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— WORKSHOPS

— SITUATED
ACTIONS

— PDC PLACES

Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence.
Designing for living together.

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PDC2026 WELCOME

PUBLICATION CHAIRS

Many years have passed since the first Participatory Design Conference (PDC) in 1990 and much has changed in our world, but this event remains a landmark forum in the Participatory Design (PD) community. As well as being a significant opportunity for people to come together and meet each other, the conference stimulates submissions providing opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Each edition focuses on a theme that presents a challenge – whether explicit or implicit – for researchers and practitioners in the field. For this reason, the conference Proceedings remain an important reference for many years to come, documenting the evolution of the field. And those from this specific edition will certainly continue to serve as such for a long time, framing further critical reflections on the pivotal role of PD in contemporary society.

This 19th edition of PDC has opened up a discussion on issues that are particularly relevant and timely, both now and in the near future: Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence. In our fragmented times, these three words represent a really urgent imperative. The challenge today is to take the PD's perspective beyond the realm of academic and industrial research, transforming it into a means of addressing the complexity of the problems facing our world.

The theme of the 19th PDC has, once again, brought the political dimension of the PD to the fore. What emerges is the need for PD to serve as a fair and inclusive framework, one that takes into account the concerns of those with less voice and power, taking a stand for them in seeking a democratic approach to complex problem-solving.

This renewed political dimension of PD invites us to address another aspect that has increasingly characterised recent PDC editions: the endeavour to engage with the perspectives of scholars who are not solely 'internal' to PD. In this edition, this effort has been particularly fruitful, as can be seen from the contents of these Proceedings.

Finally, there remains a strong focus on highlighting, as far as possible, contributions from the Global South, emphasising diverse epistemological perspectives and recognising their crucial value in fostering the growth of the PD community as a whole. Submissions for this edition PDC were over 500 from five continents, across the various categories. Of these, nearly 180 contributions have been included in the Conference and in these three volumes of the Proceedings. This huge collection of material is an enormous potential for the future of PD as a discipline capable of transforming our world into a better place.

This third volume contains 12 Workshops, 24 Situated Actions, and 12 PDC Places submissions. Together, these formats create spaces for interaction, exchange, and situated engagement within and beyond the conference. Workshops are temporary spaces where conference participants share and co-produce knowledge through active engagement. Situated Actions create interactive encounters between authors, the PDC community, and the local Milanese community. Finally, PDC Places are decentralised, place-based events that took place in the months leading up to the main conference in Milan. All submissions were single-blind reviewed by their respective Chairs.

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Practicing in the Field: Workshops, Situated Actions, and PDC Places

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Abstract

This critical overview provides a transversal analysis of Workshops, Situated Actions, and PDC Places at PDC 2026, transcending format-based boundaries to investigate the implementation of participatory design in practice. In various geographical and chronological contexts, these projects frame the field not merely as a contextual backdrop but as a political and epistemological condition. The analysis identifies cross-format clusters, providing perspectives on the conceptualization, operationalization, and institutional positioning of participation. The text contends that these behaviors indicate a structural transformation of participatory design, evolving from participation as a method to a practice that is territorially anchored, infrastructurally integrated, and politically accountable. Mediating devices are analysed as epistemic technologies, devices that not only support participation but actively generate knowledge, redistributing agency and transforming the material and institutional conditions of coexistence. Lastly, the consequences for the field are examined, indicating that participatory design must address the conflict between institutional acknowledgment and territorial accountability to maintain its democratic objectives.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Participatory design; • Collaborative and social computing theory, concepts and paradigms; • Social and professional topics; • Sustainability;

Keywords

field-based participatory design, spatial politics, infrastructuring, epistemic extractivism, democratic design, territorial engagement, coexistence

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1 Introduction

The Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026 articulates its core theme, Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence. Designing for Living



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Together, even through three alternative presentation and participation formats: Workshops, Situated Actions, and PDC Places. Each of these formats has been framed as a specific infrastructural device within the broader ecology of the conference. Workshops are positioned as designed situations in which participation is staged, materially configured, and critically examined. In this critical overview, they are conceptualised as “temporary democratic infrastructures”, in line with understandings of Participatory Design (PD) as democratic design experiments [1] and as infrastructuring of publics [3, 8]. Situated Actions foreground immersive and context-rooted engagements enacted within and beyond the conference setting. PDC Places operate as decentralized, site-based constellations that challenge extractive models of knowledge circulation and re-centre participation within local ecosystems.

Rather than analysing these formats separately, this text proposes a transversal reading of the selected applications as an ecology of field-based practices. Across diverse geographies, scales, and temporalities, the initiatives share a commitment to working within real territories, communities, and socio-material infrastructures. The “field” emerges not as a neutral backdrop for participatory processes, but as a political and epistemic condition that shapes who participates, how knowledge circulates, and what forms of coexistence become imaginable.

Building on longstanding debates in PD around democracy [1], infrastructuring [2, 3], agonism [4], and situated knowledges [5], and engaging more recent discussions on pluriversality [6], design as democratic inquiry [8], and participation for sustainable social change [9], this text argues that the field-based formats at PDC 2026 mark a further shift: from participation as method to participation as territorially embedded and politically accountable practice. By identifying recurring modes of field engagement, thematic orientations, and mediating devices, the text outlines a set of cross-format clusters that illuminate how PD is currently being practised, negotiated, and reconfigured.

2 The Field as Political and Epistemic Condition

Across Workshops, Situated Actions, and Places, a shared shift is visible: participation is no longer framed as occurring in a context, but as emerging through situated socio-material conditions. Territories are not neutral containers for design activity. They are historically layered, conflictual, and structured by power relations. Mining regions marked by socio-environmental tensions, rural territories affected by depopulation, coastal ecosystems under ecological pressure, socially polarised urban districts, and transnational networks shaped by colonial histories all operate as constitutive environments for participatory practice.

This move resonates with critiques of reducing place to “context” and community to “stakeholder,” a reduction that risks flattening ongoing struggles into manageable categories [6]. Instead, the applications presented across formats treat place as relational density: an entanglement of memories, infrastructures, ecologies, institutions, and everyday practices. Participation unfolds within these entanglements rather than being externally applied to them. The field is thus not an empirical setting added to a design process; it is the condition that shapes the epistemic horizon of that process, the evolving junction of theory and practice co shaped with territory. In line with Haraway’s notion of situated knowledges [5], knowledge claims emerging from these initiatives are partial, embodied, and positionally accountable rather than universal.

Understanding the field as epistemic condition implies recognising that knowledge production is already taking place within territories prior to any formal design intervention. Community organizations, activist struggles, informal economies, practices of care, and ecological stewardship all generate forms of situated expertise. Participatory design, when intersecting with ongoing contexts, does not initiate knowledge but intersects with ongoing processes. This perspective challenges extractive tendencies whereby local experience is translated into abstract categories for circulation within academic or institutional centres. Extractivism is even driven by temporal and administrative pressures that compress or professionalise these engagements in ways that strip away relational and political depth.

Participation therefore unfolds within infrastructures that pre-exist design interventions, including institutional arrangements, governance regimes, informal solidarities, activist networks, ecological assemblages, and corporate structures. Drawing on the notion of infrastructuring [2, 3], field-based initiatives can be understood as configuring and reconfiguring the conditions under which publics form around issues. Spatial arrangements, artefacts, facilitation protocols, digital platforms, and evaluative criteria are not neutral supports but active mediators of agency. They shape who is authorised to speak, how disagreement is structured, and what futures are rendered imaginable.

In this sense, the field becomes an arena of democratic inquiry in DiSalvo’s terms [8], where issues are not merely discussed but materially assembled. Participation is enacted through the composition of socio-material arrangements that hold together heterogeneous actors, human and more-than-human, within provisional formations. These formations are never stable; they require maintenance, negotiation, and iterative adjustment. The political dimension of the field lies precisely in these negotiations over visibility, legitimacy, and interpretative authority.

The multiplication of field-based initiatives before and beyond the central conference event produces a displacement in the geography of knowledge production. Knowledge is not generated exclusively at the conference site and then disseminated outward. Instead, multiple sites generate situated insights that converge through exhibitions, documentation, and collective reflection. This decentring challenges academic hierarchies in which peripheral contexts feed centralised venues of validation. By extending participation temporally and spatially, the formats redistribute visibility and authority. The conference becomes less a centre of origination

and more a node within a distributed network of situated practices, echoing calls for more sustainable and socially embedded participatory trajectories [9].

This tension becomes particularly visible in the relationship between field-based practices and academic institutions. While universities and conferences function as infrastructures of validation, classification, and circulation, the field often exceeds these logics. Situated practices generate forms of knowledge that do not always align with publication formats, evaluation metrics, or disciplinary boundaries. When translated into academic outputs, there is a risk that the relational, embodied, and conflictual dimensions of fieldwork are flattened or reformulated to fit institutional expectations. Initiatives such as university-based territorial platforms and off-campus laboratories explicitly attempt to negotiate this gap by embedding academic actors within local ecosystems while maintaining accountability to those contexts [10]. In these configurations, the university is repositioned not as an external evaluator of situated knowledge, but as a co-inhabitant of the field, exposed to its temporalities, conflicts, and material constraints. Such configurations reveal the productive but unresolved tension between institutional recognition and territorial responsibility.

Ultimately, conceiving the field as political and epistemic condition repositions participatory design itself. It foregrounds accountability to territory, attentiveness to power asymmetries, and reflexivity regarding the infrastructures through which knowledge travels. The field is not the backdrop of participation; it is the ground upon which democratic possibility is contested, negotiated, and materialised.

3 Cross-Format Clusters of Field Practice

Building on this understanding of the field as a political and an epistemic condition, the following section introduces a set of analytical clusters through which the selected initiatives can be interpreted. These clusters do not correspond to formal conference tracks but cut across Workshops, Situated Actions, and Places. They are constructed analytically rather than descriptively. Instead of grouping initiatives by format or declared theme, the clusters are derived from three interrelated criteria, (1) how the field is conceptualised (as conflict, ecology, infrastructure, or network); (2) how participation is operationalised (as negotiation, regeneration, maintenance, or alignment); and (3) how epistemic authority is distributed (centralised, redistributed, expanded beyond the human, or translocalised). The clusters were developed through a comparative reading of the selected conference applications across formats, identifying recurring patterns in how the field is framed, how participation is enacted, and how authority is distributed. While not all submissions are mapped exhaustively, the analysis draws on a broad set of cases from different geographical and institutional contexts, allowing for the identification of shared orientations rather than isolated examples. Each cluster emphasises a specific configuration of these three criteria, although in practice they often overlap. Through these criteria, the field-based ecology of PDC 2026 can be interpreted as a set of distinct yet overlapping orientations in the practice of participatory design.

Methodologically, this clustering approach resonates with attempts within PD to move beyond linear narratives of successive

“waves” and instead read the field as composed of coexisting trajectories and figurations, where spatial, temporal, and political configurations intersect rather than succeed one another [11, 12]. The clusters are therefore not stages of development but parallel orientations that illuminate different ontological framings of the field and different political distributions of agency within it. For clarity, each cluster is described by foregrounding how the field is conceptualised, how participation is operationalised, and how epistemic authority is figured.

A first cluster frames the field as a conflictual terrain structured by asymmetrical power relations. Here, the field is conceptualised primarily as a space of political contestation. Initiatives addressing mining conflicts, nationalist tensions, displacement, corporate responsibility, and post-conflict contexts approach participation as structured negotiation within uneven socio-political landscapes. Peace is not equated with harmony but with the capacity to sustain disagreement without collapse. Participation is operationalised as agonistic mediation, where planning toolkits, artefact-based dialogues, and equity-centred exercises render trade-offs explicit and expose institutional constraints. Artefacts operate as mediators of agonism [4], enabling participants to externalise positions and test scenarios without collapsing difference. Epistemic authority is redistributed through devices that make visible marginalised perspectives and the infrastructural logics of decision-making. Designers act as facilitators of negotiated plurality, aware of their own implication within contested terrains.

A second cluster conceptualises the field as regenerative ecology. Rather than foregrounding antagonism, these initiatives emphasise interdependence and relational entanglement. Rural regeneration initiatives, coastal mapping exercises, pluriversal councils, and multispecies design workshops extend participation toward ecological and more-than-human actors [6, 7]. Here, participation is operationalised as sensing, mapping, and re-aligning socio-ecological relations. The field is framed as dynamic assemblage in which humans, infrastructures, technologies, and ecologies are co-constitutive. Through territory-personas, speculative cartographies, and regenerative mapping, these initiatives attempt to materialise marginalised perspectives and redistribute representational authority beyond anthropocentric assumptions. Epistemic authority is expanded rather than merely redistributed, challenging conventional boundaries of who, or what, counts as participants.

A third cluster understands the field as dialogical infrastructure. The field is conceptualised as relationally fragile and in need of maintenance. This fragility lies in the fact that these relational infrastructures do not persist on their own: without continuous care, facilitation, and institutional support, they tend to dissolve, become exclusionary, or revert to existing power structures. Confessional formats addressing values misalignment, narrative workshops cultivating emotional expression, corporate peacebuilding laboratories, and community-based research reflections treat participation as the ongoing construction of conditions for dialogue. Participation is operationalised as infrastructural care: creating artefacts, routines, and institutional arrangements that stabilise plural engagement over time. Epistemic authority is broadened to include affective and experiential knowledge, legitimising vulnerability and narrative as valid forms of contribution. Rather than resolving conflict,

these initiatives sustain the material and relational scaffolding of coexistence.

A fourth cluster frames the field as a translocal network. Instead of bounded territory, the field is conceptualised as a distributed constellation. Hybrid gatherings connecting different countries, multi-city workshops, genealogical revisitations of participatory traditions, and decentralised site-based initiatives operate across scales. Participation is operationalised as alignment without homogenisation, enabling coordination across contexts while preserving situated specificity. Epistemic authority circulates laterally rather than vertically, resisting centre-periphery hierarchies and reframing the conference as one node within a broader ecology of practice. However, this lateral circulation should not be overstated. Centre-periphery hierarchies remain structurally embedded in academic and institutional systems, and many situated practices continue to operate outside or beyond the visibility of conferences such as PDC. In this sense, these initiatives do not eliminate asymmetries, but rather create partial openings where alternative forms of circulation and recognition can emerge. Many valuable practices remain unrecognised and disconnected from institutional platforms, suggesting that what is presented here is only a partial and situated articulation of a much broader and uneven landscape.

Taken together, these clusters reveal that field-based participatory design at PDC 2026 is characterised less by format differentiation than by deeper analytical distinctions in how the field is imagined and enacted. Rather than representing sequential developments, these orientations coexist as parallel yet entangled figurations of practice [11]. What varies is not simply topic or method, but the ontological framing of the field and the political distribution of agency within it. The field thus emerges as the common denominator through which participatory design negotiates conflict, regeneration, infrastructuring, and translocal coordination, while remaining locally situated and politically specific.

4 Mediating Devices, Material Politics, and Epistemic Effects

These devices, however, do not operate in isolation. Their effects depend on who enacts them, from which positionality, and within which territorial and institutional conditions. Across the clusters, similar tools and practices can be observed. What matters, however, is not the tools themselves but the kinds of knowledge and political effects they generate. Participatory mapping, for instance, does not simply visualise spatial information; it reorders visibility by externalising infrastructures, making latent conflicts explicit, and redistributing interpretative authority among participants. By translating contested territories into shared artefacts, mapping becomes a political act that negotiates whose knowledge counts and how it is stabilised within collective decision-making.

Role-play and simulation exercises function as embodied experiments in positionality. By inviting participants to inhabit alternative stakeholder roles, these devices make power asymmetries visible and open them to negotiation. The temporary suspension of fixed identities allows for the rehearsal of alternative alignments, foregrounding participation as speculative and experimental practice in line with democratic design experiments [1]. Artefact-based

dialogues, ranging from modular modelling systems to commons-oriented governance tools, mediate disagreement through material intermediaries. The artefact absorbs tension, enabling critique and reformulation without immediate personalisation of conflict, thereby sustaining agonistic engagement over time [4].

Speculative prototyping and design fiction extend this logic by projecting participation into possible futures. Rather than seeking immediate consensus, these practices construct provisional worlds in which different socio-material arrangements can be tested. In doing so, they shift participation from reactive problem-solving toward anticipatory world-making, aligning with broader calls to expand PD beyond incremental reform toward systemic transformation [6, 9]. Walking methods and embodied explorations, by contrast, anchor deliberation in situated experience. They re-sensitise participants to overlooked materialities and ecological entanglements, grounding abstract values such as peace or coexistence in lived spatial relations.

Narrative documentation and confessional formats introduce an affective dimension that complicates technocratic framings of participation. By legitimising emotional expression and personal testimony, they expand what counts as valid knowledge within PD processes and reinforce the partial, situated character of collective inquiry [5]. Digital participatory toolkits, finally, scale negotiation by rendering decision pathways traceable and by exposing the infrastructural logics embedded in planning and governance systems. They materialise trade-offs, making visible the algorithmic and procedural dimensions of collective choice and thereby enhancing reflexivity regarding institutional power.

Taken together, these mediating devices do not merely support participation; they actively produce its conditions. They redistribute agency, stabilise intermediate outcomes, and extend engagement temporally beyond singular events. In this sense, they operate as epistemic technologies that transform the field into a site of ongoing inquiry. As such, their effects cannot be separated from the situated practices and actors that mobilise them. The same device may produce different outcomes depending on context, power relations, and the designer's own position within the field. In turn, field-based formats generate artefacts, frameworks, and relational infrastructures that travel across contexts.

