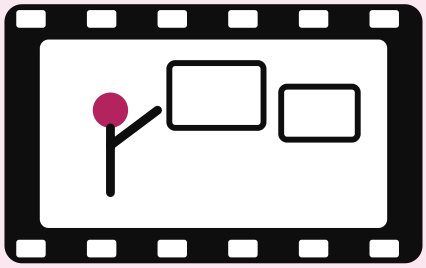
Concept

Diegetic prototype

A technology that doesn't exist yet, shown working normally inside a film or a story, as if it were already real.



In Spanish
Prototipo diegético

Origin
Kirby (2010)

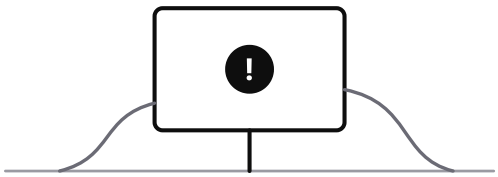
What problem it addresses

Explains why seeing a technology work in fiction makes us believe it is possible and desirable.

An example

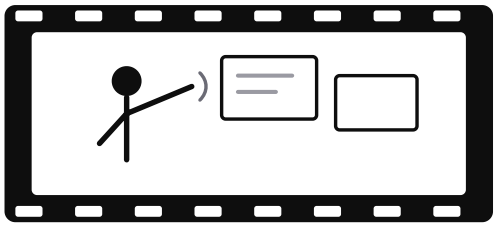
An interface controlled with hand gestures.

In a lab



A technical demo, with cables, glitches and explanations. **Hard to imagine.**

In a film



In Minority Report (2002), the main character uses it naturally, without explaining how it works. **It seems inevitable.**

Kirby presents it as the clearest example: the film's appeal helped its designer win support for a real prototype.

Why it happens

1 

The technology appears working, without glitches or doubts.

2 

The characters use it as something ordinary.

3 

The audience sees it as possible, useful and desirable.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Show your concept working in an everyday scene, with people who use it without explaining it.

Avoid

Using a dazzling scene to hide what the technology can't do.

Don't fall for it

When a technology seems inevitable to you because you've seen it on screen, ask who designed it that way and why.

2010

What the research says

David Kirby analyzed how film shows technologies that don't exist yet and how that can drive their real development, by making them desirable before they are real (Kirby, 2010).

● ○ ○ **Single study.** It is based on case analysis, not experiments: it shows that this can happen, not how often.

Connections

Used in

- Design fiction
- The Thing From The Future

Authors and works

2010	**David Kirby**	Coined the term while studying film and technological development.
2009	**Julian Bleecker**	Took Kirby's idea, which was already circulating before his 2010 article, and brought it to design fiction.
2012	**Bruce Sterling**	Defined design fiction in terms of diegetic prototypes.

Sources

Original sources

- Kirby, D. (2010). The future is now: Diegetic prototypes and the role of popular films in generating real-world technological development. Social Studies of Science, 40(1), 41–70. View source (https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312709338325)
- Bleecker, J. (2009). Design fiction: A short essay on design, science, fact and fiction. Near Future Laboratory. View source (https://nearfuturelaboratory.com/2009/03/17/design-fiction-a-short-essay-on-design-science-fact-and-fiction/)

Secondary sources

- Byrne, E. (2020, October 23). Too much truth: David Kirby. Walker Reader, Walker Art Center. View source (https://www.walkerart.org/reader/too-much-truth-david-kirby/)
- Bosch, T. (2012, March 2). Sci-fi writer Bruce Sterling explains the intriguing new concept of design fiction. Slate. View source (https://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2012/03/02/bruce_sterling_on_design_fictions_.html)

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