Exploring Futures Forming Practices for Education Research:
Utopia as Method

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Declarations

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Abstract

We are confronted with global crises such as rising nationalisms, environmental destruction and increasing global inequalities. The dominant evidence-based discourse in education does not seem to be offering adequate responses to these crises. It fails to address matters of human flourishing and to create opportunities for alternative (educational) futures. This thesis redresses this gap by offering two specific crisis responses: exploring a speculative and utopian method for education research; and rethinking how curriculum in schools can be approached as a lived practice concerned with human flourishing.

I explore how utopia as a method, based on the work of sociologist Ruth Levitas, can guide the practices of education researchers in going beyond critical scholarship through engaging in ontological inquiry and direct action. I supplement utopia as method by the novel practice of ‘Punk Ethnography’, a collaborative practice that emerged from my two-year collaborative case study with one secondary international school in Hong Kong. Punk Ethnography applies elements of the punk ethos and anarchist philosophy, and makes use of ethnographic strategies to set up imaginative action-oriented initiatives. Utopia as method is put to work as the analytical framework for the case study, focused on the school-based curricular approach called ‘Human Technologies’. This practice is evaluated against four considerations of curriculum as a lived practice that is concerned with human flourishing and the good society.

My research suggests that approaches such as utopia as method and Punk Ethnography that foreground small-scale, action-oriented and creative
practices, can activate alternative futures in the present. This research contributes to the diversification of education research practices and approaches to curriculum in schools that go beyond the dominant evidence-based discourse, putting human flourishing and responsible citizenship at the centre. It suggests that crises can become opportunities for constructing alternative futures that contribute to social change.
A Manifesto for Futures Forming Practices for Education

(this is not an impact statement)

Education (research) is increasingly being instrumentalised and the commitment to ‘evidence-based everything’ is seemingly beyond question. Scholars are required to demonstrate to university administration and research funding bodies the impact that their research will have or has had. The university requirement for this thesis to include an impact statement is one such example of an attempt to capture and justify the worthiness of intellectual work within an evidence-based regime. These developments are part of more general measurement-oriented practices and a commodification of life that characterise a capitalist and instrumentalised society. This future is singular, measurable and there does not seem to be an alternative to the gospel of evidence-based everything.

And yet…

We imagine a world in which there are alternatives; a world where humans are not turned into metrics and where plurality, imagination and speculation are celebrated. We imagine universities where impact statements are a choice, not a requirement; where, when impact of research is discussed, scholars can be speculative, imaginative and hopeful, rather than spuriously empirical and instrumentalised. We imagine universities where scholars can read, think and negotiate without having to compete against each other, without having to publish or perish. We imagine schools transformed through teachers and students
engaging in the risk of education itself, not by bureaucratic demands for evidence and accountability. We imagine communities, collectives, and spaces of possibilities where collaboration, participation and direct action are practised.

We imagine the emergence of a different paradigm for education researchers and practitioners, a paradigm that puts at the centre concerns with social transformation and the creation of alternative futures through imaginative actions in the present, guided by the following ten principles:

1. The future is provisional, contingent and plural. Alternative futures are possible and are crafted through an understanding of the past and direct actions in the present.

2. Alternative futures are formed in the present through practices that require imaginative and speculative thinking and acting.

3. Education is always a political project. Education ought to be concerned with an individual commitment to the common good and living responsibly with human and non-human beings on a shared planet.

4. Education researchers and practitioners must question and resist the capitalist and instrumental logic and create alternative approaches to contribute to a society that is underpinned by values of relationality, interconnectedness and solidarity.

5. Education researchers and practitioners must play an active, engaged, imaginative and participatory role in society.
6. Education researchers must diversify and pluralise their approaches to research as an alternative to the evidence-everything gospel.

7. Education researchers and practitioners must engage with interdisciplinary imaginative and speculative theories, concepts and practices. They must be willing to advocate, through their practice, a world formed by more than mere empiricism.

8. Education researchers and practitioners must engage in ontological inquiry and must make normative judgements, where thinking and acting are congruent.

9. Anarchist organisational philosophy and a punk ethos must serve as guiding principles and practices for educators who construct alternative futures in the present.

10. Education researchers and practitioners must embrace provisionality, contingency, and plurality, and must be willing to reimagine any of the above principles, indeed the whole manifesto, at any time.

This manifesto has been co-created with the Unicorn and Stephen Chatelier.
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List of Acronyms

5+1  5+1 Model
BERA  British Educational Research Association
DIY  Do It Yourself
GCF  Global Competency Framework
GERM  Global Education Reform Movement
HT  Human Technologies
IB  International Baccalaureate
ICHK  International College Hong Kong
IGCSE  International General Certificate of Secondary Education
OECD  Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA  Programme for International Student Assessment
PE  Punk Ethnography
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WYBE  World Yearbook of Education
Figure 1: ‘Crisis as usual’, photo taken in Groningen, The Netherlands, March 2022.
Introduction

Crisis: Problem or Opportunity

My duty as a songwriter is not to try to save the world,
but rather to save the soul of the world.
This requires me to live my life on the other side of truth,
beyond conviction and within uncertainty,
where things make less sense, absurdity is a virtue and art rages and burns;
where dogma is anathema, discourse is essential, doubt is an energy,
magical thinking is not a crime and where possibility and potentiality rule.
The answers to the secrets of the heart may just be there,
in the inscrutable dark of the forest, in the unfathomable depths of the sea,
at the uncertain tips of our fingers.

(Cave, 2019, n.p.)
1. A world in permanent crisis

On 14 October 1980, my date of birth (see Figure 2), there were 4,514,154,098 people on this planet. In that same year, and one year after the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK, Ronald Reagan became president of the United States. Thatcher and Reagan led the world into the neoliberal era, under the influence of the New Right. The following decade was marked by a number of significant events, such as the lift off of the first space shuttle and the launch of MTV in 1981, followed by the Falklands war in 1982.

Figure 2: My first identification document, 1980.

In 1986, the year I started primary school, the Chernobyl disaster led to a rise in ecological and health problems in the years to follow. The Berlin wall fell in 1989
and by the end of the decade, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the US had escalated. When I entered secondary school in 1992, the United Nations organised the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which can be considered the moment at which the growing environmental crisis entered the global popular discourse.

In 2001, three years into my studies at university, the 9/11 terrorist attacks shook the world. In 2004, two years after graduation, environmentalist David Orr described a day on the planet as follows: ‘If today is a typical day on planet Earth, we will lose 116 square miles of rainforest, or about an acre a second. We will lose another 72 square miles to encroaching deserts, the results of human mismanagement and overpopulation’ (p. 7). 2008 was marked by one of the most significant global financial crises, and, simultaneously with the start of my doctoral studies in October 2019, the political crisis in Hong Kong, my place of residence at that time, escalated. By the end of 2019, the COVID-19 virus started to spread and led to fallout in economies, mental health and the environment. At the time of writing this dissertation, the pandemic was still far from resolved and the global population reached the eight billion mark, an increase of 75% since my birth.

Education seems to have contributed to an intensification of crises in my lifetime and does not seem to be offering adequate responses to larger societal issues such as rising nationalisms, environmental destruction and increasing global inequalities. This is not only an upsetting and saddening experience, but also one that demands a response that gives purpose and direction to the choices I make, as an educator, a citizen and a human being. Therefore, my doctoral thesis should be read as a personal as well as a professional crisis response.
2. What counts as a crisis?

The events that mark my lifetime are undoubtedly significant and systemic problems which have resulted in real crises. However, the popular connection between - perhaps even conflation of - ‘crisis’ and ‘problem’ can itself be problematic. It is thus necessary to first pause and consider how we might understand and theorise the notion of ‘crisis’. There can be contestations over the origins of and remedy for a crisis, which suggest that ‘a crisis can be both real and socially constructed’ (Holton, 1987, p.35). Moreover, when a crisis is taken as self-evident in its totality, the possibility for accurate diagnosis on the one hand, and imagining creative responses on the other, is foreclosed. The risk of this kind of foreclosure is facilitated by the ubiquity of crisis talk. The discourse may become a lazy way of pointing to the seriousness of society’s ills ‘without the need to clarify exactly what is meant’ by crisis (Holton, 1987, p.503).

One example is how the World Bank framed the ‘learning crisis’ in its World Development Report of 2018, extending the ‘global learning crisis’ that UNESCO reported on in 2014. The learning crisis continued to be a point of discussion in UNESCO’s 2021 report on ‘Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education’. In these publications, the learning crisis is described as manifesting itself in decreasing learning outcomes of students, particularly in the areas of literacy and mathematics, critical thinking skills and the capacity for lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2014, 2021; World Bank, 2018). The crisis discourse is presented as irrefutable. How can one not support quality learning? Yet, neither UNESCO nor the World Bank addressed how this crisis came into being and what
their own roles might have been in the crisis formation. The learning crisis discourse mainly seems to be serving as a justification for ‘a proliferation of learning metric tools, assessment programmes, and an industry of research and consulting’ (Sriprakash et al, 2020, p. 683) as the solution for what is deemed as ‘a moral and economic crisis that must be addressed immediately’ (World Bank, 2018, p. xi). I return to the learning crisis discourse in detail in Part I, arguing that it is largely a ‘manufactured crisis’ (Berliner & Biddle, 1996).

From an ethico-political perspective, without proper attention to the origins and conditions of crisis, the concept of crisis can serve to justify normative claims of “critical” opposition to the current state of society, as much as to bolster the “conservative” desire for social stability’ (Cordero, 2014, p. 500). It seems, as the above example illustrates, that it is more common to utilise crisis talk in these kinds of decontextualised ways to refer to an unwanted problem that needs to be solved, and to legitimise new truth claims. Yet, to equate ‘crisis’ with ‘problem’ is not the only way forward.

3. Towards alternative futures starting from the present

If crises represent moments of great difficulty or fundamental problems, they also produce instability and, subsequently, possibility. Biesta (2020b) has suggested that, when confronted by crisis, ‘the interruption of the normal order literally makes us think—whether we want it or not—which, as such, is a good thing’ (p.1). So, while ‘crisis’ carries negative connotations within the popular imaginary, as Biesta
goes on to note, ‘in its original meaning, crisis is not a state of chaos, but a critical moment or turning point that calls for consideration and judgment (in Greek: “krinein”’) (p.1). Similarly, Arendt (1954) contends that

A crisis forces us back to the questions themselves and requires from us either new or old answers, but in any case direct judgments. A crisis becomes a disaster only when we respond to it with preformed judgments, that is, with prejudices. (p. 1)

My work, therefore, is concerned with acknowledging that, in moments of crisis, ‘we have lost the answers on which we ordinarily rely’ (Arendt, 1954, p. 1). I utilise this instability and fragility to create possibilities for alternative modes of doing educational work to emerge, and for alternative educational futures to emerge.

The purpose of this dissertation is, on the one hand, to offer a conceptual as well as practical example of how education research and practice can be approached differently, drawing on speculative and utopian thinking. On the other hand, the thesis should be seen as a personal crisis response, one that emerged from personal experiences during my lifetime as well as my professional experiences as an educator, in particular my two-year collaboration with an international secondary school in Hong Kong. This personal response illustrates the possibility of creating alternative educational futures by providing an example of how to approach an imaginative, speculative and collaborative project. It is not my intention to provide straightforward answers or solutions to problems, rather, I start from asking questions, problematising the obvious and offering alternative ways of thinking and acting in two areas: approaches to education research and curriculum considerations for schools.
This is not only about the field of education offering a response to crisis, but also about acknowledging that education has contributed to, and is partly responsible for, the current state of affairs. I consider crisis as an opportunity to interrupt the ‘normal’ order; to consider the conditions that have given rise to it, what it says about who we are as humans, and how we might be able to imagine and do things differently. My thesis is thus an attempt to respond differently to the crisis discourse and to create ‘a space in which it is possible to think education differently, without, as is usually expected, specifying in advance what that difference might be – a process rather than a programme’ (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021, p. 10).

This orientation towards possibility instead of problem or disaster puts imagination at the centre of thought and action, seeing it ‘as a social fact, a practice and a form of work’ (Appadurai, 2013, p. 286) that supports the formation of alternative futures. That is not to say that imagination is not present in the work of those who are concerned with the learning crisis and how to ‘solve’ it. Yet, imagination is hijacked by those actors to build a singular, prefabriated future that will emerge from solving the problems that the assumed learning crisis is posing. This future is a ‘known territory to be mapped and conquered and fought over’ (Facer, 2016, p. 70). The result of this imaginative project is what I term ‘utopian blueprints’ in Part I. Instead of a singular, deterministic imagination (see also Komporozos-Athanasiiou, 2022), I am arguing for a plural, speculative conceptualisation and application of the imagination, whereby the present is a ‘site of radical possibility’ (Facer, 2016, p. 65) for alternative futures.
In contrast with an ideal prefabricated future that is disconnected from a problematic present, I see past, present and future as inextricably linked and working on and with each other. This view corresponds with Arendt’s (2006) perspective on time, as aptly summarised by Kohn in the foreword to her book ‘Between Past and Future’: ‘Arendt argues that thinking in an extended now, the “timeless time” in which the thinker is “equidistant” from “the clashing waves of past and future,” is the condition sine qua non of liberating the faculty of judgment’ (p. 18).

4. Questions of human flourishing and the good society

There are a growing number of critical accounts of neoliberal education policies and practices that demonstrate an increasing need and commitment to shifting the focus to ethical and political questions about education (see for example Auld & Morris, 2019; Engel et al, 2019; Komatsu & Rappleye, 2017; Sellar & Lingard, 2014). Yet, ontological inquiry may be considered an area of relative neglect (Mills, 2018): investigating why a phenomenon came into being and what the underlying view on being human is, is mostly overshadowed by investigations into the what of a phenomenon and how to ‘solve’ related issues.

For educators to create possibilities and to imagine and do things differently in the present, it is necessary to step back and ask ontological questions about what it means to be a human being in ‘a good society’. These questions, as Levitas (2013) asserts, ‘must contain, at least implicitly, a claim for a way of being that is posited as better than our current experience. It entails both
imagining ourselves otherwise and a judgement about what constitutes human flourishing’ (p.177).

I follow Biesta (2020a) in claiming that, instead of a learning crisis, there is a crisis of ‘what works’ in education research and practice that fails to address matters of human flourishing and the good society. This failure is the result of an obsession with data and metrics and related big data prophecies whereby education is subsumed under a market logic that prioritises the development of human capital and economic growth over the nurturing of political beings (Brown, 2015; Sriprakash et al, 2020).

Concerns with human flourishing and the good society are thus driving the possibilities explored in this dissertation and are grounded in Arendt’s (1998) notion of the ‘vita activa’ and Aristotle’s notion of ‘praxis’. Biesta (2020b, p. 68) describes praxis as

precisely not about the production of things but about what we might call the promotion of the human good, that is, the promotion of what is conducive “to the good life in general”, as Aristotle puts it (Aristotle, 1980, p. 142).

Arendt (1998), in the same context, refers to Aristotle’s notion of ‘energia’ which are ‘all activities that do not pursue an end’ (p. 206), but are ‘sheer actuality’ (p. 207) or a ‘concern to live well’ (p. 207). She goes on to note that there is an urgent need for action as well as thought to be equally present in the vita activa, as there is an over-emphasis on thought, because of a frustration with the unpredictability, irreversibility and anonymity of action (Arendt, 1998, p. 220). Action, therefore, is being reduced to the mere ‘execution of orders’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 223), an issue
that also underpins the ‘what works’ logic. The focus on measurement, evidence and data has resulted in a ‘distance between man and the world’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 252) or ‘world alienation’ (p. 252).

If we are truly concerned with human flourishing and the good society, we need to shift our focus back to the praxis of living well, to the vita activa that brings thought and action together. Human flourishing, in the context of my work, is interpreted as an individual commitment to the collective good. In recent years, however, the work of scholars such as Kristjánsson (2015) and Seligman (2011) has determined an understanding of human flourishing that is individualistic in its orientation, and is concerned with, for example, character building, well-being, moral education or personal development. My own understanding of human flourishing strongly opposes this individualistic take. The perspective on the relationship between the purpose of education and human flourishing that underpins this thesis is one whereby education supports students and teachers in being and becoming responsible members of society who can show ‘compassion, altruism and ethical engagement’ (Biesta, 2020a, p. 32). In other words, I view the purpose of education as the development of a homo democraticus instead of a homo economicus (Biesta, 2020a, p. 35). The latter is concerned with economic productivity through a measurement of the effectiveness of individual performance and development (Komatsu & Rappleye, 2017), supported by tools such as the ‘OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being’ (2013) that see these kinds of measurements as ‘fundamental when assessing the progress of societies’ (OECD, 2013, n.p.). The development of the
homo democraticus, on the other hand, implies an understanding of human flourishing as, for example, ‘a respectful engagement with limited natural and social resources’ (Biesta, 2020a, p. 32) and ‘peaceful democratic coexistence’ (Biesta, 2020a, p. 32). This is how my work should be understood.

The praxis of living well, however, should not be considered as universal and homogeneous. The abstract form of the good life ‘is recognizably universal, but its force is distinctly local and cannot be separated from language, social values, histories, and institutional norms, which tend to be highly specific’ (Appadurai, 2013, p. 290). In other words, questions about human flourishing and the good society should not be driven by universal blueprints, but should acknowledge the ‘plurality of visions of the good life’ (Appadurai, 2013, p. 300), which are taking shape in quotidian praxis where human beings gather and a political arena is coming into being. As Arendt (1964) reminds us: ‘whenever people come together, it doesn’t matter the size, public interests come into play and the public sphere is formed’ (n.p.). In times of crisis, however, relationships between human beings in the public sphere are fragile and under pressure. Crisis therefore, following Norberg’s (2011) interpretation of Arendt, ‘is central to politics, for the supreme political question of human interconnection is brought to light in times of crisis’ (p. 132). The praxis of living well, in moments of crisis, thus requires us to ‘become political beings’ (Norberg, 2011, p. 132).
5. Contributions of the thesis

My work can be added to the increasing number of studies that aim to ‘destabilise common-sense certainties’ (Macgilchrist, 2021, p. 246) and scholars who argue for a different approach to (education) research (see for example Biesta, 2021a; Carney & Madsen, 2021). This work is often accompanied by visions of the future that are not predictive, nor composed of one blueprint, but are speculative and imaginative (Carney & Madsen, 2021; Rizvi, 2021). At a general level, there is a shared concern about big data prophecies and evidence-based discourses that do not include questions of human flourishing and the good society. This results in scholarship that is focused on creating possibilities in the present through more imaginative, participatory, democratic and activist research practices. The interdisciplinary field of speculative and utopian studies, where I would position myself, can be located within this space as it aspires to ‘open up productive new directions for education’ (Facer, 2016, p. 69) as well as to create ‘the possibility of an orientation to the future that admits of the possibility of future transformation that exceeds and resists colonisation by the constraints of the present’ (p. 69).

My research goes further than just engaging in criticism as it offers a practical focus on education research as well as curriculum and pedagogy in schools, through the action-oriented collaboration with ICHK and the shared initiatives in relation to their curricular approach of Human Technologies (HT). This is an example of how an imaginative, speculative and collaborative project could be approached. It extends an invitation to (education) researchers and practitioners who wish to contribute to the development of an alternative paradigm
that puts at its heart concerns with human flourishing, the good society and social change.

Utopia as method, adapted from Levitas (2013), is suggested as a speculative approach to education research methods that goes beyond conventional critical scholarship and foregrounds ontological inquiry and collaborative action. One possible approach to collaborative action and the architectural work of utopia as method, I suggest, is Punk Ethnography (PE), which offers a conceptual framework as well as a practical toolkit for small-scale, action-oriented and imaginative collaborations.

The two-year collaboration with ICHK contributes to the further development of phenomenological approaches to curriculum and pedagogy with an orientation towards social change. I suggest an approach to curriculum as a lived practice (Aoki, 1993), a practice for ‘defamiliarisation’ or Verfremdung (Brecht, 1964), and consider HT as a possible articulation thereof, despite its challenges.

6. Thesis aims, structure and development

The thesis weaves together the three elements discussed above: crisis, imagining alternative futures, and questions of human flourishing and the good society. I aim to offer a crisis response that is speculative and imaginative in nature, bringing together action and thought and asking, with Arendt (1998), ‘to think what we are doing’ (p. 5). I intend to create possibilities and spaces of hope, for, as Appadurai (2013) asserts, ‘it is only through some sort of politics of hope that any society or group can envisage a journey to desirable change in the state of things’ (p. 293).
To put it differently, in correspondence with Suissa’s (2006) description of anarchist philosophy in the context of education, my work ‘sees in the very act of restructuring human relationships within such institutions (the school, the workplace), a creative act of engaging with the restructuring of society as a whole’ (p. 139).

The thesis is guided by the following research questions:

Main research question: How can and do education researchers and practitioners respond to a world in crisis and create alternative futures?

Sub-question 1: How can a speculative and utopian method be applied to education research?

Sub-question 2: Which curriculum considerations support teachers and students to live responsibly with others and be concerned with social change?

The main question guides the conceptual and empirical work explored throughout this thesis and all its parts (hence the use of the verb ‘can’), and the thesis as ‘artefact’ itself is also a direct response to this question (hence the use of the verb ‘do’). In other words, my thesis is a conceptual as well as an action-driven crisis response, wherein my collaborative work with one school plays a central role. In the thesis, I address education as well as schooling, whereby education refers to national (state) and international school systems, and schooling refers to (pedagogical) practices in individual school contexts.
The first sub-question is explicitly addressed in Part I (Utopia as Method) and Part II (Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography), both mainly offering a conceptual exploration of these approaches. In these parts, as this sub-question indicates, I re-imagine how to approach education research by introducing utopia as method. The second sub-question is addressed in Part III (Curriculum as Verfremdung), offering a response at a conceptual level. Part IV (Utopia as Method, Punk Ethnography and Verfremdung Enacted) focuses entirely on a two-year collaboration with one international secondary school in Hong Kong, centred around their novel school-based curricular approach called ‘Human Technologies’ (HT). This part brings together the practical, action-oriented crisis responses to the questions, illustrating not only how utopia as method can be practiced as an approach to education research, but also how Punk Ethnography and curricular Verfremdung can be enacted.

I did not develop utopia as method, Punk Ethnography and curricular Verfremdung first to then implement these conceptual developments at the school. Rather, the concepts and practices emerged from my engagements with the school, our collaborative actions within the context of HT, our conversations and shared commitment to offering an alternative response to a world (of education) in crisis. Thus, in my research, thought and action were inextricably linked, but for the sake of clarity, I have chosen to separate the conceptual and action-oriented components in the thesis.

The main body of the thesis is organised into four parts and does not rely on traditional thesis chapters such as ‘literature review’ or ‘methodology’. The speculative and action-oriented nature of my project has resulted in a departure
from the conventional thesis structure. Nevertheless, the content of the four parts does not break entirely with those expectations and does not represent an arbitrary act of rebellion. I chose a different structure that would support the speculative and action-oriented components and arguments developed in the thesis in a more systematic manner. The thesis structure itself should therefore also be considered as a practical illustration of the first sub-question: How can a speculative and utopian method be applied to education research?

I now present a brief overview of each of the main parts, with the exception of this introduction.

Part I – Utopia as Method introduces utopia as method, following the work of sociologist Ruth Levitas. Utopia as method offers one possible crisis response for education researchers to engage in research practices starting from imaginative research collaborations, guided by ontological inquiry and oriented towards direct action. The section opens with a critical, in-depth discussion of the current crisis discourses in education. Then, a historical account of utopian thinking is followed by an application of the notion of utopia and imagination to the current state of affairs in education. I develop the argument that, despite its challenges, utopia, when viewed as a process and practice, can guide the work of education researchers and practitioners beyond critical scholarship through engaging in ontological inquiry and collaborative action. To support my claims, I use the work of Karl Mannheim, David Harvey, and Erik Olin Wright, among others. By bringing the perspectives of these different thinkers into conversation,
I draw out productive tensions and suggest how utopia can function as a method, acknowledging the complex, and often contested field of utopian studies. I offer a conceptual exploration of utopia as method, following the three modes of utopia as suggested by Levitas (2013): the modes of *archaeology*, *ontology*, and *architecture*. I briefly illustrate how to put the method to work by analysing the OECD’s (2018) Global Competency Framework (GCF) as an example of the dominant neoliberal logic shaping the contemporary utopia in education.

*Part II – Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography* extends utopia as method by introducing the novel, collaborative practice of Punk Ethnography (PE) as one possible approach to the architectural work that utopia as method requires us to do. PE applies elements of the punk ethos and anarchist philosophy, and makes use of ethnographic strategies. It provides a conceptual framework as well as practical guidelines for (education) researchers and practitioners who wish to engage in imaginative, collaborative actions and are concerned with social change. I start by making explicit the connections between PE and the architectural work of utopia as method, followed by an illustration of how this practice emerged from my own research collaboration with International College Hong Kong (ICHK). I locate the ethnographic strategies that are part of PE within the ethnographic tradition, and illustrate where PE is situated in relation to the general history and literature on punk and anarchist philosophy (in education). The perspectives of anarchist thinkers such as Colin Ward, Jo Freeman and Rudolph Rocker play a central role, and the work of Judith Suissa provides a foundation for the application of anarchist philosophy in the context of education. Next, PE is conceptually explored and organised around three
components: the creation of an anarcho-syndicate; the punk ethos as a guide for research and practice; crossing the boundaries of institutions and expert fields to allow for creative and imaginative collaborations. Finally, I use accounts from my engagements with ICHK staff to introduce how the components of PE came into being and how PE supports the creation of alternative futures, starting from direct actions in the present.

Part III – Curriculum as Verfremdung moves on to the second focus of this thesis: curriculum in schools as a crisis response. This section provides a conceptual exploration of why and how curriculum can be viewed as a practice that is concerned with human flourishing, the good society and social change. The overarching claim is that dichotomous discussions about curriculum (e.g. knowledge versus skills) impoverish and narrow our views on the purpose of curriculum and education more generally. I argue for more nuanced considerations that grapple with the reality of schools, the knowledge and experiences that students and teachers bring to the classroom and how curricular practices can lead to different, unfamiliar insights about ourselves, others and the world. This part opens with a brief discussion of contemporary curriculum debates and questions, followed by a reconsideration of the definition of curriculum as a practice and a lived experience. I contrast my own definition with more conventional assumptions about curriculum through offering a historical overview of how perspectives on curriculum have changed since the start of the 20th century. This involves introducing the notion of ‘Verfremdung’ as a key curricular purpose. The term, otherwise known as ‘defamiliarisation’, is borrowed from German playwright Bertold Brecht (1964). The section continues with a detailed
discussion of four curricular considerations: teacher artistry, negotiation and trust; the knowledge-experience nexus; curricular justice; the discipline dilemma. I draw extensively on the work of Michael Young, William Pinar, Ted Aoki, Gert Biesta and to a lesser extent, Raewyn Connell. The argument is made that curriculum as a lived practice (Aoki, 1993) can guide policy makers, researchers, practitioners and students who are concerned with human flourishing and social change in offering appropriate responses to crises by being challenged and defamiliarised from that which they accept as normal and true.

Part IV – Utopia as Method, Punk Ethnography and Verfremdung Enacted puts the concepts presented in the first three parts to work on the two-year collaboration with ICHK, focused on their school-based curricular approach HT. I present the case of, and collaboration with, ICHK separately as it allows for a more transparent analysis of the school as well as a clearer illustration of how utopia as method and PE can be applied, despite the fact that the conceptual and practical work is inextricably linked. I start with a description of the ethical stance taken during the collaboration, including a reflection on my positionality and personal involvement. This is followed by an overview of the origin of and approach to the data gathered and how they are used in the analysis. Then, I introduce an alternative set of four concepts, taken from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, which are used as metaphors in the analysis: assemblages, planes of consistency/immanence, de/re-territorialisation, lines of flight / fissures. I argue that new or alternative concepts can help us look at the obvious from a different perspective, find alternative ways of analysing and thinking, and create alternative ways of doing. At a more general level, the
conceptual language borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari supports the development of a perspective on schools as places of possibilities, not just focusing on what they are, but also on what they can be, doing justice to their complex and ever evolving nature. The main body of this section is the analysis of ICHK and HT, following utopia as method: utopia as archaeology provides a historical account of ICHK and HT; utopia as ontology critically evaluates HT against the four considerations of curriculum as Verfremdung; utopia as architecture describes how PE emerged and was practiced at ICHK during the collaboration. Utopia as method is thus the analytical framework that guides the analysis of ICHK and HT, with PE being the practice (or architectural work of utopia as method) that emerged from and made up the research collaboration.

The conclusion retraces the main arguments and responses to the questions that guided this research, and summarises the main contributions of the thesis. The first contribution is presenting human flourishing and the good society as key elements for education researchers and practitioners who wish to offer crisis responses that contribute to alternative futures, starting from actions in the present. As a second contribution, utopia as method and PE are presented as practices that support the diversification of education research practices that go beyond the dominant evidence-based discourse and conventional critical scholarship through engaging in ontological inquiry and collaborative action. The final contribution relates to curriculum as a practice for Verfremdung, which is considered as an important component for schools who want to offer crisis responses and opportunities for teachers and students to construct alternative futures. I also reiterate the overarching contribution to the field of utopian studies,
summarising my contribution as a call for a dialectic utopian perspective for social change. I close with suggestions for the application and further development of utopia as method and PE in other contexts, including a more general discussion of the challenges and limitations when applying utopian and speculative thinking to (education) research. Suggestions for further investigation of the curricular considerations laid out in this study are also offered.

At a general level, this thesis should be read as a personal and professional crisis response whereby I have utilised the notion of crisis as an opportunity to construct alternative futures and contribute to social change in the present, in my own life as well as the lives of the teachers and students involved in this work in past, present and future.
They never succeeded, of course,
in making the best of all the worlds;
but by dint of boldly trying
they made the best of many more worlds
than any merely prudent or sensible person
would have dreamed of being able to reconcile and combine.

(Huxley, 2005, p. 129)
1. Introduction

This first part of the dissertation introduces utopia as method, following the work of sociologist Ruth Levitas. Utopia as method offers one possible crisis response for education researchers to engage in research and practice starting from imaginative research collaborations, guided by ontological inquiry and oriented towards direct action. A response is formulated to the first sub-question that guides the thesis: How can a speculative and utopian method be applied to education research?

This part opens with a critical discussion of the current crisis discourses in education. I provide an account of the rise of the ‘what works’ logic in education and its relation to the learning crisis. Then, I introduce a historical account of utopian thinking, followed by an application of the notion of utopia and imagination to the current state of affairs in education. I develop the argument that, despite its challenges, utopia, when viewed as a process and practice, can guide the work of education researchers and practitioners beyond critical scholarship through engaging in ontological inquiry and collaborative action. To support my claims, I use the work of Karl Mannheim, David Harvey, and Erik Olin Wright, among others. By bringing the perspectives of these different thinkers into conversation, I draw out productive tensions and suggest how utopia can function as a method, acknowledging the complex, and often contested field of utopian studies. I offer a conceptual exploration of utopia as method, following the three modes of utopia as suggested by Levitas (2013): the modes of archaeology, ontology, and architecture. My interpretation and adaptation of Levitas’ three modes of utopia
as method holds in tension a speculative imagination for the future whilst engaging with educational work in the present. *Utopia as archaeology* provides a critical investigation of the existing utopias in education, laying the foundation for speculations about radical alternatives. *Utopia as ontology* focuses on asking questions in relation to who ‘we’ are and, subsequently, who we wish to be as educators, researchers, students, schools and communities: What alternative futures can we imagine and construct in the present? Having considered and critically interrogated the conditions of possibility for the current order and how this shapes us, the mode of utopia as ontology opens the invitation to imagine alternative ways of being. This activates the mode of *utopia as architecture*, whereby educational work functions to construct alternative futures in the present, providing immediate responses to a world in crisis. I argue that the imagining of alternative futures through ontological and architectural inquiry is often lacking in (educational) research as well as practice and consider utopia as method as a worthwhile approach to address this lack.

I briefly illustrate how to put the method to work by analysing the OECD’s (2018) Global Competency Framework (GCF) as an example of the dominant neoliberal logic shaping the contemporary utopia/dystopia in education. This brief analysis of the GCF also provides a general foundation for the work I present in Part III (*Curriculum as Verfremdung*) in relation to the current discourses and debates on school curriculum.

With utopia as method, I wish to offer a powerful alternative to the normal order of education, providing a strategy to imagine and construct not just alternative ways of doing education, but alternative ways of being.
2. A crisis in education? What works will work and that is worse

Discourses of crisis in education are not new (Arendt, 1954), yet they continue to abound. The most recent crisis in education is framed as a ‘learning crisis’ by the World Bank in its World Development Report of 2018, extending the ‘Global Learning Crisis’ that UNESCO reported on in 2014. The learning crisis continued to be a point of discussion in UNESCO’s 2021 report on ‘Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education’. These publications present the crisis as irrefutable. The lack of quality education for all (World Bank, 2019) and poor results in standardised literacy and numeracy tests (Sjøberg, 2016) are treated as evidence of an educational crisis. On the one hand, this crisis is framed by concerns connected to questions of justice, the distribution of resources, and the reproducibility of inequality (UNESCO, 2014). On the other hand, an increasingly dominant way of framing the learning crisis is by a context of global competition connected to the imperatives of national productivity (OECD, 2010; World Bank, 2018). The obsession of governments with league tables that compare the achievements of primary and secondary students in numeracy and literacy as well as the annual world rankings of universities, is framed by the need for the nation to be competitive in a global economy (Sjøberg, 2016). When national rankings decline, claims of a crisis in the national education system tend to take hold.

The learning crisis, according to UNESCO (2014) and the World Bank (2018), can be tackled through the measurement of learning outcomes. Yet, how this crisis came into being and what their own roles might have been in the crisis
formation is not addressed. The learning crisis seems to be a ‘manufactured crisis’ (Berliner & Biddle, 1996) that justifies ‘a proliferation of learning metric tools, assessment programmes, and an industry of research and consulting’ (Sriprakash et al, 2020, p. 683). Metrics and data are considered to be the solution for what is deemed as ‘a moral and economic crisis that must be addressed immediately’ (World Bank, 2018, p. xi).

This scenario has functioned to give life to the ‘what works’ (Biesta, 2010; 2020a) logic of contemporary education, whereby the identification of good education is dependent on that which can be measured instead of concerns with human flourishing and the good society. Education does not seem to be offering adequate responses to larger societal crises such as rising nationalisms, environmental destruction and increasing global inequalities. Rather, it is subsumed under a governing regime that is connected to the broad economisation of society, reducing all of life - including human beings - into commoditised units of measurement (Brown, 2015).

The evidence-based order is not only prevalent at policy level, but also in the practice of schools, and in education research (Biesta, 2020a; Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006). Arguably, it has contributed to the shift in education as a field towards a ‘technical-managerialist dystopia’ (Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006, p. 10). This is also visible at curriculum level with a narrowing of curricula as a consequence of the rising popularity of standardisation and high stakes testing (see Part III). This trend has placed pressure on teachers to design learning to fit the test and to focus on learning outcomes that can be measured. The work of John Hattie (2008) on effect-sizes, for example, has been influential at a school
level as school leaders and teachers have implemented certain strategies and practices based on statistics that ostensibly measure what works in the classroom.

This ‘what works’ logic (Biesta, 2010, 2020a) seems to imply an unquestionable commitment to evidence-based education practices, which are examples of taken for granted assumptions about a utopian society ‘that can be “governed by numbers”’ (Mills, 2018, p. 573). As a result, this utopianism of neoliberalism is led by an overabundance of data and big data prophecies (Komporozos – Athanasiou, 2022) and has tipped over into a dystopian datafication of education and society as a whole. Eventually, ‘what works will work and that is worse’ (Aldridge, 2020, n.p.). The purpose of education, and by extension education research and practice, has been reduced to being an instrument that will make things work, leaving little room for contemplation and speculation about what it means to be human in a complex world. However, given the crises facing the planet at this very moment, what works actually does not seem to work after all.

Education research is increasingly being instrumentalised where the commitment to ‘evidence-based everything’ is beyond question. It is now the norm for academics to demonstrate to university administration and research funding bodies the impact that one’s research will have or has had. One immediate example is the requirement for this thesis to include an impact statement. These developments make it far more difficult to attract funding, and to justify time for research concerning scholarly engagement that does not seem to have immediate impact (see for example Pardo-Guerra, 2022). It is out of this very real
context that Biesta (2020a) asks: ‘Why do research at all?’ (p. 19). As stated in the introduction to this dissertation, my argument is that we ought to contend with crises by going further than merely considering where we are and how we got here, but creating possibilities for alternatives. This involves questioning the legitimacy of a crisis and acknowledging that the instability and fragility that crises produce, require provisional instead of final responses.

Instead of simply accepting things the way they are, I do research in an attempt to (re)orient myself in relation to the field of education and to society more broadly in order to imagine alternative futures in the current moment. This reorientation, away from ‘evidence-based everything’ and towards human flourishing and the good society, is motivated by the idea that, as Arendt (1954) famously stated:

> education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (p. 13-14)

While educational research is ‘a particular way to respond to problems and issues’ (Biesta, 2020a, p. 19), we also need to consider educational research itself and how it might be imagined and practised beyond existing dominant paradigms. As such, I make an attempt to understand as well as transgress this neoliberal, dystopian ‘what works’ logic in education - as an example of a wider global phenomenon affecting society - through the lens of utopian practice.
Utopian practice, as explored here, can be situated more broadly in speculative and futures studies in education research (see for example Carney & Madsen, 2021; Facer, 2016; Kupferman, 2020). These domains share a perspective that offers a license to be imaginative and creative, to prognose instead of merely diagnose (Carney & Madsen, 2021). Given the focus of my work, I will not provide a general overview of speculative and futures studies, but will focus on the concept of ‘utopia’ and how it has been understood and used, particularly in relation to social theory.

3. A recent historical account of ‘utopia’

As with any concept, notions of utopia have shifted and taken different forms according to the varying historical and geographical locations. This is also true in relation to the level of interest with which the concept has been taken up. To understand how utopia is imagined and deployed in the current moment first requires a brief historicization of the recent utopian discourse. Utopian studies is not a new field and draws on a rich interdisciplinary body of literature (see Fitting, 2009). According to Sargent (2010), utopianism, as a general notion, can be split into ‘three faces’: literary utopia; utopian social theory and; communitarianism, which we might think of as utopian practice.

While it is perhaps an overstatement to say that Thomas More’s 1516 book Utopia represents the origin of literary utopia (Levitas, 2016, p. 396), it remains the case that its publication is commonly cited as the critical moment in the development of the field. As a subset of utopian studies, literary utopia includes famous work by H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, and Ursula LeGuin, among others.
While these works have played an important role in shaping utopian social theory, the second ‘face’ of utopian studies, Davidson (2021) argues that ‘the literary tradition of utopianising…has been kept at some distance from sociological accounts of utopia…with the outlandish schemes and absurd speculations of utopian authors insufficiently grounded in the world as it exists’ (p. 2). While this may be the case, it does not follow that elements of fiction – its manifestation in fantasy, symbols and dreams – are absent from the conceptualisation of utopian social theory. Nevertheless, this statement from Davidson alludes to ongoing debates about ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ – the real and the imagined – and the value of utopia as a mechanism for social transformation. For example, while seeing great value in utopian literature for providing imaginative ways of constructing alternative societies, Harvey (2000) argues that ‘the displacement of utopianism to “pure” literature (or art)… may mean that we fail to extract the political messages that come through’ (p. 190).

3.1. Utopian social theory

Utopian social theory draws on literary utopias, but is distinct from this genre. If this is assumed to mean that the former is concerned only with the empirical and the latter the imagined, Sargent (1994) suggests that all forms of utopia ‘are fictions of a particular type’ (p. 22). This rendering of utopian social theory as a fiction of sorts derives from one of the most important contributors to utopian studies, the twentieth century German sociologist Karl Mannheim. In his influential work *Ideology and Utopia* (1936/1979) Mannheim writes that ‘a state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs’
For Mannheim, though, this is not a comment in support of idealism, but part of his theory that social groups produce thought and that this social thought is connected to the conduct of society.

Mannheim (1979) explains the connection between ‘fictional’ states of mind and the organisation of society when he claims that ‘actual and concrete forms of social life have been built upon the basis of such "ideological" states of mind which were incongruent with reality’ (p.173). Yet, while Mannheim argues that ideology, like utopia, is incongruent with reality, it is distinct from utopia because it is ‘effective in the realization and the maintenance of the existing order of things’ (p.173). In contrast to the function of ideological states of mind, Mannheim posits that ‘such an incongruent orientation became utopian only when in addition it tended to burst the bonds of the existing order’ (p.173). Utopian social theory, then, following Mannheim, is about utilising a vision outside of reality in order to bring about real social change. For Sargent (1994), Mannheim’s argument that ‘the loss of Utopia would be a disaster since it is essential for social change’ is problematic because it is ‘not oriented to reality but to a vision of a better life. Mannheim wants both the reality and the vision’ (p. 23-24).

3.2. Utopian realism and practice

This ambivalence is, in part, the result of Mannheim’s view that utopian socialism resulted in problematic politics as a result of so-called ‘utopian blueprints’ being constructed for society outside of the reality of social life. This concern emerged from the problems that utopian socialism had bred in the decades preceding Mannheim’s work. As historian Russell Jacoby put it, blueprint utopianism ‘is
implicit in the realisation of a government premised on a utopian model’ (Greene, 2011, p. 2). With the establishment of nation-states in Europe during the late nineteenth century, contending political ideologies emerged, which provided particular visions for the governing and arrangement of society. From varieties of liberalism to Marxism and nationalisms, these ideologies had varying and distinct future-oriented or ‘blueprint’ visions of an ideal society. Such a scenario is problematic for Mannheim because these utopian visions manifest as ideologies which, by his definition, maintain the status quo.

Contrary to blueprint utopianists, ‘utopian realists’ see utopia as a process or a strategy that is malleable (Vieira, 2010), the effects of which are always provisional. More comfortable with the compromises inherent in pragmatism, these scholars are often driven by a hope for a just and fair society that can be established in the present. The work of sociologist and Marxist Erik Olin Wright, for example, is relevant in this context. Wright (2007) developed three practical criteria to make real utopias happen: desirability, achievability and viability, with the latter considered the most important of the three. Sargent (2010), in making a distinction between the ‘faces’ of utopian social theory and utopian practice, suggests that the latter is concerned with ‘the actual rather than the fictional transformation of the everyday’ (p. 7). Utopian practice, then, of which Wright’s work is an example, emphasises the present and the real.

In considering utopia as practice, Sargent (1994) focuses his attention on what he calls intentional communities. These communities he defines as ‘a group of five or more adults and their children, if any, who come from more than one nuclear family and who have chosen to live together to enhance their shared
values or for some other mutually agreed upon purpose’ (p.15). There can be
many examples of such communities and the purposes shared within particular
intentional communities may be vastly different from, perhaps even fundamentally
incommensurate with, other examples of intentional communities (for a taxonomy
revealing this diversity see Sargent, 1994, p.17).

The diversity of this form of utopianism makes it impossible to provide a
detailed examination of this third ‘face’. There are, however, a few important
comments to make about utopian practice. The diversity of purpose amongst
different examples of utopian practice speaks to an ambivalence regarding the
possibility of totalitarianism. On the one hand, the diversity of purpose and
expression speaks to an openness and flexibility that works against totalizing
notions of society. An extreme example thereof is Nozick’s (1974) suggestion of
a ‘minimal state’ out of a concern with individual rights. On the other hand, the
lack of specificity in Sargent’s definition regarding the purpose of an intentional
community means that any one of them could conceivably exhibit totalitarian
intent and practice. As such, there are important normative evaluations that need
to be made instead of seeing all manifestations of utopian practice as a necessary
good. It is also worth noting that while utopian practice draws on ideas and a
vision which exist outside reality, these groups turn such dreams into (some kind
of) reality. It is in this sense that they do represent real social change. However,
history would suggest that these intentional communities usually move through ‘a
period of disintegration and an end point’ (Sargent, 1994, p.16), bringing into
question the significance of social change for society at large.
3.3. *Capitalist realism*

Further still, utopian realism’s grassroots and tentacular structure, as opposed to the top-down structures of blueprint utopianism, has its problems. While the resistance it offers to more authoritarian modes of action may be attractive from a liberal perspective, one may argue that this has allowed utopian realism to become more easily absorbed by neoliberal, capitalist and globalist discourses. Indeed, Webb describes aptly how utopian realism has become capitalism’s driving force:

> Utopian realism is testimony to how deeply ingrained within contemporary common sense capitalist realism has become. No alternatives to the present can be imagined. All the utopian imagination can do is propose modifications to specific techniques of governance. The utopian is collapsed into the present and fixes its gaze on partial amelioristic reforms that anticipate or prefigure nothing beyond themselves. (2016, p. 444)

Webb posits that utopian realisms ‘are, in fact, signifiers of “capitalist realism”’ (p. 436) which, as Mark Fisher (2009) has argued, speaks of a condition in which we can no longer imagine any alternative to capitalism.

