

# Identification as Process in Participatory Design

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## ABSTRACT

In this workshop we invite participants to discuss and map techniques, approaches and principles to address processes of identification in Participatory Design endeavors. The key objective of the workshop is to present *identification as process* as a concept to think with, and to explore how different lenses can engage workshop participants in thinking about participatory design endeavors in connection to this concept. As the outcome the workshop participants produce set of principles for identification as process for PD work.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms**

## KEYWORDS

Identification, process, method, participation, workshop.

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## 1 FROM REPRESENTING USE AND USER TO SUPPORTING PROCESSES OF IDENTIFICATION?

Although the understanding of use and user situation expanded already in the early days of Participatory Design (PD), yet the collaboration and interaction with people has remained largely representational in PD endeavors [11]. Too often than not, people are invited to participate in a capacity of a predefined stakeholder category or user group set by the PD practitioners. Furthermore, it seems that in PD projects users continue to be in a need of representation e.g. in design of digital technologies in a form of personas [2], or diverse groups affected by new technologies are often presumed or “taken-for-granted” [3]. Even if PD has shifted its focus towards people’s messy everyday real-life settings, and several projects have been working with issues such as identity and capacity building [e.g. 4,7], only few scholars in PD have addressed the politics of representation, and discussed methods for more multi-faceted means for identification for actors involved [1,11]. Therefore, discussing and mapping shared techniques, approaches

and principles to address more nuanced and relational processes of identification is warranted within PD.

Identification as process is a term discussed by cultural theorist Stuart Hall, who wrote “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” [5, p. 392]. This idea has further been developed in queer theory with theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick [10], José Esteban Muñoz [9], and in art history with scholars such as Amelia Jones who has explained identification as process as “how subjects might navigate the world through process rather than endless oppositional projections that seek to fix others in place in order to confirm the self” [2, p. 229].

## 2 THE WORKSHOP DESIGN

### 2.1 Workshop Objectives

In this half-a-day workshop PD practitioners and scholars are invited to share their stories and experience as experts, and to contribute to a shared matter of concern. The key objective of the workshop is to present identification as process as a concept to think with, and to explore how different lenses can engage workshop participants in thinking about participatory design endeavors in connection to this concept.

The workshop seeks to tackle the politics of representation through participant narratives, accounts and examples deriving from practical PD work. In practical terms the workshop collaboratively maps means for multi-faceted processes of identification and produces a set of principles for PD endeavors. In a group discussion-session we specifically focus on two lenses;

Using stories and memories and Reading and manipulating materials and objects to facilitate identification as process.

### 2.2 Workshop Structure, Schedule and Outcome

The participants will be recruited through an open call for the PD community and related fields such as CSCW and HCI. Participants are requested to share their contribution in a form of e.g. case, story, an artifact that the participants' have worked with. An online submission form for collecting contributions will be set-up by the organizers. The relevant contributions are selected by the organizers, and materials will be distributed to the selected participants in the beginning of August 2018.

The workshop has four parts, and it is structured as follows:

**9.30 – 9.45** Warm up and introductions: Create a visual representation of f participants – what elements of their identity they would like to present? Provide a range of materials (paper, sheets etc.)

**9.45 – 10.05** Introduction to the theme of the workshop: Identification as Process – mini-lecture. History – positioning it, key themes and unpacking some cases.

10.05 – 10.20 Break

**10.20 – 11.40** Group discussion and reflection: Participants present their story, case or artifact in the groups and discuss together how this can be viewed as an opening for identification as a process in connection to both lenses.

- 1st lens: Using stories and memories
- 2nd lens: Reading and manipulating materials and objects

**11.40 – 12.00** Round up discussion: sharing between groups, creating initial principles for enhancing identification as process

in participatory design and shared road map for future endeavors.

*Outcome:* At the workshop, a mapping will be conducted on the challenges, risks, opportunities, conflicts, negotiations, possibilities that the different lenses open up for in terms of identification as process in participatory design. The concrete outcome of the workshop is twofold:

1. the participants create an inventory of cases and approaches to mediate identification processes, and
2. draft a set of principles for identification as process in PD endeavors. The initial list of principles is then shared with the conference participants for their reflection and feedback.

The workshop topic *Identification as Process in Participatory Design* links to the conference theme on politics in that it explores how identification as process can be supported in/through participatory design approach.

## 3 EXAMPLES OF CASES AND APPROACHES TO DISCUSS AT THE WORKSHOP

### 3.1 The Co-Archiving Refugee Documentation Project

The *Co-archiving Refugee Documentation Project* (part of the research project Living Archives at Malmö University) is based on a collaboration between museum professionals and refugees. The aim is to design collaborative (co-)archiving practices for inviting refugees to share and document their experiences from their point of view and not through the lens of the “other”, that is, those who gather the documentation, interview, filter, select and archive. Four co-design workshops were organized inviting the museum professionals and refugees to jointly explore and develop co-archiving practices. When preparing for the workshops, much effort was put into selecting a relevant set of generative tools and techniques, aimed at creating conditions for the two groups of participants to meet on equal terms, and realize expectations which were based on their roles and identities. One example is a sensitizing activity consisting of a small documentation exercise introduced during the week leading up the first workshop. The participants were asked to document four small fragments of their everyday life by answering four simple questions sent via text message. The material generated from that activity was used at the workshop to create a common ground, set up productive communication between the participants and level the field between the two groups. When describing their individual contributions, the participants were given a natural space to introduce themselves and compare the variety of material generated. This sharing of material on equal terms provided a form of connection between them, everyone brought something to the table, so to speak.

