Abstract

This study researches the relationship between institutional racism and systemic supervision, highlighting the concept of the Other and how it is created as result of social racism.

The project’s goal is to produce a dystopian live-action short film. To expose the danger of misusing technological advances to achieve propaganda set to ensure control over the public. And to closely look into the mentalities and perspectives of the public considering institutional racism.

This project represents the powerful impact of society’s issues on the future by filming in the dystopian genre. The project goes through all aspects of scene making and filmmaking as a visual communication technique.

The research shows how deeply the established media is connected to social racism and Othering. As governments, institutions, and corporations are constantly in need to create targets for the viewer/public to fear, making the world seem like it is Us vs Them. Ending with a loop of hate and injustice that keeps spiralling downwards.

Key words

Racism, dystopia, short film, institutional racism, social racism, media control, the Other, systematic supervision, social justice, social sustainability,
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1 Introduction

This report covers the theoretical, visual and research process of THEM project. I will explore and discuss the theories and the process of researching, planning and designing a dystopian short film, highlighting the concept of the Other, institutional racism and systemic supervision in society.

The film will be telling a fantasy story about a dystopian world where humans must live in fear of the sickly dangerous creatures hiding around them. To protect the citizens the state has accomplished full visual and auditory supervision everywhere over the city, so they can track and eliminate the danger, keeping everyone safe. Or so everyone thinks until people discovers that the surveillance cameras are also advanced hologram projectors that change the appearances of the creatures, and as it is deactivated it appears that the creatures are a group of humans whose looks and sounds are changed by tools of the state's control, using technologically driven institutional racism that takes away their humanity and ensures their extermination, to make sure they appear dangerous to the public.

The world we live in today is not far from that, it is full of discrimination, from institutional racism to societal and individual. There are even new kinds of racism that are being created (discrimination against Asians post the Corona pandemic). Yes, of course there are people who fight for equality and justice to make the world a little more balanced. But nothing we do is enough to stop those who are in power over the economical, political and social structure of the world to keep getting even more power.

There are many aspects of sustainability my project is working within, mainly under the umbrella of social justice and social sustainability. Exploring the relationship and connections between institutional racism and the concept of the other and Othering. The project connects directly to social justice as it tangles the direct and indirect impact of social racism. Especially within the established media channels and their representation of what is the targeted group to be Othered at the time.
2 Contextualizing

The major existing practice inspiration of this project is the British television series by Charlie Brooker named Black Mirror. It is an anthology series exploring a twisted, high-tech multiverse where humanity's greatest innovations and darkest instincts collide.

The series creates a world where humanity misuses the technology they achieved making it another tool to enforce injustices in the world. The series' creators' way of portraying dystopia is visually genius, in every episode there are plenty of visual elements that connect their world to ours, with the science fiction elements of the technological advance as the obvious distinguishing, it does have a lot of dark realities and aspects of humans and humanity; as they use parts of today’s society and injustices that are happening now and over exaggerate them to the point of fiction. So, the idea of dystopia being a world where our darkness has overtaken the good of the world is an important aspect that I want to show in the short film.

Some other visual and concept inspirations are The Matrix and World on a Wire. Both movies portray a world fully controlled and monitored all the time by the group in control of the system in each world. While the Others or the weaker group are fighting helplessly for justice.
3 Theoretical framework

Using all the time and resources available for this semester to explore racism within the concept of the other. Sadly, enough there is no time in the world to explore all of humanities racism, so I will be focusing on the relationship between the established media and institutional racism. More specifically the creation of the Other as a result of social racism.

Sara Ahmad examines the relationship between strangers, community and embodiment in her book *Strange Encounters*. Analyzing a variety of texts that propose the image of the "stranger" and show that it is either repressed as a source of danger - as in neighborhood surveillance, or as a source of difference - as in multiculturalism. The authors argue that both views are problematic because they involve "strange fetishes"; they believe that strangers "have a life of their own."

