



CHARLIE ALICE RAYA

easy town books

building

campaigns & getting started

book 4, part 1

easy town books

CHARLIE ALICE RAYA
CAMPAIGNS FOR OUR FUTURE

special editions
book 4, building
prelude to day 33

easy town books

book 4, building, part 1: campaigns, special edition

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campaigns

book 4, building
special edition

Prelude

‘DEAD,’ Megan called against the storm and rose to her feet.

Anthony nodded as another gust of wind unbalanced him, and he noticed that more people came running towards them.

Megan saw them, too. ‘STAY AWAY! YOU FOOLS!’ she shouted furiously. ‘THE STORM IS TOO STRONG. MORE TREES COULD FALL. GET BACK! TO JELLYBRIDGE! EVERYONE IN THE HALL. ASAP! SETH, give us a hand with the tree. THE REST OF YOU GO! RUN!’

They did, six or seven people, fighting against the storm to get out of the forest and back to Jellybridge House.

Megan shook her head, turning towards the fallen tree again. ‘ON THREE! ONE, TWO, THREE.’

Struggling to keep their balance, Megan, Anthony and Seth lifted the tree from the corpse and shifted it to the side.

With anger in her eyes, Megan gently picked up the dead body. Anthony and Seth helped her rise and as she steadied herself, Anthony called: ‘TELL US WHEN YOU’RE READY.’

‘I AM! PUSH! WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!’

Anthony and Seth pushed Megan forward, careful to react to the changing intensity of the storm, always one arm ready to get hold of the corpse should Megan lose her grip.

There was a moment’s relief when they left the Young Forest, both in their minds and in the storm. But they hurried on.

At Jellybridge House, Jordi and Zaida from Security held the heavy entrance door open. The three entered and walked past the shocked crowd of project team members and Jellybridge staff.

Gregory, the estate's gamekeeper, had cleared one of the twenty project desks and was ready with a blanket when Megan lowered the corpse onto the desk.

Her eyes still on the covered corpse and her bloodied arms, Megan gave herself a moment. She was struggling to keep her anger at bay. But the team needed to understand. The team needed to understand or more would die. Neither blind anger nor sentimentality would do any good now.

With determination in her eyes, Megan turned, climbed on the desk next to the body and looked into the pale faces around her. 'For everyone who doesn't know me, I am Megan Rhys, head of the Agriculture Team. It seems that I am one of the few people who grew up on a farm, and who actually knows something about coexisting with nature. Did you enjoy fantasising about building a beautiful green world where everything is all right?' Megan shook her head. 'I should have had this talk with you months ago. Nature isn't something that cares about you or your wishes. It just is. And when nature decides to lash the land with gusts of wind that knock you to the ground, you stay out of nature's way, out of nature's forces. We humans have become so bleeding superior that we think nothing can harm us. We have lost every sense of how fragile we are, and that yes, bad things happen to us, not just to others. Building, creating with nature in mind also means to know who is the stronger. It means to listen to the wind, to the creaking of the trees. It means to grasp what is happening and where to find cover. Because unlike in our fantasies, we are terribly vulnerable, and nature doesn't spare us.' Megan paused and looked at the covered corpse. 'He did not have to die!'

At the back of the crowd, Noel whispered to Daria: 'Who was he?'

'One of Leo's people. Only arrived this morning. Leaves a wife and a big family. Jonas.'

BREATHE

Alice took a deep breath in
and, counting, a slow breath out, passing ten, passing
twenty, thirty, bending forward to squeeze out more air,
fighting to keep exhaling, reaching thirty-nine — and taking a
deep breath in.

It could be done.

Alice opened her eyes.

It was dark. Outside. In here, in the atrium, the only light
came from the Oceans Bar. Soft. Dimmed.

No one was here — unless you counted the storm, which
reached London some twenty minutes ago and seemed to
be getting into a mood, building up from a groan to a high
note, like a siren, like it was waiting for something, expecting
something, preparing for something.

Most team members were at the Jellybridge Estate, the
prospective site for the town.

A site for the town.

Huge. Nine times the size they needed. Rolling meadows.
Partially framed by the New Forest in the south and west,
and by the Old Forest in the east and north. A fold divided
the site into east and west. A lake north/west of the site,
peanut shaped, five peanuts, complete with a small island. A
stream and a river merging with the lake, not crossing the
land, running north. Above the lake a hill. Some way below
the lake a pocket of flat land surrounded by the Old Forest.

Alice took a deep breath in.

Thirty-nine days, starting on Tuesday, after this weekend.
Thirty-nine days to convince the British government to let the
town project build a town from scratch and to run it as an
experiment in an attempt to find out what kind of
environment humans need to thrive.

Alice chuckled. The government had no idea what was coming. Nor did they know that it was Queen Lusana herself who had offered the estate to the town project — as a gift.

The estate included a derelict train station in the Old Forest, farmland and farm buildings in the south, bordering on the Young Forest. Inside the Young Forest was the large Jellybridge House with a lot of land around it, home to gardens, cottages, barns and famed stables. ‘Not racehorses. Practical horses,’ Jimmy, the master of horses, told Alice. A northward track through a small part of the Young Forest connected the Jellybridge House area with the prospective site for the town.

The estate would be a gift, yes, but the offer came with conditions.

One of these conditions was that the British government had to approve of the town and had to grant the project the autonomy it needed for the experiment. The project had until the 31st March to get the British government on board, or else the queen’s offer would be nil and void.

The project’s odds weren’t good. Ever since the team’s arrival in London, the previous summer, the British government had either ignored the project or mocked it as something that could never happen in the UK.

Alice inhaled, opened her arms and slowly began to spin, listening to the howling sounds of the storm. Intense. Powerful. She fixed her eyes on the thumb of her outstretched arm, focused her mind on the huge empty space and filled it with memories.

Here in this building, here in this atrium, the project teams shaped the plans for the town. Week after week, month after month, digging deeper into the root causes of what damaged people, communities, the planet, and into what might be possible if the project team had the courage to leave no stone unturned in their quest to rethink everything that might

need a rethink. Here in this building, they completed the plans for their town and for the experiments they wanted to do in the town. Here they did everything they could think of to get a site for the town. And here they failed to convince a single government to give them the autonomy to be thorough in their research. Here Tom pressured them to dismantle the project. And here in this atrium, on a spark of defiance, Alice decided not to give up, not to give in to Tom's attacks, but to step up and transform the town project into a business project, and expand the project's existing business networks so that the teams could continue to shape, rethink and test alternatives to everything that made the world sick. That afternoon, riding the wave of defiance, they began the transformation.

And then suddenly, some two weeks later, an offer.

Alice stopped to spin, feeling dizzy.

An offer of a site for the town.

Alice leaned against a bar table and focused on her breathing — in, out, in, out.

Yesterday, a small group of team members visited the site. Some, Alice included, were reluctant to consider the site as an option because of the involvement of Queen Lusana. Neither monarchy nor classes made any sense to Alice, and she was worried about getting entangled in a class system she didn't understand and didn't want to replicate in the town.

It was a long day, doubts and discoveries, drizzle, mud, an eagle, questions, suggestions, the sky opening, hints of sunshine, wondering what the town might look like, asking what their presence would do to this land, facing more doubts, a walk through the night, a tea in the stable, combing through the pros and cons of accepting a gift from Queen Lusana, a confession.

A long day.

A short night.

Revelations.

And eventually decisions.

Outside of the Compound, the storm was picking up again, moaning around the buildings: the three main buildings, one set behind the other, Front House, open to the public with venues, shops and businesses, Central Building, the heart of the project with the atrium, and Back House, flats for the team; plus all the smaller buildings in the large area next to the main buildings, home to the existing project businesses.

Startled Alice turned. Something had crashed outside. Was the storm attacking the gardens on the roofs, uprooting plants?

Maybe.

Alice exhaled.

This morning, she assembled an excellent Campaigns & Negotiations Team. Eighteen people. Experts in business, tech, crafts, ecology and society. Plus jokers for sanity, education and the NHS. Most of them she knew well, liked and respected. Each of them had their own team, and both Security and Research would work for all of them in the background as well.

If anyone could pull off a successful campaign, then it was this team.

It was during the conversations with these team members that Alice gradually came to the decision not to dismiss this opportunity but to fight for the site.

After the signing ceremony with Queen Lusana and Princess Felicitas at Waterbridge Castle, some hours ago, Alice sent her new team on a three-days break.

Three days. Three days to rest and connect with their families and friends. Three days before they would start on a thirty-nine days campaigns and negotiations marathon.

Tuesday. The starting line.

Alice straightened. She had one more task, tomorrow. After that, she would rest a bit, too.

Probably.

Tonight, her mind was still buzzing with today's events.

Breathe.

Jack. The storm. Tom's threats. Assembling the campaign team. Riding. The site. Tom storming out. Leo. The joy in the eyes of the Jellybridge staff when Alice announced that she would accept the queen's offer. Jack. The site. The signing ceremony with Queen Lusana and Princess Felicitas. Back to London. The news of Jonas' death, one of Leo's people. The video connection breaking due to the storm. Silence in the car. Jazz, the head of Project Security, driving. Arriving at the Compound. Being here. No one around.

Breathe.

Breathe.

Breathe.

A workout might help. Sweating out some of the tensions. Clearing the mind. Stretching. Twisting. Unblocking.

Alice nodded to herself. *Yes, a workout might help.*

Alice gave the atrium another glance, allowing the echoes of everything that had happened here to fill her for another moment.

Then, with a little smile, she picked up a pile of folders from the bar, turned off the lights, crossed the atrium and opened the backdoor.

The storm hit her full frontal. She staggered backwards, then she leaned forwards, pressing the folders against her chest. Pushing against the storm, she crossed the narrow street and the courtyard of the Back House, and was glad to reach the front door.

The workout studios were at the back of the Back House, on the ground floor. Studio 2, by far the largest studio, was

flanked by studio 1 and 3. Alice always worked out in studio 3, sometimes using the punchbag to let off steam.

When the door of studio 3 closed behind her, some of the mood lights on the floor turned on. Folders on a bench, Alice walked to the punchbag near the back of the studio and was drawn to the large windows. Rain had joined the wrecking party outside, and gusts of wind were lashing wet masses against the windows. So much force and energy.

Patterns appeared and disappeared on the glass. Rain and Wind. A dance. Strange and beautiful. Powerful.

Alice lowered herself to the ground, crossed her legs and watched the elements play. After a while, she closed her eyes. *This— this moment is the quiet before the storm — in the middle of a storm.*

The storm's moans, groans and high pitches had no melody, but right now it sounded as if some intention or message was included.

Leo told Alice about Megan's speech. Megan was right. When it came to nature, they were still silly romantics. Nature didn't care about humans. But humans needed to care about nature for their own sake — and most humans needed to rediscover that they were part of nature, not its patroniser, not its manager, absolutely not its superior but a part of the wonderfully entangled, interdependent, unruly whole that is the natural world.

Leo said that everyone was determined not to lose anyone else to the storm, but some more trees were bound to yield to the attacks.

Alice exhaled.

The Campaigns & Negotiations Team would use studio 2 as their workspace until the seventh floor of the Central Building would be ready for them, probably next Friday.

Using the seventh floor was a compromise.

After the project's decision to expand their business activities, they decided to wrap up the town project, and they began to empty the town team's offices in the Central Building to transform the Compound into an incubator for the project's businesses. But with the town suddenly an option again, the town team had reclaimed the sixth and seventh floor for their work. And the third floor with the conference rooms would remain at their disposal, too. All other floors would continue in transformation mode and would soon host up to twelve project businesses on each floor, most of them in their early development stages, over seventy all told.

Breathe.

Leo.

Leo was the best possible personal assistant Alice could wish for. And he headed the large and essential project coordination team.

But Alice decided against working with him in the coming weeks. She needed Leo at the Jellybridge Estate because she wanted the town teams to prepare everything for the start of the building phase — despite the uncertainties. But Alice knew that even after a win, their opponents would still try to stop the project and that was why she wanted to start building as soon as they had secured the government's approval for the town.

Rohana and her team would be working with Alice. So far, Rohana had been Leo's right hand for the Compound — a brilliant organiser, a good thinker. Rohana was about five foot six, Alice's height, had shortish dark hair, was thirty-six and liked to wear the Indian+ dot.collection, which mixed traditional Indian outfits with design elements from other countries.

Rohana. Alice smiled. When they were at Waterbridge Castle for the signing ceremony, Alice walked into a bathroom just as Rohana held her penis over a urinal.

Surprised, Rohana snapped: ‘Aren’t you supposed to go to the ladies?’

Alice chuckled. ‘No. I’m non-binary. I tend to use the toilet that’s less in demand. I had no idea you’re trans.’

‘I didn’t think I had to explain myself.’

‘Nor did I. But I thought no one has to hide on our project.’

Rohana grimaced, dropping her skirt. ‘I’m not hiding. I am a woman, and I don’t want to discuss my body parts.’

Alice chuckled. ‘OK. I actually don’t want to discuss mine either.’

Rohana rolled her eyes and washed her hands.

‘Does Troy know?’

Rohana grimaced. ‘Why? Because we transpeople answer to each other?’

‘Just curious. Honestly. For all I care, you could have a penis and a vagina. It wouldn’t make a difference to me.’

Rohana dried her hands, seeming tense. When she turned, she said: ‘I hate having to explain myself. I just want to be.’

Alice nodded. ‘I know exactly what you mean. I hate telling people that I am not a woman, not a man, and both, and no gender at all. I know exactly what I mean. But someone who had to listen to the *boys do, girls are* all their lives, how are they to grasp that there are a lot more genders and that the sex of humans and animals isn’t as clearcut as generations of teachers, preachers and parents made us believe.’

‘It’s a relief, isn’t it?’ Rohana said, frowning. ‘To be able to name who you are, to get out of the corset generations of humans forced on themselves by insisting that there are only men and women, and that each had predestined tasks and behaviours.’

‘Oh, yes! It’s liberating.’

Rohana nodded, and smiled a little. 'I hadn't considered that you know about that. I'm glad we had this talk. But I'd appreciate it if you could keep it to yourself.'

Alice nodded. 'I will. Are we OK?'

'Yes. Yes, we are OK,' Rohana returned with a big sigh. And that was that.

Are we OK?

Tom.

Tom crashing the meeting with the first members of the Campaigns & Negotiations Team, flaring up in front of everyone, declaring that he was out, done with the town project.

You need to forget, Alice. Tom is gone. He has given up on the project. He is on his way back to New York. Yes, he has threatened to have the project and the businesses dismantled. But you are safe. The project is safe as long as Fran, Tom's wife, is with the team. And she is. She told you again at the signing ceremony.

All you need to do is win. Once you've got the site, Tom can't do any harm any more.

Breathe!

What will it take to win over the British government? Will it be enough to get the public on board? Will the public put pressure on the government?

Breathe.

Jack.

Let Jack go. So he is in love with you. And as you spell it out, you have trouble believing it. It seems unreal. Like something you dreamed about and could never happen. But it did. You have been drawn to him all these months, only you never expected, suspected, asked for— Let go! He knows that you have to focus. You know that you have to focus.

Breathe!

He is on the team.

I know, and it will be OK. You both want to build the town. You both know that right now you can't let anything distract you, not even something that offers warmth, love, joy and a lot of laughing.

Breathe.

Alice took a deep breath in and a slow breath out, counting, passing ten, passing twenty, passing thirty, bending forward to squeeze out more air, fighting to keep exhaling, reaching thirty-nine — and taking a deep breath in.

It could be done.

Alice opened her eyes.

After tomorrow the town project would go silent. No interviews. No comments. Time to prepare their next steps.

Fran, who supported the Campaigns & Negotiation Team with her Research Team, suggested this strategy: 'It's something I learned from my husband, Tom. If you want to soften someone, make them sweat. How? Give them a minimum of information. Just enough to get them hooked, to get them speculating. Then go silent. Be unreachable. Let them stew. Why? Because with every minute their uncertainty will grow, and with every hour they will come up with another worst case scenario. And then, one fine morning, you break your silence, stroll into the meeting, and whatever you say will seem moderate compared to the horror scenarios they imagined in the meantime.'

Jack and Dennie would do voice trainings and acting classes with everyone who might give a speech — for the 'stroll with panache,' Dennie joked.

Breathe.

Alice took a deep breath in and listened, focusing her mind on the sounds outside. The rain had stopped. The storm was still raging.

And then, a sudden silence — followed by a single howl — a howl with a note of confidence, the confidence of someone who was rising to face down an opponent.

The next morning, Jazz and Calum drove Alice to Downing Street where Alice submitted a formal request for a meeting with the prime minister to discuss Queen Lusana's offer of the Jellybridge Estate.

Downing Street didn't react, and some ten hours later, Queen Lusana made an announcement, concluding with: 'I have studied the plans for the town project, and after meeting with Alice Adler, three days ago, I decided to offer Jellybridge Estate to the project. I am curious what the town project will discover, and I am hopeful that it will gain valuable insights for all humankind. Some conditions are attached to my offer. Alice Adler and her lawyer Emine Hamdi insisted on adding details to the original draft, demonstrating yet again that they intent to act responsibly and thoroughly — even in the face of conditions Alice Adler isn't particularly happy with.'

Shortly after this announcement, the preliminary contract between Queen Lusana and Alice Adler was published by most media outlets.

Preliminary Contract

February, 17, Waterbridge Castle

The gift of Jellybridge Estate is subject to the following conditions:

Ownership

1. Alice Adler must be the sole owner of the entire estate. Alice Adler cannot sell, lease or give away any part of the estate, neither land nor real estate, with one exception: Alice Adler can use rents and/or stand-in community ownerships as part of the town experiment. Both could be used after the experiment is concluded if the experiment proves that rents and/or community ownerships are useful for the town. Useful is defined as supporting a town-wide economic balance and as avoiding cost of living pressure on the inhabitants of the town. A stand-in community ownership means that Alice Adler is still the sole owner and has a veto on everything a community might want to decide. This stand-in community ownership is an option to test the idea, not an attempt to fragment the estate. The crown insists on a sole ownership to ensure that the estate will be cared for and looked after as a whole and in a consistent way.

Inheritance

2. No one can inherit the estate from Alice Adler.

Successor(s)

3. Alice Adler will appoint a successor or a group of successors who can and will continue Alice Adler's work in her spirit after her resignation or after her passing. The ruling monarch is granted a veto with regard to the successor or group of successors. Should Alice Adler pass before she appointed a successor, a group of her most trusted allies will appoint a successor or a group of successors. A successor or a group of

successors must be dedicated to continue the research into finding out what kind of environment (regarding town planning and architecture, business composition and business practices, arts, crafts and empowerment, education and research, nutrition, food security and water quality, nature and biodiversity, administration and security, health and community) make a human thrive. Furthermore, a successor or a group of successors can only propose changes which benefit the town as a whole. All proposed changes must undergo rigorous testing to ensure that the changes will benefit everyone in town and are in line with the project's goal and findings. The project's goal is to contribute to the evolution of humanity by finding and addressing root causes of damaging practices and narratives. All recommendations regarding all aspect of human life and activities are to be based on research and substantiating tests.

Head of the town project

4. Alice Adler must be the sole head of the town project for the duration of the experiment unless she appoints a successor or a group of successors due to health concerns. After the experiment, Alice Adler must be part of the town's administration and must have the right to veto everything concerning the welfare of the town. The crown insists on this to ensure consistency for the experiment, and to ascertain that Alice Adler is prepared to fully commit to the project for the entire run of the town experiment.

Transparency

5. While acting fully independently of the ruling monarch, Alice Adler must agree to present the ruling monarch with an occasional update on the town project's findings and on the development of the town. The same applies to the successor(s).

Approval

6. The British government and the local authorities (in the neighbourhood of the Jellybridge Estate) must agree to the town project. Furthermore, Alice Adler and the British government must agree on the terms and conditions for undertaking the town experiment.

