

Reinventing the City

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Kattenburgerstraat 5, Building 027W, 1018 JA Amsterdam

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The Right to participate: Beyond the instrumental use of stakeholders in imagining the lived experience of the city

Abstract Topic : Transdisciplinary research

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Abstract Summary : By taking a closer look at the assumptions and methods driving the current citizen participation paradigm, this paper addresses the risk of tokenistic involvement of citizens and other stakeholders in approaches such as co-design and citizen science. These participatory processes are highly demanding to plan, difficult to manage, and can lead to serious misinterpretations of the citizens' intentions and behaviour: reimagining participatory processes would be thus in order (Bannon & al. 2018). Encouraged by this, in this paper we look into 1) what type of alternative forms of participation might there be and 2) in which ways they restore ownership. We then proceed to ask further 3) how design can contribute to creating such alternative forms of citizen participation. As a case we refer to the sharp distinction distinguishable between the digital representation of urban existence and the lived experience of urban dwellers. The critical theoretical impetus can be traced back to (at least) the critical engagement with digital media in works such as "On the Internet" (Dreyfus 2001), which highlighted the absence of bodies and embodiment in digital environments. While we do agree that we need to remain critical about what aspects of human existence can be represented in digital media and which cannot, we also recognise that we are not merely the dot on a map, yet, "being a dot on a map" is part of our lived experience as urban subjects (Kingwell, 2008). In our paper, we will explore the role that digital representations of oneself get in the participatory approaches to the experience of the

city. We will address the everyday use of such services as digital maps as well as the potential use of such self-representations in artistic and educational practices to re-materialize our digital doubles and data traces. The proposed paper contributes to bridging recent developments in design ethics and participatory methods in a way which further underlines the importance of understanding the citizens' perspective in urban design processes. This means also further emphasis on interpersonal and relational aspects of citizen participation as well as probing into more experimental forms of research design in the urban studies context. References: Bannon, Liam, Jeffrey Bardzell, and Susanne Bødker 2018. "Reimagining participatory design", Interactions 26, 1 (Jan/Feb 2019), pp. 26-32. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3292015> Dreyfus, Hubert L. 2001. On the internet / Hubert Dreyfus. London & New York: Routledge. Kingwell, M. 2008. Concrete reveries: Consciousness and the city. London: Penguin.

Author Name : Sanna Lehtinen ^{1 *}

Username : sanna.lehtinen@aalto.fi, **Email :** sanna.lehtinen@aalto.fi, **Status :** Published

Author Name : Deger Ozkaramanli-Leerkes ²

Username : D.Ozkaramanli@tudelft.nl, **Email :** D.Ozkaramanli@tudelft.nl, **Status :** Published

Author Name : Michael Nagenborg ³

Username : m.h.nagenborg@utwente.nl, **Email :** m.h.nagenborg@utwente.nl, **Status :** Published