

# The Interview Project: Interviewer's Guide

# What you'll find in this guide

The Interview Projects intends to generate and gather “interview chains” of, and by, those who mobilize imaginaries to imagine and enable alternative futures.

This international project intends to create usable material on the creative and artistic practices focused on the future, on the futures they imagine, on who they engage, and on how they interact with changes in the real world.

This guide will give you tips on how to produce an interview. Take it or leave it, it is a helpful tool to start a chain!

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# The Interview Project: Why, How?

## △ Why?

Around the world, individuals and collectives are using imagination and the arts to change the future.

The Plurality University Network's mission is to find them, to allow others to discover them, and to encourage an exchange between these practices and these visions of the future.

This mission begins by conversations with and about these people, what they do and how they do it, what they have or haven't achieved, where they want to go.

You are helping launch these conversations, by creating or furthering a "chain" of interviews, in which the interviewees become interviewers, thus giving visibility to more and more people and practices that change the future.

## △ To Participate

### **Choose a person whose work interests you.**

The guidelines: (1) she or he relies on imagination and creation, whatever this definition represents to you, to explore or materialize other futures; (2) she or he agrees to play the game and interview a person in turn, and so on - the chain is created.

**Do the interview.** Use this guide as support, but feel free to do what you think is best!

**After the interview is over**, post it on the website dedicated for this purpose: sound recording, video, text, comics, whatever. We help you to finalize the formatting and publish it. Done!

## △ When, Who, What For?

### **When?**

From September 1st to December 31st, 2019.

### **Who can participate, and how?**

Everybody. The only condition is that interviewees in turn agree to interview someone else to create the next link in the chain.

### **What Will the Project Produce?**

All interviews will be published on a dedicated website. Mid-2020, a online and paper publication (free and open source) will gather the interviews and put them into perspective.

All contents will be made accessible under a Creative Commons-Attribution license.

## What Makes a Great Interview

### △ Choosing who to interview

**The right interviewee doesn't need to be famous:** just a person whose experience and knowledge are, in your opinion, worth sharing. They can be close to you, or someone you have wanted to meet for a long time. They can be “professional” artists, designers or academics, or activists, or participants in collective creations...

Beyond that, there are only **two criteria:**

1. They use arts and creation, in the broadest possible sense, to explore and enable alternative futures;
2. They are ready to interview someone else, thus continuing the chain.

You will find on page 8 a template for a message destined to convince a potential interviewee. Send it as is, or adapt it!

### △ What format?

**We strongly recommend face to face interviews,** recorded on audio or video. Smartphones or tablets are usually good enough (if using video, remember, sound quality is more important than image!)

If you can't meet face to face, most internet communication software (Zoom, Skype...) allow you to record sessions, and there are plug-ins for others such as Whatsapp (for more details, see page 7).

**Ideal duration is 45 to 60 minutes,** making the interview both accessible and deep enough.

**If you have to use email** to do the interview (which we don't recommend), there are specific techniques that we describe on page 9.

### △ What content?

**The interview is a conversation between two individuals,** not representatives of whatever institution they may be part of. **It is less about the interviewee as a person,** than about what can be learnt from their work and experience.

**A good interview goes beyond intentions and descriptions:** it looks for lessons learnt, difficulties overcome or not, uncertainties – and since this is about the future, for projections or speculations (see “Step by Step” below).

**The interviewer can do more than ask questions:** challenge the interviewee, volunteer information, etc.

And of course, **a good interview does not slavishly follow the guidelines:** a really good interview is **fun** for both parties!

# The Interview, Step by Step

(But don't follow every step, make it your own!)

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## Get prepared:

Be clear on why you want to interview that person.

Have an idea about what project, creation or practice you'd like to discuss (and be ready too change if the interviewee has a better suggestion).

Know what you'd most like to learn.

Think of one or two really hard questions to ask.

Think of what you could give to the interviewee.

1

Choose the project, creation, practice, experience, that will be the focus of the interview

2

Shortly describe the project / creation / practice / experience (the "6 Ws")

3

What is there to learn? ("Discovery Report")

4

The hard question

5

Projecting into the future

6

The gift  
(interviewer to interviewee)

*This order is just a suggestion, feel free to reshuffle, to omit an item, or to add different items!*

1

## Choose the Topic

The interview is about a project, creation, practice or experience developed by the interviewee, rather than about their personality.

- **If you know what project, creation etc. you wish to discuss,** explain why, and ensure the interviewee agrees to discuss this project. Be open to better propositions (a more recent work, something the person feels more strongly about...)
- **If you're not sure,** find out together what project, creation etc. has the most potential for change, can produce the most useful lessons, or provides the best food for thought.

2

## Describe the Project / Creation / Practice / Experience

You can use the classic “6 Ws” of journalism (or just the relevant “Ws”):

- **What?** A factual description.
- **Who** is involved as coproducers, participants, public, stakeholders...?
- **When?** The time factor.
- **Where?** The place factor.
- **Why?** What did/does the interviewee hope to achieve?
- **How?** Anything notable in terms of method, process, technique... or their absence?