Deadline

7. The offer of the Jellybridge Estate is valid until the 31st March, at midnight. After the deadline, the offer is nil and void, and cannot be renewed.

The gift

8. The gift of the Jellybridge Estate to Alice Adler will enter into force if and when the conditions 1-7 are met.

Breach of contract

9. Should Alice Adler fail to comply with any of the first six conditions after the contract came into force, then Alice Adler and the ruling monarch will find a solution which serves the town. Both the ruling monarch and Alice Adler commit to the safety and well-being of the

inhabitants of the town regardless of which disagreements or problems might have surfaced.

Two hours after the publication of the preliminary contract, ripples news, the town project's paper, published a statement about the queen's offer and introduced the Campaigns & Negotiations Team.

By that time, the phones in the Compound were running hot. But no one answered. Hardly anyone was there. Everyone wanted to be at the prospective site for the town.

|| **day 39** || 21 February || THE STARTING LINE || The Campaigns & Negotiations Team met at six o'clock in studio 2. 'Good morning, everyone,' Alice said, standing at the centre of the conference table, close to the large windows at the back of the studio, not far from a freestanding blackboard. 'We have a tight schedule this morning, but I'd like to take a moment to introduce each of you and to highlight your tasks within this team since not all of us have worked together before.' Alice smiled at Andy. 'I go by alphabetical order and start with you, my friend.' Andy blushed and returned the smile with a nod while Alice continued, letting her eyes wander across the faces of her team. 'Andy is the head of the Programming Team and my deputy. He has been an indispensable rock throughout the project, and,' Alice looked at Andy again, 'I'm very grateful to have you on board.' 'I wouldn't be anywhere else,' Andy replied, his blush deepening. Alice smiled and continued. 'Andy will be responsible for the simulations we might need for our campaigns, and he will stand in for me whenever I'm not available.' Alice's eyes found Constance. 'Constance is a member of the Crafts Team, a talented craftswoman and a person with a good business mind. Finding a viable role for crafts in our town's composition is a major task of our project. Since craftspeopleship has a long tradition in the UK, we hope that putting a focus on crafts will increase the support for our project. Constance, welcome to the team, and thank you for being here.' 'It's an honour, and I look forward to getting to know you all.' Alice smiled and turned to Dana. 'Dana. I know that you, too, would love to split yourself and be at the building site as well as here. I am glad you decided to prioritise this team.' Dana smiled. 'I want to be right here when the bleeding polluters and the short-sighted exploiters of the natural world try to argue against our project!' 'Good,' Alice returned and addressed the group

again. 'Dana is the head of our Ecology and Agriculture Team. Apart from disarming the opposition, it will be Dana's task to illustrate what coexisting with nature can mean and how the town will contribute to solutions for restoring the planet's ecosystems.' Dana nodded and added: 'We'll focus on those environmental issues which are particularly problematic in the UK such as the pollution of rivers, declining air quality, deforestation, unsustainable farming, overfishing.' Alice nodded and turned to Dennie who straightened and let out an 'Oops! Is it my turn?' Alice chuckled. 'Yes, it is. Dennie is a member of our Project Security Team and has been part of my security detail since last summer. Just a few weeks ago, he took a bullet for me —' '—Ah, don't mention it!' Alice smiled. 'Well, someone is bound to ask why your arm is in a cast.' 'Good point. But still ...' Alice and Dennie exchanged a smile, and Alice continued. 'Dennie has always impressed me with his inherent ease. This makes him an ideal person to test ideas with because he treats each idea without fuss or bias. As the most chilled person I know, I tasked him to keep an eye on our sanity and to tell us off if we get too entangled in our ideas and perceptions. Furthermore Dennie will be available to answer all security questions by the public or by politicians. He is our main link to THE, the security company, who will provide protection for us and who will help with research. In addition Dennie and Jack will offer voice and acting training.' 'I was only a smalltime actor,' Dennie commented. 'Nothing big. Just helping out.' Alice smiled and continued. 'Emine. I still remember that day in Berlin when I stood on the roof of the team house, and you suddenly appeared, smiling your big smile, and you told me that you'd like to join the main team in London. I'm so glad you made that decision, and I'm grateful you stuck with us despite the lack of a site for our town. Emine, you and Javiera are

excellent lawyers, and I'm glad to have you both in central roles: you working with us, and Javiera with the Building Site Team.' Addressing everyone again, Alice went on. 'Emine is a member of the Admin and Society Team. Her main tasks are to advise and protect us in all legal matters, to react to all legal attacks on our team and to be present at negotiations with the government. Emine, thank you for being with us.' 'Thank you for having me, Alice and everyone. It's a dream. We'll get so much opposition, and me and my team can't wait to fend them all off.' Alice smiled and turned to Hayley. 'Hayley leads the Tech Innovations Team, a team, I realised over the weekend, which I have been taking for granted without paying them much attention.' 'Hear, hear,' Hayley returned with a lopsided smile. Alice smiled back and continued. 'All the more, I look forward to working with you, and I have high hopes that our tech honeypot will attract a lot of interest. The honeypot includes our top notch tech, supplied by our project companies highFly, straight forward systems, two wheels and the Hub. Also included is our balanced approach to tech which asks where tech is an advantage and where better options are available.' Hayley nodded. 'Just as info,' she said. 'I'll have one or two people on my team who can help with tech problems you might have. You can talk to me whenever it's about content for a campaign or for a speech.' Alice nodded and Hayley added: 'It's really strange to be here. I'm glad I'm not the only newbie. I've heard so much about working with you directly, Alice. I hope I'll not come across too bluntly. It's just, I'll have to get used to you lot. I can be a bit strange when it comes to new people, and I don't know how you're about lesbians. Also, yes, I am a wheelchair user. I was run over as a child and lost the use of my legs at nine. I don't need anyone's pity or help. I'm a happy tech geek in a great relationship. I'm glad to be on this project. And obviously a

bit nervous about suddenly finding myself in this exclusive club.’ Dennie chuckled. ‘Nah, this is no exclusive club. We’re such a nicely weird mix of people. I looked us up. We’re from almost every continent, we represent most ages, all sorts of lifestyles, gender and sexual preferences, all sorts of abilities and so-called disabilities, all sorts of heights and sizes, all sorts of pasts and professions. There are stubborn and blunt people here, quiet and clever people, playful and reckless people — and at least one funny person,’ Dennie added with a grin. ‘You see, nothing to worry about. And I’m new, too. I know Alice, Andy and Jack. I’ve seen some more of you around. But this is my first time getting involved on the content side of the project. And, yeah, it’s a bit daunting. But we’re OK.’ Hayley chuckled. ‘Sanity boy, eh?’ ‘That would be me!’ ‘Thanks. That helped.’ ‘I’m gay, too,’ Marita said. ‘Oh, I didn’t know.’ ‘I’m also from South America,’ Navarro chipped in. ‘I, too, have special abilities,’ Heather said, taking off her sunglasses. ‘Me and Alice can easily match your bluntness,’ Skye added. Alice chuckled and said: ‘Maybe we can take some extra time over our meals in the first days to get to know each other a little better.’ ‘That would be good,’ Constance said. ‘Like Hayley, I feel a little overwhelmed, being one of the few new people on this team.’ Alice nodded. ‘We’ll do that. Now, I’ll press on.’ Alice looked at Heather who stirred and asked: ‘Are you looking at me, Alice?’ Alice smiled. ‘Yes. I’m looking at you, and I’m smiling, Heather.’ Addressing the team, Alice continued. ‘When I put together this team, I wanted people with a clear focus on one of our main topics, but I also wanted those who bring something special to our team. Heather is one of those people and that on many levels. Heather is the co-head of our project’s paper ripples news, she is our link to the media and she usually works with every town team on questions of accessibility, smells, textures, stability, sound and whatever

else might impact a blind person's experience in our town. But there is more. Because some of Heather's senses are so fine-tuned, she can ask questions that don't occur to me. Therefore, I suggest that we make a point of checking ideas with Heather for additional input. Heather, thanks for being with us.' 'Thank you for having me, Alice.' Alice turned to Isabel who was sitting next to her. 'Isabel is a member of the Business Team. She and her family are my neighbours in the Back House. Kuruk, her seven years old son, told me this morning: "If you need anything, you just have to say. Dad and I are on standby."' Several people chuckled and Alice addressed Isabel. 'Isabel, I remember how we developed the dot.idea together. John was there, too.' 'Oh, yes,' John (business) mumbled with a half-smile, and Alice went on. 'To think that dot. is by now an established international clothing company and one of the foundations of our business networks — unbelievable. After that we didn't get to work together much, and even as neighbours we often rush past each other. I'm glad to have this opportunity to work with you again.' 'Me, too,' Isabel said with a smile. Alice continued. 'Isabel is our art director and head coordinator for our campaigns.' Isabel nodded and said: 'Each campaign will get a team which will work closely with me and with our team.' Dennie (security) raised a hand. 'I'm a bit unclear on that point. The who is who with regard to campaigns.' Isabel nodded. 'Our first step is to collect ideas for campaigns which aim at increasing the support for our project. Next we dig deeper to explore the potentials of each campaign idea, and eventually we will select the most promising ideas.' 'How many campaigns do you have in mind, Isabel?' Emine (lawyer) asked. Isabel picked up a note and replied: 'We want to start our campaigns in a week. That gives us a maximum of thirty-two days for campaigns. We could start new campaigns every day.' Some team members mumbled

doubtfully, and Raiden (town simulation) said: 'We'd cover a lot of ground that way, but we would probably lose the public's interest halfway through.' Several people nodded and Alice said: 'I'd suggest a period of seven days in which we start four to seven campaigns each day, and after that we focus on the most successful campaigns.' Several people frowned and Hayley (tech) said: 'I think four campaigns a day is the absolute maximum, like every three hours a fresh bang.' Isabel made a note and then said: 'Valid point. Once we've chosen our campaigns, I'll put together teams for every campaign. Each team will have a team leader who reports to me, and I report to our team. Any input you want to add to a campaign, you let me know. And that's it.' Dennie twitched his mouth to one side. 'So, once all campaigns are set up, we can go on holidays?' Alice smiled. 'We hope the negotiations will keep us busy by then. And we'll deal with the responses to the campaigns.' 'Ah, no holidays, then.' 'Nope,' Alice returned and checked her notes and took a moment to collect her thoughts. When she looked up again, her eyes met Jack's, and she smiled a little while his face was blank. 'Jack. When I thought about these introduction, yesterday, I remembered our first meeting at the party in New York. And it struck me that you were the first person in New York I spoke to about the project, even before I met with Tom. You have literally been with the project from the very beginning. Back then, I told you that it would be great if you joined the team because while the team would need many experts, it would also need people with a playful mind.' Jack smiled a little and returned: 'I remember. You said you had seen my playfulness on screen and hoped it wasn't all acting.' Alice smiled and addressed the team. 'That's true. And I remember working with Andy and Jack on the simulation, months later, noticing that Andy and I have this slightly obsessive way of digging deep and being so focused

on our work that we forget everything around us. In contrast, working with Jack is much more random, playful, like a dance, whirling in and out of ideas. I think, both approaches are needed for our town and for our Campaigns and Negotiations Team. I'm glad that every one of you has their own way of thinking, and I hope that we will make the most of everything each of us has to offer. Jack is a member of the Arts Team. Apart from working with us, he will be our link to the film teams. The film teams document everything that happens at Jellybridge Estate, in our companies and at our campaigns. The teams are also available to film anything we might need for our campaigns. If you have an idea for a spot or a short, Jack is the one to talk to. Plus, Jack will be our liaison to other celebrities and charities who might support our campaigns.' Alice met Jack's eyes again. 'Jack, we haven't always worked together, but whenever we did, we were an excellent team. I'm grateful that you are here. Thank you.' Jack bowed his head. Alice smiled a little and turned to John. 'John. I remember you from the first meeting we had at Tom's estate. A businessman through and through, curious but also certain that I must be wrong.' John inclined his head with a little smile and said: 'I couldn't have put it better myself.' Alice smiled. 'John is a member of the Business Team. Like me, he doesn't like to be hugged and neither of us is particularly happy when a room is crammed with people. So, if you find us broody in such a situation, it's nothing personal.' 'As such,' John added. Alice smiled and went on. 'While I was a little annoyed about John at that first meeting, I have come to value the clarity of his incredibly organised mind, and he as well as his partner Beatrice have become something like a safety net for me. If I can convince both of them of an idea, then I don't have to worry. We might still be wrong, but no one could accuse us of sloppy thinking. Beatrice is the head of the Admin Team. She is part of the

Building Site Team and will be our safety net at the Jellybridge Estate. She told me, yesterday, that the Building Site Team already contacted the mayors in the Jellybridge region in the hope of interesting them in our project. Back to John. John is the go-to person for all numbers, be it statistics, numbers to prove the viability of an idea, or numbers to substantiate our arguments. I'd like us to use numbers wherever we can because they are easy to understand.' John nodded and said: 'Since it's a common practice to use numbers to whitewash claims, we want to be particularly transparent and coherent with regard to our numbers.' Alice nodded and looked at Marita. 'Marita is a member of the Economics Team and holds degrees in economics and psychology. Marita's speciality is to read the room and to find twists and angles we can use in our campaigns and more importantly in our negotiations.' Marita nodded and said: 'As someone who is new in this group, too, and reading the room now, I'd like to suggest something unconventional for tomorrow. Would everyone agree to block ninety minutes in the morning for a meeting, and give us new people a chance to ask some questions?' Most people smiled, everyone nodded, and Alice said: 'Thank you, Marita. I am in turbo-speed mode, but, please, never let that stop any of you to call for a break or for a special meeting.' Everyone nodded and Alice turned to Navarro. 'Navarro. We first met in the team house in Buenos Aires, and we had the most intriguing conversations.' Navarro smiled. 'A person of short stature with a big head, you said.' Alice chuckled. 'To me, you are indispensable, both for the town project and for this team. I'm glad you're here.' 'Now, you're making me blush.' 'Good.' Alice exhaled and addressed the team. 'Navarro is a member of the Society Team, an incredible thinker and always a pleasure to talk to, to develop ideas with and to explore anything that might need a rethink. His

main task will be to think with us and to add content and reasoning to our campaign ideas, to our speeches and to our negotiations.’ Navarro bowed his head and Alice turned to Raiden. ‘Raiden is a member of the Programming Team and will supervise the town simulation for the negotiations. That means, his team will listen in on discussions and negotiations, and whenever there is a point the team can substantiate via the town simulation, they will do it and sent the results directly to us. Raiden is also involved in a number of business simulations, so John and Marita, if you need any data, Raiden can help you. Plus Raiden is the go-to person when you get stuck. He has this kind of incredible mind which produces possible solutions in its sleep. On a side note: like me, Raiden is non-binary, and while we don’t mind the pronouns associated with some of our body parts, neither of us likes to be addressed as a person of a binary gender.’ Several people nodded and Alice looked at Raiden again. ‘You joined Andy’s team in September, and I remember, how, at first, I was a little dubious about you sitting in on some of my meetings with Andy, but I’ve come to fully appreciate your talents and your dedication. Thank you for being on this team.’ Alice exchanged a smile with Raiden and looked at her notes. When she looked up again, she found Robin’s eyes and shook her head, smiling. ‘Robin, when you joined the project team, in the first week of our project, I had no idea that the leading expert for progressive education had arrived from Cairo. When I heard about it, I couldn’t believe it. Then we met to discuss whether you’d be willing to head the Education Team, and I was blown away by your incredible mix of a sharp mind, a huge heart, and an openness to keep exploring even when you think you have found an answer. Robin, it is an honour to have you on the team. And as the most mature and most renowned person on this team, I have asked you to also keep an eye on our

sanity so that we don't lose our footing in the marathon ahead of us.' 'Alice, you're too kind,' Robin returned. 'I love the town project, and everyone here has so much to give. I'm happy to support you in every possible way.' 'Thank you, Robin. Like Dennie and Heather, Robin will also be a tester of all our ideas. And she will be our direct link to Fran and her Research Team. Furthermore Robin will act as an advocate for education issues, and she will be our joker should any talks or negotiations include questions around the British education system. And this brings me to our next joker, tester and sanity watcher: Skye. As the head of the Care Team and as a former nurse, Skye will be our joker should anyone bring the NHS into play. As someone who gets easily passionate about critical issues, Skye will also be a prodder and challenger of our ideas.' Skye smiled. 'You bet! But aren't you going to say anything nice about me?' Alice laughed and with a lopsided smile, she said: 'I want to. But I can't decide what to say. I love the way you think. I love working and arguing with you. And I like your passionate sense of humour and your directness. But none of this paints a complete picture. I think you're great, and I'm very glad to have you on the team.' Skye grinned. 'I think that will do for now.' Alice chuckled and turned to Troy. 'Troy, I can't wait to see your work for our campaigns. The first time, I became fully aware of your talents was during our football matches at Tom's when you did caricatures of the funniest scenes in the matches and of the best goals. I remember one caricature where Tom and I slipped, and you portrayed us in that moment of falling.' Troy smiled and, smiling herself, Alice addressed the whole team. 'Troy is the youngest member of our team, a member of the Arts Team, and an excellent illustrator. We want our campaigns to be as easy to understand as possible. Therefore I'd like us to use as many visuals as we can think up.' Troy nodded and said: 'I have a

super talented team, and if we need more people, we can get them. We do everything from humour to totally serious, from icons to charts, from caricatures to complete comics. Oh, and billboards for campaigns and illustrations for ads, speeches and negotiations. You just have to say what you need.' 'Thank you, Troy,' Alice said. 'And thank you for being on our team.' 'Glad to be here. Really glad.' 'Great. And that's us nearly done with the introductions.' 'What about you and your tasks?' Dennie challenged with a smile. Alice twitched the corner of her mouth and said: 'The negotiations are my priority and that includes talking to as many decisions-makers as possible. Other than that I'm prepared to be whatever is best for our campaigns. Though, I'll not pretend to be someone I'm not.' 'Was that meant for me?' Isabel (head of campaigns) asked with a half-smile. Alice shrugged. 'Maybe. I don't want us to go by a marketing playbook and become some smooth version of what we think people might respond to. I want us to be us. Just like our project is authentic and not something that lures people into something. I want thinking people to support us not manipulated.' Several people nodded and Alice looked at Rohana, who sat next to her. 'You've all met Rohana, an excellent member of Leo's team, my personal assistant for the coming weeks, head coordinator for this team, and already doing a great job. Rohana, you're up.' Alice sat down and Rohana stood up, saying: 'I've assembled a team who will coordinate all your activities. Today and tomorrow, I'll approach each of you individually to discuss what you might require over the next weeks, and I'll introduce you to those of my team who will be working with you. Secondly, as you can see, my team prepared this studio for us and added desks, mobile cupboards, a simulation workstation with nine monitors, three conference tables, a bar and a stationary cupboard, as well as multiple sitting options: chairs, stools,

squat chairs, cushions, yoga mats, hammocks, gymnastic balls, sofas, armchairs.’ ‘Love the hammocks,’ Skye (care), chipped in. ‘Thanks,’ Rohana returned. ‘On your desks, you’ll find a new laptop and phone, both with a live-connection to the simulations, both from our project company highFly. Also, feel free to make use of the three punchbags and the basketball hoops. But, please, check that no one in the studio minds the banging fists and balls. If there is anything else you need, let me or someone from my team know. We’ll move to the seventh floor of the Central Building on Friday, but we’ll probably keep this space as retreat and workout space for our team. That’s all from me,’ Rohana said and sat down again. ‘Raider, do you have news for us?’ Alice asked. Raider (town simulation) stood up. ‘Yes, the new town simulation now uses the landscape data from the Jellybridge Estate. All town teams are adding data as we speak, and adjust their designs to the site’s peculiarities. The town teams hope to have completed the adjustments in four weeks.’ Raider sat down and Andy (campaign simulations) added: ‘The workstation here is linked to the new town simulation and will also be connected to all other simulations we might use in our campaigns. From tomorrow on, six programmers will be on duty at the workstation and process all our requests.’ Some team members nodded and Alice exchanged a glance with Dana (ecology) who stood up and said: ‘On Sunday and Monday, Alice, Raider and I met with the heads of the town project to discuss the schedule for our town, should we get this site. We decided to complete the centre of the town first and let five to seven thousand people move in early—’ ‘—Why?’ several people interrupted surprised. ‘As a test,’ Dana replied. ‘There are a lot of unknowns in our plans and with the test we find out early what might need adjusting. We also hope that this precaution will earn us some additional trust for the