### 3.2 Performance ethnography: Speculating on the Contraceptive Microchip

Within the project *Turned On/Turned Off: Speculating on the Contraceptive Microchip*, performance ethnography was used to harness the experiences of current users of contraceptive implants in order to imagine how a digital version of the same contraceptive method would impact future users. The one-on-one sessions with current or past users of the contraceptive implant were held in a private room that had been equipped with medical paraphernalia. Participants were asked to re-enact their memory of having the contraceptive implant implanted. However, this time they were to play the role of the doctor or nurse, and the researcher was to play the role of the participant. This method allowed for better recall, and having to direct another person's actions in order to re-enact their own experience prompted them to verbalizing their emotional journey throughout the implantation: "Now you need to pinch the skin on your stomach, I did it to distract myself from what was happening". Performance ethnography, as applied in this research, allowed the memories and embodied experiences of participants to come forward. Revealing in great detail the emotional experiences of participants, and gaining a greater embodied understanding as a researcher, helped inform speculative designs that imagined the impact of digital forms of contraceptive implants on future users.

### 3.3 Co-design Tool for Sharing Personal Information During Hackathons

*Hack your heritage!* is a tagline used the past five years for several open cultural heritage hackathons in Nordic countries. These hackathons bring together professionals, practitioners and citizens interested in for creative collaboration and appropriation of open cultural heritage materials in a setting that is both amateur and multi-professional. The events provide a possibility to hands-on explorations of existing institutions' and practitioners' – sometimes conflicting – practices, and ways to learn from each other and work together towards a shared set of practices or goals that would not privilege any of the perspectives or practices.

One challenge of these creative configurations is that people are often fitted into predefined categories by the organizers (e.g. through the sign-up system, or ways of group-forming). To mediate and support more flexible means of identification we created an analogue co-design tool we the organizers called "participant wall" or people's wall. Different iterations of the wall were carried out in six hackathons during years 2013–2017 (in Finland, Denmark and Sweden). In short, in the beginning of each event participants were asked to provide a photo (or a drawing) of themselves, disclose their name (or a nickname or social media handle) and describe their interests, skills and other information they considered relevant in the context. The wall functioned in various levels; in a practical level it was a visual representation of the specific group of people that had gathered together to explore with open digital cultural heritage, and as a tool to exchange ideas, and connect interests

and people through visual indicators. On another level, the participants were given a possibility to establish or indicate who or what one is – or want to be – in more flexible and open-ended terms, and more importantly, in relation to other participants and over a longer period of time. Throughout the one-weekend event some participant kept modifying their own information as they had e.g. discovered a new skill they thought could be relevant to share, or gained more trust release more personal information.

## 4 THE WORKSHOP ORGANISERS

The organizers have the relevant expertise to set up this workshop based on previous work e.g. on identification and design (Stina Hasse Jørgensen), participatory design, co-design and commons (Sanna Marttila) performance ethnography (Sarah Homewood), participatory design and living lab methodologies (Elisabet M. Nilsson and Sofie Marie Ottsen Hansen).

### 4.1 Short bios

Stina Hasse Jørgensen – PhD student at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, and research assistant at the Digital Design Department, IT University of Copenhagen. Her research is focusing on the politics and aesthetics of synthesized voices through practice-based research within the field of interaction design.

Sanna Marttila – Doctor of Arts (DA) in New Media, Post Doc researcher at the Digital Design Department, IT University of Copenhagen. During the past ten years Sanna has been a project lead and designer for research, design and development projects. Her recent research centers on designing meaningful public access to the vast digital archives that exists in public art and cultural institutions.

Sarah Homewood – PhD student in the IxD Lab, IT University of Copenhagen. Her background in contemporary dance now informs her research on self-tracking and embodied experience. She is interested in applying performance-based methods within interaction design and exploring how technology alters how the body is perceived, both individually, and in society.

Elisabet M. Nilsson – PhD in Educational Sciences, Senior Lecturer in Interaction Design at School of Arts and Communication (K3), Malmö University. She works the field of interaction design running research projects conducted in real-world settings, applying participatory design, co-design, and living lab methodologies, exploring tools and methods for prototyping alternative futures and promoting dialogue, collaboration and knowledge transfer.

Sofie Marie Ottsen Hansen – MSc in Digital Design and Communication and a BA in journalism, adjunct and research assistant in Interaction Design at K3, Malmö University. Her main research interests lie in the converging fields of design, technology and journalism. She has a background in journalism from the Danish School and Media and Journalism, but in recent years her focus has been directed more towards the field of interaction design and technology.

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