In the following two sections, I explore how social theory and practice, enacted as a dialectical utopianism (Harvey, 2000), help us to understand the nature and function of a transnational organisation such as the OECD and its influence on education globally.
4. Neoliberal utopian blueprint

One may argue that the utopian realism of capitalism and, by extension, neoliberalism, has now become a ‘real utopian blueprint’ that leaves no alternative. This is a problem that Harvey (2000) takes seriously in his analysis of spatial (‘blueprint utopianism’) and process utopia (‘utopian realism’). If the key concern with spatial utopias is that the blueprints they envisage entail a closure, thus foreclosing other possibilities, the problem with process utopia is in its pretence of being ‘open by virtue of its multiplicity’ (Harvey, 2000, p.185). This conceptualisation of process utopia fits with the structure of neoliberalism: it relies on the idea of a genuinely free-market that is not only separate from, but antagonistic towards, institutional structures such as the state. Neoliberalism exists without a centre or an identifiable leader. If one can speak of a structure at all, it may be considered to be headless and tentacular. Or, as Fisher (2009) states: ‘...there are no overall controllers, [that] the closest thing we have to ruling powers now are nebulous, unaccountable interests exercising corporate irresponsibility’ (p. 63).

Harvey does not have a solution to the problems presented by both utopian blueprints and utopian realism, but he suggests that the challenge is to engage in the dialectical struggle between the two. The task, he posits, is to engage ‘a dialectical utopianism - that is rooted in our present possibilities at the same time as it points towards different trajectories for human uneven geographical developments’ (p.196). The first step, I suggest, is taking account of the conditions in which we are currently located. This requires an acknowledgement that every neoliberal, capitalist institution instantiates a real utopian blueprint. I thus turn my
attention now to the neoliberal instantiation of the global reform movement within education.

5. Global education reform: a real utopian blueprint

In educational institutions the neoliberal utopian blueprint manifests itself in the form of evidence-based practices, the ‘what works’ logic and the growing occurrence of big reform movements led by transnational bodies. The global, capitalist and evidence-based blueprint is rolled out by transnational organisations such as the OECD, which have their origin in the post-World War II period when a growing pragmatic, economic vision and focus on economic growth across the globe started emerging. This vision was driven by the West and the OECD, together with UNESCO, were playing leading roles in moving this vision forward. Member states would receive financial and other support from UNESCO and OECD ‘educational planning groups….to provide a model for the technical staff of national agencies seeking to reorient education so as to encompass economic motives’ (Resnik, 2006, p. 190). The tone was set for the establishment of a global field of education with economic growth as one of its main purposes. During the early 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, the opposition between the global and the local grew and global fields were taking over local contexts faster than ever (Lingard, 2013). This was a fertile climate for the OECD to launch PISA in 1997 and more recently its GCF (see also Part III). The GCF and the assessment of global competences has been part of the OECD’s PISA since 2018, and is framed as necessary for four reasons: ‘to live harmoniously in multicultural communities’ (OECD, 2018, p. 4); ‘to thrive in a changing labour market’ (OECD, 2018, p. 5);
‘to use media platforms effectively and responsibly’ (OECD, 2018, p. 5); and ‘to support the Sustainable Development Goals’ (OECD, 2018, p. 5). Ostensibly, the GCF is about students developing an understanding of ‘local, global and intercultural issues’, learning to appreciate difference and ‘interact successfully and respectfully with others’ (OECD, 2018, p. 4).

Auld and Morris (2019), however, suggest that the policy is better understood as being ‘framed by its economic mission’ (p. 677). One of the most important goals of the GCF, according to the OECD (2018) itself, is ‘to support evidence-based decisions on how to improve curricula, teaching, assessments and schools’ responses to cultural diversity in order to prepare young people to become global citizens’ (p. 6). Unsurprisingly, the launch of the GCF occurred around the same time as the World Bank’s (2018) publication on the learning crisis and their call for learning metric tools that would support the battle against decreasing learning outcomes worldwide. In other words, the GCF offers an immediate and ideal solution to the learning crisis.

This focus on measurable evidence - however dubious the measurement may be - has taken the role as arbiter of what education should look like, but also serves as a justification for the learning crisis discourse. Under these conditions, the role of imagination is instrumentalised, if not expunged, limiting our ability to present alternatives to the status quo. ‘These scopic systems’, Carney and Madsen (2021) add, ‘crystallise pasts, present and futures on one “surface” and have the power to reimagine what education is and should be for’ (p. 55). Indeed, they function as ‘real utopian blueprints’ that leave no alternative. I will return to
the OECD’s GCF as a first illustration of the application of utopia as method, which is laid out in the next section.

6. Utopia as method

My own understanding and application of the concept of ‘utopia’ as part of ‘utopia as method’ draws on the tensions, problems and possibilities of the different historical and contemporary notions of utopia. I am thus not attempting to re-invent utopia, but to reclaim some of its attributes (see also Komporozos-Athanasiou, 2017), in particular its promise as a radical and imaginative social practice, applied here in an education context. This also requires a re-imagining of the imagination, going against its instrumentalisation and reclaiming its purpose as a radical action towards social change. Indeed, as the previous accounts have illustrated, utopia as a working concept finds itself in a crisis too. Yet, with this ‘crisis of utopia’ come opportunities to re-think the concept and its workings and to put it to work differently.

6.1. Reclaiming imagination as a radical practice

Before I introduce my adaptation of Levitas’ utopia as method, I wish to briefly explore the importance of imagination in enabling utopian work to function as a creative resistance to the neoliberal blueprint. Aspects of Unger’s work, as discussed in Levitas (2013), present important interventions into the kinds of utopian realism that have capitulated to the notion that there is no alternative to capitalism. ‘We have lost’, Unger writes, ‘confidence in our ability to imagine structural change in society’ (cited in Levitas, 2013, p.139). Thus, in retrieving the
imagination from the clutches of those engaged in long-range blueprint forecasting, Levitas (2013) argues that ‘we need imagination in the short term and in the long term’ (p.139). Utopian realism in the present may become possible, according to Unger, as ‘[t]he practical imagination of institutional alternatives enables us to recognise transformative opportunity and act on it’ (cited in Levitas, 2013, p. 139). Moreover, his view of the power of imagination is of particular relevance within the context of crisis. ‘Imagination’, he argues, ‘has a role in preventing social change occurring in a catastrophic or revolutionary manner: it “does the work of crisis without crisis”. Imagining alternatives helps to counter conformity by contradicting the taken-for-granted character of the real’ (Levitas, 2013, p.139).

Imagination as a radical practice for alternative realities should be considered as an individual as well as a collective endeavour. Komporozos-Athanasiou (2017), drawing on the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, describes imagination as a practice that ‘transcends individual/collective and private/public dualisms: it contains an instituting (open, creative) and an instituted (closed) dimension, both of which exist in tension, and which sets in motion the imaginary constitution of societies’ (n.p.). Reclaiming utopia as a practice, a method for social change, countering the neoliberal blueprint, thus requires the acknowledgement of imagination as an individual as well as collective tool to enact utopia. ‘Behind this idea’, Bottici (2019) contends, ‘is a complex view of the relationship between individuals, who can only exist within imaginary significations, and a social imaginary, which can only exist in and through individuals themselves’ (p. 436).
With this in mind, I now turn to an elaboration of Levitas’ work and illustrate as a first step how utopia as method can be conceptualised and applied by using the OECD’s GCF as an example. In my adaptation, I follow Levitas’ (2013) three modes for utopia as method: archaeology, ontology and architecture. In the structure presented here, utopia as archaeology comes first, followed by utopia as ontology and architecture, yet it has to be noted that all three modes are working simultaneously and are only separated for the sake of clarity.

6.2. Utopia as archaeology: a genealogical view

In accordance with Levitas (2013), I interpret ‘utopia as archaeology’ as a critical analysis and problematisation of all constructions of utopias, which I consider to be the bread and butter of critical scholarship. By developing an understanding of the why and how of the coming into being of utopias and their related views on the good society, systemic issues can be revealed and ways of overcoming those can be speculated about. Levitas (2013) describes this analytical process as ‘interpolating the absent but implied elements – filling in, where possible, what is missing, or simply making evident the blank spaces’ (p. 154). From a utopian point of view, where the gaze is often directed towards the future, this turn to the past seems contradictory. However, an investigation of the past does not only help to understand the present, but also contributes to the imagining of an alternative present and future, what Fielding and Moss (2011) describe as ‘making
connections, both with other times and other places, by crossing borders, temporal and spatial’ (p. 16).

Yet, applying the term ‘archaeology’ can entail the risk of looking for causality and falsely connecting events in a linear fashion. Utopias, of whatever nature, are often the result of a series of events that are accidentally and at times randomly, contradictorily even, connected as they happened at the right place, at the right time. Therefore, I prefer using Michel Foucault’s concept of ‘genealogy’ to strengthen and complement Levitas’ archaeological approach. Foucault (2010) interprets archaeology as a study that

is always in the plural; it operates in a great number of registers; it crosses interstices and gaps; it has its domain where unities are juxtaposed, separated, fix their crests, confront one another, and accentuate the white spaces between one another (p. 157).

He uses the term ‘genealogy’ in the context of describing archaeological analytical processes to emphasise the non-causal connections between events and fields in an attempt to create a ‘history of the present’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 31). It is this type of archaeological work that I envisage as part of utopia as method.

Returning to the OECD’s GCF and drawing on the work of Auld and Morris (2019) as well as Engel et al (2019), can demonstrate how the archaeological mode of utopia as method is applied in their analyses of the framework. Auld and Morris (2019), through genealogical analysis, describe the connections between PISA and GCF as follows:

The tests are an exercise in economic internationalisation as their rationale has been based on the claim that future economic growth and survival of
nations in the global knowledge economy necessitates improving the quality of human capital, as measured by PISA scores, and through the transfer of international/global “best practices”. (p. 678)

Furthermore, the OECD, ‘a new centre of global governance outside that of the traditional nation-state’ (Engel et al, 2019, p. 118), to a large degree determines how education worldwide is being reformed to serve the organisation’s own wants and needs (see Lingard, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard 2009). Under such conditions of dominance, it is difficult to imagine, let alone produce, alternatives that go beyond the OECD’s own utopian blueprint.

Utopia as archaeology is a critical investigation of past and present utopias, which entails determining what is absent - ‘the blank spaces’ - and, ultimately, speculating about alternatives that address these blank spaces. Hence, in my brief archaeological investigation example of the GCF, I (also) focus on what is absent. What educational and societal matters does the GCF not address? What are some of the disadvantages and side-effects of the implementation of the GCF? How do these relate to some of the crises I have described earlier? The global (knowledge) economy is severely damaged by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Future economic growth is becoming a less attainable, less realistic and more questionable goal, and yet these matters underpin the GCF’s rationale. What kind of response will an education system driven by the OECD’s commitment to the development of ‘human capital’ (not) provide to the crises that are part of our present and future? One of the hidden issues and absent conversations when it comes to the broader notion of global citizenship, one of
the cornerstones of the GCF, is aptly summarised by Jefferess (2008), ten years before the GCF was launched:

   The ethical framework of global citizenship seems to mask the material relationships that produce some as privileged, and hence capable of being active global citizens, and some as in need of support, care, “aid”. Such a framework for conceiving of global inter-relationships and responsibility is ahistorical in that it elides the history of imperial politics that has shaped the current world system. (p.31)

A different yet equally violent version of imperial politics, this time driven by a ‘what works’ logic in service of economic progress mediated by (the same) education for all, is applied through the global governance of the OECD and frameworks such as the GCF. Putting the analysis of Auld and Morris (2019) and Engel et al (2019) further to work and focusing on the blank spaces that their genealogies reveal, leads to the detection of a new kind of imperialism or, a real utopian blueprint, that underpins these practices. A world that is already struggling with crises is now also exposed to hidden imperialist violence and increasing inequality, through global educational governance.

   By asking questions and formulating responses about what is hidden, what is not addressed, and, through archaeological analysis, we create the opportunity to start imagining alternative spaces. An archaeological investigation therefore does not end when a critical archaeological analysis has been completed, but requires another step: the step towards imagining alternative spaces. At the centre of this exercise lies a profound ontological inquiry.
6.3. *Utopia as ontology: an immanent practice*

Levitas (2013) makes the connection between the archaeological and ontological mode explicit:

> The archaeological mode of utopia as method properly includes the ontological, in excavating the assumptions about human nature and human flourishing that are embedded in political positions and institutional proposals, as well as in overtly utopian literature. (p. 177)

This excavation of existing ontologies that underpin prevalent educational utopias also make it necessary to ask ontological questions that are not (adequately) addressed and are deemed important as foundations for the imagining/creating of alternatives. I make one specific distinction between Levitas’ interpretation and my own adaptation of utopia as ontology. Levitas (2013) largely argues for an ontology as a process of *becoming*, an ‘education of desire’. For her, ontology is processual and futuristic. She draws on the work of Sayer and states that ‘Sayer’s processual ontology avoids closure but does not evade specificity. This is a needs-based conception of social being, albeit one where needs are explicitly registered in terms of lack, wants and desires’ (Levitas, 2013, p. 181). This type of ontology emphasises the desire drive that motivates human beings and ‘gives them a future’. Taking Levitas’ approach in a slightly different direction, I prefer moving away from desire as ‘futuristic motivation’ to desire as an opportunity, a productive tension, an opening that is embedded in the present. Thus, rather than a futuristic-processual view, my interpretation of utopia as ontology is one of an immanent practice connecting past, present and future, acknowledging that we always find ourselves ‘in the interval between past and future’ (Arendt, 1961).
Arendt (1961) goes on to note that this constant fighting with and against past and future is what lies at the heart of our existence (p. 29). Through doing the work that utopia as method requires us to do, we imagine and create alternative spaces here and now.

Ontological questions are not only centred around the why of being human, but also the *why of education*. Education, as interpreted throughout this thesis, is not just an orientation towards learning something new (content, knowledge or skills). It also entails an existential perspective relating to the formation of our being and becoming. This educational view therefore requires the asking of ontological questions, as part of more general educational questions, and corresponds with Biesta’s (2020a) reflections on how educational research is approached today. He asks:

… while the psychology of education will ask psychological questions about education, the history of education historical ones, the philosophy of education philosophical ones and the sociology of education sociological ones, the question that remains is who will ask educational questions about education. (p. 96)

Much educational research does a very good job of critique, but the space of ontological inquiry may be considered an area of relative neglect (Mills, 2018) as education is often interpreted narrowly as the transmission of content, knowledge and skills. If, as education scholars, we do not properly attend to critical questions of being (who, what and why ‘things’ are), we risk failing to transgress existing utopian blueprints. If all practices and actions that make up utopia as a method
are approached as responses to ontological questions, the ontological mode functions to bring these critical questions to light.

When asking educational questions about education, questions about what it means to be human thus inevitably emerge: How can we be in this world and respond responsibly to the prevalent crises? How can education research and practice be a guide to our responses? How can ontological questions be embedded in and drive education research and practice to allow for the emergence of alternative spaces? These kinds of ontological questions are, for Levitas (2013), necessary as 'any discussion of the good society must contain, at least implicitly, a claim for a way of being that is posited as better than our current experience. It entails both imagining ourselves otherwise and a judgement about what constitutes human flourishing' (p.177).

When applying the mode of archaeology on the GCF, I already started asking ontological questions about the framework. Auld and Morris (2019) also ask such questions as part of their archaeological investigation of the OECD, with a focus on global competence and global citizenship. For example, they investigate the OECD’s ontological views on ‘being globally competent’ and conclude that ‘a globally competent student who will score highly on the test is one who has experienced other cultures, is bilingual, and has access to social media and a liberal western education; i.e. a member of the global middle class’ (Auld & Morris, 2019, p. 689). However, after identifying the ontological assumptions of the GCF, they do not address possible ontological positions that they consider more appropriate and that would enable the imagining of an alternative. It is exactly this next step that allows for the opening up of alternative
futures and avoids scholarly work being limited to offering critique and to diagnosing problems. In taking further Auld and Morris' (2019) ontological inquiry about what it means to be globally competent according to the OECD, I suggest questions such as: What kind of notion of global competence will better serve the desire for human flourishing? How could this different approach to global competence potentially reframe the ontological foundations of the GCF?

I have already made the claim that the GCF is underpinned by notions of imperialism, elitism and injustice, under the disguise of the global aspiration for a better world through evidence-based practices in education. To reframe this conceptualisation of global citizenship, but also the way transnational organisations operate, a radically different ontology is required. Appiah (2006) has made a persuasive argument for a cosmopolitanism that promotes ‘conversations’ across difference not just in a literal sense but ‘as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and ideas of others’ (p.84). His is a perspective that seeks a path for living well together without resorting to the erasure of difference to achieve it. Arguably, this is in contrast to modes of governance that rely on standardised evidence-based measures and practices that are based on an ontology of homogeneity. It does not fall within the scope of my work to elaborate extensively on what a rethinking of global citizenship and the task of the OECD would mean through the lens of cosmopolitanism. Suffice to say that to reimagine ourselves, and what constitutes human flourishing, from the perspective of embracing difference, would challenge the fundamental basis of how the GCF is imagined and administered. These questions are thus not only related to past and present, but also to alternative futures. The final mode of utopia as method, the
architectural mode, is therefore concerned with imagining alternative futures that emerge in and from the present.

6.4. Utopia as architecture: castles made of mud

While the architectural mode is concerned with activating alternative spaces, I acknowledge that any ‘utopia at its best, is a necessary failure, but will fail us less than its absence’ (Levitas, 2007, p.304). Put another way, following Spivak (1990), I view utopia as inevitably problematic and yet something we ‘cannot not (wish to) inhabit’ (p.795). Moreover, this architectural work is an immanent practice that, drawing on past, present and future, strategically utilises the notion of utopia as an ‘...”activating presence” that allows us to consider how we may create a society that qualitatively differs from the current one’ (Aidnik & Jacobsen, 2019, p.28). Yet, any reimagining of a qualitatively different society is always provisional, contingent, and flawed.

As utopia as architecture is the most accessible of all three modes, there is a risk that it is viewed as the mere imagining of idealistic but unattainable alternative worlds. In Levitas’ (2013) words:

Utopia as architecture is its culturally most familiar mode: imagining a reconstructed world and describing its social institutions. This is the terrain of utopian fiction. It is also the mode anti-utopians like best, keeping the possibility of living differently safely bound between book covers. (p. 197)

What I argue for, however, goes beyond book covers and utopian fiction. I consider my approach of utopia as method in itself as architectural work. This work cannot be done in isolation, yet requires collaboration with other architectural
sites such as schools, educational institutions, transgressive educational initiatives of whatever scale and nature, interdisciplinary engagements etc., all of which share, but also question, alternative ontologies. A substantial part of my dissertation is thus attributed to my collaboration with one school (see Part IV), offering a practical and elaborate application of utopia as method.

These architectural sites are inevitably situated amidst - and influenced by - surrounding utopias, with the OECD's GCF as an example of a real utopian blueprint. Bojesen and Suissa (2019) make suggestions for lecturers within the context of higher education to make architectural interventions, which they term as 'minimal utopianism':

What we can do is to help our students imagine new ways of being in the world that acknowledge their needs and desires to negotiate the socio-economic contingencies that have, for most if not all of them, led them to be in the university in the first place, while insisting on the necessity and possibility of recognising these contingencies as exactly that: contingencies, and, as such, malleable and open to radical change through collective human action. (p. 295)

When it comes to tackling the important architectural work that needs doing to reimagine for example the GCF, a more radical and larger scale approach is necessary, yet, this work has to be started somewhere, by some-one: maybe by one lecturer in one classroom or one research project.

Another example involves applying the architectural mode to critical policy scholarship and for scholars to engage in education policy formulation. The space of academic policy work, however, is often tied to funding from governments and transnational organisations such as the OECD. As such, there is a risk that such
policy work does not adequately interrupt the status quo, instead engaging in piecemeal engineering of the dominant evidence-based and ‘what works’ logic. Yet, academic policy work that utilises utopia as method and therefore goes as far as to ask ontological questions, has the potential to transgress the dominant logic and to do the necessary architectural work.

Utopian architects thus have a challenging and bold task: questioning the status quo whilst doing transgressive architectural work that, in turn, also has to be subjected to archaeological and ontological inquiries. They are architects who are not constructing a fortified bunker, but a mud brick castle that requires ongoing maintenance, that is provisional and permanently ‘under construction’. In fact and as mentioned earlier, the instability and fragility that crises produce, require a provisional instead of a final response.

Utopia as archaeology, ontology and architecture are always working together, simultaneously, and are part of an ongoing cycle whereby every newly imagined utopia has to be subjected to all three modes perpetually. Utopia as method can thus be viewed as more than a method. I consider it, above all, as ‘an activating presence’ that never ceases, a way of being, a practice that is part of all aspects of life. This requires what Mills (2000) calls ‘intellectual craftsmanship’, which means that ‘you must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually examine and interpret it’ (p. 196). Educational researchers and practitioners engage in a whole range of educational activities: teaching, research, attending conferences, putting together course reading lists, conversations with students and colleagues, etc.. Utopia as method requires an application in all of those spaces in order to avoid piecemeal engineering. It does
not suffice to do critical archaeological work without asking ontological questions about present and future in other professional, even private domains. Creating alternative futures in the present requires architectural work in all areas of life, thereby committing to facing the prevailing crises and ‘staying with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2016).

7. Summary

I have sought to interrupt, destabilise and counter the evidence-based, ‘what works’ order of education by introducing utopia as method as a radical alternative that reclaims the attributes of utopia and imagination that have been lost in the contemporary neoliberal utopian blueprint. I have illustrated how the current learning crisis discourse serves to perpetuate this ‘what works’ logic, and have argued that ‘what works’ does not seem to work when we consider education’s failure to address wider societal issues, questions of human flourishing and the common good.

By exploring and adapting utopia as method, inspired by the work of Levitas, I wanted to provide a more appropriate and constructive ‘crisis response’, offering an alternative way to structuring and approaching education research and practice. This orientation towards possibility instead of problem puts imagination at the centre, seeing it ‘as a social fact, a practice and a form of work’ (Appadurai, 2013, p. 286) that supports the formation of alternative (educational) futures. The future, rather than being a singular ‘known territory to be mapped and conquered and fought over’ (Facer, 2016, p. 70), is now activated as a ‘site of radical
possibility’ (Facer, 2016, p. 65), connected to actions in the present as well as an understanding of the past.

Utopia as method offers an opportunity to ‘work in the margin of modern thought and find something else to say’ (Carney & Madsen, 2021, p. 103). The method functions as an ‘activating presence’, as a way of being and doing that enables educators, researchers as well as practitioners, to engage in transgressive, architectural work that goes beyond critiquing past and present, beyond piecemeal engineering and beyond the perpetuation of real utopian blueprints. It is not presented as a solution that will lead us collectively out of a state of permanent crisis, but, despite its challenges, as a worthwhile alternative practice. I briefly illustrated how the method can be put to work by a short analysis of the OECD’s GCF, which I view as an example of a real utopian blueprint that shapes the contemporary neoliberal logic in education and ‘makes things work’.

Utopia as method is central to this dissertation, not only conceptually, but also practically. It has emerged from and supported my collaboration with ICHK and our shared efforts in engaging with their novel curricular practice of HT (see Part IV). The method created the opportunity to think together about who we are as humans, as educators, and how this connects to reimagining education for human flourishing. More specifically, it provided guidance in going beyond diagnosing a problem, and in actively creating and imagining alternative ways to engage with school curriculum, starting from the present. Given the centrality of ontological questions, the method has not only supported a critical investigation of the ‘current global state of curricular affairs’, but also the development of a critical perspective on our own curricular assumptions, practices and aspirations.
Last, the ‘activating presence’ of utopia as method has given us a license to create alternatives in the present. We engaged in architectural work that was informed by a shared development of ontological and genealogical understandings instead of a predetermined research agenda with a problem-solving focus. From this work emerged PE (discussed in the next part, Part II), a futures forming practice that can guide the architectural work of utopia as method. Finally, this dissertation can be considered as one of the ‘unfinished products’ of the architectural work that made up my doctoral studies and also serves as an example of how utopia as method can be put to work.

I am in agreement with Ursula LeGuin (2014) when she writes:

To me the important thing is not to offer any specific hope of betterment but, by offering an imagined but persuasive alternative reality, to dislodge my mind, and so the reader’s mind, from the lazy, timorous habit of thinking that the way we live now is the only way people can live. It is that inertia that allows the institutions of injustice to continue unquestioned. (p. 218)
PART II

Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography

The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin.

(Arendt, 1998, p. 246)
1. Introduction

This second part extends utopia as method, as introduced in Part I, by introducing the futures forming practice of Punk Ethnography (PE) as one possible approach to the architectural work that utopia as method asks us to do. This part thus also formulates an answer to the first sub-question that guides this thesis: How can a speculative and utopian method be applied to education research? I focus here on the conceptual introduction of PE, a practice that emerged from my collaboration with ICHK (see Part IV for a detailed introduction of the school and description of the collaboration). In Part IV, in section 7. ‘Utopia as architecture: punk ethnography practiced at ICHK’, I also return to PE by offering a detailed account of the punk ethnographic practices that marked the collaborative work with ICHK from August 2019 to December 2021.

The novel practice of PE applies elements of the punk ethos and anarchist philosophy, and makes use of ethnographic strategies. It provides conceptual as well as practical guidelines for (education) researchers and practitioners who wish to engage in imaginative, collaborative actions and are concerned with social change.

I start by making explicit the connections between PE and the architectural work of utopia as method, followed by an illustration of how this practice emerged from my own research collaboration with ICHK. I locate the ethnographic strategies that are part of PE within the ethnographic tradition, and illustrate where PE is situated in relation to the general history and literature on punk and anarchist philosophy (in education). The perspectives of anarchist thinkers such as Colin
Ward, Jo Freeman and Rudolph Rocker play a central role, and the work of Judith Suissa provides a foundation for the application of anarchist philosophy in the context of education.

Then, PE is conceptually explored around three components: the creation of an anarcho-syndicate; the punk ethos as a guide for research and practice; and crossing the boundaries of institutions and expert fields to allow for creative and imaginative collaborations. I use accounts from my engagements with ICHK staff to introduce how the components of PE came into being.

The main argument made here is that research collaborations do not have to be oriented towards solving problems or achieving outcomes, nor do they have to be driven by external agendas. Imaginative, provisional and creative actions, underpinned by shared values of relationality, interconnectedness and solidarity, can lead to not only a critique, but also a transgression of some of the problematic and troubling aspects of the neoliberal and competitive mechanisms that mark the current moment. In short, PE supports the creation of alternative futures, starting from direct actions in the present.

2. From ‘no future’ to ‘alternative futures’: the value of architectural work

In 1977 the Sex Pistols declared that there is ‘no future’. Although more than 40 years have elapsed since their claim, the neoliberal order they were trying to fight is still alive and well and the world finds itself in such a fragile state that the Sex Pistols seem to have been right. As argued elsewhere, we are living in a crisis-ridden world (still) dominated by a neoliberal order that does not seem to be capable of offering appropriate and reasonable crisis responses. It would be
understandable to assume that there is *no alternative* to the neoliberal deadlock (see Fisher, 2009, for a critique of Margaret Thatcher’s slogan ‘there is no alternative’ and her capitalist realist regime).

PE, introduced here as a futures forming practice for education research and practice, is offered as one possible way to generate alternatives to the neoliberal order and contend with an increasingly complex world. The term ‘futures forming practice’ is an adaptation of Gergen’s (2015) ‘future forming research’, whereby research is seen as a collaborative action ‘to create what is to become’ (p. 294). The practices of PE are considered as one way of approaching the architectural work that makes up the third mode of utopia as method (see Part I section ‘Utopia as architecture: castles made of mud’). Utopia as architecture is focused on the construction of alternative futures in the present and calls for collaborations with architectural sites such as schools. The conceptual and practical work of PE emerged from my collaboration with ICHK, whereby the archaeological and ontological modes of utopia were also activated. What united everyone involved in the project was the desire to ‘feel and want, as well as behave, differently from ourselves’ (Levitas, 2013, p. 197). This desire is where ‘utopia as architecture incorporates the ontological mode’, as Levitas (2013, p. 197) asserts. The work thus required asking ontological questions: How can we be in this world and respond responsibly to the prevalent crises and resist the neoliberal order? How can education research and practice work collaboratively and guide our responses? How can ontological questions be embedded in and drive education research and practice?
The connection between the architectural and the archaeological work, then, lies in the commitment to ‘move between critique and reconstitution’ (Levitas, 2013, p. 198). As such, the school-based work that made up PE (see Part IV) was, on the one hand, asking critical ontological questions about the school and education more generally. On the other hand, the architectural work was aimed at actions in the present that support an educational future which reclaims and restores matters of human flourishing and the good society.

My arguments are centred around the idea that binary thinking in and about education research and practice is putting limits and constraints on the educational work we do and the alternatives we can create. One example from my own professional experience is the identity shift that a move from secondary to higher education seems to imply: you stop being considered a practitioner and are now expected to be a researcher. Instead, I argue for ‘boundary-crossing collaborations’ (Couture et al, 2020, p. 2) between research and practice. I suggest that, instead of limiting ourselves to critique or problem-solving, punk ethnographic practices allow for provisionality and support the possibility of developing not only alternative ways of doing education, but alternative ways of living and being.

3. The coming into being of a futures forming practice: positioning Punk Ethnography

PE should not be understood as an ethnographic approach that focuses on the punk subculture. It is a practice that applies aspects of the punk ethos and anarchist philosophy to ethnographic strategies allowing for researchers and
practitioners, working together, to interrupt the dominant (neoliberal) order and to create alternative futures and contribute to social change.

The application of punk and anarchist philosophies in education is not new and is part of a growing body of literature which, in very broad terms, can be viewed as having two main – often interconnected - foci. On the one hand, there is work that is focusing on the higher education context and how scholars, or ‘punkademics’ (Furness, 2012), try to resist and transgress the neoliberal climate as well as how (punk) scholars conduct research into the punk subculture (see for example Furness, 2012). On the other hand, punk and anarchist philosophies have been used as foundations for (classroom) pedagogies (see for example Smith et al, 2018).

The work that I am presenting here can be situated at the intersection of these academic and school-based contexts, offering a practice that brings researchers and practitioners together who do not aim at solving a problem, but at creating provisional alternatives without a predetermined agenda. PE argues for taking direct action, starting from the assumption that action, as Arendt (1998) contends, ‘is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act’ (p. 188). Punk ethnographic actions, in other words, are underpinned by values of relationality, interconnectedness and solidarity.

When I started my research collaboration with ICHK, I was drawn to what Mills and Morton (2013) term as the experimental tradition in ethnography which is concerned with ‘a question of making a contribution towards the ongoing “human dialogue”, of widening the whole field of human discourse, solidarity and self-understanding’ (Willis, 2000, p. 119-120). Mills and Morton (2013) remind us
of the valuable point made by sociologist Mike Savage that ‘science is not innocent or neutral. We can never fully detach ourselves from the worlds in which we work, or see our methods as mere technical tools’ (p. 53). This implies that ethnographers can engage actively with whoever is involved in their research. I envisaged my own research to be positioned in this ethnographic tradition and thus started with an ethnographic study of a novel curricular practice developed and implemented by ICHK. Yet, early on, the fieldwork transformed into something different that went beyond the work of an ethnographer. My classroom observations often resulted in direct (teaching) engagements with students. My semi-structured interviews soon became conversations, and consultations with school staff asking me for advice and staff contributing to my work. We worked on further instances and expansions of existing practices and explored options for new initiatives (e.g. setting up a series of teacher colloquia, curriculum development, thinking about lesson content, preparing joint publications and presentations, etc.). I had lengthy conversations with a small number of teachers about the role of education and how we, as contributors to this project, could step back from the global education discourse and build alternative futures collaboratively. It became clear that we had a similar vision on the purpose and nature of our work: that shared practices between education researchers and practitioners can move knowledge and action ‘from the domain of certainty, the domain of “what is” to the domain of possibility, the domain of “what might be the case”’ (Biesta, 2020a, p. 131).
We acknowledged that the value of our work was in our boldness to engage in direct action and make initiatives happen in the present, whilst being provisional in our responses. As such, the project was not rigidly planned, nor did it work towards predetermined outcomes. We worked on a series of initiatives that were co-constructed. It was in those moments that the ethnographic techniques I was applying (observations, interviews, making fieldnotes, journaling) were no longer merely methodological techniques, but were becoming ‘shaping practices’. The boundaries of our roles as researchers and practitioners became permeable and we were infiltrating into each other's roles and spaces. Our work applied a set of techniques ‘for negotiating and renegotiating our relations with others’ (Jackson, 2016, p. 3), techniques that anthropologist Michael Jackson (2016) attributes to the work that happens when anthropology and philosophy ‘meet’. The (re)negotiations of our relationships and the boundary-crossing work were also part of ‘shifting our focus from logos to life and of anchoring philosophical debates in the immediate and pressing issues of everyday existence’ (Jackson, 2016, p. 12). The ethnographic work evolved from methodology to practice, thereby (re)negotiating our roles and relationships, and ultimately, to actions that entailed visions of alternative futures. For these reasons, the ethnographic work became a ‘futures forming practice’.

It is still appropriate to speak of ethnography in a broad sense, given the continued application of ethnographic techniques and the fact that ethnographic work allows for working extensively and thoroughly within and as part of small communities. An ethnographic approach also acknowledges the differences
between communities and contexts and the fact that social transformation does not imply a homogenous ‘one size fits all’ future. This need for heterogeneity and plurality was also emphasised by philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (2010) in his book ‘Against Method’. He argued for pluralism in theories and methodologies, which he considered to be ‘an essential part of a humanitarian outlook’ (p. 32). Feyerabend asserts:

It is possible to retain what one might call freedom of artistic creation and to use it to the full, not just as a road of escape but as a necessary means for discovering and perhaps even changing the features of the world we live in. (2010, p. 32)

Pluralism and multiple futures can be striven for more easily if we are prepared to cross boundaries and to operate beyond our own institutional walls (Couture et al, 2020). In other words, if researchers can commit more often to experimentation and are not letting their institutional walls limit them, they can play a crucial role in futures forming work. Doing such extensive work, however, has become very challenging as researchers generally are operating under a lot of time and funding pressure. Yet, not having or allowing oneself the time to engage in direct action and futures forming practices entails the risk of negatively impacting scholarship, whereby scholars merely mirror and articulate crises (Gergen, 2015) rather than create more appropriate responses that can support social change. ‘The vast share of research today’, Gergen (2015) states, ‘remains dedicated to “revealing”, “illuminating”, “understanding”, or “reflecting” a given state of affairs’ (p. 291). This is also the case for how research training courses at universities typically
understand the role and meaning of research. Gergen (2015), however, sees a far more radical role for research:

Given a valued vision of the possible, the challenge for research would be to explore how such a possibility could be realised. The aim of research would not be to illuminate what is, but to create what is to become. (p. 294)

The same can be said about practices in schools: if practitioners can go beyond mirroring the dominant order, they can create spaces for alternatives and social change to happen. Research and practice, in the words of Hamilton (2005), then become a ‘fumbling act of discovery’ (p. 288).

I now move on to how I view the relationship between anarchism and punk and how this relates to the punk ethnographic practices, followed by an elaboration on the role of education, as well as the roles that researchers and practitioners can take up when engaging in these kinds of practices.

4. The nexus between anarchism and punk

Although they are two separate matters, punk and anarchism can be complementary. I draw on punk as an ethos that emphasises the subversive, the resistance, the Do It Yourself (DIY). Anarchism, on the other hand, represents non-coercive political and social organisational structures.

Gordon (2012) describes the anarcho-punk connection as ‘both a continuation of the counterculture of the 1960s and a musical genre/scene that amplified the populist embrace of DIY punk by turning it into a political project’ (p.
He refers to the punk collective CRASS who symbolised the anarcho-punk movement in the late 1970s in the UK. My own engagement with and application of the anarchist and punk ethos can be understood in similar terms. Punk provides an ethos, or more so, an attitude and state of mind that guides a futures forming practice driven by a commitment to social change. There is an orientation towards a non-coercive political and organisational structure, the latter being the connection with anarchism. In other words, PE does not only operate at the nexus between academe and school life, but also at the nexus between anarchism and punk. Before I bring the three components of PE together, I illustrate in more detail how I interpret and put anarchism and punk to work. For the sake of clarity, I will separate them out.

4.1. Anarchism as an organisational structure

My interpretation of the term ‘anarchy’ is one that reclaims the original meaning rather than following the contemporary interpretation. It is therefore important to first return to the original meaning in Greek. The Greek polis or the public sphere was made up of equals and ‘to be free meant both not to be subject to the necessity of life or to the command of another and not to be in command oneself’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 32). There were no ‘archons’ or leaders who ruled over others. The Merriam-Webster dictionary mentions that ‘anarchy’ originally meant ‘without archon’ (‘without leader’). By the 16th century, the term was used as a synonym for ‘absence of government’. However, in contemporary and more popular usage, in particular by those who lack a profound understanding or who are dismissive
of the anarchist movement, ‘anarchy’ as well as ‘anarchism’ have come to mean chaos, lack of rules, disorder. This shift indicates that popularly, there is an assumption that the absence of government leads to chaos and that the presence of a top-down governmental structure is a necessary condition to govern ourselves. The contemporary interpretation thus also involves a conflation of the terms ‘anarchy’ and ‘anarchism’ whereby the latter is no longer referring to a political position or movement, but simply to a state of chaos. The original interpretation of ‘anarchy’ and in particular the political dimension of ‘anarchism’, on the other hand, creates possibilities to conceive of anarchism as a general political philosophy that requires a certain alternative form of organisation (see also the section ‘The creation of an anarcho-syndicate’). Anarchism, however, is not a homogenous movement, but a very diverse field that has evolved over time with disagreement and contradiction among anarchist thinkers. I pick up on a few common denominators of anarchist thinking, in particular in relation to organisation and education, that support the framing of my work. I therefore have to make some necessary generalisations (for a more nuanced account of anarchism and its relation to education, see Suissa, 2006).

Anarchist philosophy (as distinct from philosophical anarchism, which claims that anarchism is the only legitimate system of government) is thus offering an appropriate foundation for a view on human existence that is centred around principles of relationality, interconnectedness and solidarity. I do not wish to make any claims about what anarchist pedagogies could or should look like. What I am drawing on is what has connected a diverse group of anarchist thinkers (e.g. Peter
Kropotkin, Rudolph Rocker, Colin Ward) throughout history: their commitment to bottom-up social transformation starting from small communities. Anarchists challenge the status quo by striving for transgression through direct action, often underpinned by ideas of self-governance, mutual aid and participatory democracy (Suissa, 2006). This set of attributes and their underlying ethos play a key role in the framing of PE.

An anarchist approach, according to Suissa (2006), ‘does not simply concern “blueprints for single institutions”, but sees in the very act of restructuring human relationships within such institutions (the school, the workplace), a creative act of engaging with the restructuring of society as a whole’ (p. 139). In other words, ‘anarchists did not subscribe to the view that one can do away with education, or even with schools, altogether, but seemed to agree that schools, and education in general, are a valuable aspect of the project for social change’ (Suissa, 2006, p. 97). If we view the role of education as such, then schools (practitioners) as well as education researchers can create spaces where the status quo can be challenged and alternatives can be imagined, driven by a commitment to experimentation (Kropotkin, 1898). It needs to be noted that a lot of anarchists emphasise the importance of the moral education of children for a society based on self-governance and participatory democracy to function. This is a different matter that does not fall within the scope of my work, as I am not concerned with what an anarchist school could look like.

Educational spaces that do something different ‘besides and in spite of the institutional logic’ (Suissa, 2020, p. 11) deserve our attention. Suissa (2020), in
her foreword to sociologist Nils Christie’s translated publication ‘If Schools Didn’t Exist’, reminds us that Christie encouraged us ‘to look more critically, but also less cynically and more carefully at some of the extraordinary schools around us’ (p.20). The possibilities of working with these extraordinary schools is an additional motivation behind PE as a futures forming practice.

4.2. Punk as an attitude and ethos

The punk subculture, which emerged in the UK and the US in the 1970s, was initially a radical reaction against ‘a social context shaped by deindustrialisation and economic stagnation’ (Moore, 2004, p. 323) and mainstream capitalist culture, politics and economy (Parkinson, 2017). It was a highly incoherent, at times contradictory and heavily contested subculture (for a detailed historical account of the punk subculture, see Moore, 2004; O’Hara, 2001; Savage, 2005). As I am using it, however, punk is not a reference to a lifestyle or a subculture, but an attitude, a state of mind and a broader ethos that flows through the practices of PE. Shukaitis’ (2012) definition of punk accurately describes my own perspective:

Punk, as a technology of rebellion, works most effectively (and affectively) when the process of artistic composition exists through a process of social composition, of bringing together and enacting other ways to live and be together in the world; ways not based on the values of capitalism or other forms of social domination and exclusion. (p. 126)
The work punk does here supports the idea that education can be a catalyst for social change, but this requires a bold attitude and a commitment to engage with the present in a different way, not only questioning the dominant social discourses, but creating alternatives collaboratively and inclusively. To do so, ontological questions need to be put at the centre and a willingness to resist and transgress the status quo has to be shared. The notion of punk as an ethos will be further unpacked in the following section (5. ‘The three components of Punk Ethnography’), but at this point it is important to note that researchers and practitioners who wish to apply punk ethnographic practices need to be prepared to leave the safe confines and siloed spaces of their higher education institutions and schools. They would be served by a punk attitude, but also need to organise themselves differently. It is here that punk and anarchism intersect, as anarchism, and more precisely the structure of the anarcho-syndicate (discussed below), can provide guidance.

In what follows, I describe the three components that make up PE, how they are related and how they provide the conditions for futures forming practices. Although the three components are presented separately, they are inevitably applied simultaneously.

5. The three components of Punk Ethnography

5.1. The creation of an anarcho-syndicate

The first component that makes up PE is structured around the creation of an anarcho-syndicate, an organisational concept borrowed from the anarchist school
of thought that emerged from the labour movement in the early 1900s (Chomsky, 1976). Anarcho-syndicalism was concerned with the welfare of workers and their rights to organise and govern themselves in small syndicates, based on the principles of solidarity and direct action. Critics of anarcho-syndicalism such as contemporary anarchist Murray Bookchin (1992) critiqued this school of thought for not being concerned enough with wider societal transformation and being too focused on the rights of workers instead. Yet, in my adoption of the anarcho-syndicate, I focus on its potential as an organisational structuring tool for (educational) futures forming practices rather than its functioning in the context of worker welfare. For my interpretation, I mainly draw on the work of German anarchist and activist Rudolph Rocker (1873-1958).

An anarcho-syndicate has two important features that allow for direct action: it is small by intention and self-governing, features that can also be recognised in John Dewey’s approach to democracy as participatory and decentralised (Price, 2014). These features are opposed to the structure and purpose of large and often hierarchical bureaucracies because ‘organisation is, after all, only a means to an end. When it becomes an end in itself, it kills the spirit and the vital initiative of its members and sets up that domination by mediocrity’ (Rocker, 1938, p.93). A second risk of large operations is the ‘almost irresistible inclination toward despotism, be this the despotism of a person or of majority rule’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 43)

Educational institutions and the work they do are often governed by larger - local, national or transnational - bureaucratic organisations. External policies and
practices are inevitably impacting and often imposed upon them. Transnational bureaucracies in particular are shaping the dominating discourse, having little consideration for the specificity of local contexts and alternative views on the future, and are thus often excluding. Similar examples can be found in academe in university ranking bodies, such as QS World University rankings. In contrast, as Ward (1996) writes:

> an important component of the anarchist approach to organisation is...the theory that, given a common need, a collection of people will, by trial and error, by improvisation and experiment, evolve order out of the situation – this order being more durable and more closely related to their needs than any kind of externally imposed authority could provide (p.31).

It is a hard ask that schools and universities can escape or transcend bureaucracies, yet there are ways of structuring and organising oneself differently and allowing for a distancing from imposed authorities, as suggested by Ward (1996). In doing so, as Jo Freeman states in her famous essay 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', ‘we must accept the idea that there is nothing inherently bad about structure itself – only its excess use’ (1970, n.p.). I view the anarcho-syndicate as one possible way to be organised in an inclusive, non-coercive, participatory manner that is provisional instead of final in nature. The first feature of the anarcho-syndicate, small by intention, is based on the idea that change is more likely to happen in smaller structures.

Anarcho-syndicalists are concerned with solidarity amongst all community members, establishing common interest and thereby ensuring that ‘mutual
agreement is possible and serviceable to all parties’ (Rocker, 1938, p. 113). There is a commitment for members of this type of organisation to ‘deepen their understanding, and broaden their intellectual outlook’ (Rocker, 1938, p. 117). These are fecund conditions for futures forming practices to take place. Within a school context, different anarcho-syndicates can emerge for different purposes. It may be that an anarcho-syndicate emerges in relation to matters of policy affecting a particular school, or approaches to pedagogy in the classroom. They can grow organically and allow school community members to take up a variety of different roles and actions. It is not a requisite for an organisation to be small in order to work collaboratively in an anarcho-syndicalist manner, as anarcho-syndicates can be formed within larger organisations as well.

