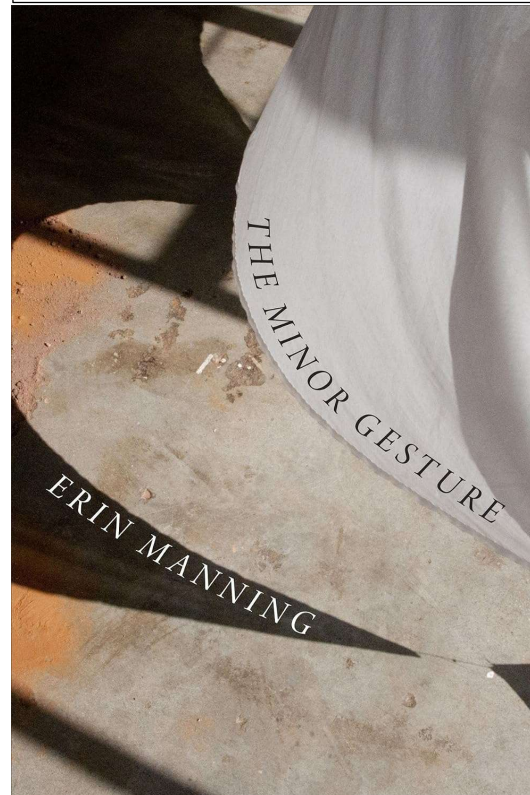
IMAGINING NEW FUTURES IN DIGITAL EDUCATION

Inspired by...

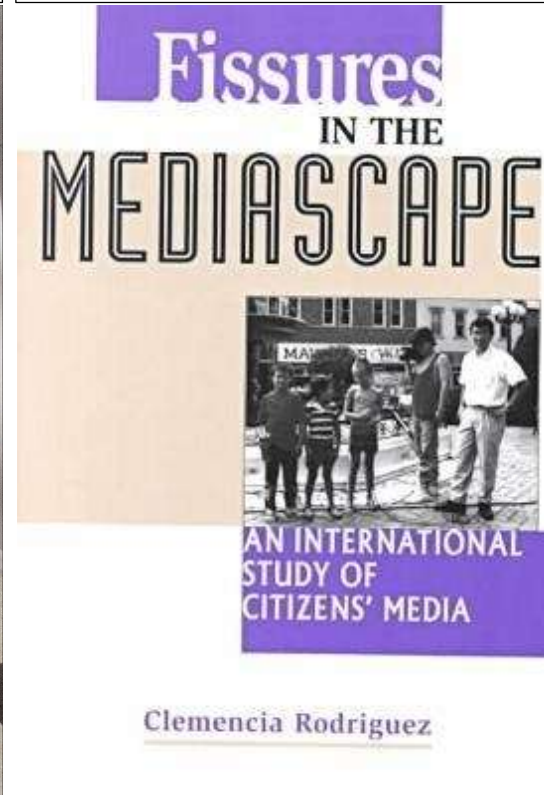
"The politics of small things"



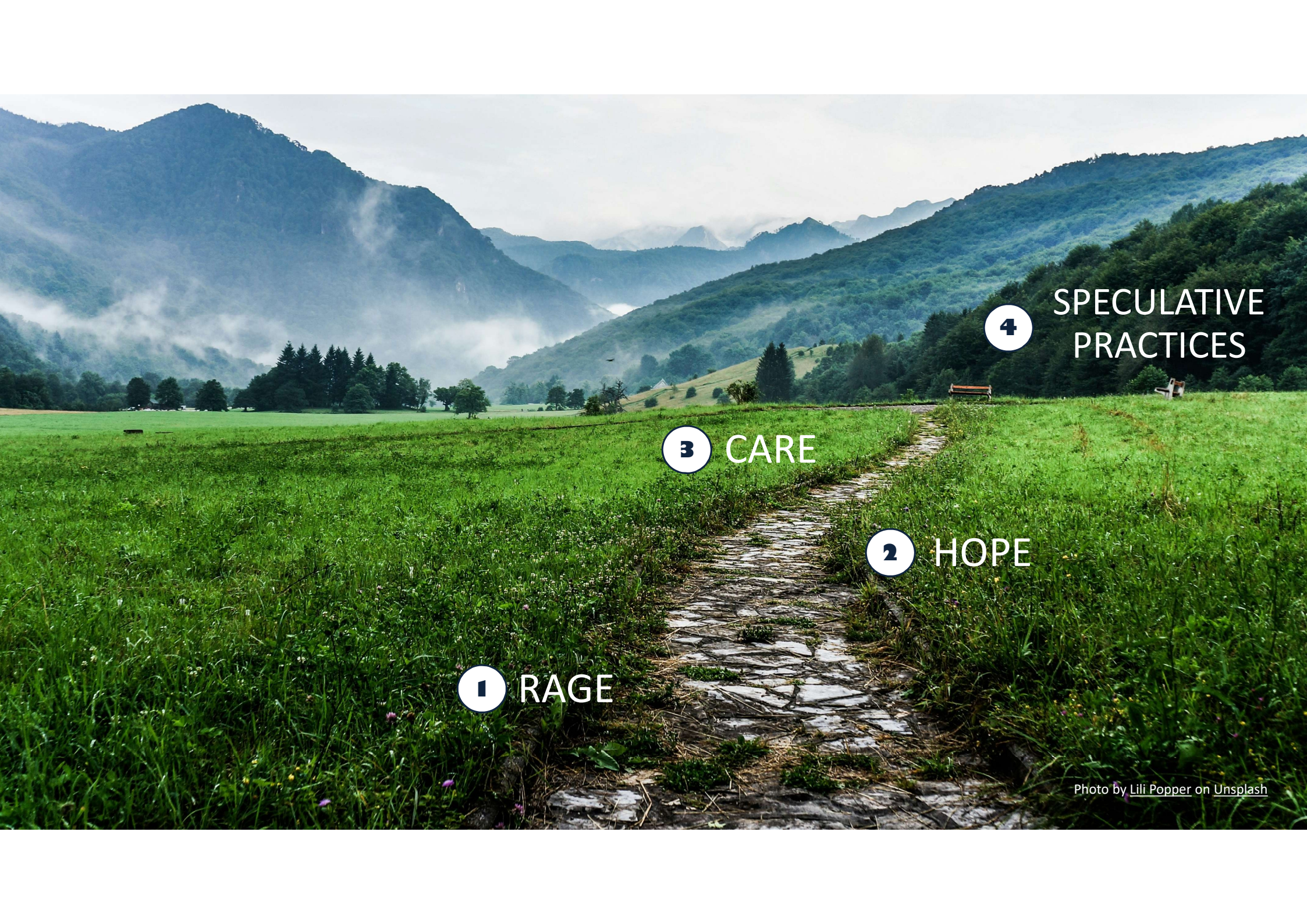
"The minor gesture"



