Ting: Making publics through provocation, conflict and appropriation

Karin Hansson
Stockholm University, Kista, Sweden
khansson@dsv.su.se

Jaz Hee-jeong Choi
Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia
h.choi@qut.edu.au

Tessy Cerratto Pargman
Stockholm University, Kista, Sweden
tessy@dsv.su.se

Shaowen Bardzell
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA
selu@indiana.edu

Laura Forlano
Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, Illinois, USA
lforlano@id.iit.edu

Carl DiSalvo
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, USA
cdisalvo@gatech.edu

Silvia Lindtner
School of Information, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA
lindtner@umich.edu

Somya Joshi
Stockholm University, Kista, Sweden
somya@dsv.su.se

ABSTRACT
In Swedish the word “ting” has different meanings. It can mean “things”, “matters” and “a session at court” as well as the act of appropriating space. This one-day workshop starts in the notion of the artifact as a “ting”, and design as something that raises a question, provokes a discussion, and creates a public through which agonistic encounters occur. This particular lens allows us to approach design beyond ‘merely producing artifacts’. Instead, we come to see it as a production of provocations, speculations, and alternative interpretations of the social world as well as new sets of relationships between participants in this public.

Because of the importance of the role and embodiment of the designer/artist in making publics, this workshop calls attention to self-reflective practices in participatory design, and questions how these practices can be embedded in the functionality of new publics and design practices.

CCS Concepts
● Human-Centered computing → Interaction design
● Participatory design

Keywords
Participatory design methodology; infrastructuring; thinging; speculative design, design as research, critical design.

1. INTRODUCTION
Dewey suggests that a public is formed when people become aware of how something affects them collectively, which gives them a reason to recognize each other and come together [7]. From this perspective, the public is both a product of social or political action and a ground for further action. Therefore, the mode of expression, whether it is a conversation, an online chat, a painting or a book, is central for the forming of publics.

From this perspective, the public is both a product of social or political action and a ground for further action. Therefore, the mode of expression, whether it is a conversation, an online chat, a painting or a book, is central for the forming of publics. Following Latour [13], this means that not only humans are forming publics but also artifacts such as art objects or communication technologies. Similarly, drawing on Marilyn Strathern’s ethnographic work on gender [17], Haraway stresses the importance of the situatedness and materiality of the design space through the notion of “speculative fabulation” [11].

The role of design as provocation – creating awareness for societal issues and as part of political processes – have been explored since the 1990’s [8]. Concepts such as critical design [10, 2] and reflective design [16], describe an ambition to use design and the design process as a means to problematize the design objective and questionbroader socio-technical and cultural configurations. Similarly, speculative design [10], critical making [15], and design fiction [6], view the design process as a way to rethink norms and values and imagine alternative interpretations and possibilities. Adversarial design emphasizes the agonistic space brought together in the design process as a way to reformulate political issues [8]. These design approaches share the idea of design as a way to create a public space, initiating discussion around an issue.

Comparably, art as a way to engage a public into being, has a history within the field of participatory art [4]. Kester proposes the term “dialogical aesthetics” to describe art that is rooted in a historical and social context where the art is viewed as a platform for discussion rather than the expression of someone’s experiences [12]. Today, participatory and artistic methods are recognized in design, but this comes with challenges. Participation is a norm foremost in a western socio-cultural value system [18]. Participatory processes take time and reveal conflicting interests and values. Participatory design may not be so much about designing things, as about “infrastructuring”, designing the social infrastructure of the participation [5]. From this perspective, the designer is required to make a long-term commitment to the publics that they contributed to developing through their design.

When the design becomes less tangible and more of a process, the designer/artist/researcher also embodies the design. This is why it is interesting to look more closely at how “design” is appropriated and reformulated, and how designers and researchers create legitimacy for these practices [11]. For example, the more performative and speculative appropriations...
of public space in DIY design such as “guerilla gardening” or “street art” can be questioned for being expressions of a hegemonic discourse rather than underdog activities [9]. Participatory art can similarly be more exclusive than inclusive compared to more traditional art forms [4, 12].

2. MOTIVATION, GOALS, AND THEMES
Because of the importance of the role and embodiment of the designer/artist in making publics, this workshop calls attention to self-reflective practices in PD [1], and questions how these practices can be embedded in the functionality of new publics and design practices. More specifically, the workshop aims to explore the following questions: How does the designer/artist create and maintain publics? How do we accommodate differences in these agonistic spaces? What is the role of the designer/artist in these contexts? How can we understand the tension between artistic control in speculative design and empowerment in participatory design?

We invite researchers, designers, activists, technologists and artists that are exploring utopian, speculative, and critical design projects as well as designing for and with social movements, alternative societies and relational economics. The specific themes and topics we are interested in covering in this workshop are:

- Agonistic public spaces versus consensual decision-making;
- The role of the author/designer/creator/artist in speculative and critical design in relation to participatory design;
- Exclusion and inclusion in the design practice;
- Norms in speculative participatory design practices; and
- Institutional conditions for the development of speculative and critical design within participatory design practice.

3. PARTICIPATION AND KEY DATES
We expect to select 15-25 participants based on their submitted position papers. The position papers should be up to 2,000 words in the ACM ICPS format and should include an image or illustration of a design work.

- Position paper deadline: June 13, 2016
- Author notification: June 20, 2016

ting@performingthecommone.se

4. WORKSHOP PLANS AND STRUCTURE
Prior to the workshop, the accepted papers will be shared among attendees to prepare for discussions at the workshop. Beyond the themes highlighted here by the workshop organizers, other themes for the workshop, which emerge from the position papers will be posted on the website. Key discussants identified among the workshop attendees will be assigned to each position paper to facilitate interaction and engagement in the workshop.

The participants will prepare a 5-minute presentation of their submission from the perspective of “making publics” to be delivered during the first half of the workshop. The second half of the workshop will consist of an open session focusing on the role of a socio-material, agonistic and pluralistic participatory design perspective within academia.

The workshop proceedings will be published, and participants will be invited to submit to a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal.

5. REFERENCES