5 Implications for Participatory Design

The field-based formats at PDC 2026 do not simply extend participatory design into new contexts; they make visible an ongoing structural reconfiguration of the field itself. What is at stake is not merely a refinement of participatory techniques, but a reconsideration of where and how knowledge in PD is produced, legitimised, and circulated. The analysis developed in this critical overview suggests that these transformations are neither marginal nor temporary, but indicative of broader shifts in the epistemic and institutional configuration of participatory design.

First, the place where knowledge is produced shifts. If earlier articulations of PD centred on participation as inclusion within design processes, and later developments emphasised infrastructuring and agonistic engagement, the initiatives analysed here foreground the field as epistemic ground. Knowledge emerges from territorial embeddedness, long-term relational commitments, and sustained

exposure to conflictual socio-material conditions. Contribution, therefore, cannot be understood solely in terms of methodological novelty or conceptual abstraction. It increasingly requires attention to territorial accountability, durability of relations, and the capacity to influence or reshape institutional arrangements. This marks a shift from participation as bounded event toward participation as situated political practice embedded in ongoing socio-material processes.

Second, the role of the designer is reconfigured in ways that carry significant implications for both practice and education. Across clusters, designers operate as infrastructural actors embedded within contested systems. They curate conflict rather than resolve it, mediate ecological interdependencies rather than optimise predefined solutions, stabilise dialogical conditions rather than orchestrate consensus, and connect translocal networks without erasing situated specificity. Such a role demands sustained reflexivity regarding positionality, power, and institutional implication. The designer is less an external facilitator and more a situated participant, one whose agency is entangled with the temporalities, asymmetries, and material constraints of the field. This redefinition complicates traditional accounts of design expertise and calls for pedagogical and institutional adjustments that recognise infrastructural and relational labour as central to the discipline.

Third, the conference itself is reinterpreted. PDC 2026 does not merely host field experiences; it operates as one node within a distributed ecology of practice. Workshops, Situated Actions, and Places extend the temporal and spatial boundaries of the event, redistributing epistemic authority across territories. The conference becomes an articulatory infrastructure rather than a singular site of validation. This redistribution does not eliminate institutional hierarchies, but it makes them visible and contestable, inviting the discipline to reflect more explicitly on how legitimacy, authorship, and recognition are structured.

These developments point toward structural questions for participatory design as a research field. If PD increasingly unfolds through decentralised, field-embedded, and infrastructural practices, then prevailing evaluation criteria, publication formats, and academic reward systems may not adequately reflect its operative realities. The risk of extractive dynamics, where situated practices are translated into institutional capital without reciprocal transformation, remains present. Addressing this tension requires not only methodological refinement but institutional reflexivity.

The argument advanced here is therefore not prescriptive but diagnostic: participatory design appears to be moving toward a deeper commitment to the field as a political and an epistemic condition. Coexistence, peace, and dialogue are not simply aspirational values to be operationalised through tools; they are materially enacted through infrastructures, territorial engagements, and sustained negotiation across differences. To practise in the field entails exposure to conflict, redistribution of authority, and accountability to place.

Rather than concluding with closure, this critical overview situates PDC 2026 as a moment of consolidation and clarification. Participatory design seems increasingly confronted with the need to decide how far it is willing to follow the implications of its own practices: whether to remain primarily a methodological discourse

centred on conference-based exchange, or to further institutionalise its transformation into a territorially embedded, reflexive, and politically accountable practice. The initiatives analysed here do not resolve this tension, but they make its contours visible and difficult to ignore.

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Engaging in Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence

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Abstract

This paper offers an introductory reflection on the workshop track of the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026, outlining the key questions and perspectives that emerge from it. Participatory Design (PD) is a growing international academic and practice-based field, with an extensive body of work addressing a wide range of questions surrounding the idea of designing together [14]. Across these developments, one practice consistently sits at the core of PD: the workshop. Workshops constitute intentional moments of engagement with others within research and professional projects. This paper introduces the workshop track of the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026, framed by the theme Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence. Building on the historical role of workshops within PD, we approach creating a workshop track for the conference as temporary democratic infrastructures where participation is staged, negotiated, and critically examined. Twelve workshops were selected within four thematic clusters: (a) Living Together Beyond the Human; (b) Place, Spatiality, and Situated Participation foregrounds; (c) Conflict, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding; and (d) Narratives, Emotions, and the Politics of Participation. Across these trajectories, workshops are understood as designed situations that distribute agency, structure tension, and materialise future conditions for coexistence. Significantly, the workshop track at PDC 2026 reveals a constellation of experimental practices concerned with how participation can infrastructurally support plural forms of living together.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Participatory design.

Keywords

Workshop, Embodied experience, Situated participation

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1 Introduction

Participatory Design (PD) is a growing international academic and practice-based field, with an extensive body of work addressing a wide range of questions surrounding the idea of designing together, see for instance [14]. Scholarship in PD has explored diverse aspects of participatory practice, including forms of engagement [10], theories of participation and invitation [9], temporality [11], power relations [3], and cultural and environmental concerns [12, 15], among others. Across these developments, one practice consistently sits at the core of participatory design: the workshop. Workshops constitute intentional moments of engagement with others within research and professional projects, activating design processes to be shaped by multiple actors connected, directly or indirectly, to the issues at stake. Through workshops, PD practitioners gather people to collectively explore, negotiate, and act upon shared issues.

Rooted in the 70s through various social movements across the globe, such as the workplace democracy movement, the community design centers and collaborative design initiatives [10, 13], the idea of bringing people together through workshops has evolved alongside the field itself. Today, workshops address increasingly complex and interconnected issues, ranging from product and service design to social innovation, policy-making, decolonial practices, and more-than-human relations. Reflecting this expansion, workshops in PD now take a wide variety of forms, bringing together heterogeneous participants and deploying diverse modes of engagement, materials, and temporalities. Within the broader trajectory of PD, workshops have historically functioned as sites where democratic commitments are enacted rather than merely discussed: PD has positioned itself as a practice concerned with shaping the conditions under which people can participate in decisions that affect their lives [10, 15]. Within this academic and practice-based landscape, the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) has, since its beginnings in the 1990s, functioned as a central point of connection for researchers, practitioners, students, and other actors engaged in participatory design.

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2 Workshops as experiencing participation at PDC 2026

The PDC 2026 workshop program builds upon the evolution of the field, the centrality of workshops to PD and the significance of the conference to the global PD community. However, it does so under conditions of renewed urgency. Framed by the conference theme Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence, the workshop track for PDC 2026 asks how participation can sustain pluralism under conditions of conflict, ecological and political crisis, polarization, systemic inequality, and increasing uncertainty. In this perspective, the workshop track is shaped through the interplay between curatorial priorities, aimed at engaging critically with the current state of participatory design, and the arguments articulated across the submitted proposals. The resulting interpretation, organised through four clusters, reflects both a proposal to approach workshops as practices that configure the conditions of participation, and a way of making visible how participation is currently being shaped within the field.

Guiding the workshop track was a set of curatorial priorities, which include fostering active and embodied participation; foregrounding the role of artefacts and material practices in structuring interaction; engaging with politics, voice, and power; addressing tensions as constitutive of productive dialogue; making structural conditions perceptible; and engaging with pluralities across diverse ways of being and knowing fostering active and embodied participation; foregrounding the role of artefacts and material practices in structuring interaction; engaging with politics, voice, and power; addressing tensions as constitutive of productive dialogue; making structural conditions perceptible; and, finally engaging with pluralities across diverse ways of being and knowing.

In terms of promoting engagement, the workshop track has been conceived as privileging activation and experience. Engaging in workshops in PDC 2026 works as invitations into shared inquiry with knowledge generated through being together. As such, emphasis has been placed on inviting workshop formats capable of staging and engaging with participation as spaces where participatory design is enacted and interrogated in practice.

Moreover, as an in-person practice within the conference, the workshop track has been conceived as a structured environment in which dialogue, negotiation, and collective sense-making are materially configured. Hence, rather than orbiting solely around discussion, the track has been designed to create an environment where participation takes shape through spatial arrangements, engagement with materials, diverse facilitation formats, mapping devices, role-play scenarios, and collective prototyping.

Through these situated and material engagements, the track has aimed to bring together workshops capable of generating intermediate artefacts that could extend the life of participation beyond the temporal limits of a single session, functioning as mediating infrastructures within the broader PD practice and research field. While the idea of intermediate artefacts has not been rigidly defined, workshops were envisioned as producing outcomes in the shape of guidelines, thematic maps, frameworks for navigating values misalignment, or repositories of narratives functioning as infrastructural seeds that could enable participation to persist and circulate across research and practice contexts.

Whereas these dimensions concern the more practical aspects of workshop, the track also sought bring to foreground engagement with broader conceptual and structural questions. A key priority, in connection with the conference theme, was for the workshop track to hold space for engagement with issues of politics, power relations, and voice. As such, the workshop track represents a space to engage, scrutinize and co-create in relation to political structures, issues of power and privilege, and voice and agency. In this sense, the track itself constitutes a primary political gesture that opens up reflection on how publics are organised and constituted within PD in relation to local, global, and trans-local socio-political conditions. The distribution of voices, the artefacts mediating exchange, and the structuring of disagreement shape the conditions under which peace and coexistence are explored. Building on this, another dimension the workshop track sought to hold concerns the idea of tensions as productive spaces. Following recent developments in the field regarding agonism and dialogue [5], the workshop track proposes conflict, asymmetry, and infrastructural limitations as inherent conditions of democratic existence. The aim is to create settings in which diversity becomes generative, while differences are both acknowledged and emphasized. Dialogue is thus understood as a practice requiring structure and support, and coexistence as a process rehearsed and negotiated through material and relational configurations.

In relation to matters of politics and tensions, it was considered necessary for the workshop landscape at PDC 2026 to engage critically with underlying structural conditions. The track aims to promote engagements in which the socio-material, institutional, ecological, and technological infrastructures that shape participation can be rendered perceptible. Through practices such as mapping, infrastructural reflection, speculative prototyping, and governance-oriented inquiry, participation is framed as a situated and relational practice whose emancipatory potential unfolds through the scrutiny, exploration, experimentation, and co-creation with existing power structures. This perspective positions *Peace*, *Coexistence*, and *Dialogue* as a continuous process of reallocating visibility, agency, and responsibility within controversial systems.

In engaging with engagements, materiality, politics, tensions, and structural conditions, it was considered essential for the workshop track to create a space that neither implies nor presupposes unified perspectives, shared ontological grounds, or homogeneous modes of being. In this sense, plurality constituted an overarching dimension to be nurtured within the workshop landscape of the conference. Within the broader context of the conference, this epistemological stance is crucial: coexistence depends on acknowledging that no single perspective can exhaustively represent complex socio-ecological realities.

Workshops therefore operate as collective processes of sense-making, where understanding is co-constructed and provisional. In this sense, they extend the argument that PD is not only about “designing things” but about designing socio-material assemblies that gather issues and actors into deliberative formations [5]. By welcoming diverse actors, disciplinary perspectives, and more-than-human agencies, workshops challenge anthropocentric and discipline-bound models of engagement [1, 8, 16].

Coexistence is thus framed beyond human-to-human negotiation as the management of interdependencies across ecological

and infrastructural assemblages. Designing for peace, in this sense, requires attention to distributed agency and ecological regeneration alongside social justice. As such, the PDC 2026 workshop track is envisioned as a collective space for expanding the field of participation.

Conceived in this way, the workshop track at PDC 2026 operates as temporary yet consequential democratic infrastructures. It functions as designed situations in which participation is staged, negotiated, and critically examined. This resonates with DiSalvo's [6] framing of design as democratic inquiry: an experimental practice that constructs publics around issues. It also connects with the notion of micro-publics [2] as temporary spaces in which participants rehearse ways of living together through structured encounters, artefact-mediated dialogue, and collective reflection.

The following section introduces the selected workshops, using them as an entry point to examine how contemporary participatory design engages with current challenges and possibilities. The clusters make explicit how curatorial intentions take shape through distinct configurations of participatory practice, providing a lens to interpret ongoing shifts in the field.

3 Clustering Participation: Curating Themes Across the Workshop Track

Building on this vision of workshops as spaces where participation is enacted rather than described, the call for workshop proposals invited formats capable of fostering meaningful interaction through co-design, discussion, speculative prototyping, performative tactics, and hands-on collective work. Workshops were framed as spaces for collective exploration, situated inquiry, and critical engagement with the conference theme of living together. Particular emphasis was placed on formats that support participant agency, encouraging those involved to actively shape both the workshop process and its outcomes.

The call generated 77 workshop submissions, reflecting strong engagement with the conference theme across geographical regions and institutional contexts. Proposals were received from academia, industries, government, and independent practices, demonstrating the breadth of contemporary PD engagement. From these submissions, 12 workshops were selected to take place at the conference. The final selection reflects a careful balance across disciplinary backgrounds, geographical distribution, and methodological approaches, bringing together diverse perspectives on participation, coexistence, and democratic practice. Taken together, the selected workshops reveal a set of recurring concerns and orientations that cut across contexts and formats. While each proposal maintains its specificity, thematic convergences began to emerge through the review process, suggesting shared conceptual orientations across otherwise diverse formats.

The selected workshops point to a reconfiguration of participation as a practice that engages with political conditions, relational dynamics, and processes of collective transformation. The four clusters operate as interpretative lenses that support the articulation of these shifts, offering a structured way to map emerging directions within the field. They are not neutral groupings, but the result of a curatorial process shaped by the above-mentioned priorities. The focus on artefact-centered and embodied participation foregrounds

workshops where materials actively mediate interaction; the attention to political and structural conditions brings forward proposals engaging with power, conflict, and governance; while the commitment to plurality supports approaches that expand participation across heterogeneous actors and perspectives. In this sense, the clusters make visible how participatory design is currently being reconfigured across different trajectories, while maintaining overlaps and productive tensions between them. Across the selected workshops, a set of recurring concerns and orientations became visible, cutting across disciplinary differences. These convergences were not predefined but emerged through the ways in which participation is framed and enacted across the proposals.

On this basis, four clusters were developed to articulate distinct yet overlapping trajectories within the workshop track: (a) Living Together Beyond the Human, which expands participation toward more-than-human and ecological relations; (b) Place, Spatiality, and Situated Participation, which foregrounds the spatial and infrastructural conditions shaping participation; (c) Conflict, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding, which addresses participation as a practice of engaging with disagreement and power; and (d) Narratives, Emotions, and the Politics of Participation, which highlights the role of experience, storytelling, and lived perspectives in shaping participatory processes. The following section outlines these clusters in detail and provides a structured lens through which to read the workshop program as a whole.

3.1 Living Together Beyond the Human

Living Together Beyond the Human cluster encapsulates a commitment to expanding participation and relationships beyond only human stakeholders, inviting broader perspectives in PD and coexistence. This approach challenges the prevailing human-centred worldview, urging us to consider the intricate entanglements between humans, non-human entities like animals, plants, and technologies, as well as diverse environments and longer temporal scales. By moving away from anthropocentric framings, workshops under this theme engage deeply with multispecies relations, ecological conflicts, and pluriversal mapping.

The cluster focuses on coexistence between humans, non-humans, technologies, and ecosystems, often employing speculative, cartographic, or material practices to foster inclusive participation. Central concerns revolve around interdependence, long-term living together, ecological conflict, and governance that is not solely human-centric. This aligns strongly with the PDC26 call to rethink coexistence beyond human actors, recognising the necessity for frameworks and participatory practices that reflect the complexity of contemporary ecological, technological, and social realities. The workshops are committed to developing strategies for genuinely inclusive coexistence, considering the needs and impacts of both human and non-human entities.

Despite these progressive intentions, translating more-than-human and pluriversal concerns into clear, actionable participatory mechanisms remains a challenge. Many struggle to articulate how non-human relations and interests can be materially enacted within participatory processes, especially in terms of negotiating relationships among diverse stakeholders. The underdeveloped dimension of relational negotiation highlights the need for robust methods

that ensure the principle of living together in plural contexts is not just theorised but practised concretely and impactfully. Moving forward, future efforts should address this gap by designing participatory mechanisms that genuinely accommodate and enact the interests of all living stakeholders, thereby advancing the ethos of living together beyond the human.

All three proposals within this cluster share a central concern: expanding the scope of participation to include multispecies relations and ecological perspectives. By doing so, they address the necessity of rethinking coexistence and governance in ways that recognise interdependence among humans, non-humans, and ecosystems. The common thread is a commitment to developing participatory frameworks and practices that reflect the complexity and plurality of contemporary ecological, technological, and social realities.

More-than-human and long-term living together workshop by Saez Martinez et al. is distinct in its methodological approach, guiding participants through the phases of Field of Conflict, Seeding and Flourishing. It uniquely emphasizes the integration of all living stakeholders, including technologies and policy agents, with the aim of designing for lasting community benefit. The focus is on crafting actionable strategies for genuinely inclusive coexistence, considering the needs and impacts of both human and non-human entities.

Bello et al., in the *Beyond SDGs: Pluriversal Interspecies Council for Post-development Futures* workshop, invite participants to critically reconsider the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to collaboratively formulate post-development principles. By blending perspectives from Colombia and Italy, it facilitates participants to shift between human and more-than-human roles, mapping harm and care in a holistic manner. This approach foregrounds the importance of pluriversal thinking and the co-creation of futures that transcend conventional development paradigms.

Pluriversal Mapping workshop, proposed by Salgado Cofré et al., lies in its examination of contradictions such as resource exploitation and ecosystem disruption, which exacerbate the climate crisis. Through participatory and speculative design methods, it encourages reimagining coexistence between humans and more-than-human entities, particularly in contexts affected by extractivism. This workshop highlights speculative and cartographic practices as tools for envisioning alternative, more equitable forms of living together.