"A politics of the quotidian"



...on the route to CARE



1 RAGE

3 CARE

2 HOPE

4 SPECULATIVE
PRACTICES

Photo by [Lili Popper](#) on [Unsplash](#)



1 RAGE

3 CARE

2 HOPE

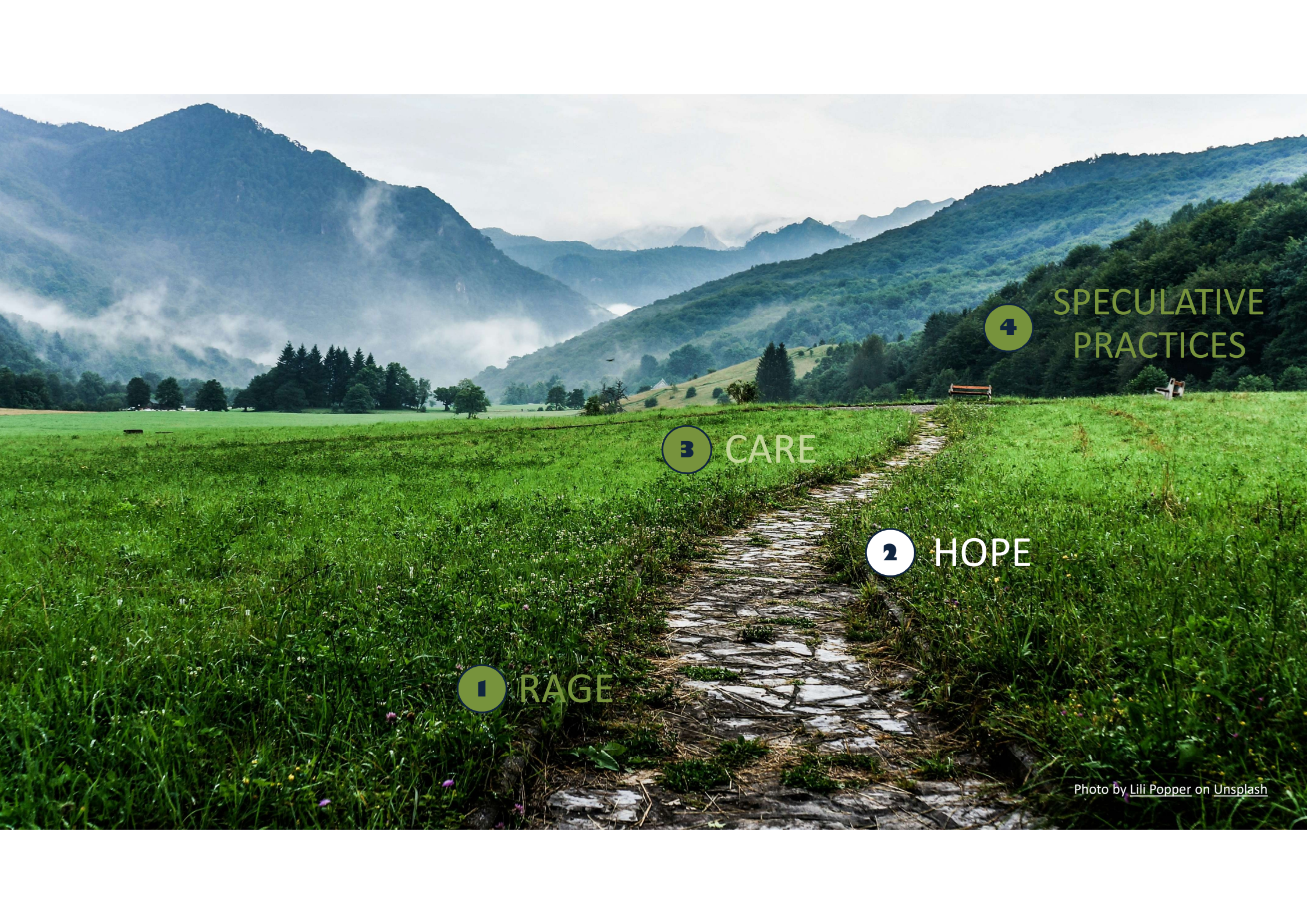
4 SPECULATIVE
PRACTICES

Photo by [Lili Popper](#) on [Unsplash](#)



surveillance capitalism
data colonialism
algorithms of oppression
algorithmic injustice
algorithmic regimes
techno-authoritarianism
technofascism
cyberlibertarianism

Photos by [Mahmoud Sulaiman](#) on [Unsplash](#),
[Matt Palmer](#) on [Unsplash](#) and
[Sujin c](#) on [Unsplash](#)



1 RAGE

3 CARE

2 HOPE

4 SPECULATIVE
PRACTICES

Photo by [Lili Popper](#) on [Unsplash](#)

~~Optimism~~ vs. Hope

[A] person must first despair with a vengeance, despair to the full, so that the life of spirit can break through from the ground up.

Søren Kierkegaard (1849/1989).
The Sickness Unto Death. Penguin, p. 91.

Pedagogy of Hope [...] is written in rage and love, without which there is no hope.

Paulo Freire (1992). *Pedagogy of Hope*. Continuum, p.4.

[Hope] knows how to find encouraging words that do not conceal the fact that catastrophes are imminent. Instead, words that show how to avoid catastrophes, or at least how to (...) create the basis for a different way of living together and dealing with the earth.