My collaboration with ICHK did not only emerge from shared views on the purpose of education, but was also facilitated by the fact that the school is small by intention, community-oriented and encourages the kind of organisation that Ward (1996) suggests. In their 2008 School Proposal document, composed two years before the establishment of the school, the ICHK founders wrote that they wanted to provide ‘an alternative to the larger scale and more impersonal style of many other international schools in Hong Kong’ (ICHK, 2008, p. 2). The founders purposely wanted to offer an alternative to the high-stakes and large-scale education enterprise model and therefore saw potential in the small size of the school building, its green and lush surroundings. Although the school has grown since its inception in 2010, it remains committed to its small-by-design-intentions. The school website states that ‘ICHK is a small community school. It is
intentionally small and our policies, approaches and culture all flow from this deliberate decision’ (ICHK, 2022, n.p.).

The second feature of the anarcho-syndicate is its self-governance and its refusal to be disproportionately influenced by an external bureaucracy. I illustrated earlier the challenges for researchers and practitioners to stand outside the influence and power of larger local and transnational bodies, yet the choice to create opportunities to function with a high degree of self-governance and create productive tensions can be made. Organisations or units that are small by intention provide more opportunities for self-governance and practices that supersede elements of the external bureaucratic, dominating forces which otherwise go unquestioned. I return once more to Jo Freeman (1970) to emphasise that structure is a necessary condition for solidarity and inclusion: ‘A “laissez faire” group is about as realistic as a “laissez faire” society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others’ (Freeman, 1970, n.p.). Therefore, far from creating a lawless environment, the community is required to assume an authentic responsibility for vision and values, an explicit spelling out of its own principles, purposes, duties and responsibilities as distinct from an ‘imported’ programme. Kinna et al (2019) term this as the ‘constitutionalising practices’ that make up anarchist organisational structures. Rocker (1938) emphasises the importance for the members of an anarcho-syndicate to exert ‘vital solidarity with their fellows-in-destiny and moral responsibility for their own actions’ (p. 90).
The project with ICHK was organised along anarcho-syndicalist lines whereby we, researchers and practitioners, made deliberate choices in the practices we wanted to engage in, ensuring that they were not subsumed by (the demands of) external bureaucracies. When I embarked on this project with the school, these were matters we discussed extensively. We looked at how we could ensure that our collaboration could flourish, and our direct actions and practices could be sustained. In conversations with a small group of staff members from across the school - teachers as well as school leaders - we set up formal as well as informal meetings, always returning to questions of purpose and ensuring that our actions were in line with our principles and our shared concern with contributing to alternative ways of living and being. This also required ongoing reflection and questioning our own practices. We maintained a level of provisionality and a willingness to change practices when deemed necessary. Moreover, we were aware of the bureaucracies that impacted us, from transnational education bodies to academic rules, regulations and procedures, and thus continuously looked for strategies to govern our project bottom-up, with each participating individual having a say in and contributing to the actions we set up.

In short, if researchers and practitioners make deliberate choices to engage in immediate initiatives that are small by intention, allowing them to grow organically, but with great intentionality, resisting the dominating bureaucratic order becomes a more realistic scenario. Operating within the tradition of anarcho-syndicalism requires a particular mindset, a commitment and ethos from
the school as a community, as well as from the individuals who are involved in direct action together. This mindset does not necessarily have to be punk, yet, for PE, a punk ethos is essential to one’s attitude within the anarcho-syndicalist structure. The DIY ethos and the commitment to resist and create instead of recuperate are important requisites for futures forming practices to emerge. This is where anarchism (as a political and organisational structure) and punk (as an attitude and ethos) intersect. How is it then, that the punk ethos can guide punk ethnographic practices? This is the focus of the second and next component.

5.2. The punk ethos

The punk ethos, as described earlier, holds the promise of transgressing the status quo, of traversing boundaries and creating productive tensions. Beer (2014) when illustrating his notion of ‘punk sociology’, describes the punk ethos as follows:

A punk is not afraid of their own limitations and vulnerabilities. Nor do notions of legitimacy or authenticity inhibit them. Punk seeks to break down and transcend boundaries and obstacles and to erode the lines between the performer and the audience... The punk can then be bold and inventive in their work. (2014, p. 28)

The two specific elements of the punk ethos I am drawing on are bold inventiveness, and the DIY approach. The first element, bold inventiveness, is expressed in the boundary-crossing work, the infiltrations that researchers and practitioners are concerned with as part of PE. They are at times performer, at times audience. These relationships, following Jackson (2016), 'hold in tension
both antagonistic and empathic potentialities, in which subjects become objects and vice versa as the dynamics of interaction change’ (p. 22). Researchers and practitioners thus need to be comfortable with changes of state and discordant role play. They need to be willing to acknowledge their own limitations and despite these, be bold and inventive and willing to work collaboratively. The second element of the punk ethos is built around the DIY ethos of punk. Punk can create what Moore and Roberts (2009) describe as ‘a “mobilising structure” (McCarthy, 1996) through its “do-it-yourself” (DIY) ethic which states that punks should not be content with being consumers and spectators but instead should become active participants’ (p 275).

The following accounts from two staff members at ICHK (see Part IV – section 3. ‘Data: origin and use’ for an overview of how data were collected and used) are illustrative of the tensions and challenges that come with inventiveness and DIY:

I feel torn between the school approach and transnational systems such as the International Baccalaureate and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education. (The Convert)

So, the really interesting and skillful part becomes navigating a behemoth called School through the inescapable bullshit, while holding onto the passion and drive. (The Iconoclast)

For some the accompanying challenges came across as greater than for others and therefore it should not be assumed that engaging in direct action, driven by a punk ethos, is an easy route to follow. Yet, the general commitment of the ICHK
community seemed recognisable as supported by a punk ethos, which motivated me to collaborate with the school. These are the signs one should be looking for as a fertile ground to put PE into practice.

The third and last component of PE described below brings together and connects a number of aspects that have been discussed earlier: the commitment to transgressing and resisting the dominant ‘what works’ order in education, a commitment to crossing boundaries and roles and ultimately, a commitment to engaging in futures forming practices. These aspects do not only require us to continuously question our own ways of doing and being, but to rethink our practices and roles beyond the boundaries of our institutions and expert fields. Social transformation, I argue, requires a refusal to be locked in and at the same time separated from a world in crisis.

5.3. Border-crossing work: crossing borders without passports

In accordance with Beer (2014), I argue that, for social transformation to be possible, it is important ‘to escape the restrictions of normalising categories and labels’ (p. 21). This asks for what Jon Savage, as quoted by Beer (2014), describes as ‘deliberate unlearning’ (p. 25) as part of the punk ethos. PE, therefore, to do its job well, is asking us to unlearn and refuse to be limited by the restrictions of our institutions and professional fields. Said (2004), in his critical analysis of the state of affairs in the academic humanities, describes the problem of the separation between fields and disciplines as ‘a whole factory of word-spinning and souciant specialities, many of them identity-based, that in their jargon and special pleading address only like-minded people, acolytes, and other
academics’ (p. 14). Researchers as well as practitioners often limit the possibilities of expanding knowledge and understanding through dialogue and collaboration outside of their professional comfort zones. In other words, by staying safely within the confines of expert fields as well as institutional walls, we are cultivating future generations who will have a difficult time in responding thoughtfully to a complex and crisis-ridden world.

What I consider an additional challenge is the neoliberal academic climate of ‘publish or perish’ whereby academics are forced to publish in high stakes, highly specialised journals, usually behind paywalls. Research therefore often remains in the abstract realms of academe and does not reach practitioners, who in turn are not in a position where they can easily contribute to, question or critique research. In such a closed off environment it is difficult for research to be part of direct and radically alternative actions. Of course, for researchers and practitioners to work together, across fields and institutions, comes with risks for both: not being able to operate as an expert who is a ‘more knowing other’, having to deal with uncertainty about or even absence of the outcomes of a project or engagement, to give two examples. Researchers, when interested in interdisciplinary, what I would term more broadly as ‘border-crossing work’, often find themselves in what Darbellay (2015) calls a ‘schizophrenic situation’ whereby they play the inter- and transdisciplinarity game while confidently adhering to the institutional displays for the promotion of the dialogue between disciplines and are caught out when the criteria ultimately remain clearly rooted in a purely disciplinary perspective – in relation to evaluation (p. 167).
Academics are thus encouraged to stay in the safe environment of their disciplines, driven by career prospects and the accompanying funds and pay cheques.

Beer (2014), on the other hand, in his plea for a punk sociology, refers to the punk attitude as one of ‘having a go’, of ‘breaking with conventions and to move into unfamiliar analytical territory’ (p. 59) for matters that one considers to be worthwhile and important. This kind of attitude requires us to move into unknown territory, to leave behind our established roles, fields and expertise, to be humble as well as bold enough to engage with(in) unfamiliar spaces. We could draw an analogy with crossing borders without passports, yet, in PE, this crossing is legitimate and desirable. Etienne Wenger, in his well-known work on communities of practice, discusses extensively the fertile areas that borders (or boundaries) are and acknowledges that ‘radically new insights arise often at the boundaries between communities’ (Wenger, 2000, p. 232-233). He continues:

At the boundaries, competence and experience tend to diverge: a boundary interaction is usually an experience of being exposed to a foreign competence. Such reconfigurations of the relation between competence and experience are an important aspect of learning. If competence and experience are too close, if they always match, not much learning is likely to take place (p. 232).

Being comfortable with the unlearning of what is familiar and the learning of what is foreign, the boundary interactions of institutions, individuals, roles and expert fields, help us to remove limitations and to engage with alternative practices
across communities. With this emphasis on border-crossing work, however, I do not wish to dismiss the potential value of borders and categorisations. The disciplinary training of researchers and practitioners, for example, can offer useful tools and ways to understand particular contexts. What I am arguing for is a more provisional and partial approach to these borders.

The crossing of borders implies asking ontological questions, questioning oneself, others and the world, thereby taking the specificity of different contexts into consideration. The negotiations and collaborations that happen across borders contain exchanges of perspectives on what constitutes a good life, and how matters of human flourishing can be addressed in a participatory, democratic and inclusive way. A world that is driven by a need to rigidly categorise, separate and simplify the present and the future in order to deal, or rather a failure to deal - with the complexities of our existence, makes border crossing without passports a risky or even illegal endeavour.

6. Summary

I have laid out how PE is conceptualised as a futures forming practice that can be applied by any researcher and/or practitioner who wishes to contribute to social change in education and beyond. It is an example of how the architectural work of utopia as method can be put into practice. However, PE is not exclusive to utopia as method. It provides conceptual as well as practical guidelines for researchers and practitioners who are committed to imaginative actions that are inclusive, participatory and community-oriented. Concerns with direct action and social transformation, underpinned by matters of human flourishing, are the core
principles of PE. The practice is informed by the punk ethos, anarchist philosophy and organisational principles, and considers three components that are simultaneously put to work: the creation of an anarcho-syndicate; the punk ethos; and border-crossing work. In Part IV (section 7. ‘Utopia as architecture: Punk Ethnography practiced at ICHK) I provide a detailed example of how PE within an educational context can be applied by describing the various punk ethnographic practices that marked the collaborative work at ICHK from August 2019 to December 2021.

There is an increasing interest in research partnerships with schools and public research engagements from, for example, funding bodies with a social mission. Methodologies such as participatory action research and practitioner inquiry are to a certain extent similar in approach and aim at the field of education research ‘being always in dialogue with schools, teachers and students’ (UNESCO, 2021, p. 124). Yet, in most cases, these methodologies start from problem-solving, predetermined and outcome-oriented agendas. They lack imagination and creativity, two important characteristics for anyone who wishes to imagine alternative futures starting from the present.

PE does not ‘belong’ to the field of education and can be practised and applied across fields and contexts. This work is therefore also an invitation to experiment with PE in different contexts, to cross borders, to further shape it, conceptually as well as practically, and - ultimately - to shape alternative futures. My starting point inevitably is education, as I have been active as an educator for a substantial period now, in various roles, across continents. On bad days, I get
discouraged by the neoliberal paradigm that has got education in a deadlock. On those days, I easily slip into pessimism and find it hard to see alternatives. Yet, on good days, I see possibilities and opportunities to resist and imagine alternatives. It was on one of those good days that I came across a podcast by sociologist Stephen Ball who made a bold case for the importance of scholars to ‘engage in small acts of resistance’ (2020, n.p.), to not give in and to battle against that which we have become. None of this work is easy, as the challenges and tensions described here have shown. These challenges are not exclusive to education, but exist elsewhere too. The role of scholar is the latest addition to the list of educational roles I have taken up, yet I do not stop being a teacher, student, practitioner, and above all, a human being and citizen. Each role adds layers to the other roles and traversing the boundaries between them creates more possibilities. We are and increasingly become multitudes. Shevek, the main character in Ursula K. Le Guin’s utopian science fiction novel ‘The Dispossessed’ (1974), emphasises our potential in the final words of his speech to the people of planet Urras: ‘You cannot buy the revolution. You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.’ (p. 485)
Part III

Curriculum as Verfremdung

Before familiarity can turn into awareness
the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness;
we must give up assuming that the object in question needs no explanation.
However frequently recurrent, modest, vulgar it may be it will now be labelled as
something unusual.

(Brecht, 1964, p. 144)
1. Introduction

While Part I and Part II addressed approaches to research in education, this part moves on to the second focus of the thesis: curriculum in schools, formulating an answer to the second sub-question that frames the thesis: ‘Which curriculum considerations support teachers and students to live responsibly with others and be concerned with social change?’ It provides a conceptual account of why and how curriculum can be viewed as a practice that is concerned with human flourishing, the good society and social change. The overarching claim is that dichotomous discussions about curriculum (what versus how, knowledge versus experience, teacher-centred versus student-centred, traditionalist versus progressivist, etc.), which have occupied the field of curriculum studies for more than a century, impoverish and narrow our views on the purpose of curriculum and education more generally. Garcia-Huidoboro (2018) and Young (2013) speak of a crisis in curriculum, referring to the gap between the discussions in the field and the reality of the classroom. The conceptual work laid out in the chapter is aimed at problematising the stifling nature of the discussions that occupy curriculum theorists. I am arguing for more nuanced considerations that grapple with the reality of schools, the knowledge and experiences that students and teachers bring to the classroom and how curricular practices can lead to different, unfamiliar insights about ourselves, others and the world. These conceptual insights emerged from my collaboration with ICHK and are thus underpinned by the actions and interventions that we undertook together in the context of their school-based curricular approach HT (see Part IV for an analysis of HT).
This section opens with a brief discussion of contemporary curriculum debates and questions, with specific reference to the 2011 edition of the World Yearbook of Education that had as its focus ‘Curriculum in Today’s World: Configuring Knowledge, Identities, Work and Politics’. I aim to offer responses to some of these curricular debates and to the crisis in curriculum (Garcia-Huidoboro, 2018; Young, 2013).

A first response is given by a reconsideration of curriculum as a practice and a lived experience, inspired by the work of Ted Aoki and William Pinar. I introduce the notion of ‘Verfremdung’ as a key curricular purpose. This term, otherwise known as ‘defamiliarisation’, is borrowed from German playwright Bertold Brecht (1964). I then contrast my own interpretation with more conventional assumptions about curriculum through offering a historical overview of how curricular perspectives have changed since the start of the 20th century, thereby focusing on the shortcomings and pitfalls that emerged in the last few decades.

As a second response, a detailed discussion of four curricular considerations is offered:

- teacher artistry, negotiation and trust;
- the knowledge-experience nexus;
- curricular justice;
- the discipline dilemma.

I view these considerations as interconnected and crucial for developing an alternative understanding of curriculum that offers a different response to some aspects of the contemporary curricular issues and debates (instrumentalism,
standardisation, inequality, competence-based models, etc.) as well as broader societal issues.

I draw extensively on William Pinar, Ted Aoki, Gert Biesta, and the more recent work of Michael Young. At times, the views of these scholars are in tension with one another, yet these tensions provide a productive dialectic that allows for the emergence of alternative curricular perspectives. These ‘conversations’ support a more nuanced approach to curriculum that moves away from dichotomies.

I suggest that curriculum as a lived practice can guide teachers and students who are concerned with social change in offering appropriate responses to crises by being challenged and defamiliarised from that which they accept as normal and true. Through actively engaging with historical and current curricular and wider educational debates, as well as problematising and rethinking how curriculum can be (re)conceptualised, I explore how curriculum and curricular debates can be approached differently by policy makers, researchers as well as school-based practitioners, putting the good society and human flourishing first.

2. Curriculum and/for/in crisis: emerging questions

The 2011 edition of the World Yearbook of Education (WYBE) had the title ‘Curriculum in Today’s World: Configuring Knowledge, Identities, Work and Politics’. In their introduction, editors Yates and Grumet (2011) summarised one of the major contemporary issues and debates in curriculum studies as follows: ‘Like the economic agendas of OECD, the focus here too is on measurable indicators of inputs and outputs as the key agenda for schooling, rather than the
substance of what is taught’ (p. 6). Au (2011) terms this trend in curricula in the 21st century as ‘new Taylorism’. Thereby he claims that curricula - and education in general - are approached and organised according to the principles of scientific management with standardisation and high-stakes testing as the major foci.

This focus on accountability and standardisation followed a period that was marked by what is known as the ‘curriculum wars’, which intensified during the 1990s. The wars raged between the so-called ‘progressivists’ and ‘traditionalists’ who were arguing over a question that Herbert Spencer had formulated more than a century earlier: ‘What knowledge is of most worth?’ (1869, n.p.). The dichotomous and reductive debates shifted in focus towards accountability and, as Yates and Grumet (2011) highlighted in their WYBE edition, in recent years there seems to be a lack of conversation around ‘the substance of what is taught’ (p. 6). This matter has been at the heart of the work of Michael Young and Johan Muller who, since Young’s publication of his book ‘Bringing Knowledge Back In’ in 2008, have been problematising a social constructivist approach to knowledge, which they see as too relativist. They also criticise the dominating emphasis on competences, experiences and generic outcomes (Muller & Young, 2019; Young, 2008, 2009, 2015; Young & Lambert, 2014). Young and his colleagues also criticise Young’s own earlier work of the 1970s which they now consider to be too relativist and too dismissive of the importance of knowledge, a debate I will return to in more detail.

Today, more than 20 years into the 21st century and about a decade after the 2011 curriculum edition of the World Yearbook, the debates have led to what Young (2013) and Garcia-Huidoboro (2018) call a crisis in curriculum. The
crisis refers, in broad terms, to the loss of relevance of curriculum studies because of its focus on accountability, standards, instrumentalism, as well as its disconnection from the reality of the classroom teacher (Garcia-Huidoboro, 2018). The crisis also refers to the lack of discussion about the what, in favour of the how of education (Young, 2013), an aspect that is also discussed in Part I, where I provided a detailed account of the notion of crisis in education.

In this part, I attempt to offer a response to the crisis in curriculum and the still pertinent issues highlighted by Yates and Grumet in 2011, thereby taking the opportunities offered by crisis (see ‘Introduction: crisis – problem or opportunity?’) to look more closely at the two questions they formulated in their introduction of WYBE (2011, p. 8):

What kind of world is being represented in curriculum?

What are the ways of knowing this world that curriculum extends to students?

In my responses, and in accordance with Yates (2018), I wish to pay ‘attention to curriculum as formative of the human subject as well as formative of cognitive capacities of a particular kind’ (p. 175). It is not my intention to offer solutions, but to explore some aspects of the recent debates and crisis and, from there, reconsider curriculum in a way that it can speak to policy makers, theorists and practitioners who see a strong connection between curriculum, the purpose of education and social responsibility. For these shifts in focus to occur, we need to reconsider some of the current curricular notions and practices that are taken for granted.
3. Reconsidering curriculum as a praxis

The complex, dynamic and troubled nature of our world makes a response to the two questions of Yates and Grumet in the 2011 edition of WYBE a challenging matter. It asks for a dynamic and active conceptualisation of curriculum that acknowledges complexity and uncertainty, and that turns our attention to ‘why’ questions (Biesta, 2020a). I draw on Pinar’s notion of ‘currere’ (Pinar, 2011; Pinar et al, 1995) which I consider to offer an appropriate starting point. Pinar’s perspectives are inspired by the work of Ted Aoki and Max Van Manen who developed a phenomenological perspective on curriculum. Aoki (1993) spoke of a ‘lived curriculum’ as opposed to ‘curriculum-as-plan’. The ‘curriculum as-plan’, as noted by Aoki (1993), frames

a set of curriculum statements: statements of intent and interest (given in the language of "goals," aims" and "objectives"), statements of what teachers and students should do (usually given in the language of activities), statements of official and recommended resources for teachers and students, and usually implicitly, statements of evaluation (given, if at all, in the language of ends and means). (p. 258)

A curriculum-as-plan can be developed at supranational (e.g. International General Certificate of Secondary Education), national (e.g. The British National Curriculum), regional (e.g. The Australian curriculum in Queensland) and school level (e.g. school-based curricular initiatives) with a detailed description of goals, resources and assessments, often connected to a system of accountability with regular inspections or (re)-authorisations whereby student performance data are collected and interpreted as evidence of quality. These plans can be constructed
for individual subjects or categories following a strong classification (Bernstein, 1996) (e.g. a subject-based curriculum), or according to thematic articulations or weak classifications (Bernstein, 1996) (e.g. interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary curricula), but also according to age groups.

Aoki (1993) considered this an all too glib, static and instrumental way of looking at curriculum. He contrasted the curriculum-as-plan with his notion of the 'lived curriculum' (Aoki, 1993) or what Pinar (1975, 2011) has termed 'currere'. Pinar replaces the noun 'curriculum' by the Latin verb 'currere', thereby shifting curriculum from a static object to an active, analytical practice or 'praxis'. 'Praxis' can be understood in an Aristotelian sense, as described by Biesta (2020a):

> praxis is precisely not about the production of things but about what we might call the promotion of the human good, that is, the promotion of what is conducive “to the good life in general”, as Aristotle puts it (Aristotle, 1980, p. 142). (p. 68)

In the context of a lived curriculum or currere, praxis should be understood as an end that emerges during the course of practice rather than being a predetermined end. Currere is first and foremost focused on the interactions between students and teachers. It is a 'lived experience' (Aoki, 1993) or a 'complicated conversation' (Pinar, 2011, p. 1) that requires teachers and students to negotiate and question their experiences, underpinned by concerns with human flourishing. In this context, Pinar et al (1995) view teaching as a 'being' rather than a 'doing', and students are approached as subjects instead of objects (Biesta, 2017) who 'try to exist in and with the world and not just with [them]selves’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 98). This also corresponds with Dewey's (2011) view on the role of the teacher in
helping students to become *active* members in society, to become *practising citizens*.

Pinar et al. (1995) assert that this phenomenological view on curriculum ‘embraces the world as we live it, but in the process, invites us to change the way we live’ (p. 413). It thus offers the opportunity for teachers and students to respond, immediately and (pro)actively, to the world and its crises. Instead of being a static plan, curriculum is viewed as an emergent practice in schools that can become sites not only for social participation, but also for social transformation.

In this view, pedagogy cannot be seen as separate from curriculum. Pedagogy, when understood within the continental configuration as opposed to the Anglo-American configuration (Biesta, 2020a), has its roots in the German discipline of ‘Pädagogik’ and has normative traits: it is concerned with the aims of education as well as with providing guidelines for educational practice (see Biesta, 2020a, p. 90). Following Young (2014), pedagogy refers to ‘the professional practice of teachers’ (p. 19) and ‘the relationship between teachers and pupils’ (p. 21). There is thus a strong focus on the present, but I would add that this pedagogical focus can also be accompanied by concerns with alternative possibilities for the future. This kind of pedagogy can be referred to as a ‘pedagogy of the present’ (Facer, 2016), which aims to ‘continuously seek to expand our assumptions about the future, to keep the spaces of possibility for the future open’ (Facer, 2016, p. 73). In other words, when conceptualising curriculum as currere, as a lived practice, it is not possible to separate curriculum from pedagogy, and present from future. Therefore, my use of the word ‘curriculum’
also implies the pedagogical practices in which teachers and students are engaged.

My response to the 2011 WYBE question ‘What world is being represented in the curriculum?’ leads to two key elements: firstly, curriculum as a practice between, and active engagement of, teacher and student (currere); secondly, curriculum as an acknowledgement and reflection of the complexity of the world and a concern for the human good. Together these elements contribute to a curricular practice that creates possibilities for an alternative future through applying a pedagogy of the present.

4. Shattering the knowledge mirror

The phenomenological view on curriculum that I wish to utilise is a ‘moderate’ view, as a phenomenological perspective entails the risk of overemphasising personal experience and underplaying the importance of existing and emerging knowledge. Teachers as well as students bring their personal experiences into the classroom, and one of the roles of schools is to expand these experiences and generate the knowledge one needs to participate actively and responsibly in society. Students, guided by their teachers, ‘are able to acquire the knowledge that takes them beyond their experience and which they would be unlikely to have access to at home, at work or in the community’ (Muller & Young, 2016, p. 55). This, however, does not imply a discrediting of the knowledge and experiences that students have acquired at home, but acknowledges the importance of the ‘powerful knowledge’ (Muller & Young, 2016; Young, 2014) that schools can give students access to and which will help them to become active and responsible
members of society. I will return to this notion of ‘powerful knowledge’ in more detail later. This process of becoming can be facilitated by a phenomenological, active curricular practice (currere) that connects and generates (new) knowledge and (new) experience. Knowledge and experience are thus not incompatible, but two notions that are in constant conversation in a ‘moderate’ phenomenological classroom setting.

The importance of conversations about knowledge addresses the second WYBE 2011 question: ‘What are the ways of knowing this world that curriculum extends to students?’ Nonetheless, bringing personal experiences and knowledge together in a dynamic curriculum (currere) does not automatically offer an adequate response. The selection and organisation of knowledge is always political (Connell, 1993) and involves different dynamics of power and truth (e.g. Ball, 2015; Muller & Young, 2019). Many considered the question of power underdeveloped in the earlier work of Muller and Young on the role of (powerful) knowledge in curriculum. As a response to this critique, they published their famous paper ‘Knowledge, power and powerful knowledge, re-visited’ (2019). Curricula are often raced, gendered and classed, therefore questions about which and whose knowledge is (not) being represented beg asking. I refer to the growing body of scholarly and practitioner literature on decolonisation of curricula and education in general that addresses these important questions at length and in depth, as they fall outside of the scope of my own work.

As an acknowledgement of the importance of the questions that surround the decolonisation of curricula, I argue for a curricular perspective that carefully considers whose knowledge and ways of knowing are being represented.
Knowledge(s) as well as experience(s) need to be contextually appropriate for students and teachers in specific political, geographical and cultural contexts. As Martin (1994) asserts, knowledge ‘is not and never can be a mirror reflection of reality’ (p. 213). As such, taking inspiration from Martin (1994), the image of knowledge and its representation in curriculum as a mirror of one reality should be shattered. It is the responsibility of policy makers, schools and teachers to acknowledge and include the different voices and perspectives of their communities, but also to acknowledge that knowledge is imperfect, fallible and emergent. However, this shattering ‘does not have to translate into a fragmented curriculum’ (Martin, 1994, p. 216) nor does it imply an idiosyncratic, ‘anything goes’ approach. The commitment of schools and teachers in offering opportunities for diverse articulations of knowledge and experiences and contextualised meaning making, asks for a careful consideration of their curricular practices or currere. Discussions around different types of contextualised knowledge and experiences as well as appropriate pedagogical practices can guide teachers and students in developing a better understanding of ‘the social and historical forces that connect us to each other’ (Andreotti, 2012, p. 1) and that shape our past, present and future. Central to these discussions are shared concerns for human flourishing and social change, starting from engagements in the present.

5. Curriculum for ‘Verfremdung’ or ‘defamiliarisation’

The cornerstone and purpose of my framing of curriculum as a lived practice or currere, and my perspectives on knowledge as well as the four curriculum
considerations that will be introduced later, is what I call the ‘Verfremdungseffekt’, a term I have borrowed from German playwright and poet Bertold Brecht (1964). ‘Verfremdungseffekt’, often translated as ‘defamiliarisation effect’ or ‘A-effect’, is a dialectic process Brecht (1964) introduced in theatre that is aimed at defamiliarising the audience with what is happening on the stage. Instead of passively sitting back and watching the show, the audience is required to engage actively with the play. Through a series of techniques that make the familiar strange (e.g. revealing the backstage area, bright lighting, music, placards, addressing the audience etc.), Brecht wanted the audience to develop a new and different understanding of the play, and through this, also of society. The process of being forced to question that which is given and familiar, to be forced to actively think and rethink, would help the audience to transgress their personal experiences and their often simplistic assumptions about the world. This type of theatre would support the audience in developing a better insight in the world and one’s active role in it. Ultimately, Brecht (1964) hoped that this kind of approach to theatre would support social change:

In setting up new artistic principles and working out new methods of representation we must start with the compelling demands of a changing epoch; the necessity and the possibility of remodeling society loom ahead. All incidents between men must be noted, and everything must be seen from a social point of view. Among other effects that a new theatre will need for its social criticism and its historical reporting of completed transformations is the A-effect. (p. 98-99)
Brecht contrasted this approach with more traditional, passive approaches to theatre which he considered to be ahistorical and portraying human beings and their environments as too universal and too fixed (Brecht, 1964). A clear connection can be made with a static view on curriculum-as-plan, that scholars such as Aoki and Pinar problematise for similar reasons.

The *Verfremdungseffekt* would give the audience an active role that would allow them to engage more deeply with worldly matters, intellectually as well as experientially. This is effectively a *phenomenological* experience: an intellectual change in perspective happens simultaneously with an experiential change. This experience can be accompanied by an affective response that might also shift someone’s ethical stance. The experience of *Verfremdung* whilst attending a play thus provokes intellectual labour which, in turn, can result in an affective and ethical change in life more broadly. When applying this theatrical notion to curriculum, we can start rethinking curriculum as a possible crisis response that requires active engagement and a questioning mindset from everyone involved.

I am calling for *Verfremdung* in four different ways:

- *Verfremdung* of the existing notions of curriculum (including knowledge, disciplines, competences and experiences);
- *Verfremdung* of the assumed role of the teacher;
- *Verfremdung* of personal experiences of teachers as well as students;
- *Verfremdung* of the world as we think we know it.

The last point, *Verfremdung* of our world, is a different process for teachers and students. Teachers, often trained and steeped in a particular discipline, are asked
to question this training and expertise, and reflect on how this might limit their world view. How these limitations can be overcome and defamiliarisation can be central to their training and teaching practice, is thus a key question. Students, on the other hand, do not come to the classroom with a clearly defined picture of the world that is shaped by disciplines. Their process of defamiliarisation is located at the level of their personal world. How can they distance themselves from their personal communities and develop an understanding of the society at large? In other words: How can students enlarge their world and position themselves actively and responsibly vis-à-vis others?

To work towards a different world in the future, we have to rethink our current moment and consider our past. This process comes with inevitable, yet productive tensions: we cannot speak but from our current reality and therefore have to work with (curricular) notions that are familiar to us. *Verfremdung* can help us to rethink and question those familiar notions and put them to work differently. This inevitably also means that our own alternative suggestions should be questioned (defamiliarised) and not seen as definite responses. I will draw on several familiar curricular concepts, inspired by phenomenological approaches to curriculum, that require defamiliarisation in order to approach curriculum as well as the purpose of curriculum and its response to the world differently. *Verfremdung* initiates a much needed shift towards a curricular place we cannot know yet, a ‘curriculum in a New Key’ (Aoki, 2005, p. 89).

Before discussing the four curricular considerations that I deem important in relation to curriculum as a lived practice, I first provide a historical account of the way curriculum has been understood and approached since the start of the
20th century. This account not only helps to contextualise conventional understandings of concepts such as knowledge, experience, skills, competences, but also offers a heuristic that helps problematise and rethink these common assumptions, as part of the curricular considerations.

6. A recent historical account of perspectives on curriculum: the pendulum swing

The notion of curriculum, its purpose, structure and content, has been subject to different interpretations throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, interpretations that are also connected to shifts in ways of thinking in sociology and philosophy of education, and the increasing impact of the global field of education since the latter half of the 20th century. In the overview that follows, I have to make inevitable generalisations and acknowledge that there are certain, less dominant views and dynamics that are not discussed (enough). This overview should therefore not be read as a complete historical account, but as a heuristic that serves as a foundation for the curricular considerations I suggest further on. I use the analogy of a pendulum swing to describe the different shifts.

6.1. The First Swing: education and economic growth

During the first half of the former century, the dominant view on curriculum in the West was largely based on American educator Ralph Tyler’s rationale, whereby curriculum ‘was understood as a linear process which starts with the development of clear objectives or goals, proceeds through to the selection of content which is specified in behavioural terms’ (Scott, 2016, p.14). The Tyler approach is teacher-
centred, subject-based, and is usually considered as an example of a performance-driven model of economic instrumentalism in which students are being prepared to become productive members of society (Scott, 2016). This model suited the economic progress-driven climate during the post-World War II period. The economic vision was mainly determined by the West and some of its most powerful transnational organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD. The UNESCO Address of 1960 left no doubt: ‘in addition to the direct social and economic advantages of educational progress, aid given through education advances the mutual knowledge and understanding of the peoples’ (UNESCO, 1960, p. 78). Education needed to support economic growth and countries who joined the United Nations should adhere to the same logic. Member states would receive support from UNESCO and the OECD ‘to provide a model for the technical staff of national agencies seeking to reorient education so as to encompass economic motives’ (Resnik, 2006, p. 190). The conditions were set for the establishment of a global field of education. Compulsory schooling became the flagship of projects around the world as education was now to produce a workforce that could contribute to the growth of economies worldwide. These initiatives were - and continue to be - mainly led and ‘modeled’ by organisations such as OECD, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, with large funds going into educational projects in Asia, Central- and South-America as well as Africa (Rizvi, 2006). Although the impression was given that every nation around the world could contribute to progress and economic growth through their own education system, Europe and North-America, ‘the global metropole’ (Connell, 2007), considered themselves as the modeling authority.
6.2. The Second Swing: education and freedom

Reactions against this economically driven model intensified in the late 1960s, a period that was marked by the confrontation between the US and the Soviet Union, and, not unrelated, intensifying political and cultural turbulence. Concerns about social inequalities were rising. These concerns also became an important focus in the sociology of education (Guile et al, 2018) and discussions about curriculum. Tyler’s instrumental technocratic curriculum model had served the economic perspective well, but it had not adequately addressed the politics of education and the growing inequalities inside as well as outside of classrooms around the world. A number of radical approaches amongst education scholars emerged, with Paolo Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ (1970) as one of the most widely acknowledged. Freire’s critical pedagogy, which originated as a movement challenging the oppression faced by politically disenfranchised populations in Brazil, is still hugely influential. It is centred around the idea that governments can utilise education to maintain and reinforce structural relationships of oppression in their societies. In response, a critical rational approach is suggested: the teacher (and by extension the education system) is no longer the authority or the ‘all knowing other’, filling the students with knowledge, coined by Freire as ‘the banking model of education’ (Freire, 1970). Through the process of ‘conscientization’ or ‘consciousness raising’ (Freire, 1970), students, supported by their teachers, can free themselves from oppressive forces. What Freire’s approach meant for curriculum, was a shift away from a teacher-centred, subject-based and heavily knowledge-focused curriculum.
to a more student-centred, progressive approach to curriculum that takes student experiences far more into consideration (Whitty, 2018).

The educational views of the instrumentalists, following Tyler, differed greatly from those of critical pedagogues (e.g. Freire) or ‘reconceptualists’, as Pinar (1999) described them. Whilst the instrumentalists saw education as a means for a nation to achieve economic prosperity, the reconceptualists considered this view as oppressive and contributing to societal inequalities. These opposing views led to the curriculum wars, reaching their peak in the 1990s.

The reconceptualists argued for an educational approach that would liberate students and would allow them to draw on their personal experiences. Although there was no full consensus among the reconceptualists, Pinar (1999) identified three ‘streams’: the political stream, with Michael Apple’s influential work ‘Ideology and Curriculum’ (1979) and Henry Giroux, two of the leading names who were heavily influenced by Freire’s critical pedagogy. Freire’s work also resonated with Michael Young when he wrote ‘Knowledge and Control’ (1971). Young presented a relativist view on knowledge, considering it as ‘a procedural device for subverting taken-for-granted assumptions about the seemingly absolute status of the knowledge which had come to be institutionalised in the school curriculum’ (Guile et al, 2018, p. 2). Young, together with other radicals, came to view experience as more important than knowledge in the battle against oppression and inequalities through education.

The second reconceptualist stream is the feminist stream, with bell hooks as an example, who was also heavily influenced by Freire, but whose main focus became the oppression of women and other minority voices in education. bell
hooks influenced a whole generation of feminist scholars as well as scholars active in the field of subaltern and postcolonial studies. It is noteworthy that, despite Freire’s wide acclaim, there were critical voices who viewed his work as insufficiently attentive to multiple forms of oppression, and saw his ideas as too dogmatic and abstract (Ellsworth, 1989; Snaza 2013). In her well-known paper, Ellsworth (1989) rigorously questions the abstract language of critical pedagogy as well as the dogmatic ‘violence of rationalism against its Others’ (p. 304), thereby referring to the potentially problematic imposition of critical reason in classrooms as the only option.

The third and last reconceptualist stream is the phenomenological stream, with Ted Aoki, Max Van Manen, and William Pinar as the main voices in the 1980s. It is this stream that has largely informed my own perspective on curriculum as introduced earlier. The phenomenologists were concerned with the importance of immediate experiences instead of distant outcomes of curriculum and, in that respect, were not that different from the political stream. Yet, they put the self at the centre of the educational experience and saw the classroom as ‘the moment-by-moment experience of specific teachers and students in a particular place at a particular time’ (Kincheloe, 1998, p. 136). This concern with the self was also taken up by feminist scholars and poststructuralists (Pinar, 1998).

Kincheloe (1998) emphasises the political nature of this approach: ‘Teachers and students begin to systematically analyse how sociopolitical-distortions have tacitly worked to shape their world views, perspectives on education, and self-images’ (p. 133). Not dissimilar from the political stream, the phenomenologists want teachers as well as students, through the development
of self-knowledge, to also develop an understanding of complexities of society, thereby ‘keeping alive the possibility of self- and social transformation’ (Kincheloe, 1998, p. 135).

What united these different reconceptualists was their critical stance towards existing social structures, their shared relativist view on knowledge and their focus on experiences. Later, Muller and Young (2014) critically refer to this view as an ‘over-socialised view’ of knowledge. They highlighted the increased risk for curriculum, when viewed this way, to become ‘a tool for achieving particular political or economic purposes’ (Muller & Young, 2014, p. 60). This concern is not unjustified, despite the fact that the reconceptualists did not envisage a curriculum model that would serve economic purposes, on the contrary.

6.3. The Third Swing: education and accountability

Simultaneously with the relativist view on knowledge gaining more traction in the 1980s and 1990s, an increasingly stronger global narrative about generic skills and competences developed as part of the homogenisation process that the field of global education was pushing for. Early in the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, the opposition between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ grew (Lingard, 2013). The educational economic discourse that UNESCO had started in 1960 continued to amplify and now infused countries in all corners of the world. Local education systems became overshadowed by the emerging field of global education. Through educational projects and investments, funds and policies, still largely driven by transnational organisations in the West, economic and homogenising
discourses were finding their way to education systems around the globe. Local schools in a rural part of Brazil or in a town in Thailand, for example, are now becoming part of a ‘system of remote control operated by funding mechanisms, testing systems, certification, audit and surveillance mechanisms’ (Connell, 2013, p. 107-108). Students have to be prepared to become human capital (Connell, 2013), to become a ‘homo economicus’ who is concerned about competition with others, investment in oneself, and ‘producing his (sic) own satisfaction’ (Brown, 2015, p. 80). This global, homogenising and increasingly privatised operation, driven by GERM (Lingard & McGregor, 2014; Sahlberg, 2012), came with an increased interest in generic skills and competences (addressing ‘the global’) which represents a universalist view on the world that assumes ‘that we could all come to agreement if only we had the same vocabulary’ (Appiah, 2006, p. 57). Local and contextualised knowledge and ways of knowing became subordinate to generic skills and competences that made up the ‘global curricular framework’. Central to the GERM are ‘standardisation of teaching and learning in schools, systematic management of data through standardized testing’ (Sahlberg, 2016, p.130). The leading authority in these reforms was and still is the OECD and with their launch of PISA in 1997 and the addition of the GCF in 2018, it established a global, homogenised and generic outcomes-based approach to curriculum (see also Part I). These initiatives are part of the OECD’s ‘Future of Education and Skills 2030 Project’ that was launched in 2015 and that ‘aims to set goals and develop a common language for teaching and learning’ (OECD, 2015, n.p.). Another example are the guidelines provided by UNESCO in their ‘Future Competences and the Future of Curriculum’ document published in 2017 in which
they make a case for a competence-based approach to curriculum, providing a ‘global reference framework on future competences’ (UNESCO, 2017, p. 31). Although these initiatives seem to be driven by a progressive perspective on education, they are appealing to conservative politicians and policy makers as additional tools for increased control and management of the state through education (Anderson-Levitt & Gardinier, 2021).

These types of standardised and accountability-driven curricular approaches are very different from the views of the reconceptualists, yet there is a ‘shared absence’: an absence of conversations about the place of knowledge in the curriculum. The debate about the ‘voice of knowledge’ (Young, 2008, 2009) was forcefully reinvigorated with Young’s publication ‘Bringing Knowledge Back In: From Social Constructivism to Social Realism in the Sociology of Education’ in 2008. In this work, Young criticised the relativist view on knowledge and the overemphasis on experiences and skills in curriculum, including a strong critique of his own work of the early 1970s. In their later work, Muller and Young (2016) explicitly question the approaches of ‘international organisations and governments that refer to knowledge and the knowledge economy’ (p. 38), yet ‘they don’t feel the need to ask the question “What is this knowledge that we are referring to?”; its meaning is simply taken for granted’ (p. 38). Young and his colleagues still start from the assumption that knowledge acquisition is a social process (Young, 2015), but make a distinction between knowledge and experience and develop the idea of ‘powerful knowledge’ (Young, 2014) or ‘better knowledge’ (Young, 2013). This type of knowledge refers to the fact that ‘all fields of inquiry have better and more reliable knowledge about the world, yet this
knowledge is not fixed, “always fallible and open to challenge” (Young, 2013, p. 107). Young sees it as the task of schools to give students access to this powerful knowledge and help them to move beyond their personal experiences, although knowledge and experiences are in constant conversation. This increasingly important debate about powerful knowledge, however, is also being critiqued by scholars concerned with the decolonisation of education (see for example Rudolph et al, 2018).

This third pendulum swing is once again marked by polarised debates. In a 2021 publication by BERA with a focus on curriculum, the editors introduce the contributions from various curriculum theorists by asking ‘whether the purpose of education is to cultivate and assess intercultural competence among 21st century citizens through schooling, or to provide the means for learners to use powerful knowledge to make sense of a fast-changing world’ (p. 15). There does not seem to be any curricular space left for negotiation and nuance.

6.4. Swinging away from dichotomies

This heuristic is illustrative of an ongoing pendulum swing in the way (the purpose and structure of) curriculum is perceived. From a very instrumental, technocratic, teacher and knowledge-centred approach in the first half of the 20th century, the pendulum swung towards relativist, progressive and more student-centred approaches with a focus on personal experience. Critical pedagogy was seminal in the acknowledgement of the politics of education and served as the foundation for the emergence of feminist, subaltern and postcolonial studies. The phenomenologists put the self of the teacher and the student at the centre of the
curricular *experience*, whereby the self is viewed as a political subject that can be formed in an educational setting. From there, the pendulum swung towards a global, homogenised curricular agenda focused on generic skills and competences, an agenda that is determined and shaped by transnational organisations such as the OECD who see education as a tool for economic growth and increasing global control and comparisons. Meanwhile, the pendulum seems to be swinging back towards discussions about the role of knowledge and what counts as knowledge in the curriculum, returning once more to Spencer’s question, posed in 1861. The fact that curricular perspectives can be conceived of as a pendulum that swings from one extreme end to the other implies a rather dichotomous view on curriculum. Thinking in dichotomies about curriculum (what versus how, knowledge versus experience, teacher-centred versus student-centred, etc.) impoverishes and narrows our view on the purpose of curriculum and education more generally. In responding to a complex and crisis-ridden world, curricular debates should address questions of knowledge as well as experience, what as well as how, thereby not shying away from negotiating difference (Appiah, 2006) instead of forcing a homogenised global curricular framework for all, in true neocolonial fashion. More recently, there are signs of a possible turnaround and shift towards a more nuanced conversation, such as UNESCO’s 2021 publication ‘Futures of Education: A New Social Contract’:

> Education can smoothly embrace both knowing that and knowing how. Content mastery does not need to compete with application, skills, or the development of capabilities. Instead, foundational knowledge and skills can intertwine and complement one another. (p. 64)
As a response to the reductionist and dichotomous debates and the educational and societal issues that we are faced with, I have developed a perspective of curriculum as a lived practice for Verfremdung that urges educators to grapple with four curricular considerations that are, although presented separately, intertwined and connected: teacher artistry, negotiation and trust; the knowledge-experience nexus; curricular justice; and the discipline dilemma.

