

# narratopias

« Sharing Transformative Narratives »  
A Guide for Workshop Organizers

# What you will find in this guide

Narratopias is a collaborative and open project to organize, on a global scale, a collective response to the recurring call for «New narratives». It is an invitation to embark on a search for alternative, transformative narratives, work from them and in the aim of turning them into the seeds of concrete changes.

This guide is about the first leg of this journey, which intends to build an open « Library of Transformative Narratives », which will be managed as a commons.

It helps you organize a workshop during which participants will share what they consider to be « Transformative Narratives » from arts, fiction, and design, and to kickstart a discussion around them. It tells you how you can prepare and run such a workshop (feel free to adapt it!), and how to share its output with the global community taking part in Narratopias.

We hope you'll have a great time doing these workshops!

If you need any help, contact us:

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**3**  
BUILDING A COLLECTIVE LIBRARY OF  
TRANSFORMATIVE NARRATIVES

**5**  
THE FOUR PHASES OF THE WORKSHOP

**7**  
PREPARING FOR THE WORKSHOP

**8**  
RUNNING THE WORKSHOP

**10**  
APPENDIX

# The goal: to build a collective Library of Transformative Narratives

## WHAT DO WE INTEND TO ACHIEVE TOGETHER?

The first step of Narratopias is to build a collective library of transformative narratives, from all over the world, and open to all languages and means of expressions.

This Library will be managed as a “commons”. Anyone can access it, browse through its content, and contribute to it. The content database will also be made available to research and other groups willing to analyze it, map it, etc.

At this stage, the Library is accessible here:  
<https://platform.plurality-university.org/narratopia/>

## WHAT BELONGS IN THE LIBRARY?

By « Narrative » we mean « a particular way of explaining or understanding events », formulated as a story or an image, rather than a theory or discourse.

By « Transformative Narratives » we mean a narrative that hints at possible alternative futures (i.e. not usual, not dominant, somewhat desirable...).

These Narratives can be presented in stories, images or videos, games, design fictions, etc. They can be about the future, the present or even the past, so long as they relate to possible change. They can refer to change at any scale (from local community to the Planet or beyond). They can be the participants’ own work, or other references that they find fertile and inspiring; Original or pre-existing works; Based on pure imagination, or on existing initiatives and experiences.

Content can be in any language; English summaries are encouraged, but not mandatory

back  
Corpora v0.10.3-dev  
English  
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[cookies, personal data and legal notices](#)

## Narratopias

contribute to the collective library of transformative narratives!

Here you can share: (excerpts of / links to) "new narratives" of alternative realities or futures; collective projects aimed at coproducing or engaging with new narratives; collections of alternative narratives, etc.

- [See the call for contributions](#)
- [Narratopias Q&As](#)

**Contribuez à la bibliothèque collective de récits transformateurs !**  
ici vous pouvez partager : des (extraits de / liens vers) "nouveaux récits" de futurs ou de réalités alternatives; des projets collectifs de création ou de discussion de nouveaux récits; des collections, etc.

- [Retrouvez l'appel à contributions](#)
- [Questions-réponses Narratopias \(anglais\)](#)

edit

filter by source of contribution  
Show all fragments  
create a source of contribution

display options  
By tabs  
Sort fragments by Date created

[narratopias](#)  
Narrating the World We Want, Together

+

Click here to add a contribution (stuck? see p. 12)

4 Co-production

5 Collections

5 Design

20 Essays / Essais

29 Fiction / Fabulation

### A Stranger to the Weave

created last friday at 4:08 pm

"(...) The Weave was something that young children felt intuitively. Suruli had come to the age when they were taught to work more deliberately with its lessons, to explore its other planes of experience. He settled into the corner beside his grandmother, carefully tugging two strands of *manakkodi* from the matrix of the house. He closed his eyes and began to repeat one of the mantras they had learned at school. Ramalinga Adigal, one of the old ones from the time before, was said to have found the phrase.

*Vaadiya payir kanda pothellaam naanum vaaduvan. "Whenever I find a wilting plant, I too begin to wilt." Suruli wasn't sure what it meant, but he'd chant the way he was taught.*

The tips of the leaves always tickled at first, made him want to sneeze. The taste was metallic. He could imagine a rosy green network of limbs extending in every direction. Then things began to blur, and movement took on a more ambiguous tone.

