

## SENSING THE FUTURE

AT THE FOUR IN100Y-SEMINARS, PARTICIPANTS WERE INVITED TO EXPLORE AND ENGAGE IN A HOLISTIC FORM OF VISIONING AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION THROUGH TAILOR-MADE PERFORMANCE INSTALLATIONS. MEET THREE OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THESE SELECTED INTERVIEWS AND READ ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE PLAYFUL AND EXPERIMENTAL SEMINAR DESIGNS.

BY INGA GERNER NIELSEN,  
FICTION PIMPS/ HOUSE OF FUTURES

The journey of 'In 100 Years – Starting Now' took the Reisende on time travels through the canals of Copenhagen year 2112, down sensuous walks through future scenarios as performance installations, into mysterious explorations of imaginary cities and laboratories in the Future Mind Tours Headquarters.

What was going through the minds of these participants as they moved? Which reflections were activated along the way? Two of the most important findings extracted from the performance action research of In100Y, is that travelling with Future Mind Tours establishes a common ground for any group of people, and requires and strengthens an open mind, something everyone agrees on, is vital when travelling far into the inner landscape of the future.

We now invite you dear reader, to become a Reisende by exploring some of these moments through the eyes and reflections of chosen seminar participants, their descriptions condensed and transformed into small

travelogues, becoming vessels to carry you into the otherwise unknown territories of In100Years.

### MICHAEL – AN EXPERIENCED REISENDE

The journeys of 'In 100 Years – Starting Now' began on a Wednesday morning at a dock on the outskirts of Copenhagen. The location was unfamiliar to many of the seminar participants, and some had trouble finding it. Arriving at last, they were met by creature-like people dressed in black organza, silvery veils and tagged with black ink signaling their imaginary origin. The participants would soon get to know these people as the agents of Future Mind Tours. Boarding the boat, the participants or 'Reisende', started their journey. Together we sailed into the grey waters and foggy air of that spring morning in June 2011 on an Imaginary Tour of Copenhagen transformed into sites of year 2112.

The Reisende, Michael Stubberup, was pleased. When he had first been invited to participate in the seminar project, he imagined that the scale would be expansive, something which was confirmed right away. Look-

ing around at his fellow Reisende, Michael suspected that a lot of them were thinking, *'When are we going to do what we're actually here for?'* The obvious opening of a seminar would have been to find ones seat on location, listen to lectures, take notes, meet up with colleagues and make new acquaintances during the breaks. However, Michael felt that this first journey was exactly what was needed - Human beings getting together, leaping into new landscapes, where fresh approaches could be fostered.

Having worked with similar processes for many years, Michael would advise other Reisende to activate a form of self-awareness which would allow them to notice and welcome their own resistance during the journey – a position from which they could challenge their preconceptions and potentially evolve. The agents were presenting similar guidelines, pointing the Reisende to the purpose of the journey: *"In order for our agents to take you on an intense tour into your mind, we need to get rid of the barriers standing in the way of your visions ... Do not get fixated on just one future. We are now approaching the first image of 2112 ..."*

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### ACTION & PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

Action Research refers to experimental qualitative research, which started within the field of educational studies and the social sciences. At its simplest, it is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by the participants to improve their understanding of a certain practice and the situation in which the practice is carried out.

As part of the action research of the project 'In100Years', we have developed methods specifically designed to document the subjective experience of the performance. We build in striking points during the journeys where the participants are

invited to give different kinds of poetic statements representing their experience in the moment. We also conduct follow-up interviews, guiding former participants into revisiting their memory of the seminar, going back in time and telling the story of their journey. Conducting these qualitative interviews in our action research is part of reopening the space in which we can explore the future landscapes opened between participants, performers and the different rooms and places the journeys take us into.



MICHAEL STUBBERUP, CEO SYNerGAIA and member of the board of Vækstcenteret.

And so, the *Reisende* sailed through five institutional milestones transformed into new sites of the future: the milestones of politics, religion, economy, art and the social, before they entered their next destination: the check-in gates. Here, they were given a passport and were now prepared to enter ‘The Red Room’, the heart of the seminar, where the lectures, that some had so anxiously been waiting for, were presented.