7. Consideration one: teacher artistry, negotiation and trust

This first consideration problematises the ‘learnification’ of education (Biesta, 2010, 2017) and the proletarianisation of teachers, both of which have resulted in a decreased level of agency and involvement of teachers in what is taught in schools and how.

7.1. The learnification of education

The language of education appears to have changed significantly over the last 45 years. A search using the Google Ngram Viewer confirms these assumptions. As shown in Figure 3, in printed sources in English the word ‘learner’ has been on the rise since the 1930s.
This change in word use can be an indicator for a change in discourse in particular fields and disciplines (Foucault, 1980). In the field of education, the language seems to have shifted from ‘teaching’ to ‘learning’. The Google Ngram viewer result is reflected in education literature (academic and non-academic) as well as in general education discourses, where the words ‘teachers’ and ‘students’ are often replaced by ‘learners’, and education is re-branded as ‘learning’, a phenomenon that Biesta has termed as ‘learnification of education’ (Biesta, 2010, 2017). This shift towards learnification often implies a different role for the teacher, with more responsibility and freedom for students (‘learners’), with students venturing into a learning journey known under the common and popular denominator of ‘independent learning’, the teacher being a ‘peer at the rear’ rather than a ‘sage on the stage’ (Biesta, 2017). This learnification trend is problematic
as it ‘puts the self at the centre and turns the world into an object for the self’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 31). Biesta (2017) warns us against the risks that come with taking all resistance out of education, by making it flexible, personalised, and completely tailored to the needs of the individual child or student. Such strategies run the risk of isolating the student from the world rather than supporting the student in engaging with the world. (p. 19)

How can students be prepared to become active members of society, able to live responsibly with themselves, others and the world if the education they receive holds the illusion that one can get and do whatever one wants? Following Biesta (2017), it is important to free teaching from learning and to allow teachers to interrupt (Biesta, 2017) the worlds of the students and question whether ‘their desires are desirable’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 18). In other words, there is a need for Verfremdung from one’s own world, desires and assumptions. This also fits the broader idea that education is not just a matter of content, but also of purpose and relationships (Biesta, 2017) whereby ‘the teacher is a subject with other subjects’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 65) who engages actively with students and vice versa.

7.2. The proletarianisation of teachers

Ironically enough, whilst teachers have become ‘peers at the rear’, they are at the same time being held accountable for the learning outcomes of students, having to keep detailed records of student performance as part of the current outcomes-based, performative and competitive discourse in education (Ball, 2003). These trends, as mentioned earlier, serve conservative agendas of control well. Despite
the expectation of ‘keeping track’ of student performance, teachers are often not asked to be involved in curriculum development and related policies. They simply have to ‘enact’. This phenomenon is what Ozga and Lawn (1988) call teacher ‘proletarianisation’, borrowing a Marxist term. Although the current global education context is different from the 1980s (and the UK context out of which Ozga and Lawn wrote), and there are - as acknowledged by the authors - dimensions of social class connected to this notion that are not (necessarily) applicable to a teacher context, the basic mechanisms of teacher proletarianisation are at play in the current moment. Proletarianisation, according to Ozga and Lawn (1988)

is the process which results when the worker is deprived of the capacity to both initiate and execute work, it is the separation of conception from execution, and the breaking down of execution into separate, controllable, simple parts. This process desskills the worker, and results in the erosion of workplace autonomy, the breakdown of relations between workers and employers, the decline of craft skills, and the increase of management controls. (p. 324)

The worker, in this case the teacher, is no longer part of the conception of the curriculum, but is merely involved in its execution and the recording of student performance data. Curriculum conception is often, as signaled earlier, in the hands of transnational organisations whereby teachers are reduced to executors or workers.

Curriculum, to be a dynamic negotiation, a lived practice between teacher and student that is reflective of the complexity of the world, of different ways of
knowing whilst allowing for *Verfremdung*, requires an active role for the teacher, and for the teacher to be viewed as a professional (Gardner-McTaggart, 2021). Gardner-McTaggart (2021) as well as Biesta (2020c) highlight the remarkable proliferation of teacher initiatives and creativity that became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of a lack of immediate crisis response from policymakers and curriculum leaders, many teachers were forced to take matters into their own hands and did this successfully. Already before the pandemic, there was an increasing amount of research and literature on the importance of teacher agency, in particular in relation to curriculum formation and policy enactment (see for example Alkan & Priestley, 2019; Biesta et al, 2015). UNESCO’s (2021) ‘Futures of Education: A New Social Contract’ document also foregrounds the importance of teachers and teacher agency. Much earlier, it was Stenhouse (1988) who made the connection between teaching and artistry, and who emphasised that curriculum development requires teacher involvement as well as teacher development.

Young (2014) reminds us that ‘it is because we recognize the professional knowledge of teachers that our society gives schools responsibility for their curricula as well as the day-to-day activities of classrooms over which they have direct control’ (p. 47). In other words, there is an urgent need to put (back) trust in teachers instead of following anonymous, abstract, transnational bodies. Teachers deserve to be ‘authorised’, to be considered as ‘a subject that speaks and addresses us’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 56) rather than as an object that executes. Researchers and policy makers should therefore work with teachers (Connell,
1993) and make curriculum development a shared and collective endeavour (see Part IV for an example based on my collaboration with ICHK).

One example of a curricular initiative that took teacher involvement and professionalism seriously was the New Basics, a government-initiated interdisciplinary curriculum project that was piloted in Queensland, Australia, between 2000 and 2003. It was part of a wider educational agenda called ‘the Queensland State Education 2010 plan’ (QSE 2010). The New Basics was organised around five fundamental educational premises, including the ‘Professional Learning Community Premise’ (Luke, 2000), that acknowledged the importance of teacher professionalism and collaboration (for an elaborate analysis, see Lingard & McGregor, 2014). Despite its good intentions, the New Basics did not manage to live up to its expectations and, although committed to teacher involvement, failed in supporting teachers through professionalisation, resources, time and trust (Lingard & McGregor, 2014). This brief example illustrates that what I am suggesting as part of this first consideration is challenging and brings to the fore questions of staffing and resourcing. It also requires teachers to ask questions about what deserves to be taught and how, the focus of the next consideration.

8. Consideration two: the knowledge-experience nexus

This consideration extends the discussion started earlier in the section ‘Shattering the knowledge mirror’, and focuses on the importance of finding a middle ground between knowledge and experience, moving away from binary discussions
whereby knowledge and experience seem to be two separate, incompatible curriculum matters.

8.1. *Powerful knowledge, truth and access to society*

Knowledge, as argued earlier, supports responsible participation in the current and future world. Dewey (2011), whilst also being focused on the importance of experiences, puts it thus:

> For we live not in a settled and finished world, but in one which is going on, and where our main task is prospective, and where retrospect - and all knowledge as distinct from thought is retrospect - is of value in the solidity, security, and fertility it affords our dealings with the future. (p. 84)

Young and Muller (2016) go further in their discussions about knowledge and make a distinction between everyday knowledge and powerful knowledge or ‘better’ knowledge, drawing on Durkheim’s differentiation between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ knowledge (Young, 2008). It is the role of schools to give students access to the powerful or better knowledge that they need to participate in society (Young & Muller, 2016). ‘Better knowledge’, according to Young (2014), ‘means the best knowledge we have and the best means we have for creating new knowledge for the kind of world we envisage for the next generation’ (p. 30). Dewey and Young, both starting from a democratic view on society, thus seem to be echoing the same perspective: access to knowledge allows for nurturing and sustaining the democratic society.
Young (2013) also emphasised that powerful knowledge is fallible and emergent and should thus not be accepted as a fixed truth. Students and teachers, through their negotiations in the classroom, can question, scrutinise, re-think and re-reframe the powerful knowledge that is presented to them. This comes with an awareness that certain bodies of knowledge (or the silencing thereof) might have led to a world in crisis. Critics of Young’s notion of powerful knowledge such as Rudolph et al (2018) highlight the delicate task of ‘the powerful knowledge framework to see its shadow side in order to reconstruct curricular knowledge that is powerful in dismantling - not reproducing - the epistemic formations of colonial-racial hierarchies, dispossessions, and violence’ (p. 27). What these debates illustrate is that it is important not to take a simplistic standpoint when it comes to knowledge and truth. Critical questions about what counts as knowledge, who knowers are and how they come to make knowledge claims need asking, yet this does not have to imply a strong relativist view, claiming that there is no truth. What is required is ‘to go beyond critical skepticism and to reconstruct how to make truth claims both responsible to political realities as well as reliable and adequate to the complexity of reality’ (Martín Alcoff, 2011, p. 70).

To put it differently, I argue for a willingness to be defamiliarised from one’s own knowledge assumptions, and to negotiate truth and ways of knowing that are not familiar, acknowledging the importance of powerful knowledge. At the same time, educators are asked to be defamiliarised from fixed notions of powerful knowledge, allowing for this knowledge to be interrogated, problematised, updated. One thus has to be comfortable with the idea that certain types of new
and alternative knowledge might (have to) emerge in the future. These are requisites for an alternative future that is prefigured in the present and takes into consideration the complexity of our world.

8.2. Acknowledging and expanding existing knowledge and experience

A point I wish to emphasise more strongly than Young is that schools/teachers should also acknowledge that students bring personal experiences and tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1969) into the classroom that cannot be separated from the acquisition of powerful knowledge. It was Polanyi (1969) who described the power of ‘co-extension of knowing and being’ (p. 136): we can move from our personal frameworks (based on personal experience and tacit knowledge) to alternative frameworks in our conscious engagement with new knowledge. He says: 'If an act of knowing affects our choice between alternative frameworks, or modifies the framework in which we dwell, it involves a change in our way of being' (Polanyi, 1969, p. 134). Acquiring (powerful) knowledge can change not only our way of knowing, but also our way of being in the world and thus lead to a different phenomenological experience. Being 'stuck' with one's own personal experiences or a curriculum that is organised around generic competences and outcomes, can deprive students from this opportunity (see also the next curricular consideration: ‘curricular justice’). Students should therefore be considered as subjects instead of objects who bring existing (tacit) knowledge to the classroom (see for example the work of Moll et al, 1992, on funds of knowledge). At the same time, the teacher should take on the task of interrupting the world of the students (Biesta, 2017) and
providing an opportunity to question and expand their epistemological and
ontological frameworks.

8.3. *Verfremdung from what is known about students*

Biesta (2017) adds an additional layer to this discussion by addressing the issue
of too much diagnostic knowledge about individual students. There is often an
assumption that teachers need ‘to figure out “the problem”’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 92)
with students, personal and academic, in order to ‘serve them better’ (p. 93). Yet,
an overemphasis on the student as a subject with personal and academic
experiential baggage can lead to dangerous assumptions and limitations. Biesta
(2017) asserts:

Knowing our students too well may not only block them from futures
that cannot be foreseen as possibilities from the here and now. It
also may block us, as teachers, as educators, from opening up such
futures, from trusting that the unforeseen is the very thing that may
happen. (p. 93)

Although this is not a point that Young and Muller (2016) explicitly make when
discussing the importance of access to powerful knowledge, it is one that can be
connected to their discussion. If we have assumptions about students’ (prior)
personal and school experiences or deficiencies, we might falsely assume that
they do not have the aptitude to acquire certain types of specialised knowledge.
Without wanting to discredit the attention that certain schools have for children
with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), an overemphasis on
individual needs and the accompanying categorisations and special measures
risk depriving students from access to (certain types of) specialised knowledge, despite the fact that they are in school. This risk also brings questions about inclusion to the fore, yet this theme does not fall within the scope of my research. When connecting this issue to the notion of *Verfremdung*, we could claim that it is important for teachers to defamiliarise themselves to a certain extent from the personal background of students to allow them the access to the powerful knowledge they are entitled to (Young, 2014).

What the above discussion illustrates is the danger of having curricular discussions that focus either entirely on personal experiences (often the case in very student-centred, experience-based models) or entirely on knowledge (often the case in teacher-centred, outcomes-based conservative models, following the Tyler rationale). Rather, it is a matter of trying to operate at the knowledge-experience nexus, which is a dynamic continuum instead of a question of choosing one over the other. Students’ personal experiences and tacit knowledge thus serve as a foundation that can be expanded and shifted through acquiring new powerful knowledge that is connected to broader societal issues. Knowledge should therefore be viewed as a ‘process of knowing’ (Polanyi, 1969, p. 132) that contributes to a process of being, a process that does not stagnate when access to powerful or better knowledge is available. This view corresponds with the phenomenological and processual view on curriculum as articulated in Pinar’s notion of ‘currere’.

A curriculum that operates at the knowledge-experience nexus allows for *Verfremdung* in three ways:
- *Verfremdung* of the students from their personal experiences and familiar communities by giving them access to powerful knowledge and thus access to (an understanding of and participation in) the wider democratic society;
- *Verfremdung* of the teachers from the potentially deficit assumptions about their students’ individual backgrounds to ensure adequate access to powerful knowledge;
- *Verfremdung* from what is assumed to be powerful knowledge, acknowledging that it is fallible, emergent and political.

9. **Consideration three: curricular justice**

As signalled earlier, the notions of powerful knowledge and access to society also relate to curricular justice and are unpacked further here.

9.1. *The challenges of powerful knowledge*

In the second consideration, I argued that depriving students of their entitlement to powerful knowledge (Young & Lambert, 2014) can lead to deprivation of an understanding of broader social dynamics and participation. When knowing and being are considered to be static matters, not active processes, it becomes challenging for teachers as well as students to respond actively and appropriately to a complex and troubled world. Following Young (2014), a curriculum that lacks access to powerful knowledge therefore risks contributing to inequality and injustice. However, the presence of powerful knowledge does not automatically imply a doing away with these issues. It matters who decides on the powerful
knowledge, whether it can be questioned and to what extent considerations about alternative ways of knowing and being are taken into account (see the second consideration ‘The knowledge-experience nexus’). Muller and Young (2019) defend their case for powerful knowledge by contrasting it with what they see as problematic ‘knowledge of the powerful’ (KOTP) and differentiate the notions of power that are at play in both.

Take the subject of history: if the history curriculum ‘represents the interests of those with power’ (Muller & Young, 2019, p. 197), or KOTP, for example representing a Western, colonial history as the universal perspective on world history, there is an assumption that other histories of the world are inferior and are thus silenced. However, Muller and Young (2019) argue that the power in powerful knowledge

is potentially available to all who require it; it is a non-zero-sum property, a non-rivalrous good. Potentially, everyone can have this power, it is infinitely transferable, hence the fundamental democracy of powerful knowledge and its conceptual link to social justice.’ (p. 198)

Examples of powerful knowledge are knowledge about the shape of the earth, gravity, how political power works, photosynthesis, how viruses emerge, historical trade routes etc. When deciding on the content of the curriculum as well as pedagogical approaches, socio-ethical and moral questions need asking (Rata, 2018) and connections with local contexts and local ways of knowing and being need to be made (see for example Andreotti, 2012). Homogenised, universal competence-based curricula as being defended by UNESCO and the OECD are
failing to address these matters: their focus on competences instead of knowledge potentially deprives students from the access to powerful knowledge, and their curricular frameworks are presenting a universalist–worldview. Competence-based models tend to lack conceptual knowledge-based connections and if concepts are at all present, they are often presented as universal and fixed entities. Notions such as gender or race become fixed, assumed or are absent from discussions all together. Ultimately, this ‘conceptual silence’ sustains inequality as it dismisses the dynamic and diverse situatedness of individuals and their contexts. Rudolph et al (2018) assert that powerful knowledge, to be ‘more meaningful and more powerful for all’ (p. 35), requires ‘foregrounding multiplicities and relationality’ (p. 35) if educators wish to ‘contend with the politics and power of social relations and knowledge production’ (p. 35). It requires offering the opportunity for students and teachers to grapple with new knowledge, connect it to existing knowledge and experiences and construct meaning through these negotiations. In failing to do so or in the absence of conversations about knowledge, powerful knowledge risks turning into ‘universal’ knowledge that represents those whose cultural capital is prioritised by the schooling system (Yandell & Brady, 2016). In other words, powerful knowledge turns into KOTP.

Powerful knowledge, when carefully negotiated and allowing for multiplicity, supports Verfremdung, whilst KOTP leads to alienation from oneself as well as from the contexts of others, and dismisses the opportunity for schools to be places of (new) meaning making.
9.2. The question of (not) having access to society

What I have illustrated so far is that curricular justice is not just a matter of access to knowledge, but also what kind of knowledge and related experiences one has access to and ultimately, how this provides students with access to society and societal participation. The latter, however, remains a topic of debate among scholars. I will focus on the differences in perspective between Young and Connell to sharpen my own interpretation. Connell (1993) is of the view that, to achieve curricular justice, one has to start from ‘the interests of the least advantaged’ (p. 43), following Rawls’ view on social justice. She presents the idea of a counter-hegemonic experiential curriculum that ‘seeks a practical reconstruction of education which will yield relative advantage to the groups currently disadvantaged. It attempts to turn a defensive, compensatory strategy into a proactive, universalising strategy’ (Connell, 1993, p. 38). Following Young (2014), I see this approach as problematical as it risks ‘leaving the “disadvantaged” where they are’ (p. 87). If, as argued earlier, a curriculum has the purpose of extending students’ personal knowledge and experiences and, through offering powerful knowledge, providing them with access to the world, a counter-hegemonic curriculum such as suggested by Connell would keep students locked into their current way of knowing and being, seemingly ‘treating these experiences as if they were versions of the best ways we have of making sense of the world’ (Young, 2014, p. 87). Connell’s perspective thus seems to suggest that the disadvantaged have a kind of epistemic privilege.

Although it is important to acknowledge the personal experiences of disadvantaged and minority groups, a curricular approach that can expand their
experiences and allow for full participation in society, seems a more constructive route not only to curricular justice, but also for those students to contribute to social change instead of remaining marginalised. At the same time, privileged students are also taken beyond their personal experiences by becoming aware of their privilege and finding ways to turn their privilege into responsibility towards other, less privileged, groups. In other words, Verfremdung from one’s own context through the curriculum is an important requisite for curricular justice for the disadvantaged as well as for the privileged.

One last matter worth discussing is the risk of developing marginal and alternative curricular initiatives in an attempt to be local, contextualised and inclusive. This could be considered the point where Connell and Young agree. Connell (1993) warns us about the risks of setting up curricular alternatives for particular (disadvantaged) groups of students. She gives the example of an Australian credential-based curriculum (dating back to the 1990s) that was developed for the reasons mentioned above, but ended up being viewed as inferior and made it challenging for students to have access to, for example, universities (Connell, 1993). Although today there is a larger diversity in curricular frameworks and approaches to assessment acknowledged by universities, the risk of too localised and too marginal curricular models remains when it comes to providing access to larger educational and societal structures.

Curricular justice, to sum up, is a matter of having access to knowledge and experiences beyond one’s own personal knowledge, but considerations about the type of knowledge that is being selected and by whom are of great importance. On the other hand, highly contextualised and alternative curricular
frameworks that are often set up with good intentions related to inclusivity and diversity, do not always lead to just outcomes and might deprive students of access to certain societal resources. Curricular justice, therefore, requires input from teachers (cf. the first curricular consideration) who are not only experts, but can also make curricular connections with and between local, regional and global issues.

One last curricular consideration remains: how then could curriculum be structured and organised?

10. Consideration four: the ‘discipline dilemma’

The three considerations that have been discussed so far also prompt questions about the role of disciplines in the curriculum. How can disciplines be structured and organised to best support a curricular Verfremdungseffekt? This fourth consideration brings together the matters addressed in the first three considerations.

10.1. Curricular classifications and power

First, a return to the foundational notions of curriculum organisation is necessary. Bernstein (1996) observes that a curriculum can consist of categories (or disciplines, e.g. history, physics, languages etc.) and he defines the relations between categories as ‘classifications’. These classifications can be strong or weak ‘according to the degree of insulation between categories’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 7). In either case, he asserts, classifications ‘always carry power relations’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 7). The stronger the classification, the more specialised the
related discourse and the power and control that the category has. One example of a strongly classified area of knowledge is statistics. It is a highly specialised knowledge area that has, what Bernstein (1996) calls a ‘singular’ discourse: a discourse that has ‘very few external references other than in terms of themselves’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 9) and that comes with high levels of power and control. Another notion that Bernstein (1996) introduces is the notion of ‘framing’. Whilst classification ‘refers to the what’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 12), ‘framing is concerned with how meanings are to be put together, the forms by which they are to be made public, and the nature of the social relationships that go with it’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 12). A subject teacher or a subject department in a school can decide how the framing of their subject is approached: how they sequence the content of the subject, what they choose to teach and what they choose to discard, but also what kind of subject-related communication will be shared with parents.

Following Bernstein’s approach and applying it to the two historically most dominant curriculum models, the instrumental performance-driven model (cf. the Tyler rationale) and the competence-based model as promoted, for example, by UNESCO’s (2017) Future Competences and the Future of Curriculum, leads to the following observation: the performance-driven model has a strong classification of categories (disciplines) with high levels of power and control attributed to the different disciplines. The competence-based model, on the other hand, has a weak classification with unclear (or at times absent) disciplinary categories and low, more implicit, levels of power and control for the disciplines. Yet one could claim that the power and control has shifted from what used to be the discipline experts, to the governing bodies that design the competence
models, in the case of my example: UNESCO. To go one step further, the Bernsteinian singular discourse seems to be determined by the governing body instead of the traditional disciplines.

10.2. Curricular scenarios for the future

In their famous paper ‘Three Educational Scenarios For The Future: Lessons From The Sociology Of Knowledge’, Young and Muller (2010) build further on Bernstein’s work in their presentation of three curriculum scenarios for the future. Future 1, where ‘boundaries are given and fixed’ (Young & Muller, 2010, p. 16) corresponds with a strong classification of categories (disciplines) with high levels of power and control for the different disciplines. Future 2 implies ‘the end of boundaries’ (Young & Muller, 2010, p. 16) which corresponds with the currently popular competence-based models that have a weak disciplinary categorisation and what Young and Muller (2010) consider, critically, to be evidence of an oversocialised concept of knowledge. These two futures represent what I have referred to earlier as the two extremes of the curricular pendulum swing.

It would be more constructive, I have argued, to view curriculum as a lived practice (currere), a dynamic, phenomenological process between teachers and students that involves the acquisition of powerful knowledge to extend personal knowledge and experiences, a process that responds more appropriately to the dynamic and complex nature of society. Curriculum should initiate a Verfremdungseffekt that leads not only to an understanding of, but also an active participation in society, and potentially a contribution to social change. This
requires moving ‘beyond Futures 1 and 2’ (Young, 2014, p. 65) towards Future 3 (Young & Muller, 2010; Young, 2014).

I consider Future 3 as one possible route towards structuring curriculum in response to the curricular considerations discussed here. Future 3, Young (2014) asserts, ‘is a resource for teachers who seek to take their students beyond their experience in the most reliable ways we have. It implies that curriculum must stipulate the concepts associated with different subjects and how they are related’ (p. 67). He goes on to say that ‘it is the systematic interrelatedness of subject-based concepts and how they take their meaning from how they relate to each other that distinguishes them from the everyday concepts of experience’ (Young, 2014, p. 68). In Bernsteinian terms, the Future 3 curriculum model follows a moderate classification between categories (disciplines) whereby interdisciplinary connections are made. Disciplinary fields have a certain level of power and control given the existence of powerful knowledge, yet this knowledge is considered to be fallible and emergent, and therefore the disciplinary power is not absolute. Control is moderate given the interdisciplinary connections. Future 3, in other words, requires both ‘boundary maintaining and boundary crossing’ (Young & Muller, 2010, p. 19) of disciplines. This curriculum model therefore, requires deliberate engagement from teachers, who, as subject experts, need to be willing to collaborate with other subject experts and make connections between concepts, content and skills that are embedded in their disciplines (Young & Muller, 2010).

The Future 3 curriculum can represent a concept-based organisational structure. As ‘concepts are always about something’ (Young, 2014, p. 97), not
only disciplinary bases, but also concepts can (and should) shift. Evaluative and abstract concepts that feature in curricula (for example justice, power, education, etc.) are dynamic entities that should be ‘essentially contested’ (Gallie, 1955) and should be understood in their historical context. If, for example, the concept of gender could be rethought in the classroom by looking at its historical context and understanding how historically rooted assumptions or the lack of conceptual understanding can lead to inequalities, some of the societal gender-related issues could be addressed immediately. The curricular process can thus be made ‘transferable to out-of-school situations’ (Dewey, 2011, p. 114). Curriculum can support societal change through a change in/acquisition of conceptual understandings that can be contested, but also through developing related skills and competences or ‘practical accomplishments’ (Bernstein, 1996, p. 42).

This dynamic process of grappling with concepts, content and skills through making interdisciplinary connections can initiate a Verfremdungseffekt that potentially leads to social change. It needs to be reiterated that Verfremdung should also operate at the meta-level of the Future 3 scenario, acknowledging that even these curricular structures have powerful knowledge and experiences that are always moving and shifting. Therefore, any Future 3 scenario should be seen as contingent, yet the best we can work with. This approach can overcome the limitations of a fixed scenario or one where ‘anything goes’ by allowing us to imagine scenarios that are yet to come, being open to disciplines and experiences that are new and emerging, from the past and the current moment.

A look at the example of the origin of apples as a potential lesson topic illustrates the value of the Future 3 scenario. Students are familiar with apples.
Yet, where do apples come from? How did they get from Asia via Europe to North America? How does worldwide consumption of apples relate to other phenomena? In other words, how can students be taken beyond their personal experience of eating apples, how can they be defamiliarised and through this process, see the world differently? The presence of apples in North America can be connected to the disciplines of history, geography, biology, to name a few. The broader discussions can involve issues of colonialism and slavery. The concepts of ‘power’, ‘race’, or ‘origin’ could be explored within but also across the disciplines addressed. The acquired knowledge about apples can be expanded to other phenomena, supported by an inquiry-based pedagogy with elements that involve exploration in/of the physical surroundings outside of the classroom. Do we grow or import apples? Who is involved in the expert-import endeavour? Would there be ‘better’ fruit options? What kinds of fruit can we grow in our immediate environment?

This final curricular consideration tackled questions of the organisation of disciplines, how they can relate to one another by building conceptual links that make connections with the world. These dynamic processes allow for negotiation and contestation, and give students the power to question their own knowledge and experience and participate in a society that is highly diverse and complex. Disciplinary experts should be prepared to be defamiliarised from their own disciplines in order for students to be defamiliarised from their personal knowledge and experience.
11. Summary

In this part of the dissertation, I shifted my focus to curriculum in schools and explored four curriculum considerations that sought to respond to what is referred to as a crisis in curriculum (Garcia-Huidoboro, 2018; Young, 2013). The dichotomous and polarised discussions that have marked the field of curriculum studies for decades now, I argue, have contributed to this crisis. The discussions fail to address the complex reality of classrooms as well as society at large, and are dominated by transnational organisations that enforce homogenised, competence-based curricular frameworks on a global scale. Guided by the questions asked in the 2011 edition of WYBE, I have proposed a reconsideration of curriculum as a praxis: a lived experience (Aoki, 1993) between students and teachers, driven by concerns with human flourishing and the good society. I have utilised Pinar’s notion of ‘currere’ (Pinar, 1975, 2011; Pinar et al, 1995) and have drawn more broadly on the phenomenological tradition to give conceptual shape to my understanding of curriculum. Verfremdung, a theatre concept borrowed from Brecht (1964), is introduced as a central curricular purpose: students and teachers, through curriculum, can be exposed to a range of defamiliarising experiences that support them in rethinking and questioning that which is familiar and developing a more nuanced understanding of the world. Ultimately, Verfremdung, following Brecht’s (1964) interpretation, encourages students and teachers to actively participate in society and to contribute to social change.

The ‘pendulum swings’ that have marked the history of curriculum in the last 100 years and that have shaped education policies and practices illustrate that a binary, reductionist view of curriculum has not led to constructive debates.
We therefore also need a defamiliarisation from the contemporary perspectives on curriculum, which is what I have aimed to do in my work presented here. I am aware that what I have laid out are not easy or straightforward considerations. There are tensions in each of the considerations and no solutions or frameworks are offered. Yet, a non-binary view on curriculum that does not get caught in extreme pendulum swings, leaving room for curricular attributes to emerge from the present whilst holding firmly to a set of important principles, holds the promise of offering more appropriate responses to the complex and crisis-ridden world we are part of.

I have indicated earlier that the conceptual insights presented here emerged during my collaboration with ICHK and our shared work on their school-based curricular approach HT. In the fourth and last part of this dissertation (in the section ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and curricular Verfremdung’), I evaluate HT against the four considerations and the purpose of Verfremdung. This evaluation serves as a practical example of how the conceptual work introduced in this part can function as an evaluative tool for policy makers, researchers and practitioners.

As a lecturer in a pre-service teacher training programme I am confronted daily with the constraints of the curriculum that is set for the programme, but also how curriculum and pedagogy are discussed with and by the student-teachers in anticipation of their future careers as teachers. To grapple with the complexity of teaching, and to master curricular and pedagogical approaches, many student-teachers (as well as lecturers) have the tendency to simplify their understandings and to see curriculum as an instrument that works towards a particular outcome.
What that outcome is exactly, depends on who you ask. It is telling that this instrumental perspective is what student-teachers fall back on before having even started their careers. These same students and colleagues, however, also express concerns about the environmental, economic and political crises, about issues of inequality and injustice. Helping them to make connections between these concerns and their perceptions of and approaches to curriculum requires complex defamiliarising conversations. It is in these conversations that the seeds of social change are planted.
PART IV
Utopia as Method, Punk Ethnography and *Verfremdung* Enacted

We might find a transgressive way
to present the world and its actors
that is allowed to run free, proliferating,
outrunning the proselytizers and cynics
who wait at the gates of academic integrity ever ready
to sort fact from fiction, reality from fantasy, expert from fool.

(Carney & Madsen, 2021, p. 19)
1. Introduction

This fourth and last part puts to work the concepts presented in the first three parts to the two-year collaboration with ICHK, focused on their school-based curricular approach HT. I bring together the practical, action-oriented crisis responses to all three research questions, thereby illustrating not only how utopia as method can be applied as an approach to education research, but also how PE is enacted and how curricular *Vertremdung* can be utilised to support an analysis.

I present the case of and collaboration with ICHK separately in this fourth part as it allows for a more transparent analysis of the school as well as a clearer illustration of how utopia as method and PE can be applied, despite the fact that the conceptual and practical work is inextricably linked. It needs reiterating that utopia as method, PE and curricular *Vertremdung* were not developed first to then be applied to the case of ICHK. Rather, the concepts and practices emerged from my engagements with the school, our collaborative actions within the context of HT, our conversations and shared commitment to offering an alternative response to a world (of education) in crisis.

This part starts with a description of my ethical stance taken during the collaboration, including a reflection on my positionality and personal involvement. This is followed by an overview of the origin of, and approach to, the data gathered and how they are used in the analysis. Then, I introduce an alternative set of four concepts, taken from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, which are used as metaphors in the analysis: *assemblages, planes of consistency/immanence, de/re-territorialisation* and *lines of flight / fissures*. I
argue that these concepts can help us look at the obvious from a different perspective. They support alternative ways of analysing and thinking, and create alternative ways of being engaged in educational practices that respond differently to the crisis of ‘what works’. The conceptual language borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari supports the development of a perspective on schools as places of possibilities, not just focusing on what they are, but also on what they can be, doing justice to their complex and ever evolving nature.

The main body is the analysis of ICHK, following utopia as method. I will focus specifically on the novel curricular approach HT. As argued earlier, utopia as method, consisting of three modes, holds in tension a speculative imagination for the future whilst engaging with educational work in the present (see Part I). In other words: utopia as method allows for a rigorous critical analysis (in this case of ICHK and HT) and, through asking ontological questions about past, present and future, it provides an opportunity to be actively involved in initiatives that are connected to and developing from the investigation. Although the three modes cannot be separated and are part of an iterative and cyclical process, they will be presented in a linear fashion:

- The mode of archaeology guides the genealogical excavation of the coming into being of ICHK and HT and provides a historical account, thereby revealing the ‘blank spaces’ that help formulate ontological questions;

- The mode of ontology is activated in the analysis of HT, which includes an application of the four considerations of curriculum as
Verfremdung (see Part III), thereby addressing the ‘blank spaces’ that the genealogical investigation revealed;

- The mode of architecture describes how PE emerged and was practised at ICHK during the collaboration.

2. Positionality, involvement and ethics

2.1. A fusion of horizons

Following the PE practice (see Part II) I am not presenting an objective and distant account of ICHK. An aspiration to be objective would not do justice to my involvement in and collaboration with the ICHK community as it was ‘permanently changed by my presence and the contributions I made while present’ (Gordon, 2012, p. 107). To be objective, as described by Daston and Galison (2007), is ‘to aspire to knowledge that bears no trace of the knower — knowledge unmarked by prejudice or skill, fantasy or judgment, wishing or striving. Objectivity is blind sight, seeing without inference, interpretation, or intelligence’ (p. 17). This aspiration to be objective often guides empirical research that starts from brute data that are being presented in a seemingly unambiguous and generalisable manner (Taylor, 1971). Although my study could be considered as empirical, it is trying to do something different; focused as it is on rigour and creativity (see Flick, 2007), which I consider to be important attributes for imaginative approaches such as utopia as method and PE.

Gadamer’s (2013) concept of ‘horizon’ is helpful in terms of understanding my engagements with the school community, but also my reading of school
documents as well as my own texts (research diary, observation notes, …). I have never aspired to find an Archimedean point on which my analysis and insights could rest. Rather, I have tried to create a shared understanding about ICHK and HT, taking into consideration the contexts of everyone involved as well as my own ‘prejudices’ (Gadamer, 2013). In Gadamerian terms, I have tried ‘to acquire a horizon’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 316), gathered from conversations, collaborative actions, documents and personal reflections. This involved a looking ‘beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 316). Bringing all the ICHK ‘texts’ into conversation, revising my own questions, reflections and responses in light of this process of dialogue, has allowed for a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, 2013) that takes past and present into consideration. This kind of understanding is ‘more than merely recreating someone else’s meaning. Questioning opens up possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one’s own thinking on the subject’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 383).

I am not claiming that utopia as method and PE adhere to Gadamer’s rigorous hermeneutical approach. Yet, the imaginative character of both practices requires a particular positionality that is oriented towards a cyclical process of questioning and understanding (Gadamer, 2013), leading to an ‘opening up of new horizons’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 313). It is this kind of positionality that supports the creation of alternative futures in the present.
2.2. Life-changing involvement

With this ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, 2013), I have aspired to offer ‘a valid response to “I don’t understand” which takes the form, not only “develop your intuitions”, but more radically “change yourself”’ (Taylor, 1971, p. 47-48). The PE practices that guided the study did not only change the ICHK community, but also changed me. The two-year collaboration had an impact on my own view of (the) school, (the HT) curriculum, and my role as researcher and scholar. It brought out ‘undetermined possibilities’ (Gadamer, 2013, p. 383) and was a life-changing experience indeed. In an attempt to take this experience beyond the context of ICHK, I have chosen to structure the account of the study by means of a set of concepts borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (see section 4. ‘Reconceptualising the territory of “school”’).

A high level of involvement in a research project is not uncommon for researchers involved in (participatory) action research and research focused on public engagement. Yet, what makes my position different is my embeddedness in the creation of initiatives that are not part of a set agenda nor come from a place of solving a problem, but come instead from the immediacy, the urgency that the present brings to us. This is the DIY and the direct action that makes up an important part of PE (see Part II). Direct action also implies an attitude of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1984), whereby knowing is ‘implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing’ (Schon, 1984, p. 64). In collaborating with staff at the school, our prior, often tacit knowledge was put to work in our direct actions related to the HT curriculum project, and in turn, those actions created new knowledge in the moment (Schon, 1984). Indeed, ‘in much
of the spontaneous behaviour of skillful practice we reveal a kind of knowing which
does not stem from a prior intellectual operation’ (Schon, 1984, p. 66). Another
layer of reflection and knowledge is added by writing up this account post hoc.

Gordon (2012), when talking about his research in the punk scene in
Bradford in the UK in the early 2000s, describes the challenges and
consequences of his DIY involvement as ‘the development of individual and group
autonomy, control, and empowerment within the immediate field of force’
(Gordon, 2012, p. 114). As mentioned earlier, the field of force of ICHK was
directly impacted by my presence and vice versa. This involvement, however, is
challenging and described accurately by Gordon (2012) when he states that ‘my
insider position made for a difficult methodological scenario in terms of potentially
overlooking, during the course of field work, the central mechanisms involved in
the DIY process and the ways in which DIY operates amidst immediate and
external forces’ (p. 107-108). He goes on to say that he ‘felt the pressure of dual-
role existence caught up between the interplay of two contextual “fields of
force”’(p. 109). I experienced my position very similarly: there were powers at play
within the school, whilst I was inevitably also a power that influenced the school
context. In addition, I was and continue to be subject to external powers, a major
one being academe with, most immediately, the academic institution that
ultimately decides on the validity, quality and rigour of my doctoral research. Other
immediate forces were, for example, conversations with my supervisors and
peers as well as feedback from various audiences during presentations. Being
aware of and questioning the impact of those different powers, including my own,
requires a strong ‘ethical imperative’ (Gordon, 2012) and the importance of
reflecting ‘on ways that decisions taken in-the-moment have ethical implications’ (Rossman & Rallis, 2010, p. 380).

Power, however, I understand not only as a repressive, but also a productive and creative force, in a Foucauldian sense. All individuals are ‘vehicles of power’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 98) and power ‘traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). The impact of the different powers that were at play during my doctoral research have contributed to the way this account is presented and how meaning has been given.

2.3. **Ethics: beyond procedural matters**

A researcher is always also a moral practitioner (Rossman & Rallis, 2010), which implies that every decision made as part of the research process has a moral aspect. Rossman and Rallis (2010) describe ethics as ‘ethics in practice’ alluding to the fact ‘that ethically defining moments demand that the researcher critically reflect on ways that decisions taken in-the-moment have ethical implications’ (p. 380). In accordance with Rossman and Rallis, I view research as a practice that has a strong moral dimension. More broadly, it is important to acknowledge that the human sciences are moral sciences (Taylor, 1971) that always entail personal judgements about human beings individually as well as collectively. These judgements are also at play when making ethical decisions during a research collaboration: which questions to ask, what kind of initiatives to set up and for what purpose. Ethics thus goes beyond the often trivialised and proceduralised
matters of ethics applications, consent, data protection and so forth (Rossman & Rallis, 2010).

When I prepared my ethics application (see Appendix I and II), I considered what the implications would be for the study, for the individuals involved, but also for the school and for myself. I wanted my approach to ethics to support a study that was action-oriented rather than outcomes-oriented and that would allow for initiatives to grow organically, and for work to be truly collaborative and imaginative. I discussed my initial ideas and the potential ethical challenges at length with all key individuals before submission of my ethics proposal. These discussions, together with my experiences with the pilot study and my personal considerations, resulted in two major ethical decisions.

The first decision was to disclose the name of the school and the investigated curriculum for three reasons. The school is well-known given the small geographic area of Hong Kong, and the small and dense nature of the international school scene. Second, the name of the investigated curriculum is very specific and significant for the content. Fully anonymising the name of the curriculum would have hindered a thorough investigation and would also have hindered the analysis of curricular documents. Last, public presentations related to this study during and after completion and in collaboration with the school would have become very challenging.

The second decision involved the protection of privacy of individuals through anonymising adult participants (mainly school staff) and minors (students). Staff members that played a central role throughout the whole study
were either given a pseudonym or chose one themselves. The pseudonym has a connection with their personality and their position vis-a-vis the school:

*The Convert:* An English teacher who has committed most of her time to the teaching and development of HT since 2017. She became Head of the HT Department in August 2021.

*The Founder:* The first Head of School of ICHK in 2010. He left in 2016.

*The Iconoclast:* The current Head of School who took over from The Founder in 2016. He is the creator of HT.

*The Incomer:* He joined ICHK in 2020 and was the first teacher to be hired exclusively to teach HT.

*The Neophyte:* A newly graduated English teacher who joined ICHK in 2020 and was assigned to co-teach two HT classes.

*El Profe:* A Spanish teacher who has been in the school since the start in 2010 and has been involved in teaching HT since 2014.

*The Unicorn:* A primary school trained teacher and former Primary Head who was brought into ICHK in 2014, given his interest in HT and his experience with outdoor education.

### 3. Data: origin and use

The data for this study were collected during a pilot study from August 2019 until December 2019, and the main study from August 2020 until December 2021. During the pilot study, I conducted class observations and had semi-
structured and unstructured conversations with staff and students. I went into the school one day per week for a total of 11 days (44 hours) and observed three different HT classes (two Year 7 and one Year 8 class), taught by two different HT teachers. In addition, I had informal conversations with those two teachers, as well as a small number of students from the two classes, four other teachers, four non-teaching staff members and three members of the school leadership team. I made fieldnotes of the observations as well as the conversations. My classroom observations often resulted in direct (teaching) engagements with students and my semi-structured conversations became consultations with school staff asking me for advice and staff contributing to my work (see the section ‘Utopia as architecture: Punk Ethnography practiced at ICHK’).

The main study was divided into two ‘data periods’: during the first period (August 2020 - February 2021) I had unstructured conversations with two HT teachers every two weeks (15 weeks in total), centred around their HT teaching practice, curriculum development, as well as more general personal and professional reflections. One of those teachers kept a personal journal related to the project. I also had one semi-structured conversation with every teacher who was or had been involved in the development and/or teaching of HT (11 teachers in total). In addition, I had semi-structured individual conversations with three Year 10 HT students, I interviewed The Founder of ICHK, and engaged in ongoing conversations with the current Head of School, the Iconoclast, throughout the two periods of the main study. I kept descriptive (and at times ad verbatim) notes of all conversations and saved audio-recordings of online conversations when physical meetings were impossible due to the pandemic. During the second
period of the main study (March 2021 - December 2021), I focused almost entirely on the development of HT professional development materials for teachers and general HT curriculum development, in collaboration with a small group of three HT teachers. From the start of the main study, we worked on further instances and expansions of existing HT practices and explored options for new initiatives (e.g. curriculum development, thinking about lesson content, preparing joint publications and presentations, setting up a series of teacher colloquia, etc.). These initiatives are described at length in the section ‘Utopia as architecture: Punk Ethnography practiced at ICHK’. I kept notes in my personal research journal (from April 2020 until December 2021) and these materials were supplemented by school (policy) documents, publications, pictures, emails and chat message exchanges.

I used the data analysis software NVivo to initially organise all these qualitative data thematically and develop general patterns. This analysis involved the creation of a priori codes (Boyatzis, 2008), based on their relevance in response to the research questions. My analysis is not a typical thematic analysis, even though I approached the data thematically in the initial analysis phase to make sense of a large volume of information and to develop an initial perspective on how to structure the narrative. The main analytical tool used in this investigation is utopia as method.

Before starting the investigation of ICHK and HT, I introduce the four concepts borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as these concepts will guide the analytical narrative.
4. Reconceptualising the territory of ‘school’

4.1. Why reconceptualise: ‘From thinking the multiple to doing the multiple’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. viii)

In their book ‘What is Philosophy?’, Deleuze and Guattari (1996) state the following about the potential of applying and developing new or alternative concepts: ‘If one concept is “better” than an earlier one, it is because it makes us aware of new variations and unknown resonances, it carries out unforeseen cuttings-out, it brings forth an Event that surveys (survole) us’ (p. 28). New or alternative concepts, in other words, can help us to look at the obvious from a different perspective, to find alternative ways of analysing and thinking, and more importantly, to create alternative ways of doing.

It is for these reasons that I have chosen to make use of an alternative set of concepts to support the analysis of ICHK and HT. I have argued earlier that there is a crisis of ‘what works’ in education (see Part I) which has resulted in very fixed, measurement-oriented concepts, tools and frameworks in education research that maintain and support the ‘what works’ logic. I have argued that we need not only to consider how this crisis came into being, but also how we might respond to this crisis differently in order to create alternatives that put human flourishing at the centre. A constructive and powerful response needs, to return once again to Arendt’s (1998) notion of the vita activa, thought as well as action. A purposeful conceptual approach that guides our thinking can thus support a purposeful set of actions.