The boy could tell that his grandmother was somewhere nearby, which was reassuring. He could find his way to his parents too, to a semblance of where they were, what they were feeling. The Weave made tangible what many societies on earth had long insisted was true. No mind was ever alone, finding its place instead in a worldly nexus of intercalated consciousness, a vast network of impulses and ideas. With practice, one could navigate this space with greater ease, see things as they wish to be seen. (...)"

From a short story by Anand Pandian, in <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-stranger-to-the-weave>, 2020



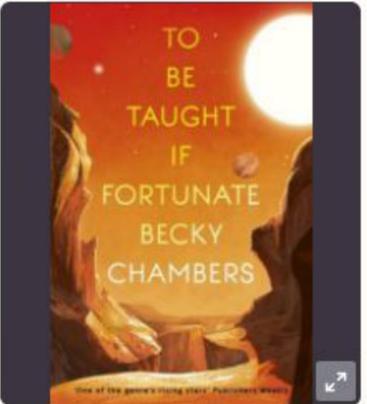
Illustration by Michael Bracco, @spaghettkiss

Also by cultural anthropologist and writer Anand Pandian:

### Contrapuntal

### To Be Taught, if Fortunate / Apprendre, si par bonheur

created 03/07/2021



Becky Chambers, 2019 <https://www.therscribes.com/#/tobetought/>

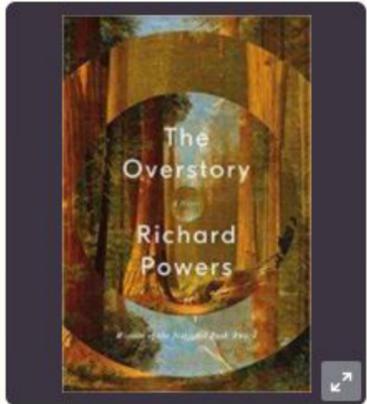
"I send greetings on behalf of the people of our planet. We step out of our solar system into the universe seeking only peace and friendship, to teach if we are called upon, to be taught if we are fortunate. We know full well that our planet and all its inhabitants are but a small part of the immense universe that surrounds us and it is with humility and hope that we take this step."



« Nous n'avons rien trouvé que vous pourrez vendre. Nous n'avons rien trouvé d'utile. Nous n'avons trouvé aucune planète qu'on puisse coloniser facilement ou sans dilemme moral, si c'est un but important. Nous n'avons rien satisfait que la curiosité, rien gagné que du savoir. »

### Richard Powers : The Overstory / L'arbre-monde

created 03/06/2021



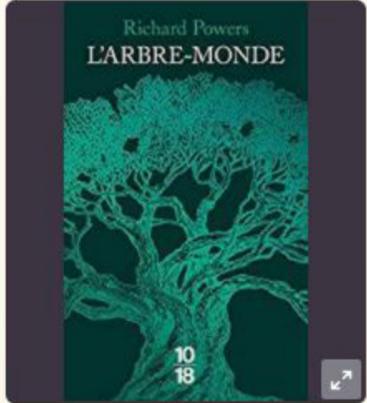
Richard Powers, 2019 <http://www.richardpowers.net/the-overstory/>

embed [https://youtu.be/efHH\\_4Jkx94](https://youtu.be/efHH_4Jkx94)

load

"The novel is about five trees whose unique life experiences with nine Americans bring them together to address the destruction of forests."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Overstory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Overstory)



<https://www.babelio.com/livres/Powers-LArbre-Monde/1051249>

"Après des années passées seule dans la forêt à étudier les arbres, la botaniste Pat Westerford

### The SCP Foundation: Secure, Contain, Protect

created 03/06/2021



<http://scp-wiki.wikidot.com>

From Wikipedia:  
"The SCP Foundation is a fictional organization documented by the web-based collaborative-fiction project of the same name. Within the website's fictional setting, the SCP Foundation is responsible for locating and containing individuals, entities, locations, and objects that violate natural law (referred to as SCPs). The real-world website is community-based and includes elements of many genres such as horror, science fiction, and urban fantasy."  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SCP\\_Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SCP_Foundation)