This cluster reveals a fundamental tension in participatory design: while more-than-human perspectives are increasingly invoked, participation risks being operationalised through human-centered logics. What is at stake is not the extension of participation to additional actors, but a reconfiguration of what participation entails, where agency is distributed, temporalities are non-linear, and relations exceed representational frameworks. Without this shift, more-than-human participation continues remaining a conceptual claim rather than a material practice. Moving ahead, the challenge lies in translating more-than-human and pluriversal concerns into clear, actionable participatory mechanisms. While these workshops open-up vital questions about coexistence, interdependence, and non-anthropocentric governance, there remains a pressing need to articulate how non-human relations and interests can be materially enacted in participatory processes. Future efforts should focus on developing robust methods for negotiating relationships among

diverse stakeholders, human and non-human alike, and ensuring that the principle of living together in plural contexts is not only theorised but practised in concrete, impactful ways.

3.2 Place, Spatiality, and Situated Participation

A second cluster, Place, Spatiality, and Situated participation, emerging across the PDC 2026 workshop submissions foregrounds place, territory, and spatiality as constitutive dimensions of PD itself: these workshops insist on the fundamentally situated character of participation. Indeed, it unfolds within specific socio-material arrangements, infrastructural conditions, and layered histories of place; it is shaped by conflicts over land, by ecological fragilities, by institutional sedimentations, and by everyday spatial practices. This cluster grounds itself in the understanding that spatiality is not a neutral backdrop for relational processes, but a contested political terrain shaped by power and exclusion. These workshops resist to abstract lived territories into generic contexts. Instead, they position place as an epistemic and political condition for participation. In this sense, spatiality is not simply the “where” of participation but part of its ontological grounding: it structures who speaks, what can be imagined, which actors, human and more-than-human ones, are recognized, and how power circulates. Across the cluster, design charrettes, mapping, role-play simulations, spatial storytelling, and infrastructural analysis are mobilized as ways to render visible these entanglements and to experiment with alternative territorial futures.

The workshop *Digital Participatory Toolkit for Conflict-Sensitive Planning in Mining Regions* by Pantić and colleagues offers an example of participation as spatial negotiation. Grounded in mining regions marked by socio-environmental tension, the workshop frames spatial planning as both an arena of contestation and a platform for dialogue. Here, territory evolves from a passive container to a conflictual socio-material assemblage where economic imperatives, environmental degradation, and community well-being collide. Through a structured sequence combining analog GeoDesign, role-play, and a Digital Participatory Toolkit (DPT), participants inhabit stakeholder positions such as citizens, NGOs, mining companies, local authorities and collectively design spatial interventions. The process makes visible how proposals materialize in space and how tools reframe trade-offs and expose unanticipated consequences. Importantly, planners (played by facilitators) curate the evaluative categories, thereby surfacing questions of power and infrastructural mediation. Participation becomes an exercise in navigating spatial “hotspots,” where misalignments crystallize and negotiation is required.

While Pantić et al. focus on extractive territories, *The Living Territory: Participatory Design as an Ecology of Regeneration* by Braga de Araújo and João Ribeiro Gomes expands the spatial lens toward regeneration and more-than-human coexistence. Framing territory as a living organism, the workshop proposes PD as a “collective immune system” capable of detecting imbalances and restoring relationships. Using a simulated coastal setting as a case study, participants collaboratively map social and ecological dynamics, construct territory-personas (including more-than-human actors), and prototype regenerative interventions. The workshop unfolds in phases, Seed, Germination, Fruiting, culminating in a

collectively produced “Map of Living Principles”. Spatiality here is relational and processual: places are understood as evolving ecosystems shaped by tourism pressures, climate transitions, and cultural practices. Designers are repositioned from solution providers to mediators of pluriverse ecologies, echoing debates within the *Living Together Beyond the Human* cluster. Indeed, this workshop explicitly mobilizes regenerative design and pluriverse thinking, situating PD within broader political-ecological transformations. Participation is thus enacted as an embodied, spatially grounded co-production of territorial futures.

A more explicitly theoretical engagement with spatiality is developed in Exploring the Entanglement of Participatory Design, Spatiality and Place by Binder et al.. Responding to what they identify as a relative neglect of spatial dimensions in PD’s “fourth wave” characterized by an increasingly intimate entanglement of human and digital technology, the workshop draws on assemblage theory and entanglement perspectives to interrogate how space and place both shape and are shaped by participatory processes. Using a design charrette format, participants bring case studies and collaboratively map the entanglements among human and non-human actors, infrastructures, technologies, and disciplinary assumptions. The emphasis is less on producing a single territorial proposal and more on unpacking cross-disciplinary tensions and identifying opportunities for bridging silos. Spatiality is conceptualized in “place-as-assemblage”: dynamic alignments of buildings, people, signs, technologies, and institutional forces, as intervention within evolving socio-material configurations.

Taken together, these three workshops articulate a shared claim: that participatory design must be understood as situated spatial practice. They resist abstract notions of engagement detached from material contexts and instead foreground how territory, infrastructure, and place-based histories condition participation. Whether addressing mining conflicts, coastal regeneration, or interdisciplinary entanglements, they deploy spatial artifacts as epistemic and political devices. Mapping becomes a way of surfacing invisible infrastructures; charrettes create temporary publics that rehearse alternative spatial alignments; role-play destabilizes fixed stakeholder positions; and digital toolkits mediate scales of governance. Participation is thus rendered tangible, embodied, and negotiated through spatial media. This cluster shows that participation does not simply take place in space but is continuously produced through spatial and infrastructural arrangements that organise recognition, access, and legitimacy. Territories emerge here as contested configurations shaped by historical sedimentations, uneven distributions of power, and situated practices. Participatory design is implicated in these dynamics, as it contributes to reconfiguring the conditions through which participation becomes possible, visible, and actionable.

What is therefore at stake is the capacity to engage spatiality as a constitutive dimension of participation, where designing means intervening in the arrangements that enable or constrain collective action. At the same time, this cluster does not remain confined to geography or planning. It dialogues with broader concerns emerging across the positioning paper. The emphasis on conflict-sensitive planning aligns with peacebuilding and agonistic PD debates; the ecological framing of territory connects with regenerative and more-than-human design; the assemblage perspective bridges infrastructuring and pluriversal narratives. What distinguishes the

Place, Spatiality, and Situated Participation cluster is its insistence that these themes are always grounded somewhere, materialized in specific territories, infrastructures, and spatial practices. In foregrounding place as constitutive, these workshops expand PD’s repertoire for engaging complex socio-ecological transformations, reminding the field that democracy, coexistence, and regeneration are always spatially enacted and territorially contested.

3.3 Conflict, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding

This cluster, Conflict, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding, brings together workshops that approach conflict and peacebuilding as core PD concerns. Participation is framed as an ongoing process of engaging difference, negotiating power, and sustaining dialogue across organizational, communal, and place-based contexts. The selected workshops examine how peace is cultivated through everyday practices, material arrangements, and relational infrastructures rather than singular interventions. Across the cluster, participants work with artifact-based making, narrative and counter storying practices, role-play, and equity-centered frameworks to surface tensions, articulate competing perspectives, and prototype pathways toward more just forms of coexistence. Conflict appears as organizational misalignment, historical grievance, and structural inequality, addressed through design processes that hold plurality and enable collective sense-making over time. Design functions as a mediating practice that supports dialogue across scales, linking interpersonal encounters to institutional structures and broader societal dynamics. Together, these workshops position peacebuilding as participatory work grounded in situated action, relational accountability, and the continuous shaping of conditions for living together.

The workshop *Creative Dialogical Spaces for Agonism - Embodied Making and Material Dialogue in Contexts of Conflict and Transformation* by de Kreek et al. offers an example of participation as materialized dialogue under conditions of conflict. Situated in participatory design contexts where disagreement is frequently present, the workshop approaches dialogue as an embodied and material practice enacted through artefacts. Through a structured rotation across three stations (LEGO-based modelling of personal transitions, low-tech remix walls in post-conflict community settings, and commons-oriented mapping for shared governance) participants explore how artefacts mediate voice, power, and imagination across different scales and situations. The process foregrounds artefacts as active participants in dialogue, enabling indirect engagement with sensitive issues, surfacing disagreement, and carrying meanings across time. Participants respond not only to one another but also to artefacts left by previous groups, framing conflict as an ongoing, situated material conversation. Participation takes shape as a practice of sustaining agonistic spaces through making and material negotiation. By foregrounding embodied interaction and affective engagement with artefacts, the workshop also intersects with the cluster on narratives, emotions, and the politics of participation.

The workshop *From local action to global impact: companies as peace builders - Design tools to foster positive peace in organizations* by Lebano et al., offers an example of participation as organizational peacebuilding coming from a business context. Grounded in the concept of Positive Peace, the workshop situates companies as socio-political infrastructures whose everyday decisions

shape conditions of inclusion, cohesion, and conflict across scales. Participation unfolds within organizational life, from internal governance and workplace relations to supply chains and community engagement. Through co-design activities, role-play, and real-world scenario simulations, participants examine how business practices influence social resilience and collective well-being. The workshop emphasizes translating ethical commitments into concrete design tools, culminating in the co-creation of instruments that embed peace-oriented practices into organizational routines. For this reason, participation becomes a way of aligning internal structures with broader societal responsibilities. By extending participatory design into corporate and institutional settings, the workshop also connects with the cluster on place, spatiality, and situated participation, highlighting how organizational practices are embedded in wider socio-material contexts.

The workshop *Prototyping Place-based Pathways towards Peace: Cultivating Change through Counterstorying* by Lake and Marshall offers an example of participation as relational pathway-making. Situated in place-based PD practices, the workshop approaches peace as a plural and situated process shaped by local histories, power relations, and lived experience. Participation unfolds as a collective inquiry into how inequities, harm, and exclusion operate across social systems and how relational design practices can support more equitable conditions. Through methods such as counter-storytelling, intergroup dialogue, and equity-centered collective impact models, participants surface hidden histories and alternative narratives connected to place and peace. These narrative practices are combined with design activities that support the prototyping of context-specific strategies for systemic change, inviting participants to map cycles of harm alongside emerging cycles of care and justice. Participation takes shape as a practice of cultivating pathways toward peace grounded in difference, plurality, and equity. Through its emphasis on counter storying and collective sense-making, the workshop also intersects with the cluster on narratives, emotions, and the politics of participation.

Taken together, the workshops in this cluster argue that peace-building in participatory design cannot be understood as the technical management of disagreement nor as the achievement of consensus. It unsettles the persistent orientation of participatory design toward alignment and shared understanding. Participation is articulated here as an ongoing engagement with asymmetry, where conflict is not a problem to be resolved but a condition to be sustained. The question shifts from facilitating agreement to designing the conditions under which disagreement can persist without being neutralised or absorbed.

The workshops position peace as an ongoing design practice: the careful construction and maintenance of relational infrastructures capable of holding plurality, asymmetry, and historical tension without collapsing into antagonism. Thus, positioning PD as a practice fundamentally concerned with sustaining democratic life, where dialogue is a practice that must be actively designed, negotiated and renewed.

3.4 Narratives, emotions, and the politics of participation

Last cluster places storytelling, emotional engagement, and political awareness at the heart of PD. Narratives, emotions, and the politics of participation cluster purposefully diverge from viewing PD as a neutral, technical exercise, instead highlighting how narratives, affect, and power relations fundamentally shape the participatory process. By acknowledging that participation is influenced by the stories we construct, the emotions we encounter, and the underlying politics, this cluster challenges depoliticised and detached perspectives. It argues that documenting, reflecting on, and sharing experiences are inherently political acts, forming the core of PD practice.

All three workshops in this cluster share a central commitment as they recognise that participation cannot be separated from narrative and affective dimensions. Rather than treating emotions and values as peripheral, these proposals place them at the core of participatory processes. Each workshop contests the idea that PD is a purely objective or neutral activity, instead positioning it as a site where personal stories, feelings, and ethical considerations shape outcomes. By experimenting with alternative formats of documentation such as visual narratives, situated writing, and embodied reflection, the workshops collectively advance the notion that participation is a lived, relational practice. They challenge participants to reflect on the politics of representation, the role of emotions, and the ethical responsibilities in engaging with others. In doing so, they foster a more inclusive, caring, and politically conscious participatory design ethos.

The *Participatory Design Narratives: Embracing Emotions, Politics and Passions towards Dialogue and Coexistence* workshop by Del Gaudio et al. distinguishes itself by cultivating dialogue, care, and solidarity, especially in politically charged environments. It offers activities that help participants articulate their emotional experiences within PD contexts, breaking the silence around feelings that often go unacknowledged in research. By encouraging both expression and written reflection, the workshop positions emotions as sources of insight, critical to understanding the complexities of participation. The focus on caring and solidarity enables participants to navigate tensions, fostering a climate of mutual support and empathy. The workshop's unique contribution lies in its deliberate attention to how emotions interact with dialogue and narrative, reframing the role of affect as central to participatory practice.

Confessions of a Participatory Designer: Navigating Values Misalignment in Co-design Practice workshop proposed by Johnson and Hughes brings a candid, confessional format to the forefront, centering on values misalignment and the challenges practitioners face. By offering a safe space for honest discussion and practical advice, it allows participants to share their struggles and learn from experts. This workshop is unique in its explicit acknowledgement of the complexity and ambiguity inherent in participatory design. Rather than masking difficulties or pretending neutrality, it invites participants to confront the realities of misaligned values and conflicting priorities. The guidance provided helps practitioners develop clearer strategies for navigating these challenges, making the process more transparent and resilient. The confessional approach

legitimises vulnerability while also creating a shared repository of knowledge that can guide future practice.

The workshop *A Gendered Lens to Designing with Care to Recognise the 'Other'* by Gera and Navarrete Rigo, introduces a feminist perspective on care as a structuring principle of civic participation. Its uniqueness lies in positioning participation as both an ethical and affective *practice*, shaped by collective reflection and relational accountability. Through group discussions, collaborative mapping, and shared synthesis, participants are encouraged to articulate culturally situated understandings of care and trace their interdependencies. The workshop foregrounds non-hierarchical relationships, social values, and collective agency, positioning personal experience as legitimate design knowledge. Participation unfolds through attentive listening, respect, and responsibility across individual, community, and global scales. By foregrounding care and lived experience, the workshop extends the logic of relational participation, connecting with broader themes such as multispecies coexistence and interdependence, as highlighted in other clusters.

The workshops open vital questions about the politics, the importance of affect, and the ethical responsibilities inherent in participatory design. Moving forward, there is a need to develop robust frameworks that integrate narrative and emotional dimensions more systematically into PD practice. This includes creating new methods for documenting and reflecting on participatory processes, methods that value lived experience, acknowledge power relations, and foster transparency. The workshops suggest that future efforts should focus on building inclusive participatory mechanisms that legitimise personal stories and emotional realities as sources of design knowledge. Additionally, there is scope for cross-pollination with other clusters, such as those emphasising more-than-human participation and care, to further enrich understandings of relational and interdependent coexistence.

Ultimately, the challenge is to move beyond theorising and to enact these principles in concrete, impactful ways. This requires ensuring forms of participation that are inclusive and caring, while also politically conscious and ethically grounded. By embracing narrative, affect, and politics as core components of PD, practitioners can foster more meaningful and transformative engagement, one that recognises the plurality of voices, experiences, and values shaping contemporary design realities.

4 Conclusion

The twelve workshops selected for PDC 2026 collectively reveal that participatory design practice is undergoing a significant evolution in line with what has been described as a fourth wave of PD [14]. Moving beyond participation as user involvement or stakeholder consultation, the workshops position participation as a political, relational, and infrastructural endeavor concerned with the conditions under which plural forms of coexistence might be sustained. In dialogue with the conference theme of *Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence*, these workshops offer a constellation of experimental practices that engage critically with contemporary challenges. The artefacts, protocols, and formats proposed carry political positions regarding what counts as knowledge, who can speak, and what futures are imaginable. Confession circles, pluriverse maps, and territory-personas, just to quote a few, operate as what might be

described as *devices*, that more than capturing existing perspectives actively unlock availability for future research agendas exploring how workshops distribute agency, encode power relations and enable or foreclose several forms of coexistence.

The four clusters operate as an analytical synthesis of these orientations, making visible distinct yet interconnected trajectories within the field. Together, they point to an understanding of participatory design as situated within spatial, political, ecological, and affective conditions that actively configure participation. In this sense, the workshop track foregrounds a shift in participatory design from methods of inclusion toward practices that engage with the conditions through which participation becomes possible, legitimate, and sustainable. *Living Together Beyond the Human* expands the diversifying agenda of PD toward multispecies and ecological entanglements, questioning anthropocentric assumptions and exploring pluriverse dimensions of coexistence. *Place, Spatiality, and Situated Participation* foregrounds territory, infrastructure, and material context as constitutive of democratic engagement, positioning participation as spatially enacted and historically grounded. *Conflict, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding* frames peace as an ongoing, agonistic practice, designing for the productive negotiation of difference across organizational and community settings. *Narratives, Emotions, and the Politics of Participation* centers storytelling, affect, and care, emphasizing that participation is shaped by lived experience, ethical responsibility, and the politics of representation.

Together, these clusters create a workshop landscape that articulates participation as a relational, situated, and structurally embedded practice. As trajectories, these do not represent separation, but rather distinct concentrations of focus within the broader landscape. In this sense, the twelve workshops share common orientations in multiple ways. For instance, many employ artefact-based methods, such as mapping, speculative prototyping, charrettes, confession circles, and commons-based governance tools, as mediators of conflict and imagination. Another overlapping feature is the refusal to assume that participation is inherently harmonious. Many proposals explicitly foreground friction, values misalignment, and structural asymmetry as constitutive of democratic life. Rather than smoothing over disagreement in the name of consensus, many of these workshops are designed to hold tension productively.