The four concepts that I have chosen to draw on are assemblages, planes of consistency/immanence, de/re-territorialisation and lines of flight / fissures.
Using these concepts allows me to look at the past, present and future of the school from a perspective of possibilities. I can identify unknown resonances and lay out the possibilities that emerged from shared actions, including my own involvement during the collaboration. More specifically, I will be using these concepts as metaphors to structure the analytic narrative, and to develop insights into the coming into being of the curricular approach HT as one of the main phenomena. At a more general level, I argue that the conceptual language borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari can support the development of a perspective on schools as places of possibilities, not just focusing on what schools are, but also on what they can be, whilst doing justice to their complex and ever evolving nature. This purpose also lies at the heart of utopia as method and its complement PE, and therefore should not be considered as a separate addition, but as another layer that meshes with the theoretical work developed as part of this research.

4.2. Why Deleuze and Guattari?

The work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is of incredible volume, complexity and density. It is thus impossible to do full justice to their system of thought. It has been and continues to be debated, contested as well as applied across fields and disciplines (Buchanan, 2008), including education, as methodology, epistemology, ideology and metaphor. I will limit my application to four concepts that were first introduced in the book ‘Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977), (further) developed in ‘A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and returned
to again in ‘What is Philosophy?’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996). I acknowledge that my interpretation of the concepts is one of many possible interpretations and might even contain flaws as a result of simplification. The latter is unavoidable in ensuring that the metaphors can do their work of helping to understand a series of complex phenomena that make up the dynamic nature of a school. (For a rigorous interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari’s work, see for example Buchanan, 2008.)

The choice of Deleuze and Guattari is not coincidental. They developed a system of thought that acknowledged the complexity, interconnectedness and dynamic nature of entities and beings in what could be called a philosophy of immanence, always looking at possibilities rather than limitations. They make connections between Marxism and psychoanalysis, and do not limit their psychoanalytical views to the individual (cf. Freud), but see the individual as embedded in and influencing as well as being influenced by larger social and political dimensions. Together, they developed a new conceptual language, often inspired by the natural world, to support non-binary thinking about the complex world we are part of, but also to encourage creativity and point out that, exactly because of the dynamic and ever moving nature of entities, there are always possibilities to be creative and think anew. Furthermore, they acknowledge that the current moment cannot be separated from the past nor the future as ‘new concepts must relate to our problems, to our history, and, above all, to our becomings’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 27). It is this temporal view combined with the dynamic and immanent perspective on individuals and/as part of larger entities that makes their conceptual language suitable as a way of looking at
schools. Schools are dynamic and constantly evolving entities populated by a diverse body of individuals that make up the school community. Through their members, schools are connected to an infinite number of wider contexts, yet each school has their own unique context, histories, productive tensions and possibilities. Acknowledging this is a first step in a different direction, one that moves away from the dominant homogenised, instrumental ‘what works’ perspective on schools and schooling.

Although they are inextricably linked and cannot be separated, I will disentangle the four chosen concepts for the sake of clarity. For each concept, I will describe its meaning according to Deleuze and Guattari, combined with a personal interpretation and application thereof to the context of schools.

4.3. Assemblages

Assemblages, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987), consist of an infinite number of actions, events, occurrences, concepts and so on. They are ‘all the voices present within a single voice’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 80). If we look at the single voice of a school, examples of assemblages can be teachers, students, curricular initiatives, a classroom, policies, school terminology … These assemblages are infinitely ongoing and connected in a rhizomatic manner. The latter is a term that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) borrowed from botany to describe that assemblages have ‘no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo’ (p. 25). Given the rhizomatic nature of everything that happens in what we call ‘school’, school is a dynamic entity that is constantly changing and evolving, simultaneously connected to and separated from its environment.
Deleuze and Guattari (1987), when describing assemblages, make a distinction between ‘content’ and ‘expression’. Content is what they define as an assemblage of ‘bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another’ (p. 88). In a school, content is made up of teachers, students, parents, the entire school community. Expression, on the other hand, is ‘a collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies’ (p. 88). Expression in a school context is made up of the school policies, curricular frameworks and other articulations of the school community. Content and expression are intertwined and we can assume that, within a school context, the school community (content) is constantly articulating (expression) that which we call ‘school’.

In addition, the account of my study is also an assemblage, an in-between, a moment in time that I was part of, yet one that extends beyond my own presence. I, myself am an example of content, and the theories, analyses, writings… that make up my research are expressions. More generally, any research project can be considered to be an assemblage. We thus have to be careful with formulating solutions or making generalisations for it is possible that we think we have found a solution; but a new curve of the plane, which at first we did not see, starts it all off again, posing new problems, a new batch of problems, advancing by successive surges and seeking concepts to come, concepts yet to be created (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 82).
4.4. *Planes of consistency/immanence*

Despite the ‘forever in-between’, the infinite and dynamic nature of assemblages, they can ‘hold together, with components of passage and relay’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 327). Or: assemblages connect conceptually as well as physically on a plane of consistency, often also referred to as a plane of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The latter emphasises the immanent and dynamic nature of the entity, and the fact that it is not possible to pin down planes of immanence. A plane of consistency emerges from a state of chaos followed by ‘a state of equilibrium in a more or less constant movement of variation whose end result cannot be known’ (Buchanan, 2008, p. 91).

A school can be seen as a plane of consistency as it is held together by assemblages (e.g. the school community, policy documents, curricular initiatives, mission and vision), and is not a boxed off and isolated entity, but can be recognised as something that holds together, despite its ongoing shifting and moving.

Planes of immanence are populated by conceptual personae, presupposing each other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996). Deleuze and Guattari (1996) state: ‘Conceptual personae constitute points of view according to which planes of immanence are distinguished from one another and brought together, but they also constitute the conditions under which each plane finds itself filled with concepts of the same group’ (p. 75). When applying this to a school, the conceptual personae are represented by the school community (staff, teachers, students, families). The school community shares a set of points of view that constitute the plane called ‘school’ and distinguish it from other schools and other
institutions. At the same time, the conceptual personae have ‘several features that may give rise to other personae, on the same or a different plane’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 76). School communities, in other words, shift and change with teachers and students coming and going. In my own research, I start from the plane of consistency called ICHK that holds together, whilst at the same time acknowledging that it is not possible nor desirable to capture a blueprint of the school, and that, by the time the dissertation is written, the plane of consistency called ICHK will have shifted.

It is important to reiterate that planes of consistency do not exist separately and are ‘not only interleaved but holed, letting through the fogs that surround it’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996, p. 51). A school is always connected to other schools as well as to its immediate environment, and at a more general level, to the global field of education. Transnational organisations such as the OECD or UNESCO should not be underestimated as significant conceptual personae in the articulation of the plane of consistency that makes up the global field of education (see also Part III), a plane that is inevitably intertwined with and influencing the smaller planes of consistency that make up schools.

4.5. De/re-territorialisation

A plane of consistency, populated by conceptual personae that create assemblages, is subject to ongoing processes of territorialisation. Deleuze and Guattari (1996) draw on the animal world to illustrate the formation of territories by human beings: ‘We already know the importance in animals of those activities that consist in forming territories, in abandoning or leaving them, and even in re-
creating territory on something of a different nature’ (p. 67). They add that territories are held together by codes and consist of different zones (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). A school is a territory that is held together by codes such as mission, vision, approaches to teaching and learning, and is made up of zones such as classrooms, corridors, staff rooms, but also mental zones of teachers, students, parents.

The processes of territorialisation are always simultaneously processes of de-territorialisation (‘not home’) as well as re-territorialisation (‘home’), which creates ongoing productive tensions between a territory and its environment. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) put it: ‘A territory is always en route to an at least potential deterritorialisation, even though the new assemblage may operate a reterritorialisation (something that “has-the-value-of” home)’ (p. 326). The plane of consistency of a school thus always risks being destabilised (deterritorialised) by conceptual personae (e.g. teachers) and their accompanying assemblages (e.g. teachers’ actions and perspectives) that are articulating concepts that are not consistent with the plane of the school. At the same time, teachers articulate actions and perspectives that are aligned with the values of the school (reterritorialisation).

4.6. Lines of flight / fissures

The ongoing productive tensions of de/re-territorialisation bring forth what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) term as ‘lines of flight’ or ‘fissures’. They also use terms such as ‘cracks’, ‘ruptures’, breaks’. Once again they draw on the animal world, the world of birds. Birds can - literally - be aligned, following the same line
of flight, but ‘it is quite possible that one group or individual’s line of flight may not
work to benefit that of another group or individual’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 205). Even when groups are aligned and follow the same lines of flight, there
might be tensions and challenges and branching off can happen at any time. Lines
of flight emphasise, once again, the dynamic nature of things, but also the
existence of possibilities, of new horizons, to use an apposite image.

We could view lines of flight as endless dynamic pathways, branching off in many different directions. Through this image, Deleuze and Guattari (1987)
acknowledge once again that territories or planes of consistency are not
homogenous entities, but multiplicities that are subject to ongoing lines of flight or
fissures. They make a distinction between slow and fast lines of flight. Slow lines
of flight lead to ‘viscosity’, or: consistency, coherence. Fast lines, on the other
hand, create sudden breaks, ruptures or fissures. These fissures are openings
that allow for something new to emerge. They can be a particular event, a person,
an incident, a new concept. Fissures will play a crucial role as I am constructing
the mode of archaeology (following utopia as method) of ICHK on the basis of a
series of fissures. These fissures should not be understood as linear,
chronological events that reconstruct the history of the school. On the contrary,
they are a selection based on the purposes, perception and experiences that
emerged from my research. The use of fissures also implies ‘recognising that
history is discontinuous; it is made up of ruptures and limits, breaks and
transformations, not continuity or progress’ (Buchanan, 2008, p. 93). The fissures
that we choose to focus on, are a representation and acknowledgement of ‘a long
sequence of accidents, mishaps, chance meetings and unexpected syntheses, rather than a logical progression’ (Buchanan, 2008, p. 93).

In the analysis that makes up this part, ICHK is presented as a plane of consistency populated by conceptual personae who instigate assemblages. ICHK as a school is constantly subject to processes of de- and re-territorialisation and riven by fissures that allow for the emergence of new initiatives. My focus will be on the emergence of the curricular approach HT and the fissure created by my own research.

I now move on to the analysis of ICHK and HT, following utopia as method, starting with the first mode of the analysis: utopia as archaeology.
5. Utopia as archaeology: from an empty building to Human Technologies

In this first mode I provide a genealogical excavation of the coming into being of ICHK and HT. This section is split into three parts. I start with a description of the rationale behind my choice for ICHK, thereby also describing the Hong Kong education context within which the school is situated. This is followed by a selection of four fissures that I consider seminal in the ‘formation’ of ICHK and HT:

- Fissure 1 - 2009: The Founder, climbing the school fence
- Fissure 2 - 2012: Launch of Human Technologies
- Fissure 3 - 2013: Introduction of the 5+1 Model
- Fissure 4 - 2016: The Iconoclast becomes Head of School

In the summary, I bring together the ‘blank spaces’ that emerged from the excavation, making connections with the mode of ontology that follows.

5.1. Rationale and context: ICHK and the Hong Kong context

On 31st January 2018, I drove my motorbike all the way up to Sha Tau Kok, a remote town in the far north of the New Territories in Hong Kong, bordering mainland China. There, until 2006, the Sha Tau Kok Government Secondary School used to be located. Since 2010 it has been the site of ICHK, a small international secondary school (see Figure 4). The government school used to serve the fishing community of the surrounding islands. Children came to school by boat, being dropped at the little pier close to the school campus (see Figure 5). Slowly, the population declined and a lot of families relocated to Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom, particularly around 1997, with the Handover of
Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China. The school population declined and it was closed in 2006. Around that time, the international school scene in Hong Kong was thriving and started expanding. Most schools, however, were located further south on Hong Kong island or in the densely populated Kowloon area with little to no options in the north of the New Territories. That is why, in 2010, ICHK was founded and the empty government building housed a school again. The green surroundings, absent in most schools in Hong Kong, is one of ICHK’s distinctive assets.

Figure 4: The school surroundings, photo taken January 2021.
5.1.1. *The school connection*

The school visit in 2018 led to a close collaboration between ICHK and the Education University of Hong Kong, the university I worked for at that time. As the coordinator of a growing pre-service teacher training programme focused on international schooling, I was working actively to expand the international school network in Hong Kong as a way to offer students not only teaching placement options, but also opportunities for school-based research projects, guest lectures by school-based practitioners and knowledge exchange. One of my purposes with the expansion was to go beyond the famous and established international schools in Hong Kong, and to connect with younger, lesser known schools that had
specific features. This way, students in the programme would get a better understanding of the diversity among international schools in the area. A colleague had told me about ICHK, located not too far from the university campus, which was increasingly known for its connection with the outdoors and its school-based curricular initiatives.

In June 2021, 11 years after being founded, ICHK had 409 students and 51 teaching staff. From Year 7 until Year 9 (11-15 years old), students follow a school-based curriculum, whilst in Year 10-11 (15-16 years old) and Year 12-13 (17-18 years old) students follow the IGCSE and the IB Diploma Programme respectively. They also have the option to complete the Mastery Transcript, a credential-based qualification for senior secondary students. ICHK offers a range of alternative school-based curricular initiatives such as HT, Free Learning, Deep Learning and Enrichment & Flow. These initiatives are timetabled and offered in combination with traditional subjects.

Our collaboration became more research-oriented in September 2018, when I started a small qualitative case study, funded by the IB Jeff Thompson Award, focused on the school-based curricular initiative ‘Free Learning’. By the time the project finished, early 2019, I had established good relationships with The Iconoclast and the teachers who were involved in the project. It also became apparent that the school leadership was supportive towards a longer term relationship that would involve research engagement, whereby other school-based initiatives could be explored from a research point of view (Dimmock et al, 2019). During the project, I had also met a small group of teachers who were ‘research champions’ (Burn et al, 2021): teachers who displayed a broader
interest in research, (in)formal collaboration in knowledge exchange and collaborative projects. Gradually and organically, more assemblages started occurring (generating expressions such as guest lectures, university student-led research projects in the school, ideas for teaching activities and resources). A small social network with shared values and principles emerged and a foundation was laid for further research engagements (Cornelissen et al, 2017). Through informal conversations alongside the research project and the ongoing collaboration within the context of my work at the university, I gained a comprehensive insight into the various school-based curricular initiatives, including HT, a curricular approach in full development at that time. The latter ultimately became the focus of this study. My personal (research) interests were not specifically directed towards international schooling, yet focused on alternative approaches to curriculum, collaborative action, and more broadly, how schooling can be a catalyst for social change. For these reasons HT as an alternative curricular approach sparked my interest.

5.1.2. The Hong Kong context: multiple planes of consistency

International schooling is not the focus of this study, yet, it is important to illustrate what the plane of consistency that makes up schooling in Hong Kong looks like, and how international schools are positioned within/outside, as well as influenced by this larger plane. ICHK is simultaneously being pulled towards the plane of international schools and broader schooling in Hong Kong (de-territorialisation) whilst it is also trying to maintain a unique position within this context, emphasising
specific features such as the outdoors and alternative curricular initiatives (*re-*
territorialisation).

Hong Kong, with its 7.5 million inhabitants (in 2019), is a densely populated area that is highly regulated. The Education Bureau is responsible for the development and implementation of all education policies and practices that concern the local schooling system, but it also has some authority over international schools when it comes to jurisdiction and policy guidelines (e.g. school fees, required number of local students). Most international schools, however, have a private independent status, which gives them freedom and flexibility in matters such as recruitment, curriculum, approaches to teaching and learning, and medium of instruction. This is why, for ICHK, in comparison with local schools, it is easier to implement school-based curricular initiatives.

In May 2021, there were 1050 local public Kindergartens, 455 local public primary schools and 392 local public secondary schools (Education Bureau, 2021), all of which are running the local Hong Kong curriculum and mainly serve local Hong Kong students. A total number of 551,000 students were enrolled in public primary and secondary schools at that time. In comparison, according to the Education Bureau (2021), there were 54 international schools (primary, secondary and combined) in the territory in April 2021, serving 41,015 students. This student enrollment number has been increasing steadily since 2000 (Education Bureau, 2012). Due to the shortage of land and infrastructure, starting a private independent school is a highly competitive, expensive and challenging endeavour. And yet, new private schools still emerge when sites are freed up by the government and bids are accepted.
This is not the only competitive factor in the international school plane in Hong Kong. International schools, in particular schools offering the IB Diploma Programme, are becoming increasingly popular in Hong Kong and the wider Asia-Pacific region (Bunnell, 2011, 2019; ISC Research, 2018), including a rising number of local schools also offering the IB Diploma Programme alongside the local curriculum. Another recent development is the growing number of local, affluent families who wish to send their children to an international school based on the assumption that this type of schooling (and English as a medium of instruction) will give their child access to elite universities worldwide (Bates, 2011; Bunnell, 2019). In Hong Kong, for example, the proportion of local students in international secondary schools has increased from 12% in 2012 to 21% in 2018 (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2018). At ICHK, the number of local students went from 40.07% in 2016 to 51.95% in 2020. Yet, access to universities overseas might not be the only reason for the local influx. Local Hong Kong families seem to be increasingly dissatisfied with the local Hong Kong school curriculum (its competitiveness and exam-based approach, with high levels of stress amongst students and staff) and are therefore looking for non-local alternatives. This dissatisfaction is often expressed by local families during the ICHK admission process, in addition to the attractiveness of the green surroundings and outdoor focus of the school. Families are attracted by this unique feature, which stands in stark contrast with the urban environment and lack of outdoor space for most international schools in the territory.

More recent developments which are likely to impact international schools are related to the passing of the National Security Law on 30 June 2020, after
months of city-wide, large-scale protests against the increasing influence of the Chinese government. Hongkongers experienced the interference of China as a violation of their ‘One country, two systems’ constitution, which has given them a semi-independent and democratic status since the Handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The Chinese government sees education as a means to instill patriotism, and since the passing of the National Security Law, local Hong Kong schools are expected to teach on the importance of patriotism and national security across subjects (Hong Kong Free Press, 2021). This has added to the dissatisfaction of local pro-democracy families who either decided to leave Hong Kong (with media reporting on an ‘exodus’ in 2021) or pull their children out of local schools (South China Morning Post, 2021), thereby exploring options in Hong Kong-based or overseas international schools. In December 2021, the Education Bureau reported that 6200 students had left local schools in the last four months (South China Morning Post, 2021). Additionally, as a result of the pandemic, it seemed that families were increasingly attracted to greener and less urban environments such as the location of ICHK. Simultaneously, the political situation as well as the economic struggles as a result of the pandemic have led expat families to leave Hong Kong, and thus take their children out of international schools.

Although these trends were too recent in 2021 to be certain of their impact, they were hinting at a shift in the planes of consistency that make up education in Hong Kong. There seems to be a de-territorialisation of the local public school system because of the increasing influence of the Chinese government, which in turn, has led to a re-territorialisation of the international school scene, that,
because of its mostly independent private status, has been less impacted by the political shift and has experienced an influx from local families. At the same time, this local influx can also be viewed as a de-territorialisation for international schools, as a loss of international families in favour of local families might challenge the diversity of the school community, an important feature of international schooling.

The intense political developments as well as the challenges that came with the pandemic were at play from the start of the case study in August 2019 until the end in December 2021. It is difficult to tell how exactly the development of HT was impacted by these events (or fissures), but it certainly influenced how the work evolved, and how past events played out in the present and might impact the future: multiple school closures because of protests and the pandemic, online teaching of an experientially-oriented curriculum such as HT, remote curriculum development and teacher support, students and teachers unable to travel back to Hong Kong or leaving. These are just a few examples of fissures that impacted the school and influenced the work related to the study in one way or another, whether it was by posing challenges or creating opportunities. It is appropriate to say that the motivation for engaging in this doctoral research as a crisis response (cf. the main research question: ‘How can and do education researchers and practitioners respond to a world in crisis and create alternative futures?’) became very pertinent and immediate given the specific time and place of my work. Hence, the accounts provided in what follows should be read with these developments in mind.
Six months before the opening of the school in 2010, The Founder climbed the fence of the empty school campus. In his letter, written on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the school in 2020, The Founder looks back:

After exiting the car, I walked the short distance along the little side road leading to the small village just south of the school. There was at the time a massive tree, with thick branches; one of which was angled perfectly over the fence. I climbed up and then down onto the grounds. For just a second I stood there waiting to be attacked by a guard dog but fortunately none appeared.

This was just a few short weeks before the contractors would begin to transform the site into an international school unlike any in the city. As I walked through the hallways and into several of the open classrooms, I noticed that there were still a few words visible on the black boards. These were left by homeroom teachers, offering their best wishes to the previous generation of students who traversed the hallways.

In the science laboratories there were still a few old cabinets, now empty, but thick with dust, and whose doors hung open on their hinges. In truth, it all seemed rather sad and lonely. Schools should be bustling hives of energy with students and staff working side by side, but here in this dark campus all was eerily quiet.

Within just a few minutes, the rain stopped. The light shone into the hall on the ground floor. Now, you could see it. Now you could see just how beautiful and quiet this location was.
Until 2009, The Founder had been working for the most established international school organisation in Hong Kong, affiliated with the IB as well as the IGCSE. A policy change in the organisation resulted in an increase in primary places for students, but a lack of places at secondary level. Moreover, most international schools in Hong Kong were (and still are) located on Hong Kong island and Kowloon (the south of the New Territories). Families in the far north of the New Territories had little to no options in their immediate environment. At the same time, there was a growing demand for places in international schools in what was already a competitive landscape (Bunnell, 2011, 2019; ISC Research, 2018). It was in this context, and given the availability of an unused school campus in Sha Tau Kok, that four international primary schools in the New Territories decided to start a non-profit, independent international secondary school, an expansion of the very small plane of consistency of international (secondary) schools in the area. The Founder was asked to lead the project. As he acknowledged during our conversation in September 2020, from the start, he had considered the location of the school to be a real challenge as well as an opportunity. As The Founder asked himself:

How can you compete against the other schools?
They are big, you are small.
They are in high rise campuses and dark, you focus on greenery.
They are large and impersonal, you are trying to be personal and visible.
They are big and changes are slow, you are going to be innovative.
... That would guide the mission statement and what I would suggest to the Board of Governors.
Indeed, the agility that comes with small size and the green surroundings became the centrepiece of the construction of ICHK’s own plane of consistency characterised by a set of unique school-based initiatives that did more than just academic development. This was expressed in the first school proposal document in 2008. In 2022, the ICHK Outdoor and Experiential Learning Department mentioned on the school website that ‘we believe that the right education requires the right environment’ (ICHK, 2022b, n.p.). School values were and continue to be very strongly connected to place (physical environment), which my initial thematic analysis confirmed (there were 11 explicit references to place values across six different documents). Yet, there was a need to be pragmatic as well, given the competitive nature of the (Hong Kong) international school scene and the expectations of families regarding curricular pathways that cater for further studies at higher education institutions globally. The Founder was well aware of this and therefore chose to offer a school-based curriculum largely based on the English National Curriculum for lower secondary (Years 7 until 9), the IGCSE for middle school (Years 10 and 11) and the IB Diploma Programme in the senior years (Years 12 and 13), ensuring opportunities for students to enter higher education overseas, thereby connecting ICHK explicitly to the global plane of international education.

The Founder acknowledged that, from the start, there was a tension between ideology and pragmatism, reflected in the ongoing de- and re-territorialisation movements of ICHK: moving towards the broader plane of consistency of the Hong Kong international school scene (de-territorialisation) whilst simultaneously attempting to be different (re-territorialisation). I have
termed this tension between ideology and pragmatism as ‘mission schizophrenia’ and, to date, this tension remains and influences, at times negatively and at times positively, the initiatives and decisions made at all levels in the school, as this section will illustrate. It was also this tension that caused the staff recruitment process in 2009 to be challenging. The Founder was looking for experienced international school teachers who were also willing to be part of a new and small school with a focus on the outdoors and personal development, alongside the academic focus.

In August 2009 the school opened with 60 students enrolled in Years 7, 8 and 9 and 30 staff members. ICHK was positioned as the ‘extension’ of one of the sister primary schools, as the uniform shirt in Figure 6 illustrates.

Figure 6: The first ICHK uniform shirt in 2010. The logo was copied from the sister primary school until ICHK had its own logo in 2012.
The Founder continued his search for staff who were willing to commit to a school with ‘mission schizophrenia’. In 2012, he recruited The Iconoclast, coming from the same international school organisation. The Iconoclast, together with one other new hire, took on the role of Deputy Head of School. This was a seminal hire for the increasing number of assemblages that made up ICHK, as future expressions of the Iconoclast would reveal. El Profe, who refers to himself as ‘a quiet founding member’, recalls: ‘The expression “out of the box” we use often, but we don’t know what it means exactly because it is “out of the box”. Someone has to show it and The Iconoclast did that.’ El Profe also mentioned that ‘initially, we needed to show that we could survive and had the results (in the IGCSE and IB Diploma Programme), especially towards parents. Then, we started to do innovative things’. This hints at the emergence of a plane of consistency that was and would continue to be subject to dynamics of de-territorialisation through its pragmatic approach and re-territorialisation through its strong ideology.

5.3. Fissure 2 - 2012: Launch of Human Technologies

One of the first significant assemblages (innovations) instigated by the Iconoclast was the launch of HT as a timetabled, non-test based subject for the two lower years of secondary, taught by six teachers, including The Iconoclast himself. He had developed HT out of a dissatisfaction with more traditional subject-based curricula and the utilitarian nature of education, based on his experiences in the UK and Hong Kong. Given ICHK’s aspiration to offer a school-based curriculum that would focus on personal development and also bring in experiential opportunities and connections with the outdoors, The Founder fully supported the
launch of HT alongside conventional subjects. The Neophyte, after three months of teaching HT and being new to the school and the teaching profession, described HT as follows:

The art and craft of being human, how to be more considerate and resourceful people, understanding the world and through that, what your relationship is with the world. It becomes a challenge to do that in a grades based system. We need to find a space to do that.

HT, the way it was implemented at ICHK in 2012, was largely based on a course that The Iconoclast had developed between 2004 and 2008 during his time in a secondary school in the UK. The course, then called 'Media Arts Studies', was conceived as a course concerned with ‘thinking about thinking’. It was well received by students and the local authorities and, when The Iconoclast started working in Hong Kong in 2008, he implemented that same course and developed it further in his first international school, where he and The Founder were colleagues. He changed the name from 'Media Arts Studies' to 'Learning Futures'.

Thus, in 2012, HT already had a certain history, but it was still in development. By then, it had traits of a transdisciplinary curriculum that was thematically structured, bringing together knowledge from a range of disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, psychology and history, all centred around the idea of developing a better understanding and application of human technologies as ‘the material and immaterial tools and devices that humans draw on to live their lives’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.) In the section ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and Curricular Verfremdung’, I provide a detailed description and analysis of HT, its rationale and structure.
El Profe recalled that, in this first period, HT teachers developed their lessons based on conversations with The Iconoclast as well as their personal interests. He remembered the lessons to be rewarding, with lots of creativity, freedom and improvisation for the teacher and saw his students ‘growing up and evolving through HT’. He mentioned units he taught on fake news and truth, team building and identity that are still taught in 2021.

It was in 2016 that a first large curriculum alignment exercise was conducted by The Unicorn, one of the leading HT teachers. He looked at the lesson materials that had been created since 2012 and organised them into units that were aligned with the theoretical underpinnings of HT, informally articulated by The Iconoclast and the teachers involved. This alignment exercise of the HT curriculum into a scaffolded journey for students and teachers was a first important assemblage expression in the formation of the HT plane of consistency. An increasing number of conceptual personae (teachers, students) were involved as HT was now also taught up to Year 10. What used to be mostly random and idiosyncratic expressions of the HT assemblages (with teachers developing their own lessons without much alignment), now became more consistent. The 2016 alignment exercise can therefore also be considered as a slow fissure that led to more coherence and viscosity of HT. This process was firmed up even more with the publication of the HT Primer (see Appendix III) in 2019, a cornerstone document written by The Iconoclast, as he was starting to give HT presentations at conferences and (international) education events in Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific region. The Primer, the first formal HT assemblage expression, formally describes the rationale, purpose and theoretical underpinnings of HT and
provides a concise theoretical and practical guideline for any educator at ICHK or elsewhere with an interest in HT. It still is one of the most important HT documents.

Another important slow fissure was the second formal review of the HT curriculum and lesson materials in 2020 and 2021, a process I was also actively involved in. This process led to a detailed horizontal and vertical articulation of units connected to core questions, as well as a revision of existing and development of new lesson materials (see ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and Curricular Verfremdung’ for details on the HT curriculum development process and evaluation).

5.4. Fissure 3 - 2013: Introduction of the 5+1 Model

The arrival of The Iconoclast resulted in a gradual change in approach to leadership. Whilst The Founder had a more pragmatic approach and wanted to make sure the school survived those first few crucial years (The Founder stated: ‘You can’t be too ideological’), The Iconoclast had strong ideological underpinnings and, with that, also brought in a different leadership style and philosophy of education. It was for these reasons that The Founder approached The Iconoclast. He wanted the school to do more than just focusing on academics.

El Profe remembers this leadership shift and the accompanying tensions when he admitted that ‘I was tempted to leave because of leadership things I didn’t understand’. He describes the leadership style of The Iconoclast as follows:

The Iconoclast was different, he was like a visionary. When I discussed something with him, I gave up trying to understand what
was coming. Often it was the opposite of what you would expect. In terms of leadership and roles, The Iconoclast has always been coherent with what he preaches and what he does. It’s very fair. But at some point there was tension, like tectonic plates that were shifting.

The description of El Profe illustrates how the ‘mission schizophrenia’ became tangible and how a shift was in the making.

One of the first significant assemblage expressions that The Iconoclast undertook was the introduction of the 5+1 Model (5+1) in 2013. As Figure 7 illustrates, 5+1 is the pastoral model that underpins - to date - all practices in the school, and guides teachers and students in their daily encounters:

We believe, as teachers, that we should be ready to work harder, more explicitly and more creatively to understand the life conditions of our students. We believe this because successful teaching and learning, especially with young people, are founded on trusting relationships; and trusting relationships are based on mutual understanding and shared respect. (ICHK, 2016, n.p.)

The Iconoclast developed 5+1 based on professional experiences that had led him to conclude that ‘many, if not most, schools tend to work with a relatively underdeveloped model of their students’ psychology’. He saw this as a significant issue for schools who fail to support the personal development of students, not only in building relationships of trust, but also in their approaches to teaching and curriculum. 5+1 is drawing on the work of five thinkers: Carol Dweck’s work on Growth Mindset; Lev Vygotskys’s Zone of Proximal Development; Erik Erikson’s psychosocial theory of personality development; Kieran Egan’s work on cognitive
dispositions and Eric Berne’s theory of Transactional Analysis. The ‘+1’ refers to the students themselves. It is important to note that these thinkers come out of traditions of developmental psychology and psychoanalysis, with an emphasis on the individual being: their mental and physical development, their understanding of themselves and others, how they relate to others and the world. The Iconoclast has an academic background and personal interest in theories with psychoanalytical grounding, and he introduced a particular view on education that does not only look at academic achievement, but attaches crucial value to the mental and physical development of students, whereby they are supported by school community members who build trustworthy relationships with them.
5+1 starts from the premise that the ‘teacher is a subject with other subjects’ (Biesta, 2017, p. 65), the latter being the students, and that education should offer guidance in trying ‘to exist in and with the world and not just with ourselves’
With 5+1, a strong expression of the re-territorialisation processes of the school, The Iconoclast cemented one of the initial intentions of the school into a formal philosophy of education that permeates all practices and (curricular) initiatives, thereby moving away from a purely academic approach to education and adding the importance of personal - physical and mental - development and responsibility of the individual towards society.

All new staff are introduced to 5+1 and are encouraged to let the model ‘inform their teaching, leading and being at ICHK’ (ICHK, 2016, n.p.). Through the school’s weekly newsletter and specific meetings attributed to 5+1, the model is discussed and unpacked with teachers, but also with parents (during information evenings and panel discussions) and students. In my conversations with 14 staff members in 2020, 5+1 was often explicitly as well as implicitly referred to. One teacher mentioned that when 5+1 was introduced, she ‘didn’t take it very seriously’, but that changed when she deliberately started sharing personal stories with students as part of the development of a growth mindset. Another teacher mentioned that ‘ICHK takes care of the whole student’. In a school blog post of 2019, The Iconoclast wrote that ‘the good enough student manages something no more than [that] which can healthily be asked of any human being: to live a rewarding, productive and sustainable life’ (n.p.). These different accounts make reference to ‘+1’, the student, and point towards an educational approach that is concerned with personal development.

The Iconoclast further paved the way for the school to become known for its focus on building relationships of trust between students and teachers, acknowledgement of student diversity and inclusion, and its commitment to more
than just academic development. The latter, however, continues to remain important through offering transnational exam-based programmes such as the IGCSE and the IB Diploma Programme, creating tensions as these pragmatic attributes are part of the ongoing de-territorialisation processes that ICHK is subject to.

5.5. *Fissure 4 - 2016: The Iconoclast becomes Head of School*

In the summer of 2016, when he was appointed Head of School, the Iconoclast presented a briefing paper to the Board of Governors wherein he presented his perspectives on the current and future school community, curriculum, culture, and environment. He presented a concise new vision for the school: ‘Learning together, thoughtfully’. This vision, the expression of an accumulation of assemblages since the Iconoclast joined ICHK in 2012, was a reference to 5+1 and a further articulation of the ideology that underpins ICHK’s plane of consistency. Yet, the ‘mission schizophrenia’ remained and The Iconoclast was also tasked with ensuring the school’s financial health and the need to attract students from the competitive plane of consistency of international schools as well as the local school plane. In a conversation he described his task as follows:

> The really interesting and skilful part becomes navigating a behemoth called School through the inescapable bullshit, while holding onto the passion and drive.

Indeed, since 2016, student numbers have increased from 286 to 449 in 2021, yet with the commitment to remaining small by intention and not striving for infinite growth. The headship of The Iconoclast also strengthened the commitment of
ICHK to research engagement (Dimmock et al, 2019) with various projects running concurrently (in 2021), including my own (see Figure 8); a research project on citizen science with students co-authoring a paper; a research project about the impact of outdoor learning on student life beyond school.

In 2021, The Iconoclast was three to five years away from retirement. He expressed his intention to lead ICHK until then and to continue strengthening the
school’s position and expand various curricular initiatives, including HT. Given Hong Kong’s political situation and the longer-term effects of the pandemic, ICHK will continue to face challenging times that will involve unpredictable de- and re-territorialisation movements. Expressions such as 5+1 and HT are now well institutionalised and embedded in the school structure, which gives them a life beyond the presence of The Iconoclast, yet to what extent they will weather the storms of future fissures that will impact ICHK and the broader Hong Kong (educational) context, remains to be seen. For now, it can be claimed that ICHK, particularly since The Iconoclast took up headship, has carved out a solid plane of consistency that is populated by a significant school community (content) that is known for its expressions such as outdoor learning, 5+1 and HT. The genealogy of ICHK, however, does not stop here, but will continue after this project. Or, in the words of El Profe: ‘I do not yet understand what will happen, but I am ready to accept it’.

5.6. Summary: looking for the blank spaces

The four fissures presented here have guided the archaeological investigation of ICHK. Drawing on some of the conceptual language of Deleuze and Guattari has supported the view that a genealogy is not causal in nature, but consists of a series of events (fissures), at times contradictory, that form ‘a history of the present’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 31). These concepts also draw out the complex and dynamic nature of (the plane of consistency of) a school, focusing on the possibilities rather than the limitations. Last, with this alternative conceptual
language, I have attempted to move away from the instrumental ‘what works’ discourse on schools and schooling.

In short, I have illustrated that ICHK is connected to the plane of international schooling in Hong Kong, the wider planes of education in Hong Kong and international education globally. One of the major contradictions at ICHK, as the fissures have revealed, is its ‘mission schizophrenia’, which results in ongoing movements of de- and re-territorialisation, or pragmatism and ideology respectively.

One last important step that needs to be taken as part of this archaeological investigation following utopia as method, is spelling out the absences and ‘the blank spaces’ (Levitas, 2013, p. 154) that emerged from the excavation of ICHK. I will focus on two absences in relation to (the emergence of) HT, as HT will be the focus of the next mode of utopia as method: the ontological inquiry.

5.6.1. The first blank space: personal versus social development
I signalled earlier that, in 2012, HT became part of the timetable at ICHK. HT was developed by The Iconoclast out of a dissatisfaction with more traditional subject-based curricula and utilitarian approaches to education. The Founder supported the launch of HT as he wanted to solidify the plane of consistency of ICHK through creating a set of unique curricular features and school-based initiatives that did more than just academic development. In addition to a focus on the outdoors, he also wanted a focus on the personal development of students. HT seemed to respond to this aspiration. Yet, how exactly HT was going to contribute to this vision, was never really spelled out. The Founder trusted The Iconoclast and gave
him the freedom to offer HT as part of the timetable. It seems like the innovative and novel aspect that HT added to the mainstream curriculum was sufficient enough for its launch in 2012. To what extent was HT going to guide students in their personal development and to what end? This question remained unanswered.

The concern with personal development of students, in addition to academic development, brings to the fore questions of social development as well. How are connections between personal development and broader societal responsibilities and concerns around human flourishing being made? These questions are also pertinent when looking at the theoretical underpinnings of the 5+1 pastoral model, which have their roots in developmental and cognitive psychology. During conversations with members of the school community, they mostly referred to the importance of individual flourishing of students, rather than human flourishing for the common good. Where are the assemblage expressions that address concerns with the good society? What kind of alternative futures are being imagined through 5+1 and HT specifically? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the ontological investigation that follows.

5.6.2. The second blank space: the political dimension

Questions about students’ social development, contributions to the good society and human flourishing are deeply political and also remind us that education is always a political project. The kind of view on human beings and society more widely that is implicitly and explicitly modelled by schools, has a profound impact on students’ views. Returning once again to 5+1 that informs all practices at ICHK,
including HT, it needs reiterating that it is underpinned by ontological and epistemological views of thinkers who focus on individual development with a strong grounding in Western psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology more broadly. How then, for example, does this connect to the societal context of Hong Kong, which still has a strong Confucian rooting and a largely collectivist ontology? The recent political developments in Hong Kong might result in increasing tensions between the position of the plane of ICHK vis-à-vis the wider plane of education in Hong Kong in the future. The growing number of local students is a significant factor to take into account. This also leads to the question of how 5+1 responds to the diverse cultural profiles of the students at ICHK. These questions include epistemological and ontological matters, as well as matters of power and truth (see Ball, 2015) that are articulated not only through the 5+1 pastoral model, but also through all curricular practices, including HT.

The archaeological investigation of ICHK reveals more than just these two blank spaces. Yet, they are the most pertinent within the context of the curricular practice of HT which will be discussed in the ontological mode of utopia as method (in the next section). In the ontological analysis I will not only attempt to formulate responses to these absences, but also provide an in-depth analysis of the ‘nature’ of HT as a curricular practice, thereby putting my conceptual approach on curriculum (introduced in Part III) to work: how does HT respond to the notions of Verfremdung, a lived curriculum (currere) and the four key considerations?
6. Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and curricular *Verfremdung*

In this section I present an ontological analysis of the school-based curricular approach HT at ICHK. This analysis serves three purposes:

- It aims at illustrating how the mode of ontology can be put into effect. It is a continuation of the excavation work done as part of the archaeological investigation that makes up the first mode of utopia as method, now shifting the focus to ontological questions that are pertinent to curricular *Verfremdung*. The two blank spaces identified in the archaeological mode (personal versus social development; the political dimension) are looked at more closely as part of the ontological analysis.

- The section provides an example of how the conceptual work on curriculum as *Verfremdung* (see Part III) can guide an analysis of an existing curricular approach, revealing its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the curricular considerations, thereby providing insights and recommendations for the future.

- HT itself is an example of an alternative curricular approach that sees curriculum as a lived practice between teachers and students, aimed at addressing matters of human flourishing. As such, HT can demonstrate the possibilities for schools to distance themselves from the dominant model of accountability and instrumentalisation that drives global curricular frameworks. HT serves as an example of a school-based curricular initiative that takes normative and
ontological questions seriously and works through the challenges that come with this approach.

It is important to reiterate that the conceptual work on curricular *Verfremdung* emerged from my punk ethnographic collaboration with ICHK on HT (see the next section ‘Utopia as architecture: Punk Ethnography practiced at ICHK’). Therefore, the conceptual work and the ontological analysis should not be seen as separate, but as insights that emerged simultaneously and ‘in conversation’.

The analysis of HT presented in this chapter is supported by the data collected during my collaboration with ICHK (see the section ‘Data: origin and use’) and is co-created with the ICHK community, a process that I have referred to earlier as a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, 2013). I first describe the current context, rationale and curricular structure of HT, followed by an analysis of the different ways in which HT creates *Verfremdung*. Then, HT is analysed against the four curricular considerations (teacher artistry, negotiation and trust; the knowledge-experience nexus; curricular justice; the discipline dilemma), weaving in the blank spaces that were detected in the archaeological investigation.

6.1. *The current context of Human Technologies*  
HT was developed by the current Head of School, the Iconoclast, and launched in 2012, two years after ICHK was established (see section 5.3. ‘Fissure 2 – 2012: Launch of Human Technologies’). In 2017, a secondary state school in Australia adopted and implemented HT with about 30 teachers and about 700 students involved (in May 2021).

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At ICHK, HT is offered as part of the timetabled curriculum from Year 7 up to Year 11 with 168 hours per school year in Year 7 (4.7 hours per week), 126 hours in Year 8 (3.5 hours per week), 84 hours in Year 9 and Year 10 (2.3 hours per week), 42 hours in Year 11 (1.2 hours per week). In the school year 2020-2021, 11 teachers were teaching HT to 290 students across all year groups. HT is non-exam based and is part of a range of other alternative school-based curricular initiatives which are timetabled alongside traditional subjects.

6.2. Why Human Technologies?

In the HT Primer document, The Iconoclast states that the current education system globally ‘is the system that has guided our efforts as we have moved to our current point of global development. There can be no stronger argument for why the system must change. The current education system got us here.’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). This statement is critical of the current focus on accountability and the crises that education has contributed to (see Part I). As a response, The Iconoclast argues for a curriculum that goes beyond the traditional subject notions as it gets ‘in the way of students’ understanding of the world they live in. By separating off skills, techniques, methods, approaches, and so on within discrete disciplinary boundaries, the interconnectedness of knowing and knowledge are lost’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). HT, in other words, is a deliberate response to a world in crisis, driven by the question ‘How to be human well/better?’, as summarised by an HT teacher. HT aims to offer teachers and students a curricular experience in ‘the art and craft of being human’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.), thereby
considering everything that humankind has created for its ongoing benefit, but also to its detriment. We consider how we acquire better thinking skills, how we learn to influence others, and the forces that shape who we become, how best to collaborate, and how to cooperate towards shared common purposes. (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.)

A Year 10 student describes HT as an opportunity ‘to think more deeply about things, complex problems that do not appear in books…It allows us to connect with each other and understand what other people are thinking’. Her insights point at the phenomenological traits of the HT curricular practices, whereby teachers and students negotiate their knowledge and understanding of others and the world.

Contrary to the current instrumental and tool-oriented understanding of the word ‘technology’, HT reclaims the original meaning of ‘technology’ in Greek. “Techne”: ‘meaning art, craft or skill and “-logy”, meaning “knowledge of” or “discipline of” (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). Technology is defined in three ways: ‘technology is about taking action to meet a human need; it uses much more than scientific knowledge and includes values as much as facts; it involves organised ways of doing things’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). A technology, in short, ‘is a communal, shared device that provides for action, whether of thought or deed, in order to achieve a willed end to match human intention or desire (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). Human Technologies, then, ‘offers a novel perspective on human beliefs, practices and activities’ (ICHK, 2022a, n.p.).

At surface level, HT can be considered as a transdisciplinary curriculum that is thematically structured, bringing together knowledge from a range of
disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, psychology and history, and making conceptual connections between these disciplines. Lessons are organised around, for example, ‘technologies for teamwork’, ‘technologies for advocacy’, ‘technologies for truth’. The foundational structure that underpins the lessons across all year groups is the HT Venn diagram which organises technologies into five (partly) overlapping domains to help make sense of the ways in which humans draw on and deploy technologies in their lives as illustrated in Figure 9.

![Figure 9: The HT Venn Diagram (ICHK, 2019).](image)

*Somatic technologies* ‘allow you to maintain and use your body more healthily and effectively’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.), for example: good sleep, physical activity, a healthy diet.
Cognitive technologies ‘allow you to think more effectively and to realise your thoughts more satisfactorily’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.), such as: language or the scientific method.

Material technologies ‘allow you to act in and get to grips with the world of things more effectively’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.), such as: clothes, phones, books.

Social technologies ‘allow you to understand and get on with other people more effectively’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.), for example: body language, humour, listening skills.

Spiritual technologies ‘allow you to understand yourself better and to make you feel good about yourself’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.), such as: music, spending time in nature.

All five domains are interconnected and thus represented and discussed, implicitly and/or explicitly, in every theme. For example, lessons on the concept of ‘power’ look at how power can be technologised – positively as well as negatively – at a somatic, cognitive, social, material and spiritual level. When teachers and students develop an awareness of how their lives are technologised, they learn to better understand the complexity of society, and are encouraged to respond more appropriately and responsibly to a range of situations.

