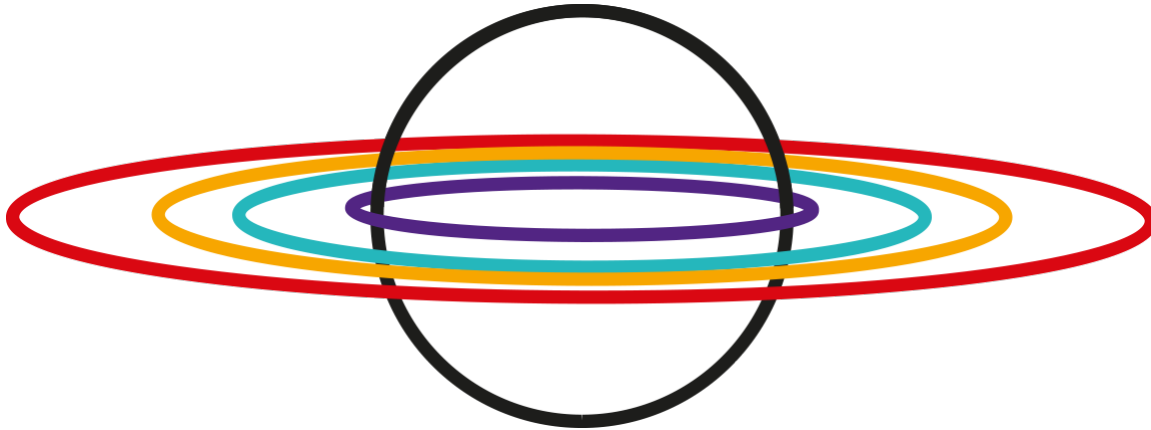


A mission to planet B

manifesting futures in the laboratory as a museum



Imagine a place that's a lot like Earth. We'll call it planet B. Planet B is a place of natural beauty — unspoiled by pollution, unmonitored by satellites, untouched by the hand of human endeavour. Now imagine that, at some point in the future, our descendants discover planet B. A flurry of activity ensues: scientists start investigating the planet, space agencies race to ready their quantum rocket ships, and government officials quibble over who gets to plant the first flag. The colonisation of planet B is about to start...

mission

Given such an unprecedented opportunity, what could we do better? How might we populate planet B in ways that are ecologically sustainable and create a society that is fair for all? What would this process look like, and what does that mean for us, here on planet Earth? This is the founding question of planet B - an interdisciplinary mission to develop a 21st century science, art and technology museum in Amsterdam by 2025.

Planet B responds to the growing need for an interdisciplinary and inclusive design approach to our future. It offers scientists, artists and citizens an open and collaborative space to explore and manifest new ways of life in the Anthropocene. Initiated by Waag and Amsterdam Science Park, the mission is designed as a museum with a laboratory at its heart; as a centre for critical thinking, radical imagination and DIY solutions.

approach

Rather than curate collections, the centre coordinates expeditions that investigate life on planet B, sparking encounters across disciplines and life-worlds. Each expedition creates traces and engenders relations that shape life on the planet. Out of these, a dynamic ecosystem emerges that brings together the speculative space of planet B with impact on our material reality, here on planet Earth.

Between now and 2025, the mission to planet B will progress in three phases. The first phase establishes an outpost where early trailblazers can explore and study this new world. In the second, the outpost will grow into a semi-permanent base using DIY and off-the-grid building technologies, thereby inviting larger groups to come together and shape life on planet B. The final phase of the mission establishes a permanent base, a laboratory as a museum, allowing anyone to visit planet B and participate in building ecologically and socially viable futures for humanity and the living world.

vision

"When Native peoples come into their own, on the basis of their own cultures and traditions, that will be the Fourth World."

— Mbuto Milando, first secretary of the Tanzanian High Commission

The dawning of the Anthropocene age allows us to understand how all of Earth has been marked by humanity - from the climate surrounding its surface down to its geological strata within. After centuries of violent expansion in the name of progress, the colonisation of our planet by modernity is complete. With the human touch extending to every corner of our terrestrial world, the strict division of nature and culture is rendered obsolete. In the Anthropocene, wherever we look, anything 'natural' is also 'cultured'. Technology has become entangled with ecology, returning a lofty humanity from the clouds of modernity back to the lively, muddy reality of the surface-dwellers.

Rejecting the nature-culture dichotomy allows us to observe a world newly discovered, yet one that is also everywhere around us. It is a realisation that confronts us with a fundamental question of ethics: how should we live in this strange yet familiar new world? What habits, practices and aesthetics can planet B offer us to - in the words of Bruno Latour - 'recolonise planet Earth'? Milando proposes an ethos for planet B based on a principle of radical inclusivity. With the Fourth World, he offers us a possibility space for a world colonised by diversity instead of monoculture, and based on co-habitation instead of exploitation.

first expeditions

The goal of planet B is to develop a laboratory as a museum in an organic way. This means growing according to the complementary capacities of participants, one step at a time - much like we would go about colonising a new planet. These steps towards the greater mission are structured as expeditions: research-based, interdisciplinary ventures involving citizens, scientists and artists who pursue specific questions about what cultures, technologies and insights might shape life on planet B. Every expedition also functions as an open platform for larger communities to contribute to life on planet B, with outcomes including fundamental and artistic research, publications, prototypes, interventions, exhibitions, workshops and events. This hybrid format creates what we might call a 'diplomatic challenge' for researchers, how to perform and translate their work to open it up to fellow travellers with highly diverse expertises and perspectives.

The first major expedition sets out to understand the role of Artificial Intelligence on planet B with the *AI Cultures Lab*. It seeks to understand the cultural and societal consequences of this new technology beyond economic efficiency, focussing on the cultural foundations of AI and the civic potential of this technology for future societies. Further expeditions include a a Bio Lab and a Space Lab, focussing on the ecological and post-human dimensions of life on planet Earth and beyond.

open invitation

Planet B has been endorsed widely by the Amsterdam scientific community, and engages prominent local and international cultural institutions such as C-Lab in Taipei and Ars Electronica in Linz. Beyond institutions, everyone is invited to participate in and collaborate with expeditions, for now by dropping a line to planetB@waag.org.

summary

Imagine a place that's a lot like Earth... Waag presents planet B: a mission to re-colonise Earth based on a narrative of DIY expeditions to a fictional planet. Planet B offers scientists, artists and citizens a 'green field' to develop symbolic and material responses to the social and ecological challenges of our times. It expresses an ethos and possible aesthetics for doing things right in the Anthropocene. By Amsterdam's 750th birthday in 2025, it seeks to establish from the bottom-up a 'laboratory as a museum', an open and inclusive platform for digital cultures focusing on innovation and ecology.

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