> "The recognition of strangers brings into play relations of social and political antagonism that mark some others as stranger than other others." (Ahmad, S, 2000: Page25)

The Other is an individual or group who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way. Any stranger becomes the Other. The mass group of society sees itself as the norm and judges those who do not meet that norm (that is, who are different in any way) as the Other.

The main issue I want to spotlight is Institutional racism, also known as systemic racism, defined as

> "Systemic and structural racism are forms of racism that are pervasively and deeply embedded in and throughout systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, entrenched practices, and established beliefs and attitudes that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment of people of color" (Braveman et al., 2022: unpaginated)

This results in societal racism which is a

> "Set or practices and habits; institutional, cultural, interpersonal and historic normalized injustices within a society that gives one or more social or ethnical groups advantages for better success chances and better position in most if not all aspects of live" (Annie E. Casey Foundation., 2020, unpaginated)

This, with time, results in disadvantages for other groups and individuals creating a gap between social groups and ethnicities. So, I want to uncover how damaging and unjust it can be to have a small group of powerful people taking advantage of a
system they control to use societal racism that they are responsible for creating, against another group or ethnicities.

In 1988, Noam Chomsky co-authored a book with Edward Herman called 'Manufacturing Consent'. The book shattered the myth that the media acts as a check on political power, informing, serving, and involving the public in the political process. While the reality is that the established media fabricates our consent by providing the visual and audio content those in power want us to see and hear.

“A propaganda model… Traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news to fit to print, marginalize dissent, and all the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public.” (Chomsky, N., 1988, page 1)

What the public thinks is democracy is being staged with the media being the core of the propaganda machine. Large media companies are often part of much bigger corporations. Their goal is profit. And so, it's in their interests to push for whatever guarantees that profit. Media outlets aren't just selling you a product - their output. They are also selling advertisers a product - YOU.

In a media system that encourages complicity, journalism cannot serve as a check on power. Big corporations, governments, and major institutions know how to manipulate the news. They fill the media with scoops, official accounts, interviews with the 'experts'. They make themself play an essential role in the journalism process.

In the end, those who are in power and the others challenging and (exposing) them are playing for the same team. If someone truly wants to challenge the power, they will be pushed away and buried. Their names will disappear from the media. Lose all access to any event or gathering.

And if any inconvenient story for the power in control, that story is trashed, all the resources are discredited, and the conversation is diverted.

To manufacture consent, you need an enemy - a target. That common enemy is communism, terrorism or immigration. Any common enemy, a bogeyman to fear, helps corral public opinion. Consent is being manufactured all around us, all the time.

That common enemy is what becomes the Other. The media creates the concept of the Other, feeds it, grows it and promotes it because the media needs it to ensure the easy attention of the viewer.
4 Methodology

As a content creator I have always been interested in dystopian representation of the powerful impact of society’s issues.

“Dystopian fiction offers a vision of the future. Dystopias are societies in cataclysmic decline, with characters who battle environmental ruin, technological control, and government oppression. Dystopian novels can challenge readers to think differently about current social and political climates, and in some instances can even inspire action.” (Atwood, M., 2021.)

The visual representation of how damaging our unjust behavior and actions can be on our future generations. As one effect of the established media and the explosion of internet and social media, we live in a world where society and individuals are exposed to so much unfairness, hate, aggregation, violence and injustice that we started to normalize seeing the issues we are facing as a society and as a species. Our consistent exposure to images of hate, unfairness etc. through mainly social media become a normal part of our everyday life.

And as I want to criticize parts of today’s society and dramatically exaggerate them in a possible near future. I still need to identify the type of dystopian future I want to spot the light on, is it going to tackle social issues, economical, technological, or environmental.

The first task with planning the production was to pick out a cast, the first challenge of this stage. I did this by looking through my creative friends with similar qualities as the characters that I shaped. As for none of them are professional actors nor had professional training, I wanted them to have parts of themselves within the characters they are playing. Then basically searched for potential actors that would support my project in challenging the issues.