6.3. The curricular structure of Human Technologies

Currently, the HT curricular structure is organised around a set of inquiry-based core questions that offer a scaffolded HT journey from Year 7 up to Year 11. The core questions are connected to the HT theoretical underpinnings as well as the school’s focus for each year group. The theoretical underpinnings are
shared with all HT teachers and serve as a foundation for teachers to think about how to approach the core questions. Every core question is then connected to a set of core units and extension units that span across several lessons and across school terms. Figure 10 provides a complete overview of the HT curricular structure (in November 2021), including all core questions, core units and extension units per year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Questions</th>
<th>Core Units</th>
<th>Extension Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are human technologies?</td>
<td>Ground Zero Introduction Unit</td>
<td>A Really Short History of Everything by Bill Bryson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are humans the same as and different from other animals?</td>
<td>Technologies for Being a Human Animal</td>
<td>Portrait of an Animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do humans technologise the place they are in?</td>
<td>Technologies of Place</td>
<td>Linked to Deep Learning +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we use human technologies to make sense of the world?</td>
<td>Technologies for Making Sense</td>
<td>Myths Fables and Legends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the most pivotal human technologies develop and what effects did they have?</td>
<td>Pivotal Human Technologies</td>
<td>Pendle Witches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 7
In Year 7, the students are introduced to Human Technologies as a lens through which to see and make sense of the world. They develop an awareness of themselves as part of the deep history of the universe whose use of human technologies make them a different kind of organism to other living things in key ways. They learn to apply the lens of Human Technologies to a range of human experiences.
How can understanding our brain and its functions help us select technologies that support our thinking? | Technologies for Thinking
---|---
What needs do humans have and how are they driven to satisfy them; and why is it that humans experience desire in addition to need? | Technologies of drives and desires
How can we balance our use of technologies to care for ourselves? | Technologies for Well-being

**Year 8**

In year 8 students begin to apply the Human Technologies lens to the wider world around them looking at relationships with others and the world. They focus on Human Technologies to uncover and express meaning, thinking, and focus on education itself as a Human Technology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Questions</th>
<th>Core Units</th>
<th>Extension Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do humans draw on technologies to explore and express meaning?</td>
<td>Technologies for Exploring &amp; Expressing Meaning</td>
<td>The British Museum Making the World by Walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we technologise identity?</td>
<td>Technologies for Identity</td>
<td>My Mini Museum Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How and why do humans technologise feelings and emotions?</td>
<td>Technologies for well-being</td>
<td>Inside Out Flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we technologise for collaboration?</td>
<td>Technologies for Teamwork</td>
<td>Establishing Teamwork Attributes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Year 9

In year 9, students deepen the application of the Human Technologies lens to the wider world by focusing on the societal level, and on economic and power relationships. They focus on Human Technologies used to affect their own consciousness and personal development, recognising this can happen at a very young stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Questions</th>
<th>Core Units</th>
<th>Extension Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the role of technologies in enabling social being?</td>
<td>Technologies for Societies</td>
<td>Flags of the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the role of technologies in exercising power?</td>
<td>Technologies for Power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the economy?</td>
<td>Technologies for Trade</td>
<td>Social Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Investment and Cumulative Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Capitalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Capitalism II - Money and Morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How and why do humans technologise consciousness?</td>
<td>Technologies for Consciousness</td>
<td>Who’s Driving the Car?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Models of the Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible Learning: Dream Diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible Learning: Surrealist Drawing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Year 10

In year 10, students begin to apply the Human Technologies lens to the way they choose to live life. They focus on Human Technologies in more intense and consequential arenas such as sex and death. They think about their responsibility for the use of Human Technologies both for the wider world but also for their own living of a good life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Questions</th>
<th>Core Units</th>
<th>Extension Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How and why do humans technologise death?</td>
<td>Technologies for Death</td>
<td>Unpack the day-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overpopulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mexican Sugar Skulls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Making Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is it reasonable to hold people</td>
<td>Technologies for Responsibility</td>
<td>Wicked problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible for the technologies they use?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How and why do humans technologise sex and</td>
<td>Technologies for Sex &amp;</td>
<td>Menstrual Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexuality?</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a good life?</td>
<td>Technologies for a Good Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Year 11

In Year 11, students are aiming for a nuanced use of the Human Technologies lens. They draw together the focus on self, their development and the living of a good life with that on their
relations with the wider world and how power relationships work through a unit on Freedom. The whole year tunes in to the use of Human Technologies to think about their own values as evidenced through the use of technologies and how they can contribute to a range of possible futures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Questions</th>
<th>Core Units</th>
<th>Extension Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How sustainable is our use of human technologies?</td>
<td>Technologies for Possible Futures</td>
<td>Reducing Plastic Waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Earth School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is it feasible to align the values we hold and the technologies on which we draw?</td>
<td>Technologies of Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean to be free?</td>
<td>Technologies for Freedom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: The HT curricular structure (November 2021).

The HT curricular structure can thus be thought of as serving two purposes. First, the core units guide students in developing an understanding of HT as a lens. This involves understanding the Venn diagram, having a view on what it means to be human and how human life is technologised. Second, the extension units apply the HT lens more extensively to different areas of life (e.g. death, economy, teamwork).

Core questions display increasing levels of complexity across year groups. For example, the first core question in Year 7 is ‘What are human technologies?’, which in Year 8 becomes ‘How do humans draw on technologies to explore and express meaning?’. The Year 9 question ‘What is the role of technologies in exercising power?’ takes this a step further and explicitly addresses the complex notion of power. ‘What is a good life?’ is a Year 10 question that touches on a
much broader range of concepts which ultimately leads to Year 11 questions such as ‘How sustainable is our use of human technologies?’ and ‘What does it mean to be free?’.

The development of the units connected to the questions is coordinated by the Head of Human Technologies in collaboration with the HT teachers. This implies that different teachers work on different units that are made available to all HT staff, all following the same HT unit template (see Appendix IV ‘Example of an HT lesson plan template’).

Since its launch in 2012, lesson materials have been increasingly streamlined and made coherent, a process I will return to in the actual analysis. However, none of these lesson materials are compulsory. Teachers have the freedom to create their own lessons or choose from existing materials, as long as the core question and underpinning understandings are thoroughly addressed. Therefore, each question is connected to an ‘emergent understanding’. This should not be understood in terms of a formal assessment students take, but a guideline that helps teachers to check to what extent students have grasped the core question. For example, connected to the Year 7 question ‘What are human technologies?’ are the following two emergent understandings: explain what a human technology is; interpret a human technology using the Venn diagram.

The expectation for a school that wishes to adopt HT is to adhere to the purpose and rationale of HT, its understanding of technologies and its Venn diagrammatic structure, all of which is laid out in the HT Primer. The structure and content of the HT curriculum depends on the context of the school, the specific curricular requirements and curricular practices that are relevant to the school. HT
is thus not set up as a ‘curriculum-as-plan’ (Aoki, 1993), but as a ‘lived curriculum’ (Aoki, 1993) or a practice that is guided by the rationale and purpose of HT, but uniquely lived from school to school.

In what follows, I will subject HT to an analysis following the curricular concept of *Verfremdung* and the four considerations introduced in Part III. Before focusing on each of the four curricular considerations (teacher artistry, negotiation and trust; the knowledge-experience nexus; curricular justice; the ‘discipline dilemma’), I will situate HT more generally within and against the notion of *Verfremdung* as a desirable curricular purpose. For the latter as well as for the four curricular considerations, I have summarised the evaluation of HT on a scale from weak to strong, whereby ‘weak’ corresponds with significant challenges that need addressing in relation to the area; ‘moderate’ corresponds with some challenges but also some strengths in relation to the area; ‘strong’ corresponds with significant strengths related to this area. A summary of this evaluation is provided in Figure 11 and each evaluation will be discussed at length.
6.4. Verfremdung

The concerns out of which Brecht (1964) developed his theatrical process of Verfremdung and the issues that motivated The Iconoclast to develop HT show a number of similarities as well as some tensions. They both want to offer opportunities to question what is familiar. Through this active experiential and intellectual engagement, a better understanding of the complexities of society and one’s role in it can be developed, and an impetus to change one’s behaviour is provided. For Brecht, this change in behaviour can happen towards oneself, others and the wider communities one is part of. However, when it comes to HT and its philosophical underpinnings, although there is explicit reference to human flourishing, the commitment to social change is not as explicit as in Brecht’s process of Verfremdung, (the latter is a point I will return to in more depth later.)
The following accounts of students and teachers are illustrative of the general sense of defamiliarisation that characterises HT:

For the school to give us a large sense of our self, and how we contribute to community and society. (Year 10 student)

At its root, it’s a lens that helps you to understand and navigate yourself and your interactions with the world, it’s learning to take a critical perspective. (The Convert)

HT leads to the possibility of critiquing the existing system. Recognising our own place in it right down to the subjective level. Being able to frame alternatives. (The Unicorn)

The Neophyte, a new HT teacher, summarised the purpose of HT as ‘to look outward at the world to become more in-worldly’. Verfremdung, at a general level, thus starts from looking at how human beings, individually and collectively, have technologised their lives, for better and for worse. HT invites students and teachers to first reflect on their own habits and perspectives and how these tap into familiar narratives and understandings, but goes a step further: the HT lens encourages everyone to question what is familiar and to consider changing the course of one’s thinking, doing and being.

Aside from the broader purpose of HT, Verfremdung also manifests itself in three other ways, at times deliberately, at times involuntarily or inevitably: a defamiliarisation from the way curriculum is generally understood; a defamiliarising experience for teachers and students; a defamiliarisation from HT itself.
6.4.1. A defamiliarisation from the way curriculum is generally understood

HT, although currently timetabled alongside more traditional subjects and practically organised as a curriculum at ICHK, is far more ambitious. It wants to do away with the existing notions of curriculum and develop an alternative perspective, not just on curriculum, but on education more broadly. ‘HT’, as stated in the HT Primer, ‘is not, in itself, a curriculum - it is an approach or a lens that generates and configures materials that become the curriculum’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). The Iconoclast emphasised the bold ambition of HT as follows:

HT has never been envisaged as a subject, but always as a way of questioning the balkanisation of subjects. It is a deconstructive move. HT is an insight, then from there it becomes a discourse. It’s a system of thought to approach the world/life.

As earlier quotes have illustrated, teachers and students experience Verfremdung in that HT offers an alternative curricular lens and perspective which is radically different from the more conventional subject-based curricula. With HT, The Iconoclast wants to defamiliarise teachers and students from the existing, conventional notions of curriculum and offer a system of thought as well as a discourse under which traditional subjects would be subsumed in an attempt to better respond to a complex world. A well-seasoned HT teacher describes this ambition as follows: ‘If you have a different lens, your epistemology is different and your construction of knowledge will be different. HT brings in a whole set of knowledge that is not part of the traditional curriculum’. A Year 10 student said that HT has ‘alternative purposes: preparing you for future life, looking at life more positively. It also teaches skills and it teaches you about what it means to be a
human being’. In my own research journal, I noted that HT ‘requires you to unlearn the curriculum’.

However, despite this ambition to generate *Verfremdung*, the current, more conventional reality of school forces HT to be organised as a curriculum alongside traditional subjects. HT is thus generally perceived as a subject and faces a conundrum: how can it stop being a curriculum whilst being offered as a curriculum? Overcoming this issue would require a substantial *revolution* in education, or, a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 2012). Following Kuhn (2012), the emergence of a new paradigm is ‘a sign of maturity in the development of any given scientific field’ (p. 12). He asserts that a paradigm shift requires a profound state of crisis for new ways of thinking to emerge, a process that is slow, marked by tensions and contradictions, and ‘professional insecurity’ (Kuhn, 2012, p. 68).

It could be argued that HT is a response to crises in education that was initially started by The Iconoclast, but has evolved into a more collective response as more teachers and students came on board over time.

Yet, for HT to become *normal curricular science*, to adopt Kuhn’s (2012) terminology, would require ‘a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most elementary theoretical generalisations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications’ (Kuhn, 2012, p. 85). Currently, HT inevitably finds itself in a state of professional insecurity, given its infancy and small scale. For HT to become a system of thought for education would require a re-construction of the field of education and a gradual de-construction of the current notions of curriculum (or: ‘total *Verfremdung’*). In theory, with sufficient time and increasing levels of crises, HT
has the potential to contribute to such a shift. The extent to which this is possible or desirable, is a question I will return to further on.

6.4.2. A defamiliarising experience for teachers and students

As described earlier, HT aims at offering a lens to students and teachers to look at the world differently, starting from the idea that human life is highly technologised. It is assumed that developing an understanding of these processes will help teachers and students to become 'human technologists' who apply this knowledge in their daily lives and might change their behaviour accordingly.

Through a core question such as ‘How and why do humans technologise death?’ (part of the Year 10 HT curriculum), students and teachers reflect on a challenging topic by making conceptual connections between disciplines on the basis of experiential activities and philosophical discussions. Examples of lesson activities connected to this unit are: looking at the biological processes that manifest themselves in the body after death; discussing the death penalty and executions; comparing different funeral traditions around the world. Students and teachers inquire about their personal views and traditions and how they might be different from others. The Unicorn describes this process as follows: ‘We get the students to reflect and spell out how they felt, what they learned, what they found difficult, and this is vital to them becoming more rounded, more self-aware, more themselves’. This reflective process is also happening for teachers. In his journal, The Unicorn mentions the following: ‘The experience of planning the death unit was engrossing. I spent a lot of time bringing back to mind the memories of my
father dying’. The Incomer, a new HT teacher, talked about his emotions regarding the near-death of his father related to the COVID-19 pandemic and how he had shared this with his students as part of the unit on death. The Convert said: ‘I feel like it is okay to pause and reflect more together with the students in HT as there is time’. The themes (core questions) as well as the pedagogical approaches and the flexibility in terms of lesson content are illustrative of HT being conceptualised as a dynamic curriculum or currere (Pinar, 1975, 2011; Pinar et al, 1995) that requires students and teachers ‘to become action researchers of (them)selves’ (Kincheloe, 1998, p. 133). Although HT has a set of core questions that make up the ‘curricular spine’, it allows for, as Kincheloe (1998) mentions in his reflections on currere, ‘the moment-by-moment experience of specific teachers and students in a particular place at a particular time’ (p. 136). Thus Verfremdung does not only occur in the curricular discourse of HT, but also during the pedagogical moments of reflection and introspection that HT teachers and students are involved in.

For teachers, however, there is an additional experience of Verfremdung that is related to their disciplinary expertise and teacher training (see also the section ‘The discipline dilemma’). Engaging with HT requires them to step away from their training and more conventional assumptions about curriculum and disciplines. They need to be willing to look at their own profession and the general purpose of education differently. The Unicorn said that ‘the effectiveness of the HT experience will depend on the extent to which the teachers themselves can live HT, the extent to which they can use the lens, problematise their own thoughts, life and practices’. A Year 10 student also acknowledged this Verfremdung experience for teachers: ‘HT is a different approach to learning and
therefore teachers need to learn it too’. It is thus important for the school to encourage and support this kind of attitude, which is the case at ICHK. The school’s 5+1 pastoral model states that ‘teachers have to develop the ability to construct and reconstruct meaning along with their students’ (ICHK, 2016, n.p.).

6.4.3. A defamiliarisation from HT itself

The last aspect of Verfremdung that is at play within the context of HT is located at its meta-level. HT was conceptualised by The Iconoclast and has been offered at ICHK for almost ten years at the moment of writing this dissertation. The number of HT teachers has grown over the years (11 in 2021) and since 2017, the curriculum is also offered at a large secondary state school in Australia. Despite its connections with several disciplines (anthropology, history, psychology etc.) and strong philosophical grounding, there is no formal HT disciplinary field (yet) and no one teaching HT is therefore formally trained (see also the section ‘The discipline dilemma’). Different teachers (and students) therefore take HT in different directions, a process that is unanimously viewed as positive by HT teachers and acknowledged in the HT Primer: ‘The Human Technologies lens is infinitely customisable and malleable, ever-changing, universally applicable, and expands with its own teaching’ (2019a, n.p.). Edward Said (1983, 2001) terms this process ‘traveling theory’, an inevitable dynamic that theories undergo as they travel through time, places and people. It could be assumed that HT ‘travels’ as it is interpreted and approached differently by different teachers in different classrooms across schools who cannot fall back on the powerful knowledge that is associated with a discipline (Muller & Young, 2019; Young, 2014). The
knowledge, experiences and understandings that HT generates are thus inevitably emergent and fallible.

At ICHK, HT teachers receive guidance in their approach to lessons, but also in the development of a personal understanding of the HT lens through meetings, documents and a self-paced professional development unit. A Year 10 student also said that ‘ICHK seems to train teachers to teach HT’. Nevertheless, HT is taken in different directions, often influenced by the disciplinary background of the individual teacher, which became apparent during my classroom observations from August until December 2019. In my personal journal from that period I wrote that ‘HT teachers often seem to be starting from their own disciplinary expertise and subject knowledge as a gateway into HT’. In other words, HT ‘travels’ in different directions. Ultimately, the traveling process of theories can result in losing ‘some of their original power and rebelliousness’ (Said, 2001, n.p.) or in ‘becoming a kind of dogmatic orthodoxy’ (Said, 2001, n.p.). If ‘travelling’ contributes to HT teachers defamiliarising from their disciplinary backgrounds, then travelling is contributing to the move towards HT becoming normal science. If HT is experiencing ‘tamed traveling’ as it becomes an extension of existing, conventional disciplines, then travelling is contributing to defamiliarising HT from itself. Which direction HT will follow, will depend on whether HT itself will become normal curricular science. It is also possible that HT never arrives at a particular destination. Said (2001) asserts that this can be viewed as a constructive and positive ‘state’ as it always leaves room for change, questioning and renewal: ‘to travel, always to move beyond its confinements, to
emigrate, to remain in a sense in exile’ (n.p.). A permanent state of defamiliarisation from itself is perhaps the best possible state for HT.

I will now move on to a discussion of the four curricular considerations, starting with teacher artistry, negotiation and trust.

6.5. Consideration one: teacher artistry, negotiation and trust
ICHK’s policy on staff appraisal and staff development describes ‘teaching as an art, craft and science’ (2018, n.p.), thereby explicitly referring to Stenhouse’s (1988) connection between teaching and artistry. This statement also indicates that the school puts high levels of trust in their teachers, something that also became apparent during my classroom observations and conversations with teachers as well as my collaboration with the school prior to my doctoral research. Generally, teachers at the school feel trusted and ‘in charge’. Another indicator of this might also be the high staff retention levels of the school with very few teachers leaving (none in 2020 and 2021) the increasing staff body (from 30 staff members in 2009 to 100 in 2022). The Conver emphasises how she feels connected to the school through having the opportunity to construct ‘a curriculum that is aligned with the values of the school and who you are as a teacher’. ICHK thus also seems to offer the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their involvement in curriculum making through dialogue, involvement and shared values, what Alkan and Priestley (2019) refer to as communicative and autonomous reflexivity and meta-reflexivity respectively.
These impressions display similarities with research done in Scotland by Priestley et al (2015) on the impact of the school environment on teacher agency in relation to a centrally mandated curriculum. They term the relation between environment and teacher engagement as an ‘ecological approach’ and describe how teacher agency is not a matter of ‘having’ or ‘not having’ (Priestley et al, 2015). Agency depends on the teachers’ past experiences, but also their ability to see purposes and possibilities in their teaching as well as the presence of resources and opportunities in their school contexts (Priestley et al, 2015). The impact of the latter two aspects of the ecological approach are particularly visible at ICHK, despite the fact that the school context is significantly different from the Scottish context where Priestley and his colleagues conducted their investigation. Apart from exam-based subjects in the senior secondary years (e.g IGCSE, IB Diploma Programme), ICHK also offers a range of unique school-based curricular approaches - including HT - across all year groups. These initiatives offer and require extensive creative input and commitment from teachers, which would not be possible if teachers were proletarianised (Ozga & Lawn, 1988), a concept I discussed in Part III (sub-section ‘The proletarianisation of teachers’). Moreover, in its 5+1 document, the school emphasises the importance of an 'open and warm relationship between staff and students' (ICHK, 2016, n.p.), which involves keeping ‘channels of communication open and allowing for teachers to remain relevant as students begin exploring wider issues and possibilities’ (ICHK, 2016, n.p.). The school views the teacher as ‘a subject with other subjects' (Biesta, 2017, p. 65) who is not just a deliverer of content, but also a relationship-builder. A Year 10 HT student described his three different HT teachers as follows: ‘They
are very outgoing, they enjoy trying new things and are very open-minded and you want to hang out with them. You don’t mind socialising with them. They can make connections between HT and life’.

It is apparent that ICHK puts a lot of trust in teachers, and makes deliberate efforts to create a sense of community, shared purposes and values. The sense of community was also one of the major points of celebration in unpublished testimonials from (former) staff and parents for the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the school in 2020. This general culture of trust makes for a solid foundation, or ‘ecology’ (Priestley et al, 2015) for any teacher who is interested in getting involved in HT.

6.5.1. ‘Accidental’ HT teachers

HT teachers are of course not formally trained in HT and most of them have a traditional disciplinary background. At ICHK, most teachers are not ‘appointed’ to teach HT. They express their interest to the school leadership team and when availability allows, teachers are timetabled to teach HT alongside teaching traditional subjects (with the majority of the current HT teachers having a background in the humanities). It occasionally happens that teachers express their interest, but are not allocated to teach HT, as they are considered ‘needed’ elsewhere, usually in exam-based subjects. In August 2020, for the first time, a teacher was hired to teach HT almost exclusively and the increase in HT teachers was significant: from six in August 2019 to 11 in August 2020. This expansion was related to two factors: the increase in student numbers and the decision to start offering HT to Year 11 students. Yet, this growth also led to three occasions where
a teacher had been timetabled to teach HT without having asked for it due to planning challenges. The latter became visible during my conversations with these teachers as well as my attendance at departmental meetings. Two concerns emerged: first, there was a noticeable lack of understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and rationale of HT, its aims as a curriculum and as a lens; second, the level of involvement and contributions to meetings and material development was limited. These concerns seem to point towards a lack of reflexivity (Alkan & Priestley, 2019) of ‘accidental’ HT teachers. When I took up these points with The Iconoclast, he acknowledged the concerns and committed to a more careful timetabling of HT teachers. Given its bold ambition to offer a very different curricular experience to students in an attempt to respond more appropriately to a complex world, and an expectation that teachers join their students in developing an understanding of what it means to be a ‘homo technologicus’, HT requires teachers who display intrinsic motivation, similar values as well as a solid understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of HT. A Year 10 student affirms this:

HT teachers are different from other teachers. They follow a model, but they need to know a lot of stuff about different topics. They can’t just look at a book, that makes it more difficult for them. They also have a more open mindset and this also affects the students.

It therefore does not suffice to simply trust teachers, but to engage teachers who are committed to the HT project, share similar values and purposes, and have an inclination towards reflexivity (Alkan & Priestley, 2019). This also requires a
willingness to contribute to the ongoing development of the HT curricular structure, the focus of the next section.

6.5.2. The risk of HT fatigue

Since its launch in 2012, HT has not only expanded in the number of students and teachers involved, but also in its documentation and lesson materials. Initially, there were very few lesson materials available and the few teachers involved created materials as they were teaching. Their inspiration came from conversations with the Iconoclast and former teaching experiences in transdisciplinary curricula. This resulted in a rather idiosyncratic collection of lesson units (see also section 6.7. ‘Consideration three: curricular justice’). In 2016, a first big alignment exercise was carried out by the leading HT teacher whereby the department looked at the existing materials and organised them into a collection of units (core and application units) that followed a scaffolded journey from Year 7 up to Year 10. The units were connected more explicitly to the theoretical underpinnings of HT and mapped against three core questions. A deliberate effort was made to connect HT to the Outdoor and Experiential Learning Department in the school (see also the section ‘The knowledge-experience nexus’). This department plays an important role at ICHK given the school’s focus on the natural environment and the outdoors. As HT also has a strong experiential component and wishes to be more than a timetabled curriculum, the connection between both was a strategic choice. The years that followed, more materials were developed by an increasing number of teachers, adding to the established set of core units and developing new units.
In May 2020, the decision was made to create a list of core questions that would make up the curricular ‘spine’ of HT and would scaffold the HT journey across year groups (see Figure 9). Existing units were revised and connected to the core questions, and in August 2020, a phased plan was created for the development of additional units as well as the revision of the unit template and a tighter alignment with the HT theoretical underpinnings (see Appendix V for an example of a revision of the unit ‘Technologies for trade’). In May 2021, this process was evaluated and further streamlined by the two leading HT teachers, which also included the establishment of a regular development and review cycle and more guidance for teachers in unit development. The choice was made to only involve a small group of five teachers in unit revision and development.

March 2021 meant another step in the development of HT: a core group of four HT teachers, The Iconoclast and I decided to create a set of self-paced professional development units (different from lesson materials) for teachers who have an interest in HT and who wish to develop a thorough understanding of its purpose and underpinnings. The units were made available in two phases in August 2021 and January 2022 (see section ‘Utopia as architecture: Punk Ethnography practiced at ICHK’ – ‘Period 4: March 2021 – December 2021: The main study – Part II’).

This brief historical overview of the ‘material development’ of HT reveals that at each stage, HT teachers were and continue to be heavily involved. The professional judgement of teachers, their professional and personal experiences as well as their ability and willingness to structure units and collaborate are indispensable for the development of the HT curriculum. Yet, this ongoing
development process comes with a risk: the risk of ‘HT fatigue’. None of the HT teachers signalled that this is the case, but this intense level of contribution, in combination with other (teaching) responsibilities across the school, is challenging. The example of (the failure of) the New Basics curriculum project in Queensland, Australia, discussed in Part III, illustrates this risk.

Moreover, there is a risk of ‘overplanning’ a curriculum that, in principle, wishes to refrain from being too prescriptive. I noticed this in some of the lesson units that seem to provide an overly detailed outline of how a lesson can unfold. In a discussion with The Unicorn and The Convert they mention the ‘accidental HT teachers’ as one of the reasons for this overplanning. By providing detailed lesson outlines they hope to buffer the lack of understanding and reflexivity. The question is whether the benefits outweigh the negative side effects of this overplanning. It would be more constructive to avoid ‘accidental HT teachers’ and to extend teacher support through the HT professional development initiative.

After this recent, extensive period of development, HT would benefit from a period of stability which would allow teachers to go through several teaching cycles. This will help them to identify inconsistencies and potential lacks. For example: a triennial curricular review cycle, or consulting other schools that might offer HT in the future, would not only strengthen the position of HT as a lens and a curricular approach, but also limit the risk of ‘HT fatigue’ and an overplanned curriculum. Contrary to many schools where teacher artistry, negotiation and trust are often too limited, these elements could be negotiated a bit more carefully at ICHK.
6.6. Consideration two: the knowledge-experience nexus

6.6.1. Expanding the worlds of students and teachers

ICHK (2022b) states that ‘the right education requires the right environment - and ours ensures that all students are given unique outdoor experiences which help them to thrive’ (n.p.). One of the school’s assets is its location in one of Hong Kong’s most green and natural environments (see section ‘Utopia as archaeology: from an empty building to Human Technologies’). The 2008 School Proposal document emphasised that ICHK would be attractive to ‘families who choose the greener lifestyle of the Northern New Territories’ (ICHK, 2008, p.1). Most international schools in Hong Kong, on the other hand, are located on Hong Kong island or in Kowloon in very urban areas where space and greenery are scarce. ICHK puts its location at the heart of its philosophy and pedagogy, and through the Outdoor and Experiential Learning Department the outdoors permeates curricular as well as extra-curricular activities. The department offers a range of specific initiatives, such as the Outdoor Leadership Certificate, and works closely with departments across the school as well as a number of other schools. Hence, not only HT but also other subjects are infused with experiential approaches to learning that take students outside of the classroom.

Throughout my HT classroom observations I have witnessed and participated in a number of experiential activities:

September 2019 - Year 7 unit ‘Technologies for becoming indigenous’: scrambling up the hill behind school to develop an awareness of the school’s surroundings and vegetation, as seen in Figure 12 and Figure 13.
Figure 12: Technologies for becoming indigenous (September 2019).

Figure 13: Technologies for becoming indigenous, view from the hill behind school (September 2019).
September 2019 - Year 8 unit ‘Technologies for teamwork’: Figure 14 shows the game room with the class playing ‘memory minefield’, a game designed for HT.

Figure 14: Technologies for teamwork - memory minefield (September 2019).

October 2019 - Year 7 unit ‘Technologies for making sense’: building a model of a tiny house in the school’s maker space, of which an example can be seen in Figure 15.
December 2019 - Year 7 unit ‘Technologies for making sense’: guided visit to a local Buddhist monastery, as seen in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Technologies for making sense - Buddhist monastery visit (December 2019).
October 2020: Year 7 unit ‘Technologies for making sense’: Figure 17 shows students sending messages in coded language from the roof of the school.

Figure 17: Technologies for making sense - coding language (October 2020).

The school’s surroundings, its dedicated Outdoor and Experiential Learning Department and its emphasis on experiential approaches provide a range of options for HT to be infused with experiential learning opportunities, which are aligned with the pedagogical underpinnings of HT: ‘to create learning experiences that engage, incite, involve and mobilise the learner, inviting them to want to know more and understand more, and to apply that new found knowledge in authentic ways’ (ICHK, 2019a, n.p.). Combining these experiences with the acquisition of new knowledge through applying the HT lens is a good illustration of the acknowledgement of the ‘co-extension of knowing and being’ (Polanyi, 1969, p. 136). ‘The structural kinship of the arts of knowing and doing’, Polanyi (1969) adds, ‘is indeed such that they are rarely exercised in isolation: we usually meet a blend of the two’ (p. 126).
This expansion of the way students and teachers know and experience the world is not only related to the application of experiential pedagogies, but also to the content and orientation of HT lessons. Given the broad thematic and conceptual nature of the HT curricular structure, there are ample opportunities to integrate discussions about contemporary societal events and crises. In what follows, I provide two examples that illustrate how, at ICHK, the HT lessons create spaces to respond to the political crisis in Hong Kong and the climate crisis respectively.

The Year 9 unit ‘Technologies for societies’ has been part of the curriculum for a number of years, and tackles matters such as nations, flags, cultural and political identity. When in 2019 the protests in Hong Kong intensified and the city experienced a big political divide, this unit offered a space to discuss the political situation students and teachers were confronted with. The Unicorn recalls one specific lesson:

I particularly remember during the protests, we had a class completely split down the middle with specifically a kid with a family in prison on one side, and one with a police officer father on the other being particularly representative.

Allowing for such conversations to happen in the classroom, expands the worlds of students and teachers and supports them in their development towards responsible citizenship. As Suissa (2022) asserts:

Diversity, discussion and dissent are important elements in democracy and you don’t have to agree with everyone in order to live and co-exist in a political space. In an age of increasing
polarisation, it is important that schools provide spaces for people to disagree and have difficult conversations, while respecting each other as individuals. (n.p.)

The second example relates to the Year 10 unit ‘Technologies for responsibility’ which addresses the core question ‘To what extent is it reasonable to hold people responsible for the technologies they use?’. This broad focus allows for HT teachers to discuss a range of different themes, with the publication of the reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as one example. The IPCC reports offer a scientific analysis of matters related to climate change. To make the reports accessible and show their relevance for individuals, The Unicorn created an extension unit (based on the 2018 publication) that is centred around the following questions:

- What are the dangers of 1.5+ degrees Celsius warming of the earth climate?
- What would humans have to do to prevent greater warming?
- What opportunities does this present for us to take action?

These questions guide students in thinking about their personal responsibility and opportunities for local action within the context of the global climate crisis. Other units such as the Year 10 unit ‘Technologies for possible futures’ also apply the HT lens to think about and act upon climate related issues.

To sum up, HT offers a phenomenological, lived curricular experience that is supported by experiential pedagogical approaches and thematic and conceptual orientations that aim at expanding the world of students and teachers.
HT, in other words, creates a space for students and teachers to be(come) responsible citizens and act upon their role as political beings. Furthermore, the transdisciplinary lens of HT creates a defamiliarising experience, for students as well as teachers, from the conventional, powerful knowledge of disciplines. Instead, they are co-constructing new, emergent knowledge and experiences through their application of the HT lens, a lens that deliberately creates a perspective of Verfremdung.

6.6.2. Acknowledging the worlds of students and teachers: pedagogies matter

The following quote from The Convert sheds an interesting light on the pedagogical approaches as well as on how students are being involved in the HT classroom:

I think most units begin, or have to, at some point, invite students to consider their current personal experience with a concept / question in order to think about how they can better technologise their experience of / with it. The balance can often depend on the unit / concept (core question) being explored. Some concepts are obviously more complex than others. For example, our units that explore 'How the economy works' or 'Transactional Analysis' require a certain degree of knowledge; however, I think the HT department is working towards it being an equal combination of [both]. The core games have been an integral part in developing the experiential side, and a great tool in helping students to break down the complexities of some concepts. More games would be beneficial, and also a great way of developing students' tacit knowledge.

There is an explicit acknowledgement of the personal experiences and (tacit) knowledge that students and teachers bring to the classroom. The Neophyte also
mentioned that she tries to make abstract concepts accessible by sharing her 'own experience of what those two concepts mean and examples which consequently make the students share their own examples. This contributes to a more lively and enriching experience'.

HT largely follows an inquiry-based and problem-based approach with each unit being driven by a core inquiry question. One (HT) teacher is professionally trained in experiential and game-based pedagogies, trains staff and has built a library of physical games, puzzles and real-life scenarios that offer an opportunity for students and teachers to explore HT themes in different ways. With every game, puzzle or scenario comes an overview of the HT units to which it is applicable, what the specific objectives are. Figure 18 shows the game ‘3D Maze’, where HT teachers guide students with instructions and equipment, and ask debrief questions that connect back to the objectives.

![Figure 18: The HT game called ‘3D Maze’.](image)
The overarching purpose of these experiential opportunities is largely the same: making abstract and complex concepts and knowledge more tangible to ensure a deeper and more transferable level of understanding. A former HT teacher highlights the role of these activities: ‘I have an unresolved question as an HT teacher: the trick is that HT is inherently philosophical, but we start with kids who are still young. The games are responding to that’. For students - and teachers - to not only develop an understanding of the HT lens, but also to be equipped to apply the lens and transfer it across contexts, diverse and experiential pedagogies are very useful.

6.6.3. The personal versus the social: a blank space?

What the above illustrations and accounts have shown is the strong connection with the natural environment, but there is little mention of the social environment. The school has partnerships with a few Hong Kong based NGOs, and there are emerging efforts to work with local farms and village communities in the area, but to date there are no long-term partnerships or explicit sustained commitments that address the social development and awareness of the need for social change among students. As 5+1 illustrates, the main emphasis of the school is on individual, personal development and this is also confirmed by teachers. This focus and seeming absence of social development also emerged from the archaeological investigation as one of the blank spaces.

When looking at ICHK’s (2022d) guiding statements, the fourth strategic direction is ‘community and partnership’. As part of this direction, the school lists a number of initiatives with local, regional and international organisations and
mentions that ‘our students are encouraged to be thoughtful, to care for others, to understand the importance of serving the community and how, through their actions, they can make a difference’ (ICHK, 2022d, n.p.). In principle, the school seems to be committed to cultivating social awareness. Yet, when talking to staff and looking more closely at the school planning, there are few long-term, ongoing community-oriented initiatives, nor are such initiatives mentioned in conversations. No one in the school, neither at leadership nor at teacher level, has a role that is formally attributed to matters of community engagement.

Given that HT’s aims, philosophical underpinnings and experiential approaches are driven by matters of human flourishing, it lends itself perfectly to provide opportunities for students to become practising citizens and active members of society (Dewey, 2011). Human flourishing can be put more explicitly into conversation with the good society and social participation as part of HT. As such, HT can provide ‘a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder’ (Dewey, 2011, p. 56). HT instills social relationships through its experiential approaches, and the HT lens provides a tool to develop habits of mind that do not just relate to one’s individual life, but one’s life amongst and with others as well. To put it differently, HT, as an example of a phenomenological, lived curricular experience has the potential to, as Pinar et al (1995) assert, ‘change the way we live’ (p. 413). One way of ensuring a sustained commitment to social participation and social change could be, for example, to embed long term initiatives into the HT curriculum that are connected to the core questions and core units across year groups. These initiatives could
be part of school-wide initiatives, potentially coordinated by a staff member whose responsibility is community engagement.

If HT developers want to ensure that HT keeps its promise of making ‘the world a better place’, according to one HT teacher, this blank space needs to be taken seriously by starting from the immediate communities the school is part of.

6.7. Consideration three: curricular justice

6.7.1. The alternative curricular option: a blessing and a curse

HT has been offered at ICHK since 2012 alongside the regular curriculum and is not externally assessed. In the current structure, HT is considered as a subject among other subjects. Yet, The Iconoclast has the bold ambition to ‘overthrow’ the current (notions of) curriculum and the way schooling is structured by developing an entire curriculum that applies the HT lens, thereby subsuming all traditional subjects. Both scenarios raise different questions in relation to curricular justice (as described in Part III ‘Curriculum as Verfremdung’ – section ‘Consideration three: curricular justice’).

In the current scenario, HT is integrated into the mainstream curriculum. The Iconoclast developed HT out of a concern about the current state of affairs in education and its failure to respond to a complex, crisis-ridden world. He wanted to offer a curricular experience that provides students and teachers the opportunity to (re)negotiate their understanding of and participation in society by applying an HT lens. HT, given its integration into the mainstream curriculum, does not exclude students from access to colleges, universities or other professional institutions. The latter is an important point that Connell (1993) as
well as Young (2014) emphasise as they both formulate concerns about alternative curricular options potentially leading to exclusion. Interestingly, this concern is also implicitly acknowledged by two different Year 10 HT students at ICHK:

HT would be very useful for your character and personal life (life skills), but not necessarily for your professional life. There is certain content, for example science, to become a doctor. Everything is a technology, but it would become confusing, as people are not used to learning like that. It would require a new way of learning and I am not sure that is possible.

HT is so large, it would be hard to examine. Showing/demonstrating what you have learnt would be harder in HT. HT is not universally known and people in other countries might not know what it is and see no value in it.

However, if the Iconoclast were to go ahead with his bold ‘deconstructive move’, as he calls it, through replacing mainstream curricular structures and subjects by HT as an all-encompassing lens for schooling, HT could face issues related to curricular justice in that it might impede students’ chances of having access to wider societal and educational structures. HT is currently not part of normal science, to use Kuhnian terms. As argued earlier, dominant normal science in education is very much driven by evidence-based, ‘what works’, homogenised approaches, and curricula are traditionally structured around subjects that are rooted in disciplines. These approaches and structures also permeate adult private and professional lives. Educator and cultural critic Neil Postman (1996) explains the relation between school and society as follows: ‘Schools, we might
say, are mirrors of social belief, giving back what citizens put in front of them’ (p. 59). He goes on to say that schools always ‘show something that is there, not of the schools’ invention, but of the society that pays for the schools and uses them for various purposes’ (Postman, 1996, p. 59-60). If we follow Postman’s pessimistic logic, schools - and education more broadly - will never be able to fully contribute to change in society. Alternative approaches such as HT will inevitably lead to exclusion from the society that the school mirrors. It is worth noting, however, that Postman was not as pessimistic as this quote seems to imply. In ‘The End of Education’ (1996), one of his most acclaimed books, he responded to what he saw as a crisis in American education in the 1990s by proposing a number of creative alternatives.

I beg to differ with Postman’s statement, and consider bold visions such as the Iconoclast’s important if we want schools to be sites of social transformation (Suissa, 2006). Change can only happen if there is a willingness to defamiliarise ourselves from and question normal science in education. Postman (1996) also stated that ‘there is no sin in being wrong. The sin is in our unwillingness to examine our own beliefs, and in believing that our authorities cannot be wrong’ (p. 127-128). HT is doing exactly that: examining curricular authorities and assumptions, and formulating an alternative that starts from a concern with human flourishing. Yet, it remains important for HT to also examine itself and to be aware of the risks that come with alternatives: the risks of exclusion. The way HT is adopted, adapted and integrated in a school context needs careful consideration if it wishes to become normal curricular science that holds the promise of contributing to an alternative society.
6.7.2. Powerful knowledge or knowledge of the powerful: another blank space?

As has been illustrated earlier, HT at ICHK has gone through several stages of development and alignment: from a fairly idiosyncratic set of units at the start in 2012 to a tighter aligned curricular framework with core and extension units that are connected to a set of core questions offering a scaffolded journey from Year 7 to Year 11. It also deserves re-emphasising that HT is not prescriptive and allows schools to develop their own curricular spine that connects to the values, communities and contexts of the school.

This flexibility implies great responsibility of the teachers and developers involved. As HT is not a disciplinary field (yet) and has transdisciplinary traits, there is no clearly delineated expert knowledge, or ‘powerful knowledge’ available. The knowledge drawn upon is thus entirely dependent on the HT curriculum developers and their pre-existing expertise in bodies of disciplinary and powerful knowledge. This comes with a set of challenges:

How can HT ensure the integration of powerful knowledges that foreground multiplicity and relationality (Rudolph et al, 2018)?

How can HT avoid powerful knowledge turning into knowledge of the powerful?

The theoretical underpinnings of HT are steeped in human-centred epistemologies with a strong focus on individual development. An example thereof can be found in the document that lists the theoretical underpinnings of
HT and its description of what it means to lead a good life (connected to one of the Year 10 core questions): ‘A good life is to pursue with hope and satisfaction the true ends (or telos) of your personhood, which is perhaps something more than just your selfhood’ (ICHK, 2021, n.p.).

HT makes connections with, for example, psychoanalysis, Western perspectives on history and human development (e.g. Darwinian evolutionary biology). This is also evident in the lesson materials and the profile of the current HT teachers at ICHK: all of them (including The Iconoclast) are trained in Western educational institutions. When I took up this concern with the Head of the HT Department (The Convert) and The Unicorn, they admitted that, to date, they had never deliberately or systematically considered the Western lens through which a lot of the HT content is offered. This lack of consideration of the political dimensions of (HT) knowledge is the second blank space that emerged from the archaeological investigation of ICHK (see section 5. ‘Utopia as archaeology: from an empty building to Human Technologies’).

An additional concern that came out of the investigation is the fact that ICHK is located in Hong Kong and the school is experiencing an increasing influx of local students. To what extent does HT, as it is currently offered, make connections with these local contexts? This question is partly answered by the experiential learning approaches that are part of the HT curricular experience and that were discussed earlier. Making connections with the local physical environment of the school is one way of connecting with the local Hong Kong context. Yet, how are epistemological connections being made with the local Confucian orientation and collectivist ethos? This question remains largely
unanswered and is one of the most significant challenges that needs addressing. Currently, HT does not do enough curricular justice to considerations of multiplicity and relationality (Rudolph et al, 2018) that come with the powerful and transdisciplinary knowledge offered through HT. These considerations need to be taken seriously by HT teachers when planning the curriculum, but it also requires reflection when deciding who teaches HT. Questions about diversifying teacher profiles in terms of cultural and political background thus need consideration. This issue is also part of larger current debates about the Western ‘nature’ of international schools (for a critique, see Gardner-McTaggart, 2021a).

My conversations and interventions encouraged The Convert to start thinking about how to tackle these issues and she admitted that ‘the HT Department is at the very start of its journey in the progression of this approach’. In October 2021, she started to list out the origin of all resources that are used across HT units, with the idea to do this more systematically and across the entire HT curriculum as of January 2022 with the help of another colleague. Based on the findings, she created an action plan for the following school year. She also added that she wanted ‘to be mindful of not replacing Western voices merely for the sake of diversifying representation’.

I would add that carefully chosen pedagogical approaches can play an important role as well. Rudolph et al (2018), for example, suggest approaches that ‘would make visible the politics of knowledge production and the power relations that underpin such politics’ (p. 34). The Convert referred to this when she brought up the idea of ‘imparting this knowledge with the students explicitly: just how significant has Western influence, as a result of imperialism and colonial
power, marginalised and decentred the voices of others?’ She thought of the Year 9 unit on ‘Technologies for Societies’ as a useful starting point for students to consider these questions. HT has a strong conceptual grounding as can be seen in the core questions (see Figure 9): concepts such as freedom, power and identity are explicitly tackled (as opposed to the often ‘conceptual silence’ of purely competence-based curricular frameworks, see Part III ‘Curriculum as Verfremdung’ – section 6. ‘A recent historical account of perspectives on curriculum: the pendulum swing’). HT thus lends itself very well to ‘essentially contest’ (Gallie, 1955) concepts that are taken for granted and also, as The Convert indicated, HT can be conceptually ‘contested from within’ by its students and teachers.

To address matters of powerful knowledge, its fallible and emergent nature, and to ensure multiplicity, careful curriculum planning and alignment as well as regular review cycles are also playing an important role. Since 2020, HT at ICHK is in a stronger position as the decision was made to work with a set of core questions that help scaffold and align the curricular journey. Regular review cycles also allow for better responses to changes in society. The overall flexibility of HT and the fact that it is not externally examined, enables teachers to respond to immediate societal events.