Accordingly, several workshops within PDC 2026 acknowledge that living together may also entail sustaining the conditions under which disagreement remains generative rather than destructive. This calls for design capacities that warrant further investigation: how to hold conflict without resolving it prematurely; how to infrastructure dissent without producing paralysis; and how to create responsible spaces without reproducing extractive research relations.

To conclude, the workshop landscape at PDC 2026 can be understood as a site where the future methods, tools, and approaches of PD are actively negotiated. The workshop track represents an intense and concentrated arena for presenting, experiencing, discussing, reflecting upon, and co-developing workshop practices for further PD work, contributing to generating and transferring knowledge through making, testing participation, staging, and treating coexistence as practice.

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Digital Participatory Toolkit for Conflict-Sensitive Planning in Mining Regions

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Abstract

This workshop explores participatory methods for spatial planning in mining regions, combining role-play and analog GeoDesign experiences with a Digital Participatory Toolkit developed within the MINIPART project, aimed at improving public participation. Participants, representing diverse stakeholder roles, will collaboratively test tools including SWOT analysis, ranking, polling, and mapping exercises. Through structured negotiation and evaluation of trade-offs, they will gain insight into context-sensitive planning. The toolkit will be encouraged for ongoing use, equipping participants with skills to implement in participatory approaches in the future.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing**; • **Participatory design**; • **Information systems**; • **Decision support systems**; • **Applied computing**; • **Environmental sciences**;

Keywords

Role-play simulation, Geo-design, Digital participation tools, Conflict mitigation

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1 Introduction

Mining regions are complex socio-spatial environments where economic imperatives, environmental impacts, and community well-being often collide [1]. Effective governance and stakeholder engagement are crucial for navigating these challenges [2]. Large-scale extraction projects often trigger tensions between authorities, companies, and local populations when decisions lack inclusive dialogue, resulting in disputes over land use, environmental degradation, and perceived inequities [3]. Addressing such conflicts requires planning approaches that recognize diverse perspectives and build trust among stakeholders.

Spatial planning thus becomes both an arena of contestation and a platform for negotiation [4]. Traditional top-down approaches often fail to capture local realities, generating mistrust and resistance [5]. Conflict-sensitive planning seeks to acknowledge power asymmetries and promote equitable participation [6].

Building on this framework and participatory planning methods [7], the workshop introduces the **Digital Participatory Toolkit (DPT)**, developed within the MINIPART project (Improving Participation in Spatial Planning of Mining Areas), to support conflict-sensitive spatial planning. The DPT will be integrated with established participatory techniques (e.g., newsletters, polls, SWOT analysis, scoring) and interactive co-creation formats such as analog **GeoDesign** and **role-play**. Participants will combine digital tools with direct, face-to-face interaction, enhancing skills and reflections on participation in fragile trust contexts [8]. Aligned with participatory design principles [9], the goals of the workshop are: (1) To **explore and adapt participatory methods**; (2) to **experiment with digital and analog tools**; and (3) to **create a collaborative learning environment**.

The workshop aligns with the PDC conference theme by showing how participatory design can address environmental justice and resource governance in mining regions—critical sites for testing the “political dimension, investigating how participatory processes can foster peacebuilding, social justice and transformative change” and

“how design can support sustainable transitions through collaborative decision-making, inclusive policy frameworks and prototyping systemic interventions.”

2 Format, Methods, and Participant Involvement

The workshop is designed as a highly interactive, practice-oriented session structured in four blocks. It combines role-play, analog GeoDesign, and the DPT developed within the MINIPART project, ensuring a mix of hands-on and digital methods. The workshop is intended for **12–20 participants** (3–5 per stakeholder group), a size that allows for active engagement and meaningful interaction. All participants will be involved through **role-play, small-group tasks, presentations, and structured debates**, ensuring that each voice contributes to the collective learning experience and final decision. The workshop is designed to last **3 hours**, divided into four interactive blocks that combine analog role-play and geo-design with digital participatory tools. The modality is offline (in person), with digital support elements.

Block 1: GeoDesign exercise (≈ 50 minutes). Following a short introduction to the MINIPART project and the workshop aims and structure, participants will be divided into four stakeholder groups – citizens, NGOs, the mining company, and local authority – while convenors act as spatial planners. Each group receives a role-specific mandate (e.g., safeguarding community well-being, protecting the environment, maximizing profit, addressing corruption). Using maps and post-it notes, groups will design spatial interventions aligned with their interests. Groups will present their proposed solutions, anticipated costs, and action impacts.

Block 2: Digital testing (≈ 50 minutes). Each group will use the DPT (e.g., SWOT analysis, ranking, polls, matrix building) to submit entries that represent their collective interests and spatial proposals developed on the maps. Since planners (in this case, convenors) determine the entries to be ranked, matrix categories to be evaluated and questions in polls, the application will broaden participants’ perspectives by drawing attention to potential impacts of their decisions that may not have been anticipated in the initial analog exercise.

Block 3: Systematization (≈ 20 minutes). The convenors, acting in the role of planners, will systematize the collected submissions in order to identify potential areas of conflict or misalignment between stakeholder groups (“hotspots”). To enable this review, a short break will be introduced for participants.

Block 4: Negotiating (≈ 60 minutes). The closing session will focus on unresolved conflicts (“hotspots”), reflection on negotiation challenges, and the added value of digital tools for visualizing trade-offs. Participants will also discuss how such participatory methods could be adapted to real-world contexts.

3 EQUIPMENT AND TECHNICAL Requirements

Participants will need **personal internet-enabled devices** (smart-phones or tablets) to access the DPT. To ensure inclusiveness and technical accessibility, the convenors will provide three tablets, available to participants who may prefer to work on a larger screen but do not have their own device at hand. The workshop will also

require **maps for the analog Geo-Design exercise (provided by the convenors), post-it notes, and four flip charts** to support group work and reporting. If flipcharts are unavailable, large sheets of paper will be sufficient, enabling group work and the visual display of results for subsequent discussion and exchange. In line with the map and the subject of the spatial plan, the convenors will also provide stickers to represent spatial objects within the analog GeoDesign exercise, as well as “banknotes” to be allocated among the groups in order to emphasize real-case experience. **A standard seminar room with movable furniture** and stable **Wi-Fi** is sufficient, provided it has enough tables to accommodate four groups of approximately five participants each. **Markers in multiple colors** would be beneficial.

4 Relevance and Positioning

This workshop is relevant to the **PDC2026**, as it situates participatory spatial planning within contexts of social, environmental, and economic complexity. Mining regions often present conflicts arising from competing interests, making them ideal settings to explore participatory design as a tool for fostering dialogue, negotiation, and coexistence. By engaging participants in collaborative exercises, the workshop contributes to theoretical insights, provides practical experience, and offers participants actionable lessons in trust-building.

The workshop aligns with key conference themes by addressing the interplay between **global systems and local experiences**. Through the use of a **DPT**, the session enables stakeholders to simulate decision-making processes, negotiate trade-offs, and collectively co-design interventions that balance environmental, social, and economic priorities. This approach resonates with discussions on democracy and participation by exploring how digital tools can enhance inclusion, transparency, and deliberation across governance scales.

Positioned within the **MINIPART project (2024–2027)**, which focuses on improving participation in spatial planning of mining areas in Serbia, the workshop translates research outputs into actionable tools and experiential learning. It serves as a platform for knowledge co-production, capacity-building, and the dissemination of participatory strategies that can inform future policy, planning, and civic engagement. In doing so, the session contributes directly to the conference’s mission of designing for coexistence and socially responsible decision-making in complex, multi-stakeholder contexts.

5 Organizers and Expertise

This workshop is convened by a multidisciplinary team with extensive expertise in spatial planning, sociology, environmental governance, and participatory design. The team combines project members and an external collaborator to provide both methodological rigor and comparative perspectives. Together, the convenors ensure a rich interdisciplinary foundation, enabling participants to engage in meaningful, co-creative exercises that combine academic insight with practical experience in participatory spatial planning.

Dr. Tamara Maričić, Spatial Planner, Senior Research Associate, PhD in Spatial Planning, with 19 years of experience in researching mining regions, including environmental protection, social impacts,

and public participation. Her expertise is applying participatory methods in real-world planning contexts.

Dr. Marijana Pantić, Spatial Planner, Senior Research Associate, PhD in Spatial Planning. She specializes in integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, including interviews and focus groups. Experienced in facilitating participatory processes, enabling her to lead interactive stakeholder engagement exercises.

MA Dušanka Milosavljević, Sociologist, Research Assistant, MA in Integral Urbanism, PhD student in Sociology. She has field research experience with diverse communities across multiple social research projects. Her expertise in qualitative methods and group facilitation ensures effective participant engagement and data collection.

Prof. Dr. Milovan Vuković, Technological and Physical Chemist, Metallurgical and Mining Engineer, Environmental and Political Scientist, Full Professor. His interdisciplinary background bridges technical and social perspectives, enabling him to guide discussions on complex trade-offs in mining and spatial planning.

Prof. Dr. Ana Perić, Urban Planner, Assistant Professor, is an external collaborator on MINIPART. Her research focuses on stakeholder collaboration, participatory procedures, and comparative planning cultures. She brings expertise in designing co-creative, conflict-sensitive participatory workshops that foster social learning and democratic governance.

6 Expected Outcomes and Takeaways

Participants will gain practical knowledge and skills in participatory design and conflict-sensitive planning through collaborative exercises using the DPT, role-play, and analogue GeoDesign. They will learn to co-develop spatial solutions, negotiate diverse interests, assess trade-offs, and prioritize interventions within limited

budgets. The activities will strengthen their ability to identify consensus and divergence, enhancing informed decision-making in professional and community contexts.

Beyond individual learning, the workshop - embedded in the MINIPART project on public participation in mining area planning - will contribute to academic outputs, policy insights, and methodological refinement. Participants will gain access to the freely available DPT for future use and may form collaborations that inspire follow-up projects.

Acknowledgments

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From Local Action to Global Impact: Companies as Peace Builders. Design Tools to Foster Positive Peace in Organizations

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Abstract

In a time marked by growing polarization, systemic crises, and increasing social fragmentation, organizations are called to rethink their role within society. This workshop explores how companies can act as agents of Positive Peace by generating tangible impact from their internal organizational environment to local communities and the broader global context. Through a participatory design approach, participants will examine how everyday business decisions influence social cohesion, inclusion, resilience, and community well-being. The workshop aims to generate six actionable design tools that organizations can implement to embed Positive Peace principles into their strategies and operations.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Participatory design; • **Applied computing** → Business and management; • **Social and professional topics** → Sustainability.

Keywords

Positive Peace, Participatory Design, Organizational Innovation, Social Impact, Business Ethics, Co-design

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1 Introduction

Businesses play an increasingly influential role in shaping social structures and collective well-being. The concept of Positive Peace

offers a transformative framework for reimagining corporate responsibility. This workshop investigates how organizations can contribute to Positive Peace through participatory and design-driven approaches.

2 Workshop Objectives

- Develop an operational understanding of Positive Peace in organizational contexts
- Analyze how internal corporate practices influence local and global ecosystems
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration through participatory design
- Co-create six actionable design tools to foster Positive Peace within organizations

3 Methodological Approach

Learning can be a plural, shared, and practical act. This is what the Training from the Back of the Room methodology says. For this reason, the session will take the form of an interactive workshop, combining co-design activities with role-playing and real-world scenario simulations. Participants will actively collaborate in small groups to develop shared design tools and concrete prototypes aimed at promoting Positive Peace within organizations.

4 Relevance to Participatory Design

In this context, the workshop's focus on Positive Peace and the translation of ethical principles into concrete design tools and prototypes offers a compelling contribution: it explores how corporate practices, traditionally viewed as driven by profit and efficiency, can be reimagined as mechanisms for social inclusion, cohesion, and resilience. By engaging participants from diverse professional domains in co-design and simulation, the workshop operationalizes PDC's call to integrate participatory and political dimensions into design processes. In this context, the workshop's focus on Positive Peace and the translation of ethical principles into concrete design tools and prototypes offers a compelling contribution: it explores how corporate practices, traditionally viewed as driven by profit and efficiency, can be reimagined as mechanisms for social inclusion, cohesion, and resilience. By engaging participants from diverse professional domains in co-design and simulation, the



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workshop operationalizes PDC’s call to integrate participatory and political dimensions into design processes.

Moreover, the workshop’s emphasis on linking internal organizational environments with external community and global impacts resonates with PDC2026’s interest in exploring the interplay between global systems and local experiences.

By doing so, it enriches the conference dialogue on how participatory design can mitigate marginalization, address conflict, and foster more inclusive, peaceful forms of living together.

This workshop thus serves as a bridge between theory and practice in the PDC2026 ecosystem: it not only contributes to the scholarly exploration of participatory design for peace, but also delivers tangible tools and prototypes that participants may carry beyond the conference, stimulating real-world transformation consistent with the principles of Designing for Living Together.

5 Justification for holding the workshop at PDC

PDC is a leading platform for advancing participatory design practices with strong social and political relevance. Hosting this workshop at PDC provides a unique opportunity to engage an interdisciplinary community in exploring how design can support Positive Peace within and beyond organizational contexts. The conference’s focus on “Designing for Living Together” makes it an ideal venue for collectively developing tools and frameworks that transform business practices into drivers of inclusion, resilience, and social cohesion. PDC’s collaborative environment will enhance the impact, depth, and future scalability of the workshop outcomes.

6 Expected Outcomes

Participants will gain a practical understanding of how businesses can foster Positive Peace, co-create six actionable design tools, and explore how to translate ethical principles into everyday organizational practices. They will leave with concrete frameworks, prototypes, and insights to generate impact within their organizations, in local communities, and—on a broader scale—contribute to global peacebuilding efforts.

In a time marked by growing polarization and systemic crises, the concept of Positive Peace offers a transformative framework for addressing root causes of conflict and inequality. The workshop also introduces the evolving perspective of the ESDGs becoming ESDGPs—emphasizing peace as a foundational and measurable pillar of sustainable development.

7 Organizers

Trending Peace Srl is an innovative start-up that helps companies become peace-driven by measuring their impact across key social, economic, and organizational dimensions. Using our proprietary TP Index, we assess how businesses contribute to Positive Peace and identify areas for growth. We then support them in closing these gaps through tailored strategies that align purpose with performance. We believe peace is the next frontier for business growth—driving resilience, innovation, and long-term value. By embedding peace into their core, companies not only strengthen their operations and reputation, but also generate positive ripple effects across local communities and, ultimately, at a global scale.

Borderless Factory is a benefit corporation operating in the fields of strategy, communication, and learning, with a strong focus on social innovation and positive impact. The company designs and delivers services and products that combine digital experimentation, educational content, workshops, and community facilitation, with the goal of fostering participatory and collaborative learning processes. Within its internal “hub factory,” Borderless Factory hosts initiatives such as mentoring programs — for example, B. Gen, dedicated to young people under 30, offering selection and support often free of charge — as well as a variety of workshops and events aimed at the creative community. As a benefit corporation, Borderless Factory is committed to “giving back”: every year it devotes time, expertise, and resources to social causes, setting positive impact goals that go beyond profit.

8 Logistics

Duration: up to 3 hours

The workshop is designed to be delivered in a hybrid format, accommodating both in-person and online participation. Preferably, at least half of the participants would attend in person, to enhance interaction, group dynamics, and the effectiveness of collaborative activities.

9 Future outcomes

The workshop has the potential to evolve into a longer, structured program that fosters ongoing collaboration between companies and local communities, deepening Positive Peace initiatives. This could include a series of workshops connecting businesses and communities through co-design and dialogue.

Moreover, we envision offering a consultancy service to help companies integrate Positive Peace into their strategies, including measuring their impact using the TP Index. This service would support tailored assessments, co-creation of tools, and practical implementation to drive social impact.

Post-conference, a dedicated network could sustain collaboration, enabling participants to share best practices and launch new projects, turning workshop outputs into lasting social innovation and peacebuilding.

10 Positioning of the Workshop: novel initiative, part of a series, or embedded in a broader project

This workshop is part of a broader initiative led by Trending Peace. As part of our ongoing work, we engage with companies to assess their contribution to Positive Peace through a proprietary evaluation framework—the TP Index—which measures corporate practices across dimensions such as inclusion, resilience, social cohesion, and ethical governance.

The workshop represents both a stand-alone experience and a key element within a longer-term educational and consultancy pathway. We are currently developing a training program aimed at equipping companies with the knowledge, tools, and strategies needed to act as peace-building agents in their communities and sectors.

By offering this workshop at PDC, we aim to expand our participatory design approach, validate our tools in an international

setting, and foster new collaborations with designers, researchers, and practitioners working at the intersection of business, ethics, and social impact.

11 Min/max number of participants

- Participants: Minimum 12 – Maximum 30.
- Technical requirements: Participants are asked to bring their own devices (laptops or tablets).

12 Equipment and setup needs

- Flexible space with tables for group work and open collaboration
- Basic prototyping materials: sticky notes, markers, post-its, cardboard, pens
- Projector and screen for shared instructions and visual content
- Internet access for participants
- Access to power outlets for personal devices
- Participants will be asked to bring their own laptops or tablets (BYOD – Bring Your Own Device)

The Living Territory

Participatory Design as an Ecology of Regeneration

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Abstract

This workshop offers a practical immersion into Participatory Design understood as a regenerative, ecological, and political practice. In contexts marked by complexity, uncertainty, and socio-environmental tension, the workshop reframes design as a relational system capable of restoring connections between communities, territories, and more-than-human actors. Using a simulated coastal territory as a living case study, participants collaboratively map social and ecological dynamics, engage in speculative prototyping, and co-construct principles for territorial coexistence. Rather than positioning designers as solution providers, the workshop emphasizes their role as mediators of pluriversal ecosystems, fostering ethical reflection, collective intelligence, and regenerative action.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design; Human computer interaction (HCI); Interaction paradigms; Collaborative interaction; • **Social and professional topics** → Professional topics; Computing industry; Sustainability.