negotiations.’ ‘Which areas will be completed first?’ John (business) asked, adding: ‘And what kind of timeframe are we talking about?’ Raiden (town simulation) replied: ‘We’ll prioritise the main street network, circle roads and star roads, the centre of the town, the neurological clinics and rehabs, the first two circles and the upper part of Central Avenue.’ Dana added: ‘If we start building on the first of April, we could open the centre of the town in September.’ Alice nodded. ‘This has the additional advantage that we would have something presentable quickly. And, next year, on April the first, the second anniversary of our town project, we could open the entire town.’ ‘That’s a tight schedule,’ Troy (illustrator) remarked. ‘It is,’ Alice returned. ‘But it will leave no one in doubt that we mean business and that there is an urgency involved in our work. We need that rethink, that reshaping, for our societies and for our planet. The sooner we can present viable results in our town the better.’ Heather (press) frowned. ‘This gives the Building Site Team less than six weeks to get ready for the building phase.’ ‘That might be a good thing,’ John (business) remarked. ‘We’ll need materials and machines. The longer our project is in the news, the more difficult and expensive it might become for us to get what we need. So our best course of action is to acquire both materials and machines now. If we have to wait months before we can use either, then our costs will skyrocket, but if we can use them in six weeks, that’s workable.’ ‘Good point,’ Alice said. ‘Can you talk to the Building Site Team about that, and can you give us an update on the involvement of our project businesses for the town?’ ‘Of course,’ John said and stood up. ‘Alice, Rohana and I met with members of the project businesses to discuss which products we will need, for example: tools, phones, working clothes for the building phase, or furniture, crockery, paints for the future town. We can produce most of these

products in our emerging business networks and decided to start the production of key items as soon as possible since all of these products could be sold to other customers should we not require them.' Andy (campaign simulations) scratched his stubbly chin. 'We should build a simulation to find out what exactly we need for the building site and also what exactly we need for our facilities and homes in town.' John nodded. 'I already talked to Daria and Light from your Programming Team, who head the simulations team at the building site.' Andy smiled. 'Oh, good. Daria will have the numbers in no time.' Alice nodded and said: 'We also decided to push our international job shaking ideas to pave the way for our international teams and other international volunteers who want to help at our building site.' Isabel (head of campaigns) smiled. 'We could use this in the campaigns: Have a discussion about international work exchanges and the benefits for all involved.' Heather (media) nodded. 'And in a post: Illustrate that we are an international team, working for everyone and with everyone, giving people opportunities to explore the world on their terms.' Several people nodded and Dana stood up again. 'I have more news. Alice and I met with Megan, head of Agriculture, to discuss the Agriculture Team's progress with regard to food suppliers for goods like chocolate and coffee beans, tea, coconuts, spices and other exotic foods. Last summer several food and raw materials teams travelled around the world to find potential suppliers. There was some interest, but we put all bigger decisions on hold, until now. In the meeting with Megan, we had the idea to use our business networks to support suppliers. So far, many suppliers are dependent on corrupt contractors. But with our networks, we could create the sort of environment and distribution channels that allow the people to own their own lands, to sell at adequate prices, and to establish local economies. We

could further support local economies by setting up dot.stations, book stations or any other of our future business stations, hubs for everything the community might want and need, and co-financed by a portion of the business's incomes. This way farmers can protect themselves from exploiters and would have the freedom and means to set up local, slave-free and sustainable economies, take pressure off the plants by giving them time to rejuvenate and by restoring biodiversity. Restored nature, beneficial distribution channels and local economies will create ripple effects for the regions, too, as we're already seeing at existing Hub and dot.stations.' 'This sounds good,' John (business) said. 'And these farmers would supply our business networks, too, not just the town?' 'Yes,' Alice said. 'That's why we can sign contracts now. One way or another, we'll have some demand for these goods.' John (business) nodded and Raiden (town simulation) said: 'Our team will build a simulation the farmers and distributors can use to determine sustainable output, habitat restoration, sustainable amounts for shipping, and viable pricing.' 'Good,' Alice returned and Emine (lawyer) chuckled. 'I must say, the concept of taking time off seems foreign to some of you, doesn't it? I mean, Alice, you sent us on a three-days break.' Several people chuckled and Jack (film) said: 'I've been thinking the same.' 'I wouldn't worry,' Navarro (sociology) returned. 'They will need rest at some point, and then we can present them with a long list of news the next day.' Several people chuckled and Alice said: 'One day I want to learn how to take time off — after we've started building our town.' Several people laughed and Dennie said: 'I'll remind you.' 'Please, do. Anyway, these were all the updates on my list. Are there any questions or additions?' Jack (film) nodded. 'In between enjoying time with my children and resting, I spoke with some fellow actors who might be

prepared to join our campaigns.’ ‘Great,’ Isabel (head of campaigns) said. ‘The more recognisable people get involved the better.’ Alice smiled and said: ‘Thanks, Jack. OK. Let’s press on. From tomorrow on, we have another two days of seclusion, and we’ll focus on ideas for our campaigns and on the first press conference, which will be on Friday. And remember, our aim is to make it impossible for the government to ignore us. We want to give them good reasons to work with us, but we also hope to win enough public support to put pressure on the government so that they can’t refuse to negotiate with us. Let’s pop up wherever they go, in whatever they watch or listen to, and whenever they have their coffee or a snack. Plus, people like to talk. Let’s give them plenty to talk about.’ The team smiled and nodded. Alice continued. ‘On Thursday, we’ll take a look at the reactions to the queen’s offer and probably make some adjustments to our ideas.’ Alice paused and looked at her team. ‘There is one thing, I forgot to bring up earlier. As a project we’re pretty transparent, but even we have a few classified corners, and in this room only Andy, Jack, Dennie and I know the details of what I’m going to tell you now. I spoke with the head of THE, the security company which provides security for our project, and we agreed that there are a few things you should know. However, we ask you to treat this information confidential.’ The members of the team nodded and many of them frowned. Alice continued. ‘At our first project conference, last May, and afterwards, Tom and I met with a number of influential people, most of them global players in the business world who hope to make some money with our town. These meetings were informal, and Tom and I left these businesspeople guessing whether or not we’d eventually open the doors of our project to their so-called investments. It was Tom’s idea to be evasive. He argued that our project should get stronger before facing

backlashes from companies who usually eliminate their competition. THE kept an eye on these and on other players, and infiltrated a group THE calls The Illustrious Circle. Last summer, The Illustrious Circle ordered sabotages at Hub Stations, disrupted deliveries to our businesses, initiated the smear campaign, tried to bribe members of our team to leave the project, tried to infiltrate our teams, and attempted to put an end to our project. That changed when they discovered THE's mole. Up to that point, the mole's information meant that THE knew about attacks upfront and could prevent greater damages. With the mole exposed, THE gave the members of the Illustrious Circle a choice: "You can leave us alone, or we will bring you crushing down —" "—That's blackmail," Navarro (sociology) interrupted. Alice nodded. 'After my arrival in London, Any, the head of THE, whose real name I don't know, and I had a long discussion about how to deal with these people. I'm not happy about the blackmail. But the power vacuum which would ensue if we put those people behind bars, would be less predictable.' 'Know your enemy?' Constance (crafts) asked. 'No,' John (business) said. 'It's better, actually. Have leverage over your enemy.' Alice nodded. 'The Illustrious Circle still exists. Some notably ruthless members of this group have retired. But these people are still scheming. Only they can't touch us, and they can't do any major harm because that would be the end of them. My consolation is that our international business networks challenge the old narratives and practices of exploitation and profiteering. If our and similar projects can continue to inspire change in how we do business globally, then these players won't have a footing in our societies for much longer, and we won't have to worry about power vacuums any more. Saying all this, there are still other influential players who are not part of the Illustrious Circle and who have been reacting vehemently to

our business expansion plans. We have no idea what anyone might throw at us now that we have the chance to get a site for our town, too. Why am I telling you this? We will have to meet with as many influential people as possible, and we will have to convince them that gambling and scheming is a fun thing in stories, but it has no place in the real world because at the end of the day, we all suffer the consequences. When we speak to people, THE will provide us with profiles of those people so we know a few things about them upfront. That's where you might come across some associates of the Illustrious Circle, or some people Tom and I talked to. Generally speaking: I don't want to make more enemies. I don't want to play games. I don't want to scheme or blackmail. Ideally, I want us to convince people that we are all in the same boat, and we can only get to that sunrise if we do a thorough rethink of practically everything instead of fighting and outsmarting each other. But beware that there is a lot going on behind closed doors, and also that there are likely to be people, especially politicians, who will try to use our campaigns to stir up fights, not necessarily with us but with some opposition. I don't want to go deeper into this, but if you have questions, you can ask Dennie.'

'The attack in Russia, was that the Illustrious Circle, too?'

Skye (care) asked quietly. 'It doesn't seem so,' Dennie replied. 'We never found out who the contractor was. But we guess that it was one of the global giant corporations.' Alice nodded and looked at Navarro with a half-smile. 'I know I'm rushing, but I'd like to start with ideas for campaigns before our first appointment. Are you ready, Navarro?' Navarro (sociology) nodded, stood up, stepped on a platform next to his chair, near the blackboard, and said: 'Alice and Isabel asked me to lead a brainstorming session for campaign ideas. And while I have a few questions regarding the updates and the revelations we just heard, I understand the

need to make a start. Maybe we could include a daily team meeting for questions which had to be postponed.’ Alice and other team members nodded, and Rohana (coordination) said: ‘I’ll schedule it flexibly.’ ‘Thank you,’ Navarro returned and continued. ‘Leo’s street survey team have confirmed that we should focus our campaigns on the economy, tech, the environment and society. The team added that people are also worried about immigration. Last week, Alice made an important point when she reminded us that as a project we’ve been cooped up in a bubble, and that we need to step out of that bubble, even step away from our core arguments and find out which issues are relevant to people here so that we can illustrate how our project might be useful for them. And since we’re still part of the sitting-less experiment, I suggest that everyone who has an idea for a campaign, adds the keywords to the blackboard. Yes, Dennie?’ ‘Maybe we only write ideas on the blackboard when they pass something like a first test?’ Navarro smiled and several people chuckled. ‘I always thought that a certain laziness creates a practical mind. And I’ll do a U-turn on my suggestion.’ Dennie (security) smiled back. ‘Always happy to be of service.’ Navarro nodded. ‘Then let’s begin by just pushing out topics and ideas. I’ll make notes, and when we had enough of sitting and throwing around keywords, we’ll explore the most promising ideas further. Alice, will you kick off?’ Alice nodded. ‘Housing, homes, communities.’ Rohana (coordination): ‘Climate emergency, exploitation.’ Andy (campaign simulations): ‘Mental health crisis, polarisation, hate.’ Raiden (town simulations): ‘Water pollution.’ John (business): ‘Loneliness crisis.’ Marita (economics): ‘Bullies, traditions.’ Hayley (tech): ‘I’m supposed to say tech, right? But I want a millionaires boot camp where they can sweat out their unimaginative narratives.’ Several people chuckled. ‘Great. Keep it coming,’ Navarro called and Constance

(crafts) said: 'Connections campaign.' Dana (ecology): 'Food systems, food security, food waste. Private schools.' Hayley (tech): 'Whiteboards.' Jack (film): 'Clickbait.' Heather (press): 'I wanted to say that, Jack.' 'Sorry. I can say conspiracy theories instead.' 'Jack, you did it again.' Heather and Jack chuckled, and Heather said: 'I'll take evolution then. A campaign that asks how we can evolve and rethink the mess we created. And I'd like to use Kahu's universe stories. They are so powerful. Some of those stories address critical issues like failing governments, ending wars, restoring the planet, replacing crude oil. And they illustrate how people of other planets deal with these issues.' Several people nodded and Troy (illustrator) said: 'We could use comics to make our arguments.' 'What exactly do you mean?' several people asked. 'Say we do a campaign to dismantle narratives, the ones that cause harm. Comics could be part of that. We wouldn't just visualise ideas in comic stories. We could take a critical narrative and pick it apart in a comic book, and make a case for alternatives.' 'I love it,' several people said. Navarro grinned and pointed to the blackboard. 'It seems we have an early entry for our blackboard.' Hayley nodded. 'I wonder whether we could get the gaming community on board, too. Have them create the sort of stories that make the adventure about finding out where a damaging narrative comes from and then develop the strategy to rewrite that narrative and see what the effects of the alternatives are for the planet.' 'Wow, that's a good idea,' Raiden said. 'We could offer gamers input from our simulations.' 'Fantastic,' Navarro applauded. 'Keep it coming. Robin, you're next.' 'Thank you,' Robin (education) said. 'It might be good to have three related campaigns: one for stories that dominate our lives and could do with a rethink, one for narratives, reviewing them and suggesting new ones, and one for comics, games, artworks, stories, focusing on visual and fictional cues for

rethinking.’ Marita (economics) straightened. ‘Could we develop some kind of test that allows people to become aware of how stuck they are in their narratives and convictions? I mean most people know how to criticise others, but they are blind to the narratives that make them as bullheaded as everyone else.’ Robin (education) nodded. ‘We could give it a positive spin and create a test to see how flexible and empowering our thinking is and could become.’ ‘Fantastic ideas,’ Navarro said. ‘We need to increase our thinking flexibility to have the conversations we need to have. For that we need to know where we stand, and where we might need more flexibility. Great. That’s one for the blackboard, too.’ With a glance at Alice, Jack said: ‘When Alice told me, back in New York, that she needed playful people on the team, I got angry because I had buried that part of myself, and I didn’t quite get what she meant anyway. But I think, Alice called it, and she always nudges the teams to play with ideas, to test them, to dismiss nothing that springs to mind. I wonder whether we could have a campaign or event where people can experience this combination of thinking and exploring with a playful mind.’ Many smiled and Navarro clapped his hands. ‘More for the blackboard. Fantastic thoughts. Playfulness in thinking opens doors to discovering — often more than we were looking for. We could add games that let people experience how mistakes and failures improve our chances to make a discovery.’ Robin nodded. ‘Playing is a powerful way to nurture a thinking mind, much better than learning by heart and simply parroting what others made up.’ Jack finished writing Playfulness for thinking explorations on the blackboard, and Navarro turned to the group again. ‘Fantastic. Let’s continue. I think, it’s your turn, Dennie.’ ‘Thanks Navarro. I’d like a Your powers campaign, or a You can shape campaign, like inviting people to test what

happens if they boycott a company or a game or an institution. Or what happens if they go on a general strike, if they refuse to partake in the economic and social everyday doings.’ ‘I didn’t know there’s a rebel in you,’ Alice teased. Dennie (security) shrugged. ‘Usually my rebel is a bit of a lazy dude. And since you hired me as a sanity joker, I won’t pull him up to full size. But yeah, I have a bit of rebel in me.’ Alice and Dennie exchanged a smile, and Jack (film) said: ‘Culture, identity, race and gender could be discussed in our campaigns.’ Skye (care) put her glass of water back on the table and said: ‘We should have a Campaign Square on the Hub where all our campaign teams can post and interact with the users, and maybe the users with each other.’ Several people nodded and Andy (campaign simulations) said: ‘I send a request to Daria and Noel directly. They can start setting it up now. The square could also be used for the live coverages of our press conferences and the Q & As.’ Several people nodded and Jack said: ‘The documentaries we want to shoot can be posted there, too.’ ‘Very good,’ Navarro said. Emine (lawyer) smiled: ‘I can’t believe family still didn’t make it onto our list. As a mother, I’d love a campaign either for kid’s welfare, or for our motto: Happy parents make for happy children.’ Rohana nodded. ‘I’m for the latter. It always angers me when people talk about supporting children while overlooking that happy, healthy and content parents are the best protection you can give a child.’ Navarro nodded. ‘I’ll write it down. What else? Ah, I have one myself: Hello questions. A campaign about the trouble with answers, and how answers can be in the way of explorations. And I have another one. Last year, Alice brought up the idea of a demand-time-to-think campaign.’ Alice chuckled. ‘Press pause. I forgot about that. We leave so many decisions to a few players because we don’t have time to think and engage. So, I thought that governments

should give people the opportunity to come together and voice their concerns, search for solutions together, and shape their societies.’ ‘I wish that was possible,’ Skye (care) remarked. ‘Maybe we can make it possible,’ Jack said. Skye frowned. ‘Hm. Anyway, I want a public town simulation. Can we do that, Raiden?’ Raiden thought for a moment. ‘I could spare three people to strip down our original town simulation so that a user could, for example, experience life in our town as a nurse or as a teacher.’ ‘Great,’ Skye said. ‘And then we can make the simulation available on the Hub’s Campaign Square. People could practically walk through our town and see what it’s all about. We can’t turn it into a game, can we?’ Andy (campaign simulations) grimaced. ‘No. It’s a simulation, a scientific tool, not a plaything.’ ‘Just asking. And I read this article the other day about people who get really old, and how humans have always been trying to find ways to live longer, like forever. And I thought, we could do a longevity campaign because, hey, in our town, if we do a good job, then a hundred years will be some kind of middle age.’ There was laughter and Navarro said: ‘I think, we have another entry for the blackboard. Blimey! This is perfect! The quest for longevity! It doesn’t have all the ballast of people fighting some ideology wars, there is no us and them, good and evil, nor any self-righteous indignation. It’s so basic and so incredibly fitting.’ Blushing a bit, Skye added: Longevity campaign, town simulation (not a game) and Campaign Square (Hub) to the blackboard. Navarro smiled. ‘You inspire me, Skye. Maybe we can even get a bit poetic and have a to-be-or-not-to-be campaign. What do you say, Jack?’ ‘Hm. Street theatre throughout London, artworks that explore the existential questions of our time? I like it. Hamlet though seems to be contemplating suicide in that famous scene, and while we are ready to take up arms against the sea of troubles, which surely awaits us, I am confident that by

opposing them we have a chance to succeed.' There was applause and Dennie teased: 'Spoken like a true actor.' 'Suicide?' Navarro asked. 'I didn't know that. I always thought the line sounded rather romantic, rather like a call to defy. Hm. Well, maybe one of Shakespeare's comedies will serve us better.' There were some chuckles and Dana (ecology) said: 'A consequences campaign might be interesting, illustrating which consequences people's actions have, like what are the consequences of using your phone all the time? What are the consequences of eating avocados every day?' Several people nodded, but Dennie remarked: 'I thought we want to win people's support and not make them feel miserable about avocados, their favourite fruit which they regard as a vegetable because it's just not sweet and juicy enough to qualify as fruit.' Several people chuckled and Marita (economics) asked: 'What about a Happy mistakes campaign? Illustrating how useful mistakes can be. It could be part of the Hello questions campaign.' Dennie shrugged. 'Again, I think we'll achieve more if we find ways to make people feel good. That's the cool thing about Skye's Longevity Campaign. It's a hopeful, non-judgemental thing, even though we can use it to include pretty much every critical issue like water pollution, housing crises, discrimination, exploitation, NHS, education, cost of living, loneliness, austerity, speculations. Because all of these things, when improved or replaced, will increase our chances to live longer and that has hope value.' Navarro smiled. 'Kudos, Dennie. I didn't quite get why Alice wanted you on the campaigns team, but now I can only say, I'm honoured to be working with you.' Dennie grinned. 'I wish I could say the same, Navarro, but I know exactly why Alice wanted you on the team. And I knew beforehand that it would be an honour to work with you.' 'OK, OK,' John (business) chipped in. 'That's enough schmoozing. I think

we should add a transparency campaign. Being open about our numbers and procedures has, so far, served us well.’ Alice twitched her mouth and said: ‘Do we need a campaign for that? I mean we will cover everything we do in Jellybridge with our vlogs and posts. Same goes for our business expansions. Can’t we just check what else could be used in this category and make the data available without doing any actual campaign on transparency?’ John nodded. ‘You’re right. I’ll ask Beatrice to run a check where we could add more transparency.’ ‘Good. Thanks,’ Alice said and continued ‘Hope value is great. Maybe we could add a spectacle or spectacles. Positive. No attacks. Challenges which engage. Humour. We could try to find the hooks that make people laugh. Lightness.’ Alice chuckled. ‘I have a fun idea. What about a faces and feet photo campaign on the streets of London? Everyone is invited, everyone can participate, and we collect a great variety of face and feet photos. We’d engage with each other and celebrate just how incredibly diverse nature creates, and how we are nonetheless all humans and fellow humans.’ ‘I want to do this!’ Troy (illustrator) exclaimed. ‘People could photograph each other. We provide the printers, and then we create the longest gallery ever by fixing the photos to strings and the strings to lampposts, sculptures, doorframes, balconies, and that as far through the streets of London as we can get, maybe starting several lines from Trafalgar Square.’ There was applause and many smiles. ‘Why feet, though?’ Dennie (security) asked. Alice smiled. ‘Because we don’t usually take the time to look at each other’s feet. Anyone can do faces. But faces and feet, that’s special.’ Dennie chuckled, Navarro put the idea on the blackboard, and Raiden (town simulations) said: ‘We can get people involved with the town simulation, too. We could open a test version of the Hub Town features.’ ‘Oh, yeah,’ Dennie said. ‘I did some tests in