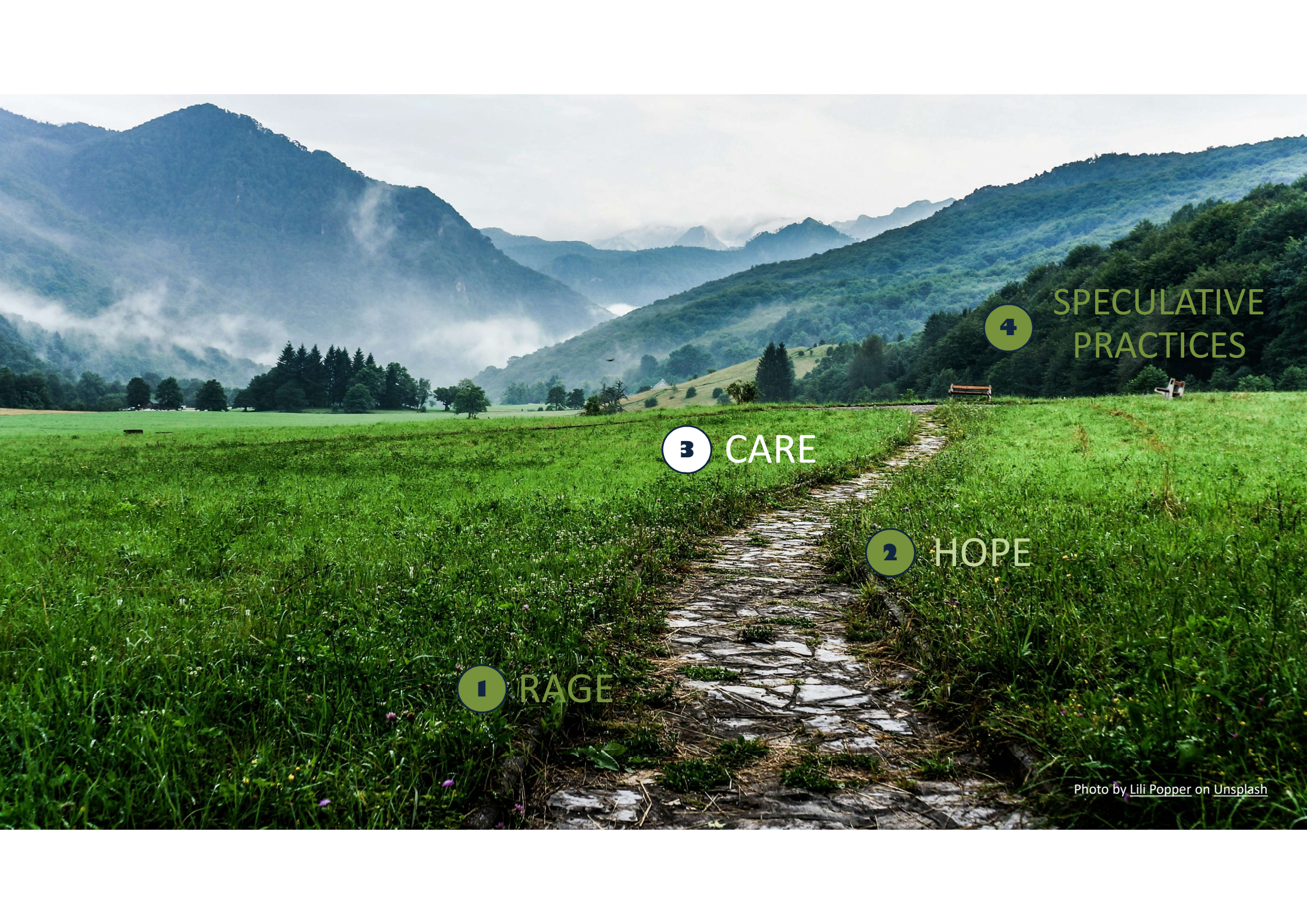
Corine Pelluchon (2023). Die Durchquerung des Unmöglichen: Hoffnung in Zeiten der Klimakatastrophe. C.H. Beck, p. 59f.

How do we transcend bitterness and cynicism and embrace love, hope, and an all-encompassing dream of freedom, especially in these rough times?

Robin D. Kelley (2022). Freedom Dreams:
The Black Radical Imagination. Beacon, p. x.

hope as commitment to see through
around and beyond unending misery.

Lola Olufemi (2021). Experiments in Imagining
Otherwise. Hajar Press, p. 11.



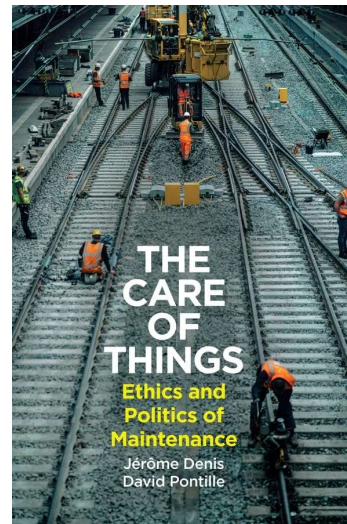
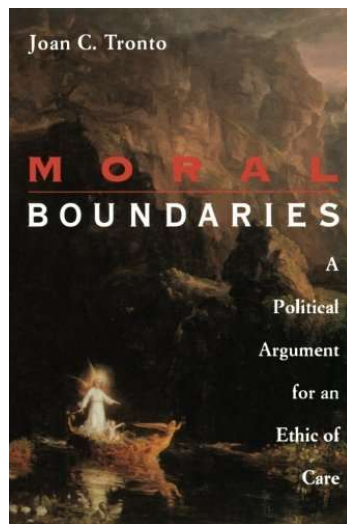
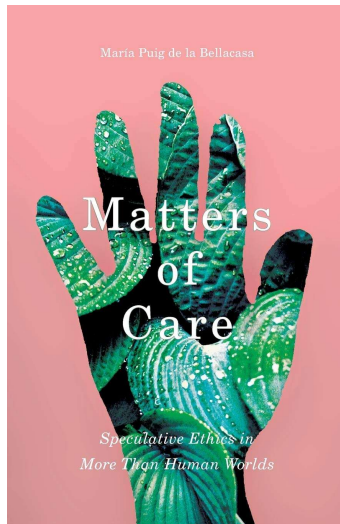
1 RAGE

