

The Leftovers of Participation

Identifying the Value of Interaction-based Design Experiences

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Falling under the theme of Design Learning Environments the workshop *The leftovers of participation* looks to identify learning environments that can be adapted to facilitate learning experiences through reflection. Drawing on experiences from interaction (with clients, users, communities, etc), places many of the experiences outside of the classroom. By identifying the impact of rich experiences, the value of these experiences can be qualified. In turn, existing educational structures can then be encouraged to open up to participation, looking for new environments, new forms of interaction and socially relevant involvement that not only support the community but aids in the holistic development of a student who is both citizen and changemaker.

Keywords: participation; reflective practice; research through design; designer experience; design anecdotes

Workshop Aims

Falling under the theme of Design Learning Environments (environments where students come into contact with and interact with participants) the workshop will look at the following topics:

- Environment:
What sort of environments or types of participation delivers these meaningful learning experiences?
- Reflection:
Where does reflection take place and in what form does it happen?
- Integration:
How might these reflective practices be better integrated into design practice?
- Dissemination:
What are best-practices for documenting and sharing these meaningful experiences?

The workshop will center primarily upon the experience of the participants. Prior to the workshop, those enrolled in the workshop will be interviewed via Zoom (or similar). The interview will be a discussion on design insights based on personal experience. The design facilitator will provide examples on the forehand to help prep the discussion. The discussion will look to gather experiences in which interaction with a participant (client, user) had a lasting impact. It will look to discuss the impact on the designer and identify how this insight matured and what reflective action preceded it. Those not able to meet digitally or who prefer to submit a written reflection are requested to submit a word document (maximum 2 pages) in which they respond to the following:

- Describe a memorable experience you had in the capacity of designer/researcher in which the working together with another individual continues to impact your way of working.
- Describe the context and purpose of the interaction
- Explain how this experience impacts your process or way of working
- When and how did you realise that this experience was 'important' or influential?
- If you work as a lecturer, explain how you express this experience to others or use it within the



classroom.

- The reflection can be supported by an image or illustration but this is not required. If submitting an image, please provide the relevant citation for use of the image.

These interviews will be bundled into one-page summaries utilising the participant's own voice and used in the workshop as a means to organise the groups and best utilise the time.

10 minutes: Introduction to the workshop, the facilitator, background story and the intention of the data generated in the workshop. Includes group formation: 4-5 participants.

5 minutes: Introduction of participants to group

The workshop will utilise a workshop technique called mapping. Mapping is a tool to facilitate "participants' exchanges and disagreements" (Schepers et al. 2013) in which a large-format document is created together by workshop participants and becomes a documentation of their working process (see Map-it.be) through the use of collaborative brainstorming with post-it notes and hand-written descriptions placed on the map.

20 minutes: Participants will share their own 3-5 minute story about how participation within design impacted them. They will identify who it was (name), What they were doing (the context) and why it was important (what they learned?) and place this within the mapping document.

20 minutes: Moving from personal experience to third person, the groups will identify the environments that facilitated these experiences. Each groups will read 3-4 interview transcripts (not their own) and on the mapping document, summarise per transcript:

- The experience
- The insight(s) or knowledge gained
- The questions needed to gain access to these insights
- The format that would be suit this sort of reflection (ie. journal, selfie-film...)

20 minutes: In a following section on the mapping document, groups will identify potential teaching and design environments where these experiences could take place and cluster together concepts on reflective practice.

- Learning environments that would offer students these experiences
- Potential groups of users, populations, contexts that could offer this sort of experience for students
- Design course modules that would cater to this sort of experience (ie. design thinking, intro to design research,...)
- Where/how reflection can be integrated into coursework
- Known challenges to reflection integration

10 minutes: Final group discussion where participants will be asked to think about dissemination:

- Who is reflection for?
- How might design anecdotes such as the collected interviews become a tool
- Who would be the audience?

5 minutes: Wrap up summary of the workshop. Collection of participant details for those interested in participating in further research on this topic or in receiving workshop material (audio files and/or transcripts). Participants will receive a sticker that says "ask me about...." and encouraged to fill out the sticker with the name of the person they identified in part 1 of the mapping. This offers the intention of being a conversation starter for the rest of the conference day.

Physical vs. Online:

The above workshop was initially created for face-to-face interaction within small groups. However, gathering the material on the forehand through informal interviews allows the facilitator to better get to know the participants of the workshop individually and better refine the workshop format. This works for both a physical workshop as well as an online or adapted one. An online adaption would be facilitated by the use of Miro for the mapping. Miro allows participants to work on a larger document in small groups much in the same way as mapping physically. This would require the inclusion of a platform that allows breakout rooms.

Expected outcomes of the workshop:

The resulting 'maps' will collectively form an initial critical analysis of 10-15 design reflections based on the workshop participants (designer/educator/researcher) experiences. Collecting and cataloguing these design experiences is an ongoing project about design reflection that looks to identify ways to best utilise and disseminate these narratives in ways that respond to the needs of both current and future design students.

Minimum and maximum numbers of participants:

Minimum 10, maximum 20

How the workshop will benefit the participants:

Workshop participants will get to know each other within a very informal and personal setting. This group work allows participants to build connections that can extend beyond the workshop and conference. Next to this, participants will be invited to participate in further research in this area contributing to publications or audio series on this topic.

How the workshop is relevant to the selected track's aims:

Participation within design involves interaction between design researchers and participants and is defined as: "a process of investigating, understanding, reflecting upon, establishing, developing, and supporting mutual learning between multiple participants in collective 'reflection-in-action'... the designers strive to learn the realities of the users' situation while the users strive to articulate their desired aims and learn appropriate technological means to obtain them" (Simonsen & Robertson 2012, p. 2).

The knowledge generated and documented within this participation is limited to the expectations of academics and journals as well as limited by the requirements outlined by the project the research is situated within. Within education, the knowledge is also limited by the requirements outlined in a brief: an object is created, a process has been followed. However, in acknowledging the relevance of each of these forms of knowledge, there is also the need to be aware of other forms of knowledge that is generated through these processes. They are most often not the focus of papers that are submitted to journals and they exist within the fringes of formal design processes, but they are powerful drivers of the way in which designers design. This workshop focuses on these small moments of change or insight within these well orchestrated design routines. By turning to storytelling, this workshop will reflect on the "leftovers" or the "unused" anecdotes of interaction between designer-researchers and participants. Often dismissed, anecdotes are a means of "interrogating the research process itself" (Lury & Wakeford, 2012, p. 33). It will look at the impact these have on the individual and the potential for use within design education environments. In doing so, the workshop will create a collection of media resources that will challenge educators to create new learning environments that are focused not only on designed objects, services or interfaces, but rather on student experiences.

References

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