My reason for doing this is that I wanted a certain element of improvisation, for my script to be placed in the actors’ mouths in a more comfortable way for the character. I needed to put as much realism in the dialogues and movement of the characters and I wanted my team to feel included in their roles, even with a start as choosing names fit for the characters together as well as overall ages at our first meeting. As a more basic type of Method acting; also known as the method. An acting technique founded by the actor and director Konstantin Stanislavski, the method focuses and encourages the actor through expressive acting to understand and identify with the character, understand the world it lives in, its motives and emotions.
Started with me preparing for an introduction workshop by making a character map that we could fill in together. And right from there were cosmetic and visual aspects that I don't have much experience with; mainly styling the characters, make up, outfits, accessories and looks. So, I collaborated with makeup artist and stylist Mio Saarela (9-Bibliography). With her help that gave me the freedom to focus on the important aspects for me to learn like camera movement and angles, color profiling and motion tracking. The list goes on.

I planned a presentation to show the cast my thoughts, my vision of the world and how I wanted the movie to be perceived. Showing my mind maps, visual references, the storyline and plot. We went into everything I had planned for the film, so we all would understand the message intended to be delivered for the film.

We sat down and documented other references from the cast that they associated the story with. Both from visual and theoretical angles. Followed by a session to fill the character profiles (Documentation #1 to #5) to decide characteristics like name, age, gender and discuss costumes possibilities.

From the technical perspective, I had to work with two cameras, a wild lens (Sony A7III 20mm) to capture full scenes and cover the surveillance camera perspective. And a narrower lens (Canon 6D 70 mm) used to single character scenes and close ups.
5 Design process

The design practices I used in the project all fall under the umbrella of filmmaking. The process of filmmaking is overloaded and can be overwhelming if not structured, for that I divided it into different stages:

5.1 The concept of the film:
This will be the fundamentals of the film, needing to have an outline of the plot, a world building, characters map, character profiles and story map and eventually creating a script. Followed by building concept visualization, mood boards, time plan and mock-ups to build the visual structure of the film.
5.2 Production planning:
This stage will follow the general architect of the concept that has been built earlier to ensure that visuals, scenes, characters, costumes, makeup and filming is done to deliver the correct message intended. Will need to consider casting and collaborations with other creators considering that there is no budget for the project the actors playing the characters will need to do that voluntarily.

Image: Collaboration Board

Image: World building
Images: Characters design sketch and characters make-up sketch by Mio Saarela.
5.3 Filming:
As the active stage of filmmaking, this stage collected all what I have built above previously to ensure that the production team could apply all the elements together to film scenes and shots that deliver the intended message that I wanted for each of them. At first, I assumed that the challenging aspect would be ensuring that the scenes are dystopian without needing to use much visual effects as they are very time and resource consuming. But as I keep moving forward, I learned that compared to other aspects of film making that is not an issue. There is a lot of visual dystopias all around us, we are just so used to seeing it in our world that we don't notice it as much anymore.

Image: Shot list
6 Filming process

The introduction workshop succeeded in achieving both of its main goals; Setting a well communicated shared interactive environment between everyone on the project. And have a complete character map and shots list making the beginning of the first filming session.

Our first filming day took a lot more preparation time than our other days. At that point we were trying out all the outfits and experimenting with smaller accessories, looks and makeup, seeing how it would look on camera and talking through with the cast how they saw it fit with the characters. Following what was built on the introduction workshop and with consideration to thoughts and requests from the cast, we had characters that were ready to be on camera.

![Image: Behind filming scene 1.](image1.jpg)

We set up the scene together with props found around our houses and storages. The budget is very very low but in this concept of a dystopian world where the average citizen barely makes it, scraps worked well. We set it up in such a way to make it easier filming from different angles, packing and putting it back for later scenes in the same location. Trying our best to make it a home. While doing so we talked about the script while getting ready and everyone got time to practice and go through any questions.
When starting our filming process, we ran into a lot of trial and error, trying out what angles that would be visually appealing while matching with the feeling and general mood of the scene. There were a lot of retakes because of the difficulty getting into character in the beginning, but the roles are based on the actors so eventually it felt more natural. The retakes were also a positive element for us to figure out the sound situation and really go through the lines a good number of times, and they gave me a chance to have a lot to experiment with on the first shots.