6.8. Consideration four: the discipline dilemma

6.8.1. A moderate version of a Future 3 curriculum

Young’s (2014) Future 3 curriculum scenario implies ‘the systematic interrelatedness of subject-based concepts and how they take their meaning from
how they relate to each other’ (p. 68). Despite the fact that HT developers want to challenge the conventional notions of curriculum and disciplines, I would claim that it partly formulates a response to the Future 3 scenario. It deliberately wishes to cross boundaries (Young & Muller, 2010) between disciplines, which is clearly stated in the HT Primer (ICHK, 2019a):

Current curriculum design and nomenclature get in the way of students’ understanding of the world they live in. By separating off skills, techniques, methods, approaches and so on within discrete disciplinary boundaries, the interconnectedness of knowing and knowledge are lost. (n.p.)

Given that HT critiques the existence of traditional subject disciplines and aspires to be a ‘deconstructive move’, it does not seem to adhere to the boundary maintaining attributes of the Future 3 scenario (Young & Muller, 2010). If discipline boundaries are critiqued, it can be assumed that there is no aspiration to maintain them.

HT is also not an example of a typical concept-based curriculum as it does not have an exhaustive list of concepts that drive the organisational, curricular structure. Nevertheless, the core questions that shape the HT curricular spine are driven by conceptual connections (see Figure 9). For example, the Year 8 core question ‘How do we technologise for collaboration?’ implicitly addresses the concept of ‘relationships’. The Year 9 question ‘What is the role of technologies in exercising power?’ explicitly addresses the concept of ‘power’. Through inquiry-based and experiential pedagogies, HT teachers unpack these concepts in an attempt to make HT ‘transferable to out-of-school situations’ (Dewey, 2011, p.
HT could thus be considered as a moderate version of a concept-based approach to curriculum as well as a moderate version of a Future 3 curriculum scenario, as Young and Muller (2010) suggest. It shares traits with a Future 3 scenario (boundary-crossing, addressing complex worldly matters, conceptual grounding) and is similar in aim: taking students beyond their experiences whilst also remaining contingent and moving away from a fixed curriculum scenario, being open towards revision and the emergence of new knowledge and experiences.

6.8.2. Stuck between a rock and a hard place: an anti-discipline discipline

There are a number of tensions that emerge from HT’s aspiration to go beyond the conventional notion of disciplines and, simultaneously, its practical implementation in the current more conventional organisation of school. These tensions result in HT being simultaneously transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and anti-disciplinary.

In its current organisation and enactment, starting from core questions that bring together knowledge and experiences from across disciplines, HT can be considered as transdisciplinary. HT teachers describe the transdisciplinary nature of HT as follows:

I think the HT lens encourages us to think of disciplines not being entirely separate from one another; therefore, it must be transdisciplinary. As to what extent the lens, or the HT Department, seek connections between these disciplines in our planning, I'm not entirely sure. Speaking from my own experience, this is not something I've specifically sought to do on a consistent basis. Yet, I
do believe this is something we need to do more of; it might be one way of encouraging greater cross-curricular planning, which I think would lead the whole staff (those who do not teach HT) to actually understand what it is - we all use technologies; they are not unique to the subject of HT, and we are all teachers of these technologies!

Currently, I think we're more transdisciplinary: the spine of HT curriculum is built upon big ideas that we, as school, feel are important for the students to understand. (The Neophyte)

Therefore in its enactment it is transdisciplinary, creating themes which draw on other disciplines- more traditional ones that exist elsewhere in school such as English and science and also on anthropology and sociology. (The Unicorn)

A secondary school system, compared to primary, is working in isolated compartments / subjects. There is no connection between what the maths, language or physics teachers teach. HT is fluid and makes all these cells interconnected. If you look at the HT Venn Diagram, it comprises the different facets. HT is the plasma of other subjects. (El Profe)

However, transdisciplinarity might offer more opportunity for the learner to be integrated into the learning process, which I think in HT, is quite central in that I think it aims to bring greater awareness and understanding to an individual learner that goes beyond just an integration of subject knowledge. (The Convert)

The transdisciplinarity of HT is also ‘felt’ by students. A Year 10 HT student said that ‘HT is somehow connected to everything’. It is noteworthy that two of the current HT teachers are trained primary school teachers, which, given the
transdisciplinary nature of many primary education programmes, might make transitioning into the transdisciplinary HT approach at secondary level easier.

Despite its overall transdisciplinary approach and structure, there are instances where HT becomes ‘accidentally traditionally disciplinary’. I have signalled earlier that less experienced and engaged HT teachers (but even well-seasoned HT teachers at times) tend to fall back on their ‘own’ disciplinary knowledge base when teaching HT. One illustration thereof is an observation of a Year 8 HT class in October 2019. The theme of the lesson was storytelling (part of the unit on ‘Technologies for making sense’) whereby the teacher, on the basis of a short story, a video and a text about hieroglyphs, takes the students through the purposes of storytelling and the importance of language. In my personal research journal notes of that day I write that ‘this class is not very different from an English or a history class. The teacher uses materials and pedagogies that she would use in her English lessons’. Approaching HT in a transdisciplinary manner takes time and requires a solid understanding of its aims, theoretical underpinnings and discourse of human technologies. Above all, it requires a deliberate focus on the concepts that underpin the core questions when planning the curriculum.

HT seems to find itself in a disciplinary existential crisis. On the one hand HT is oriented towards defamiliarising us from the conventional notion of discipline as it ‘conceives of disciplines as a technology, and therefore it can be called post-disciplinary’, as The Unicorn stated. On the other hand, HT inevitably has to be built on existing knowledge that is rooted in existing disciplines before it can reorganise and reconnect concepts into a new discourse. HT thus has no choice
but to have roots in traditional disciplines, despite its bold aspiration to be a ‘deconstructive move’. What is more, the tighter structuring of HT as a curriculum in recent years could be seen as compromising on this aspiration and as a move towards disciplinary characteristics. The Unicorn sums up this quandary aptly:

You can’t get to be a post-discipline without becoming a discipline first. If you become a discipline you can’t be post-disciplinary. If you try to be post-disciplinary without being a discipline you end up being a religion. If you give up on post-disciplinarity and become a discipline, most likely you will disappear in a few years as one more quirk.

What also points to the inevitable (inter)disciplinary rooting of HT is the fact that teachers who wish to teach HT need guidance and training in developing an understanding of its underpinnings. In other words, they have to become ‘HT experts’: an expert domain undoubtedly is a trait of a discipline in its conventional sense. However, there is the danger of powerful disciplinary HT knowledge becoming too dogmatic and uncontested and potentially turning into knowledge of the powerful (Muller & Young, 2019). HT, as claimed by The Iconoclast, wants to be, first and foremost, a ‘system of thought to approach the world/life’. If HT cannot be challenged from within, it can become a religious orthodoxy, which The Unicorn alluded to. There are good reasons for HT to have disciplinary traits and carve out an expert domain: it strengthens its theoretical underpinnings and guides schools and teachers in the organisation of the HT curricular spine and the development of their understanding of the HT lens. Moreover, there is merit in acknowledging that HT did not emerge ‘out of the blue’, but stands on the shoulders of giants, in the words of Isaac Newton. HT, through its current
transdisciplinary approach and its unusual discourse, can create alternative conceptual connections and ultimately, alternative perspectives on and engagements with society. Yet, at the same time, there is a strong argument for HT to remain an anti-discipline and to not fall into the trap of becoming dogmatic. This keeps HT ‘contestable from within’, emergent, and adaptable to a variety of school and societal contexts. As such, HT can play an important role in not just offering an alternative perspective on what it means to be a human in this world, but also in problematising more conventional curricular and disciplinary notions. In other words, it is advisable for HT to be what could be called ‘an anti-discipline discipline’.

The above discussion also connects to broader discussions about what makes a discipline a discipline. There are, for example, opposing views on the ‘nature’ of education. Some claim that education studies should be considered as a discipline in its own right (Wyse, 2020a, 2020b) to ensure coherence and rigour in research. Others argue that education studies should be informed by ‘foundation disciplines' (McCulloch, 2002) (i.e. history, philosophy, sociology and psychology) and education is an interdisciplinary field (Hammersley, 2002, 2021). I tend to agree with the latter, on the premise that rigour and broader societal relevance of education research and practice depend on the capacity of education as a field to make connections across disciplines and via those connections, to be connected to the communities of which students and teachers are members. Viewing education as such implies a perspective on education as a social process that allows teachers and students to be practising citizens (Dewey, 2011) can education be a force for social change and the wider human good. Last, if we
consider curriculum as a lived practice that is concerned with the praxis of living well (the good life), it is crucial for education to be more than a discipline, indeed, to be an interdisciplinary field that includes all aspects of human life. HT, given its aspirations and aims, has the potential to be a constructive and meaningful part of this field.

6.9. Summary

This ontological investigation that makes up the second mode of utopia as method focused on an in-depth investigation of HT as a curricular practice for Verfremdung. Through asking a number of normative questions guided by the curricular considerations and notion of Verfremdung developed in Part III, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive perspective on the philosophical underpinnings of HT, its rationale and the way HT has been developed and enacted at ICHK since 2012. This ontological inquiry allowed for the blank spaces that emerged from the archaeological investigation to be looked at closely, for further insights to emerge and for recommendations to be made. Along with this, the section illustrates how the conceptual work on curriculum as Verfremdung can guide an analysis of an existing curricular approach.

The ontological analysis has illustrated to what extent HT addresses Verfremdung and the four curricular considerations. As summarised in Figure 6, HT is strong in the areas of overall Verfremdung and ‘teacher artistry, negotiation and trust’; moderate in the areas of ‘the knowledge-experience nexus’ and ‘the discipline dilemma’; and has significant challenges in the area of ‘curricular justice’.
First, it is commendable that HT offers teachers and students the opportunity to engage in a curricular practice (currere) that offers an alternative lens - the HT lens - to look at one’s own world, as well as the world of others. These curricular negotiations offer the opportunity to, as Jackson (2021) asserts, “think what we are doing”. And by doing so, to reap the benefits that come from understanding the human condition and finding our place in the world’ (p. 128). This is a crucial requisite for anyone concerned with human flourishing. Given its defamiliarisation from traditional approaches of curriculum and the contemporary discourse of ‘what works’ in education, HT asks its teachers to engage actively in the shaping of the HT curricular spine and to step back from their disciplinary backgrounds. The analysis has illustrated that it is therefore important to consider carefully which teachers to involve and to offer support in the development of their understanding of HT.

Second, HT aspires to make abstract concepts such as power and freedom accessible by making interdisciplinary connections and providing experiential pedagogies (e.g. connecting with the outdoors, real-life scenarios and problems, puzzles, etc.). Meanwhile, it is acknowledged that students and teachers bring knowledge and experiences into the classroom that can be expanded through the engagement with HT. However, this expansion of worlds can be done more strongly if HT - and ICHK in general - would have a more deliberate emphasis on making systematic and structural connections with the communities of which it is part. In doing so, HT would strengthen opportunities for social participation and matters related to the good society.
Third, HT is steeped in Western and human-centred disciplines with a focus on personal development, resulting in challenges in the area of curricular justice. Yet its theoretical underpinnings are not de facto problematic. It is the lack of consideration of how these knowledges and perspectives can be questioned, diversified and connected to local contexts that can result in curricular justice issues. As HT developed into a more aligned curriculum (with core and extension units and an expanding database of materials and resources), the lack of consideration in these areas seems to have intensified the issues. The Head of the HT Department and a couple of other HT teachers have admitted this, but they have also signalled that these challenges can be tackled at two levels: knowledge, resources and materials can be scrutinised at curriculum planning level; and concepts such as power, race and gender can be contested - together with the students - as part of the HT curricular practices in the classroom. A last, positive noteworthy point related to curricular justice is the fact that HT is currently offered as part of a timetable built around conventional disciplines and mainstream curriculum organisation. This means that students and teachers are exposed to a defamiliarising experience whilst at the same time not being excluded from access to societal structures such as universities and workplaces. The latter, however, is also an ongoing point of tension given HT’s ambition to ‘overthrow’ the conventional (discipline-based) curriculum. This tension between offering a radical alternative and not wanting to be exclusive is present in many radical educational experiments (see Haworth, 2012).

HT finds itself in a complicated space. It makes conceptual links across disciplines and is structured as a transdisciplinary curriculum, centred around a
set of core questions. Simultaneously, HT problematises traditional disciplines as it considers them as ‘technologies’ which can fracture the educational experience thus failing to address complex societal matters and an all-encompassing development of the human being. In other words, HT is drawing on existing disciplinary knowledge for making interdisciplinary connections, whilst superseding the very nature of disciplines. I therefore termed HT as an anti-discipline discipline.

I would argue that, despite the difficulties and tensions, this permanent ‘in limbo state’ is the best possible place for HT to occupy. Its rejection of (wanting to become a discipline mitigates the risk of disciplinary powerful knowledge becoming dogmatic and turning into knowledge of the powerful. HT does not have to bear the burden of what can be considered as the fragmented nature of disciplines that fail to connect with the complexities of society. At its best, HT could ultimately develop into an interdisciplinary field that would allow for complexity, rigorous and rich collaborations as well as a take on education that puts societal relevance first.

That said, for HT to be a strong curricular practice for *Vertfremdung*, it should remain contestable from within, to offer opportunities to not only be defamiliarised from one’s world and conventional notions of curriculum, but to be defamiliarised from oneself. Offering opportunities to teachers to question their HT curricular practices, to question the expansion of knowledge and understanding that they offer to students, is at the centre of curriculum as a lived practice that does not settle for accepting reality as is, but is committed to social transformation. As such, HT as an anti-discipline discipline is also an example of
utopia as practice and process (Harvey, 2000) that is not striving for an ideal state of stability, but starts from the immediate reality and actions of students and teachers. If HT were to become normal curricular science, it would risk losing its powerful purpose of *Verfremdung*. 
7. Utopia as architecture: Punk Ethnography practiced at ICHK

This section presents the third and last mode that makes up the analysis of ICHK and HT following utopia as method: the mode of architecture (see Part I). First, the mode of archaeology described the genealogical excavation of the coming into being of ICHK and HT (see section 5. ‘Utopia as archaeology: from an empty building to Human Technologies’). Then, the mode of ontology activated the analysis of HT following the four considerations of curriculum as Verfremdung (see section 6. ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and curricular Verfremdung’). This last mode, the mode of architecture, describes the architectural work that emerged from and was practised during the collaboration with ICHK. As described in Part II (‘Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography’), I consider PE as one possible way of executing the architectural work that makes up utopia as method.

On the one hand, the aim of this section is to give a detailed account of the punk ethnographic practices that emerged from and eventually made up the study at ICHK, and that led to the insights about and actions related to HT. On the other hand, this section aims to illustrate how PE can be approached within the context of a school.

I will describe four significant periods that marked the study between August 2019 and December 2021:

- Period 1: August 2019 - December 2019: the pilot study;
- Period 2: August 2020 - February 2021: the main study - Part I;
- Period 3: February 2021: a moment of darkness;
Each period is defined by a shift in the set of punk ethnographic practices and accompanying thought processes that occurred at that time. The practices in each period were driven by a commitment to question the prevailing ‘what works’ discourse in education, and to imagine and create alternatives with a focus on human flourishing and the good society, starting from actions in the present.

For each period, the set of practices that is introduced illustrates how the three components of PE - the creation of an anarcho-syndicate; the punk ethos; border-crossing work - were being put to work (see also Part II ‘Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography’ – section 5. ‘The three components of Punk Ethnography’).

7.1. Period 1: August 2019 - December 2019: the pilot study

When I started my fieldwork at ICHK in August 2019, it was my intention to conduct an ethnography. I started with weekly classroom observations of HT classes and conversations with HT teachers (see section 3. ‘Data: origin and use’). Initially, the main purpose of this pilot study was to get a general idea of how HT was developed and practised in the classroom, and to work out how best to approach the ethnographic work. It was my assumption that specific points of interest would emerge from the pilot study that could help me set an agenda and focus for the main study in 2020. With that aim in mind, I set out to gather data and record detailed field notes (see Figure 19).
Yet, early on, the pilot study led to a very different set of realisations and a less clearly defined role for me in the school. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes illustrates how I crossed the boundaries of my own assumed role as researcher: between October 2019 and December 2019 I taught a set of classes, helped students, took an HT class on a field trip, and supported lesson development:

The Unicorn asked me to cover two periods of his class and gave me an outline, but gave me the freedom to add my own twist…. I chose an inquiry-based approach, very similar to what he is doing in his classes. As I understand the vision behind HT now, it was easy to lay out a lesson outline.
Meanwhile, my conversations with two key HT teachers evolved from discussing how HT was being planned and taught to what it means to be a teacher and how this relates to the purpose of education. We also had discussions about the limitations of teaching within the structure of traditional disciplines. These conversations became what could be considered as career counselling sessions, often focused on ontological questions related to the broader purposes of education.

From my very regular engagements with a small group of teachers, it became apparent that we shared similar values and principles. Their experiences with their teacher training and professional experiences across different schools corresponded with my own experiences as an educator and researcher: curricular discussions seem polarised, and the current push for homogenised competence-based curricular frameworks fails to address the complex reality of classrooms and the wider society (see Part III ‘Curriculum as Verfremdung’). Although we were coming from different backgrounds and contexts, we shared a motivation to engage in educational practices that would go beyond these global discourses and would address matters of human flourishing and how students as well as teachers can be guided in becoming responsible citizens.

There was a significant DIY and creative aspect to being part of the HT project in school, as HT did not exist elsewhere and thus none of the teachers involved were HT trained (see section 6. ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and curricular Verfremdung’). I was being asked for advice and input, and was seen as a collaborator rather than as a visiting researcher,
because of my own attitude to the project and the fact that I had built a close relationship with the school prior to embarking on this study. In hindsight, I would call this the emergence of a punk ethos that guided our collaboration: we shared a set of values and principles, a bold inventiveness and desire to develop HT, as well as a creative and DIY approach.

Not unimportant to note here is that this period was also marked by large and intense protests across Hong Kong. These had started in June 2019, in response to the proposed implementation of a bill that would allow extradition from Hong Kong to mainland China. Many in Hong Kong perceived this bill as a threat to the fragile semi-democratic status of the city, known as ‘One Country, Two Systems’. University students played an instrumental role in the protests which led to intense debates about the role of education, freedom of speech and academic freedom, amongst democrats as well as opponents. These themes also permeated our conversations at ICHK. When in October 2019 all schools and universities were forced to close as the protests escalated, online lessons were introduced. This demanded an immediate crisis response and thus high levels of creativity from educators across settings. The immediacy of the crisis, the central role of university students in the Hong Kong protests and the accompanying disruptions forced us to rethink our teaching practices and to reflect on our own perspectives on the role of education. From the outset, my decision to engage in doctoral research was based on the premise that crises can be opportunities to engage in alternative practices that support social change (see ‘Introduction: Crisis – Problem or Opportunity?’). Amidst the intensification of the Hong Kong protests in the second half of 2019, whilst trying to support my own university
students in their fight for a democratic society and also becoming aware of the changing nature of my so-called ethnographic field work, I started thinking at a more general level about the purpose of and approach to research engagements. How can research be more engaged and activist whilst being reflective, principled and pluralist? How can a less outcomes-oriented agenda be developed? What does research concerned with social change look like? I started from the ideas and experiences that emerged during these first months at ICHK. During that time, I, together with two HT teachers (The Unicorn and The Convert) and The Iconoclast, started exploring various initiatives that could strengthen HT and other curricular approaches in the school, including how to continue offering education in the - at that time - state of emergency that Hong Kong experienced. Our small group emerged organically and was committed to direct action, not being led by external policies or guidelines. It was at this point that we started forming an anarcho-syndicate. The boundaries between our roles became permeable and it was no longer accurate to speak of a typical ethnography.

I would now claim that the pilot study, first and foremost, laid the foundation for the development of a different approach to engaging in research starting from small scale, direct actions as a crisis response and a motivation to support social change. The practices that made up the period of the pilot study, some deliberate, others incidental or forced, led to the conceptual development of PE in 2020.

7.2. Period 2: August 2020 - February 2021: the main study - Part I

In the period between the pilot study and Part I of the main study, I spent most of my time developing the conceptual outline of utopia as method and PE, drawing
on relevant literature as well as my experiences during the pilot study. In December 2020, I presented PE for the first time at a conference and this resulted in an invitation to write a book chapter for a book on punk pedagogies (see Stewart & Way, forthcoming). Meanwhile, I also gathered more documentary information on HT and the school in general, and read into curriculum theory.

By August 2020 I had decided that I did not want to conduct a typical ethnography and had termed my approach as ‘Punk Ethnography’. I was committed not to work towards pre-determined and intended outcomes, but to focus on direct actions, creative and transgressive collaborations that support social change. The collaboration would be guided by elements of the punk ethos and anarchist philosophy and would, to a lesser extent, make use of ethnographic strategies. My main goal was to engage in an enriching and transformative collaboration, with HT as a starting point and alternative (educational) futures in mind. I decided therefore to conduct minimal observations, and to focus mainly on conversations and actions with a small number of staff. I organised conversations with two HT teachers (The Unicorn and The Newcomer) every two weeks (15 weeks in total). The Unicorn also kept a personal journal related to the project. Additionally, I had one conversation with every teacher who was or had been involved in the development and/or teaching of HT and had individual conversations with three Year 10 HT students. I interviewed The Founder and engaged in ongoing conversations with The Iconoclast (see section 3. ‘Data: origin and use’).

During this period, the composition of the anarcho-syndicate shifted. I still worked closely with the same two HT teachers, but a new HT teacher was added.
The Newcomer had been recruited specifically to teach HT and had given up his job as a teacher of economics and business studies in an established international school to join the HT project. He became a key member of the anarcho-syndicate together with The Unicorn and The Convert. Other teachers were mostly peripheral members. In February 2021 The Newcomer wrote the following:

I'm also looking forward to supporting you in whatever those next steps are and thank you for your support and advice throughout the start of my HT journey. I have definitely benefited from working with you on your project. Let me know if there is anything else in the meantime.

Apart from the ongoing conversations, the boundary-crossing work intensified and we were challenged once again, this time by the pandemic which forced schools to close several times starting February 2020. We came up with creative ways to continue our collaboration without too much interruption, moving our meetings online and working on initiatives that did not require us to be in school. A major initiative was a curriculum re-alignment exercise for HT, the first one since 2016. Over time, ICHK had built a rich repository of lesson materials, but, as I noticed during conversations with teachers, in particular with The Unicorn who had led the alignment exercise in 2016, there was a need to revisit the materials and work towards a scaffolded HT journey across year groups. The Unicorn, The Convert and I decided to develop a curricular spine built around core questions and connect existing and new materials to this spine. The first draft was completed in August 2020 and reviewed and refined during that school year (see section 6. ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and curricular Verfremdung’). I also
supported a series of online HT classes in January and February 2021 and
submitted a conference presentation on HT with The Unicorn and The Iconoclast.

This whole period was marked by ongoing disruptions related to the
pandemic as well as a drastic shift in the political climate in Hong Kong since the
enforcement of the National Security Law in June 2020. The increasing anxiety
around shrinking freedom of speech and academic freedom as a result of
guidelines for education institutions provided by the Hong Kong government
impacted our conversations and actions. Nevertheless, the HT project was not
negatively affected by this, apart from actions happening at a slower pace. The
punk ethos became central to our attitude and helped us to be resilient, creative
and agile in a time of great uncertainty and tension.

Yet, towards the start of 2021, I had come to a challenging realisation,
which had emerged from going through all of the data (interviews, documents,
notes, etc.) I had collected by then, as well as my conversations with HT teachers.
There seemed to be significant differences in the level of understanding of and
approaches to teaching HT. For some teachers, HT became an extension of their
subject, for others it was an opportunity to rethink curriculum, their own
approaches to teaching and perspectives on the purposes of education. Others
tried to grapple with HT, but were rather confused and unclear about its aims and
underpinnings. These discrepancies were inevitable given that HT is not a
disciplinary field (see section 6. ‘Utopia as ontology: Human Technologies and
curricular Verfremdung’ – ‘Consideration four: the discipline dilemma’). An
understanding of HT is entirely dependent on one’s own professional
experiences, the communication with colleagues and The Iconoclast who created
HT. If HT was really going to offer an alternative curricular practice, it was crucial for teachers to understand its purposes and philosophy. These reflections were also affirmed during my conversations with a secondary state school in Australia that had adopted HT since 2017. ICHK had lost contact with the school, so I decided to reach out to them and try to re-establish the connection. It turned out that the school had implemented HT at a large scale and had also realised that teacher support was crucial. I made extensive notes in my research journal and ultimately shared my concerns with The Iconoclast, The Convert and The Unicorn, playing devil’s advocate. What were the risks of this lack of understanding among HT teachers? Why had it come this far? What could be done (better) to support teachers in the development of their understanding of HT? These were challenging conversations from which productive tensions emerged that marked the end of this period.

7.3. Period 3: February 2021: a moment of darkness

During these conversations we discussed a number of big questions: Is HT a curriculum? Is it a perspective, a lens or a (curricular) practice? Can it be offered in a purposeful way in a conventional school setting? How does HT relate to societal concerns? To what extent do teachers need guidance in their understanding of HT? How useful and necessary is the further development of lesson materials? What kind of challenges does a further expansion of HT imply? Around this time, The Unicorn wrote the following in his journal:
What we offer the HT teacher and what we demand of them, poorly serve the subject. What we have done in the past is HT introductions, but it didn’t happen often. So, teachers don’t really get HT, they don’t get it in a way that is going to make a difference.

In February 2021, I wrote this in my personal research journal:

I also realised, after going through all the documents, that there is a big tension at ICHK: the school is very strong when it comes to values, approaches to human beings in a holistic way, community and care. This needs to be commended. There is a very profound and ‘different’ rationale that underpins HT. Despite all the efforts done by The Iconoclast and The Unicorn, because of HT being plugged into a conventional ‘status quo’ timetable with conventional ‘status quo’ teachers, it is challenging for HT to do its job and live up to its purposes and potential.

I decided that, for the study to continue to be constructive and support the transformative purpose of HT, I wanted to rethink my involvement as well as our collaborative actions. There had been no changes in the composition of the anarcho-syndicate for a while and I found that, although our work related to curriculum alignment and classroom practices was important, it did not tackle my growing concerns about teachers lacking an understanding of HT. How could the transformative purpose of HT serve the teachers better? I reflected on this conundrum individually, and discussed it with The Iconoclast, The Unicorn and The Convert, being rather critical in my feedback. It was the first time that crossing role boundaries had become a delicate matter. Yet, our carefully built relationships allowed for honest and open discussions, and the idea emerged to
set up an HT professional development journey for teachers that would not be focused on teaching HT, but on understanding HT as a lens to rethink curricular practices.

7.4. Period 4: March 2021 - December 2021: the main study - Part II

ICHK has an established school-based initiative called Free Learning. Free Learning offers a structured approach to independent learning, starting from a map of (online) learning units that provides a scaffolded learning journey to students, whilst being guided by a mentor. Being very familiar with Free Learning myself because of a research project I conducted on the topic in 2018, I discussed the option of using the Free Learning approach to offer HT professional development to teachers. This idea was received with enthusiasm.

In April 2021, we formed a new anarcho-syndicate involving five HT teachers and The Iconoclast. We brainstormed about what kind of scaffolded content we could create that would offer HT teachers not only a basic understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of HT, but apply the HT lens as a tool that challenges established notions of curriculum, education and society more broadly. Our discussions also addressed ontological and normative perspectives on curriculum and the role of the teacher. Ultimately, we agreed on a set of learning units, and committed to developing a first set by August 2021, the start of the new school year. I took the lead in the coordination of the development and together with three HT teachers and The Iconoclast, I started developing HT professional development units. By August 2021, seven units were ready and offered via the school’s online learning platform (as illustrated in Figure
20), but with an option for non-ICHK staff to enroll as well. We envisaged that any school or individual with an interest in HT should have free access to these materials. The Unicorn took over the coordination in August 2021 and followed up on the second phase of unit development, which was planned to be completed in December 2021. Meanwhile, the secondary state school in Australia had been given access to the platform, and ICHK was in conversation with an international school in China and a local school in Hong Kong, both of which expressed interest in HT.

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 20: The HT professional development units, August 2021.**

Developing the units and thinking about the kind of content and tasks we wanted to offer, required creativity, a DIY spirit and a clear spelling out of the values that underpin HT as a lens and as a curricular practice. This initiative therefore puts all the elements of the *punk ethos* to work. In this period I spent minimal time conversing with teachers and was no longer involved in classroom practices or
curriculum development. I started one last major initiative with The Unicorn: the creation of a website on PE: www.punkethnography.org (see Figure 21).

![Punk Ethnography Website](image)

**Figure 21:** The landing page of www.punkethnography.org.

We shared the view that our own experiences with PE could be of value to other researchers and practitioners (in education) and agreed that we had enough materials and insights to share. We worked with a graphic designer, put key texts on the website and started developing podcasts, including guest interviews, with the idea of making PE and related approaches accessible to anyone with an interest in creative collaborative practices, direct action and social change. This website remains an *architectural work in progress* that is outliving the doctoral study.

This final period was marked by a number of *boundary-crossing roles* and creative initiatives that can be considered the capstones of more than two years of collaboration. One other international school in Hong Kong developed an interest in the PE approach and in April 2021, I, together with a colleague, started exploring how a collaborative research project at their school could be set up. The actual project started in September 2021, and together with two key players in the
school an anarcho-syndicate was formed which committed to a collaboration in the spirit of PE. What made this project different from the study at ICHK was the fact that there wasn’t a specific project focus from the outset. The focus slowly emerged and was negotiated by the anarcho-syndicate during the first few months. The collaboration started from a shared set of values and a willingness to engage in a collaboration that was driven by ideas, creativity and a desire to step away from an outcomes-oriented agenda. This project could therefore be considered as more radical in its participatory approach, as even the project focus was negotiated by the anarcho-syndicate.

As the conceptual and practical work of PE now had a solid foundation, I led a presentation at the European Conference on Educational Research in September 2021, received the peer review award by the Journal of Dewey Studies for a manifesto-type publication on PE (Van dermijnsbrugge, 2022) and co-authored an article on curriculum considerations with The Unicorn (Van dermijnsbrugge & Kidd, 2021). In January 2022, a co-authored paper on utopia as method was published by the Asia Pacific Journal of Education (Van dermijnsbrugge & Chatelier, 2022).

I had conversations with The Unicorn and The Iconoclast about my conceptual work on curriculum for Verfremdung (see Part III) and made some of the classes that I was teaching at my university available to ICHK staff, as this would offer them free professional development. The latter was also meant as a symbolic gesture to bridge the gap between university and school and to illustrate that crossing boundaries between institutions and disciplines is possible and fruitful.
At the end of September 2021, I shared an overview of the two-year HT study with ICHK staff during a colloquium that The Unicorn had set up following one of our conversations. The school framed the purpose of this first colloquium in a series as an opportunity to offer a venue for research by external practitioners, who themselves become part of the school community, and some from within the school become practitioner-researchers. I presented my sharing session as a symbolic, formal end point to our collaboration.

7.5. Summary

Although the collaboration with ICHK had a formal end point, this should be considered as artificial. The architectural work that utopia as method requires us to do, is always ‘under construction’. HT will continue to evolve beyond the scope of this study, so will PE as well as the various initiatives that were taken along the way. We engaged in immanent practices that did not always have a clear goal, were messy at times and successful at best. Our actions did not only result in immediate changes, but also generated more questions. And, although the four periods look like coherent and structured segments, this coherence is created post hoc.

Applying PE also brought up questions about the nature and purpose of research. It forced me to go back to the most fundamental question: Why do research? Following Biesta (2020a), this question generates questions of ontology and normative judgements, which are some of the most challenging aspects of the study. Reflecting on the ontological and normative perspectives of
one’s own actions whilst being ‘in the middle of it’, and how these actions do or do not relate to alternative futures, requires ongoing efforts and ethical considerations. This demands a willingness to be comfortable with the discomfort of provisionality and ‘not knowing’. The development of personal relationships with some of ICHK’s stakeholders and my evolving views on HT as a curricular practice also begged for an awareness of the influence of these relationships and my personal views on the work we were doing. Yet, these challenges were accompanied by a rich set of dynamics and exchanges that have led to a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, 2013), to return once more to Gadamer’s metaphor (see section ‘Positionality, involvement and ethics’).

Taking up these challenges is crucial in our consideration of what it means to live well as researchers, practitioners, as human beings. Arendt (1998) pointed out that action is mostly being reduced to the ‘execution of orders’ (p. 223), and argued for the importance of bringing thought back into the vita activa if we are truly concerned with human flourishing and the good society. She goes on to say that ‘it is in fact easier to act under conditions of tyranny than it is to think’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 324). It is the comfort of tyranny, of executing orders in its many different forms that has brought us to a world in permanent crisis. The study at ICHK has illustrated that, albeit challenging, punk ethnographic practices can provide an alternative to the tyranny of ‘publish or perish’ in academia, to outcomes-oriented discourses in education, to the impositions of external bureaucracies and policies. It can provide an alternative to the tyranny of meaningless research that is often caught in the dominant ‘what works’ logic and that fails to ask ontological and normative questions. It allows for an in-depth engagement, in this case with HT
and the ICHK community, that creates possibilities to think and do something different, to create alternative futures.
8. A story of possibilities

In this fourth and last part of the dissertation, I have focused on ICHK and our collaborative work on their school-based curricular approach HT, having brought together a set of action-oriented responses to the three research questions that structure this thesis. Utopia as method has guided the analysis of ICHK and HT, and through separately presenting the three modes of archaeology, ontology and architecture, I have attempted to retell parts of the history of the school, the emergence of HT, the ontological underpinnings and the actions that made up past and present, and are influencing the future.

The conceptual work of utopia as method, PE and curricular Verfremdung would not have existed without the collaboration with ICHK, and therefore Parts I, II, III of this thesis are inextricably linked with this last Part IV. The seemingly coherent narrative that is presented here was, in fact, a messy process marked by a whole range of assemblages, but by applying utopia as method, I have attempted to present a sophisticated and transparent story of a school that, despite challenges and constraints, is a story of possibility. By incorporating the conceptual language of Deleuze and Guattari, I have tried to illustrate that it is possible and worthwhile to acknowledge the complex, interconnected and dynamic nature of a school.

For more than two years, I was part of the plane of consistency of ICHK and was one of the conceptual personae that influenced the processes of de-and re-territorialisation of the school and of HT. My own presence has created a number of fissures, fast and slow, offering possibilities for something new to
emerge (e.g. HT professional development, philosophical conversations with staff, curriculum development, etc.). I myself have also benefited from the fissures that marked the plane of consistency of ICHK (e.g. the teaching opportunities, the development of utopia as method, PE and curriculum as Verfremdung, etc.). A coherent and predictable reality (in a school) is an illusion and this makes conducting research a challenging endeavour. It would be easy to turn to the ‘what works’, outcomes-oriented approaches in education research to do away with this complexity, but in doing so, one also refuses to respond more responsibly and appropriately to an (educational) world in crisis. It is this question that lies at the core of my doctoral project:

How can and do education researchers and practitioners respond to a world in crisis and create alternative futures?

This last part has offered a very immediate and personal response to this question and has illustrated that, when seeing the possibilities rather than the constraints that crises present to us, alternative futures can be created in the present.
Conclusion

Calling All Insurgent Architects

But positioned as an insurgent architect,
armed with a variety of resources and desires,
some derived directly from the utopian tradition,
I can inspire to be a subversive agent,
a fifth columnist inside of the system,
with one foot firmly planted in some alternative camp.

(Harvey, 2000, p. 238)
1. Introduction

With this thesis, I sought to offer a crisis response that is speculative and imaginative in nature, exploring alternative ways of thinking and acting in two areas: approaches to education research and curriculum considerations for schools. My collaborative work with one school played a central role in the conceptual as well as action-driven crisis responses offered in this thesis.

Throughout my thesis, crisis has functioned as a possibility, an opportunity to formulate alternatives, guided by concerns with human flourishing and the good society, starting from an individual commitment to the collective good. Drawing on Arendt’s (1998) notion of the vita activa, I sought to illustrate that thought and action are equally important in the work of education researchers and practitioners who wish to distance themselves from the ‘what works’ logic (Biesta, 2020a) that dominates the current, neoliberal financialised moment.

This conclusion draws together the responses to the questions that guided my research and serves three purposes. It starts with a summary of the four parts and how they addressed the research questions. This is followed by an overview of the contributions to the field, as well as a reflection on the limitations, and suggestions for future research, not only with regard to utopia as method and PE, but also more generally with regard to applying utopian and speculative thinking to (education) research. Finally, I offer a brief personal reflection on the actions I undertook as part of this research and the process of writing this thesis.
2. Responses to the research questions and summary of the thesis

I retrace the main arguments in this thesis by summarising the responses to each of the research questions.

Main research question: How can and do education researchers and practitioners respond to a world in crisis and create alternative futures?

Not only the conceptual and empirical work explored in the four parts (Part I – Part IV) of this thesis, but also the thesis ‘artefact’ itself is a response to this main question. Crisis, instead of being equated with ‘problem’, is seen as an opportunity to interrupt the normal order and to imagine and do things differently. The instability that comes with crisis thus functions as an opening for the creation of alternatives.

I developed utopia as method, inspired by the work of sociologist Ruth Levitas (2013), as an approach to engaging in research that draws on utopian and speculative thinking (Part I – Utopia as Method). This kind of thinking, I have shown, offers the opportunity to go beyond reflections on the status quo, and engages in imaginative architectural work guided by ontological questions. At the heart of this crisis response are concerns with human flourishing and the good society. I have taken Arendt’s (1998) understanding of the vita activa as a guide, and have made connections - through PE - with the punk ethos and anarchist forms of organisation as guiding principles for engaging in collaborative (research) practices that strive for living well (Part II – Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography). I also argued that for school curricula to become part of the vita activa, it is necessary to shift from curriculum as a plan that needs
executing to curriculum as a lived practice. I then laid out what should be considered when developing such a lived curriculum (Part III – Curriculum as Verfremdung). Part IV (Utopia as Method, Punk Ethnography and Verfremdung Enacted) brings together the practical, action-oriented crisis responses to the main research question. This part illustrated not only how utopia as method can be practiced as an approach to education research, but also how PE can be enacted, and how the suggested curricular considerations can function as an evaluative tool and guide.

None of the practices and actions presented in the different parts are oriented towards outcomes, solutions or blueprints. I have shown that the architectural, imaginative work requires a level of provisionality to allow for a problematisation not only of the dominant order, but also of one’s own actions. We thus need to acknowledge that, as Harvey (2000) reminds us, ‘when a decision is made, it forecloses on other possibilities, at least for a time. Decisions carry their own determinations, their own closures, their own authoritarian freight’ (p. 235). As ‘insurgent architects’ (Harvey, 2000, p. 233) of utopia as method and PE, to keep open the possibilities for alternatives, we need our actions to be ‘provisional, reflexive and dialogic’ (Levitas, 2013, p. 218).

Sub-question 1: How can a speculative and utopian method be applied to education research?

This aim was achieved through the conceptual and practical development of utopia as method and the distinctive practice of PE, as described in Part I and Part II respectively and applied in Part IV. Utopia as method offers education
researchers an alternative practice to engage in research starting from creative and imaginative collaborations oriented towards ontological inquiry and collaborative action, thereby going beyond critical scholarship. I have extended and adapted the work of Levitas (2013) on utopia as method beyond the field of sociology and have shown how it can be put to work within the context of education (Part I – Utopia as Method). The architectural mode of utopia as method can be approached in many different ways. One possible approach I have suggested is PE, which foregrounds small-scale, action-oriented and creative collaborations, imagining alternative futures starting from the present (Part II - Constructing Alternative Futures in the Present: Punk Ethnography). PE, driven by the punk ethos and anarchist organisational structures, builds further on the ethnographic tradition by expanding the scope for ethnographic work that does not start from a set agenda, an envisaged outcome or a problem that needs solving. I have illustrated how PE, and more broadly an imaginative and speculative project, can be approached within the context of a school-based collaboration (Part IV - Utopia as Method, Punk Ethnography and Verfremdung Enacted). This account also generated opportunities, challenges and considerations for applications of PE in other settings, extending an invitation to (education) researchers and practitioners who wish to engage in similar actions.

Utopia as method as well as PE are practices that expand and rethink education research methods and practices, utilising alternative, activating strategies to the dominant evidence- and outcome-based discourses. This is not to say that other, more orthodox approaches to research should be dismissed. Rather, I argue for asking ontological and normative questions when engaging in
educational research practices. Instead of a dogmatic adherence to methods or frameworks that are in vogue, a method should be chosen in function of the research questions and the aims of the project, answering questions of ‘why’ before questions of ‘how’ (Biesta, 2020a). It is the acknowledgement of the complexity of a world (of education) in crisis, combined with questions of purpose, that can lead more successfully to developing educational (research) practices that contribute to social change.

Sub-question 2: Which curriculum considerations support teachers and students to live responsibly with others and be concerned with social change?

My two-year collaboration with ICHK, centred around their distinctive curricular approach called ‘Human Technologies’ (Part IV - Utopia as Method, Punk Ethnography and Verfremdung Enacted), has offered a practical response to this question. Furthermore, a conceptual approach to curriculum (Part III - Curriculum as Verfremdung) as a lived practice also emerged from the collaboration. This takes four elements into consideration: teacher artistry, negotiation and trust; the knowledge-experience nexus; the discipline dilemma; curricular justice. The analysis of HT against these four considerations has provided practical insight in how they can function as evaluative tools. The analysis has also illustrated the advantages and challenges of these considerations when applied in a school context.

School curriculum, I have argued, plays an important role in the contributions schools can make in responding to a crisis-ridden world and supporting students in being and becoming responsible citizens. Approaching
curriculum as a lived practice between teachers and students is supportive of this purpose. I have suggested that we do not only need to consider a curriculum that defamiliarises students and teachers from what they take for granted about the world. We also need a defamiliarisation from the contemporary views on curriculum. As such, I have adopted Brecht’s (1964) notion of ‘Verfremdung’, originally developed in the context of theatre, and have applied it to my reconceptualisation of curriculum.

3. Contributions

Here, I summarise the main contributions offered in this thesis, as well as a more general positioning of the thesis within existing literature that draws on utopian thinking.

*Human flourishing and the good society*: The first contribution is a focus on human flourishing and the good society as key elements for education researchers and practitioners who wish to offer crisis responses that contribute to alternative futures, starting from actions in the present. Education’s failure to prioritise human flourishing as a ‘peaceful democratic coexistence’ (Biesta, 2020a, p. 32) for the common good is the result of an obsession with data and metrics and being subsumed under a market logic (Sriprakash et al, 2020). Education, in other words, is locked into the neoliberal utopian blueprint, driven by global initiatives, such as OECD’s GCF, that project a singular future ‘that works’, causing ‘world alienation’ (Arendt, 1998, p. 252). The work presented in this thesis pushes back against this alienation by shifting the focus back to human flourishing and the good society, thereby opposing individualistically oriented
perspectives on human flourishing as the personal development of, for example, character or well-being. This shift requires a different approach to education research and practice, which is the second contribution of the thesis.

_Diversification of approaches to education research and practice_: Utopia as method and PE are introduced as practices that support the diversification of education research and practice that go beyond the dominant evidence-based discourse and conventional critical scholarship through engaging in ontological inquiry and collaborative action. Both utopia as method and PE emphasise the importance of reclaiming _imagination_ as a working tool for education researchers and practitioners. Imagination is generally assumed to be ‘the faculty for representing what is not there’ (Bottici, 2019, p. 433) instead of a tool that can activate alternative ways of being in the present. A growing group of educational scholars (see for example Biesta, 2020a; Carney & Madsen, 2021) actively transgresses the neoliberal blueprint by creating alternative and imaginative routes to think about and practice research. Utopia as method and PE are offered as additional conceptual and practical tools to work towards (educational) alternative futures whereby an individual commitment to the collective good is central.

_Curricular Verfremdung_: The third contribution relates to curriculum as a practice for _Verfremdung_, which is considered as an important component for schools who want to offer crisis responses and opportunities for teachers and students to construct alternative futures. I sought to problematise the dichotomous and stifling nature of the discussions in the field of curriculum studies and
contribute to the development of alternative perspectives on the role of curricular (and pedagogical) practices in schools. As early as the 1970s, curriculum specialists such as William Pinar (2011) and Ted Aoki (1993) argued for an orientation to, and purpose for curriculum that acknowledges the complexity of schools, and of the knowledge and experiences that students and teachers bring to the classroom. And yet, this literature is overshadowed by global curricular ‘what works’ initiatives, led by transnational organisations such as the OECD. In an attempt to push against these developments, I build on and expand the work of Pinar and Aoki by bringing in the theatre concept of ‘Verfremdung’ (Brecht, 1964) or ‘defamiliarisation’ as a central curricular purpose. I thereby engage with current debates around the place of knowledge, skills and experiences in school curriculum, offering a complex and nuanced contribution to the curricular debates.