3 CARE

2 HOPE

4 SPECULATIVE
PRACTICES

CARE



Research Articles

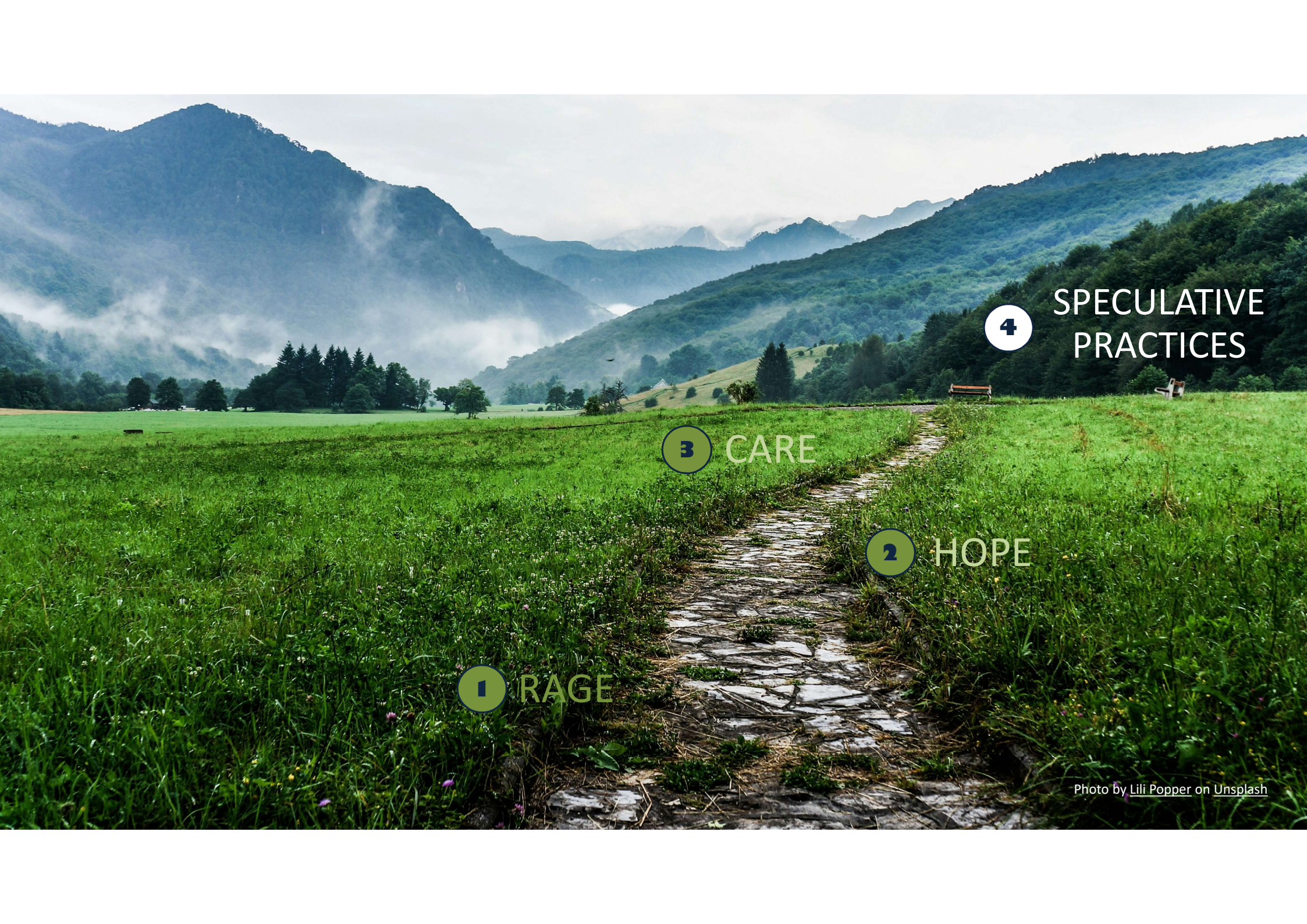
Sociodigital futures of education: reparations, sovereignty, care, and democratisation

Arathi Sriprakash , Ben Williamson , Keri Facer , Jessica Pykett  & Carolina Valladares Celis 

Pages 561-578 | Published online: 20 May 2024

Care as a critical analytical concept and a politically hopeful concept to engage with the mess of today's world.

Care refers to the ongoing, unequally distributed, historically invisibilised **work** of **attending to** people, relations, vulnerability, interdependency, and to the social, technical, emotional, and planetary conditions that make digital education possible.



4

SPECULATIVE
PRACTICES

3

CARE

2

HOPE

1

RAGE

Photo by [Lili Popper](#) on [Unsplash](#)

“What if?”

Why are things as they are? Must they be as they are? What might they be like if they were otherwise?

Ruff, M.-B., & Wortmann, K. (2025).
Counterfactual thought in educational theory.
Research in Education.

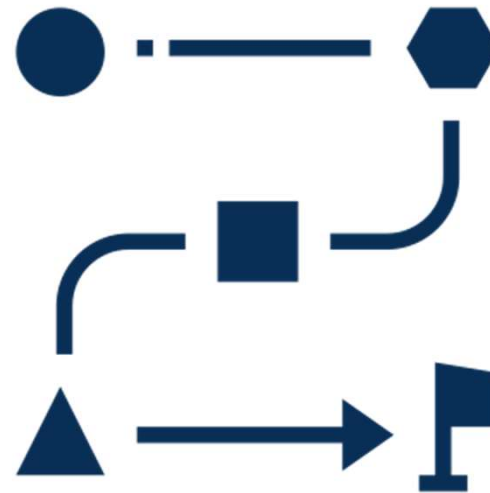
Ursula K. Le Guin (2017) No Time to Spare:
Thinking About what Matters. Mariner, p. 83

It is hard to
imagine the
unimaginable.

Speculative, utopian thought is
“metonymic of minor and repressed
spaces in which we already dwell in the
present”.

Ghassan Hage (2015) Critical Anthropology and
the Radical Imagination. MUP Academic, p. 201

We need methods.



