"It is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. We can now revise that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world".
Fredric Jameson (2013) https://newleftreview.org/II/21/fredric-jameson-future-city

Application Form

Please tell us about your work including delivering commissions and public realm projects. Include up to four links (make sure they're live!) to relevant recent projects. (Up to 250 words)

This project is the first coming together of four artists, designers, educators, technologists and theorists as a collective.

Dr. Christian Nold is known for his large-scale participatory mapping projects such as Bio Mapping (www.biomapping.net) and currency projects such as the Bijlmer Euro. These projects have been run in 16 countries and involved thousands of participants. He is based at University College London, managing an EU funded project on participatory and DIY science. www.softhook.com

Alexei Blinov is an engineer with over 20 years experience of electronic media, hardware and software development. He was part of the BAFTA winning group 'Audiorom', director of Hive Networks and innovator at Raylab.com laser light and holographics. Artist collaborations with Jamie Reid, Empress Stah, Shu Lea Chang many others.

Daniela Boraschi is an information designer and academic and has worked for a world-leading publisher designing science books for young audiences. She has collaborated with Nold as designer on the Stockport Map and Brentford Biopsy and is today researching the history of evidence in cancer screening and teaches Media Studies at the University of Essex. www.stockport.emotionmap.net

James Stevens - SPC.org, founder of proto cybercafe Backspace, continuing support of art and activist projects at Deckspace. Currently researching DIY networking in Deptford Creek with CAPS funded Mazizone.eu and advises on community wireless network development internationally. http://furtherfield.org/reviews/revisiting-backspace

Your proposal - tell us as clearly as possible about your idea including how it reflects i) one or more of our themes (there's no advantage to addressing more than one), and ii) the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (this could be in a small or more substantial way). (Up to 500 words)

This project addresses the theme of 'data culture' by exploring and visualising the Bitcoin blockchain as a tangible artefact. The total financial value of Bitcoin is currently 95 billion dollars with 14 million wallets in use. Yet, the aim of this project is to engage with the blockchain not as a financial tool but as a social and cultural artefact that is forming the first publically owned supercomputer. Its patterns and affordances are shaping our political forms of organisation and becoming a lasting record of our daily lives.

Can you imagine when future historians will uncover the blockchain? We imagine a scenario where all centralised forms of information have disappeared in a calamity. All that is left as record of life is the distributed blockchain. Hence the metaphor 'Doomsday Blockchain'. The Doomsday Book was a centralised tax ledger drawn up shortly after the Norman invasion in 1066. The name referred to the way the Saxon population perceived the book as a judgement that would fix their relations with authority.

We see two parallels. Firstly, the blockchain is becoming a critical concentration and judgment of our financial interactions. Secondly, it is becoming a means to leave a permanent and immutable record of people's lives, such as marriage vows and business contracts. It is known that users are deliberately inserting photos, personal messages and memorials into the blockchain to preserve them for the future https://goo.gl/CoKzB4 . Yet it is currently not know how many hidden traces are there to be discovered. Thus like the Doomsday Book, the blockchain may well become a means for future historians to analyse life in the 21st century.

Our project has three components.
1. Online software system that will search for media in the blockchain by displaying and sonifying it, decoding any material embedded within.
2. An exhibition where visitors will turn a physical dial 'tuner' for scrolling through the records of the blockchain archive, from its genesis to the present. Reviewers can also pick from a library of 'presets' that will take them to previously exposed media. The installation will be accompanied by contextual material such as an interview with a historian eg. Mary Beard talking about what it is like to interpret historical records to reconstruct past lives.
3. A series of workshops with community groups that allow them to experience and understand blockchain technologies discus broader implications of its use as well as write 'themselves' into the blockchain.

The project supports the UN SDG by encouraging public education and inclusion around emerging and contested technologies. Blockchains are the basis of a new funding track for the EU Horizon 2019-2020 that aims to empower an inclusive next generation internet. Thus, it is important to develop new grassroots metaphors for the blockchain and empower community groups to participatory in critical discussions to shape its future.

How will it actively engage audiences? (Up to 150 words)

This work allows the audience to actively participate in the real-time progress of the digital revolution. It enables people to explore the blockchain within the exhibition and sign up to take part in participatory workshops. Each workshop participant will receive their own wallet with a tiny amount of the cryptocurrency using a QR code and create a short message to leave for future humanity. These messages will be embedded within the blockchain using automated financial transactions and thus become a permanent part of the history of the blockchain. These messages will be stored on millions of computers around the globe from hackers to bankers. The participants can then view their own messages along with others as part of the collective blockchain using the exhibition viewer. The single transaction of adding their message can become the seed for 'growing' an alternative future blockchain with new social and political goals.

What are the key challenges and risks to realising your idea? How might these be addressed? (Up to 150 words)

This exploratory project relies on programming a universal viewing and sonification application for the Bitcoin blockchain. This is the first time it has been attempted, we anticipate difficulty in developing algorithms for automatic identification of start /end blocks and developing decoding filters for extrapolating data records. It will also be a challenge to maintain useful decrypting and decoding algorithms. Yet Alexei and James are confident this can be accomplished within the time and budget having extensive experience in software and network deployment.

We also highlight the challenge of communicating the blockchain technology to the wider public. This is a highly complex and evolving subject that requires imagination, analytical and design skills to explain and demonstrate the social and personal relevance of the blockchain. Daniela is keen to tackle these challenges drawing on her years of experience teaching and designing popular science books.

Outline budget - please download the 'Outline budget' template, complete and upload it here. Cover the key areas noted in the brief (see 'Your proposal - what to include'). Please save file as Excel (.xlsx, .xls.) or Open Document (.ods)

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1oxFNocz5-E1E2BDsQwqKKiHv8TSRhAkrK79SfzQzfBg/edit#gid=593288311

Please tell us what you'd hope to gain from working with Collusion. (Up to 150 words)

Working with Collusion will be extremely valuable for helping to develop and test metaphors for the blockchain that can resonate with the public. So far the topic has been focused largely on the commercial and technical innovation with little focus on social, cultural and artistic impacts. This feedback is critical to the success of this project. Working with Collusion will also be useful

for establishing contacts with the computer industry in Cambridge who have insights into the future of the blockchain, as well as world-leading local academics that can help with communicating our alternative history concept of the Doomsday Blockchain.

Post application meeting

Please indicate your availability for each of the time slots *

Wed 25 October - good for James *
10am - 1pm *
1pm - 3pm - we have weekly workshop 2pm till 8pm in Greenwich
3pm- 6pm

Thurs 26 October- not so good for James as off on a trip
10am - 1pm*
1pm - 3pm
3pm- 6pm

Please tell us which app you prefer to use (e.g. Skype, Google Hangouts) and your user name or equivalent

Group Skype?
Or perhaps chatb.org

Project page is at
http://wrd.spc.org/doomchained
This document is at
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uq7nIx8ODHh-i3jbAs-MsGuUH3l1Hi5cx534hN4NQ68/edit