Keywords

Participatory Design, Regenerative Design, Territorial Governance, Coexistence, More-than-Human Design

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1 Description

This workshop offers a practical immersion into how Participatory Design, viewed through a regenerative lens, can address profound global transformations. In a context of complexity and uncertainty, design is explored as an ecological and political practice capable of restoring connections and fostering coexistence.

Using a simulated coastal territory as a living case study, participants collaboratively map social and ecological challenges, cultivate

an ecosystemic perspective, and prototype interventions to restore balance between communities and their environment. The session aims to equip participants with methods to collectively construct pathways toward territorial peace and conviviality.

The core objectives of the workshop are to:

- Explore participatory approaches for territorial regeneration across ecological, social, and cultural dimensions;
- Investigate design as a relational system in contexts of imbalance or conflict;
- Critically reflect on the designer's role as a mediator of pluriversal and more-than-human ecosystems;
- Foster knowledge exchange between researchers and practitioners;
- Co-construct principles for territorial coexistence.

2 Format, Methods, and Techniques

A 3-Hour In-Person Workshop for 8-30 Participants. This collaborative workshop frames Participatory Design as a collective immune system for socio-ecological territories - detecting imbalances and regenerating relationships between communities and their environments. Structured around the natural cycle of a living organism, the session unfolds through three phases:

In the Seed Phase, participants establish a shared coexistence agreement and perform a living reading of a simulated coastal territory. Using illustrative cards of human and more-than-human actors, they map systemic relationships and select territory-personas as narrative anchors.

During the Germination Phase, small groups co-create participatory action frameworks through speculative prototyping. This experimental stage emphasizes critical discussion about designing in contexts of imbalance, culminating in shared presentations and debate on the ethical coherence of each approach.

The workshop concludes with the Fruiting Phase, where collective insights are synthesized into a Map of Living Principles - a visual guide organized by roots (ethical foundations), stem (sustainable processes), and fruit (desired impacts) that consolidates emergent values and commitments.

Through collaborative mapping, persona construction, and speculative prototyping, participants will generate three key outcomes: a Map of Systemic Territorial Relationships, Experimental Participatory Frameworks, and the collective Map of Living Principles. These artifacts serve both as practical tools and as potential foundations for further research and publication, reinforcing Participatory Design's role as a political, ethical, and ecological practice.



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3 Participant Contribution Modalities

Participants will engage as co-learners and co-authors, contributing their experiences in territorial, ecological, and community-focused design. Through small-group collaboration, they will map systemic tensions, explore regenerative approaches, and co-create participatory frameworks for real or speculative challenges. The emphasis is on methodological experimentation and ethical, relational action rather than definitive solutions.

A critical reflection on the methodologies' potentials, limitations, and broader implications will underpin the work. The session will culminate in the collective construction of a principles-and-practices repertoire, to be systematized post-event. This output is intended to seed future collaborations and joint publications, fully acknowledging the co-authorship and collective intelligence generated by the workshop.

4 Relevance to Participatory Design and the Conference Theme

This workshop examines Participatory Design's role in territories facing profound social, environmental, and cultural shifts. It re-frames the territory as a living organism and design as a relational system for regeneration, recasting the designer from a solution-provider to an articulator of collaborative ecosystems. Participants will explore methods and sensibilities to strengthen participatory practices in contexts of tension and transition, expanding the field's repertoire and aligning it with agendas of care and sustainable coexistence.

Directly engaging with the PDC26 theme of Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence, the workshop positions Participatory Design as a tool for negotiating conflict and regenerating pressured territories. It highlights design's political and ecological dimensions by addressing urgent challenges like tourism impacts and climate transitions, ultimately working to build solidarities and imagine more-than-human futures.

5 Justification for Hosting at PDC

This workshop belongs at PDC26 because the conference serves as a unique convergence space for the Participatory Design community. As a long-standing forum for challenging the field's practices and epistemologies, PDC provides the ideal context to test and refine the regenerative approaches proposed here.

The workshop acts as a living laboratory, leveraging the diversity of participant perspectives to generate new methodological insights for design in contexts of conflict and transition. Its focus on coexistence and territorial negotiation directly contributes to the conference theme and expands the international community's repertoire. PDC's collaborative environment is optimal for fostering the co-learning, future collaborations, and global research networks this workshop aims to initiate.

6 Expected Outcomes for Participants

This workshop is designed to generate transformative outcomes across cognitive, practical, and relational dimensions. Participants will develop a systemic mindset, internalizing the practice of seeing territories as interconnected ecosystems and making the concept

of regenerative design tangible as strengthening a territory's innate capacity for self-renewal. They will also sharpen their critical perspective by learning to question not just the efficacy of participatory methods, but the power dynamics and types of knowledge they privilege.

Practically, participants will co-create a portfolio of emergent methodological practices and a collective Map of Living Principles to serve as an ethical compass for future projects. The collaboration will forge a qualified network of peers, while attitudinally fostering a profound trust in collective intelligence. Through role-playing non-human personas, they will cultivate expanded ecological empathy and embody the role of a designer-mediator.

For long-term impact, the workshop concludes with personal commitments to action, empowering participants as multipliers of its principles. Ultimately, it aims to initiate a sustained community of practice, ensuring the work continues to influence projects and foster collaboration beyond the event itself.

7 Workshop Positioning

This workshop builds upon the facilitator's ongoing research at the University of Aveiro on Participatory Design for Sustainable Tourism in coastal areas. It evolves from a prior experiment on stakeholder management by expanding its focus from mapping to active territorial regeneration, adopting a more open and ecological approach.

Positioned as an action-research laboratory, it facilitates a co-learning environment where participants and the facilitator jointly explore methodologies to redefine design's role in socio-ecological transitions. The goal is to enrich the discourse on Participatory Design and Regeneration while generating valuable insights for ongoing research and future collaborations.

8 Experience of the Organizers and Brief Biographies

Arthur Braga is a PhD candidate in Design at the University of Aveiro and a member of the ID+ Research Institute. His research explores participatory and service design approaches for tourism and territorial development, with practical experience facilitating co-creation workshops with communities, local governments, and international organizations in Portugal and Brazil.

Gonalo Gomes, Vice-Director of ID+ Aveiro and faculty member at the University of Aveiro since 2006, holds a PhD in Design. His work focuses on Participatory Design and Future Cultural Heritage, specializing in community co-construction of knowledge. He previously coordinated the ID+ DESIS Lab, advancing design-led social innovation through the international DESIS Network.

9 Future Outcomes of the Workshop

The workshop's outcomes will develop across three interconnected dimensions. Investigatively, the collaboratively produced materials - including the Map of Systemic Territorial Relationships, Experimental Participatory Frameworks, and Map of Living Principles - will be systematized to advance research in Participatory Design and territorial regeneration, leading to open-access publications

that acknowledge participant co-authorship. Educationally, the activity will strengthen professional networks and inspire new training initiatives and local projects based on the emergent learnings. Collaboratively, it aims to spark inter-institutional partnerships and foster an international network for testing participatory approaches, especially in vulnerable coastal ecosystems. Conceived as a catalyst rather than a singular event, the workshop is designed to generate lasting impact by informing future research, collaborations, and coexistence policies through collective intelligence and ethically-grounded design practice.

10 Material and Equipment Requirements

The workshop requires a spacious, flexible room with mobile furniture (tables and chairs) to facilitate group work and collaboration. Essential infrastructure includes:

- A projector or large screen.
- Whiteboards or flip charts.
- Walls or panels suitable for pinning collective maps and papers.

- Accessible power outlets and adequate lighting.
- A side area for material storage and photographic documentation.

All dynamic materials (post-its, cards, markers, paper) will be provided by the facilitator. Audiovisual recording is requested for documentation purposes, pending organizational approval.

Acknowledgments

Beyond the funding acknowledged above, this workshop was shaped by a broad body of scholarship in participatory design, design anthropology, commons and institutional thinking, and regenerative and political design. These works informed how we framed uncertainty and future-making, approached collective action and governance, and articulated care, interdependence, and socio-technical relations as practical concerns in the workshop design.

This work was supported by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P. by project reference UID/04057: Research Institute for Design, Media and Culture.

A Gendered Lens to Designing with Care to Recognise the 'Other'

Designing with Care

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Abstract

This workshop intends to repurpose the language arising from the experiences of 'care' (from a feminist perspective) as an agency to critically inform design research and practices that promote collaborative and bottom-up, citizen-centred practices at a societal level. This workshop will bring together participants from different backgrounds to reflect upon their experiences and perceptions of 'care' through participatory design methodologies to guide alternate design approaches characterized by citizen initiatives and participation elements. This co-created knowledge will contribute towards creating a conceptual framework that can extend beyond the workshop, one that is based on a flexible structure that (1) promotes social inclusion and collectiveness, rather than an individualistic and hierarchical structure; (2) generates human capacities guided by social values rather than economic interests; (3) increases society's engagement and its members' role in inclining towards participation and action; (4) encourages participants for further collaborations to foster informal horizontal productive models.

CCS Concepts

• **Applied computing** → Applied computing; Law, social and behavioral sciences; Applied computing; Arts and humanities; Language translation.

Keywords

Ethics of care, Gender, Inclusion, Pluriversal design, Design for autonomy

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1 Background

As Gilligan suggests, "The idea of care is an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world

by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone." [3]. Throughout her research, Gilligan established an important divergence between how women and men view moral problems. She identified the notion of 'care' from a women's perspective to be of a critical difference. Additionally, Ruddick argues how mothering contributes to both political and moral spheres and to what Noddings expands by stating that the sense of morality is constructed by justice and care while considering others' needs within specific contexts [5]. Mothering is integral to femininity. It impacts essential factors related to new and future generations, such as environmental, cultural, and political aspects; the connecting and nurturing action and mothering can shape and render a more appropriate role model for society to follow [6]. Therefore, understanding how care permeates the construction of social entities expands and enriches the social resources needed to build upon collectivity [3]. Moreover, Fisher and Tronto argue that caring is an essential aspect of everyday life and is necessary for the existence of human life [2]. Simultaneously, Escobar [1] argues that care within autonomous design praxis allows the creation of more just and sustainable forms of existing and relating since such autonomy possesses the potential to act as an agency and inform alternate design theories and practices.

2 Workshop Goals

We seek to explore how the ethics of care can be integrated into design processes to create more inclusive and empathetic solutions that cater to the needs and values of a wide range of individuals and communities. Through this workshop, we intend to discuss and deepen the interrelationship between care and design informed by the diverse perspectives and experiences of the participants. Simultaneously, we aim to delve into the ethics of care embedded within feminist principles, recognising it as a collective form of agency that can activate collaboration among citizens and embrace care as a foundational element that encourages bottom-up, decentralised initiatives at a local level. Recognising and examining such an approach, we hope to understand how to cultivate a more inclusive and participatory design process that reflects the diverse needs and values of the communities it serves (Figure 1).

This workshop aims to delve into the multifaceted concept of care, examining how it is perceived and experienced by participants at various scales: the individual (micro), community (meso), and global (macro) levels. Through the lens of feminist perspectives, the workshop seeks to evaluate the fundamental elements of care, including inclusion, respect, and alternative modes of thinking, collaborating, and designing, by exploring the "why," "how," and "what" of care, the workshop aims to develop a comprehensive

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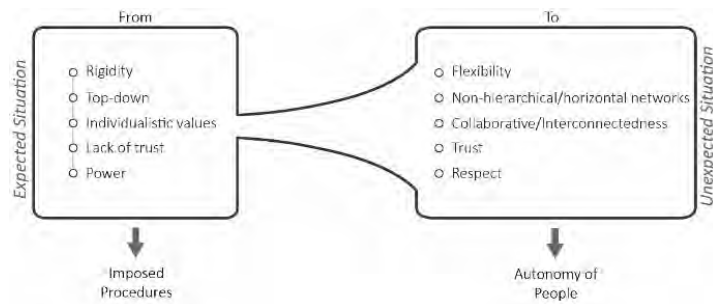


Figure 1: Care - From imposed procedures to the autonomy of people. Source: Authors.

understanding of care as a guiding principle in the design processes. Furthermore, the workshop intends to facilitate collaborative discussions to synthesise the emerging exploratory frames and develop a care framework that is informed by cultural similarities and differences, ultimately fostering agency among participants. This framework will serve as a catalyst for transitioning the ethics of care from a theoretical and philosophical domain to a more practical and action-oriented approach.

The knowledge co-created during the workshop will contribute to developing a conceptual framework that extends beyond the workshop itself. This framework will be characterised by its flexible structure, promoting social inclusion and collectiveness over individualistic and hierarchical structures. It will prioritise the generation of human capacities guided by social values rather than purely economic interests, aiming to increase society's engagement and the active role of its members in promoting participation and action. Additionally, the framework will encourage participants to engage in further collaborations, fostering informal, horizontal productive models. Ultimately, this comprehensive approach will contribute to and strengthen a broader discussion on the possibility of informing alternate design cultures from a feminist lens, paving the way for more equitable, empathetic, and sustainable design practices.

3 Proposed format and methods to structure the workshop

This workshop aims to employ participatory design methods to delve into the diverse meanings and understandings of care, specifically focusing on inclusion, participation, respect, and the reconstruction of the mesh of life [2, 4]. By centring on the concept of care and its association with feminine values, the workshop seeks to facilitate intercultural dialogue and prototype a more effective model for citizen participation through participatory, inclusive, and interactive design activities.

The workshop session will be structured into three parts (Figure 2). The first part will involve the introduction of participants and facilitators, followed by the formation of three groups representing different scales: individual level, community level and global level, with each group comprising an approximately equal number of participants. The second part will consist of a parallel session where each group will engage in discussions focused on the ethics

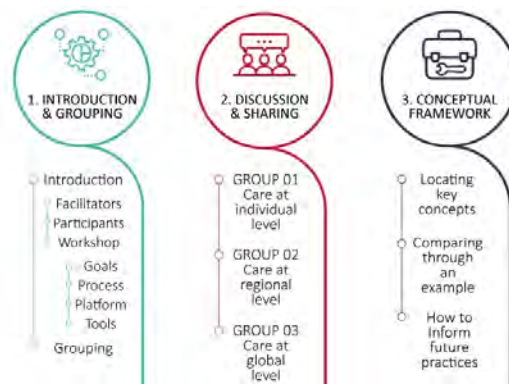


Figure 2: The structure of the workshop is divided into three sections. Source: Authors

of care within their respective scales. The third part will centre on a participatory activity, bringing the three groups and facilitators together for a collective session to compile a comprehensive list of key concepts identified in the first section of the workshop. This will be followed by a discussion emphasising the interdependencies and interconnections among the key concepts. Subsequently, participants will compare their findings with a pre-established example. The workshop will conclude with participants and facilitators sharing reflections on how the ethics of care can serve as an agency to inform future design practices and how this conceptual framework can address complex social issues.

4 Participants' Contribution

The active involvement and contributions of participants will be essential in shaping the outcomes of the workshop. We would like the participants to contribute as follows:

During the workshop:

Active participation by engaging in all the activities.

Sharing their expertise and insights through their diverse perspectives and experiences.

Collaborating and actively engaging with others, fostering an environment of mutual learning.

After the workshop:

Provide constructive feedback on the materials provided, examples presented, activities carried out, and workshop facilitation.

Applying the knowledge and insights gained into their respective fields of research and practice to disseminate our research work and interest.

Continue to network to foster a community of caring practice.

5 Relevance to PD Conference

The workshop has significant potential for connecting different participants with diverse perspectives and nationalities because every potential participant holds a unique understanding and application of the ethics of care that their culture and upbringing have informed. Hence, by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and regions, the workshop can serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and perspectives, fostering a rich tapestry of knowledge and insights. The participatory nature

of the workshop encourages active engagement, providing a space for individuals from various geographies to join, promoting cross-border collaboration that allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances inherent within the different contexts. Furthermore, the workshop's emphasis on care, inclusiveness, and openness aligns with fundamental principles of participatory design, which prioritise the involvement of diverse stakeholders in the design process. This alignment underscores the relevance of the workshop to the conference, as it exemplifies its potential to serve as a catalyst for collaboration and exchange. By highlighting the interconnectedness of such perspectives, we aim to contribute to the broader discourse on participatory design, emphasising its capacity to bridge and foster meaningful collaborations.

5.1 Importance of running the workshop at PD conference

Conducting the workshop at the Participatory Design Conference holds significant value as it enables us to connect with conference participants who share similar interests; these encompass diverse participatory methodologies and methods within vast domains, particularly social justice, and the inclusion of underrepresented groups in creative and design processes. The conference serves as a platform for networking with academic researchers, practitioners, and community members; by engaging with this audience, we can contribute to and benefit from the diverse perspectives and experiences from the attendees.

6 Expertise of the organisers in delivering the workshop

Krity Gera is a researcher and academic with her interests in code-signing with / for marginalised communities. In her research and practice, she adopts feminist philosophies to explore hidden meanings within the context of everyday to inform existing design practices with a pluriversal framework. Being passionate about equitable urban mobility futures, Krity actively works in collaboration with the local governments and NGOs to engage with residents and vulnerable communities through creative placemaking approaches. Krity is working at the Royal College of Art as Assistant Professor.