### SCP Foundation Mission Statement:

"Operating clandestine and worldwide, the Foundation operates beyond jurisdiction, empowered and entrusted by every major national government with the task of containing anomalous objects, entities, and phenomena. These anomalies pose a significant threat to global security by threatening either physical or psychological harm. The Foundation operates to maintain normalcy, so that the worldwide civilian population can live and go on with their daily lives without fear, mistrust, or doubt in their personal beliefs, and to maintain human independence from extraterrestrial, extradimensional, and other extranormal influence. Our mission is three-fold:

**Secure**  
The Foundation secures anomalies with the goal of preventing them from falling into the hands of civilian or rival agencies, through extensive observation and surveillance and by acting to

### Balades sonores : explorons nos futurs (heureux)

created 03/06/2021



Une série de 12 podcasts <https://podcast.ousha.co/baladessonores>

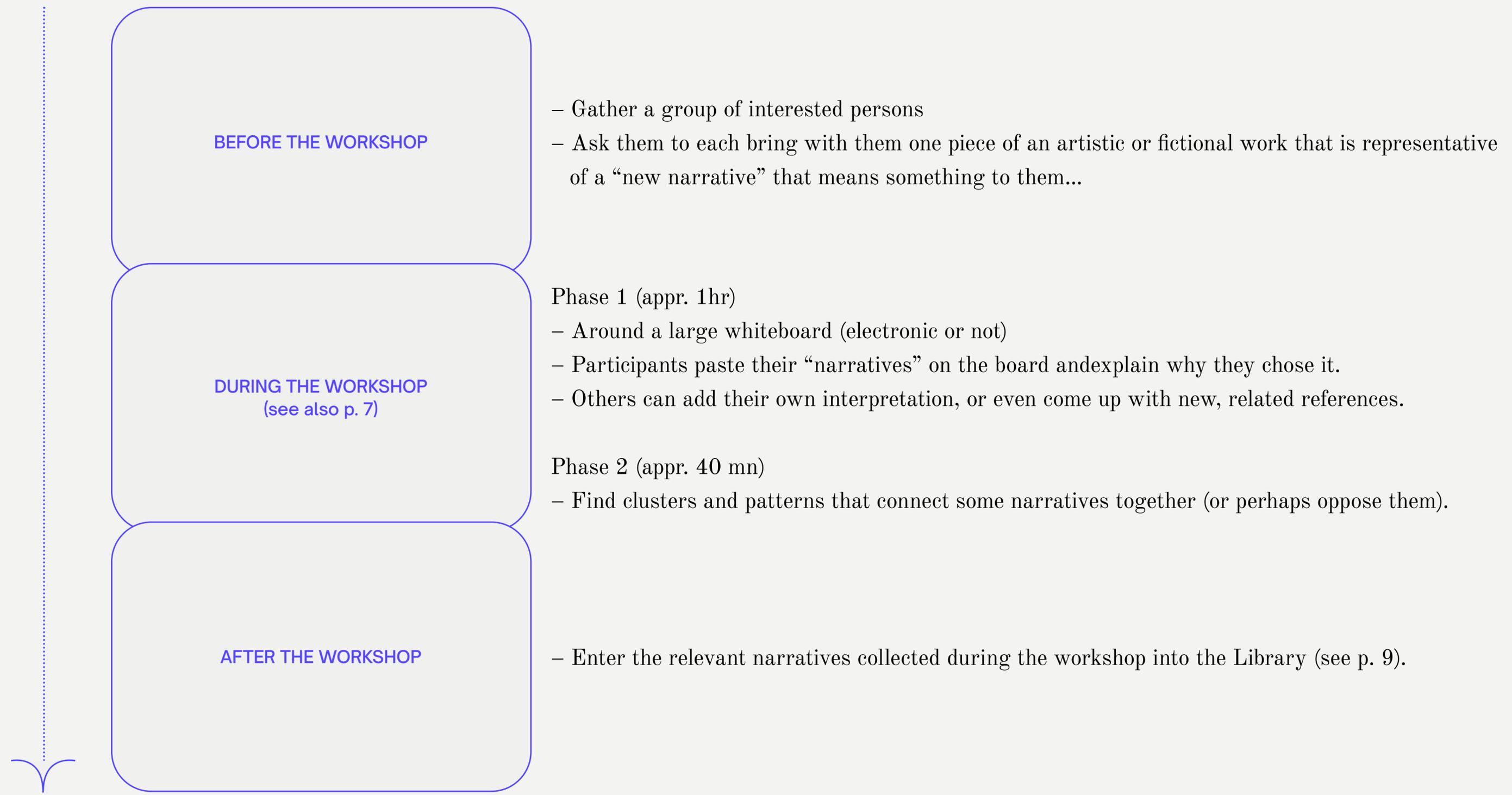
À l'occasion de leur 41e Rencontre, les agences d'urbanisme se sont mobilisées autour de cet exercice de prospective ambitieux "Explorons nos futurs (heureux)".