A utopian practice for social change (in/through education): As signaled in the introduction to this thesis, I seek more broadly to contribute to the intellectual debates in the field of speculative and utopian studies, in particular its application in the field of education. The latter, as Facer (2016) points out, is enabling a ‘rapprochement between critical and activist scholarship (Amsler, 2015; Kompridis, 2011)’ (p. 69). It is this kind of activist approach, underpinned by ontological considerations, that is much needed in education research and practice. There is an abundance of critical scholarship which is necessary, yet not sufficient (Mills, 2018) if we wish to transgress the prevalent utopian blueprint of ‘what works’ and offer an alternative. Harvey (2000) asks the difficult question of how to ‘build a different sense of possibilities while acknowledging the power of the constraints with which we are surrounded?’ (p. 233). Utopia as method
responds to this question by offering a structure to engage in an archaeological and ontological (self) inquiry whilst doing architectural work that is imaginative and speculative. Education researchers and practitioners, through utilising utopia as method, thus become more than critics or executors, they become architects of social change.

4. Limitations and future(s) directions

4.1. Conceptual limitations and challenges of the utopian lens

As the historical account of ‘utopia’ in Part I has illustrated, the concept has taken different forms and interpretations over time. ‘Utopia’, Levitas (2013) summarises, ‘has been misunderstood as a goal and travestied as totalitarian’ (p. 217) by many a liberal theorist. Utopia as a concept is thus laden with tensions and problematic interpretations that need careful consideration. Therefore, working with utopia requires working through its complex history and acknowledging its risks. Harvey (2000) describes one of the biggest risks of utopia as follows:

> The history of all realized utopias points to this issue of closure as both fundamental and unavoidable, even if disillusionment through foreclosure is the inevitable consequence. If, therefore, alternatives are to be realised, the problem of closure (and the authority it presupposes) cannot endlessly be evaded. To do so is to embrace an antagonistic romanticism of perpetually unfulfilled longing and desire. (p. 183)

Harvey does not have a solution to the issue of foreclosure that utopia entails. Yet, he suggests a dialectic utopianism, utopia as an imaginative practice
(Harvey, 2000) that ‘permits diverse knowledges and practices to be rendered coherent across scales without resort to some narrow causal reductionism’ (p. 234). Levitas (2013) holds a similar view when working with utopia as a method to construct alternative futures in the present. She acknowledges the ever present tensions and risks of foreclosure, but asserts that the ‘utopian mode straddles this tension more effectively than prediction or forecasting’ (Levitas, 2013, p. 218).

Working with the concept of utopia as a method, as explored in this dissertation, is thus not free of risk, and requires careful consideration of the function of utopia, how it is utilised and activated as a concept, and how potential foreclosure can be avoided.

4.2. Practical limitations and challenges of utopia as method and PE

Utopia as method and PE offer a range of possibilities that have been discussed and illustrated throughout the thesis: they allow for a combination of an analysis of a particular phenomenon with how the research evolved and grew through the actions that were part of the process. It suggests a rigorous approach to research without an outcomes-based agenda and offers an opportunity to move beyond mere critique. Yet, with these possibilities also come challenges and limitations, particularly in terms of time and scale. Utopia as method and PE are useful within the context of small communities and small-scale collaborations where it is easier to build relationships of trust, but would be more challenging in large operations or projects that require, for example, a longitudinal approach or large amounts of data. Immediate access to people, resources and places, and opportunities to work bottom-up, quickly and creatively, starting from shared values, are other
important requisites (see for example projects as described by Christie, 2020; Ward, 1996). It is crucial for everyone involved to be comfortable with the discomfort of ‘not knowing’, of not having an agenda, whilst simultaneously being able to respond to the requirements and expectations of academic institutions, funding bodies, etc.

Furthermore, when applying utopia as method, it is important for collaborators to share a commitment to the construction of alternative futures, starting from present actions whilst developing an understanding of the past. The temporal challenges are thus not only applicable to the amount of time that is needed to engage in a meaningful collaboration, but also to the development of a shared conceptual perspective on time (i.e. the interconnectedness of past, present and future) as an important element for social change.

4.3. Future(s) directions

Despite its challenges, utopia as method holds the promise of contributing to social change, because it activates the individual as part of the process of systemic change. PE, specifically its underpinning punk ethos and anarchist organisational approach (see Part II), is similarly oriented towards institutional and systemic change through actions at personal level.

Utopia as method, as originally developed by Levitas (2013), is positioned in the field of sociology. The engagements of utopian theorists with the field of education (see for example Webb, 2016) have provided an important foundation for my own exploration of utopia as a method. My work adds a new dimension to the application of utopian and speculative thinking in an educational context as it
looks at utopia as a method to guide educational practice, and thus offers a lot of scope for further conceptual and practical exploration. Conceptually, the notion of the imagination and how it can function as a practice, for example, deserves further unpacking. Practically, in this thesis, the method is applied within the context of a school-based collaboration, yet applications in other settings can be considered. The brief example of the OECD’s GCF in Part I has given a first indication of how utopia as method could be approached in a policy context, taking into consideration challenges of time and scale. I agree with Levitas (2013) when she says that ‘most policy approaches are both piecemeal and extrapolative, and concerned with damage limitation’ (p. 218). Utopia as method can provide the conceptual and practical tools for policy makers to create alternatives that can contribute to systemic change, by acknowledging the value of small-scale and bottom-up initiatives. Moving away from data-driven and ‘evidence-everything’ discourses and a concern with human flourishing and the good society are the concerns that drive utopia as method and make it a worthwhile practice for social change in education policy, classroom practice, curriculum and pedagogy, as well as in other fields and contexts.

PE, as a novel futures-forming practice and one possible example of the architectural work of utopia as method, is in an early developmental stage. Its rich conceptual foundation and the engagements that emerged from my collaboration with ICHK as well as the ongoing work on www.punkethnography.org reveal the potential of working with PE. In Part II, I described how the punk ethos and anarchist philosophy is utilised in the field of education. PE is an addition to this body of literature. The connection with utopian and speculative thinking is an
additional perspective that can enrich this body of work. The connection between utopia as method and the elements of anarchist philosophy that underpin PE ‘can help to rescue the word “utopian” from its pejorative connotations and reclaim it as an urgent and committed form of social hope’ (Suissa, 2010, n.p.). Although PE emerged from an educational context, it is not limited to this field and deserves exploring elsewhere, in contexts where there is a shared concern with social change and a commitment to engage in imaginative, non-coercive, and participatory actions that are not outcome oriented.

Last, the conceptualisation of a curricular practice for Verfremdung that is explored in Part III contributes to views on curriculum that go beyond dichotomous discussions. It deliberately goes against the current push for a global, homogenised curricular agenda which is shaped by transnational organisations such as the OECD, yet further investigation would be worthwhile. Connections could be made with current debates about the decolonisation of education (see for example the work of Raewyn Connell), but also work within the context of educational inequalities, justice in education, and the internationalisation of education. The practical investigation of HT and its evaluation against the four considerations (see Part IV) has illustrated how this conceptual work can guide a curricular evaluation, and how an analysis can be carried out. The evaluation provides guidelines for policy makers and practitioners who want curriculum to be oriented towards living responsibly with others and be concerned with social change.
5. Concluding thoughts: Quite a crowd indeed

Deleuze and Guattari (1980) started their book ‘A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia’ with the following phrase: ‘The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd’ (p. 3). I did, of course, not co-author this dissertation, yet it is the result of a long process with many iterations, expressions of different ideas and voices, the ‘severals’ of me (the early-career researcher and scholar, the philosopher, the sociologist, the practitioner, the teacher, the student…), as well as the voices of collaborators, writers, scholars, colleagues and critical friends who contributed to this work. Moreover, there is you, the reader, who brings additional perspectives, speculations and judgements to this work. These processes of collective thinking and acting are the political acts (Arendt, 1964) that are crucial when imagining alternative futures starting from the present. None of what is investigated and explored in this dissertation is final or comes out of a desire to create a framework that would offer a ‘solution’. It is work done by a group of insurgent architects who call upon all of us to imagine and create alternatives, because it is possible.

It is quite a crowd indeed.
Appendices

Appendix I: Example information and consent form for teachers

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

Title of Study: An ethnographic investigation of a radical curricular approach in an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Department: UCL – Institute of Education – Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher:

Ms. Elke Van dermijnsbrugge
velkemaria@eduhk.hk
+ 852 5307 9777

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer:

Alexandra Potts
data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk This ‘local’ privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information from research studies can be found in our ‘general’ privacy notice for participants in research studies here. The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the ‘local’ and ‘general’ privacy notices. The lawful basis that will be used to process any personal data is: ‘Public task’ for personal data and ‘Research purposes’ for special category data.

I will be collecting personal data such as your name. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If I am able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide I will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at dataprotection@ucl.ac.uk.

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee under Project ID number: Z6364106/2020/06/167

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet (page 2) or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
Information sheet:

An ethnographic investigation of a radical curriculum at an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Dear participant,

This ethnographic case study is part of my doctoral research and builds further on a pilot study I conducted at your school from August – December 2019. Some of you might have been involved in this pilot study. My study aims at developing a profound understanding of one of your curricular approaches (called 'Human Technologies'). More precisely, the investigation aims to shed light on how the curriculum came to life and how it sits in the school; to what extent the traits of this curriculum correspond with traits of a 'lived curriculum' and a 'holistic utopian curriculum' and how it offers a curricular experience that can be an alternative to more conventional approaches to curriculum. At a more general methodological level, the study aims to develop perspectives on how ethnographic fieldwork can be approached in a way that supports a view on research methodology rooted in utopian thinking (another focus of the doctoral research). This empirical, qualitative analysis will contribute towards broadening research in curriculum studies (in terms of content as well as method) and diversifying approaches to curriculum in schools.

The investigation will consist of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with members of the school community, document and communication analysis. Interviews and observations which will be carried out online (using Zoom) whereby cameras do not have to be switched on.

My experiences during the pilot study were very positive. I appreciated the willingness and openness of school community members in participating in the study. I hope we can continue our collaboration and through the study, I can make contributions to the school as well.

Sincerely,

Ms. Elke Van dermijnsbrugge
CONSENT FORM - ADULTS:
An ethnographic investigation of a radical curricular approach in an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

YES    NO

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction.

YES    NO

I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored pseudonymised and securely using password-protected Google Drive space, with a backup on an external drive.

I agree on participating in:

YES    NO

- online group discussions

YES    NO

- a series of individual online interviews

YES    NO

I understand that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.

YES    NO

I consent to my interview being audio recorded and my own notes to be used as data. I understand that the recordings and notes will be stored pseudonymised, using password-protected software and will be used for specific research purposes. I understand that all data will be kept under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
(If you do not want your participation recorded you can still take part in the study.)

- classroom observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I consent to the name of the school as well as the name of the curriculum ('Human Technologies') being disclosed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I understand that I can contact Elke Van der Mijnsbrugge at any time up to the point of the publication of this research and request for my data to be removed from the project database.

Name of participant ___________________ Date ___________________ Signature ___________________
Appendix II: Example information and consent form for students and parents

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS and PARENTS - Interviews

Title of Study: An ethnographic investigation of a radical curricular approach in an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Department: UCL – Institute of Education – Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment

Name and Contact Details of the Principal Researcher:

Ms. Elke Van dermijnsbrugge
velkemaria@eduhk.hk

Name and Contact Details of the UCL Data Protection Officer:

Alexandra Polts
data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

Data Protection Privacy Notice

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I will be collecting personal data such as your name. Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If I am able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide I will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, or if you would like to contact us about your rights, please contact UCL in the first instance at dataprotection@ucl.ac.uk.

This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee under Project ID number: Z6364106/2020/06/167

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet (page 2 and 3) or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
Information sheet for students:

An ethnographic investigation of a radical curriculum at an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Dear student,

I am a researcher from a university in London, UK, and you might remember me! I came into your school in 2019 to conduct research about one of your classes, called ‘Human Technologies’. I am now returning to your school to do more research about ‘Human Technologies’. I am interested in how it came to life and how it sits in the school. Also, I want to investigate how ‘Human Technologies’ is different from other, more traditional subjects.

For my investigation, I will do classroom observations, interviews with members of the school community (teachers and students) and I will look at school documents. Interviews and observations which will be carried out online (using Zoom) whereby cameras do not have to be switched on.

If you do not want your information to be part of the classroom observations, you and your parents have to sign a form. If you want to be interviewed, you and your parents will have to sign a separate form.

I hope that my investigation can give others schools ideas about doing something different in their curriculum and see what ‘Human Technologies’ is all about.

I really liked my time in the school in 2019 and I appreciated connecting with students and teachers in the school. I hope we can continue our collaboration and through the study, I can make contributions to the school as well.

Sincerely,

Elke Van der Mijnnsbrugge
Information sheet for parents:

An ethnographic investigation of a radical curriculum at an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Dear parent,

This ethnographic case study is part of my doctoral research and builds further on a pilot study I conducted at the school from August – December 2019. Your child(ren) might have been involved in this pilot study. My study aims at developing a profound understanding of one of the school’s curricular approaches (called ‘Human Technologies’). More precisely, the investigation aims to shed light on how the curriculum came to life and how it sits in the school; to what extent the traits of this curriculum correspond with traits of a ‘lived curriculum’ and a ‘holistic utopian curriculum’ and how it offers a curricular experience that can be an alternative to more conventional approaches to curriculum. At a more general methodological level, the study aims to develop perspectives on how ethnographic fieldwork can be approached in a way that supports a view on research methodology rooted in utopian thinking (another focus of the doctoral research). This empirical, qualitative analysis will contribute towards broadening research in curriculum studies (in terms of content as well as method) and diversifying approaches to curriculum in schools.

The investigation will consist of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with members of the school community, document and communication analysis. Interviews and observations which will be carried out online (using Zoom) whereby cameras do not have to be switched on.

My experiences during the pilot study were very positive. I appreciated the willingness and openness of school community members in participating in the study. I hope we can continue our collaboration and through the study, I can make contributions to the school as well.

Sincerely,

Ms. Elke Van dersmjnsbrugge
CONSENT FORM – STUDENTS and PARENTS- Interviews:
An ethnographic investigation of a radical curricular approach in an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

[ ] YES [ ] NO

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction.

[ ] YES [ ] NO

I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored anonymised and securely using password-protected Google Drive space, with a backup on an external drive.

[ ] YES [ ] NO

I agree on participating in an individual online interview.

[ ] YES [ ] NO

I understand that I can refuse to answer any or all of the questions and that I can withdraw from the interview at any point and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used.

[ ] YES [ ] NO

I consent to my interview being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be stored anonymised, using password-protected software and will be used for specific research purposes. I understand that all data will be kept under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

(If you do not want your participation recorded you can still take part in the study.)

[ ] YES [ ] NO

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
I understand that I can contact Elke Van der Mijnsbrugge at any time up to the point of the publication of this research and request for my data to be removed from the project database.

________________________  ________________  __________________
Name of student          Date                  Signature

________________________  ________________  __________________
Name of parent           Date                  Signature

**OPT-OUT FORM – STUDENTS and PARENTS – Classroom observations:**
An ethnographic investigation of a radical curricular approach in an international secondary school in Hong Kong

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research and you wish to OPT-OUT of the classroom observations.

I do not consent to have any data of my child collected, stored or included in the study at any stage.

________________________  ________________  __________________
Name of student          Date                  Signature

________________________  ________________  __________________
Name of parent           Date                  Signature
THE PROBLEM WITH THE CURRICULUM

The secondary school curriculum was conceived and designed at a period very different from the one in which we now find ourselves educating our children.

The curriculum bears all the hallmarks of the time of its invention. It is too narrow in its focus; it is insufficiently interdisciplinary; it provides inadequate opportunities for students’ agency; it encourages too little teamwork and collaboration; it defaults to ‘high stakes’ assessments that address too few human qualities and strengths.

In a nutshell, it is not fit for purpose and does students a disservice.

This state of affairs is now widely acknowledged and has been for at least the last five to ten years. Suggested solutions tend to tinker with the model rather than rethink it. As such, there has been no significant improvement. There are many good ideas in discussion and a number of overlapping points of agreement for what is sought, but a realistic alternative has not yet been forthcoming.

STEPS TO A SOLUTION

The curriculum needs to be rethought, radically. This process needs to take place within the framework of what we now know about learning and the state of the world.

We know that successful learning is tied up with motivation, positive emotions, engagement, a sense of purpose, and self-regulation. We know that the state of the world is precarious.

We know, further, that the traditional mainstream education system, which has been in service for the last sixty years, is the system that has guided our efforts as we have moved to our current point of global development. There can be no stronger argument for why the system must change.

The current education system got us here.

We cannot solve our current problems using the same assumptions and approach that got us here.

We need a new curriculum and a new system.

1. This is true both in the sense that we know a lot more now about human beings and also in the sense that the environment in which we operate has changed substantially.

HUMAN TECHNOLOGIES

The curriculum must be rethought in the light of our current understanding of what it is to be human. We need to focus on how we can best educate young people to be resourceful, resilient, collaborative, open-minded, ethical, accepting of others, sustainable in their habits, and more inclined to take the long view.

In short, we need to educate students to have a profound and positive sense of the art and craft of being human. This is the aim and the promise of Human Technologies.

Human Technologies is not, in itself, a curriculum - it is an approach or a lens that generates and configures materials that become the curriculum. The Human Technologies lens is infinitely customizable and malleable, ever-changing, universally applicable, and expands with its own teaching. It is the ‘magic well’ of education: the more water you draw from the well, the more there is to draw, in and outside of school. The greater your appreciation of Human Technologies, the more there is to appreciate, in and outside of school.
In his recent book, *The Secret of Our Success*, Joseph Henrich discusses "cumulative cultural evolution", which comes, gradually and then suddenly, to trump and transcend the selection pressures of biological evolution.

"As a product of this long-running dust between cumulative cultural evolution and our genes, our brains have genetically adapted to a world in which information crucial to our survival was embedded implicitly in a vast body of knowledge that we inherit culturally from previous generations. This information comes buried in daily cooking routines, taboos, divination rituals, local tastes, mental models, and tool-manufacturing scripts. These practices and beliefs are often (implicitly) MUCH smarter than we are, as neither individuals nor groups could figure them out in one lifetime."

[Henrich, ibid. 112]

In the language of Human Technologies, all the information sources that Henrich lists - the recipes, the taboos, the rituals, tastes, mental models, and scripts - and all the many other ways in which human thriving is embedded in inherited knowledge, are best thought of as technologies.
The word "technology" comes from the Greek, "techne" meaning art, craft or skill and "logia", meaning "knowledge of" or "discipline of". Originally used to denote the art and craft of a domain, by the late nineteenth century, technology had acquired a more limited sense referring to what is done with tools and machines. Today this is the dominant usage in English.

Charting the progress of the term's developing meaning, we witness a change in keeping with the spirit of the times: a conception of human being and human activity in evermore industrial and mechanical terms, best understood through the rational calculus that could be applied to the workings of machines and automated systems.

One is struck by what has been lost in the process of adopting an evermore narrow, instrumental, machine and tool-orientated usage for the term. Consider the domain of medicine. What would comprise a list of the most critical elements of the art and craft of health and healing? Stethoscopes and microscopes would feature, certainly, but only after a wealth of other human skills and attributes.

A good medical practitioner is marked by capacity and willingness to listen actively, a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of diseases and their symptomatology, a reasoning bedside manner, the ability to organise and lead a team of colleagues, the confidence to know when to defer to other specialists, and so on. The physical tools of the medical profession are dangerous in the hands of a practitioner without these human qualities.

Ask the same question of another domain: what are the crucial elements of the art and craft of sport? Balls and bats, gloves and pads, shoes and skis, but the successful sportsman can make little use of this sporting equipment without a knowledge of the rules of the game, of tactics, of teamwork and leadership strategies, of means for self-motivation, a will to compete, to push beyond boundaries, and of the harnessing of grit and determination.

Is cooking merely about mixing bowls and measuring jugs, or do recipes, a trained palate, patient technique, and a readiness to trial and error, not also play an equally significant part? Is scientific experiment a matter only of the use of tools? The trained scientist, the investigator, the researcher, the experimenter, the experimenter...

Human Technologies suggests that the physical tools of our trade are undeniably an important part of the picture, but that fully to appreciate the art and craft of human activity requires looking beyond these obvious artefacts. It requires taking full account of all those other aspects of technology which contribute to our effectiveness and success in any domain and without which the tools are all but useless. The scripts, recipes, roadbooks, routines, conventions, strategies, methods, checklists, protocols, rituals, orthodoxies, procedures, and so on. To map this territory clearly, we must first reclaim a better definition of the term "technology".

Human Technologies assumes a tripartite definition of the term "technology":

1. Technology is about taking action to meet a human need
2. It uses much more than scientific knowledge and includes values as much as facts
3. It involves organised ways of doing things.

1. Technology is about taking action to meet a human need - we draw upon and use technologies to mediate our aspirations, in order to bring about stability or change.
2. Technology is about much more than scientific knowledge and includes values as much as facts: we use technologies to reflect and reshape the world in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to us.
3. Technology involves organised ways of doing things: technologies are the devices, in the widest sense of the term, available to us to realise our intentions and desires.
2. Technology uses much more than scientific knowledge and includes values as much as facts, given its implication in action, technology necessarily has an ethical dimension. It is deployed in an effort either to protect or transform the status quo. Writing such is continuous, or alteration in the state of things is an ethical act, in that it presumes that the state aimed at, whether continuation or change, is preferential. Preferential for whom and to what ends are, of course, issues at stake, and are where values play their inevitable part.

That 'scientific knowledge' rather than plain human values is the critical motivator of technological action is part of our species' contemporary confusion, part of the reason why the current definition of 'technology' is so machine-oriented and unsatisfactory, and a vital hurdle to overcome if we are to come to use technologies generally more reflectively, responsibly, realistically and sustainably.

3. Technology involves organized ways of doing things - technology is not invention. Invention is that moment when something new is created and is not yet available for wider or general consumption. Technology is what comes after, when the invention is taken over by others in their own usage, when they come to routine, constrain, discipline or otherwise collectively influence its use in performance.

Many are the occasions when an invention, in its technological career at the hands of its users, becomes something quite other than intended by its inventor.

Technology, then, is by definition communal. Its use is pooled and distributed; its significance is shared, common (or with common elements) and mutual; its potential and future reside in the hands of the community who draw upon it.

In short, a technology is a communal, shared device that provides for action, whether of thought or deed, in order to achieve a willed end to match human intention or desire. There is nothing more elemental in our experience than technology, and life, in all its dimensions, is (literally) unthinkable without it.

Our final task is to organise the infinite world of human technologies in a way that encourages us to engage with them, reflect on them and mediate our relationship with them more critically and thoughtfully.

The Human Technologies Venn Diagram identifies five broad types of technologies, placing the remaining four - cognitive, material, social and spiritual - within the enveloping circle of the fifth, the Somatic (technologies promoting the use and maintenance of the physical body).
The scope of Human Technologies is far-reaching. We are encouraged to consider everything that humankind has created for its ongoing benefit, but also to its detriment. We consider how we acquire better-thinking skills, how we learn to influence others, and the forces that shape who we become, how best to collaborate, and how to cooperate toward shared common purposes. We consider what makes us happy and what makes us tick. And we consider why it should matter to us that we know why we tick.

As a means of engagement with learning, Human Technologies invites us to explore the cumulative technological progress of humankind and, with the growing awareness of that story, the potential in ourselves to employ appropriate technologies, whilst avoiding those which will not serve us well. ‘Homo technologicus’ is a more apt title than ‘Homo sapiens’ for our species – we are meddlers and tinkerers not seers and sages. School should be about changing that for the better.

Example would include - any practice that helps you get enough sleep; any custom that leads to a good diet; any routine that helps you to sustain good fitness.
MATERIAL

physical tools and devices

technologies that allow you to act in and get to grips with the world of things more effectively.

Examples would include:
fire; clothes; computers; hammers; cooking utensils; pens; books.

COGNITIVE

technologies of the mind

technologies that allow you to think more effectively and realize your thoughts more satisfactorily.

Examples would include:
language; mathematics; working with numbers; understanding how to tell a good story; Edward de Bono's thinking tools.
SOCIAL

Interpersonal technologies

Technologies that allow you to understand and get on with other people more effectively.

Examples would include -
- a handshake; consciously nodding to show agreement; being seen to put the team's interests before your own; using your sense of humour to energise and inspire; active listening; attending a communal meal.

SPIRITUAL

Intrapersonal technologies

Technologies that allow you to understand yourself better and to make you feel good about yourself.

Examples would include -
- yoga; singing in the shower; mindful breathing; a walk in the woods; noting reasons to be cheerful in a journal; providing loving service to others.
THE PRACTICALITIES - THE CRITICAL USER OF HUMAN TECHNOLOGIES IN SCHOOL

Presently, at ICHK, Human Technologies occupies a place of its own, as a ‘subject’, in the timetable. It is delivered to students in Years 7 to 11. Human Technologies sessions are organised to address different sets of ‘technologies for…’. For example, there are units on technologies for truth, for persuasion, for teamwork, for communication, for advocacy.

Developed more fully, Human Technologies would come to shape the learning of students on a more thoroughgoing basis. It would subsume and reframe much of what is taught at school, and add to it in ways that provided a more holistic experience for learners. In particular, a more comprehensive Human Technologies approach would provide additional space and time, and lend additional value, to the three "S"s: somatic, social, and spiritual technologies in a school system where the cognitive and the material are already overserved.

Current curriculum design and nomenclature get in the way of students’ understanding of the world they live in. By separating off skills, techniques, methods, approaches, and so on within discrete disciplinary boundaries, the interconnectedness of knowing and knowledge are lost. Recoupled via the Human Technologies lens, this barrier to learning and understanding is removed. Physical Education becomes Human Technologies, with an emphasis on technologies for fitness, leadership, collaboration, self-regulation and fair play. English Language and Literature become Human Technologies, with an emphasis on technologies for expression, communication, linguistic creativity, and persuasion. Mathematics becomes Human Technologies, with an emphasis on technologies for working with numbers, engineering, statistics, coding, spreadsheets and algorithms. Drama becomes Human Technologies, with an emphasis on technologies for performance, confidence, teamwork, self-expression and resilience. Science becomes Human Technologies, with an emphasis on technologies for hypothesizing, observation, experimentation, tabulation and critical reason. And so on.

In other words, the curriculum is recast as an apprenticeship in the use of the many technologies that humans have evolved better to order, organise and work upon their worlds.

Most crucially, the Human Technologies approach encourages learners not only to be aware of the technologies on which they rely, but to employ them as critical users. This means to understand that these technologies are of human invention, that they have a history, and that there are usually alternatives with their own, different, histories and users. It also means to understand that technologies sometimes come at a cost as well as a benefit, and that their use in any given situation is an ethical act with consequences.

A common reaction when people are first introduced to Human Technologies is to say, "Hold on, that means everything is technology!"

Well no, that’s not quite the case, but it is true to say that, as humans, we have technologies just about everything.

That’s the insight behind the Human Technologies perspective: technologising is what humans do and being human, we just can’t function without recourse to technologies.

Forming a useful understanding of humans and of their behaviour, both as individuals and collectively, means getting to grips with the technologies on which we rely across the whole range of our activities and interactions. And on the option to live without technologies is not available to us in a world without language, a world without tools, a world without etiquette, without clothes, without cooking, without convention, without rules... so, the vital question becomes not “will you use technologies” but “which technologies will you use?”

Let’s focus for a moment on an instinctual behaviour native to humankind and which absolutely cannot be thought of as a technology: breathing.

When a newborn infant is delivered into the world, breathing is something she’ll do instinctively, without any form of prompting or instruction. Well, naturally, you might think, because not to breathe would result in her immediate or imminent destruction. And that’s absolutely right - the entire evolutionary process has served to equip the newborn to respond in critical ways to her new environment outside of the womb. As an organism that subsists on oxygen, she breathes to oxygenate.

However what follows for the newborn, as she gradually grows and develops and is tutored in life, is not natural even with respect to this most essential feature. Breathing will come to form the basis of a repertoire of intentional strategies deployed for deliberate ends.

One primitive example of the technologising of this innate somatic feature can be found in the phenomenon of breath holding. An authentic breath holding spell is a reflective response that occurs in some healthy young children. These spells usually affect children between the ages of about eight months and two years and last between two and 20 seconds. During this time, the child cries or gasps, forcibly exhales, stops breathing, and turns either blue or pale. While in the grip of the spell, the child may faint or briefly lose consciousness. Indeed, some physicians do not consider it to be a true breath holding spell unless the child faints. Once fainting occurs, the body’s involuntary breathing mechanisms take over and normal inhalation picks up once more. The entire episode usually lasts less than a minute, at the end of which the child regains consciousness and resumes normal breathing, with skin and lip colour restored.

Understandably, these episodes are terrifying for parents, especially when first encountered and poorly understood.
It is precisely because of the terror that attends these involuntary spells, that breath holding will come to be, for some children, one of the first weapons drawn upon in the battle of wits that comes to characterize life, no less so with caregivers than other social players. A great many parents will be familiar with the child who holds her breath deliberately and strategically as a means of eliciting a response when words and other channels have failed: the deliberate act of breath holding is no less frightening for parents than the involuntary, authentic variety, and the child, growing in self-awareness and the effects she can elicit through her behavior, comes to realize this. The threat, “I’ll hold my breath until I die” from a toddler thwarted in her desires is familiar to many mums and dads, often in supermarket queues. She holds her breath, or these occasions, not because she can’t help it, but because it is the most effective way to tell her story. And whether she will continue to deploy the technology is likely to rest in large part on the response that she elicits from her audience — that is, whether her story is understood and received, as she would see it, a fair and favorable hearing. If her audience are moved by and sympathetic to her performance, it will probably be repeated in similar circumstances in the hope of achieving similar ends. If it is ignored or even punished, its use will perhaps be discontinued.

If breath holding is the traumatic archetype of technologized breathing, later variants will be more productive and less alarming. We learn to technologize our breathing as actors or singers, drawing breath from the diaphragm not the lungs so as to project our voices; as sports men and women, we are taught breathing techniques that help to achieve focus before or during performances so as to optimize achievement in the practice of yoga and mindfulness, controlling breath is one of the first skills to be mastered as we handle ourselves with greater care. The simple act of breathing becomes subject to human technologies.

**TECHNOLOGIZING HOW YOU KNOW**

The following exercise gives an insight to the Human Technologies approach.

Take a look at the diagram below. How many circles are there altogether?
35, of course. 7x5. You were able quickly and accurately to arrive at the answer, not by counting the circles one by one, but by counting the rows and the columns and multiplying the one number by the other. You employed multiplication as a technology. The different colors were not a distraction, because your appreciation of the strength of multiplication as a mathematical tool trumped other cognitive considerations. Understanding how multiplication works as an operation allowed you to ignore distractions, cut the time the task took to complete and to be confident of your answer.

For the average seven year old, yet to master her multiplication tables, the task would have been much more demanding. She would probably have gone through the laborious process of counting the circles, one by one, haunted by the attendant danger of losing her place and having to start again or of getting muddled. The different coloured circles might have interfered with her processing, so they invite an alternative focus and risk dividing her attention. If she wanted to have faith in her answer, she would probably have repeated the whole process a second time, just to be sure.

For the average five year old, whose mastery of numbers itself is still developing, the task would likely have been beyond her. The dual cognitive challenge of counting plus keeping track of which circles have and have not been accounted for would have defeated her.

Numeric digits are a technology, multiplication is a technology. Colour coding is a technology. Technologies can be deployed in ways that are helpful or unhelpful. Understanding and mastering technologies is critical to effective performance. The more technologies you know and the better you are at choosing between them, the more likely you are to meet the challenges you face in ways that please and reward you.
THE HUMAN TECHNOLOGIES TEACHER

The Human Technologies teacher understands that teaching is a technology that has been built on the tendency found in all primates to observe, selectively mimic, and experiment with behaviours modelled to them by others in their social group. Using this orientation towards emulation as a foundation, teaching has developed over time to become perhaps the most significant way in which humans are able first to cope with and then to have an increasing effect on the world. Unlike other animals, the human social group within which learning happens can now extend almost infinitely to include individuals who are proximate neither in time nor space: unlike other primates, we learn from the absent, we learn from the dead.

In the history of our species, the quality of teaching and the quality of what is taught have thus become central and vital. Teaching is achieved by reliance on a vast set of available technologies, which have evolved to serve the task of growing awareness, understanding, appreciation, and mastery in others. There is no set way of ordering these technologies as necessarily better than others. Their effectiveness can only be evaluated once they are folded into the complex interactions and involvements of an actual learning situation: a crucial part of any such occasion is the preferences of the learner herself and those are liable to differ from person to person and, moreover, can change, even quite rapidly, within the person herself.

So it is that the responsibility of the Human Technologies teacher is to appreciate the role of attention, interest, activation, and motivation in successful learning and, as far as possible, to create learning experiences that engage, incite, involve and mobilise the learner, inviting them to want to know and understand more, and to apply that new found knowledge in authentic ways.

Wherever possible, Human Technologies units of study will give rise to choice for the learner, so that the exercise of agency in response to a flexible field of learning is a part of the overall experience. The 'cosmological' design of the curriculum is intended to support this intention: once identified and approached as 'gravitationally' significant, the stars at the center of each unit give rise to opportunities for self-directed exploration of the supplementary planets and satellites that associate systematically, more or less directly.

POSTSCRIPT: FOUR COMPLICATING FACTORS

There are a number of reasons why change in secondary school education is difficult to bring about:

ONE

Everyone has been to school and knows what school looks and feels like. For school to be otherwise is hard to imagine and even harder to evaluate ‘theoretically’ - especially when what is being suggested deviates significantly from the remembered template. Until there are well established alternatives, school change remains a difficult ‘thought experiment’ in an area that causes parents unique anxiety. While there is widespread agreement that transformation of school is overdue, many parents take a NIMBY approach, supporting the idea of innovation anywhere but at their own child’s school. We are caught in a vicious circle.

TWO

The ‘product’ of school, i.e. the school learner, has a long and complex production cycle. Changes in the quality of its ‘output’ remain mysterious for many years after the cycle is completed and, even then, are hard to associate with one or another specific adjustment or innovation. Judging what does and does not work in improving the product is a contested business and evidence is open to multiple interpretations.

THREE

School does not stand alone. It is entrenched in a massive pre-educational system with many vested interests and entrenched opinions. It is a billion dollar industry and a matter of national pride. It is a media football, endlessly kicked around. It has wide financial and political implications that have very little to do with the actual learning experienced by students.

FOUR

School is subject to an endpoint called University that generates very specific requirements for the school learner that are, if anything, more retrograde, bureaucratic and yearning than school itself. Unless and until universities change, it is hard for schools to...
Appendix IV: Example of an HT lesson plan template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Title: Technologies for ...</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year ...</td>
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<td>Orientation:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Core Question(s):</th>
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<td>How...</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theoretical Underpinnings</th>
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<tr>
<th>Emergent Understandings</th>
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<td>...</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Overview:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This unit ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Opportunity: ...

Core Game(s) ...

Approaches to Learning ...

Extension Units: ...

Curated Learning List (CLL) ...

Smart Blocked Lesson Plans

Smart block title:

Activity 1: Intro ...

Activity 2:
Unit Evaluation

Was there an overall sense that students engaged with the unit?

What worked well?

What did not work well or could have worked better? What additional material, resources and activities might work to better facilitate this?

Was there sufficient experiential learning?

If a core game accompanied the unit, how well did it aid the core question, understandings, ..?
Appendix V: Revision of the HT unit ‘Technologies for trade’

Unit Title: Technologies for Trade

Year 9 Orientation: An agent in a world of others (Gracious and self-motivating)

Core Question:

What is the economy?

Theoretical Underpinnings

Humans experience all the biological needs common to any living creature, as well as a vast range of further needs and wants engendered by their complex mental lives. Needs and wants can be both conscious and unconscious. Meeting needs and wants becomes increasingly complicated and entailed as they multiply and/or when their sources are hard to fathom. Different wants (or desires) can stand in opposition to one another e.g. I want another piece of cake, but I also want to eat healthily. The economy is the system set up by humans to meet human needs and wants. Fundamentally, it consists of people, who can act as either producers and consumers of goods or services, and a set of mechanisms and expectations as to how producers and consumers conduct the exchange of goods and services. As the system grows more complicated, additional roles emerge in the economy, such as brokers, quality assurers, credit providers, rule makers and regulatory officials. As more complicated, larger scale economic systems develop, ownership of resources and the means to put them to use becomes more instrumental. Some people become employers and others are employed by them. People who are not able to join the economic system in any productive role are judged as being ‘unemployed’. The simplest form of trade is barter, when one good is exchanged directly for another. The marketplace supports trade, as it brings producers and consumers, and then sellers and buyers, together in a single space. We now live within a global marketplace, which encompasses people and economic processes across the world. The invention of money greatly eases the
mechanisms of exchange that underlie the economy. Money acts as an infinitely fluid "universal medium", providing a means of ascribing value to anything and of enabling trade between all agents within a market, provided they have funds. Credit is a financial instrument with the potential to vastly increase the power and dynamism of markets, as it equips people with funds to spend that would not otherwise be available to them. It carries with it the penalty of interest, which can have crippling effects. Advertising is an industry that exists to incite and energise desire in markets.

**Emergent Understandings**

- The economy is a system that consists of people, who can act as either producers and consumers of goods or services, and a set of mechanisms and expectations as to how producers and consumers conduct the exchange of goods and services.
- The simplest economy is barter.
- The market is a place or space set aside for exchanging goods and services.
- Money is a universal medium of exchange that greatly increases the dynamism of markets.
- Credit is a 'financial instrument' that equips people with money they do not have, but expect (and promise) to come by. Interest is charged on credit.
- Money makes it much easier for individuals and organisations to amass substantial wealth which leads to wide economic disparities and becomes a motivating dynamic in many human interactions.

**Unit Overview:**

**Assessment Opportunity:**

1. **2:** Explanation: Infographic activity
2. **2:** Self-Knowledge and Perspective: reflection on time banking.

**Core Game(s):**

- Barter Game- first activity.

**ATL:**

- Showing Initiative and Making Choices

**Extension Units:**

- Social Enterprise
- Investment and Cumulative Interest
Smart Blocked Lesson Plans

Smart block title: From barter to money

Aim: to understand how exchange works and how money lubricates the process.
NB – students will need to bring $30 in small denominations for the second part of this step to work. Prep them in advance!

Segment 1: The Barter Market
Explain the overall theme of the module – i.e., an investigation into the human technology of money, including its strengths and weaknesses as a tool to enable trade and commerce; and the ways in which concentrations of money can become prime movers in the way that the world works.

Use the Hans Rosling video to establish the link between material resources and lifespan - which he frames as “wealth” and “health”. This framing is itself something that can be explored - something that he does not draw attention to is the increase in lifespan in the “Asian giants” circa 1986 [3’06’], without a corresponding massive increase in dollar wealth. And, in fact, the more substantial shift in average dollar wealth in these countries that comes from 1995 to 2009 does not significantly increase life expectancy. His graphics would seem to suggest that having enough is vital for well-being but having more than enough delivers diminishing returns. This seems to be supported by wider research into the positive effects on wellbeing and happiness of successive incremental increases in wealth beyond a certain point.

Tell the students that the module will start by giving a sense of how human trade functions without money. This ‘barter’ model will have been the method for the vast majority of human history and will continue to operate, either with or without money as a supplement, in many areas of the world today.

Have the students create the goods they need to participate in the opening activity: <The Barter Market>.

Each student is allocated a quota of goods that they should “bring to market”. Once are allocated their goods, they should roughly sketch them on paper and cut them out. This need not be great artwork, just so long as the different goods are clear:

1. 2 cuts of mutton; 2 beetrots; 4 cabbages
2. 3 cuts of beef; 4 cabbages
3. 6 bags of potatoes; 3 apples; 3 turnips
4. 8 bags of potatoes; 5 apples; 1 cabbage
5. 6 bags of rice; 2 x dozen eggs
6. 2 jars of honey; 2 chickens; 1 x dozen eggs
7. 1 jar of honey; 8 apples; 2 cauliflowers
8. 4 fish; 3 cauliflowers; 1 x dozen eggs
9. 5 loaves bread; 2 packets of spice
10. 12 oranges; 1 packet of spice
11. 6 flasks of milk; 2 fish
12. 2 cuts of pork; 1 packet of spice; 1 pumpkin
13. 5 cabbages; 6 turnips; 1 bag of rice
14. 6 rounds of cheese; 2 chickens; 1 x dozen eggs
15. 3 packets of spice; 2 flasks of milk; 1 round of cheese
16. 6 bottles of wine; 2 fish
17. 6 bunches of bananas; 1 flask of milk
18. 1 X dozen eggs; 3 loaves bread; 2 X jar honey
19. 10 apples; 2 cuts of mutton; 1 X dozen eggs
20. 1Xjar olive oil, 8 passion fruit, 2 squash
21. 2X jar of olive oil, 1 chicken, 5 sweet potatoes

i.e. Student 1 will draw something like this:

Before opening the market, remind students of the food pyramid:
Your task in the market is to ensure that, once you have finished trading, you have a variety of goods that provide a healthy diet: MEAT, VEGETABLE, FRUIT, STAPLE, DAIRY and that, if possible, you should supplement this with a LUXURY, as this will add to your lifestyle and impress your friends and neighbours!

To give a sense of what barter markets still look like – and how they function to unite communities as well as distribute goods, watch short video barter market.

This table shows what goods fit each of the categories at the market:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEAT</th>
<th>VEGETABLE</th>
<th>FRUIT</th>
<th>STAPLE</th>
<th>DAIRY</th>
<th>LUXURY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mutton</td>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>Potato</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Turnip</td>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>Cauliflower</td>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>Yoghurt</td>
<td>Honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the conditions of the marketplace are clear, the market opens: Market 1A. Students have thirty minutes to barter and trade – with the goal of securing themselves as good and varied a diet as possible for the week. Once the market closes, the more goods they have, the better their diet. They can, of course, hold on to some or all the goods they bring to market.

There are no ‘rules’ at the marketplace beyond that there can be no theft or coercion.

This table shows the points combinations available to students once the market closes, with variety within categories (e.g. two different meats) gaining even more kudos [don’t worry with the point system if it seems too onerous - just make the general point re. attaining a healthy diet]:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity Combination</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Vegetable, Fruit, Staple, Dairy, Luxury</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Vegetable, Staple, Dairy, Luxury</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Fruit, Staple, Dairy, Luxury</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Vegetable, Staple, Dairy</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Fruit, Staple, Dairy</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Vegetable, Dairy</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Fruit, Dairy</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat, Staple, Dairy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable, Staple, Dairy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit, Staple, Dairy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other combinations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the activity is over, discuss the experience with the students. How did the mechanism of the market work? Did people find themselves making secondary deals – i.e. trading on a good that they had received for one of their own original goods? What made barter more or less difficult? What goods were most in demand and which least – any ideas why?

**Money in the Market.**

Now, rerun the activity, but introduce money as a medium of exchange: Market 1B. Have the students use real money for the activity – each student should bring $30 in coins of smaller denominations to the class, to be returned to them once the activity has run. In all other respects the activity is the same – they start with the same goods, but now have cash in supplement.

What difference does this make to the market? Is getting what you want more or less straightforward? Do any goods increase or lessen in value now that a medium of exchange is available? Did people continue to barter as well as use money?

The hope is that students end this second market activity with a sound conceptual understanding of how money functions as a medium of exchange and the advantages this brings in simplifying trade; plus an understanding of how goods take on value as a consequence of supply and demand; and, depending on how their market operated, a possible sense of the ways in which a durable medium of exchange can come to distort the value of goods by changing the dynamics of transactions and by providing a permanent store of value.
Credit and the Crash Course

This step is to shift the focus to a larger perspective, one that relates the economy to energy and the environment. By looking at how money and our mechanisms of trade are intertwined with energy use and environmental impacts the speaker, Chris Martenson, offers a way to understand current challenges - resource depletion, environmental degradation and the pursuit of growth for example.

The video is one hour long, and it is shared here with suggestions of ways to prepare and enhance your understanding.

Suggestions of key points to draw out:

- Exponential Growth - the J-curve represents any function that increases by a percentage.
- Money is a claim on wealth not wealth itself - this reinforces that money has no value rather derives its value from our trust.
- Debt is a claim on the future - builds on the point above to say more specifically that new money is created backed by debt which is itself a claim on (or backed by) the future. So, our monetary system is premised on the idea that the future will be just as prosperous as now and more so.
- Bubbles as a response to perceived wealth - watch out for sudden surges in the perceived value of assets as they will always be based on a perception rather than reality.
- Energy as the basis for social complexity - our social structures will always be built on the energy available for powering them.
- Resilience as the response to crisis - when things go awry it is our resilience - personally as communities and countries that will be our greatest asset.
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List of personal publications


