

Call for papers - International conference

## Speculative narratives from the margins: social alternatives, decolonial ecologies, and critical knowledge

Pau, Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, and Wednesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

What if the most fertile futures were invented from the margins—where undermined traditions and narratives reshape our horizons? From anticipation to speculation, narratives of the future become spaces of symbolic resistance where critical imaginaries, capable of reconfiguring our ways of conceiving time, living things and connectedness, emerge.

Thus, speculative fiction—whether science fiction, dystopian and utopian narratives, uchronia, or indigenous futurisms—accounts for much more than a mere projection in the future. It is a means to experiment with other temporalities and challenge the linearity of dominant narratives. By shattering chronologies and the “logic of inevitability,” it paves the way for possible futures while providing alternatives to the present. Consequently, these perceptions of time are more than mere aesthetic responses. They carry far-reaching political and epistemological consequences. By allowing temporalities which can be plural, circular, or detached from Western models, speculative narratives enable us to question systems of domination and explore other ways of relating to the world.

Science fiction, as the word suggests, implies referring to science. Logically, speculative fiction is partly based on scientific material, shared by the author and their readership, from which possible or fictional futures can be imagined. Science, however, is also structured by hegemonic narratives that are blind spots— sources of bias preventing us from imagining possible worlds. Standpoint epistemology and, more recently, research on epistemic injustice, have made it possible to clarify the role of marginalised knowledge in the constitution of legitimate knowledge. Today, the environmental crisis has brought these tensions between legitimate and situated knowledge to the fore. In other words, the environmental crisis challenges the philosophy of environmental sciences in many ways.

In such a context, futuristic narratives offer a unique space for questioning our relationship with the living world and the future. While the Anthropocene is often depicted as an era of disaster and unavoidable destruction, speculative narratives also explore conditions for a liveable present (and future) by suggesting other ways of coexisting with living beings, by inventing narrative forms to describe climate change, and by imagining a possible future beyond the disaster. How can narratives enabling us to envision a present that is “still possible” emerge? How can one think beyond the announced catastrophe, by listening to the voices arising from outside the dominant Western narrative, where decolonial cosmologies and plural ways of inhabiting the Earth are being reinvented?

Concurrently, many voices from Indigenous cultures, diasporic and decolonial literatures explore these narrative alternatives to offer reinterpretations of obliterated stories, to reactivate “silenced” cosmologies, and to restore ancestral knowledge. From these perspectives, imagining the future becomes a way to rethink the present, reconnect the past

and future prospects, unlock narrative and political potentials, and reassert the value of ancestral knowledge in the contemporary world.

Likewise, the vitality and creativity of queer and feminist speculative fiction actively contribute to the critical analysis of a present still dominated by patriarchal and heteronormative codes. Science fiction, especially, seeks to imagine futures free from contemporary oppression and binarism; to challenge normative systems taken for granted, and consider, through futuristic and/or utopian projections, the aspirations of marginalised people. Science fiction has managed to move away from the manly values that characterised its early days to renew itself persistently and to invent new modes of inter-individual, inter-gender, and even inter-species relationships.

The use of fiction as a tool for political questioning therefore constitutes a genuine declaration of a “war of imaginations” contrasting the prevailing political narratives with alternative spaces that outline the fringes of a “radical utopia.” This ideal “nowhere,” accessible only asymptotically, claims its subversive power in the perpetual journey toward the otherworldliness of fiction. In this respect, speculative fiction becomes an act of resistance to the tyranny of the inevitable thanks to a double shift –it is both critical of a dystopian reality embedded in storytelling, and generative of new possibilities responding to the “potential truths” of contemporary post-politics. The specular representation of a moving fiction or a passing text reinforces this form of resistance through imagination. Contemporary creation unleashes all the potential for fighting against the dominant narrative through shifting fictional elements—from the ancient myths supplying contemporary literature with generative material, to works that maintain the ambivalence between reality and fiction, including post-realist initiatives exploring subjective or intersubjective realities through intertextuality. Intertextual and intercultural circulations thus reinforce the dynamics of political questioning as patterns, figures, and archetypes move between narratives, languages, and geographical areas, producing multiple echoes. These connections reveal the vitality of speculative fiction as well as its ability to travel, transform, and hybridise, encouraging one to consider these imagined narratives not as isolated productions but as networks in motion, capable of generating symbolic and social alternatives.

Choosing the margins as the main focus of this conference will help to examine how speculative fiction disrupts hegemonic narratives, bringing to light subaltern or minoritised modes of knowledge, temporality, and resistance; how it operates somewhere between the end of the world and the possibility of a new beginning to allow us to imagine other ways of inhabiting the Earth and of projecting ourselves collectively into the future. Proposals exploring these issues through the study of narrative processes, cultural appropriations, and intertextual circulations, will be welcome. Cross disciplinary approaches will also be appreciated.

Papers may examine, although not limitedly, one of the following topics:

#### 1. De-chronologies and decentred ways of imagining time

- How futuristic narratives (speculation, dystopia, uchronia, Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurisms, etc.) deconstruct the linearity of historical time and the dominant narratives about progress.
- The future as a critical tool to counter the inevitability of progress or catastrophe.

- Circular, spiralling, and plural temporalities as alternatives to the perception of time as an unequivocal and linear process.
2. Environmental and poetic narratives of habitability
    - The role of science fiction and speculative fiction in representing the Anthropocene, climate change, and connectedness between living beings.
    - Eco-utopias/biotopias, speculative ecologies, solarpunk, solastalgia, collapsology – how literature and the arts explore the conditions for a liveable present/future.
    - Ecological allegories, eco-poetics, and imaginary cohabitation with non-humans.
    - Environmental ethics and political philosophy of the crisis of the living world – acting against dominant views.
    - Integration of minoritised perspectives in science – from marginal to scientific environmental knowledge.
  3. Indigenous knowledge, decoloniality, and marginalised voices
    - How Indigenous narratives engage with imaginary visions of the future to reinterpret obliterated stories and reactivate silenced epistemologies.
    - The role of non-Western cosmologies in expanding narrative horizons.
    - Challenging imperial and colonial narratives through speculative fiction.
    - Indigenous futurisms as movements generating alternative worlds.
    - Feminist and queer science fiction as counter discourses.
  4. Intertextual circulation, cultural transfers, and decolonial hybridisation
    - Dialogues between texts, traditions, and genres – how patterns and archetypes evolve through time and space.
    - International science fiction and speculative fiction networks.
    - How movements from the margins (translations, adaptations, appropriations, hybridisations) reconfigure global narratives of the future.

### *Organising committee*

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**Submissions either in English, French or Spanish (between 300 and 500 words including 5 keywords) may be sent to [anticipation.marges2026@univ-pau.fr](mailto:anticipation.marges2026@univ-pau.fr) before Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> 2026 along with a short bio-bibliographical note (100-150 words).**

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