



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

NETWORK SOVEREIGNTIES: REIMAGINING COLLECTIVE ACTION BEYOND THE NATION-STATE


TL;DR


 **APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN!** Join us in (re-)imagining governance for a networked age! From May to September 2024, the SOAM Residency Program offers an unique opportunity to explore the concept of network sovereignties through a speculative lens.


 **WHY JOIN US?** In an era marked by technological acceleration and geopolitical shifts, decentralized technologies like blockchain and peer-to-peer networks are enabling new forms of sovereignty that transcend territorial borders. Our program delves into how these digital innovations can empower networked communities to govern themselves, foster alignment, and catalyze collective action – thereby complementing or even transforming the existing nation-state system. Discover more through our application guidelines on our website: www.soam.earth


 **WHAT TO EXPECT?** Over five months, our hybrid program brings together 5-10 interdisciplinary residents through offline and online experiences:


- **Governance Speculation:** Explore the future of network sovereignties.
- **On-site Stay:** Spend a month at our stunning studio on Lake Ammersee, Germany.
- **Learning Circles:** Join bi-weekly virtual workshops to expand your horizons.
- **Expert Mentorship:** Receive support and feedback from our curatorial team.
- **Community of Practice:** Collaborate with a vibrant group of governance radicals.
- **Visibility & Impact:** Present your work at a public event and prestigious symposium.

 **WHAT IS THE OUTPUT?** Design and showcase a speculative governance prototype that envisions the future of networked community building.

 **WHO IS THIS FOR?** SOAM seeks governance radicals from all disciplines, including but not limited to artists, technologists, researchers, and policymakers.

 **HOW TO APPLY?** Apply as an individual or duo. Submit your application [via our designated form](#).

 **DEADLINE:** Friday, April 12, 2024 (23:59 CEST).

 **LEARN MORE:** Ready to envision the future of network sovereignties? Discover more through our application guidelines at www.soam.earth/residency or contact us at info@soam.earth.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

[The SOAM Residency](#) will select 5-10 interdisciplinary individuals or duos to develop speculative governance prototypes that envision the future of network sovereignties. Our program is uniquely designed to offer a blend of time, space, and community, enabling residents to refine their practice, collaborate with their peers, and evolve together.

Residents will receive support and feedback from the curatorial team and their extended network throughout the process.

Running from May to September 2024, the program unfolds in four parts:

- 1. On-Site Residency:** Each resident spends one month consecutively at our scenic studio located at Lake Ammersee, Germany, from May to September 2024.
- 2. Virtual Residency:** All residents participate in bi-weekly virtual learning circles (each 2h) from May until September 2024.
- 3. Kick-Off Workshop:** All residents partake in a kick-off workshop (3h) in late April 2024, setting the stage for the months ahead.
- 4. Public Event:** All residents will showcase their projects at a virtual public event in autumn 2024 (TBA).

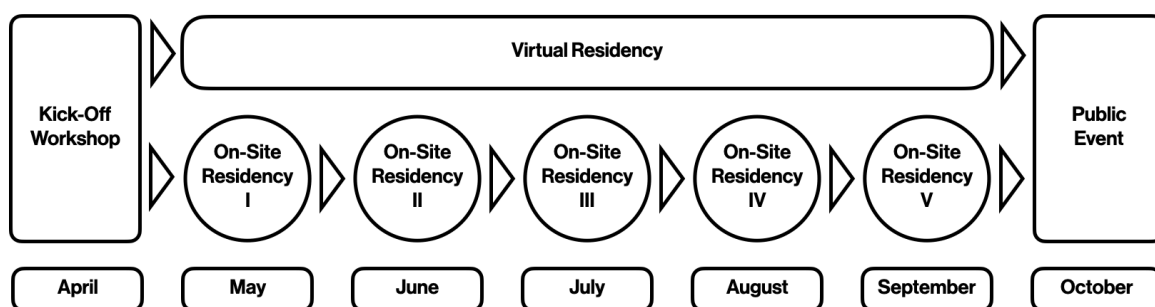


Illustration: Program Overview

ANNUAL THEME

The SOAM Residency 2024's core hypothesis is that decentralized social technologies like blockchain or peer-to-peer networks give rise to [new forms of sovereignty](#) that transcend traditional political and geographical borders. This institutional evolution marks a move away from the rigid hierarchies of the past toward a future where power is distributed, governance is co-created, and communities are interconnected.

