

# 110. TOWARDS GENUINELY INCLUSIVE DESIGN

DESIGN AS A POLITICAL AGENT

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## OBJECTIVE

This workshop aims to support a dialogue around Participation and Design. The motivation is not to develop new ‘Participatory Design’ practices but to develop community accepted modes of design decision making which stem from a dialogue about participation, design and social change.

## INTRODUCTION

We are all trying to make a world in which we are free to do the things that are important to us. As we create this world we come across alternative opinions about what it should look like and how it can be achieved. These multiple perspectives should help to reshape our own views and move us toward collective action. Unfortunately however, we often find ourselves surrounded by structures which define who and how we connect with others to create change. In other words, we become stuck in specific ways of working together. One reason that these structures become stuck is that opening them up to people who might question the way we do things can be painful as we are forced to challenge ourselves and change some things that are valuable to us.

PartE is a structure which supports the collective to redefine to whom, with what and how we work together in the creation of social change. As a structure it does not provide a repeatable process but rather a set of guiding principles which help the collective to critically reflect and reshape the way they relate to each other in the creation of change. In essence, people learn how to engage while engaging.

The PartE structure supports the collective to review current critiques of value of associations – identify the patterns of structures governing them – and with this information generate alternative structures which support more inclusive change. PartE doesn’t tell people step-by-step what to do, but rather facilitates the

revealing of patterns describing with whom, with what, why and how we did, do and can work together.

PartE is a way of thinking rather than a way of doing. An initial infrastructure of activities are proposed which aim to link the guiding principles of PartE to the everyday lives of people with the intention that the collective will go on to appropriate the PartE guiding principles into their own activities to promote and share more inclusive change in their work. Like all functioning structures PartE is a community curated critique of connected, collectively understood and transforming associations.

## BACKGROUND

The world can be understood in terms of a constantly transitioning network of value-based relations between people, objects and place (Highmore, 2008; Latour, 2005; Boltanski and Thevenot, 2006).

The value associated with these relations differs dramatically between actors and informs the practices of day-to-day interactions – traditions, rituals, roles, position etc. It is the ongoing justification and critique of these differences which generates changes in the way relations are enacted.

Design – both in terms of process and product – are an intentional attempt to promote and coordinate the transition of actor relations. The nature of these intentions – from emancipatory to imprisoning – are informed by the values of the actors of design. It therefore follows that to coordinate a fair transition of relations design needs to be an ongoing negotiation of the value of relations between all affected actors. In other words it needs to be inclusive.

Inclusive, Participatory, Collaborative, Human-Centred, Collective, Social, Democratic are all adjectives that have been used to describe attempts at intentionally inclusive design negotiations. The need to name these approaches stems from a recognition that a significant amount of design is justified according to the values of a limited set of actors – usually those with power. Abuses of this power in design are plentiful and require

concerted action to ensure transition toward equitable actor relations.

The actual experiences of those taking part in these intentionally inclusive design negotiations remain largely unknown. There is a lack of evidence from systematic studies to understand what makes a design process genuinely participatory – the types or levels; the methods and practices that best suit specific communities, projects or stages of a social contract; the actual advantages and limits of its realisation; how it is expressed; and the strategies or heuristics to identify, promote and study participation and design.

## APPROACH

This workshop will support design practitioners and researchers to trace and share their experiences of participating in design for social change. The aim of the activity is to provide participants an opportunity to build a greater understanding of design relations within their own practice and how changes to their design approach can support more inclusive design practices.

Participants will begin by reflecting on and tracing design relations in their own design practice. They will then share these personal experiences in a plenary session and begin to trace design relations across their multiple experiences. Through this exchange the characteristics of situations where equitable or hegemonic relations are experienced will begin to emerge. This exchange will conclude with a generative exploration of the changes that need to occur in design practice to achieve greater inclusion in design decision making for social change.

We do this with the hope that through collective reflection – across individuals, cultures and practices – we can develop an open dialogue about what people value about participating in design and whether these values are being met as they seek to create change in their society. Through this dialogue we hope to support a significant shift in design through the development and adoption of genuinely inclusive practices in decision making for social change.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Table 1: Tentative schedule Towards Genuinely Inclusive Design Workshop

Time	Phase	Activities
30 min	Introduction	Share motivations for workshop Share individual expectations for workshop Introduction to PartE Framework - case example
30 min	Reflecting	Reflect on personal participatory design experience using PartE framework
15 min	Coffee break	

45 min	Group exchange	Share personal experiences with other practitioners/researchers and identify characteristics of inclusive design practice
45 min	Co-creation	Generate individual action plans to embed characteristics in personal design practices
15 min	Coffee break	
60 min	Plenary closing	Share and critique personal action plans

## PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Those wishing to participate are required to submit a short reflective piece (1000 words) about their personal experience of participation and design for social change. This should include:

- A brief description of their participatory design practice
- An overview of why people are involved in - or affected by - the design practice
- A short reflection about how this has changed over time.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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