Click here to add a contribution (stuck? see p. 12)

Users can navigate by using "tabs", or remove them altogether

# The four phases of the workshop



# The workshop's goals and state of mind

## GOALS

The goals are:

- \* To collect “new/transformative” narratives that participants brought with them and/or thought of during the workshop.
- \* To initiate a conversation around those narratives.
- \* To insert the relevant narratives into the Library.

The goal is NOT to agree on one particular narrative. A large diversity of narratives is a desirable outcome, not an issue.

## STATE OF MIND

This workshop should open up new ways of thinking, expose participants to diverse narratives, and generate discussions. It is a time to spend drifting with other between the content shared and the discussions on why they chose it.

It shouldn't be approached with the purpose of producing «deliverables» or «actionable material». The only formal deliverable is the addition of some of the «narratives» brought by participants into the library.

This workshop can be over when there are no more content to share nor connections to make.

However, nothing stops you from pushing it further (if you have time) and use the material as an entry point to an activity you might want to do with your group (draw, write, build, play, etc.).

# Preparing for the workshop

## MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKSHOP

- \* Duration: 2 hours (can be reduced to 1.5 if necessary).
- \* Can be online or offline. If online, use a shared whiteboard such as Miro or Mural. If offline, you can use an electronic whiteboard and big screen, or a board/wall/table; in this case, a connected computer and printer are recommended.
- \* Participants: at least 10, can be more if participants can be split into subgroups of 10-12, with one facilitator per group.

## BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

Approximately one week before the workshop, ask all participants to each select and bring with them one piece of an artistic or fictional work which is representative of a “new narrative” that means something to them.

Remind participants of this request 1-2 days before the workshop.

See email template on p.10 (Appendix).

# Running the workshop from beginning to end [1/2]

DURATION: 2 HRS. MAX

## INTRODUCTION (10 MN)

- Quickly introduce yourself/ves as organizers, Narratopias, the workshop's goals, and how it will be organized.
- There is no need for all participants to introduce themselves at this time (especially if they are more than 10-12), they can do it at the beginning of phase 1.

## PHASE 1: SHARING PARTICIPANTS' NARRATIVES [1 HR]

Around the whiteboard:

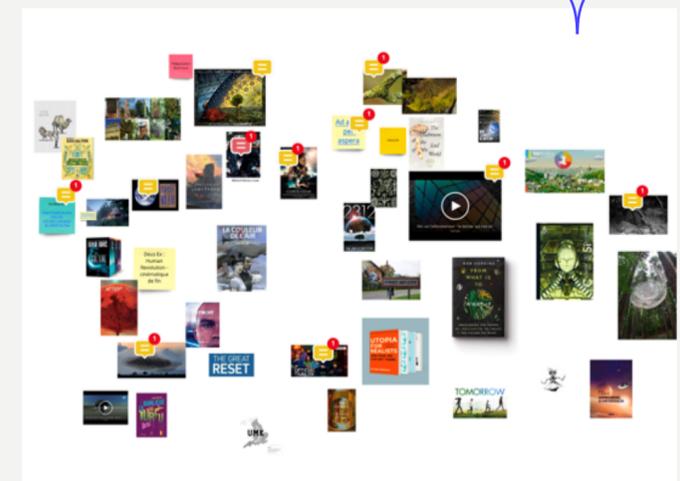
- Ask a participant to start sharing his narrative by pasting an image, a link, a video, an excerpt of a text, etc., while explaining why this is to them a meaningful new/alternative narrative. (the 1st time, participants can also present themselves in very few words). Encourage participants to take to time to read an extract (if they brought a text), to describe the image or movie they brought, to discuss the message, character and themes of their narratives.