January. They are fun. And you get an idea of how the town will work on the admin side but without getting bored. I got to pick different characters. That was fun, too. And not at all a game, Andy.' Dennie added with a grin. Andy (campaign simulations) rolled his eyes and returned: 'We don't need more testers. But it might be good for transparency to open a public test version.' Raiden nodded and said: 'We can add the town features to the town simulation. Then people could register as one of the simulated characters.' Andy (campaign simulations) nodded and Heather (press) asked: 'Could we have a simulation which demonstrates how much we lose by increasing the cost of living? Or a simulation which compares the effects of austerity to the effects of a balancing economy where people have the means to live their lives without constant worry?' Many nodded and Skye said: 'I bet that austerity increases health costs. Worry makes people sick. No access to culture, healthcare, education, sports, gardens, travelling, makes people sick. We're healthiest when we have the means to eat healthy, to be in nature, to afford spending time with friends.' There was a grim applause and many nods. 'Is anyone going to bring up Brexit?' Rohana (coordination) asked. All British people: Andy, Jack, Heather and Dennie shook their heads. The others shrugged. Rohana smiled and crossed Brexit off her list. 'That's a clear enough No for me. I guess colonialism, the British class system, landownership, child poverty or disparities between British regions don't qualify as subjects for feel-good campaigns either?' Several people shook their heads. 'Alright. What about setting world records?' 'Like the longest open air gallery in the world?' Constance asked. 'Exactly. Or could we point out which records we plan to break in our town?' 'Which records do you have in mind?' John asked. Rohana smiled. 'Have you ever heard of a town that was built in a year? And with the least possible damage

to nature? Or a town with the highest health, education and equity levels?' 'Oh, that,' John returned with a smile. 'But that sounds more like a good piece for ripples news than for a campaign. What do you think Heather?' 'I agree. I'll pass it on to my colleagues,' Heather replied. 'Besides record breaking might be too close to the competition narrative we want to debunk.' Raiden put his head to one side.

'Competition. Compete to dominate. Dominance. These are related. I know we said hope value, but maybe we could add a campaign that questions the usefulness of dominance.' 'Or whether competition needs to be about dominance instead of being just for fun,' Dennie remarked. 'Fantastic!' Navarro said. 'Competition for fun is fun. But dominance destroys and holds back. If we unearth each other's potentials instead of competing, if we empower and give all our potentials room to unfold, then our world will thrive. And that reminds me of something you, Alice, said: "True power is in creation," because there is nothing more powerful than to create and nurture a living, breathing and thriving world.' Alice nodded. 'Yes. A poet from Lebanon said this to me last year, and it's been on my mind repeatedly every since. And yes, let's have a True power campaign. It won't be quite a feel-good campaign, more a sharp edge but with hope value because we don't have to act competitive or dominant. Animals don't bother with either. Nature thrives on diversity, on digesting, on cycles, on balances not on dominance or competition for its own sake. A leader of the pack acts as a balancer, provides guardianship and maybe guidance, but leadership in nature is not a means to oppress, betray, sell out or exploit the pack.' Alice smiled. 'I recently read another of Kahu's universe stories, one about ending all wars. In the story, the thinkers talk about predator and prey, and rewrite that narrative with a much more logical explanation of why some animals kill: "If the planet had no carnivores," the

thinkers say, 'it would have a great problem with carcasses. That carnivores hunt is not a manifestation of strength or superiority, it's simply an important task within the ecosystem.'" In other words, predators clean up before the old or weak animal dies. It's a perfect system and has nothing to do with dominance for its own sake. And strength, the story suggests, might be a natural kind of birth control, making sure that not too many animals breed. The story even suggests that animals marking their territory might be nature's way of avoiding overpopulation and with that a way to keep waste in any given area manageable. Nature is amazing, and maybe we could have another campaign which focuses on reconnecting with nature and with each other.' Several people nodded and scribbled notes while Troy (illustrations) said: 'I don't think I know Kahu.' 'Kahu is one of our special transfers, like Navarro and Emine,' Alice replied. 'She was a member of the Aotearoa New Zealand Team and joined our main team in September. She is of Maori origin, an oceanologist and works with the Ecology Team. Kahu and some friends from several countries started a collection of thoughts and stories called Views from around the universe, some years back. They imagine how the people on other planets deal with issues like war, work or water. I've only heard and read bits of the collection, but it's amazing, and I'm sure the authors would support us. We could probably send them keywords and let their imaginations create some responses from different planets for us.' 'Like what do you think about taking photos of feet?' Dennie (security) teased. Alice laughed. 'Actually, they would love that. They like adding funny bits, like zebra because someone insisted on having an entry for Z, or wondering what it is with humans and feeding ducks.' Several people chuckled. 'Sounds fantastic,' Navarro said and added: 'I'd love to hear more, but we should keep going. Constance?'

‘I’d like a crafts campaign which demonstrates how much we win when we work with our hands, when we are creative — and that branding, mass production and AI take so much away from us, both from us creators and from us customers.’ ‘Maybe this could be part of the Your powers campaign,’ Dennie suggested, several team members nodded, and Navarro said: ‘I’d like a campaign called: How to turn *I can’t* into *I can*?’ Several people smiled and Heather (press) said: ‘We could give that a spin in a Benefits of empowerment campaign. And for both we could build simulations which demonstrate how much we win if we empower people instead of keeping them down, and if we turn can’t into can.’ There was applause and Navarro said: ‘Heather, everyone is smiling.’ Heather smiled, her milky eyes shiny. ‘Thanks for the translation.’ ‘My pleasure.’ Alice frowned. ‘Maybe we could have a discussion about rethinking immigration within the empowerment campaign. Something about dealing with each other as humans and fellow humans, and something about what makes a community, how to support those who have to flee their country, and how to support them in dignifying ways.’ ‘And how our town will deal with immigration?’ Constance asked. Alice shook her head. ‘Not really. In our town we don’t ask where someone comes from. We are interested in bringing people together who share an interest in neurology.’ Alice scratched her chin. ‘I think a lot about immigration needs a complete rethink and that includes a rethink on what makes a community, and that’s the point our project can contribute to.’ Jack (film) straightened and said: ‘How about a campaign about the benefits of rethinking?’ ‘And about the fun of thinking.’ Robin (education) added. ‘We could show the potential we unearth if we rethink and actively shape our world rather than repeating what already failed us and our ancestors, including the way we deal with those we perceive as strangers.’

Several people nodded and Robin (education) said: 'And here is a question from me: Will we include the sex talk as a campaign?' 'Oh,' Rohana uttered. 'Do we have to?' Troy shook his head. 'We, as a project, have only started this conversation, and I'd say it's too early to drag it into the open.' 'You might be right,' Robin conceded. 'Though it could be a chance, especially with respect to domestic violence and gender inequality.' Hayley (tech) shook her head. 'I agree with Troy. We only just started those conversations. It feels too personal. But, will we do anything on the big fairy tale of growth?' John (business) raised his eyebrows. 'Not if we want to include a happiness potential in each campaign.' 'Didn't we say hope value?' Skye (care) asked. 'Same, same.' Hayley nodded. 'OK. I have a number of ideas for tech challenges such as staying off tech for three days, experiments where tech enhances our abilities and where it makes us dependent and potentially stupid because we aren't sufficiently challenged any more, and so on. But I'd rather include all tech honey drops in bigger campaigns, let tech challenges have a practical relevance for the True Power is in Creation Campaign or for the Longevity Campaign.' 'Good point,' Andy (campaign simulations). Emine (lawyer) looked up from her notes. 'I have one more idea: rethinking laws as a kind of challenge event where people can name laws, and we give them a taste of how we would go about rethinking that law.' Jack drummed his pen on the table and said: 'At Jellybridge, I met Betsy, the cook. An amazing person. A soul, Jazz said. Generous. Lively. Welcoming. But I was surprised about how supportive of the town she is. She has spent most of her life on the estate. And now we come along and propose to transform the estate beyond recognition. So why does she welcome us? Part of her support originates in her fears of greedy investors. But she is also genuinely interested in our project

and seems pleased to have become part of it. I keep thinking that there must be more people like Betsy. People who'd rather choose the uncertainty of change that aims at benefitting humanity and the planet than to continue with people and practices which have already proven disastrous for humanity and the planet. Maybe we can keep that in mind when we choose our campaigns and add issues which will give people a reason and a way to support us. For Betsy supporting us means teas and pies. For Jimmy, the master of horses at Jellybridge, it's riding lessons and getting more wagons ready for us. What will it be for the Londoners? What will it be for the people from the Jellybridge region? And there's another question. It makes sense to do campaigns in London, and in other big cities. But could we add a nod to the Jellybridge region? I mean, in addition to the campaigns the Building Site Team will do for the locals—'Noises made everyone at the conference table look towards the double door of studio 2 where some thirty people were filing into the studio, some faces known, others new, all of them meeting the team's gazes. 'Thank you, Jack,' Rohana said, standing up. 'We'll have to postpone further discussions. Please, allow me to introduce you to the cook and household team, to the health and workout team who will offer strength training, yoga classes, massages, breathing sessions, meditations and therapy sessions around the clock, and to Jazz, the head of Project Security, plus the security team assigned to our Campaigns and Negotiations Team.' Over the next hour the teams discussed the practical background support for the Campaigns and Negotiations Team. Afterwards Jack and Dennie split the group for the first voice trainings. And about an hour later, the dot.designer Hachiro and his team came to discuss what kind of outfits the team were likely to need in the coming weeks. This settled, the Campaigns & Negotiations Team

returned to the conference table and continued to discuss the potential campaigns. In the late afternoon, the team split. Some worked on campaign ideas, others on speeches, and Alice, Andy and Rohana met with the Hub Team to discuss how to involve the Hub (an internet within the internet, a safe haven with everything an internet can offer minus the bullshit, exploitation and profiteering of other platforms) and the Hub Stations (physical social hubs worldwide which provide local communities with spaces for crafts, arts, health and education financed with some of the income from the Hub) in the campaigns, what the Hub Campaign Square should include, and the Hub's involvement in the expansion of the project businesses. Afterwards, Alice, Andy and Rohana met with the heads of the transition teams.

Transition teams was a term Alice had coined because these teams were an addition to the original town project teams, and their main task was to transition the town project from theories and a few project companies to a fully fledged operational town and an international businesses network.

The four transition teams were: the Campaigns & Negotiations Team (CaN), headed by Alice and Andy, the Building Site Team (BuST), headed by Olivia, the Business Expansion Team (BET) headed by Alice, Seth and Fi, the Alert Team (AT), headed by Lucy, whose task it was to protect the project businesses from backlashes which might be caused by the Campaigns & Negotiations Team's activities. Also present were the Media Team (MT), and Towns and Cities International (TaCI) who coordinated the input by the project's international teams, plus the Conference Team who would continue to prepare the second Easy Town Conference which was scheduled for the end of May. The news which boosted the teams' mood most that evening was that thousands of professionals and helpers had already applied to help build the town. Some

wanted to use their holidays, others wanted to take unpaid leave, and some wanted to come for the whole run of the building phase. || **days 38-37** || 22-23 February || Seclusion & Preparations || ‘What does the government need to agree to?’ Emine (lawyer) asked the next evening when the team were back at the conference table after a busy day of preparing speeches, discussing potential campaigns and adding another voice & acting training. ‘We need a list of conditions we can take into the negotiations,’ Emine said, ‘conditions which ensure that the town has all the freedom it needs for the experiments.’ Alice frowned. ‘I don’t need a list. A single word will do: autonomy.’ Robin (education) smiled. ‘We need to wrap this into more words, illustrate what it means, and what it doesn’t mean.’ Troy (illustrations) rubbed his hands together. ‘I could write a comic for this.’ ‘Can you do it with a single word?’ Alice asked with a lopsided smile. ‘Nah. But I can keep it really simple. So simple that people won’t be able to misinterpret our motives, aims or reasons.’ Alice smiled. ‘Fly and make it happen.’ Emine (lawyer) drummed her pen on the table. ‘Can you play to Britain’s pride in your comic?’ Troy (illustrations) frowned. ‘Something about hunting?’ Navarro (society): ‘Or what a great seafaring nation they — well, used to be?’ Raiden (town simulation): ‘Or all the grand castles and buildings which — well, were financed by slavery and colonialism?’ ‘What are they proud of?’ Rohana (coordination) asked. Alice shrugged. ‘What is any nation proud of? Many nations did terrible things at some point in their history, some still do. But a country who has the guts to allow us to do the town experiment, I mean that would be something to be proud of, because it’s not a selfish or self-serving thing, or something that will give them a competitive edge. It could be. But we’ll make sure that we share all our findings with the world. So, a reason for pride would be to dare to think, to dare to test, to dare to consider

the planet as a whole—’ Here Rohana (coordination) interrupted, ‘—a whole that’s not to be conquered to become part of a new British Empire!’ Alice chuckled. ‘No, if that happened, we would have failed. No, we want to figure out the opposite of empire building. We want to figure out the *Live and let live*, the *Ravel in the diversity our planet offers without exploiting it*, the *Be empowered and empower.*’ ‘We should use this in your speech,’ Navarro (society) said, already scribbling. (37) The next morning, Dennie (security) read aloud: “Queen blackmailed?” Chuckling, he looked up from a press folder, some hundred and fifty of which had been waiting for the Campaigns & Negotiations Team. ‘I’ve got: “Queen courageous,”’ Skye (care) said. Frowning Alice read: ‘It says here: “Therapists demand access to queen to assess her sanity.”’ ‘Ouch, that doesn’t sound good,’ Emine (lawyer) remarked. ‘Is there anything that’s not about the queen?’ ‘Yes, each folder has a subject, for example: international reactions,’ Andy (campaigns simulations) replied, lifting his folder and pointing to the label on the front cover. ‘There are some with outer space theories,’ Dennie commented. ‘Like this here: Clone army poses as scientists in harmless looking town project.’ Emine rolled her eyes, went back to the other conference table and sorted the folder into heaps until she let out a whistle. The others looked up. ‘Reactions relating to laws,’ Emine said, a happy smile on her face as she opened the folder. Some six hours later, everyone felt drained after reading all the wild speculations, accusations and assumptions the press and social media had been throwing around. To be fair, a few journalists had published thorough analyses of the town ideas. Interestingly there was no mainstream line of attack or approval. Some groups celebrated the end of the monarchy. The next had a mind to replace their rebellious queen and others insisted that the queen’s involvement was a bold,

outrageous or unimaginative lie. The next group yelled: You can't do this! Change is impossible! The world is the way it is! To which Alice reacted with a big sigh: 'The old songs over and over again. It can't be done. La, la, la. It can't be done. La, la, la. Honestly, it's time for a new song.' 'A lot of new songs!' Skye (care) said. 'Including songs about people who always have an explanation of why things are the way they are. People who insist that nothing can ever be changed.' 'And about those who always know better,' Rohana added. Dennie (security) grinned. 'La, la, la, let me tell you about the big bad guys who want the world destroyed.' Alice chuckled. 'La, la, la, nothing we can do. It's all so la, li, do, can't do.' Skye tapped with her foot: 'La, la, la, li, lo, do, nothing we can do — UNTIL WE CAN!' The team laughed. After some more song snippets along the lines of how much humans like to explain all the things that can't be changed, and some other songs about breaking the cycles of *can't be done* by rising to *It can be done*, the team nudged itself back to sifting through the reactions. Some papers wrote exclusively about Tom quitting the town project, a project his money and connections got started last year. These papers ridiculed Tom because Tom couldn't quit the project legally so long as his wife, Fran, stayed. Why? Because at the beginning of the town project, Fran had been critical of Alice and the project and insisted on a contract which would give her a veto on all the couple's decisions regarding the project. Now, Fran used this veto to stop Tom from gutting the project. Others commentators picked Jack as hero or traitor, depending on who posted the comment. The town project's conditions for building the town also drew ridicule with statements like: Nice try! or Don't we all want autonomy? And then there were the different interest groups which either called for cooperation (few) or an immediate shutdown of the project (many), among those were groups

business people, politicians and activists. Several groups criticised the project for planning to destroy wild land. 'If you want to fix towns, fix existing towns!' they wrote. The big question for the Campaigns & Negotiations Team was: How to respond to any or all of those comments? 'Should we just ignore them?' Alice wondered aloud. Several people shook their heads, and Emine said: 'We can't afford bad publicity. To win our case we have to fight. And we need to give the public a way to find out what is real and what isn't.' Navarro agreed. 'We need to make it possible for people to hear and evaluate our arguments.' Emine nodded. 'I suggest we list each negative headline on the Hub Campaign Square and fact-check it. Ripples news can pick up issues for more detailed responses. Plus, we can use our responses to expose the stupidity of fake news, and the warping of reality by dramatising and twisting facts. And we can expose the motives behind those stories, profit, and offer incentives to stop trashing everything that might be fun to trash (restored, thriving planet & communities). At best we manage to inspire writers and readers to say: Fucking hell! Our planet is in a mess. Maybe playtime is really over, and we should do our bit for humanity and the planet, and not be a freaking pest.' Alice sighed. 'You sure know how to phrase it to win me.' Later that day, Robin was the first to call for a sanity check when the team got lost in a sea of campaign ideas. After a break and another discussion, the team decided to do only seven campaigns. **Campaign one: Longevity**, asking what it takes to live a long and healthy life. **Campaign two: Your Powers**, discovering and testing our individual powers. **Campaign three: Narratives**, exploring what narratives are, what they do, testing them for usefulness and replacing those which don't serve us. **Campaign four: True Power is in Creation**, debunking the myths of dominance and competition. **Campaign five: Connections**, highlighting