The second time Michael heard the voice of Future Mind Tours, was on the second seminar of ‘In 100 Years – Starting Now’, sitting in an older auditorium, his eyes were following the silhouette of an agent walking into a landscape of limestone, clear blue water and white clay. This was the slot in the seminar program, which Michael was looking forward to the most; he was interested in experiencing the dynamics between the academic and the artistic process in the workshops. Immersing himself into the dreamlike cosmic atmosphere of the instruction video, he sensed the universe of Future Mind Tours to be slightly threatening; yet becoming more tangible, as he connected the film instructions to the two white pavilions he had passed in the yard earlier that morning. It was only when he entered the second of the two installations called ‘Two Sensed Futures’ that he realized how different the two scenarios were at their core.

Upon entering the first pavilion, a future scenario transformed into a performance-installation, he was

shown to his seat. He had entered ‘Man-made World’. Two groups of *Reisende* were sitting opposite each other. A visual web of wires drawing lines and sculpting the room drew his attention to the geometric structure of the social performance design. It reminded Michael of a sort of a greenhouse. Almost a flying saucer. There was a pen hanging right in front him, functionally marking each individual’s responsibility to practice their citizenship and contribute with sensible solutions to a Man-Made World.

A bell of three clear tones rang and the voice of an agent of Future Mind Tours said: *“If this is your first Sensed Future, take a moment. Breathe. Listen to the sounds of a Man-Made World.”* To his own surprise, he found himself entering into a completely different state of mind just minutes after he had entered the live scenario. It became very easy for him to follow the instructions. Instead of expecting to see a theater performance played out in front of him, he focused and listened to what was going on within himself. Sitting there in the middle of all the sounds of mumbling voices coming from distant democratic assemblies and codes being typed into the invisible hollow, yet soft sound of a machine, Michael noticed a heightened alertness, a kind of acceleration of emotion.

Entering his second sensed future, ‘Power of Nature’, he felt a different kind of intensity. The room was intrusive. He found himself amongst split mechanical parts, green plants, insects

and fur. Images of the temples he had once visited in Mexico came to mind. Ruins of a culture, which plants had crept around and inside of. Two women were crawling on the floor. Looking into the eyes of one of the women, Michael found himself mesmerized, deeply touched by the reflection of the part of himself that sometimes wondered what it would be like if he actually let everything go – if he gave in to a self-organizing life-system like the one created in this atmosphere?

Entering into the subsequent dialogues, the experiences of the two sensed futures led to lively conversations about the barriers of change, which Michael believes to be our mindset. In his opinion, staging the reality of an event like ‘In100Years’ in which the senses are valued as much as the intellectual content, is a key element in removing the barriers of the current mindset.

#### PEDER – A REISENDE REVISITING OLD DREAMS

At the third In100Y-seminar, we moved out into the forest, into the Mystery of Acorn Falls. Moving the *Reisende* north of the city into a universe, in which they could start exploring their personal desires and ideas, opening a space where a seemingly strange and poetic imagery could find its way into the seminar dialogues at any time.

The beginning of the story of their journey in Acorn Falls had already been written before they arrived: “On



PEDER AGGER (with his glasses in the middle and his cap to the right), Prof.Em. biology, former head of The Danish Council of Ethics and Danish Nature Council, Chairman of Planning Committee in The Danish Society for Nature Conservation.

*a misty day in autumn, a group gathered to solve a mystery. The Mystery of Acorn Falls. On this day, the wind stroked the trees in such a way that most of them knew that this would be a significant event. The wind seemed to enlarge the dimension of the area, and questions circled repeatedly in the air: "Why are we here? What brought you here?"*

Listening to the metallic noises from the soundscape of the Future Mind Tours instruction video, Peder Agger thought of the associations with the world of 'Stalker', a film by the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky. Many years had passed since he had last seen the film, but he remembered the image of a man wandering through a world of empty sewage pools, looking for fragments of the old life that had almost vanished completely under moss and ferns. Peder welcomed what he felt to be a dystopian atmosphere. To him, it was the right place to start looking for new futures. He feels that far too many visions of the future are generally like the graphic illustrations of new architecture, picturing places where the sun never retreats behind the grey of stormy clouds. Places, where chronically happy people walk in scenery of un-natural nature. In Acorn Falls, he would soon unlock the lost memories and visions that had truly fueled his actions in life. Imagery that had been powerful, inspiring and anything but pleasant.