This first filming was very critical in setting the relations between the characters but also as actors themselves, as because our first scene in the movie is also the first scene we shot together and our characters will grow as characters and also evolve in their acting, raising the standard.

I took the chance in our first session to experiment a little with the filming style, so trying a couple methods that are going to be used later in the movie gave me a quick
look on how it will shape. And during this process my methods and ways have evolved and changed. I have got to learn and try different styles relating to how the film portrays dystopia. With a total of seven filming sessions, I ended up learning so much, I learned things that I didn't know I had to learn. But maybe more importantly for me is that I lived through the process of making a film from scratch, and I experimented with all its aspects, from writing the plot and the script, to acting and filming, camera control and light, composition and editing, color matching and special effects (images #6 to 12).

With each new skill I learn I would adapt my working accordingly, for example my first thought was to color grade each scene separately after the scene is filmed but I learned that having all the scenes from the same location together made it smoother to color grade and edit.
7 Contextualizing

For the contextualization of the independent project in society and in collaboration with Mickal Lawrenin and Biostaden Kalmar; Project THEM is screened at the local movie theater in Kalmar in a “Dystopian Hour” event. Scheduling the screening of two short films in the dystopian genre, followed up with open discussion.

Collaborating with Visual Communication + Change content creator Mickal Lawrenin; a classmate of mine working on 3D rendered anti-commercial in the dystopian genre. The event was targeted to two target groups, the general public and more closely choses guests including university professors, media professionals, newspaper journalists and artists that we personally invited.

Promoting the event, I designed and created a custom VIP cinema ticket to send as a digital invitation of the event and used social media and printed posters to promote the event even further on among the general public. (Picture #13 - #14).

Image #13: Dystopian hour poster in 1x1 format.
I made sure to curate a variety of formats of the posters to fit social media and cinema posters. During the test and tryout day, we had some technical modifications to make for the film such as format, aspect ratio and sound control.

The aim of the event was to engage all with open discussion that briefly explains the concepts of US vs. THEM in the short film and in relation with today's society. Using the interactive method of quantitative feedback collecting (Word Cloud) of responses to the question: In today's world, where the media and the news is always spinning around the concept of US vs. THEM, who do you consider to be “THEM”?

During the dystopian hour, we started the session by greeting the attenders and introducing the schedule of the hour. Right after we started the screening by showing Michal’s dystopian anti-advertising before the short film Project THEM. showing the film at the cinema was the optimal choice as the big screen is the home of all film, yet I did not want to forget the main goal of my film; to provoke thought and have the audience think about the issues the film is discussing. Yet, screening at the cinema had its own disadvantages, as it became difficult to get the conversation going as a conversation rather than a Q&A format, unlike having the set up in locations that are more natural to have a conversation at, for instance a seminar room at the university or an art gallery at the museum, that could have created smoother conversation and the space to share thoughts more freely.

To make sure that is achieved during the contextualizing, the film was activated by opening the conversation through the WordCloud. By first giving the opportunity to give both of us (Michal and I) feedback on our work and being open for questions to reply on and explain our concept, decisions and ideas behind the choices we made. The goal of the project was to make people think about the systems controlling the
boundaries we live in today's world. And to connect the issues addressed in the film to the real world we live in and to let the people relate their own experiences with the story; I asked the audience to participate in WordCloud feedback to create a collaborative piece of all the answers given to the main question of the open discussion: We are constantly exposed to media telling us that the world is divided to US vs. THEM. in each of our individual worlds, who is THEM to you? (Picture #15)

The results varied between participants, and it was very interesting to read and share live with everyone, yet the most answered word was (government). Which I believe it says a lot on its own. Yet to elaborate more on that my work in this (and other) context by not just the WordCloud, but also with all the conversations and interactions that I have had along with the experience and the prosses, since the prosses was such large part of my work.