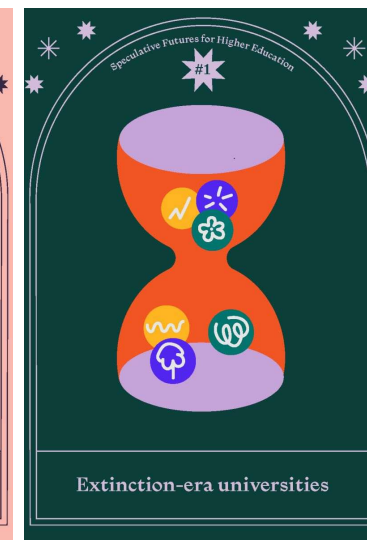
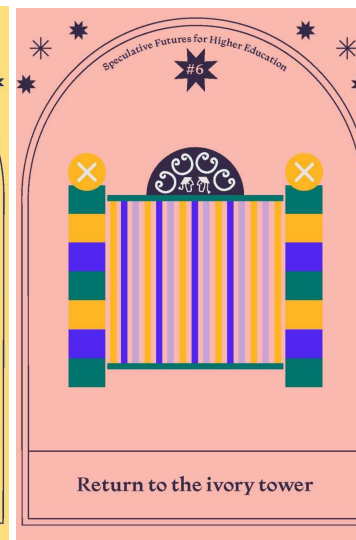
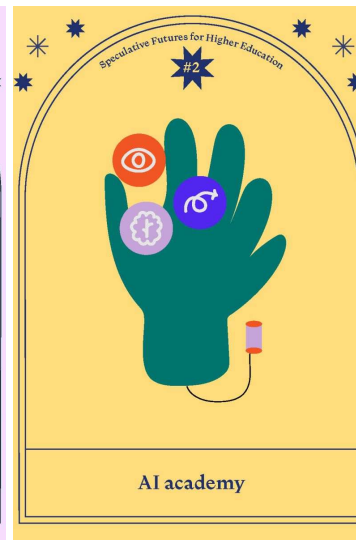
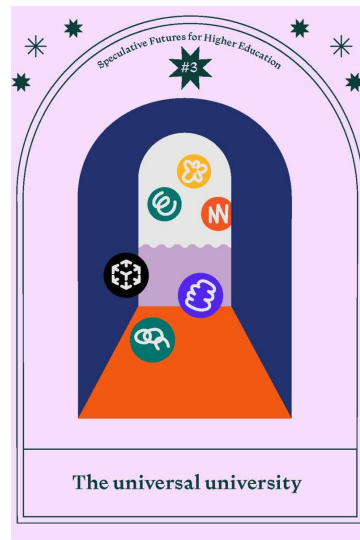
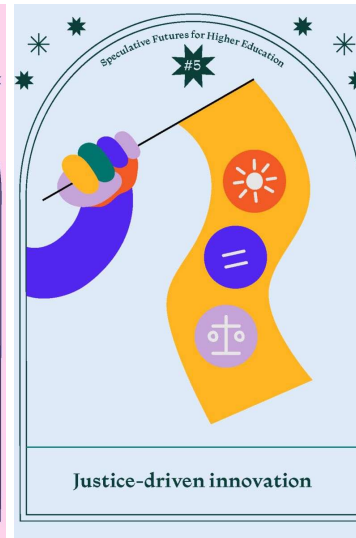
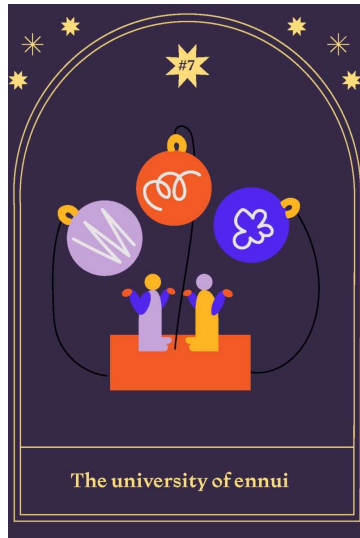