At the threshold of entering deeper into Acorn Falls, Peder was handed a transparent map, making visible

the invisible sights of the place. He thought it best to walk alone. On his way to see what the map designated as 'The Machinery' he saw a woman in an indigo jacket balancing on a tree trunk singing old love songs to other Reisende. To her left was an open field for lumber work. Around the field, Peder noticed small hourglasses lying around in the mud, and in the middle was an old door with a freshly carved poem by William Blake: 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time'. Peder looked up when he heard a knocking from the inside of a window. A woman with a white hat waved at him, signaling to him to come into 'The Hour Glass Inn' – a place Peder recognized to be a traditional bar for lumberjacks. The woman introduced herself as Pam and told him that she collected and studied significant events. "This is what we do in Acorn Falls; opening up into the mystery of what makes an acorn fall", she said. It didn't take long before she let him to share a childhood memory. Peder saw himself walking in the forest with his father, stopping to watch a bird hunting for a mouse. Then, an old dream suddenly came to mind. A dream, that had made him realize he had to make a difficult, but necessary change to his love life. He was there again in his dream, dancing in a circle of fire.

Pam smiled as she wrote down his story and the notes, she intended to connect with her newest findings. On the fifth page of her book, it read: 'A specific moment in time and space

where everything changes. Where the life path of that character is turned upside down. A moment of clarity. A striking point. A significant event. So prior to this day, life has passed like sand running through an hourglass, such are the days of our lives, but then it happens, that moment that changes everything'. Walking out of the Hour Glass Inn, Peder was astonished and thrilled that meeting a stranger in a place like Acorn Falls had made him recall such specific memories and personal dreams. He hoped that his fellow Reisende had had similar experiences in the other parts of Acorn Falls which were still unknown to him.

On the last part of his journey through the woods, he passed by another open field where two agents were conducting an unusual method of inquiry, once discovered in a dream by a fellow special agent. Peder liked this playful method. He thought that in times of great uncertainty, we need alternative measures like asking the hand throwing a rock to give us an answer to a question, or finding other ways of working with the dynamics of the mind in the gaps between conscious and unconscious states. During difficult times, Peder had occasionally felt he was left with no other option than to trust his intuition. This is also why he appreciates the approaches employed in 'In100Years' – and how these types of journeys and experiments dissolve boundaries and categories, a necessary process if we are to anticipate the future.



KAREN BLINCOE (to the left and the right) is Director of ICIS and Chairman of Danish Designers. She has also been a member of the Core Group of In100Y (see p. 31-32)

### KAREN – A BALANCING REISENDE

The fourth and final In100Y-seminar took place in January 2012. As agents of Future Mind Tours, we had decided to invite the participants into our headquarters at Carlsberg Academy, former residence of Nobel Prize winner Niels Bohr, who had held the scientific ‘Copenhagen Conferences,’ which had no programs and included theater performances, at this location back in 1929.

Finding her way to the hidden mansion of the headquarters, Karen Blincoe recognized the gratifying feeling of disorientation that she had felt when coming to the docks on the first journey into ‘In100Years’. It had made her summon up her intuition and sharpened her senses, and Karen suggests that new Reisenende come with an open mind. They should be ready to enjoy and to contribute. Listening to a Future Mind Tour lecture on rituals and root-metaphors in a mind shift, Karen recognized many of the points made about the potential power of rituals. She has had a lot of experience with different kinds of rituals and recognized the ritual structures and states they created on the journeys of the In100Y-seminars. From journey to journey she has observed how other Reisenende have become more and more accustomed to and excited about the different modes of knowledge production. The more experienced Reisenende took pleasure in the thrill of knowing that they would never know what to expect... Even sitting and thinking about all the things that might happen

at any moment, was one of the things that opened her mind.

