

John Lynch

Ocean Futurisms: New Storytelling Devices for Radical Imagination (3 films)



The seminar will be a presentation of 3 short films that were commissioned for screening at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, June 2025. I will show the films (each between 6-8 mins) and discuss the process of their development and my role as storytelling advisor and Script Editor. This was a collaboration between the commissioning foundation, TBA21; Radical Ocean Future, whom I advise; and the digital design studio, Inferstudio. The aim is to navigate, through a practice, questions of imaginary futures that are derived from peer-reviewed ocean-science publications.

Radical Ocean Futures is a project based at the Stockholm Resilience Centre and led by Andrew Merrie. It was originally set up as an experimental futuring project to develop research findings into forms of storytelling that could expand the reach of ocean science to a wider audience. Initially brought in to work as script advisor on a science-fiction drama series, I was invited to become part of the film project to bring knowledge of cinematic and serialized storytelling to the ongoing collaboration with Inferstudio.

A key aspect in this context was the development of future speculations of the ocean that whilst grounded in research could present scenarios that were not simply linear extrapolations from current trends. In this way it raises the question of how to imagine the future *differently*. Further, how to imagine an ocean future that is not simply a predetermined dystopia but one that could provide retroactive links to policy makers at UNOC25 with a view to realising an alternative vision. There is a necessity to provide counter-imaginings to those of the current system's apparent monopoly. The aim, therefore, is to introduce not a singular-total vision but a multiplicity of alternative perspectives, that, at best, can open up cracks into other worlds. By offering designs of radically different systems, we can create virtualities that encourage the question of how we might get to that place, fictions that not only anticipate the future but can start to bring it into being.