8 Conclusion

As the research aims to explore and visually communicate the question, how does the relationship between the established media and institutional racism create “the Other” as a result of social racism. And with the time and resources available for the project, I was able to create a dystopian short life-action film highlighting and over exaggerating the research question.

The project was enormous. To research, explore and discuss the theories, methods and processes of researching, planning, designing, filming, and editing a short film was overflowing with constantly changing challenges. And each of those challenges gave me a new skill to learn and apply. As a visual communicator my main challenge was how to visualize dystopia. Especially since the project lacked the high-end visual effects of the classic dystopia.

The result of the project is not defined by the final film produced. But more by the process of how to achieve visual communication for the intended parts of the scenery. Researching, discussing and learning the different aspects of the project and the collaboration with the society and team members made this an objective learning experience.

LINK TO FILM: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QmVh4Y6a0g&t=5s
9 Bibliography


Stylist/makeup: Mio Saarela, https://www.instagram.com/i.am.iio/?hl=en
10 Documentation

10.1 Character profiles. Images #1 to #5

**Character 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Quicks &amp; Flaws</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Name:** Eovy  
**Age:** 19  
**Gender:** Female  
**Species:** Human (Varied)  
**Other:** Actors: Sagai | Will help the blocked and give away capabilities.  
Fears much guilt for accepting virtual and not questions the world. | Sensitive caring and loving person  
Takes care of everyone safety  
emotional andomatic but strong |

**Character 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Quicks &amp; Flaws</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Name:** Jasper  
**Age:** 19  
**Gender:** Female  
**Species:** Human (Varied)  
**Other:** Glasses | Very technical.  
Computer nerd.  
Likes to be safe and comfortable. Anxious, footing | Does not really care for the blocked, just wants to be safe.  
Fears breaking the laws but accidentally does it.  
Feels aight with everything as long as it doesn’t affect it. |
Character 3

Profile

Name: Erik
Born: 16
Gender: Male
Species: Human (Hybrids)
Actor: Nicola

Quirks & Flaws

Meets well and wants the others to be safe but ends up overprotecting and controlling.

Doesn't care about its safety as long as his "people" are safe.

Acts like the leader.

The hate of the mutants and the anger leads him to do irrational decisions.

Characteristics

Curious, angry and nitpicking person
Hates the mutants, and think they are dangerous.
Wants to protect the others no matter what.

Character 4

Profile

Name: Violet
Born: 16
Gender: Female
Species: Broken Human (Other)
Other: Cat owner
Actor: Autumn

Quirks & Flaws

Broken human, physically weak, afraid, and sick from being on the run.
Relatively young.

Spreads all the blame on the man.

Fears Humans.

Characteristics

Unpredictable, and not very careful, gets followed by Humans and lead them to the blocked hideout.

Mislabeled outfit, connecting old human life and new blocked state.

Cares for animals and have a Cat that she found and take care of biz she felt connected to it.
## Character 5

### Profile

Name: Zako  
Age: 40  
Gender: Male  
Species: Blooded Human (Other)  
Other: looks like been throw a lot  
Actor: Olle

### Characteristics

leader of the blooded, strong, political, protective, direct, fearless.

### Quirks & Flaws

Old experienced Human that been blocked the longest.  
Pessimistic and believes there is no way for peace.  
Willing to do anything to protect and will harm the Norms if needed.  

Background:  
part of the Aphas pervously before the supervision revolution, did not agree with the changes about to happen so he got outcasted and joined the blocked trying to help them.
10.2 Camera angles. Images #6 to #9
10.3 VFX. Images #10 - #11
10.4 Motion tracking. Image #12
10.5 Dystopian hour poster in 1x1 format. Image #13 & #14.

VIP invitation Ticket. Picture #14
10.6 Word Cloud Feedback. Picture #15

Who are THEM in your world?

- institutions
- politicians
- companies
- us
- russian
- people
- drugs
- hypocrites
- everyone
- government
- men
- dictators
- pedophile
- cola
- police
- CIS
- righteous
- rich
- know
- white
- structures
- outsiders
- Coca
- power
- hate

Powered by Poll Everywhere
10.7 Stills from the film