



News:

Establishment of Asiascape Occasional Pa- pers (*Asiascape Ops*)

In recognition of the under-representation of cyberculture in many of the mainstream academic journals (and hence the difficulty encountered by scholars, journalists and others in finding reliable, scholarly sources in these fields), *Asiascape Ops* deliberately utilises free, web-based distribution in order to assist in the dissemination of serious scholarship in the areas of cyberculture, animanga etc., with the goal of helping to establish a lively, rich, diverse and thriving field. Materials available here can be used freely in teaching and/or research, and we simply ask that proper scholarly conventions (including copyright) be observed when citing the material.

Submissions to the editorial board are welcome. In keeping with international academic practices, all submissions will be blind-refereed by at least two recognised scholars in the appropriate field. *Asiascape Ops* has its own ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) references. Applications for permission to reprint should be directed to the editors.

Inquiries and submissions to the editors: ops@asiascape.net



Peter Pels & Chris Goto-Jones, 3rd October 2007 - Leiden

NWO/Asiascape Workshop: The Futures of Digital Technology

Rationale:

Both the discourses of science fiction and those of global development have relied, in many of cases, on futures imagined as a result of technological change. The futures of digital technology, in particular, are as old as the immediate post-1945 period, and have predicted a number of different social revolutions: freedom from labour through artificial life or intelligence, fantasies of total surveillance and control, fantasies of libertarian life beyond the electronic frontier, even postreligious images of transcending the material. These futures changed from time to time and place to place: usually positive when predicting Third World development, often more pessimistic when written up as science fiction, but always steering the actual process of invention, investment and techno-scientific policy, whether in the West, the East, the North or the South.

Format:

This workshop brought together academic researchers in the fields of digital technology and popular culture, and representatives from beyond the academe who were concerned with the commercial, industrial and policy futures of digital technology, to discuss what kind of research is needed to understand how the futures of these various sectors may relate to the imaginary futures envisioned by science fiction and development since 1945.

The discussions in this one-day workshop started by considering the future of thinking machines and the global village that, according to Richard Barbrook's *Imaginary Futures* (Pluto, 2007) has dominated Western thinking since the rise of robots and cybernetics. Our first step was to ask scholars familiar with digital technology in East Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa to reflect on the question how different these imagined futures were and are from developments elsewhere in the world, especially in the field of "ICT for development". Secondly, we asked the various representatives of cultural, policy-making and

industrial organizations to comment on what kind of research in this field would be most relevant and needed in their sectors.

The tone and purpose of the workshop was discursive and open, and we planned to translate the results of the seminar into foci for a proposed research project, **The Future is a Different Country: Comparing Digital Futures**, which we planned to file with NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) later in October 2007. Invited participants were asked to be ready and willing to present their views on the key topics and the general area.

Result:

The workshop succeeded in meeting its goals, and it resulted in the submission of a fully developed research proposal to the NWO for consideration for a major grant. In addition, the workshop concluded that a second meeting should be held in January, focussing on the meaning and dimensions of futurology in East Asia specifically.

Keynote speaker: Richard Barbrook



Picture: © Alex Veness, 2007

Richard Barbrook is the author of Pluto Press's Spring 2007 release *Imaginary Futures* and has also written a number of influential essays on the politics of digital technology, and especially on the clash between commerce and cooperation within the Internet, including 'The Hi-Tech Gift Economy', 'Cyber-communism', 'The Regulation of Liberty' and, with Andy Cameron, 'The Californian Ideology', published in 1995, which was a controversial critique of the neo-liberal politics of Wired magazine. Between 1995 and 2005, he coordinated the Hypermedia Research Centre at the University of Westminster and was course leader of its MA in Hypermedia Studies, the first of its kind on offer in Britain. Educated at Cambridge, Essex and Kent Universities, Barbrook is currently a Senior Lecturer of Politics at the University of Westminster.



Imaginary Futures: From Thinking Machines to the Global Village
by Richard Barbrook
Pluto Press | April 2007 | ISBN 0745326609

In "Imaginary Futures," Richard Barbrook argues that, "at the height of the Cold War, the Americans invented a truly revolutionary tool: the Internet. Yet, for all of its libertarian potential, hi-tech science soon became a tool of geopolitical dominance. The rest of the world was expected to follow America's path into the networked future.

"Today, we're still told that the Net is creating the information society. Barbrook shows how we can reclaim its revolutionary purpose: how the DIY ethic of the internet can help people shape information technologies in their own interest and reinvent their own, improved visions of the future."

(from the back cover)

Invited participants:

- ◆ Richard Barbrook (University of Westminster, London)
- ◆ Bart Barendregt (Leiden University)
- ◆ Young Sook Choi (Kings College, London)
- ◆ Chris Goto-Jones (Leiden University)
- ◆ Carolien Glazenburg (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam)
- ◆ Mark Harrison (University of Westminster, London)
- ◆ Christian van 't Hof (Rathenau Instituut)
- ◆ Niels Huijbregts (XS4all.net)
- ◆ Sharon Kinsella (Oxford University)
- ◆ Hans Kuijpers (SieboldHuis Museum, Leiden)
- ◆ Susan Napier (Tufts University, Boston)
- ◆ Merel Noorman (University of Maastricht)
- ◆ Bob Overbeken (XS4all.net)
- ◆ Peter Pels (Leiden University)
- ◆ John Postill (Sheffield Hallam University)
- ◆ Marleen Stikker (The Waag Society)
- ◆ Michiel van Well (Stichting Toekomstbeeld der Techniek)
- ◆ Dorien Zandbergen (Leiden University)



Established in September 2007, Asiascape.net is the home of the Contemporary East Asian Media Centre (CEAMC). It is an attempt to build a new international research coalition in the rapidly emerging fields of cyberculture (New Media, Convergence Culture, Video Games and other related media, such as fan-culture) and anime-manga (Anime and Manga), especially as they relate to (or originate from) East Asia.

It is well known that a large proportion of this type of media emerges from the East Asian region (Japan, China and Korea), and Asiascape seeks to sponsor and organize research into the importance of these media as a series of transformative, cutting edge, transnational global commodities, and/or as a series of cultural products that reveal much about East Asia itself.

There is a scattered (and growing) group of international researchers working in this field and, in addition to conducting its own original research, Asiascape aims to provide a hub for the organization and direction of this rapidly emerging field. With an international advisory board of leading scholars, Asiascape will sponsor a series of 'state of the field' conferences and disseminate research using new and old media, including via this website and its associated news-blog, vistas: <http://vistas.asiascape.net>

Asiascape is based at Leiden University and is funded through the generosity of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), Toshiba International Foundation (TIFO) and the Modern East Asia Research Centre (MEARC):

www.mearc.eu.



Universiteit Leiden

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Submissions to Asiascape Ops:

Please send submissions to the editors at: ops@asiascape.net

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