connections lost, and ways to reconnect to ourselves, each other and the planet. **Campaign six: Benefits of Empowerment**, asking what we forwent because we didn't empower, and what we can win by empowering each other. And the final campaign, **campaign seven: Press Pause**, an invitation to press pause on what we usually do so that we can focus on the issues we as humanity are overdue to address. 'Why these campaigns?' Skye challenged with a smile. 'I mean, someone is bound to ask. We'd better have an answer.' Isabel nodded. 'Because these campaigns mirror what we want to attempt in our town experiment: connections, empowerment, healthy, healing environments, narratives which allow us and the planet to thrive. In our town we want to find practical solutions for the mess we and our planet are in.' Not much later, Hachiro and Jane arrived with their teams for Style Time and tried out new outfits, hairstyles and make-up with the Campaigns & Negotiations Team. It was after eight in the evening when Alice got a call from Any, head of the security company THE. Any had an old acquaintance on the secure line: Ron, an attractive business consultant Alice had met at the project's conference last year. Ron was a member of the Illustrious Circle. 'Alice Adler. You look stunning!' Alice laughed. 'I had forgotten just how charming you are, Ron.' Ron chuckled. 'Please, tell me, I charmed you, at least, a little, last year.' Alice smiled. 'Honestly, I was mostly perplexed by the charm offences. Not just yours but also at the other meetings. Anyway, I am curious: What brings you to my screen?' 'Can you put in a word for me with THE? They won't let me play any more.' Alice chuckled. 'Nothing I can do.' 'Hm. Were you very shocked when you found me on THE's list of miscreants?' Alice shook her head. 'Can't say I was. There is a degree of perfection to your charm that must be ideal in the circus of global schemers.' Ron grimaced, charmingly. 'Degree of

perfection, eh?' Alice smiled and returned: 'It's good to see that you are charmable, too.' 'I wouldn't call us even, though.' Alice laughed. 'Not even close. You're a much more sophisticated charmer than I am.' 'Oh, Alice Adler, your words are like honey for my tortured soul. You know, I might be able to help you with your aspirations to conquer the hearts and souls of the British Empire.' Alice laughed. 'Really?' 'Oh, yes!' 'I'm listening.' 'Well, you could ignite a war between corporations and another between countries. All you have to do is convince a few of them to become your allies.' 'I don't do wars. But I am curious. How would you turn them against each other?' 'Ah, that's easy. No big player or government can be seen as backwards, as speculating profiteers, as destroying the planet or as exploiters of people and resources, though most players do and are just that.' 'So, the moment a big player became the town project's ally and reshaped themselves into a holistically responsible corporation or government, the other corporations or governments would attack the deserter. Or they would panic and join the race to become the most responsible, restorative and empowering corporation or government? Can't quite see that happen. Or did you have bribery in mind? Threaten to expose all their broken promises, lies and damage inflicted if they don't put in a word for our town?' 'Oh, Alice Adler. You warm my heart. I wish I could claim I was your teacher. You see, I was as powerful as I was because I only cared for the game, the game that required me to stay at the top, no matter which views were presently en vogue or even woke. You and your bloody THE were the first to beat me. But despite everything that that has cost me, I can't help smiling and applauding you. Special credits for the holistically responsible. And yes, you can play them in all sorts of ways. They like to play. They like to feel clever and special. They love every opportunity to outsmart someone

they don't like. They love thumbing their chests. They even like the idea of aiding you just to upset or confuse a competitor.' Alice chuckled. 'Bloody hell. Tell me, is any one of them aware that our planet and a majority of the people on our planet are in serious trouble, and we don't have time for games?' Ron smiled sweetly and shook his head. 'I always knew that my actions meant misery for billions of people. But I didn't care. Those billions are somewhere else. Not my problem. Not part of the game. I still don't care. I only care for the game. But your project is so impossible to a mind like mine that I am a big fan.' 'You're that bored?' 'You have no idea! THE said I could open a small grocery. A grocery! Small!' Alice chuckled. 'Out of curiosity: Would you say that your charm gave you too much leeway?' Ron raised his eyebrows. 'You mean, did my charm spoil me?' 'Yes. Did others let you get away with too much?' Ron squinted his eyes. 'When did you turn therapist? And no, I am many things, but I'm not going to blame my actions on others. My actions are all me.' 'Hm.' Ron put on his most charming smile and said: 'It still pains me, how much money your project keeps off the markets. You could easily double or triple it on Wall Street. What am I saying? Your options are astronomical!' Alice smiled. 'I'll tell you a secret. I'm a numbers junkie—' '—No way!' 'I am. And the thought of our billions skyrocketing gives me a rush of excitement. Boy does it feel good.' Ron laughed and Alice added, smiling: 'That's why I don't play. I'd be one of the biggest idiots out there. I'd completely disappear in the game, blindly pushing the keys to win yet another bet, to achieve yet another high score, to make yet another trillion. And the only thing that could stop me, for some minutes, would be my excruciatingly hurting bladder.' Ron burst out laughing. **II days 36-33** **II 24-27 February** **II Press conference & first interactions** **II The town project broke its silence at seven**

o'clock in the morning with the first ripples news live coverages of the day: interviews with and reports from the Building Site Team and the Business Expansion Team. Meanwhile the Campaigns & Negotiations Team was busy getting ready for the press conference. Isabel (head of campaigns), Marita (economics) and Raiden (town simulation) got dressed by Hachiro and his team, Dennie (security) giggled because Eliza, the team's doctor, removed his cast, Skye (care) inspected 'all your sanities to make sure you're okay for the press conference.' Tilly finished a stress-release workout with Andy (campaign simulations), Heather (press), Hayley (tech), Troy (illustrations) and Constance (crafts), and Jack (film) did a voice warmup with those who would be on stage at the press conference: Alice, Emine (lawyer), John (business), Dana (ecology), Navarro (society), Robin (education) and Jack himself. There was some nervousness in the air, but the stronger mood was that of a team who were ready to step into the spotlight. And they did. At eight, Alice opened the press conference. 'Good morning everyone! Welcome to our town museum, here on the third floor of the Front House. This is the new Jellybridge room where you can already find some information on how we might use the Jellybridge Estate. And also welcome to our first press conference.' Some journalists clapped, some smiled a little, most had unreadable expressions on their faces, and a little challenge appeared in Alice's eyes. 'Yesterday, I had a fruit fly in my glass of lemon water. It paddled for its life, frantically. At first, I was annoyed about it. But then I decided to rescue the little pesky thing. I put my index finger into the water, and as soon as the fly found purchase, it scrambled up my finger with an astonishing speed — and then it collapsed. I breathed on it to dry it, but the fly didn't move. Well, I thought, maybe it needs some rest. So I let it slip onto a piece of paper and watched it.

Nothing. I went about my work, returned, watched it. Still nothing. In fact, it never moved again. I could get philosophical about how the fly's scrambling to safety had been in vain. But what intrigued me was that the fruit fly did everything it could to survive — without hesitating, without arguing, without justifying why it had to stay in the lemon water. It got a chance to escape certain death and took it with every ounce of strength it still had.' Alice inhaled. 'How come that a tiny fruit fly is so determined to survive while we seem determined to keep paddling in the sticky water? — You could reply: "What's the use of fighting? We'll die anyway, just like the fruit fly." And I admit, it's too easy to give up on ourselves, on humanity, on our planet. But we don't have to. I decided not to. I decided to find out whether we really have to damage ourselves, each other and our planet. I decided to learn to nurture and empower. For me a central question is whether it is possible to create an environment where humans thrive. And I don't mean some sort of education scheme to make people better or the same. For me the question is whether changed dynamics, changed approaches, changed foci and practices, would allow us to be less destructive, to find our curiosity, creativity, imagination and joy for life. One of the old narratives is that a world without villains, exploiters, fraudsters, profiteers, speculators or the so-called powerful is impossible, and that we ourselves need a degree of ruthlessness to succeed. We need to bite to avoid being bitten. With our project businesses we have been disproving these narratives for months already. With our town we might be able to prove that no one has to exploit, dominate, compete, hold down, enslave or pollute. Here is the thing: Our Business Expansion Team has been accused of building a ubiquitous powerhouse. But we are not about dominance or empire building. We want to figure out the opposite of empire

building. We want to figure out How to live and let live, How to revel in the abundance and diversity our planet has to offer while nurturing both, How to empower and be empowered, How to create and be part of natural cycles. Instead of an empire, we want to contribute to a world which is shaped into a breathing, living, interwoven whole. At the Jellybridge Estate, we would have a chance to let our town experiment become reality and do the research and explorations needed — not for profit but for humanity and the planet.’ Alice paused, smiling at the one journalist who clapped. ‘Last Saturday,’ Alice continued. ‘I asked the British prime minister for an appointment to discuss the town project and the queen’s offer. So far, the British government has not responded. I guess we’ll need the support of the British public to nudge their government into negotiating with us.’ Alice inhaled. ‘I have the great privilege of working with an amazing international diverse team. Every day, I learn something new. Every day we add more questions, perspectives, findings to our project. But one thing hasn’t changed so far. Every day, I grasp a little more, how devastating the situation on our planet has become only because many are convinced that making everything about money is natural, a must, the one and only way to live. Our planet is dying because we still believe in the fairy tale of hoarding riches. Our societies are drowning in crises because we have been taught what is what instead of being encouraged to say: “Hey, this doesn’t work for me, this doesn’t work for my fellow humans, this destroys, poisons, pollutes the basis of all life. Let’s stop this nonsense and let’s rethink our world.” With our project we hope to contribute to rethinking and restoring our planet. Thank you. Thank you for your attention. Thank you for joining us this morning. You’re welcome to take a look around our museum where every project team presents their specific perspectives

regarding our town project. And now, me and my team are happy to answer your questions. Some hands are already up. I'll ask you in the green jumper to make a start. Thank you.' Alice stepped away from the speaker's desk and joined Emine (lawyer), Jack (film), John (business), Dana (ecology), Navarro (society), Robin (education), who sat on armchairs on the stage, and took her seat between Emine and Jack. The quality of the journalists' questions was incredibly varied, from fake-news dumbness to highly sophisticated and pretty much everything in between, including some celebrity bashing — and fawning — aimed at Jack. One reporter pointed out that the project team had already moved into Jellybridge House. 'You should have nosed a little deeper by questioning the staff about us,' Emine (lawyer) responded with her big smile. 'I asked!' the reporter retorted. 'And they wouldn't tell me a thing!' 'Oh, well,' Alice returned with a smile, 'they are cool people.' Emine chuckled and said: 'In that case, let me enlighten you. The day Alice Adler accepted Queen Lusana's offer we submitted a formal request to rent Jellybridge House and to restore the train station, with no costs to the queen or to the taxpayer. Furthermore we asked the queen to clarify what exactly our team is allowed to do on the site as a renter. After the signing ceremony at Waterbridge Castle, the queen's secretary presented us with a proposed contract for renting Jellybridge House. Alice Adler, the queen and myself took pains to add further paragraphs to clarify what we can and what we can't do on the estate. This includes, for example, that while the prospective site for the town may be marked with strings to indicate the locations of future streets and buildings (no plastic strings and at a height that doesn't bother the wildlife), the site is off limits for every kind of change, and may only be entered for planning and documenting purposes or to show interested parties the site

and give them an idea of what the town might look like. For those purposes we might add elevated wooden walkways to protect the ground. However, as renter of Jellybridge House, our team can use everything in and around the house. The queen also accepted our offer of restoring the train station, with the added benefit that we can use the area around the train station, for example, for parking and for storing building materials. Should the queen's offer not have come into force by the thirty-first of March, then we have to leave the estate within two weeks and restore everything to its original state — except the train station.' 'Where is the contract?' 'In your extensive press pack.' 'The queen mentioned that you, Alice Adler, aren't happy about the conditions attached to the queen's offer. What are you unhappy about? And why did you agree to the offer?' 'I don't like that the conditions put so much focus on me. Our project is teamwork. But I agreed to the conditions because they don't interfere with our experiments.' 'You're very old and with no credits to your name. Why should anyone listen to you?' 'Good whiskey needs a lot of time to mature and to develop a full and unique flavour, and so did I. Besides, if you consider me old, you're in for some surprises. The older I get the more I have to laugh about just how young I used to be in my twenties and thirties. And when the time comes, I'll probably laugh about my forties, too. It's quite an experience.' 'Have you studied?' Alice smiled. 'I have. But mostly my thoughts are shaped by thinking, by testing ideas and playing through scenarios. I have little expertise in parroting.' 'Do you believe in science?' 'I take that one,' Dana said, straightening in her seat. 'Science is not a religion you decide to believe in. At best scientific research helps us to expose gaps in our understanding and provides the foundations for inventions. At worst scientists make inventions without investigating the consequences. I am a scientist. The toughest lesson I

learned came from a child, my niece, who told me that scientists ruined the world with finding all the uses for crude oil, including plastic, fertilisers and fossil fuels, with laying the foundations for mass production, factory farming, concentration camps, weapons of mass destruction and much more. “And for what?” my niece asked me. “To get a prize, an award, titles, to feel important, to beat other scientists to it, to be self-righteous, respected and rich.” My niece is right. Being a scientist doesn’t mean we are good, devoid of pride, resist high incomes, don’t compete, or that everything we find is valid, useful, untouchable, sustainable. The town project is about rethinking, and that includes to reflect on the damages scientists have inflicted on this planet. Research is needed. Thinking is needed. Honesty is needed. Inclusiveness is needed. Cooperations and empowerment are needed. Fighting for our planet is needed. But the scientific world, too, needs to rethink — a lot. And we, all of us, need to understand that the future of our planet is not in the heads or hands of a few. The changes we need require all of us. Besides, any good scientist knows that there is always a good chance that what we know today, might be disproven tomorrow. I would never ask anyone to believe me. I always encourage people to question my findings. And with our town project we invite everyone to join us on our exploration, an exploration to entangle the mess we, the people of this planet, are in. And tragically my niece is right: science has contributed to a lot of our mess. And science has hindered progress because of its exclusivity. Reflective, open-minded, curious, inclusive, clear-headed, good-trouble scientists, that’s what we need.’ ‘My question is for Alice Adler. How did you start with this town idea?’ *I will never get used to these abrupt changes of subject*, Alice thought, inhaled and replied: ‘I was tired of people theorising. I wanted something real where we can test ideas,

where we can question everything that makes us and our planet sick, and where we can shape a town that works for us and nature.’ ‘Why don’t you just build the town? It’s your land our queen gave you.’ ‘The offer of the estate will only come into force if and when the government approves of the town and grants us the autonomy we need to use the town as playground for our experiments.’ ‘You’re known to be critical of property. With the queen’s conditions you can ignore the property question.’ ‘Yes. It’s a cowardly way out of that discussion, but I’m glad to get away with not having an answer on how to deal with property. For me property is one of the big puzzles.’ ‘Aren’t you worried that people will be put off by not being able to buy their homes?’ ‘No. Testing alternatives to buying homes will be an interesting part of the experiment. And not buying gives people a lot more freedom, and independence from banks.’ ‘Who do you think you are? Town planning is the responsibility of the government, not of a group of vigilantes.’ ‘As we can see in London and elsewhere governments are doing great jobs. Say again who grants permissions to build those pretty shiny teeth that screw the sky? Who thinks housing is all a community needs and should be planned and executed by profiteers? Who prioritises car traffic and parking instead of cycling and parks? And who privatises water, energy and transport to cater to yet more money-makers?’ ‘You have no right to own the Jellybridge Estate!’ Emine smiled and returned: ‘At the core of the contract with the queen isn’t ownership but guardianship for the estate.’ Alice nodded. ‘And hopefully we’ll find an approach to property which is nowhere near speculations and property hoarding, nowhere near the failures to create communities or the pitfalls of inheritance or the lack of taste and imagination, and as far removed as possible from the failures to integrate all human settlements into nature.’ ‘How will you protect nature?’

Navarro (society) replied. 'That's one of the tricky questions in our experiment. Ideally we'll get to a point where we won't protect nature because we have learned how to coexist with it. We only have to protect nature if we use an economic system that isn't part of nature and is instead built on draining planet and people in order to accumulate profit. We only have to protect nature if people have no connection to it and don't understand how much damage their actions cause and how much they benefit if they connect to nature and become part of it. Can we, as a project, find a way to reconnect to nature and coexist with it? These are some of the many questions we want to explore.' John (business) nodded. 'To protect nature is like dealing with consequences instead of asking: What causes harm to nature and how can we replace harmful practices so that nature thrives? So long as we focus on protecting nature, we're tolerating systems, practices, products and habits which cause harm.' Robin (education) nodded. 'The best way to protect nature is to make protection obsolete. One way of doing this is to understand that everything is connected. Everything that is alive has an underlying system, every human, every insect, every lion, every crab. And each of these systems works best as part of an ecosystem. And all ecosystems work best if each of them is restored. Everything is connected, and everything on this planet, us included, depends on intact, resilient, evolving systems. In our town we hope to explore all connections, and we hope to learn how to be part of the planet's connectivity.' There were some murmurs, but then the next question was posed, and the queen featured again. 'You say, you want to rethink everything. So the queen should just leave?' 'That is not for me to say,' Alice replied. 'I've met Queen Lusana. I like her. But generally speaking, I think monarchies are a thing of the past, and democracies need a rethink.' 'So you're a socialist.' 'No. I'm an open-

minded person. We don't have to toy around with ideas which have already failed us. And contrary to what is happening in present democracies, our town will not aim at a system where populism, big promises and self-serving laws steer the course in favour of a few profiteers, where governments seem to have forgotten that they are supposed to serve and instead hasten to widen the gaps between the few who accumulate riches and those who are exploited, all in the name of the internalised fairy tale of growth. And those governments seem to have no qualms to destroy the basis of life: clean water, air, soil, a functioning natural world, and they don't seem to have an inkling of imagination when it comes to building homes, when it comes to rethinking towns and cities, to reshaping public transport, to creating the sort of environment that would drastically reduce healthcare costs and, and, and.' 'What will your political system be?' 'I don't know,' Alice returned. 'But a president like the one in the US couldn't happen in whichever system we might develop, nor any of the European clowns. The destruction of our ecosystems, the destructive goals of economic growth, competing and seeking dominance, bowing to financial interests, waging wars, voter pleasing, exploitation, elitism, discrimination, corruption, manipulation, I hope that none of these common elements will be part of our political system. We'll take it slowly, test, adjust, test again, involve the towners, involve experts, and work with proofs not with empty promises.' 'How dare you propose to question democracy?' 'By being an explorer who has not given up on humanity, by being someone who believes that we can do better. We don't have all cards on the table. There are more potential systems out there than those humanity has suffered so far. If I wanted an experiment to learn which lobbyists are the most successful in pushing the agenda of a small interest group, I wouldn't bother with building a town. I

would set up a nice conference hotel and initiate a lot of secret meetings. That should be fun, but it'd be of no interest to me. Do I believe that democracy should be more than a word? Yes. Do I think that the reality of democracies should get bone, flesh, heart and blood? By all means. Would I suggest a debate on what we want democracy to be? Definitely. Have I lost trust in what still calls itself democracy? Sadly, yes. Do I propose to upend everything that has grown over the last centuries? No. I propose that we evolve, that we have the courage to call dysfunctional dysfunctional, and that we use our minds to rethink and reshape together.' 'So, you're not going to abide by our laws?' Emine answered. 'How could we test alternatives if we were restricted by the rules we're questioning?' 'Do you know what you are, Alice Adler? You're a loose canon! You don't know, what you're talking about. You hit random marks, not because you know or understand, only because you keep rolling, determined to destroy. You'll destroy decades of work which kept our people safe and prosperous.' Alice needed to take a deeper breath to remind herself that she was not here to fight, and luckily Any knew her well enough to whisper into her ear: 'You can do this.' With half a nod, Alice said: 'We can only regain some safety and prosperity if we face up to the mess we have created with the way we govern, with the way we do business, build, live, work, educate.' 'What you and your project fail to see is that people are evil. They want to control. They want to destroy.' 'You can do this!' Any repeated. Alice twitched the corner of her mouth. 'I don't believe in good and evil. As far as I know both are a simplification and useful for fairy tales. When I say that we are in a mess, I include us personally. We have been hurt, misled, betrayed, brutalised, traumatised. We are not OK. We get an awful lot wrong. And we cause an awful lot of harm. I want to do this experiment because I

speculate that a lot of our behaviour is a consequence of the screwed up systems we live in, and of the damaging narratives we have internalised. Is it possible to break through those narratives and systems, and create new ones? I don't know. But I refuse to believe the fairy tale of good and evil. At the very least I want to try and find out what the human needs to heal, to be empowered, to live their potential, to thrive.' 'You're wrong Adler! Those in power scheme to destroy us all! It's all by design. We're meant to be divided, to be afraid.' Alice nodded. 'If that's the story some people in power believe, then that might sometimes be the case. But it's still a story. And stories can be changed. Moreover, having power is still an attractive story. An attractive story can be made unattractive. But here's another thought: my guess is that the strongest power which holds us back are we ourselves because we keep reiterating that everything there is some great, powerful evil. We chant it. And with that we make it into a self-fulfilling prophecy — instead of standing up and saying: "I'm not having it! No power, imagined or real, will have any sway over me! What can I do to get rid of that power? What can I do to put something in its place that works well without any of the power-wrangling?" 'Then whose side are you on?' 'I don't do sides. We can't afford sides. We don't need sides. We need to come together as the people of this planet, and we have a lot of rethinking to do. That doesn't mean I won't call out everything that is damaging to nature and humans. I'm not neutral. But I refuse to be dragged into a fight. We have no time for a fight. We need to restore, rethink, heal, whether we like it or not. If you need me to be on a side, then I take this one: I am on the side of humanity and the planet.'