Jen Ross (2023). Digital Futures for Learning. Speculative Methods and Pedagogies. Routledge.

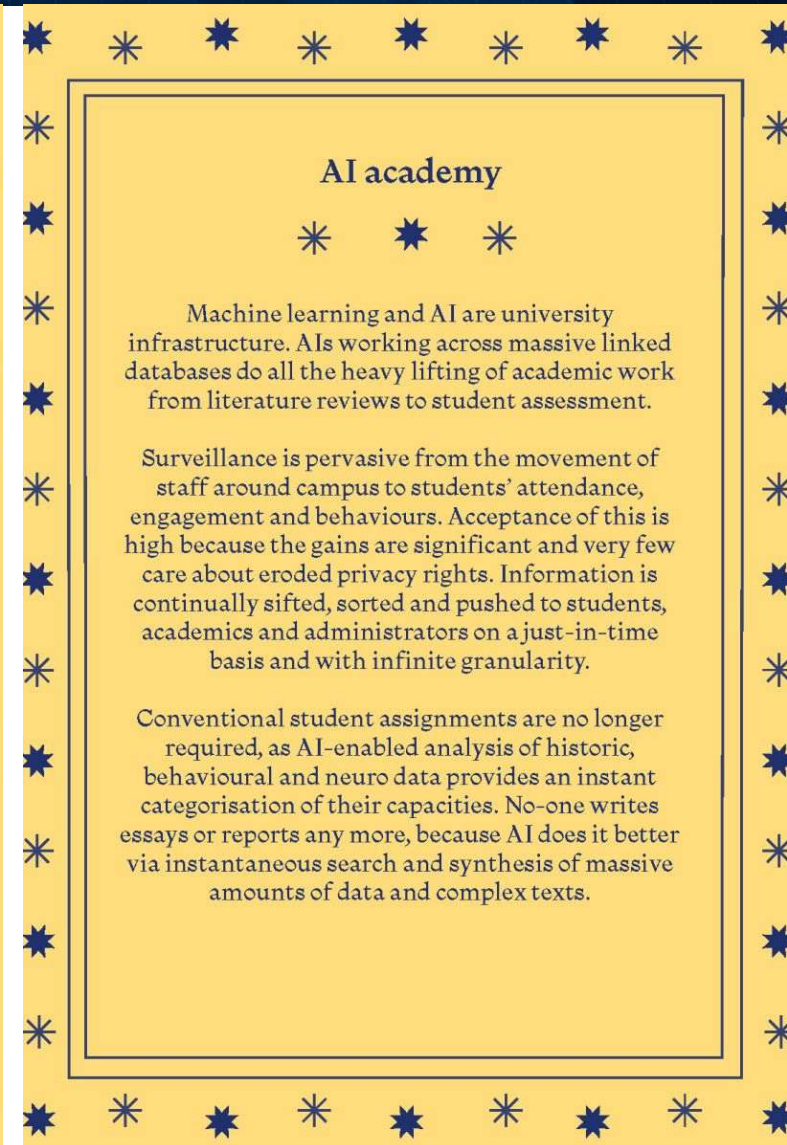
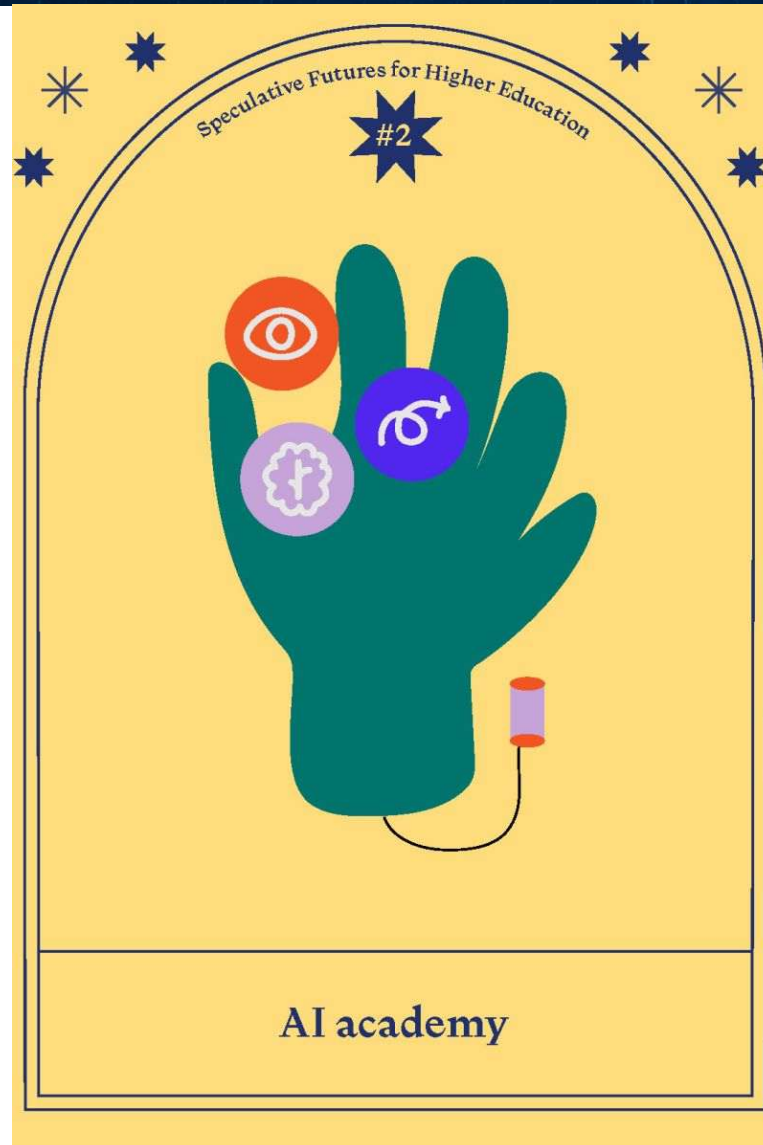
Felicitas Macgilchrist et al. (2024). Designing Postdigital Futures (Special Issue). Postdigital Science and Education 6(1)