3

## What Is There to Learn?

This is where the interview serves to share lessons that can benefit everyone:

- **What surprised you,** that you did not expect at all?
- **What destabilized you,** that you don't know what to think of?
- **What shocked you,** conflicted with your values?
- **What did you learn,** that you did not know before?

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## The Hard Question(s)

This is where you, the interviewer, challenge the interviewee to dive deeper:

- **If the interview focuses on a practice or a method, look for the meaning and/or the impact:**  
does it produce new ideas, does it concretely changes the world?
- **If the interview focuses on a creation, on content, look for the “how”:**  
is it achieving what it intended, and if not, how could it do so?

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## Projecting Into the Future

This is where you both speculate, where you look at what the project, creation, practice, experience, could become and produce in the future.

You might want to focus on just one way of doing this, such as:

- **Pushing the envelope:** suppose your project has succeeded beyond your wildest expectations – What has it become, what has it changed?
- **Worst case/Best case scenario:** Imagine what would happen if all went right, or wrong, *inside* the project or *because* of it.
- **Or use your favorite futuring method,** applied to the topic of your conversation

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## The Gift

This is where you, the interviewer, put some more skin in he game.

- **The interviewee turns the mike towards the interviewer:** “Why are you so interested?”
- **The interviewer shares her own feedback:** during this interview, What did I learn, What surprised, shocked or destabilized *me*? This secures a meaningful exchange with the interviewee.
- **If you have it, give it: something you thought about during your exchange (or before):** reference to an article., film, idea, or, maybe you brought something with you to share!

# Technical & Practical Stuff

## △Recording the Interview

Although you're welcome to use cameras or dedicated sound recorders, **most smartphones and tablets come with reasonably good sound and image recording capabilities**, and there are even better free apps.

**If you are doing the interview remotely**, preferably use an internet connection with software such as Skype or Zoom, whose latest versions allow you to record conversations. For Whatsapp, see this page: <https://frama.link/whatsapp-recorders> (easier with Android than iPhone).

If you have to use a regular phone call, you can either use an app such as Automatic Call Recorder, or a free online service such as [Rev](#). Be aware that for privacy reasons, iOS and Android have made it harder to record regular phone calls.

**Do not worry about file formats**, we will do the conversions if necessary.

## △Posting the Interview

**Log in** the [interviews.plurality-university.org](https://interviews.plurality-university.org) website (and create or update your profile if necessary)

**Create the interviewee's profile:** just a picture, a bio, an email address and if possible a web URL.

**Upload** your sound, video or text files.

**Done!** We'll take it from there. Your interview will not be published immediately, since we need to check the interviewee's consent and profile (remember, they will become interviewers next!) and possibly edit your media files (not for content, but for possible technical glitches). We'll let you know as soon as it's online!

**Thanks!**



## Zoom: Template Email to Potential Interviewee

**\*Subject: Plurality University Network – Available for an interview?\***

Dear XX,

I admire your work and would like to interview you for a publication from the [Plurality University Network](#), that intends to give visibility to projects that use art and imagination to think up and enable alternative futures. We wish to make your work better known, and to generate conversations around it, so as to inspire and enable others.

Would you be interested in speaking about one of your latest projects, creations or experiences?

There is only one rule to the Plurality University Network’s “Interview Project”: You must agree to interview someone in turn! The reason for this is that we want to create chains of interviews, looking further and further for amazing people beyond the usual circles of recognition. The attached [Call for Interviews](#) will tell you more about the Interview Project.

The interview itself will be like a conversation and last for about an hour. I’d like it to be both challenging and fun for both of us. It will be published on the Interview Project’s website (due in September 2019), and featured in a free and open-source publication mid-2020.

I sincerely hope that you will find this project worthwhile and agree, both to be interviewed, and to interview someone next.

Best regards,

XXX

# Zoom: How to Do an Email Interview

## △ What You're Looking For

You obviously can't do an email interview the same way you do in face-to-face: You can't adapt to your interlocutor as much, and responding in writing requires much more effort buy the interviewee. However, here's what you should do:

1. Choose the topic (the project, creation, etc.) of the interview beforehand.
2. Ask less questions (5-6), and don't ask them all at once. It's better to have a back-and-forth with 1-2 questions at a time, the interviewee's answers will be more spontaneous and you can adapt your next set of questions.
3. Save time on descriptions (which will prompt the interviewee to cut and paste existing answers).
4. Mix "analytic" questions (requiring thought and explanation) with more challenging questions (on difficulties, hopes, and the future).

## △ The Questions

You can always make other choices, but here's what we suggest:

1. So as to spare your time, where can we find the best description of <project, creation, practice...>?
2. What would you like <project, etc.>'s contribution to the future to be, and how would you know if it has worked?
3. What are the most unexpected lessons you learned from <project, etc.>?
4. A challenging question (see page 7, box 4)
5. Imagine that your work has made a major contribution to changing the future: What has it changed, and how?
6. What useful, enabling lessons should people take out of <project, etc.>?