'Unsubstantiated idealism! That's what this is! And with it you put people in greater danger. I'll read your philosophical treatise, but there isn't a chance in the world that you could

convince me!’ The hint of a smile appeared on Alice’s face, and she said: ‘I admit, I’ve been hoping for a comment like this because I’d like to make it very clear that our project has nothing to do with idealism, utopias and little with philosophy. We actually looked up both terms in preparation for this press conference. So here it is. According to the Oxford Dictionary: “Idealism is the unrealistic belief in or pursuit of perfection.” Our town project is not about believes. We want to run experiments to gather data and to explore what is possible. As for the pursuit of perfection, not my thing. I love imperfection, diversity, mistakes because that’s where life happens. Next philosophy. According to the Oxford Dictionary: “philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence.” As a project we are mostly interested in how we can shape our knowledge, reality and existence which might contradict the core of the philosophical idea that there is something like a fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence. Truth be told, we had a discussion about this. But in the end, we agreed that first and foremost, we are explorers for the future, we want to disentangle the messes we are in, and we want to do our bit to shape a future where we and the planet thrive. As far as I am personally concerned neither idealism nor philosophy are part of my work. But since there are plenty of definitions for both terms, some members of our team have other views.’ ‘Do you really want to rethink everything?’ Navarro (society) replied. ‘Every system that is in place today played a role in getting us into this mess, into our self-destruction.’ Alice nodded. ‘Rethinking is not about destroying what is. If something humans invented holds, even under scrutiny, if something we’ve been using for decades or centuries can make a case for itself, can face the damages it caused, or prove that it is actually useful, that it still has a place in our world, then all the better. In the

process of rethinking, we'll have gained a deeper insight into what makes our world, we'll have tested every narrative, every idea, every story, thought about it, questioned it. Anything that survives that kind of scrutiny is worthwhile keeping — until the next round of rethinking.' 'What are the goals of your town project?' Robin (education) answered. 'Much of education is about making the human fit into the world and succeed in it. We, in our town, take the opposite approach. We want to build a town that fits the human. We want to create an environment that allows the human to thrive. So far our work suggests that we will find a number of viable and adjustable approaches rather than one ultimate result.' 'You want to build a town for neurological patients. What does that mean?' Navarro answered. 'The idea is to bring people with a common interest together, in our case the study and practice of neurology and related fields. We are curious how a common purpose and interest influences the town's communities.' More questions were asked until Rohana (coordination) closed the press conference. 'Thank you all for coming,' she said. 'You're welcome to join us in the Front House courtyard. A buffet and bar serve foods and drinks, and some of our team will be available to answer more questions. At four this afternoon, our public Q & A opens in our theatre, here in the Front House.' Alice only briefly joined the crowds in the Front House courtyard, and luckily chatted with a journalist who shared quite a few of her thoughts, and she wished she had more time to think with him. It was Andy who picked her up for the meeting with the Business Expansion Team in the atrium of the Central Building. Some twenty minutes into the meeting, Alice said: 'I'd like us to pursue one main goal: inspire enthusiasm for the people of this planet and for the planet itself, an enthusiasm that catches on and has people say: "You know what, I'm done with making everything about money, I want

to make life, living, joy — not rubbish, not exploitation, not growth. I want to be part of creating balances in every possible respect within complex economic systems and as part of the planet's ecosystems. And I'll measure business success in terms of how many ripple effects a business creates for people and the planet.” It was some ninety minutes later, the dot.team were speaking about the new dot.headquarters near Tunis, when Alice got called away — to meet the British prime minister. Apparently the invitation was a reaction to the widely covered press conference. About an hour later, Alice and Jack shook hands with the prime minister and some MPs. After a minimum of small talk, one of the MPs stated: ‘Politeness and the involvement of our queen requires that we tell you in person: we have no interest in your town. We are considering measures to remove you and your businesses from our country. We are a democratic nation and not a playground for deranged fantasies.’ Alice nodded. ‘Next time you have cheerful news for us, please, don’t bother with an invite. A letter will do. My assistant will send you the details for my primary lawyer so that you can discuss all legal issues directly with her. I, on the other hand, am quite busy with finalising the campaigns for our town project. And I am strangely confident that your people are a lot more interested in their future than you seem to be. Should you, despite everything, wish to talk about the enormous benefits our town experiment has to offer your people, yourself and the planet, please, don’t hesitate to get in touch.’ ‘Dear Alice Adler,’ an elderly MP said, in a terribly patronising voice. ‘We know that English is not your native tongue, therefore I will speak very slowly and use very simple words: Please, leave our country! We don’t want any of your nonsense here.’ Alice smiled. ‘Allow me to repay your courtesy by using very simple words in return: Good day to you.’ Back in the car, Any, the head of THE,

appeared on the small screen at the back of the passenger seat. 'I'm proud—' Any started but Alice waved his remark away. 'Any, I'm too angry for flattery. Why did you call?' Any nodded. 'OK. I'll save it for later then. I actually have good news. My team found an ideal place for a Hub Station in the Jellybridge region. Devery and some of his Hub coordination team could take a look at the town and find out how the mayor would react to the suggestion. All they need is your go-ahead.' Alice nodded grimly. 'Go ahead! Let's do everything to pop up on these people's radar as often as possible until they can't ignore as any more. Let's haunt them with our ideas. Let's give them sleepless nights with our ubiquity. Let's make our campaigns into the nightmare they can't escape no matter where they are, what they do, what they try. Why isn't Jack with us?' 'He's off to a family birthday party. It's his son's Davie and his father's birthdays.' 'Oh, I forgot.' 'How was Jack? I didn't hear him via the coms.' 'I don't know. I was too transfixed by these stuffy, patronising people. I didn't look at him, and when I turned to leave, he turned with me and led the way.' Back at the Compound Alice and Heather (press) met with the ripples news team to talk about the role of the town's paper in the coming weeks. Later, Alice and Raiden (town simulation) joined the Q & A, two stools waiting for them on stage where Dana (ecology), Emine (law), Hayley (tech), Marita (economics), Navarro (society) were answering questions. The three hundred red velvet theatre seats were mostly filled, and Rohana's people made sure that anyone who wanted to ask a question got a microphone. 'How do you prevent small town fatigue?' Navarro replied: 'We don't know, yet. But we're eyeing our international business networks as an potential prevention or cure. If things go as we plan, then towners could work in our businesses around the world, for a change of scenery, for new inspirations and even for a coming-back-home

experience. We also contemplate a network of towns, each with their own focus and purpose, and exchanges between these towns. This way the world would become every town's oyster.' This reply was followed by a succession of dismissive questions, and Alice, still a bit on edge from her meeting with the PM, countered at one point: 'So you think the world is what it is and nothing can be done about it? Think again! Who made the world? Some higher power? The devil? I don't know. I don't know what happened in the beginning. But we can be relatively certain about the previous millennia. And in those thousands of years, it was humans who made the world. It was those who popularised an idea and those who adopted those ideas. That's who shaped the world. It was us humans. To this day, we shape the world by what we say, do, not say and don't do. And that means we can question what is and we can shape a world that doesn't drive us crazy. But so long as we tell ourselves that nothing can be done, nothing will be done.' Around half past eight Jack, his sons Davie and Kyle, his daughter Rose, and his father Henry joined the Q & A and caused a bit of a stir, several people pointing at Jack. But soon the next question was posed. 'You seem to seek global dominance with your businesses. How is that better than what other corporations do?' Marita took this question. 'We don't seek dominance. We seek the empowerment of creators, producers and customers. We connect all players in our networks and offer the framework to support everyone involved. That's a long shot from companies who seek to satisfy shareholders and practise modern slavery, resource exploitation, waste production and the destruction of the planet to maximise profits. We have nothing in common with these people.' 'What's your schedule for the town?' Raiden answered. 'We hope to build the town within a year and would like to open it on the first of April—' 'Fools day!'

someone shouted. 'And you want to be taken seriously.' 'Fools day,' Alice echoed, 'and on purpose. It's a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously and to keep our feet on the ground.' Raiden nodded. 'We want to run the experiment for twelve years because we believe—' '—not the socialist's five years plan then? Alice Adler was born in East-Germany, weren't you? Five years plans, isn't that your heritage?' Alice pushed a half-smile into place and returned: 'We believe that twelve years is the minimum time needed to gain reliable results. As for a five year plan. I see no reason to test a concept which has already failed in enough countries and seems to have succeeded in one. If you are interested in that concept, you can find enough data.' Raiden continued. 'After the twelve years, the town will transition into a UK town and national laws will apply. There are, of course, laws we will observe: any murderer, rapist or otherwise criminal person will be handed over to the British authorities.' 'The town will never be ready next April.' Dana replied. 'You haven't seen the number of people who want to help. We'll have enough people to work twenty-four seven. Our greatest problem is how to cater for them, and how many tent towers we'll have to set up. But we'll work it out.' At midnight Alice concluded the Q & A, announcing that there would be Q & As at the theatre and at Jellybridge House every Friday from eight in the morning to midnight, in the coming weeks, and that on top of the twenty-four/seven online Q & As. While the theatre emptied, Alice briefly talked with Jack's kids: Davie, Kyle and Rose, and with Jack's father: Henry, whom Alice hadn't met before, but she had heard about the repair works in the theatre, Henry and Jack did in January. Thanks to Rohana, Alice had presents for Davie and Henry, a voucher for a new dot.overall for Henry, and for Davie a pair of rubber boots and an overall he could wear when he would visit Jack at the building site. Davie, now nine, was over the moon.

And he had a gift for Alice: a small roaring lion crafted by Roger, the head of Crafts. 'Dad bought it months ago. But he said I can have it so I can give it to you. It can protect you. I just wish I could help more. But we're talking about the town in class next week. And me and some friends, we'll set up Q & As to get more kids on board.' Alice smiled. 'I'm not a hugger, but can I hug you?' Happily Davie swung himself into Alice's arms — and Alice carried his hug with her as she hurried back to her flat, through her dreams and way into the (35) next day when the Campaigns & Negotiations Team met the newly appointed heads of the seven campaign teams, on the seventh floor of the Central Building. The seven new heads introduced themselves and the main goals of their campaigns. Afterwards several people remarked that the names of the heads were rather fitting for each campaign. LONGEVITY CAMPAIGN, head of campaign: Elio, the sun. Goal: *Illustrate that the future town will improve longevity by design.* YOUR POWERS CAMPAIGN, head of campaign: Geraldine, the ruler with the spear. Goal: *Inspiring actions which allow people to experience how much power they have without resorting to violence.* NARRATIVES CAMPAIGN, head of campaign: Penelope, the weaver. Goal: *Demonstrate that new narratives can shape the world positively.* TRUE POWER IS IN CREATION CAMPAIGN, head of campaign: Itzel, the rainbow lady. Goal: *Make the power of creation palpable.* CONNECTIONS CAMPAIGN, head of campaign: Zoilo, life. Goal: *Revealing the benefits of seeking and nurturing connections with ourselves, with each other and with our planet.* BENEFITS OF EMPOWERMENT CAMPAIGN, head of campaign: Yahir, he will enlighten. Goal: *Visualise the benefits of empowerment, globally and through the ages.* PRESS PAUSE, head of campaign: Quintessa, the essence. Goal: *Inspire people to demand time to think and to become part of the reshaping process*

our planet and our societies need. The plan was to launch the campaigns on seven consecutive days. On day eight the campaigns would take the day off. And after that, all campaigns would run for the next seven days. Another break. Repeat. While the Campaigns & Negotiations Team and the heads of the campaigns discussed the scripts and the timing for each campaign, other project teams were busy elsewhere. Devery, the co-head of the Hub coordination team, and some of his team, arrived in Marble Town, a town in the Jellybridge region. THE had identified it as an ideal place for a Hub Station. Devery and his team talked to neighbours, viewed potential sites for the Hub Station and drafted plans for the talks they hoped to have with the local mayor in two days. At the Jellybridge Estate, Daria and Noel, both with the Programming Team, were inspecting the old train station, discussing with Jason (head architect) and Beatrice (head admin) the pros and cons of an analogue train station. 'We'd save resources if we don't use monitors or sliding doors,' Jason remarked. 'Repair costs, too,' Beatrice added. Noel nodded. 'Easy. We'll look at the best modern train stations we can find, strip them down to the minimum tech which travellers shouldn't miss, and take our findings to this station. Piece of cake. You know, I'd love to volunteer as a ticket seller, sometimes. Or as one of the people who welcome guests to our town.' 'Not sure that's a good idea,' Daria teased. 'They might jump right back into the train when they see your pink suit.' 'Pah! I love my pink suit!' At Jellybridge House, Betsy, the head cook, and Leo (head coordinator) discussed whether or not to install several more kitchens in the house, or whether to use outdoor kitchen tents for the construction phase. 'To be honest with you, my dear,' Betsy said, 'I must see one of those kitchen tents to make up my mind. It's a funny idea to turn the ground floor here into one big kitchen. But maybe

you're right and the space is better used for people — if the tents can weather the weather. If you know what I mean.' At the prospective site for the town, Megan, some of her Agriculture Team, and Light, co-head of the building site simulations, were testing three floating garden rafts on the lake while sitting in five rowing boats. 'Looks good to me,' Megan remarked. 'I'm just a bit worried about the lake's health if we cover it with rafts.' Light, whose boat was floating next to Megan's, nodded. 'I'll get an expert on lakes. And I'll build a simulation to determine how many rafts we might need for the site's plants during building phase, and how much cover a lake like this can stomach.' Megan nodded. 'Maybe it can be done if we keep the rafts in motion, or move them occasionally. This might imitate cloud cover.' 'That would mean random movements,' Light returned, frowning. 'I can test that in the simulation. I just need more input on what a lake needs.' Megan nudged two rafts apart. 'I can give you some contacts. We might also need something that keeps the rafts from bumping into each other.' 'We can add some kind of poles,' Mic, one of Megan's people, called from boat two. 'Maybe with a kind of impact rebound.' 'That's good,' Megan returned. 'That would create random movements.' A bit later at Jellybridge House, in the one-storey tower, the only fourth floor of the building, Seth, business liaison for the Business Expansion Team, the Alert Team, and the Building Site Team, was taking calls from businesspeople who offered pretty much everything from toilet paper to prefabricated houses. After ending another call, this time with a big corporation who sold every kind of plastic item a construction site might need, from tarpaulins to plastic spoons, Seth leaned back in his chair with a long sigh. *Why*, he thought, not for the first time this day, *why can't people take no for an answer? No, we won't use plastic. Yes, we really won't. Yes, I'm serious. Yes, we have*

figured out which alternatives to use. No, our equipment won't get wet. Yes, we know that timber originates in forests. Yes, there is no endless supply of timber. Yes, we need to let forests regrow. Rewilding, very important. No, we still won't use plastic or fossil fuels. Yes, we figured out how to build our town without any of it. No, we don't need another backup plan. Yes, I'll take your details and contact you should we change our mind. Thank you for your call.

Seth shook his head and looked out of the windows on the left, letting his eyes soak in the perfect view of the Young Forest and the hint of the prospective building site beyond it. Then he finally answered his flashing phone again. Around the same time, part of the ripples news team met in the Jellybridge ballroom and discussed the media's reactions to yesterday's press conference. After the extent of wild speculations prior to the press conference, the coverage of the conference was mostly minimalistic, except for those bits that could be twisted into some criticism. It seemed as if most of the media was undecided whether to attack the project, or whether to ignore it and with that silence the project's case for the town. 'It doesn't matter,' Glen, the co-head of ripples news, said. 'We'll pop up everywhere with or without the mainstream media. And no matter what they try, they cannot silence us. They could, however, choose to make themselves useful for the future of the planet.' Back in London, on the seventh floor of the Central Building, Jack (film) left his office after a short break. It struck him again how much the seventh floor had changed. This used to be the Arts & Crafts floor, the Arts Team occupying one half with easels and drawing tables, and the Crafts Team the other with workbenches and desks. Jack reached the skylight which was part of the first third of the floor, and stopped to look down, shaking his head. The Central Building really had changed, on every floor, all the way down to the atrium. But Jack felt a kind of triumph that

the town team had reclaimed two floors from the Business Expansion Team, the seventh and the sixth. Triumph, because it was a reminder that against all odds, the town project was back in the game. When Jack walked on, he noticed Alice, laughing with Andy (campaign simulations). He twitched the corner of his mouth, and let his eyes wander across the large open area which accounted for the other two thirds of the floor. At the centre was a wide circular area with sofas, armchairs, hammocks, gymnastic balls, squat stools, and two bars, left an right of it. Beyond the circle were the Campaigns & Negotiations Team's desks, where most of the team worked, though some had also offices. There were eight simulation workstations now, one for each campaign and one for the town, all along the walls. While two offices had been turned into nap and meditation rooms, it was good that they kept studio 2 as a retreat, recharge and workout place, and that they could use the conference rooms on the third floor. For today's meeting the teams had chosen the casual setting of the circular area, and when Jack reached the armchair where he had left his notes, he hesitated, noticing that the seat next to Alice was free. But no. At tonight's party, they might get a chance to talk a little. 'Jack?' 'Um?' 'Have you ever done comedy?' Penelope, the head of the Narratives Campaign, asked, sitting down on the sofa next to him. 'Um, I think Critique is the only of my movies that counts as comedy,' Jack replied a bit taken aback. 'Never heard of it. What's it about?' 'Oh, it's about a group of young philosophers who want to end self-incurred immaturity. They insist on people thinking for themselves.' 'Kant?' 'Yes.' Jack chuckled. 'Their motto was: Calling on the grey cells to take arms and rise.' Penelope laughed. 'Alice must love that. Did she see the movie?' 'I don't know. Why did you ask about comedy?' 'I'm thinking that comedy is a great way to demonstrate sanity.' 'You're absolutely right!'