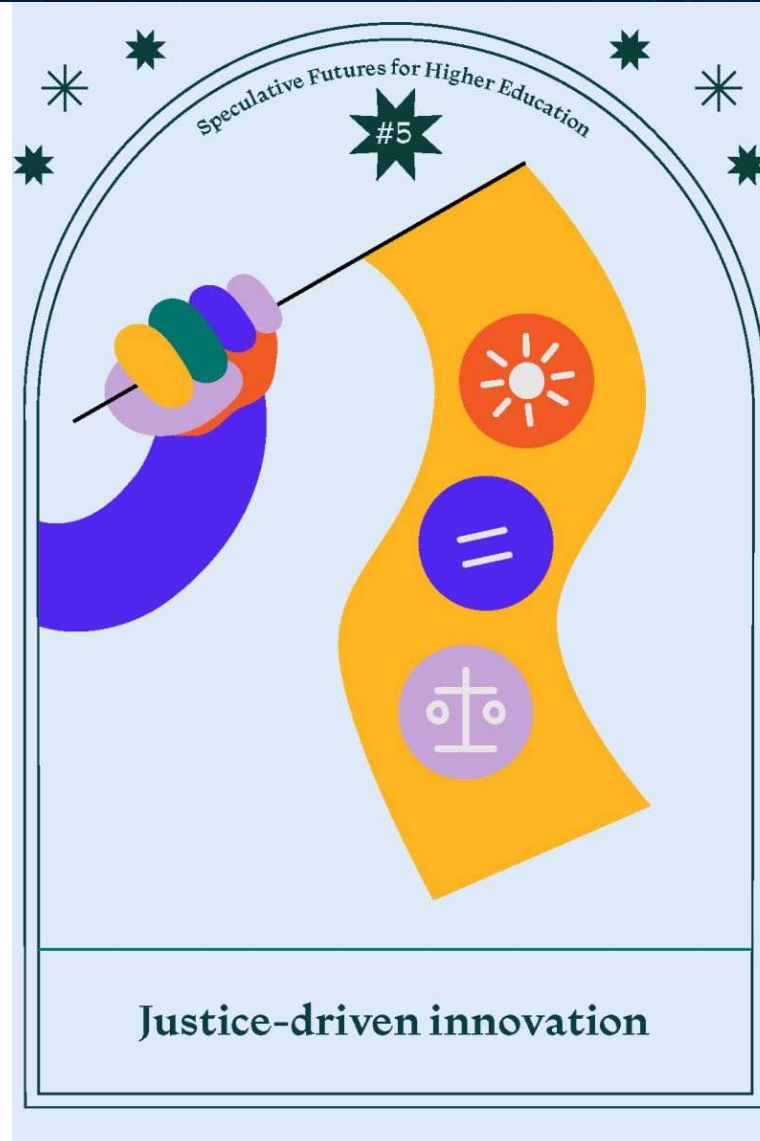
2nd Annual Public Lecture Series

BEYOND STANDARD SCRIPTS

IMAGINING NEW FUTURES IN DIGITAL EDUCATION







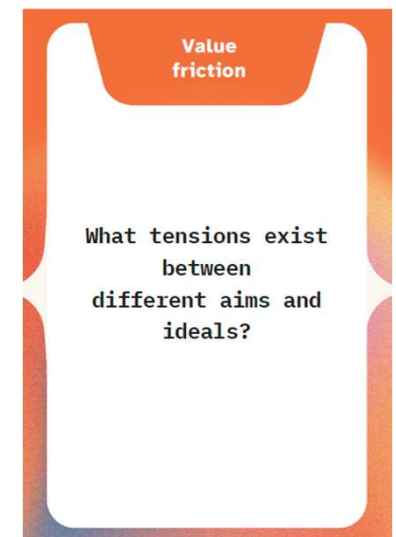
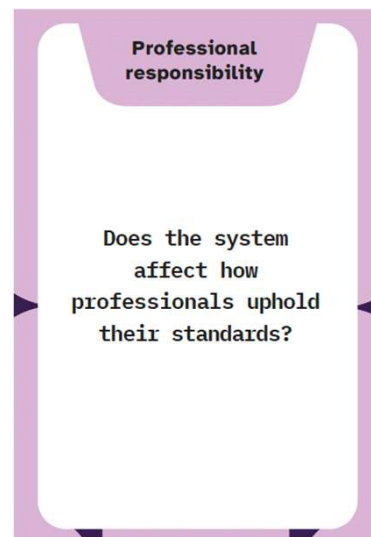
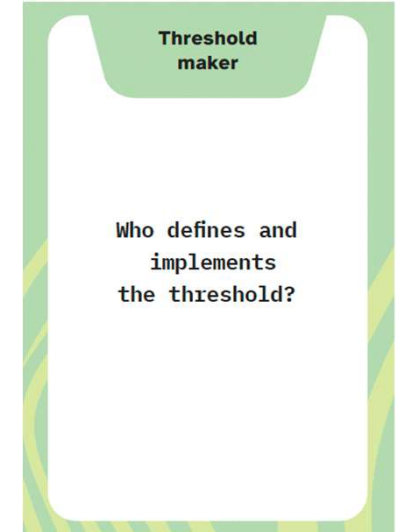
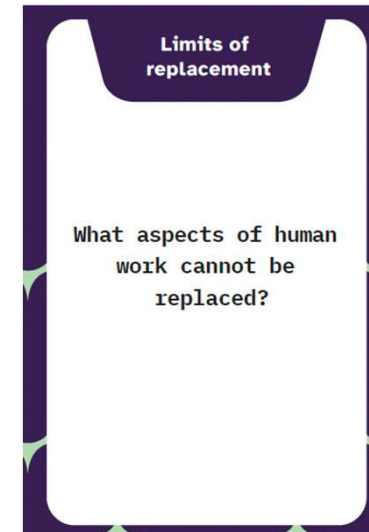
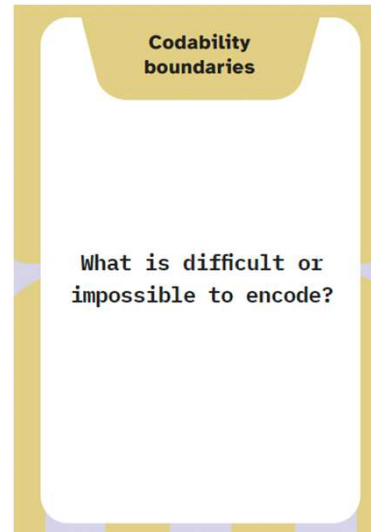
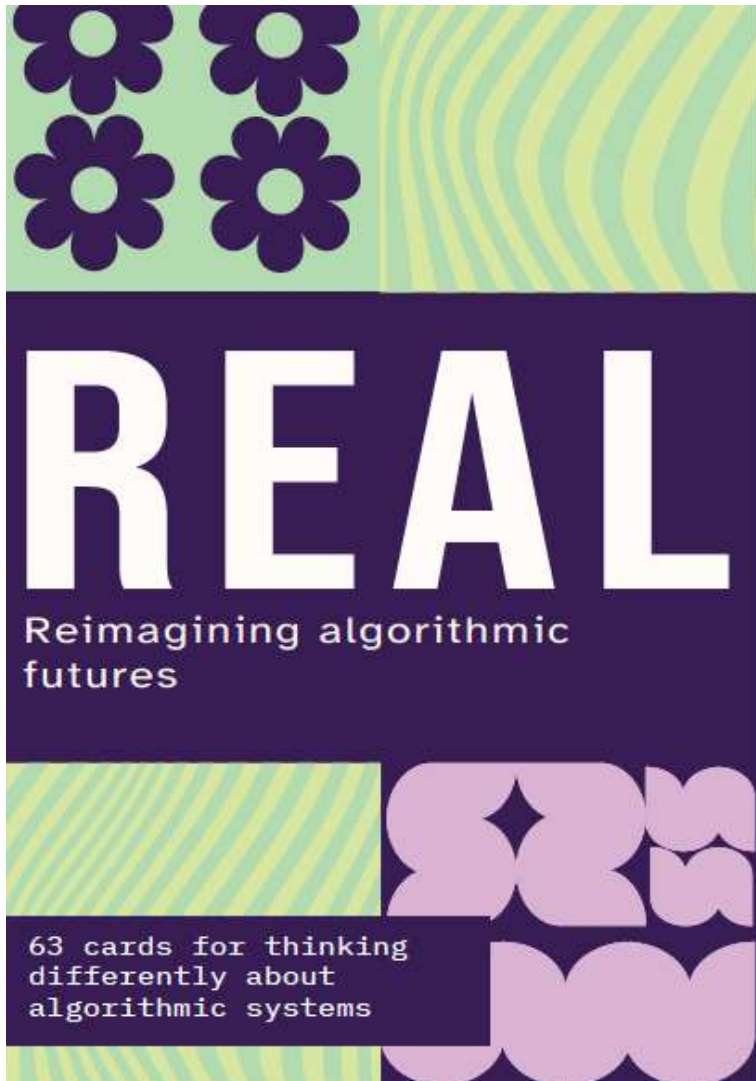
Justice-driven innovation



Unrest arising from acute societal division and unequal access to wealth prompts radical political change, and pressure to develop new economic, social and governance models.

Universities' 'third mission' - to create and share knowledge to resolve societal challenges - becomes their first mission. In the large research-intensive universities, disciplinary structures give way to radical transdisciplinarity focused on specific social challenge areas: poverty, climate, equality, governance and justice.