Andrea Navarrete Rigo is a Mexican researcher and designer passionate about the transformative potential of design agency and autonomy as foundational principles for post-development understanding. Her work is guided by the principles of the pluriverse, embracing diverse worldviews and perspectives. Within these overarching themes, the ethics of care play a pivotal role in sustaining and nurturing such practices. Andrea brings a wealth of experience, having designed and facilitated workshops for over a decade, honing her expertise in creating engaging and impactful learning experiences.

In collaboration, Krity and Andrea have led the facilitation of workshops focused on the intersection of ethics of care, design, gender, and agency. These workshops were conducted as part of the DRS 2022 and IASDR 2021 conferences, providing a platform for participants to explore and engage with these critical topics.

7 Workshop duration and format

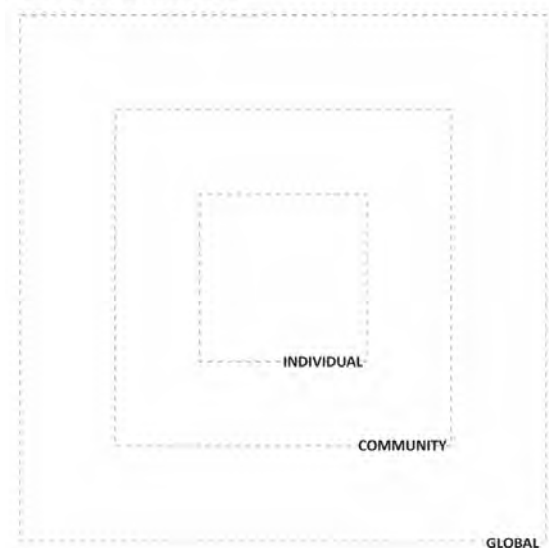
The workshop is scheduled to be an in-person event, lasting for half a day with a total duration of 3.5 hours. The following table

provides a detailed breakdown of the workshop schedule, including the specific activities for each section.

8 Number of participants, recruitment plan and workshop format

To participate in this workshop, facilitators are seeking engaged individuals who share academic or professional interests and are involved in research related to a range of areas, including but not limited to gender studies, design justice, ethics of care, social design, post-modern and future design practices, participatory design, design as an agency, decolonising design, capacity and community building, and design for policy and governance. There are no specific gender or age requirements for attending the workshop. To ensure a diverse and inclusive group, facilitators will actively promote the workshop through various online and offline channels and platforms, aiming to reach academics and researchers from a wide array of disciplines, as well as individuals from NGOs, government institutions, practitioners, and participants of the Participatory Design Conference. The recruitment period will run from the beginning of June until the end of July. Those who are interested in joining the workshop will be asked to submit a short text (100 words) or a visual representation (such as a sketch or illustration) using the template below (Figure 3), addressing the question: What is care for me at individual, community and global levels?

'Care' at different scales



Additionally, prior to the workshop, facilitators will provide reference material to the registered participants: an explanation of how to use the workshop materials and tools, and a short presentation describing appropriate examples of citizen-led projects to understand the expectations and possible workshop outcomes. The workshop expects a minimum of 12 participants and a maximum of 24.

9 Planned outcomes of the session

It is expected to identify practical and theoretical approaches that offer alternative perspectives and actions towards challenging and complex phenomena, known as "wicked problems," and "polycrisis", which significantly disrupt humans and non-humans. We argue

Table 1: Description of the workshop activities

TOPIC	ACTIVITIES	METHODS	TIME
1. Introduction & getting familiar	Introduction of participants and facilitators Establishing the goals of the workshop and working process Getting familiar with the tools	Group activity Facilitators' presentation Facilitators' presentation	15min
2. Groups discussion	Group 1 Care perceived from an individual level Group 2 Care perceived from a community level Group 3 Care perceived from a global level	Group activity	30 min
3. Group activity	Putting together thoughts on care at three different levels, by each group respectively.	Group activity	15 min
B R E A K 10 min			
4. Collaborative activity with all groups	Finding interdependencies and interconnections across the three scales Clustering ideas – Categorizing and subcategorizing themes	Cognitive mapping – to structure the findings Mind mapping – to organize the themes	30 min
5. Discussion and reflection	Three representatives lead the discussion highlighting the main themes/elements. Identify key concepts for the development of the framework	Collaborative group discussion Word clouds – to arrange content	20 min 20 min
B R E A K 10 min			
6. Developing the conceptual framework	Giving shape to the framework based on the past activities	Collaborative group discussion	30 min
7. Conclusions	Reflect on how the conceptual framework could be further developed	Collaborative group discussion	30 min
TOTAL TIME 3.5 HOURS			

that such issues could be better understood and managed through networks of relationships guided by the ethics of care. The ultimate goal of the workshop is to establish a shared understanding of care instruments, culminating in developing a conceptual framework that can be applied in complex scenarios through citizen-led and bottom-up participatory initiatives. This framework will encompass critical elements such as inclusion, respect, participation, informality, and non-hierarchical networks as agents of alternative practices and design theories. It will seek to understand care within a matristic culture, as well as the significance of collaborative and participatory initiatives at different levels. In addition to identifying critical elements to inform design's agency, the conceptual framework aims to recognise the interconnected relationships between these elements and provide flexibility for adaptation within different contexts extending beyond the workshop's scope.

The outcomes of the workshop, including the development of the intended framework, will be translated into various research outputs, such as a journal publication (CoDesign and / or International Journal of Design) and a potential podcast episode. To further the research, the organisers plan to seek future research grants focusing on communities and practices of care to support ongoing exploration and application of the framework.

10 Specific equipment and set-up required for the workshop

As the workshop will be conducted in-person, we will need a projector for an introductory presentation, one white board and 9 white board markers (black, red and blue colour – 3 each) for discussions. Regarding the space, we require a room that can accommodate up to 24 participants to form three separate groups for discussions and collaborative mind map creation. It is essential that the room layout allows for flexible furniture arrangements, enabling us to easily group and regroup participants based on the planned activities.

Acknowledgments

The workshop organisers would like to thank the School of Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University for providing support to develop this workshop. The organisers are also grateful to the participants of their previous workshops for their active participations and contributions.

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Beyond SDG's: Pluriversal Interspecies Council for Post-Development Futures

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Abstract

This workshop offers a radical participatory space to rethink the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as colonial artifacts and to co-create principles for post-development (Escobar, 2018) that weave perspectives from the Global North and South. Starting from a recognition of damage, as the harm that modernity and development have caused to territories, species, and ways of living, we invite participants to map what has been lost or silenced in the pursuit of progress and to imagine tentacular futures (Haraway, 2016): futures grounded in interdependence, care, and coexistence. Rather than producing new measurable goals, participants will co-create vital commitments: principles, manifestos, and modes of coexistence, rooted in epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2014), Buen Vivir (Acosta, 2013), pluriversal thinking (Escobar, 2018), and more-than-human relations.

Keywords

Post-development, Participatory Design, Pluriversal Design, More-than-Human, Interspecies Council, North-South Dialogue, Ecosocial Transitions

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1 DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME AND GOALS

Through a performative *Pluriversal Interspecies Council*, we connect Colombia and Italy as examples of North–South entanglement, holding contrast (urban/rural, centre/margin, human/non-human) as a source of empathy and mutual learning. Participants, aided by roleplay cards, will embody different perspectives (e.g., river, forest, mountain, local government, migrants, Indigenous community) and deliberate collectively on harms produced by “development” in governance, labour, and everyday life. Thereafter, they negotiate

principles of coexistence and care reconciling human/non-human and northern/southern perspectives.

Inspired by Donna Haraway's call to stay with the trouble, the Council embraces non-utopian, “*damaged*” futures (futures where harm is acknowledged) and “response-abilities” (a collective, situated obligation to respond to the entangled world, radically distinct from the atomized, individual responsibility of liberal ethics) are nurtured, fostering a collective ongoing “praxis of care” (Haraway, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). The session opens and closes with a short ritual that unsettles conventional designerly hierarchies and foregrounds relational accountability. Expected outputs include speculative principles for conviviality (Illich, 1973) and a brief *Statement from the Interspecies Council*: a collective commitment (between Colombia and Italy) to coexistence and response-ability beyond development.

Goals:

1. **Name and map situated harms** of modernity/development across Colombia–Italy contexts, moving beyond product critique to policies, institutions, and everyday practices.
2. **Prototype principles and commitments** (instead of ‘targets’) for human and more-than-human coexistence, as an insurgent alternative to goal-driven frameworks.
3. **Practice democratic imagination** through an Interspecies Council, exploring forms of non-formal, interspecies democracy for ecosocial transitions.
4. **Build empathy across differences** (South–North, human–more-than-human) and rehearse cosmopolitan localism as a method for transcontextual dialogue.
5. **Familiarise participants with post-development and Global South thinking**, its critiques of modernity/‘development’, its pluriversal ethics of care, and its relevance for participatory design practice.

2 PROPOSED FORMAT, METHODS, TECHNIQUES

2.1 Format overview

Three hours, in-person, highly interactive. A Pluriversal Interspecies Council structured as a time-boxed civic assembly. Participants rotate through human and more-than-human roles to map harm/care, deliberate, and prototype principles for coexistence plus a short Council Statement (a lightweight speculative prop).



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2.2 Methods & techniques (post-development, more-than-human, non-utopian (damaged) futures)

- **Harm→Care Mapping.** A lightweight, systemic mapping that moves beyond objects to services, policies, governance and everyday norms.
- **Role cards (archetypes/user persona).** Short, situated briefs (river, forest, mountain; Indigenous community, local government, migrants/diaspora, youth, informal workers). Each card includes anhelos/dreams, pains/harms, situated rights/responsibilities and a time horizon.
- **Council protocol (non-formal democracy).** Rounds with a talking piece, turn-taking, role rotation and a brief harm-care stress test for any proposed principle (Who/what still gets harmed? How does care become infrastructural?).
- **Rituals of opening/closing.** Short, gestures (collective breath + “siembra”/sowing gesture using seed-paper commitment slips) to foreground relational accountability.

3 PARTICIPANT CONTRIBUTION MODALITIES

Who contributes: Designers, community organizers, students, researchers, public officials, activists, and practitioners from the Global North and South. No prior expertise in post-development is required; lived experience is welcomed as knowledge.

Before the workshop (optional, ≤5 minutes): Participants are invited (optionally) to *bring a small everyday object*, such as a transport ticket, ID card, utility bill, or worn-out tool, as a portal to reflect on harm and adaptation: What have you had to leave behind to fit into “development”? These objects form the initial shared landscape of damage, placed at the center of the space as silent witnesses.

In the room (multiple ways of contributing): *Speaking & listening* in the Council rounds (with turn-taking and a talking piece). *Mapping or drawing* on Harm→Care maps and the Principles Charter. *Role-play via role cards* (river, forest, mountain; Indigenous community, migrants/diaspora, local government, youth, informal workers). *Speculative making:* co-create a lightweight prop. *Ritual gestures:* join (or pass) in opening/closing practices (e.g., seed-paper “siembra”).

What participants provide: *Situated examples of harm and care practices* from their places, institutions, or communities. Draft principles of coexistence and a short Council Statement.

After the workshop (optional): In closing, the daily life of objects remains in place, but beside them participants are offered seed-paper commitment slips onto which they can write a principle or promise that emerged from the Council. Together, we perform a *collective “siembra”* (sowing gesture), placing or scattering these slips among the objects, symbolically *planting future care* amidst past harms.

Following the session: Participants will be invited to join a *short online edit window* to refine the shared Principles Charter and Council Statement. Those who contribute will be *credited as co-authors*, and the final outcomes will be published on Pluriversa’s public website and social media platforms, with open access for replication and further dialogue.

4 RELEVANCE TO PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND THE CONFERENCE THEME

By convening a Pluriversal Interspecies Council, we rehearse forms of non-formal, interspecies democracy that surface conflict and care together, acknowledging harm while co-creating principles for cohabitation. The North–South dialogue enacts cosmopolitan localism: difference is treated as a generator of empathy and translation (via paired Colombia↔Italy prompts), rather than a barrier, directly engaging the conference emphasis on peace, dialogue, and designing for living together.

For the Participatory Design (PD) community, the workshop extends PD’s democratic lineage in three ways. First, it shifts from ‘problem-solving’ to post-development world-making, inviting participants to examine what ‘development’ has made us leave behind and to prototype principle-based commitments instead of targets. Second, it widens the circle of stakeholders through role-based participation for rivers, forests, Indigenous guardians, migrants, and public officials, broadening PD beyond human-centred framings to more-than-human participation. Third, it integrates rituals and harm→care mapping as legitimate design techniques, foregrounding situated ethics, embodiment, and accountability; dimensions often sidelined in workshop culture.

Our workshop tackles coexistence and conflict transformation through pluriversal, more-than-human participation aligned with climate democracy, contributing a rigorous, practice-ready pathway for PD to engage peace, dialogue, and coexistence as ongoing, situated negotiations.

5 JUSTIFICATION FOR HOLDING THE WORKSHOP AT PDC

PDC is the right venue (and 2026 the right moment) to stage a Pluriversal Interspecies Council. With less than four years to 2030, it is widely acknowledged that many SDG targets are off-track, uneven, or even regressing. Beyond missed timelines, the SDGs’ embedding in a development logic has also produced unintended harms—metric-driven governance, technocratic fixes, and the marginalization of situated, plural ways of living well. Participatory Design needs spaces that face harm head-on and rehearse coexistence, rather than re-packaging targets. The PD community already experiments with democratic participation in public institutions, studios, and grassroots settings. Our workshop extends that lineage by operationalizing post-development in practice, aligned with the conference’s emphasis on peace, dialogue, and living together.

6 EXPECTED TAKEAWAYS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- **Conceptual shifts.** A clear, practice-grounded grasp of post-development and Global South thinking (why principles (not targets) matter), cosmopolitan localism (Colombia↔Italy participation), and more-than-human / interspecies democracy, framed by staying with the trouble.
- **Tangible artefacts.** Each table’s Principles Charter, a short Council Statement, plus acknowledgement in the post-event digital publication.
- **Personal reflection and empathy.** A written response to “What did you have to leave behind to fit into ‘development’?”

and cross-context analogues that deepen empathy across North–South and human–more-than-human differences.

7 POSITIONING OF THE WORKSHOP: NOVEL INITIATIVE, PART OF A SERIES, OR EMBEDDED IN A BROADER PROJECT

This is a new iteration of an evolving Pluriversal Assemblies (Juntanza Pluriversal) series by Pluriversa (its first Europe-based edition). It takes advantage of prior experiments in Colombia (youth foresight and peace education labs in Medellín; the future of right-of-nature assemblies) into a concise, workshop-ready format. The workshop is embedded in Pluriversa's longer-term purpose on Designing Ecosocial Transitions, which develops open tools for plural, situated democracies. Post-PDC we will: (i) host a brief online refinement session; and (ii) publish a post-event digital zine crediting contributors.

8 MIN/MAX NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- **Minimum:** 16 (4 tables × 4 roles to ensure human/more-than-human diversity)
- **Maximum:** 30 (6 tables × 5 participants)
- **Preferred operating range:** 24–30 for optimal deliberation and facilitation flow.

9 ORGANIZERS' EXPERTISE AND SHORT BIO

Daniela Montenegro - *Pluriversa*

Colombian Strategic Designer working across service design, social innovation, and systemic transformation. M.Sc. in Product–Service Design from Politecnico di Milano; her work focuses on participatory research, co-design methodologies, and the creation of tools that enable communities and organisations to collaboratively address complex challenges.

Her practice spans qualitative research, stakeholder engagement, workshop facilitation, and interdisciplinary collaboration within EU-funded projects and international partnerships across Europe and Latin America. She applies design as a driver for collective intelligence, public value, and organisational learning.

As a facilitator and systemic thinker, she is interested in how design can cultivate agency, foster meaningful participation, and shape resilient innovation ecosystems.

Ivan Peñaranda - *Pluriversa* – *Bitmama Reply* Colombian Service and Experience Designer with an M.Sc. in Product–Service System Design from Politecnico di Milano. His design perspective is shaped by a strong interest in how ethics, interdependence, and alternative worldviews can inform more respectful and plural ways of designing and living together.

He works across strategic, service, and experience design, facilitating innovation processes in complex environments for both private organizations and non-profit contexts. His projects span industries such as healthcare, education, and energy, combining strategic foresight with hands-on design to shape meaningful experiences and foster collaboration.

Guided by curiosity and a deep connection with nature, he draws inspiration from the living world as a source for creative, ethical, and grounded design practice.

Miguel Bello - *Pluriversa* Colombian designer with more than 18 years of experience at the intersection of design, technology, and social change. M.Sc. in Product–Service–System Design from Politecnico di Milano; his work focuses on the ecosocial transition in Latin America and on exploring alternatives to development (post-development).

His design approach encompasses sustainable business strategy, futures thinking, systems thinking, design transitions, and, more recently, design in permaculture.

As Director of Pluriversa, a member of the board of directors of Fundación TerritoriA, and Professor of Strategic Design and Innovation at the Pontifical Bolivarian University, he is interested in enriching the ecosocial impact of design, emphasising regeneration, social justice, and adaptability to emerging technologies.

10 DURATION AND MODALITY

Duration: 3 hours (180 minutes), time-boxed. **Modality:** Offline / in-person only. (Optional post-event online edit window)

11 FUTURE OUTCOMES (E.G. PUBLICATION, PROPOSALS, EXHIBITIONS, COLLABORATIONS)

- **Twin-site comparative edition (Milan ↔ Colombia).** We will run the same workshop in Colombia with local partners, using the identical templates and protocol to enable comparison. A cross-site synthesis will be produced.
- **Open publication on pluriversa.org.** A bilingual (EN/ES) online publication integrating results from both sites (Principles Charters, Council Statements) plus a concise methodological note on pluriversal/interspecies assemblies.
- **Open tools.** Downloadable micro-assembly kit (Harm→Care map, role cards, charter templates, ritual cues) under a CC licence to support replication.