The Rise of Network Sovereignties

[The concept of "network sovereignties"](#) describes how contemporary [societies are progressively restructuring around and through digital networks](#), as the primary engine for cooperation. These emerging modes of governance challenge the Westphalian status quo and move beyond conventional notions of sovereignty bound by the geopolitical borders and centralized authority of nation-states. Network sovereignties are non-territorial in nature; they foster collective coordination around a shared sense of identity and belonging, rooted in the digital networks that envelop our globe.

By leveraging the power of information and communication technologies—including blockchain, social media, and peer-to-peer networks, network sovereignties unlock new opportunities to solve global coordination challenges. These political entities are at the forefront of digitally empowered governance innovation, forming decentralized yet highly aligned communities with a capacity for collective action.

Rather than replacing existing state systems, network sovereignties seek to complement additional layers of sovereignty that support emergent communities. In this new paradigm, traditional national identity—once seen as the singular, overarching organizing principle of personhood—becomes one of many facets of an individual's self-conception. Network sovereignties recognize and cultivate a plurality of identities, enabling individuals to identify with and participate in [multiple collective entities both online and offline](#).

The Promise and Perils of Network Sovereignties

Imagine a world where local communities, empowered by digital technology, come together to tackle global challenges—climate change, social inequality, and beyond. In this world, traditional architectures of power undergo reconstruction: authority is distributed rather than concentrated; legitimacy emerges bottom-up rather than top-down; and association is voluntary; rather than inherited. Network sovereignties envision a radically different mode of political organization, offering an innovative and adaptive approach to global collaboration, mutualism, and solidarity.

Network sovereignties offer more than just a fresh outlook on governance; they propose a [third mode of societal organization](#) that exists alongside markets and states. This model underscores the significance of [mutual coordination](#), enhanced by digital innovation, to

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effectively manage shared resources and galvanize collective action. It invites us to explore digital, decentralized forms of [peer production](#) across various scales, ranging from [self-organized community infrastructures](#) to [network-based stewardship of the commons](#) and [polycentric global governance](#).

However, as with any emergent paradigm, this shift presents new challenges and dilemmas. Questions of [accountability and legitimacy within decentralized networks](#), the balance between local autonomy and global interdependence, and [the mitigation of power concentration in an increasingly adversarial internet](#) demand urgent attention. Moreover, the rise of alternative modalities of networked governance raises critical concerns regarding the emergence of [anarcho-crypto colonialism](#), [libertarian start-up states](#), and [digital authoritarianism](#). These developments highlight the importance of a reflexive examination of these complex dynamics and their interplay with network sovereignties.

Navigating the New Frontier

The confluence of accelerating technological capabilities and shifting geopolitical landscapes heralds new configurations of sovereignty, balancing precariously between the promise of democratic renewal and the threat of systemic decline. SOAM Residency seeks to chart possible pathways by which this transformation might unfold. To this end, our program aims to envision the possibilities of decentralized community building – thereby revealing emerging layers of sovereignty that have the potential to complement and even transform the existing Westphalian system of nation-states.

APPROACH

To navigate the future of network sovereignties, the SOAM Residency Program adopts an approach that we term **Governance Speculation** – a research-driven design practice aimed at (re-)imagining governance arrangements by bringing together diverse positions, disciplines, and backgrounds. This approach not only develops speculative governance propositions but also critically examines their potential societal implications, practical feasibility, and long-term viability, moving beyond simplistic utopian and dystopian gestures.

SOAM's Governance Speculation is guided by **five core principles**:

- 1. Transformative:** We support speculation that critically questions established paradigms, demonstrates new patterns of possibility, and strives for systemic change.
- 2. Pragmatic:** We are interested in speculation that mediates between what's desirable and what's possible, prioritizing actionable insights over purely aesthetic or utopian gestures.

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- 3. Transdisciplinary:** We understand speculation as a mode of boundary-spanning experimentation that fosters collaboration across diverse sectors, disciplines and backgrounds.
- 4. Situated:** We believe in speculation that is community-centric, informed by real-world context and co-created with all stakeholders.
- 5. Hyperstitional:** We embrace speculation as a means to craft self-fulfilling prophecies rather than reductionist predictions of future alternatives, thereby calling into existence the public necessary for its creation.

In practice, the speculative process unfolds in **three stages**:

- 1. Case Study:** The initial stage delves into a specific governance case studies – from the past, present, or future – to anchor our speculative exploration in real-world context.
- 2. Extrapolation:** Leveraging these case studies, the second stage then speculates on altered governance configurations to reveal alternative possibilities.
- 3. Backcasting:** The final stage translates these speculative models into actionable insights, aiming to generate societal impact.