- The more detailed the description, the easier participants will bounce on each other, create connections and add other references.
- Other participants can provide additional or different interpretations. Encourage them to write them down as comments or post-its appended to the "narrative".
- Ask whether other participants have brought narratives that feel close to the first one. Repeat commenting process.

- Repeat until all participants have shared their narratives. If some participants have brought more than one, try to make sure all participants have had a chance to share before that.
- If participants have ideas they want to share but haven't brought specific material, search the web with them in order to find and print/paste an image or an excerpt.

Template Board on Miro: [https://miro.com/app/board/o9J\\_IPo3uF8=/](https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_IPo3uF8=/)

This is what the whiteboard may look like at the end of phase 1



# Running the workshop from beginning to end [2/2]

## PHASE 2: REFLECTING ON THE NARRATIVES [40 MN]

- Invite participants to regroup narratives that seem connected. Express why they are connected. Give the clusters a name. Take note of possible disagreements.
- If a narrative can be connected to different clusters, just duplicate it.  
When there are no more connections to make, you can consider the workshop as finished. The following possibilities are optional, depending on the time you have left and the dynamics of the group:
- Invite participants to identify narratives that seem opposed in some way. Express why. Give the opposition a name. Take note of possible disagreements.
- Reflect on the exercise: What does it tell us about the role of narratives? How, under which conditions, can they facilitate desirable change? What should be the project's next steps?

If you're having difficulties managing the group or the workshop, see page 11.

## AFTER THE WORKSHOP

- Select the relevant material collected during the workshop and post it on <https://platform.plurality-university.org/narratopia/>
- By “relevant” we mean all material that fits the broad definition of “transformative narrative”. Trust your judgement – but also, remember a narrative may have its place in the Library even if you personally don't like what it says.

If you're having difficulties posting onto the platform, see page 12.

There is no absolute need for a long plenary at the end, apart from thanking participants and letting them know what will happen next.

Disagreements on narratives, their meaning, their desirability, are good and do not need to be resolved.

# Appendix

- [Template email to participants](#)
- [Tips for running the workshop](#)
- [Tips for posting the material on the Platform](#)

# Template email to participants

\*Subject: Narratopias Sharing Workshop\*

Dear XX,

[thank you for registering ; reminder of date, time, location or URL...]

This workshop is part of Narratopias, an international project which aims to collectively build a «Library of transformative narratives». Your participation will allow you to contribute to this effort, to take part in a global movement, and to begin reflecting on how (or under which conditions) new/transformational narratives can facilitate meaningful, or perhaps radical change.

In order to prepare for the workshop, we need you to select one one artistic or fictional work that, in your opinion, is representative of a “new narrative” that points the way to possible and desirable change.

This «narrative» can be presented as a story, an image, a video, a game, an object, etc. It can be about the future, the present or even the past, so long as it relates to possible change. It can refer to change at any scale (from local community to the Planet or beyond). It can be from your own work, or another references that you find fertile and inspiring; Original or pre-existing works; Based on pure imagination, or on existing initiatives and experiences.

We will begin the workshop by sharing what each of you has brought.

[We look forward to meeting you, etc.]

Best regards,

XXX

# Running the workshop: Tips

## WHAT IF PARTICIPANTS HAVEN'T BROUGHT MATERIAL WITH THEM?

- First, make sure at least some did: ask them well ahead of time; remind them 7, then 2 days before the workshop, talk to them...
- Start with those who have something and ask others whether that makes them think of something else. Help them think of narratives that complement, or contradict, the ones already shared.
- Go on the web to search the content that came to the participants' minds and paste it along with others.

## WHAT IF A PARTICIPANT DOESN'T TALK?

That participant needs to be helped, not shamed ("X, have you nothing to say?"). Have moments when you naturally go through each participant in the group, so the person has their turn without being singled out. Help them express what they have in mind.

## WHAT IF A PARTICIPANT TALKS TOO MUCH?

- Before giving them a chance to speak a 3rd or more time, make sure everyone else has shared / expressed their views. If needed, interrupt that person by saying other people must have their say before.
- Repeat as many times as needed in order to avoid an imbalance to progressively shut off other participants.