12 EQUIPMENT AND SETUP NEEDS

Room & layout:

One step-free room with movable tables/chairs (4–6 tables; 24–30 seats); Wall space to tape A3 sheets; Projector/screen.

Prints (we can supply files; venue prints if possible): A3 Harm→Care map × 1 per table; A3 Principles Charter × 1 per table; Role-card packs × 1 per table; A4 Council Statement sheets (a few).

Stationery (basic): Markers, pens, Post-its, masking tape/Blu-Tack, dot stickers, scissors; Name badges.

We will bring: Digital templates (USB), ritual cues, consent/photo opt-in sheet, spare objects for the icebreaker.

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More-Than-Human and Long-Term Living Together

Designing peaceful and inclusive interactions

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Abstract

Designing for living together requires going beyond an anthropocentric (Human-Centered) view to a more-than-human approach that considers all living stakeholders as well as technologies, policies and other kinds of agents. It also requires going beyond the extent of discrete projects, that often produce short-term benefits for some organizations without installing long-term benefits for communities, towards ensuring long-term participation and sustained impact. For this necessary paradigm shift, we propose a design methodology – product of our previous research and practical experience – to be tested and iterated via this workshop together with all participants.

CCS Concepts

• Life-Centered Design; • More-than-human; • Social Innovation; • Stakeholder governance.;

Keywords

Strategic Design, Design for Sustainability, More-Than-Human, Life-Centered Design

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1 DESCRIPTION OF THE THEME AND GOALS

We understand the relationship between environmental crises, social crises, and conflicts [2–4, 7, 8, 10]. Thus, the essential themes in our workshop are: (1) the importance of including more-than-human perspectives – such as those of Nature’s stakeholders [1, 5] or even technological agents – when addressing participatory design for conflict resolution and prevention, and (2) infrastructuring long-term impact beyond discrete projects [6, 9].



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The objectives of our workshop are: (1) **test** the methodology “Designing more-than-human living together” with the community, putting it into collective practice and collecting impressions and insights from the participants’ experiences; (2) **co-produce** an improved framework together with the participants, by applying it to specific hands-on cases and redefining it throughout this collective action; and (3) **raise key questions** regarding the methods for including more-than-human perspectives in the design processes of our century.

2 PROPOSED FORMAT, METHODS, TECHNIQUES

A participatory format is proposed, where assistants will be engaging in the following activities:

2.1 Introduction

The workshop will start with an introduction to the design methodology. It has certain transversal characteristics, such as an approach across time (from the past to the future), and an ethic principle for prioritizing living agents (communities, living beings, ecosystems...) before artificial agents (products, organizations...); and three distinct phases:

1. Field of conflict. Understanding stakeholders’ complexity, and attuning. We propose here a tool of our own, called “Mapping more-than-human stakeholders”, which opens the understanding of every kind of stakeholder as “agents”, be they human individuals, organizations, technologies or other living beings and living ecosystems. Agents can also be grouped. For example, a business would be a “group agent” encompassing “individual agents” like workers, products that the business offers, and others; a living ecosystem is a group agent compounded by multiple living beings as individual agents. The relationships between agents are also drawn in the canvas of this tool, via lines, arrows, and notes.

2. Seeding. Co-designing shared vision, distributed agency and strategies for living together. The tool “Strategizing more-than-human agents and interactions” redefines the anthropocentric and even customer-centric design thinking tools “empathy map” and “value proposition map”, to leave space for other types of stakeholders. It also goes beyond the distinction between “recipient” (or beneficiary, or client) and “deliverer” (usually, the organization offering a product or service): all of them are “agents”, in the sense that was defined for the previous phase. Instead of focusing

on client- or user-specific aspects (as “empathy map” often does) or aspects that are specific of products and businesses (as “value proposition map” does), our tool focuses on aspects such as values (usually, we associate values with humans, but technological agents have embedded values as well), behaviour or language (humans have what we often understand as language, but living beings and technologies also have their languages). This way, we can understand stakeholders’ motivations and the interactions between them in a more flexible and less transactional manner.

3. Flourishing. Co-implementing solutions, understood as new stakeholders or ‘agents’ (or relationships between agents) that are integrated into the system, validated and iterated. The tool “Blueprint for living together” works as a roadmap, facilitating drawing different scenarios across time towards the desired one; this is, to draw transition, for constantly implementing, testing and iterating it.

At the same time as we introduce the methodology, several key questions will be raised for participants to position themselves among different options, and to provide their insights from experience. This way, we intend to facilitate attuning among the workshop participants, before jumping into the hands-on activities. This whole first stage of the workshop is meant to last around 30 minutes.

2.2 Using and testing the methodology

The core and longest stage of the workshop (1h 30min) is focused on using the design methodology for the questions that matter to the participants. Teams of 2 to 5 people will be created based on previous attuning (and depending on number of participants): each team will decide what their initial field of conflict or challenge is that they want to address. Challenges that have a link with their personal experiences will be encouraged.

Then, participant teams will test the methodology for their contexts, using it to design more-than-human and long-term strategies for peaceful and inclusive living together through the three phases of the methodology “1. Field of conflict”, “2. Seeding” and “3. Flourishing”. Participants will have canvases especially printed for them, post-its and other physical materials for creative collaboration.

2.3 Sharing

The workshop ends with participants sharing, for 30 minutes, their results and their insights from the process with the methodology. There will be a space for participants to exchange their contacts and concerns, with the aim of nurturing future collaborations on the topic.

3 PARTICIPANTS: NUMBER, CONTRIBUTION MODALITIES, DURATION AND EXPECTED TAKEAWAYS

Participants will be **active co-creators**, contributing with their lived experience, professional insights, and creative exploration during the process encompassing group discussions, co-creative and prototyping exercises, and final sharing. The **number of participants** for the workshop can be estimated between a minimum of 5 participants and a maximum of 35 participants. The **duration**

of the workshop will be 2.5h (two hours and a half), in offline modality (in person).

Participants can expect the following **takeaways**: (1) learning and using an advance design framework that helps them visualize and activate more-than-human governance; (2) creating a novel prototype of strategy for more-than-human participation adapted to their own communities or contexts; (3) deepening in collective reflections about power, inclusion and peacebuilding; and (4) developing network connections and seeds for future collaborations in research and practical initiatives.

4 RELEVANCE TO PARTICIPATORY DESIGN AND THE CONFERENCE THEME, AND JUSTIFICATION FOR HOLDING THE WORKSHOP AT PDC

This workshop directly aligns with the core PDC26 theme “Designing for living together” by introducing the perspectives of more-than-human agents (e.g. other living beings and technological agents such as AI) into the participatory design process, to tackle the major crises of our time.

PDC’s interdisciplinary, global community and focus on social transformation by means of Participatory Design provides the ideal setting to engage diverse stakeholders in co-creating insights for more-than-human and long-term infrastructured participation. The workshop supports PDC’s mission to catalyze research toward shared futures of coexistence.

5 POSITIONING THE WORKSHOP AND FUTURE OUTCOMES

This workshop is part of broader research focused on design for peacebuilding and inclusion, featuring a complementary exploratory paper for this Conference. This piece of research is embedded in a doctoral thesis, whose main theme is Strategic Design for Sustainability Transitions, understanding Sustainability from a complex lens that considers governance, economic, social, and environmental factors.

The results from the workshop will expand the exploratory paper that we have proposed for the Conference, with the expectation of publishing a future journal paper that will contribute with a comprehensive methodological framework meant to Design for living together. The workshop is meant to stimulate ongoing collective research and potentially nurture future collaborations and project proposals together with the participant community.

6 ORGANIZERS EXPERTISE AND SHORT BIO

Pedro Sáez Martínez is a strategic designer, facilitator, project leader, researcher, and educator whose practice focuses on transformative methodologies for sustainability and social impact. He drives projects that require multilevel collaborations — such as Center for Digital Technology and Management, BIO LAB, and regional sustainability cluster SECMACV — bridging cross-sector innovation to achieve real-world transitions.

Begoña Sáiz Mauleón mentors the Spontaneous Generation — YUDesign group at Universitat Politècnica de València, connecting industrial design education with social transformation. Through

participatory and sustainability-centered practice, as well as Cooperation for Development, she helps students grow individually and collectively, fostering diverse and inclusive creative ecosystems.

Jimena González-del Río Cogorno's career combines design practice with deep reflection on its role as a tool for social transformation. At the Graphic Technologies Research Center, she focuses on design and visual communication, addressing issues such as sustainability in corporate identity and packaging, inclusive signage, participatory design, and typography as a means of cultural expression.

7 EQUIPMENT AND SETUP NEEDS

Room with flexible seating, tables or surfaces for group work, post-its, markers, large paper, projection capabilities (ideal but not completely necessary). If needed, some materials can be provided by the authors of the workshop: post-its, markers, and large paper. The organizers of the workshop will provide visual materials that are specific to the workshop and the design methodology that is proposed.

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Exploring the Entanglement of Participatory Design, Spatiality and Place

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, Participatory Design (PD) has expanded its scope towards the democratisation of design in diverse settings, embracing the entanglements of humans and non-humans in socio-material arrangements. Despite the foregrounding of relations in these entanglements, little attention has been given to what role spatiality and places may have in PD. This workshop explores the entanglement of participatory design, spatiality, technologies and places based on design cases from participants. Using a design charette methodology, participants will collaboratively (1) map how participatory entanglements shape and are shaped by design research and practice; (2) identify and unpack disciplinary tensions and opportunities; and (3) co-create a vision and action plan for bridging silos and fostering collaboration across disciplines. The aim is to build an interdisciplinary understanding of the intimate entanglement of humans and non-humans, spatiality and places in the complex social-material arrangements we engage with in PD.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

Keywords

Participatory Design, Entanglement theories, Place, Place theory, Assemblage theory

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1 Introduction

Over the last two decades Participatory Design (PD) has expanded its scope towards the democratisation of design in diverse settings, and research is entering a fourth wave characterized by an “increasingly intimate entanglement of humans and digital technology” ([13], p2). However, little attention has been paid to the spatial

dimensions of these entanglements, a concern long shared in architecture and urban planning. The concepts of context, space, and place often overlap, and the terms space and place are frequently used interchangeably [15], a result of shifts in spatial theory during the late 20th century [20] that influenced a range of disciplines from architecture, urban planning and social psychology to ICT.

This workshop explores renewed perspectives on *space* and *place* and their intersections with technology in PD. We identify three shifts that challenge the role of PD in complex socio-material settings. *First*, design has moved from bounded contexts to open, multi-stakeholder settings, expanding PD’s focus from “democracy at work” to broader citizenship and public engagement [2]. Influenced by STS and ANT, design now addresses socio-material assemblages of human and non-human actors [3, 12, 18]. *Second*, following Star and Ruhleder [22, 23] and Bowker’s [5] idea of *infrastructural inversion*, attention has shifted from people and artefacts to the infrastructures that connect them, emphasizing relational dynamics and non-human actants. *Third*, agency is now viewed as distributed across humans and non-humans, informing more-than-human design [1, 14, 19]. From a cross-disciplinary perspective, Clarke et al. [6] discuss the entanglements of human and non-human worlds to counter narratives of human privilege in the urban environment. Similarly, Whatmore [24, 25] argues that the creativity of cultural geography is generated through enduring preoccupations with the processes and excesses of ‘livingness’ in a more-than-human world. Entanglement theories [13, 21] further develop this relational ontology, drawing on ANT, post-phenomenology, mediation theory, and new materialism. These ideas have shaped PD concepts such as infrastructuring [17], design things [12], institutioning [16], agonistic PD [4], and design as democratic inquiry [9].

Our entanglement with human and non-human elements unfolds continuously across time and space, opening up for an ontological basis for PD that links technology, society, and the spatial. Recent “place thinking” provides such grounding. For example, Kim Dovey’s concept of *place-as-assemblage* [10, 11], drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s [8] and DeLanda’s [7] assemblage theory, aligns with the expanded scope of PD described above. Dovey describes assemblage as a dynamic “layout” or “alignment” involving both process and spatial form. An assemblage’s properties emerge from interactions among contingent parts—for example, buildings, trees, people, and signs forming a street. As these elements change, places remain fluid and continually in the process of becoming [10, 11].



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2 Purpose

With the expanded perspectives and scope for design and design research suggested above, there is room for development in our approaches to place and spatiality embracing non-human actors, distribution of agency, and the dynamics of relationality in PD. In this workshop, we propose to take the idea of place-as assemblage as a starting point to discuss how we could reinvigorate a concern for spaces and places to better understand the intimate entanglement of humans and non-humans in complex social-material arrangements. We would like to discuss the impacts of the expanded scope in PD described above on how we understand and engage technologies, place and spatiality in design, and how the entanglements of relations in places of design, shape and are shaped by the socio-material arrangements that we design within. The workshop's goal is to be open to and inclusive of a vast diversity of perspectives and insights originating in disciplinary differences as well as in different fields of engagement. Therefore, contributions from disciplines to be included in the workshop may span the varied fields of PD, interaction design, service design, architecture and urban design.

We aim to bring together participants with different disciplinary backgrounds to debate and pinpoint the cross disciplinary entanglements. As an example of the type of cases we have in mind, one author has applied place theory from cultural geography in studying a youth café initiative in a socially challenged suburb of a city in the Global South to foster youth social development, counter gang influence, and reduce unemployment by improving job readiness. Another author has investigated bottom-up planning and design approaches in informal settlements where communities supported by diverse institutional actors drove and enacted the construction of their area and, ultimately, their place. A third author studied the place-ness of design studio activities, suggesting that the studio as a place co-evolve as design processes unfold. Participants are asked to prepare a A3 poster for the workshop, presenting a design case, the participant has been engaged with, and pointing to what perspectives and insights have been pursued when addressing issues of place and spatiality.

3 Activities

3.1 Overview

This hands-on workshop will explore participatory design (PD) at the intersections of place, technology, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Using a design charrette methodology, participants will collaboratively: (1) Map how participatory entanglements shape and are shaped by design research and practice (with participant case studies); (2) Identify and unpack cross-disciplinary tensions and opportunities through an exploratory exercise focusing on cross-disciplinary entanglement; and (3) Co-create a vision and action plan for bridging silos and fostering collaboration across disciplines. Through hands-on activities, participants will engage in relational mapping and co-design exercises to generate insights and concrete strategies for interdisciplinary engagement.

3.2 Structure & activities (3 hours total)

Envisioning a maximum of 20 participant in groups of 5 people, we will encourage disciplinary diversity among groups.

Introduction (10 min)

- Facilitators detail the objectives, structure and activities of the session.
- Setting the Stage: PD & the Entanglement of Place, Technology, and Design - framing of the workshop

Case study discussion (30min)

- Participants introductions in their groups (5min)
- Walkabout to see case study posters [or small group discussion on posters depending on the notice participants have to prepare these before the conference] (25min)

Mapping of entanglement by identifying opportunities and challenges (90min) – facilitators guide the steps

- Groups discuss and collaborate to create a concept map of the entanglement found through the case study walkabout (members are encouraged to discuss their case studies)
- Identify common elements, the disciplines, key actors (human & non-human), technologies, places, and socio material forces
- Draw connections between these elements, considering power dynamics, agency, and interdependencies
- Annotate tensions, blind spots, or disciplinary assumptions
- Explore challenges and opportunities of these entanglements. Participants write these on Post-it notes
- Each group presents their analysis

Co-creating the vision and plan (35min)

- Group members move to new tables to create a vision and a concrete plan for fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and define next steps, potential partnerships, and future research questions. This activity should respond to the challenges and opportunities identified in the previous section (30 min)
- A whole-group discussion about the entanglement led by the facilitators while developing a summary map based on participants insights - all concept maps are pinned to walls for this activity (20)

Reflection and next steps (10 min)

- Facilitators summarise the visions and action plans (5min)

Participants write down one commitment (5min).

- This can be e.g., reaching out to another field, exploring a new theory, applying PD in a new way).

4 Application to the workshop

To apply for the workshop, please send a one-page abstract to on or before 31 March 2026, briefly describing the case you bring to the workshop and the perspectives and insights that have been pursued when addressing issues of place and spatiality.

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Prototyping Place-based Pathways towards Peace Cultivating Change through Counterstorying

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CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

Keywords

place-based design, counter-storytelling, participatory changemaking scaling, feminist pragmatism, relational design

ACM Reference Format:

Danielle Lake and Sandy Marshall. 2026. Prototyping Place-based Pathways towards Peace Cultivating Change through Counterstorying. In *Participatory Design Conference 2026, Vol. 3: Workshops, Situated Actions, and PDC Places (PDC 2026 Vol. 3), June 15–19, 2026, Milan, Italy*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 3 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3789493.3797301>

1 WORKSHOP VISION AND GOALS

This workshop builds on PDC’s 2026 call to reimagine peace as a process, not a product; it is an invitation to explore plural pathways towards peace through 1) community-led counterstorying [1-2], 2) relational, place-based design thinking [3-8], and 3) transdisciplinary research on scaling social systems change [9-12].

We have three overarching goals for participants this session:

- Collectively explore hidden histories and counterstories of relational, place-based design collaborations that have yielded complex social systems changes and examine core strategies emerging from these stories;
- Assess the potential of equity-centered collective impact [3-14] and diverse scaling strategies for supporting plural pathways towards peace;
- Adapt and apply strategies and assessment metrics to their own relational design contexts.