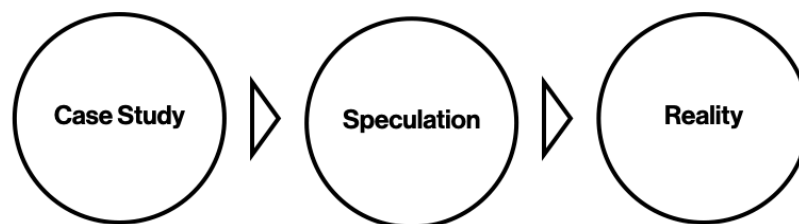


Illustration: Process of Governance Speculation

At its core, our approach uses speculative thinking as a tool to traverse various timelines—past, present, and future—questioning the status quo and exploring uncharted governance possibilities.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

In 2024, the SOAM Residency Program invites participants **to create speculative governance prototypes, grounded in thorough case study research of network sovereignties**. Each resident will select a case—whether historical, contemporary, or futuristic—of a community organized through networked principles. This exploration should uncover the distinctive primitives, mechanisms and justifications that could lead to the formation of a network sovereignty.

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A non-exhaustive list of questions to be explored might include: How might networked communities fulfill core prerogatives of the state like administration, legislation, and welfare? How might they introduce new avenues for political participation, civic engagement and collective action? How might they redefine traditional dichotomies—such as local vs. global, bottom-up vs. top-down, and horizontal vs. vertical hierarchies? How might they leverage decentralised technologies to expand their geopolitical, monetary, legal, and popular sovereignty? How might they complement or even reshape the existing nation-state system?

Residents are expected to complete the following:

- **Speculative Prototype:** Design a speculative prototype for a case-based networked sovereignties;
- **Residency Report:** Write a residency report detailing the prototype model, research findings, and key learning (approx. 5-10 pages);
- **Workshop Facilitation:** Host two virtual workshops during their on-site residency;
- **Program Attendance:** Attend bi-weekly virtual workshops of other residents, regular mentor check-ins, and final virtual conference;
- **Project Presentation:** Present output at our virtual public event in autumn 2024;
- **Regular Updates:** Communicate progress throughout the program.

BENEFITS

Residents will benefit from:

- **Living and Working Space:** Enjoy dedicated time and a serene space at our Lake Ammersee studio to delve into innovative ideas and projects.
- **Expert Mentorship:** Receive personalized feedback through one-on-one mentorship with curatorial team and other residents.
- **Experimental Learning:** Participate in bi-weekly virtual workshops designed to stimulate critical and speculative thinking.
- **Community of Practice:** Connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas within a diverse community of peers, mentors, and experts in governance, technology, and community building.
- **Visibility and Impact:** Showcase your work at our public event and contribute to our annual publication.
- **Research Symposium:** Present your project at [the European University Institute's Symposium on Network Sovereignties](#).

FUNDING

At this moment, the SOAM Residency is self-funded, meaning we are unable to offer stipends or financial support for living, travel, or material costs. However, **we are actively exploring funding opportunities** with the hope of offering financial support to our residents.

In your application, we encourage you to detail your specific funding needs. Your transparency helps us gauge the collective financial needs and explore possibilities for providing assistance.

Please rest assured that the information you provide will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will not impact the selection process.

ELIGIBILITY

The SOAM Residency Program seeks **individuals or duos** who are eager to explore the intersection of technology, governance, and networked communities (**Please read the FAQ for more info on duos**). We welcome applications from a diverse array of participants, including but not limited to researchers, artists, entrepreneurs, innovators, designers, technologists, activists, and policy-makers.

Applicants should:

- Be established in their practice;
- Be interested in learning about or developing their understanding of network sovereignties;
- Provide a concrete case study for their speculative project;
- Be 18 years or older;
- Be proficient in English (C1);
- Commit to the residency's full timeline, including the kick-off workshop, public event, and bi-weekly virtual learning circles.

SOAM is committed to offering equal access, opportunity, and outcomes to all potential applicants regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race, or cultural and/or socio-economic backgrounds.

TIMELINE

APPLICATION PHASE

- 21 March, 2024 — Open Call Released
- 12 April, 2024 — Deadline of Application

- 19 April, 2024 – Announcement of 2024 Cohort

PROGRAM PHASE

- Late April, 2024 – Kick-Off Workshop
- May until Sep 2024 – Program Duration
- Oct or Nov 2024 – Public Event

APPLICATION

Those interested in applying to the SOAM Residency Program 2024 should fill in our [digital application form](#). This form includes:

1. **Motivation (max. 500 words):** A brief explanation of how your experiences and interests align with the theme of network sovereignties.
2. **Short Project Proposal (max. 500 words):** A short proposal that outlines the objective, case study, and methodological approach for your speculative governance prototype.
3. **Residency Timing Preference:** Your preferred time slot for the on-site residency, to be scheduled for one month between May and September 2024.
4. **Funding Needs:** Any financial support you may need to participate in the program.
5. **(Optional) Curriculum Vitae:** A current CV along with links to your social media profiles.
6. **(Optional) Project Portfolio:** A portfolio showcasing relevant past projects or research.

