

Regarding the world of today, interpretive theorist might suggest that we now live within a multitude of realities. This vein of theory posits that reality is subjective according to each individual, and that realities are socially constructed through communities of agreement. Because interpretivists believe there is no objective reality outside of the self, there is an awareness given to the possibility of biased research:

“Because the values and theoretical beliefs of researchers cannot fully be removed from their inquiry, interpretivists believe research *on* human beings *by* human beings cannot yield objective results. Thus, rather than seeking an objective perspective, interpretivists look for meaning in the subjective experiences of individuals engaging in social interaction.” (Wikipedia, *Antipositivism*)

In ways, this sort of thinking calls to mind certain parts of the design process and design research. “... look for meaning in the subjective experiences of individuals” reminds me of ethnographic research, which involves becoming intensely familiar with a subject through shared experience(s). And the notion of “awareness” toward research bias reminds me of primary research, during which the opinions of researchers (designers) might interfere with the outcomes of the project.

In *Speculative City*, I find myself amidst an interesting dichotomy. In this studio, I am asked (and permitted!) to see myself as something “other” than my major of Communication Design—which I quite enjoy. I am free to consider potential harms and unintended consequences my field has regarding capitalism, and am encouraged to imagine futures where my career might appear in wildly different forms. Meanwhile, while on co-op and in certain other studios, encouraged to become “professionally palatable.” It almost feels like a pressure to fit inside the box of Designer, proper. I feel similarly to one statement from Chapter 6 of *Speculative Everything* which states “...we are usually on the wrong side of spectacle, helping construct ones that encourage people to consume more.”

In this way I feel that *Speculative City* allows me to look at design and my career through an interpretivist lens. While I am on the inside, I can acknowledge the bias that I have (from co-op and other studios) and continue to think speculatively and engage in experimental discourse.

I recently made this connection between material from my Theory class and *Spec City*, so please forgive this soapbox moment. I’m just excited! Hooray for learning...

“Every act of creation requires destruction. For designers to materialize a particular future, they must dislodge an existing present... Debates are things that designers need to make happen.” (Cameron Tonkinwise, “Just Design”)

Something that excites me about *Speculative City*, and speculative design in general, is perhaps this notion of “disobedience” that speaks to me... Speculative thinking allows my brain to let down barriers of thought— certain barriers of “reality”— that would normally prevent me from presenting extrapolated ideas. The above quote by Tonkinwise is highly encouraging to me in that it encourages me to extend my thinking beyond boundaries of familiarity.

Tonkinwise is encouraging people to “dislodge” comfortable ideas of what is proper and “functional”. To me, this speaks to the idea of not being afraid to fail– which is a mindset I come back to constantly. One could say that speculative design as a whole is the freedom to “fail,” and not necessarily in a negative context. “Large-scale speculative design contests “official reality ”; it is a form of dissent expressed through alternative design proposals...” (Duane–Raby).

“Speculative design... can inspire imagination and a feeling that, if not exactly anything, more is definitely possible. The actual limits of what is achievable depend in part on the beliefs people hold about what sorts of alternatives are viable. The beliefs people hold about limits systematically affect what is possible.” I love this position because it presents the notion that people must have faith in possible change before its really “possible.” From this perspective, speculative designs must first be powerful to evoke feelings of trust and confidence from audiences/clients/populations. Only when there are adequate beliefs that better futures are possible will we be able to move forward with speculative futures to actionable movement.

“If our values , mental models, and ethics change, then the world flows from that worldview will be different, and we hope better.”

[Speculative Everything, Chapter 6](#)

“Just Design” by Cameron Tonkinwise

<https://medium.com/@camerontw/just-design-b1f97cb3996f>

“James Bridle on why technology is creating a new dark age”

<https://www.theverge.com/2018/7/16/17564174/james-bridle-new-dark-age-book-computational-thinking-interview>

Antipositivism

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipositivism>