

ZERO HORIZON · SWITZERLAND

An Integrative Knowledge Ecosystem

On the formation of Zero Horizon and the inaugural Bubbles Initiative

— — — — —
An invitation to scholars, researchers, artists, and practitioners

Inaugural Statement · 2025

ABSTRACT

How to think, work, and create under conditions of increasing fragmentation? *Zero Horizon* is a nascent intellectual ecosystem cultivating *integrative thinking* — the work of placing elements into relation. This note describes the initiative's mission, method, and orientation, and introduces its inaugural *Bubbles Initiative*: a study of expansion, integration, and of the fragile interiors in which knowledge, value, and coexistence are formed.

PART ONE

The Initiative

Mission, method, and the wager of integrative thinking

Zero Horizon is a forthcoming intellectual initiative concerned with one central problem: how to think, work, and create under conditions of increasing fragmentation. Contemporary knowledge production has become powerful at generating information, concepts, methods, data, and specialized vocabularies. It is often less capable, however, of integrating them into forms of understanding that can orient action, judgment, and collective life.

Zero Horizon does not begin from a rejection of academia, but from an attachment to what the university has historically promised at its best: disciplined inquiry, intellectual community, the transformation of cultural inheritance, and the possibility that rigorous thought might help us inhabit the world more lucidly. Yet this attachment cannot remain nostalgic. The contemporary research ecosystem is strained by precarious careers, proliferating metrics, institutional branding, competition, loss of public trust, and a widening gap between knowledge production and accessibility. Zero Horizon emerges from within this situation, asking what intellectual forms and practices become necessary when existing institutions no longer fully sustain their original educational and academic purpose.

The mission of Zero Horizon is to cultivate *integrative thinking*. By integration, we do not mean smoothing over differences, reducing multiple disciplines to one master language, or producing a grand theory from above. Integration is the patient work of placing elements into relation: concepts with practices, disciplines with one another, historical tendencies with present institutions, subjective experience with structural forces, and local problems with broader temporal dynamics.

This orientation gives Zero Horizon its specific position. It is not a university, journal, consultancy, art collective, or think tank in the conventional sense, although it may borrow something from each. It is better understood as an *experimental knowledge ecosystem*: a space in which researchers, students, artists, writers, and practitioners can test ways of producing, circulating, and applying knowledge without submitting it to academic closure or market-ready simplification.

The wager is that many contemporary problems are misunderstood because they are approached at the wrong scale, on too few layers, or within an impoverished temporal frame. A

policy issue cannot be grasped if treated only as technical. A crisis in higher education cannot be understood only through funding, ideology, or epistemology. Such problems must be read across material incentives, institutional structures, intellectual habits, public perceptions, technological change, and transformations in the value of knowledge.

Zero Horizon, therefore, works through three modes of interweaving analysis — combined, never reduced to singularity.

MULTI SCALAR	Across orders of magnitude. Examines a phenomenon at the level of the individual, the group, the institution, the market, the state, the discipline, and the historical epoch — and asks how dynamics interplay between them.
MULTI LAYERED	Across registers. Reads the same phenomenon economically, epistemologically, politically, aesthetically, technologically, affectively, and symbolically — without reducing one register to another.
TEMPORAL	Across time. Asks not only what a thing <i>is</i> , but how it became possible, what rhythms sustain it, what residues it carries, and what futures it may be preparing. (and what trajectories it may have)

This approach reveals what conventional frameworks often miss. It can show that a problem presented as individual failure is structurally produced; that a technical solution may deepen the contradiction it claims to resolve; that an institutional reform may operate symbolically rather than materially; that a public controversy may express not only ignorance, but a crisis in the communicability of expertise; and that a research output may be formally rigorous while remaining poorly integrated into a broader ecology of knowledge.

Zero Horizon is especially interested in the points where different systems touch without fully understanding one another: academia and public discourse, research and art, expertise and decision-making, institutions and subjectivity, theory and practice. These contact zones are often treated as peripheral, but they are increasingly central. The most urgent questions of our

time rarely fit inside a single disciplinary container. They appear as ecological, technological, political, economic, psychological, and cultural at once. Addressing them requires not only more information but better intellectual orientation.

This is why Zero Horizon's epistemological position is also practical. Integrative thinking is a *capacity that can be trained*. It involves learning to map tensions, distinguish levels of analysis, identify assumptions, compare frameworks, recognize symbolic investments, and follow a problem's movement across time. It requires sensitivity to contradiction without immediately forcing resolution, and the ability to hold together elements that institutions often separate: rigor and imagination, critique and construction, scholarship and style, analysis and judgment.

At this stage, Zero Horizon does not claim to possess a complete method. It is still forming its vocabulary, testing its practices, and clarifying its institutional shape. The ambition is not to announce a finished doctrine, but to build a space where intellectual tools can develop in contact with real problems, collaborators, and limits.

One guiding intuition of Zero Horizon is that knowledge production should be understood *ecologically* rather than industrially. The industrial model imagines research as a sequence of outputs: projects, articles, deliverables, credentials, and indicators. An ecological model asks instead what environments allow ideas to grow, and how unfinished thoughts, failed attempts, marginal insights, unexpected analogies, and unpublished conversations might become resources for others.

This ecological view also changes the meaning of collaboration. Collaboration is not simply the addition of several names to a project. It is the creation of conditions under which different forms of attention modify one another. The artist may perceive a formal structure that the theorist missed. The practitioner may expose the limits of an elegant concept. The student may ask the naive question that reopens the problem. The specialist may protect rigor; the generalist may restore orientation. Zero Horizon wants to cultivate this relational intellectual environment.

“Integrative thinking is a capacity that can be trained.”

I.

Who This Is For

The value proposition of Zero Horizon follows from this orientation. For scholars, it offers a space where research can become more intelligible, connected, and alive without being diluted. It invites researchers to think beyond the isolated article and ask how their work participates in broader conceptual, historical, and public conversations; how it articulates and contours an

actualized worldview. It also responds to the loneliness and strategic exhaustion of academic life by creating a setting where intellectual seriousness is not opposed to visibility, experimentation, or personal voice.

FOR SCHOLARS

Research that becomes intelligible without being diluted.

Established scholars find contact with a community interested in translation, synthesis, and interdisciplinary resonance — a setting in which intellectual seriousness is not opposed to visibility, experimentation, or personal voice.

FOR EARLY-CAREER RESEARCHERS

Articulating a profile without reducing oneself to branding.

Support in shaping a distinctive intellectual position, beyond the isolated article — and inside a network of peers practicing the same patient work of integration across disciplines, scales, and registers.

FOR ARTISTS AND WRITERS

Encountering research as material, method, and provocation.

A space where formal experimentation, narrative form, and aesthetic sensibility *participate* in research — not as illustration beneath the “serious” work, but as part of the drive towards integration.

FOR PRACTITIONERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Analysis that clarifies the structure of the problems you face.

Diagnostic and integrative work that resists ready-made solutions and instead surfaces the scales, registers, and temporal dynamics at play in the situation — making complexity navigable without falsifying it.

Practically, Zero Horizon imagines this work through several connected forms: a learning community, a magazine, a gallery of contributors, public-facing essays and resources, collaborative projects, and workshops on navigating complexity. These are not separate products so much as expressions of one aim: to create channels through which intellectual work can be refined, shared, tested, and made usable without losing depth.

The project also has a *civic dimension*. When knowledge becomes inaccessible, opaque, or reducible to institutional authority, public trust weakens. The answer is neither to abandon rigor for simplification nor to retreat into specialist enclaves. The harder task is to build forms that make complexity communicable without falsifying it. Zero Horizon's gambit is that transparency, intellectual generosity, and formal creativity can help restore confidence in knowledge — not by demanding trust, but by showing the work through which trust might be earned.

This is an invitation, not a recruitment pitch. Zero Horizon is still at ground level, but it begins from a conviction: the present crisis of knowledge is not only institutional or economic, but also epistemological and imaginative. We need new ways of seeing relations, tracing tensions, composing scales, and inhabiting complexity. Zero Horizon exists to begin that work — not from above, not as a final horizon known in advance, but from the ground where fragments become visible, and integration can begin.

PART TWO

The Bubbles Inaugural Issue

A first object of inquiry — and an editorial experiment

The most immediate test of this orientation is Zero Horizon's first journal issue. If the project's broader aim is to cultivate integrative thinking, then its inaugural publication must stage that ambition through a concrete object of inquiry: one image and one conceptual field capable of gathering different scales, registers, and temporalities without dissolving their specificity. For this reason, the first issue turns to the figure of the *bubble*.

The bubble offers a compact yet unstable way of examining tensions already central to Zero Horizon: protection and exposure, expansion and collapse, interiority and relation, abstraction and material constraint, institutional persistence and experiential fragility. Rather than beginning with a settled doctrine, the issue begins with a question — *what becomes intelligible when contemporary forms of knowledge, value, identity, and coexistence are read through the bubble dynamics?*

The choice is not ornamental. A bubble is at once fragile and durable, protective and suffocating, material and almost immaterial, bounded and exposed to what surrounds it. It can refer to a financial cycle, an institution, a digital enclosure, an ideological atmosphere, an ecological threshold, or a shared world of meaning. Because the image travels so easily, it risks becoming vague. The task of the *Bubbles Initiative* is to resist that vagueness by treating “bubble” not as a casual metaphor, but as a serious analytical object.

The initiative begins from the intuition that many contemporary crises are not only crises of collapse, but crises of *failed integration*. We are surrounded by expansion: more information, platforms, credentials, forecasts, markets, images, tools, and institutional promises. But expansion does not necessarily produce orientation. It can produce saturation, fatigue, redundancy, and paralysis. A bubble forms when something expands faster than it can be integrated into a durable form of life, knowledge, value, or coexistence. It may burst spectacularly, deflate slowly, or persist for decades because its internal logic becomes too familiar to perceive.

*“We do not live only after bubbles have burst. We also live inside them,
before their instability becomes legible.”*

The first issue will investigate bubbles across philosophical, historical, institutional, economic, technological, ecological, psychological, and artistic registers. These are not separate territories placed beside one another for breadth. The wager is that the same structural problem can be examined at different scales without reducing one scale to another. A speculative market and a university are not the same thing; nor are a filter bubble and a childhood bubble. But each involves a relation between interior and exterior, boundary and pressure, protection and distortion, expansion and possible collapse.

The philosophical point of departure is Peter Sloterdijk's account of bubbles and spheres. Sloterdijk interrupts the assumption that human beings begin as isolated individuals who later enter into relations. Instead, human existence begins inside shared interiors — placental, familial, intimate, social, atmospheric, symbolic. A bubble, in this sense, is not merely an enclosure. It is an *elementary form of coexistence*. The initiative is therefore not interested in repeating the familiar command to “pop the bubble,” as though all bubbles were false and all exposure emancipatory. Some bubbles protect life. Some make learning, intimacy, attention, or collective trust possible. The problem is to distinguish livable bubbles from suffocating ones; generative interiors from closed systems; necessary protection from pathological insulation.

II.

The Three Inaugural Essays

The first issue gathers three contributions that establish the field, in addition to strategic work, artistic responses, and short fragments from collaborators.

SLOTERDIJK'S SPHERES PATHWAY

From Intimacy to World Order

The theoretical grounding.

What does an ontology of shared interiority offer to debates about knowledge, institutions, digital life, and collective existence? The essay clarifies why the bubble should not be treated only as deception: a bubble may distort reality, but distortion is not always the opposite of truth. Like a lens, it can reveal through distortion. The task is to understand what each bubble makes visible, what it hides, and what kind of life it permits inside its membrane.

RUPTURES OF MODERNISM PATHWAY

Lost Futures and the Ruptures of Modernism

A historical examination.

Modernity itself can be read as a bubble of expectation — inflated by the belief that history possessed direction and that social life could be progressively ordered. When those futures fractured, they did not disappear. They left ruins, traces, obsolete infrastructures, and attachments to futures that never arrived. The essay situates the initiative temporally: we are not only building new bubbles; we are also inhabiting the remains of older ones.

THE EPISTEMIC ENCLOSURE PATHWAY

The Ossified Epistemic Bubble of Solid Modernity

The institutional and epistemological stakes.

How has, in our liquid modern age, the mass proliferation of information fractured the ways by which we produce knowledge? This entry is an exploration of how the established dynamics of knowledge production were wholly unprepared for the advent of the digital age. It is also a sustained argument for the necessity, now more than ever, of transdisciplinary modes of knowledge production by which we may grasp the immensity of our current situation. As the author describes: “The rate of information, it was believed, would achieve unprecedented acceleration ... the spread of the digital commons would gradually foster our supravirtual ties, bettering the real-world resources we exchange and share.” Regarding this quixotic dream in hindsight he continues that with “the partial realization of such promise” we bear witness to a “parallel opposing movement: as interpretation does not derive immediately from data, some forms of knowledge have actually risen in costs, and the inefficiency of excessive and confusing information has been increasingly identified as a phenomenon taking roots everywhere.”

Alongside these essays, the issue will include strategic work on hype cycles, technological analysis of algorithmic enclosure, artistic responses to fragility and saturation, and short fragments from contributors describing oversaturation in their own fields. These fragments are not ornaments for the “serious” essays, but part of our method. A theoretical essay can describe saturation; a worker, artist, researcher, or founder can show how it is *lived* — too many tools, forecasts, platforms, options, signals, and too little integration.

Zero Horizon's *Bubbles Initiative* is therefore an initial research object, an editorial experiment, and a way of gathering people around a shared problem. Its value does not lie in institutional authority or claims of scale. It lies in the attempt to build an intellectual space

where philosophical analysis, institutional critique, strategic thinking, artistic form, and lived observation can be held together long enough for patterns to become visible.

THE INVITATION

To think bubbles without reducing them to illusion.

To study saturation without merely lamenting excess; to ask what forms of coexistence remain possible when expansion outpaces integration. Zero Horizon begins from that question — not above the problem, and not outside the bubble, but from within the fragile interiors where thought, trust, and collective orientation still have to be made.

If this resonates, we would welcome a conversation. Write to us with a brief description of the questions you are working on, the institutions you are part of, or the dynamics you are trying to understand.

ZERO HORIZON

Bridging Research, Art, and Practice.

Switzerland · info@zerohorizon.ch · zerohorizon.ch