Deadline: Friday, April 12, 2024 (23:59 CEST).

Applications are welcome from individuals or duos. Given the studio's spacious yet open-plan layout, potential applicants are advised to review the studio description thoroughly to gauge the suitability of the space for collaborative living and working arrangements (See FAQ for more info).

FAQ

Please read our FAQ before applying. The document can be found via this [link](#) or on our [website](#). Should you have any further questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@soam.earth.

CURATORIAL TEAM

[Felix Beer \(TUM Think Tank\)](#): Felix (he/him) is a transition strategist dedicated to co-creating scenarios, pathways, and ecosystems for transformative change. His work focuses on building networked governance systems at the intersection of technology, democracy, and regeneration.

[Primavera de Filipi \(Harvard Berkman-Klein\)](#): Primavera (she/her) is a legal scholar who explores challenges, opportunities, and best practices in the field of blockchain governance. As a leading scholar on extitutional theory, she is also developing a new theoretical framework on structured social dynamics to help build better interfaces between institutions and extitutions.

[Holke Brammer \(Hypercerts\)](#): Holke (he/him) is a political economist who is committed to improving the capacity of groups to engage in collective action through the use of technology. Currently, he is focused on the development and adoption of open-source protocols for public good funding and impact reward systems.

[Lou de Kerhuelvez \(Foresight Institute\)](#): Lou (they/them) is a researcher and facilitator exploring how technologies can empower governance systems to address the existential challenges of our time. In their current work, they connect and grow a decentralized scientific community advancing those goals.

[Annette Diefenthaler \(Technical University Munich\)](#): Annette (she/her) is a transdisciplinary designer committed to integrating human-centric, responsible, and co-creative design practices into research and innovation. To this end, she designs and facilitates collaborative interfaces between diverse disciplines, sectors, and backgrounds.

ABOUT SOAM

Founded in 2021, SOAM is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering transformative collaboration. We offer residency programs for change agents who challenge outdated paradigms and demonstrate new patterns of possibility. By weaving together diverse ideas, approaches, and backgrounds, we aim to nurture new ecologies of thought and practice. Our goal is to help build a thriving future by offering a space for collaborative imagination, experimentation, and learning.

FURTHER READING

- Workshop Paper: [Network Sovereignties as a Mechanism for Global Coordination](#)
- [Coordi-Nations: A New Institutional Structure for Global Cooperation](#) - Introductory Medium Post
- [Overthrowing the Network State](#) - The Blockchain Socialist podcast
- [Summaries and Insights](#) from the OTNS podcast
- Lightning talk on [Coordi-Nations](#) at Plurality Conference
- [Creating a Coordi-Nation](#) (GreenPill episode)
- [Designing New Institutions](#) (Institutional Architecture Lab)
- [A Progressive Web3: From Social Coproduction to Digital Polycentric Governance](#) (Quinn du Pont)
- [Tribes, Institutions, Markets, Networks: A Framework for Societal Evolution](#) (David Ronfeldt)
- [Ethics of Decentralized Social Technologies](#) (Danielle Allen, Divya Siddarth, E. Glen Wyl & more)
- [Plurality: The Future of Collaborative Technology and Democracy](#) (Audrey Tang, E. Glen Wyl & Plurality Community)
- P2P Foundation collection of [Alternative to States Approaches](#)
- [Decoding Digital Authoritarianism](#) (Berggruen Institute)
- Panel with Nathan Schneider and Sara Horowitz on [Mutualism and Web3](#)
- [DAOcolonialism Reader](#) (OxSalon)
- [Decentralised Society: Finding the Soul of Web3](#) (Puka Ojlhaver, E. Glen Weyl, Vitalik Buterin)
- [Decentralisation: A Multidisciplinary Perspective](#) (Balázs Bodó, Jaya Klara Brekke & Jaap-Henk Hoepman)
- [Cryptoeconomics as a Limitation on Governance](#) (Nathan Schneider)
- [The Insistence of Possibles: Towards Speculative Pragmatism](#) (Isabelle Stengers)