TEZO Analytics LLC
Website: www.tezoanalytics.com

Workstream: Art and speculative design practices to 'learn infrastructure' through immersion – unveiling our mental models that shape infrastructure

Infrastructure can be enabling or hostile, visible or invisible, a conduit for life or a disruptor. However, its characteristics and impact on us can over time become invisible to us. We walk the same path without seeing our surroundings, but they still shape us and our behavior.

Arts projects and new media can help inquire and re-configuring the relationship with space and infrastructure. Lefkowitz's "Walk, Hands, Eyes" is an example: participants are guided in silence with closed eyes through a city – every step can transform and shape the perception of what had become invisible, perceived sounds and smells lead to orienting oneself or to getting lost, sensing the different materials on which we normally tread inattentively, having to surrender control and paying attention to flows of thoughts and feelings. Using extended realities (VR and AR) to simulate and co-create spaces and infrastructure can equally enhance visibility while allowing those who imagine, create, and use it to immerse themselves and unearth underlying values and mental models, assess and reflect on inclusiveness or lack thereof (e.g. by adopting a child's perspective or that of a person in a wheelchair).

Combined with speculative design practices, such as the value replacement therapy (Bendor, 2021), simulations could further unveil design choice and clarify which basic human values (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz et al. 2012) they respond to. Replacing the values we can inquire how our choices would change. Thus, infrastructure studies can benefit from new approaches of participatory design practices, cross-disciplinary collaboration and integration of technologies.