After the lecture, Karen went into the office of Future Mind Tours, where books were lying on the floor. “Be careful not to fall out of poetry”, an agent said, and Karen followed the instructions, stepping lightly onto the books. She got totally absorbed in the game and found a sort of symmetry, balancing and aligning her steps according to the movements of the other people in the room. She was with the others and at the same time in her own world. She was walking on water. Floating.

Curious to see the rest of the rooms in the headquarters, she walked on down the halls into ‘The Delivery’. In the old living room, people were now sitting in smaller groups engaged in discussions. In the middle of a room, an agent in white fur was consulting an oracle. Putting her hand into the heart of the oracle, Karen felt as if she was being submerged into a deep ocean. Her question related to her new field of research in sustainability utopias.

Afterwards, she was standing in front of an integral cross of inner and outer, top-down and bottom-up fields of work (see p. xx), where Reisenende were invited to place a black dot in the quadrant, they thought their work was, and a red dot where they thought the focus of future of sustainability should be. She put her black dot on top of her red and thought: ‘This is the mind shift! Instead of longing to be somewhere else, we should be working where we

want to be and belief will contribute to the creation of a sustainable future’.

Karen soon followed the sound of a sort of Indian fusion of electronic music into the ‘Conscious Construction Site.’ The sound came from DJ Hvad’s Indian drone machines and other sound devices on a set placed between ancient statues and new movable pillars of black, white and red boxes. At each pillar stood Future Mind Tour agents ready to use different art forms to shape spaces in which the Reisenende could see and shape their own ideas about future mindsets transformed and expressed in gestures of sound, imagery and movements.

The music was loud, but Karen felt drawn to it. After listening intensely to music for a while, she felt inspired to create a collage. Another Reisenende switched the boxes around constantly. Karen did not feel disturbed by it, but played along, cutting out pictures of nature and putting them onto other Reisenende’s collages on the boxes, which were now becoming a collective, moving image. Again, Karen found a sort of balance between her inner desire and the presence of other people. Perhaps because there were so many people around her, she did not paste any people into the collage. She was drawn to images of trees, faunas, colors, skies and animals. Elements of nature she could not live without. Without nature, people’s existence would be very fragile. Karen felt and saw her love for nature in her imagery. Felt how it gave her strength and

knowledge and connected her with her intuition and her spirituality.

Agent Armstrong had come from a pillar of movement, absorbed the nature of Karen's collages and then transformed them into a dance of living, circular, spiral movement, reflecting her work. Feeling the movement together, the agent and Karen then talked about how nothing in nature is static, how everything is circular and never ends anywhere. It is a constant change that never comes back to the same point, but always moves into something new, and in these movements, always finds its balance.

Later, when Karen walked back into the Conscious Construction Site for a moment, she felt terrified when she saw that many of the boxes with her images had been moved around. But then she realized that this was in fact exactly what her work, imagery and choreography in the headquarters had been all about; the fluid, ever-changing flow. Experiencing how ideas may change all the time, and that you cannot expect them or anything else to stay the same forever. You have to become fluid yourself. Embodying the fluidity in a liminal space like this, once again connected Karen with her strong sense of actually anticipating a more balanced future – in many respects.

#### TRIBUTE

Staging the qualitative interviews with participants as stories of In100 Years is inspired by the work of performance artist and scholar in Performance Studies, Anna Deavera Smith, who turns interview texts into scripts and analyzes them by performing them on stage. Smith introduced herself to the people she interviewed as follows: "If you give me an hour of your time, I'll invite you to see your self performed"

And thank you, dear Reisende, for opening your minds and taking this ride into the unknown with us. It has been very inspiring for us to see what was in there, and perhaps we will meet again? Please keep your hearts open and ready to create more journeys with us in the Future.

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**TO ME "IN100YEARS" IS....**

**... a wonderful beginning.**

**... mind blowing.**

**... a very important brick in the wall leading to future sustainability for the planet.**

**... very chaotic to think about.**

**... thought provoking, stimulating and inspiring.**

**... an ambitious, necessary project that should be continued.**

**... the group of people we have waited for.**

At every seminar the participants have been asked to finish the sentence: To me "In100Y" is ... This is a selection of the full sentences from the four In100Y-seminars.