

*Call for papers in a Special Issue of Design Issues*  
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## **Provocation, conflict and appropriation: The role of the designer in making publics**

This special issue draws attention to reflexive practices in Art & Design, and questions how these practices can be embedded in the formations and operations of publics and design practices.

We invite researchers, designers, activists, artists, and others who in their work are exploring utopian, speculative, and critical design projects and/or are designing for and with social movements, alternative societies and relational economies, to contribute to the theme of ‘Provocation, conflict and appropriation: The role of the designer in making publics’.

This special issue will contain selected papers received and presented in the corresponding workshop in the Participatory Design Conference in Aarhus in August 2016 (PDC2016) entitled “Ting: Making publics through provocation, conflict and appropriation”, as well as other invited contributions.

The specific themes and topics we are interested in covering in this special issue are:

- Design as world making or as a way to create a public space;
- 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;
- Politics of Participation or what Barney et al. (2016) call the “Participatory Condition”;
- Exclusion and inclusion in the design practice;
- Norms in speculative participatory design practices;
- The tension between artistic control in speculative design and empowerment in participatory design;
- The tension between empowerment and exploitation, between participation and precarious labor.

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### **TIMELINE**

01.9.2016: Submission deadline for intentions to contribute (1500-2000 words)

01.10.2016: Notification of relevance sent to authors / selected contributions invited to continue

01.12.2016: Full papers submission deadline for those selected to continue (5000 + references)  
01.02.2017: Notification of accept / reject / revisions to authors  
01.06.2017: Final manuscript submission deadline  
15.09.2017: Final selected manuscripts to production

## **BACKGROUND**

The idea of design as provocation – creating awareness for societal issues and as part of political processes – has come to prominence especially since the 1990's (DiSalvo, 2012). Constructs such as critical design (Dunne and Raby, 2013; Bardzell & Bardzell, 2013) and reflective design (Sengers et al., 2005) describe an ambition to think about design and the design process as a means to problematize the design objective and question broader socio-technical and cultural configurations. Similarly, speculative design (Dunne and Raby, 2013), critical making (Ratto, 2011), and design fiction (Bleecker, 2009) 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 (DiSalvo, 2012). These design approaches share the idea of design as a way to create a public space, initiating discussions about issues that affect individuals and societies. Dewey (2012) 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. 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 (2005), 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 (1988), Haraway stresses the importance of the situatedness and materiality of the design space through the notion of "speculative fabulation" (2011).

Comparably, art as a way to engage a public into being has a history within the field of participatory art (Bishop, 2012). For instance, Kester (2004) 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 individual experiences. Today, participatory and artistic methods are gaining increasing interest in design, but this comes with challenges. Forms, values, and languages of participation can vary in different cultures (Winschiers-Theophilus, 2010). 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 (Björgvinsson et al., 2010). From this perspective, the designer is required to make a long-term commitment to the publics that they contributed to developing through their design processes.

When the focus of design becomes less on tangible artefacts but more of a process, the designer/artist/researcher also embodies the design. This calls for a need to look more closely at how "design" is appropriated and reformulated across diverse sites, regions, and interests, and how designers and researchers create legitimacy for and speculate on the impact of these practices. 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 (Parra-Agudelo, Choi & Foth, 2017;

Douglas, 2014). Participatory art can similarly be more exclusive than inclusive compared to more traditional art forms (Bishop, 2012; Kester, 2004).

Against this background, this special issue draws attention to the role and embodiment of the designer in enacting new publics, new design methods, and contributing to reflexive practices in Art & Design.

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