Skye (care) said, sitting down next to Jack. 'Comedy is the ultimate test whether or not you're a thinking person who gets a few things right, otherwise no one would laugh.' Robin (education) nodded and took the seat next to Penelope. 'We could use comedy to expose silly narratives and stories.' 'Did I hear expose silly narratives?' Alice called, coming closer. Penelope smiled. 'Yes. With comedy. You know, Alice, a highlight would be if you did a stand-up gig.' Alice raised her eyebrows. 'Are you asking me how far I'm willing to go for our project?' 'I guess, I am. That's how we win hearts and minds. Making people laugh wins their hearts. A sharp conclusion wins their minds. All of this achieved by someone who has never done stand-up and who happens to be the head of the town project, that could have an impact.' Alice grimaced. 'You know, I'm sort of ready to do whatever it takes. But I wouldn't mind sitting this one out and leave it to comedians who know what they're doing.' 'OK. Just a thought. I'll ask around. But you'd agree to using comedy?' 'Absolutely!' Alice replied, and, noticing that everyone was back, she returned to her seat to reopen the session. 'For starters,' she said, 'I'd like us to take a decision on whether or not we want to do the millionaires boot camp.' 'It's a good idea, I'm thinking,' said Itzel, head of the True Power is in Creation Campaign. 'Like it might be worth a try.' 'I second that,' Raiden (town simulation) said. Skye (care) nodded. 'We absolutely should. Did you hear about that millionaire who wants to build a second Titanic?' 'Yes,' several people replied. 'That's how bored they are!' Skye said. 'They have no imagination! They just copy what already exists.' 'And make it bigger,' Troy (illustrations) chipped in. Itzel clapped. 'We can use that! All we need are superlatives that are actually good for something.' 'Such as?' John (business) asked. Itzel smiled. 'True power is in creation! We can show them how to become creators, how to become part of

something much bigger, more creative, fabulously unique and truly more amazing than stupid speculations, skimming, extorting, lying, bragging.’ ‘Such as?’ John (business) repeated. ‘Building a lunch tree?’ Constance (crafts) suggested. Alice laughed. ‘That’s great. But once we have stimulated the billionaire’s imaginations and broadened their receptiveness, we could water their mouths with our eighty-plus town ideas.’ Itzel clapped again. ‘Perfect! We’ll tell them: Imagine you had the money to build, or rebuild, a town and transform it into a place that has a focus, a purpose, something to aim for, a town or a city where people have everything they need to live an empowered, healthy and inspired life, a place where people restore the ecosystems and find a way to become part of it. That’s one of the greatest things anyone could ever achieve.’ Skye (care) laughed. ‘And then we say: Oh, hang on. You have that sort of money. Let’s get started!’ The others chuckled. ‘Love it!’ Dennie (security) said. ‘The millionaires boot camp has passed my sanity check. It’s mightily insane, in a good-trouble kind of way. It has my vote.’ Navarro (society) nodded. ‘Mine, too. Let’s try to inspire millionaires and nudge them away from their destructive narratives, which drain them as much as everything they touch.’ Dennie (security) grinned. ‘We might need to provide brooms so they can sweep out those narratives and maybe feathers so they can tickle themselves free of those superiority complexes.’ The team chuckled and Jack nodded. ‘I’ve met plenty millionaires. They are bored and empty, and keep seeking ever more ridiculous, dangerous and damaging thrills to drown their emptiness.’ Andy (campaign simulations) snorted dismissively. ‘Jack, you’re talking as if you weren’t a bleeding millionaire yourself.’ ‘And famous, too,’ Raiden (town simulation) added. Several people moved to comment, but Itzel, head of the True Power is in Creation Campaign,

got ahead of them all. 'I had forgotten about that,' she said, smiling at Jack, who knew well enough why Andy would attack him, but why Raiden, too? Besides— 'Jack, would you help us with this campaign? Your insights will be invaluable.' Jack didn't like this. Any of it. Yes, he was a bleeding millionaire. But why did that still matter? Wasn't he here? Every day doing his bit? *Don't look at Alice! She doesn't mind. She's not that biased, and she—* 'Jack?' 'Erm. Yes. Of course. We could get some other sympathetic millionaires involved, too.' 'Good point,' Geraldine, head of Your Powers, said. 'And since we've been thinking about making use of overlaps between the campaigns, I'd say the millionaires boot camp could get a boost from the Your Powers campaign, too.' Raiden (town simulation) nodded. 'Good idea. The common narrative is that a so-called average person had little power and that there's a lot they can't control. Millionaires are often in a similar situation if they want to play with the other money bros.' Skye (care) laughed. 'Money Bros! You're right Raiden. They aren't free either. They need to stay cool, stay ahead of the game, get their yacht, their vineyard and their car collection, or else they're out. Boy, that must be exhausting.' Troy (illustrations) nodded. 'Jack, would you say millionaires are afraid of deviating from the Money Bro Codes?' Jack shrugged, unwilling to get on slippery ground again. Raiden answered instead. 'Some millionaires complain that they are unjustly targeted because without them there wouldn't be a functioning economy.' Alice nodded thoughtfully. 'That's the thing about narratives. If you believe you do the right thing, then every attack will simply bounce off, or worse it will confirm that others don't understand what it takes to run a successful business.' John (business) nodded. 'Most rich people believe in the current economic systems, and millionaires are a natural result of these systems. The boot

camp will have to debunk the underlying economic narratives.’ Alice frowned. ‘The one-day boot camp we have in mind won’t be enough for that. I wonder whether it’s necessary to talk much economics, or whether a focus on freeing the imagination, encouraging playfulness, watering their mouths for discovery and tickling them into being alive couldn’t be the seeds they need to start rethinking their beliefs, attitudes, actions, and their strange fantasies.’ ‘I’m always in on the tickling,’ Dennie (security) remarked. ‘And I like your thinking. What about you, Jack, the grumpy millionaire, who’d rather not be reminded of his fortunes? What’s your take?’ Jack couldn’t help a half-smile. Dennie was right. Jack was feeling rejected. Like any other millionaire, he enjoyed every bit of privilege that came with his fortune. But he hated the reminder that he was just another of those bleeding millionaires. Putting his head to the side, Jack said: ‘It sucks being a millionaire unless you’re with other millionaires. Then it can suck, too, but—’ Jack grimaced. ‘I don’t know what could bring a millionaire back to planet Earth. I know that being on this project has reawakened a lot in me. I love being here. I love that my money allows me the freedom to be part of this project. I think, the boot camp should see the humans in the participants and have some believe that somewhere beneath all that money, bravado, bragging, superiority complex, there is still a human who wants to live, love and laugh. If Alice hadn’t challenged me to find my playfulness again, when we first met, I might not have given the project another thought.’ ‘Wow, Jack,’ Skye (care) said. ‘Honestly, thank you for sharing. And just so you know, I never thought you were as much of an idiot as most millionaires and probably all billionaires.’ Jack grimaced with a half-smile in the mix. ‘Thanks, Skye.’ ‘My pleasure.’ Navarro frowned. ‘Here’s another argument for the boot camp. We can use it

to find out what the millionaire needs to choose creating over gutting. Maybe we can even find out what makes them so sick that they choose to destroy rather than to nurture.’ Several people nodded, and Skye (care) said: ‘We should include body work. Get them sweating, like Hayley said, so they can “sweat out their unimaginative narratives.” Several people smiled. ‘Good,’ Isabel (head of campaigns) said. ‘I’d say that settles it? We’ll have a boot camp?’ Everyone nodded, Itzel, head of the Power is in Creation Campaign, beamed and Elio remarked: ‘We haven’t decided on the foci for week four, yet.’ Alice opened her notebook and said: ‘I have a plan for week four. Part of me hopes that we’ll have completed our negotiations long before then. But just in case, we need to fight all the way to the deadline, on the thirty-first, I’d like to suggest the following for our final week: a build up for our final pushes to get the government on board. I want to start that week with a Body and Sexuality Day to emphasise that change starts with every single one of us, and connecting to ourselves is the strongest basis for connecting to each other and to nature. Day two, we dive straight from the individual into the community. What makes a community, what does it need to be alive, kicking and dancing? If we still don’t have any assurances by then, I’d like us to challenge both the political and the economic system in the UK.’ ‘You want to attack?’ Andy (campaign simulations) asked surprised. Alice nodded. ‘Up to that point we’ll have tried nice, inspiring, encouraging, providing heaps of potential solutions and vibrant visions. If that doesn’t move the people we need to move, then I won’t shy away from a full frontal attack. Strip away their shiny suits, their stuffy words, their condescension and superiority complexes, and leave no one in doubt that our economic systems and our political systems ruin us all. And we won’t sugarcoat that governments apparently have no intention to

be of service to anyone but the few morons at the top and some of the minions who enable them.’ Alice inhaled. ‘I am always for building, always for making visions palpable, always for creating alternatives that prove what is possible and beneficial. But since I decided to take up this fight, I will pull out all stops if I have to — in the final week.’ There was some grim applause, and Skye (care) said: ‘I will drink to that! As many bottles as I can stomach!’ ‘I’ll join you!’ Dennie (security) said, and Raiden (town simulation) asked Alice: ‘What do you have in mind for days three, two and one?’ Alice smiled a little. ‘Day three: rewilding.’ Elio, Longevity Campaign, punched the air. ‘YES! And you won’t just make it about landscapes, oceans, forests, peatlands, mountains!’ Alice smiled. ‘Nope. Though I’d like to include all nature rewilding projects here in the UK, and all ideas for rewilding projects.’ Dana nodded. ‘Megan already gave me a list of contacts.’ ‘Good,’ Alice said. ‘And yes, let’s also include rewilding our societies, our arts, our towns, our families, our minds — everything! A few dominant narratives have buried so much of who we are and who we can be. We’ve allowed so much sameness and control into our world that we are stifled at best. Let’s create a campaign which inspires all of us to embrace and unearth the worlds that are in us and in our fellow humans. Let’s find ways to embrace the unexpected. Let’s learn to be curious explorers in what appears to be chaos, fluidity, the unfixed. Let’s celebrate diversity in all it’s form. Let’s rediscover playfulness. Let’s allow self-seeding in our minds, in our stories, in our days. Let’s allow the world to touch and expand who we are.’ The team applauded, and Zoila, Connections Campaign, said: ‘And as we rewild, we discover that everything is connected.’ Alice smiled broadly. ‘And that’s why day two will highlight all the connections we unearthed and created during the rewilding day.’ ‘Wow,’ Dennie (security) said. ‘Then what’s

left for day one?’ Alice’s expression darkened. ‘We will ask, loud and clearly: Do you want a future?’ There was a moment of grim silence. Then Emine (lawyer) remarked: ‘I love your ideas. I love all our campaign ideas. I think the events will be fantastic. But I’m worried. It won’t be enough to reach a few hundred people. It won’t be enough to reach a few thousand people. We need millions to prick their ears and find an incentive to engage with our project. So the big question is: How do we get people involved? How do we make sure millions know about the events? How do we make it easy for millions to participate? We have the Hub Campaigns Square, but social media is not enough. TV ads? Not enough. Posters. Not enough. Demonstrations. Not enough. All of it? Not enough. We need to make our town project the talk of the town. What am I saying? The talk of the city, of the country and beyond.’ Geraldine, head of the Your Powers Campaign, smacked her lips. ‘I can create a bunch of campaigns with snowball-effects. People can use their power just by talking about our project, by making it the talk of the city. We can use gossip games and challenges. And we might reach more people with a large amount of smaller event than with just one big one.’ There were nods and Hayley said: ‘Flashmob. Organised online we can have thousands at the same time.’ Alice frowned. ‘Good. — Emine is right. We need to develop strategies which reach millions. And Jack was right in our first meeting, we need to communicate that there is something for everyone to contribute. What will it be?’ Not much later, Alice, Raiden (town simulation) and John (business) left the meeting for an appointment with some interested politicians in a conference location in Central London. Alice gave a little speech and concluded it with: ‘You know how people tend to say: “But who will pay for this?” I thought about it, and came to the conclusion that from now on my response will be: “So long

as you find the money for power plays, wars, state receptions, prestige projects, the entertainment industry, dubious subsidies, misguided housing developments, speculations, fossil fuel extractions, bribes for political and economical gain, and for all the other ambiguous expenses, I will not think about this question again.” There is enough money to reshape the world several times over. I might add: If our town project does a good job, many government expenses won’t be necessary any more — which some corrupt beneficiaries of government contracts might regret, but my business is not with them. My business is with the people, the planet, with balanced economic activities and continuous ripple effects.” Later an MP confided in John: ‘I agree, it’s not money we lack. It’s the lack of vision.’ Another politician said to Alice: ‘You cannot exempt businesses from your town. That’s illegal and unrealistic.’ ‘No and no. Part of our experiment is to see whether there is something like an ideal business mix for the town. So, yes, we can determine the parameters of our experiment. It’s what it’s for.’ The politician shook her head. ‘I hear you. But your chances of getting your project approved would increase if you let others get a piece of the pie.’ ‘I guess so. But it would also render the experiment impotent.’ ‘But you let farmers in,’ another politician remarked who joined them at the bar table. ‘Some organic farmers who don’t use slaves or plastic, yes.’ ‘If you can’t let any businesses in, then we can’t agree to have any of your products get out.’ ‘I see your point. But we want to test how many products the town will have to export to make production in town viable. The results of these experiments will give us and every other town and city an indication what kind of business composition might be most promising to create economic balances and ripple effects regionally and globally. So while we would benefit to some extent from keeping other businesses out, and exporting

some of our products, everyone will benefit from our findings.’ Next, Alice and John (business) met with some investors and repeated that investments would not be possible in town because that would interfere with the experiment. ‘That explains why you don’t want shareholders in town, but your project businesses are in your hands, too. What’s your excuse there?’ Alice smiled. ‘Right now, our excuse is that we’re young and in a process that requires the freedom to experiment with how we run our businesses and our networks. A divided ownership might get in the way of our work.’ ‘You could still use your skyrocketing cashflows and your considerable fortunes to strengthen the markets, give the market impulses.’ John (business) smiled. ‘A year ago, I would have agreed. Today, I’d invite you on a tour of the inner workings of our project-wide financial framework and cycles. I can also recommend a closer look at our discussions about what we expect money to achieve. It’s a whole new world. And it doesn’t just work. It creates tangible and lasting value far beyond numbers, and that without speculations and without dubious schemes. The financial system we are developing is as clear, transparent, versatile and in constant motion as the waters from a mountain river — one that is far removed from games for game’s sake.’ In the car, on the way back to the Compound, Alice remarked: ‘A mountain river. That was a nice imagery.’ John smiled a little. ‘Tom used it when he was still on board.’ Alice swallowed, and they both fell silent, looking out of the window as the car approached Piccadilly Circus. ‘Have you heard from Tom?’ John asked quietly. ‘No. Nothing.’ John nodded and looked out of the window again. Alice twitched the corner of her mouth. ‘John, you’ve known Tom for years. How bad can it get for us when he decides to take measures against us?’ John looked at Alice and shrugged. ‘Before Christmas Tom said to me: “You and Seth used to work for

me. You used to be reliable, intelligent workers who could fix anything on the business side of my companies. You've changed. Both of you. You have become creators yourselves. Not in a big way. But you no longer operate in a clearly defined space. Instead, you allow the town project to prod you just enough to step out of your bubble and cautiously explore what else the world has to offer, and what else you might contribute." And Tom added: "I'm very proud of you." Alice shook her head and said: 'This reminds me, in October or November, last year, I had an argument with Tom about empowerment. I insisted that empowerment has the greater benefits and offers more control because much less control is needed when people have responsibilities and can use their talents. He said to me: "I could comprehend the truth of this if I allowed my brain to stomach these thoughts." I remember that he paused, lost in thoughts, and when he looked at me again, he said: "It is true, the people who used to work for me are a lot more independent, stronger, more involved — and more productive, here at the town project. They hardly need any control because they have made this project their own. But this has a disquieting effect on me." A week later, Noel told me that Tom had asked him to build a simulation, on the quiet, so that Tom could play around with empowerment parameters. And at the beginning of December, Tom said to me that the results always pointed to empowerment as the better option. "But," Tom added, "the simulation doesn't take into account that I am more comfortable if people stay in their dedicated spaces, and do what they are told. Ignoring employees is a lot more pleasant than constantly being faced with people who have something to say." I laughed and returned: "But that's natural. You're used to dull, faceless, predictable employees. Once you get used to the empowered workers, you'll be just as fine. And probably better.'" John chuckled, echoing: 'And

probably better. I think you're right. And maybe he experienced that in those last days before the winter break. He said something appreciating to Beatrice and Seth, too. It was as if he was making an effort, we all thought.' Alice grimaced. 'I hate that Tom turned against us. He was always the old-fashioned capitalist and the self-congratulating programmer genius, but on top of that, he was also curious.' John nodded, frowning, and Alice asked: 'Are you worried what Tom might do?' John grimaced. 'Yes. Yes, I am. Tom is a rational person. But he has talked himself into rejecting our town project, and he has made his arguments sound rational. That's the most dangerous kind of madness: to be convinced to be right, and to be angry that no one else sees just how wrong they all are. At worst he will develop an obsession with what he now sees as an affront to his convictions and rights. The more obsessed the more likely that he'll move heaven and earth to put an end to our projects and do so as publicly as possible to punish us for not seeing the errors of our ways.' 'Fanaticism,' Alice mumbled. 'Yes.' John looked at Alice. 'You said, you were a fanatic in your religious time.' 'I was. And every attack on my believe strengthened my belief. That's maybe the most perverse aspect of fanaticism. It is fuelled by the attacks and dismissals of what the fanatic believes to be right. I've never met anyone who understood that a believe is a believe, and that attacks make it stronger not weaker. It's like trying to stop a fire by throwing dry timber at it.' 'Then how does one extinguish the fire?' John asked. 'In Tom's case, I think the only thing we can do is hold him off, build our town, and hope that by the time our towners have moved in, he will not be too bitter to take a look at the result. Seeing could heal him, I think.' 'Hm.' Alice leaned back in her seat, briefly closing her eyes. 'What worries me more, right now, is the question of how we, individually and as a project, make sure

that we keep every sliver of fanaticism out of our minds and our project.’ ‘You’re worried?’ Alice grimaced. ‘I am. We are about to launch massive campaigns with big teams, thousands strong, to engage the population of a country, few of us have ever called home, in conversations about fundamental questions that are relevant for the future of our town and through that for the future of our planet. What kind of megalomaniac has the audacity to do something like that? And how can we know that we haven’t and won’t turn into fanatics?’ John smiled, a soft smile Alice had never seen on him, and he said: ‘Because we have each other. Because we have questions. Because we want to unearth not control or patronise. Because we are afraid of being wrong. Because we will stay in motion and don’t get stuck. Because we have learned to listen and we have learned to think together.’ Alice grimaced. ‘I like your thoughts. But a fanatic would likely say the same about their bubble. How can we—’ A smile appeared on Alice’s face. ‘Maybe tests can keep us safe. We will never make anything about believing. We’ll always test our ideas.’ In the evening Alice, Jack (film), Raiden (town simulation), Andy (campaigns simulations), Dana (ecology), Hayley (tech), Marita (economics), Rohana (coordination), plus some members of the project businesses: Hachiro for dot. Gary for soap opera, Ef for toys around the world, and Adeola from the Building Site Team (business liaison) were at a business party in a conference hotel in Central London. Standing next to an abstract oil painting, Alice and Jack chuckled, and Alice said to the friendly businessman, grey suit, no tie: ‘Oh, absolutely. Humans have the potential to be clever. And I don’t mean anything as advanced as cunning. Just very basic cleverness, like: do we have hundreds of planets? No. Hm. It’s just one. Do we have an endless supply of resources? Hm. Actually not. Do we have clean air? Well, not so much

these days. Is treating people like assets a good idea? OK, I'll withdraw that question. You need to be a bit more advanced for this one.' The businessman shook his head. 'I must say, it's interesting to meet you, Alice Adler. I admit, I expected a bitter, aggressive person. But you are—' '—quite remarkable,' Jack said, smiling at Alice. The businessperson nodded. 'Remarkable. And pleasantly easy-going.' Alice smiled. 'I admit, I'm having a good moment. I hope, you won't be too disappointed when you see me angry.' The businessperson shook their head. 'No. Having met you, I might cheer you on. Honestly, make your case as loudly and clearly as you can.' 'Thank you. Much appreciated.' At the smaller of the three bars, Dana's face hardened as she listened to a casually dressed trader, and eventually she countered sharply: 'We know that the way we farm is destroying the very basis of farming: healthy soil, clean water, water access, pollination, biodiversity, shade. So why do we keep finding excuses to postpone the necessary transformations?' At a table near the medium-sized bar, Raiden (town simulation), Hayley (tech) and Ef (toys around the world) were in a conversation with five businesspeople. Hayley put down her wineglass, saying: 'Our highFLY phones are developed by inventors from around the globe. That's possible because we use a modular system, and the customer can combine phone modules by different designers.' A grey-haired businesswoman frowned. 'I heard the phones only work half a day?' Raiden smiled. 'Our aim is to fine-tune our operations system to the extent that the phone only works when it's needed.' 'Isn't a phone always needed?' a black businessman asked. 'It's rarely needed,' Ef returned. 'We've just turned phones into something that is constantly in our hands and on our minds. highFLY experiments with developing phones and phone practices that benefit us.' At the large bar, Andy (campaigns