Universities collaborate to build their own open learning platforms as there is a mass move away from for-profit, data-extractive big tech infrastructure. This globally-accessible, digital open learning is woven through local, context-specific autonomous ecovercities and there are many strong, activist partnerships between higher education and community-based movements.





with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

How can we be taught by different systems of knowing and being, while remaining (a)cutely aware of their gifts, limitations, and contradictions, as well as our own misinterpretations and potential for appropriation?

long-haul questions

How can we hospice a dying way of knowing/being and assist with the birth of something new, still fragile, undefined and potentially (but not necessarily) wiser?

long-haul questions

How can we respect the pace and readiness of people's learning while being accountable to those negatively affected by this learning and its pace?

long-haul questions

How can we tap the possibilities that are viable but unintelligible or unimaginable within the dominant paradigm (what most people consider impossible)?

long-haul questions

What can activate a sense of care and responsibility towards everything that overrides indifference, self-interest and categories of thought?

long-haul questions

with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

with/out
modernity
decolonialfutures.net

For design/development:

Workshopping from the entangled practices of rage, hope and care to imagine new futures in digital education.

For foundational research:

Utilising speculative methods to watch knowledge emerge by challenging what we thought we knew.



Learning, Media and Technology

ISSN: 1743-9884 (Print) 1743-9892 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cjem20

'Help!?' My students created an evil AI': on the irony of speculative methods and design fiction

Lina Rahm

This talk draws on imaginative inter-thinking with these colleagues:

- Bock, A., Macgilchrist, F., Rabenstein, K., & Wagener-Böck, N. (2024). Hoping for Community in a Technologically Decelerated World - A Critical Utopian Approach. *Futures*, 163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2024.103434>
- Costello, E., McDonald, J., Macgilchrist, F., Jandrić, P., Carbonel, H., Crighton, S., Buch, A., & Peters, M. A. (2024). Speculative Practicescapes of Learning Design and Dreaming. *Postdigital Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-024-00465-5>
- Flury, C., Hof, B., & Macgilchrist, F. (2026/accepted). From Mundane Reality to a Bright Future? Technopedagogical Visions and their Historical Configurations. In L. Gourlay et al. (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Science and Technology Studies in Education*. Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-92-1483-9_11
- Macgilchrist, F., Allert, H., & Bruch, A. (2020). Students and society in the 2020s: Three future 'histories' of education and technology. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 45(1), 76-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2019.1656235>
- Macgilchrist, F., & Costello, E. (2023). Imagination and justice: Teaching the future(s) of higher education through Africanfuturist speculative fiction. In L. Czerniewicz & C. Cronin (Eds.), *Higher Education for Good* (pp. 445–472). Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0363.19>
- Macgilchrist, F., Jarke, J., Allert, H., & Cerratto Pargman, T. (Eds.). (2024). *Designing Postdigital Futures (Special Issue)*. Postdigital Science and Education, Vol 6(1). <https://link.springer.com/journal/42438/volumes-and-issues/6-1>.
- Macgilchrist, F., Allert, H., Cerratto Pargman, T., & Jarke, J. (2024). Designing postdigital futures: Which designs? Whose futures? *Postdigital Science and Education*, 6(1), 13-24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-022-00389-y>
- Macgilchrist, F., Jarke, J., Allert, H., & Cerratto Pargman, T. (2024). Design Beyond Design Thinking: Designing Postdigital Futures when Weaving Worlds with Others. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 6(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-023-00447-z>
- Suoranta, J., Teräs, M., Teräs, H., Jandrić, P., Ledger, S., Macgilchrist, F., & Prinsloo, P. (2022). Speculative Social Science Fiction of Digitalization in Higher Education: From What Is to What Could Be. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 4, 224-236. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00260-6>
- Williamson, B., Macgilchrist, F., & Potter, J. (2024). Near future academic publishing – a speculative social science fiction experiment. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 49(4), 523-526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2024.2436835>

Further references

- UNICEF <https://www.youthmentalhealthcoalition.org/media/591/file/Genz-global-report-EN.pdf>
- Uppsala Conflict Data Program <https://ucdp.uu.se>
- Bayne, S. (2024). Digital education utopia. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 49(3), 506-521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2023.2262382>
- Birhane, A. (2021). Algorithmic injustice: a relational ethics approach. *Patterns* 2(2): 1.9.
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2018). Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's Relation to the Contemporary Subject. *Television & New Media*, 20(4), 336-349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418796632>
- Elliott, D., & Culhane, D. (Eds.). (2017). *A Different Kind of Ethnography: Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*. University of Toronto Press.
- Golumbia, D. (2024). *Cyberlibertarianism: The Right-Wing Politics of Digital Technology*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hrastinski, S., Costello, E., & Rahm, L. (Eds.) (2026). Research on Educational Fiction (Special Issue). *Learning, Media & Technology*, 51(3).
- Jarke, J., Prietl, B., Egbert, S., Boeva, Y., Heuer, H., & Arnold, M. (Eds.). (2024). *Algorithmic Regimes: Methods, Interactions, and Politics*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Mühlhoff, R. (2025). *Künstliche Intelligenz und der neue Faschismus*. Reclam.
- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. NYU Press.
- Ross, J. (2023). *Digital Futures for Learning. Speculative Methods and Pedagogies*. Routledge.
- Ruff, M.-B., & Wortmann, K. (2025). Counterfactual thought in educational theory: Towards a heuristic of modes and figurations of 'As if' and 'What if'. *Research in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237251385911>
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Profile Books.

Card decks for speculative practices

Higher Education Futures:

<https://www.de.ed.ac.uk/project/higher-education-futures>

REAL (REimagining ALgorithmic Futures): <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/reimagining-public-values-in-algorithmic-futures/whats-new/the-real-card-deck-thinking-differently-about-algorithmic-systems>

With/Out Modernity:

<https://decolonialfutures.net/withoutmodernitycards/>

The Oracle for Transfeminist Technologies:

<https://transfeministech.codingrights.org/>

The Thing from the Future:

https://atelierdesfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CandyWatson_2015_FUTURETHING_Print-and-Play.pdf

Many thanks
for your attention!

felicitas.macgilchrist@uni-oldenburg.de

4 SPECULATIVE
PRACTICES

3 CARE

2 HOPE

1 RAGE

For design/development:

Workshopping from the entangled
practices of rage, hope and care to imagine
new futures in digital education.

For foundational research:

Utilising speculative methods to watch
knowledge emerge by challenging what we
thought we knew.

Photo by [Lili Popper](#) on [Unsplash](#)