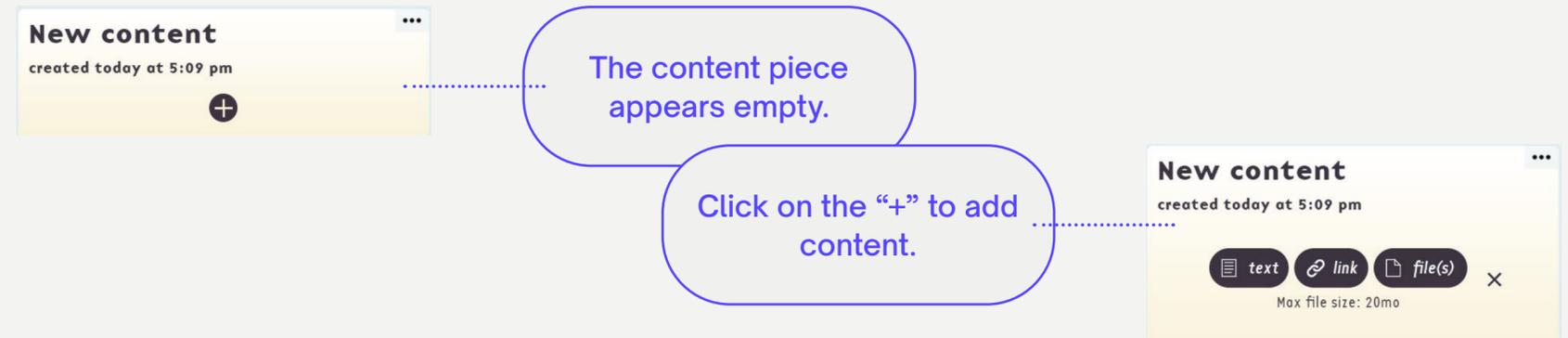
## WHAT IF WE CAN'T FIND PATTERNS FOR CLUSTERING (IN PHASE 2)?

Try any of these means to scout for patterns:

- Content: Which narrative disagrees with one another?
- Attitude: is the Narrative more around Resistance / Revolution / Adaptation / Progressive transformation / Ambition... ?
- Tone: Hopeful / Despair / Neutral-Descriptive / Militant...
- Driver: Technology / Policy / Economics / Individuals / Collectives / Dreams...
- Scale: Community / Local / Region / Country / Planet / Universe...
- Points of view...

# Posting the material on the Platform: Tips

- Go to <http://platform.plurality-university.org/narratopia/>
- To add a reference, click on
- Describe the reference



Title of the work / project

Tags : click on "already created" to see which ones exist. You can always add your own by typing it and clicking the yellow "+".

Tabs: under which tab(s) the Content should appear. Try not to exceed 2 tabs!

Click to create the content piece and start entering content.

**Create a fragment**

**title**

**source of contribution**

**keyword(s)**

**tab(s)**

- Co-production
- Collections  Design
- Essays / Essais
- Fiction / Fabulation
- Manifestos
- Methods / Méthodes
- Movements
- Papers / Articles
- Participants
- Places / Lieux

You now see three possibilities:

save

texte here

description, source... link  
 ex: author, date, title www.

**Text:**

1. Type or paste. You can use basic editing functions (bold, italics, titles, quote, links...).
2. Add reference information if possible: bibliographical or other source data; source URL.
3. Click "save".

save

URL

Paste a link to a URL such as <https://www.plurality-university.org/>

description, source...  
 ...

**Link:**

1. Paste a link. Youtube and Vimeo links result in embedding the video. Tweets are also embedded. Other links create a snapshot of the page.
2. If relevant, add information on the source.
3. Click "save".

narratopias

description, source... link  
 ... www.

**File:**

1. Choose the file to upload from your device. Images are displayed as such. Downloadable files are displayed as links.
2. Add reference information: title, source, author...; source URL.
3. Click "save".

You can add as many elements of content as you want.  
 The content can be modified during the next 24 hours. Afterwards, it can only be modified by the Narratopias team. This is a technical consequence of the fact that the platform does not require identification or collect personal data.