simulations) and Rohana (coordination) spoke with two giggly businesswoman, one of them flirting with Andy, the other with Rohana, both refilling their wineglasses at a disquieting pace. 'I agree, you know,' the brown-haired businesswoman in a dark-green suit said to Andy. 'It's our decision what we use, how we produce, how we work. No one forces us to make the human obsolete. But—' here she giggled again. 'But humans are such a nuisances, except you, of course,' she said, smiling at him. Andy swallowed and Rohana nudged him, saying: 'It's true that humans are peculiar. But we decided to work with people, haven't we Andy?' 'Yes. We build tech that serves us without frustrating, patronising or dulling us.' The red-haired woman pursed her lips and chanted with a hint of mockery: 'This is our world. This is our world. We are its masters.' Rohana moved a little closer, smiled sweetly and returned: 'Exactly! This is our world! And we are done having tech and money mess with our lives and with our planet. Tech is fascinating but literally not human. In fact, a lot of what tech does goes right against human instincts. If a human behaved like our clever machines, we would make fun of them. It's time we become the masters of our world — and this time in concert with nature.' 'I can get us a room and you can say that over and over and over again.' Back at the table, the conversation had taken a similar direction, and Ef said: 'As a former doctor, I can appreciate some of what has become possible thanks to machine learning, but I'm glad that the town project takes the view that human welfare, human work and human curiosity are more important than having some sort of results in a few seconds. No one will be motivated to do anything if there is a machine who is perceived as being better at everything.' Hayley nodded. 'Exactly. Besides, it's short-sighted to make the human redundant, and it makes no sense to flood the world with more products faster.' Raiden

nodded. 'Neither does it make sense to fill the internet with endless repetitions of the same fear-mongering and attention-seeking emptiness.' Ef nodded. 'It also makes no sense to give everything a price tag. No one can do an excellent job if they have to reach monetary goals. Everything that is important needs time, freedom, room for tests, mistakes, new tests. In medicine the focus on making profits literally kills people, every day. I killed my family because I had to work a double shift. I killed other people, because I didn't have the time to give them the attention their cases needed.' The black businessman frowned. 'Will your project give the very concept of money, profiteering and fortunes a rethink?' Raiden nodded. 'There's nothing we won't question, nothing where we won't test alternatives in our town's microcosm.' At the large bar, Hachiro said to a good-looking businesswoman: 'dot. means creative diversity and power. No more useless clothes, no landfills. More happy and empowered customers. We have a scope that is unchallenged and will remain so because the only way anyone could offer what dot. offers is by copying us. And that would be both fantastic and a waste. Fantastic because the more companies get away from flooding the markets with products no one needs or wants — unless you spend billions in telling people what they should want — so, the fewer companies follow that stupid and unsustainable practice the better. It would be a waste because dot. already has all the infrastructure needed, and more people could simply join us. And if you allow me, I'd be happy to design something for you which isn't just a piece by a great designer but which is a perfect reflection of who you are or, if you like, of who you want to be.' Further along the bar, Marita (economics) had joined Andy, Rohana and three businesswomen, and had accepted the invitation to a Bloody Mary. After taking a sip, Marita said: 'Today's competitions are won by those who

have the most money and find the most effective methods of exploiting humans, data and nature. That's neither a gain in quality nor any sort of progress.' 'Sweetheart,' one of the flirty businesswomen said, 'if you put it like that— I mean international tournaments. It's all about who has the most money. It's not a nation's achievement we see. All we find out at a world cup is who has the biggest purse.' Rohana nodded, a drunken smile on her face. 'True, true. It's the nations who pump the most money into sports. They win. Nothing to do with the nation.' Marita stirred her Bloody Mary, saying to the sceptical looking redhead: 'If you think that competition is needed to drive humans to excellence and progress, then I invite you to visit our project businesses and later our town. All the data we've collected so far on this project indicate that cooperation is more effective on every count.' The third businesswoman, an Indonesian, shook her head. 'We can only grow if we outperform our competition.' 'Growth,' Rohana groaned, slurring her words just a little. 'Who came ever up with that? Oh, I know: a marketing genius. Growth is such a great imagery. But why do we believe that an economy gets eternal life and endless growth? Who would want to grow forever? I mean where would our arms and legs go? And we'd be tired all the time. Growing needs a lot of energy. See, the whole growing imagery makes no sense as soon as you take a proper look at it. A cycle on the other hand, that could get us talking for real.' Meanwhile Alice had been moving from group to group, chipping in here and there. On her way to another group, a man her age, stopped her and stated: 'You hate men!' Alice frowned. 'What for? In my experience hate is self-harm and doesn't achieve anything. Besides, I'd not waste any emotions on the vague and generalised idea of manhood.' The man shook his head and stumbled away. Alice frowned. *What was that about?* Near a staircase, a young reporter

said to Hayley (tech): 'So everything falls down?' 'No. Everything grows in all sorts of directions. Air and water flow and sometimes blow. Birds fly and lions roar.' The reporter laughed. Some feet away, Dana chuckled about a white businessman's remark and returned: 'You're telling me that the flap of a butterfly's wing in India can cause a hurricane in Uruguay, right?' 'That's the case.' 'OK. So what happens if millions upon millions of insects don't flap their wings any more because they're all dead? What if all leaf-flapping trees are replaced with dead facades? What if there is no flapping any more. Won't that have an affect on the weather?' At the medium-sized bar, Andy and Adeola had a moment of just chatting, and Adeola said: 'There're quite a few beautiful sparrows at Jellybridge, and I thought, why do sparrows in cities look so dishevelled?' 'Enlighten me,' Andy returned, raising his bottle of beer in a toast. 'It's because city-sparrows eat what we eat. And what does that tell you?' 'That I might have a water after this beer?' At a bar table, Alice and Marita were in a discussion with a boss and her assistant, talking economics. Alice declined another drink and remarked: 'The present economic systems make our world boring. A few ideas and brands dominate in most countries. It's like, why travel at all, everything has become the same.' The boss shook her head, doubtfully. 'I hear you. But what if everything was fine on our planet? Wouldn't that be boring?' 'No,' Alice returned with sudden sparkles in her eyes. 'Excitement comes from exploring. And there is so much to explore on our planet. We don't need any commerce thrown at us. We can simply become explorers and discover the world, on foot, on bicycles, on trains, on sailing boats. Quite frankly, I think, right now we waste our time with screwing each other instead of enjoying life.' 'Aren't you promising a bit much with your project?' the assistant ask with a sideways glance at her boss as if to assure

herself that the question was acceptable. The boss nodded approvingly. The assistant looked relieved, and Alice replied: 'My promise is to be always curious and to test every promising idea, and probably some pet-ideas, too. The only thing I can offer is to always explain my decisions, to be transparent and to frequently question whether my decisions still hold or should be revised.' 'Do you really think the world can be fixed?' the boss asked. Marita (economics) shook her head. 'The world was never whole or perfect or OK, not since humans spread across the planet. So there's nothing to fix. But we can rethink everything that harms us.' Alice nodded. 'That's the great thing about our brains. Our brains are incredibly capable if we make use of them.' 'How can this rethinking happen?' the boss wondered aloud and Alice said: 'We need something we, as the people of this planet, consider worthwhile building together. Some kind of planet-wide effort. We try to do something like that with our businesses and our supply networks. But maybe the planet needs something simpler, something we can all relate to.' 'And you need the money for change,' the assistant chipped in and got a dismissive glance from her boss. Alice shook her head, both about this duo and 'It's not the money we lack. It's imagination, willpower and vision.' Marita nodded. 'And we keep making things difficult for us by holding on to the systems which brought us to our crises — in our societies and in the natural world.' Near the dance floor, Gary and Jack were talking to a gay and to a straight businessmen, and Gary sighed: 'Beauty is essential for the healing process. For everything.' 'Nonsense!' the straight businessman retorted. Gary put on his most charming smile and returned: 'I didn't come up with this. It's just us humans. We react to beauty. And I agree, humans are peculiar.' There were many more such encounters, some shorter, others longer, and in between most team members relaxed. Quite a

few danced with the other guests. In particular Rohana, Marita and Adeola increasingly used the dance floor to chat with interested people. Alice wasn't in the mood to dance and joined Ef (toys around the world) just when he got dragged into a discussion about homelessness by an elegant businesswoman in the white suit. Alice felt her temper rising, and was just about to lash out when Hayley rolled in to the rescue and said: 'Madam, Ef is one of the most courageous people I know. He lost his wife and children in an accident he caused, and he not only survived to this day, he also found some new hope in our project. I'm in a wheelchair, and I cannot imagine the pain he went through and still feels. I have nothing but respect for him.' Ef's tears were rolling and his shaking hand found Hayley's shoulder. The businesswoman nodded and returned quietly: 'I thank you. I doubt I ever saw a human in a homeless person. Thank you for making me see. And please, excuse me, I need a drink. Would you join me, Alice Adler?' Alice hesitated, looking at Ef, wondering whether she should— 'You go, Alice! I'll be okay.' Alice nodded and followed the elegant businesswoman. At the bar, their eyes met, and Alice couldn't help asking: 'Did you really mean what you just said?' 'Yes. Yes, I did. But I doubt it will last. I fear, in my world there are very few humans, and all of them are rich. It's a strange, soulless world. You're a millionaire, too. But you haven't been infected by the soullessness, yet. I can't make you out. Is it because you used to be poor?' Alice smiled and accepted an invitation to a gin tonic. 'For a long time,' Alice said, 'I was more a mind than anything else. And sometimes I still am.' 'I don't follow.' 'I had hardly any connection to my body or to other people. I spend my days thinking, calculating, shaping. It is only through this project that I am discovering my body, that I work out, that I enjoy a stick fight, that I have become aware of what I wear—' '—I

thought your designer, this Japanese guy over there, dresses you.' Alice smiled, probably thanks to the alcohol or maybe because Adeola did some funny dance moves. 'You're right, I'm spoiled. But most of what I wear is a kind of co-creation. I tell Hachiro what I'd like to wear and he designs it to perfection.' 'OK. But what are you telling me?' 'I guess making and having a lot of money comes with so much stress that there is an acute lack of connection to the body and to other people. But we need those connections to sense ourselves and be a human, and to sense other humans. I'm glad that I don't ever have to worry about money again. I'm grateful that I have so much money that I can set up teams for the most fringe questions my mind throws up. I love that. But other than that, other than making things possible, I have no interest in riches, and hoarding makes no sense to me.' 'You people really are like aliens. Can't you take your spaceship and go back to where you're from?' Alice took a sip of her gin tonic. 'Maybe after the town experiment. This is too exciting a chance. Space travel is incredibly boring by comparison. A bit impressive but not half as exciting.' The woman shook her head. 'I like you. Say, will there really be no cars in your town?' 'Yes. There will be underground parking spaces outside of the town. But there won't be cars in town.' 'But I saw you arrive in a car, today.' 'Our Security Team has electric cars and drives us to our appointments.' The businessperson shook her head. 'I couldn't live without driving. Sometimes I just sit in the car and drive for hours on end. It relaxes me.' Alice smiled. 'We're considering to build a car simulation in our underground town.' 'Really?' 'Yeah, you can sink into the best leather seats, turn your favourite music full volume and choose from hundreds of landscapes. There is even talk of adding some smells and wind, provided you choose to drive a cabriolet.' The elegant woman laughed. 'You people really

are crazy. But I tell you what: If you get your town, I will visit and test your car simulator.’ (34) The next morning greeted the project team with headlines like: Town project brings homeless man to business party // Indian cock woman, personal assistant to Alice Adler // Will Jack Harris be the star of the town’s sex temple? // Genius programmer, the mastermind behind the town project? How dangerous is Andy Lawrence? // Hachiro Anabuki offends all ladies. Anabuki, only half a man, self-obsessed dot.designer, tells more than twenty women that their outfits are inferior, and he could dress them better. // Town project want people to starve! // The Hub causes mass unemployment // Never sit again, says Nigerian beauty // Farms kill, yells Swedish ecologists. // Town after our phones // soap opera’s Gary glitters and slithers, shiny gay-talk about cosmetics doesn’t impress // No cars. Back to the middle ages. // Jack Harris brainwashed // Adler shines, her minions disappoint. // Heather shook her head. ‘What happened at that party? I thought it was businesspeople not a bunch of yellow press minions.’ The party-goers, still tired, shrugged and Alice said: ‘It was just a party, talking, laughing, dancing. Nothing special. Much. Most people seemed relaxed, few bigger questions. And why was I let off?’ ‘It might actually be a clever move,’ Marita said. ‘To bash the whole team is like any generalisation, it lacks grip. But to say that you are great, only unfortunately you surround yourself with losers, makes you seem—’ ‘—harmless,’ Alice finished the sentence and grimaced. Heather sighed. ‘I’d better get Tabansi— No, I’d better get the whole ripples news team to help us write the responses.’ In the early afternoon, the project countered some of the headlines. Highlights were: Homelessness is not a disease, sometimes it’s a necessity by Ef (toys around the world) and Heather (media) // Easy guide to human biology: about body parts, hormones and other

characteristics that make a human by Skye (care) and Rohana (coordination) // The Challenge Garden — a different approach to fighting by Tilly (health team) and Alice // The sex temple, a place to learn by Robin (education) and Jack (film) // Our masterminding is teamwork for the planet by Andy (campaigns simulations), Raiden (town simulation) and Navarro (society) // The beauty of dot. — an apology by Hachiro Anabuki // The art of staying in motion — and sitting, by Adeola (Building Site Team) and Alice // The Hub has drastically reduced the number of exploitative jobs by Andy (campaign simulations) and Devery (Hub) // Why soap opera doesn't want to impress by Gary (soap opera) and Dana (ecology) // Economics needs a rethink, just like most systems and ideas of our time by Marita (economics) and John (business) // Land of plenty, we can produce all the food we need without destroying our chances to harvest food next year, too. About simulations, earthworms and biodiversity, by Dana (ecology) and Andy (simulations) // When will we listen and act, when will we hold destructors to account, when will we rise to demand a future? — that's what it sounds like when I yell, by Dana (ecology) // Be the master of your phone and save resources while you're at it by Hayley (tech) and Raiden (town simulation). // Food security, food monopolies, food speculations and food waste by Dana and Ef. Afterwards Alice and Raiden discussed which questions from the party could be picked up by the simulation team to prepare visual examples for the negotiations. Raiden smiled. 'We could start with a simulation of a Challenge Garden.' Alice laughed. 'To insinuate that we are ready to take them on in a Challenge Garden?' Raiden shook his head. 'No. Or maybe. But to break out of a narrow respectability box. Yes, we give room to fights. Not for amusements, not for bets but in acknowledgement that some humans sometimes need to

fight. I think that says a lot about our project.’ (33) The next day, the frequent-speakers group, consisting of Alice, Navarro, Robin and Heather, had just finished their voice training practice with Jack when rumours reached the team that some companies were fidgeting over the question whether or not to side with the project in order to get a foot in the door and hopefully some business deals. Meanwhile voices against the project got louder which seemed to inspire some conspiracy theorists to declare their support for the project, claiming that the project confirmed their views. To counter that assumption, Alice and Heather recorded a brief statement for the Hub’s Campaign Square. ‘What do you say about the claims of various conspiracy theorists?’ Heather asked Alice. ‘I have no intention of confirming anyone’s views. Personally, I don’t care who lies or what is kept secret. I care about what we can create, find out, build, test and shape.’ In response to this statement, all conspiracy people seemed to lose interest in the project, and Alice later remarked: ‘Not a win.’ ‘You think our reasoning should be good enough to get everyone on board with rethinking?’ Alice shrugged. ‘Something like that. As humanity, at this point in time, we can’t afford to be divided. We’ll have a much better chance to get out of our messes if we find a way to come together.’ In the early afternoon, Isabel (head of campaigns) opened the team’s meeting with the heads of all campaigns. ‘Tomorrow, we’ll begin a fireworks of campaigns for our town, for our societies, for our planet. You’ve all done a tremendous job with your teams, and I couldn’t be prouder to work with you. In the first week, we’ll open each campaign with a spectacle, always starting just before noon, each day focusing on the opening campaign while all opened campaigns also run. From the second week on, each day will get a special focus, like the No Plastics Day, Connections Day or the Challenge Day. While some

campaigns are likely to cooperate with each other earlier, all campaigns will interweave their actions with the other campaigns from week three onwards. Week three also sees the Spring Specials for which we'll use every available public space in London and hopefully in other cities, too, to celebrate the beginning of spring, the magic of nature and the promises of beginnings. In any case, we'll have a great party as soon as the government agrees to support our town, and we won't have any regrets if that happens after only a few days of campaigning.' The teams chuckled, and Geraldine, head of the Your Powers Campaign, said: 'I believe in our powers, but people usually need a moment to let new ideas catch on.' Jack smiled. 'I might have a crazy idea on that account.' 'Let's hear it!' Dennie (security) said. Jack straightened in his chair, a playful smile on his face. 'What if,' he said slowly, still sorting his thoughts, 'what if we did a series of short videos? Each video has the same message, but uses completed different styles: dramatic, cool, sophisticated, simple, playful, serious and so on. The viewer is then invited to 'Pick your style' or 'Find the style that speaks to you.' Yahir, head of the Benefits of Empowerment Campaign, frowned. 'You want to make jokes about how different people are?' Jack shook his head. 'No, I want to acknowledge that we react differently to different styles of presentation. We could add: "You didn't find your style? Let us know what it would take to gain your interest?" Plus "Vote for your favourite style."' Several people smiled, others frowned, and Isabel (head of campaigns) said: 'I can see it happening if we do it playfully.' Jack nodded. 'That's what I mean. We'd be saying: This message is serious. We need you to hear it, to give it a thought. So we're doing everything to make it accessible to you.' 'Which messages do you have in mind?' Penelope, head of Narratives, and Navarro (society) asked. Jack shrugged. 'I'd suggest we

keep it simple. Something like: This is our world. Let's rethink and shape it.' Dana stirred. 'We could add videos for scientists because we need scientists and scientists need to get out of their bubbles and, I'm sorry to say, rethink a lot of their attitudes, including their language.' Some nodded, others looked thoughtful, and Alice said a little grimly: 'Let's do that. We need everyone on board, and that means to tear down the barriers generations before us erected. And I like what you said, Jack: This is our world. We can shape it.' Alice paused for a moment, then she added with a spark in her eyes: 'Yes, we want to build our town — and on the Jellybridge Estate. But for the campaigns we can leave our bubbles, too, and take that look at the whole planet, make the planet our concern, and use this time to raise our voices not just for our project but for all of humanity and for all of the natural world.' Not much later, and in Marble Town, Devery, co-head of the Hub coordination team, talked with the mayor. 'What if you don't get the site for the town?' the mayor asked. 'It wouldn't matter. Marble Town still qualifies for a Hub Station.' 'Why here?' 'Because your town seems like it could do with the economical and societal advantages a Hub Stations brings, and because it's at a pretty perfect distance to the prospective town. Not too close (we won't get into each other's hair), not too far away (we can still conveniently meet for an afternoon tea and get back with the night bus).' Just past six, in the evening, Alice and Raiden (town simulation) left London for Jellybridge.