Participants will get the chance to frame, explore, generate, and prototype situated strategies that have been shown to transform practices and policies, shift resource flows, reshape unjust structures, build relationships, and generate tipping points towards peace.

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1.1 Format and Methods

Outlined in the agenda below, this workshop will support an interactive and dialogic engagement across participants. The session will begin with connection through the sharing of stories and a discussion of counterstorying [2, 4]. After participants visualize their own mental models of peace and explore the plurality of frames within the room, we will examine the value of framing peace through the visionary lifework of peace activist Jane Addams. Addams frames peace as the emergence of processes which support plural and participatory place-shaping. The session will briefly highlight how equity-centered design thinking, as a process of participatory cocreation, is valuable for breaking cycles of harm and cultivating cycles of peace [3, 15-17].

Participants will then identify their own unique strengths and challenges in relationship to this work and explore opportunities for growth within their current practices and communities. Next, participants will learn about counterstorytelling strategies and engage in individual and small group brainstorming opportunities to help them consider how they might adapt these strategies to their own context. In the end, more inclusive assessment metrics from equity-centered collective impact and scaling research will be reviewed for potential application. We have outlined this plan for the session on the agenda below.

- AGENDA
- FRAME (30 min)
- Welcome, Goals, & Agenda
- Storysharing Activity
- Framing & reimagining peace activity (Jane Addams)
- Design thinking: Internal and systemic cycles of oppression
- Identification of strengths and challenges
- EXPLORE (30 min)
- Counter-storying Case Study: The Power + Place Collaborative
- Relational Strategies: Remember, Reimagine, Remake, & Restore (Arturo Escobar)
- Individual brainstorming and Intergroup dialogue
- GENERATE (30 min)
- Plural pathways towards peace: Applying the Equity-Centered Collective Impact Model
- Exploration: Integrating Joyful philosophic activism (Jane Addams & Grace Lee Boggs)
- PROTOTYPE (15 min)

- Review: Scaling change & tiny task creation
- Mapping & Intergroup dialogue
- CULTIVATE (15 min)
- Large group visual think tank to document learning and take-aways
- Glow & grow shared activity

1.2 Participant Engagement

Noted above, participant engagement will be facilitated through a number of methods, including:

- Session Toolkit with various design methods and tools supporting visualization and brainstorming
- Storymapping and sharing activities
- Intergroup dialogue practices
- Equity-Centered Collective Impact Assessment
- Scaling Complex Social Systems Change Matrix

1.3 Participant Design and Conference Theme Relevance

The call for the 2026 PDC conference, asking contributors to explore “How participatory design can facilitate living together?” is the center of our current teaching, research, and service design commitments. We have been facilitating relational, place-based, and community centered curriculum at our university, supporting research practices to assess the value and challenges of this approach, and engaged in community service projects designed to build bridges across divides and foster dialogue [1, 9].

The PDC 2026 call for contributions appeared to be a great opportunity to share what we have learned and to learn from others similarly committed to cultivating participatory systemic design practices that cultivate peace.

1.4 Justification for holding the session at PDC

The PDC 2026 call for contributions is a unique opportunity to share what we have learned in our own place-based participatory design efforts and to learn from others similarly committed to cultivating participatory systemic design practices that cultivate peace. As the call suggests, this is an opportunity to cross-pollinate and cocreate new methods and strategies across communities.

1.5 Takeaways for Participants

Participants will

- Consider how the strategies and methods reviewed in the session (i.e., counterstorying, intergroup dialogue, scaling strategies, etc.) can cultivate peaceful practices and communities;
- Explore opportunities for how their current design practices support liberatory and peaceful pathways and visualize opportunities for growth in their current practices;
- Assess and adapt strategies to align with their particular design partnerships and projects.

1.6 Positioning of the workshop

The session is a novel workshop emerging from collected insights across communities and disciplinary fields.

1.7 Min/max number of participants

5-50

1.8 Organizers’ expertise and short bio

Danielle Lake is the Director of Design Thinking and Associate Professor in Human Service Studies at Elon University. Lake directs the Center, oversees the Power + Place Collaborative (a community-university, counterstorytelling participatory design partnership), conducts research on participatory design initiatives, and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on equity-centered, participatory design. Her consulting, research, and teaching efforts all aim to support relational, place-based design initiatives for addressing wicked problems, building capacities, and transforming systems. Lake is the winner of the John Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Leaders in Civic Engagement, the John Lachs award for Public Philosophy, and a two-time recipient of the Jane Addams Prize.

Sandy Marshall is an Associate Professor of Geography in the Department of History and Geography and Faculty Director of the Global Neighborhood at Elon University. As a human geographer, Dr. Marshall adds pedagogical, methodological, and content-area expertise. Specifically, Dr. Marshall will be responsible for training, advising, and overseeing students in oral history interviewing and digital storytelling. In addition, Dr. Marshall serves as a campus/community liaison between Elon University and community partners, and he currently serves as an advisor to the Burlington Masjid Youth Committee.

1.9 1.9 Duration (max 3 hours) and modality (online/offline)

2 hours offline (in person)

1.10 Future outcomes (e.g. publication, proposals, exhibitions, collaborations)

We hope this session might lead to long term relational connections as well as potential cross-sector partnerships that span geographic and cultural boundaries. In addition, this work is a part of longitudinal, transdisciplinary research project assessing the value and limitations of this approach for participating placeshaping and bridge-building.

1.11 Equipment and setup needs

If possible, it would be valuable to have access to project slides as well as a moveable space with tables and chairs for intergroup dialogue, visual mapping, and other activities.

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Participatory Design Narratives: Embracing Emotions, Politics and Passions Towards Dialogue and Coexistence

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Abstract

Building on urgent calls for a Participatory Design (PD) practice to promote dialogue, care and solidarity towards peaceful coexistence, the workshop centers on often overlooked but constitutive elements of dialogue, co-creation, and living together. It invites PD researchers to look at the tensions and conflicts that characterize the politics of PD research and practice and how these are communicated and crafted through different narrative styles and modes. Through hands-on and reflective activities, participants will explore what conflicts reveal about the nature of PD research, what can be learnt and understood from addressing them, and how they can be narrated to share their learnings. Overall, the workshop aims to foster awareness of the relevance of attending to the emotional dimensions of politically engaged research practice and the value of communicating these aspects, and to support researchers in identifying ways to write about them.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing;

Keywords

Conflicts, Emotions, Participatory Design, Situated Writing

ACM Reference Format:

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1 Introduction

Participatory Design (PD), since its emergence in Northern Europe, has been driven by a commitment to democratic design practices and engagement with pressing societal challenges of the time. These ambitions remain relevant today, even as contemporary society faces a polycrisis—characterized by overlapping societal, environmental, technological, and political disruptions—and the uncertainty brought about by increasingly frequent and significant

upheavals. Today, there is a growing call for PD’s contribution in addressing politics and conflict for diverse voices in/and through PD research [1, 2]. PD is increasingly valued not only to shift power dynamics, but to foster dialogue, promote care and solidarity, support negotiation among different actors on controversial issues, political conflicts and social transformation. Given these ambitions, PD research must explore and communicate how it engages with diverse stakeholders in situated micro-dynamics, while also critically addressing the complexity, politics and inherent messiness of socio-political design research and practice at scale. PD processes are informed by the interplay of individual and collective motivations, values, and desires, as well as the resulting tensions, emotions and conflicts that arise from their convergence and divergence. These dynamics inform both the micro and macro dynamics of PD practice, which becomes evident when recognizing that emotions and passions are constitutive of collective action. Ahmed [3] describes emotions as orientations that mobilize subjects—directing them toward certain objects, collectives, or ideals, and away from others. Fear can unite a “we” against a threatening “they”; love can sustain narratives of belonging; and shame or anger can drive political resistance. Emotions also reproduce hierarchies by associating specific bodies with particular feelings determining whose experiences are centered, whose voices are silenced, and how stories of collaboration or conflict are told [4]. Within PD practice and research, such tensions and conflicts among participants profoundly influence both the process and the narratives that emerge from it. Not acknowledging such emotional and sociopolitical dimensions of PD practice and research can hinder the achievement of its core ambitions, since key dynamics that inform the process are overlooked by researchers in the collaborative processes and, hence, excluded as part of their outcome. We argue for the need to develop ways to recognize, document, and reflect on the tensions, emotions, conflicts and politics that shape PD practice, foregrounding them as part of communicating PD research. This workshop centers specific aspects that characterize its politics and how these are shared and crafted through narrative styles and modes: the tensions and conflicts that emerge through PD practices, which should be acknowledged and actively considered by PD researchers and practitioners. These aspects are important to foreground in PD literature for several reasons: first, they are always part of participatory research but often not reported on; second, they can promote dialogue, care and solidarity across and in spite of differences, towards peaceful coexistence. The main goal is to explore ways of narrating the conflicted and contested dimensions of PD research and practice. It creates a platform for collective exploration of new



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ways to listen to conflicts in PD and narrate them to wider audiences. Overall, this will support PD researchers in addressing and conveying the affective aspects of politically engaged processes [5]. Its specific objectives are: 1) To explore situated modes of and formats for narrating conflicts that characterise PD practice and research; 2) To map and build a repertoire of approaches and formats for narrating conflicts in PD practice and research; 3) To foster a community of practice of researchers for exploring ways to listen to conflict, reflect upon, and narrate it through different narrative styles and modes in design literature.

2 Workshop format and contribution

The workshop will: happen in person, host 8-15 participants; and be participatory and hands-on, as per PDC2026's spirit.

2.1 Preparation

Participation requires completing a preparatory activity that will be provided through a link with instructions to upload a document, choosing one of the following: a) a visual map illustrating their experience of conflict in a recent PD project they were involved in as designers; b) a visual map of conflict experienced by participants in a recent PD project they were involved in as designers. Participants need to visualize and/or document the following, using their own style of representation, one month prior to the conference: 1) Moments of conflict, locating them within the project timeline; 2) Identified or declared source/causes of conflict, placing them in relation to the specific moment of conflict, when possible; 3) Clear (if any) manifestations of each moment of conflict (e.g., participants' statements); 4) Manifestation of perceptions of unspoken conflicts; 5) Interpretation of how each moment of conflict affected participation.

2.2 Workshop structure

The workshop consists of two phases: hands-on experimentation and collective reflection, respectively, including space for identifying potential next steps and future directions. The agenda is as follows: Introduction (20 min.) The workshop will start with a brief introduction, after which participants will form groups of three to explore one of two themes: 1) Identifying and communicating conflicts in PD from the designer's perspective, using a designer-led narrative; 2) Identifying and communicating PD conflicts through participants' voices and perspectives. Group experimentation (75 min.) Participants will reflect on how they identified and documented conflicts in their preparatory work, discussing strengths, limitations, and insights about PD processes. Each group will select a key theme to explore and plan how to narrate it in a research article, considering style, tone, visuals, and structure. They will then apply chosen strategies by writing a short text (≈ 200 words) and creating a poster showing the theme, strategies, and text. Shared Reflection (60 min.) After the group activity, participants will engage in a collective reflection to synthesize insights and co-develop guidelines for writing about conflict in PD. Each group will present their key learnings and poster, followed by feedback and discussion on the clarity and effectiveness of their approach. This shared reflection will help identify common themes, diverse perspectives, and strategies for narrating

PD-related conflicts. Wrapping up (25 min.) A closing circle will foster collective reflection on challenges in assessing the previously generated manuscripts and explore strategies to address them. It will also recap possible formats and principles for communicating socio-politically engaged PD research. The resulting posters will be exhibited at PDC2026.

3 Relevance to Participatory Design and the conference theme

The workshop aligns with the conference theme, *Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence. Designing for living together*, by focusing on overlooked but constitutive elements of dialogue, co-creation, and living together. At its core are acts of listening to both spoken and unspoken conflicts inherent in participatory processes, essential to embracing diverse voices and fostering inclusion, equity, and resilience. It is also about negotiation and the ability to perceive, hold space for, and engage with conflict. While PD research has addressed issues such as power imbalances, hidden agendas [6, 7], and the need and ways of supporting the expression and bringing together diverse perspectives [1], less attention has been given to how spoken conflicts are surfaced and navigated [8], and how unspoken ones are perceived and communicated. Work is needed on understanding how to capture conflicts, how to communicate them, and how they reshape our understanding of PD. By addressing these questions, this workshop contributes to ongoing efforts within PD to rethink what we narrate, and how.

4 Justification and expected results

There has been a growing effort to innovate academic writing practices in Design, both broadly [9] and within PD [10], to reflect its situated nature better, shared authorship, and participants' and designers' lived experiences [11]. However, these efforts have often faced resistance within the research community, mainly due to: 1) challenges in having such manuscripts accepted and valued by reviewers; 2) a lack of understanding among reviewers of their scholarly value and appropriate assessment criteria; 3) uncertainty around how research can be written in alternative, more situated ways. This is what makes it important to raise such issues at PDC2026, where there is a strong potential to raise awareness and foster dialogue. The workshop will raise awareness of the emotional dimensions of politically engaged research and explore alternative ways of narrating them, challenging conventional academic writing and valuing situated knowledge. Participants will learn to acknowledge and reflect on conflicts and uncomfortable emotions in PD, rather than backgrounding them. Finally, the workshop fosters a community of practice to support reflection, experimentation, and transformation in PD narratives.

5 Positioning and outcomes of the workshop

This workshop is a pioneering initiative—the first within the PD community to directly address this topic. It builds on the organizers' ongoing work through the *Design and Culture* (D&C) Editorial Board to question dominant worldviews in knowledge production and design practice. The workshop supports experimentation with participatory processes and contextually situated knowledge in

both research and its narration. It is part of a broader set of initiatives aimed at expanding possibilities for knowledge production in design and supporting scholars in integrating feminist, queer, and decolonial principles into their work. Through D&C and conference workshops, the organizers seek to foster awareness, experimentation, and publication of alternative modes of narrating design research and practice. The organizers will compile and share workshop discussions in a set of guidelines for writing and assessing this type of manuscript through D&C. The experimental contributions will be exhibited at PDC2026 and included in a co-authored publication in the journal, as a reference for future work. A forum will be created for the wider PD community to continue the conversation and refine the emerging guidelines. **Equipment and setup needs:** A classroom with workshop tables, projector, Wi-Fi, easel pads, markers, pens, paper, sticky notes, printer access, tape, pins, and frames for displaying posters.

6 Organizers' expertise and bio

All organizers, members of the *Design and Culture* (D&C) Editorial Board, will attend the workshop, bringing complementary expertise and strengthening its outcomes. Some have prior PDC experience and strong community connections. **Chiara Del Gaudio** (D&C co-Editor-in-Chief) is an Associate Professor of the School of Industrial Design at Carleton University. Del Gaudio's work has focused on the politics of PD, with a specific focus on agency and on power asymmetries. **Griselda Flesler** (D&C co-Editor-in-Chief) is a Professor in Design and Gender Studies of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism at University of Buenos Aires. Her work has focused on emotions from a feminist and queer perspective, i.e., the unequal uses of university space. **Rachel Charlotte Smith** (D&C Associate Editor) is Associate Professor at Aarhus University.

She works across PD, Design Anthropology and Human-Computer Interaction.

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Pluriversal Mapping

Participatory Cartographies for Ecological Coexistence

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Abstract

Pluriversal Mapping: Participatory Cartographies for Ecological Coexistence explores participatory and speculative mapping as a design practice for understanding socioecological transformations in extractive territories shaped by the global energy transition. Through object-based storytelling and collaborative cartographic exercises, participants create relational maps that connect spatial trajectories with multiple temporalities and more-than-human agencies. By challenging conventional cartography, the workshop proposes mapping as a participatory and reparative practice that fosters ecological awareness, dialogue, and alternative imaginaries of coexistence

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

Keywords

Participatory Mapping, Speculation, Decoloniality, Pluriversal Design, Interdependences, Coexistence

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1 Description of the theme and goals

The accelerating implementation of the so-called “green” or “sustainable” energy transition is reshaping the landscapes and social fabrics of extractive territories worldwide. While framed as an ecological solution, this transition often perpetuates colonial forms of

resource exploitation, displacing communities and altering ecosystems in ways that exacerbate rather than mitigate the climate crisis [1, 2]. Pluriversal Mapping proposes to explore these contradictions through participatory and speculative design practices that reimagine coexistence among human and more-than-human entities in territories affected by extractivism.

Drawing from interdisciplinary research across geography, psychology, architecture, and art, the workshop engages participants in co-creating speculative cartographies that reveal the affective, ontological, and material relations entangled in the energy transition. The goal is to foster situated reflections and experimental mappings that make visible invisible agencies—waters, winds, minerals, animals, infrastructures, and emotions—thus opening a dialogical space for peaceful coexistence and ecological reparation.

By bringing together designers, researchers, and community practitioners, Pluriversal Mapping invites participants to collectively recompose fractured territories, imagining alternative futures where conflict is transformed into dialogue, and where mapping becomes a tool of reconciliation rather than control.

2 Proposed format, methods, techniques:

The Pluriversal Mapping workshop is conceived as an exercise in expanded social cartography, where speculative design media and materials are used to challenge modern-colonial modes of spatial representation [3, 4]. Traditional cartography, rooted in Eurocentric rationalities, has historically divided the world into dichotomies, like space/time, nature/culture, developed/primitive, producing epistemic hierarchies that have legitimized domination over territories and communities. In contrast, Pluriversal Mapping seeks to decolonize the spatial and temporal imagination through collective, affective, and more-than-human mapping practices [5].

The workshop is organized as a half-day, hands-on session structured into four parts:

- Introduction and situated framing (15 min): The facilitators introduce the conceptual foundations of Pluriversal Mapping: the spiral notion of time, and territorial memory as resistance
- Object-based relational activation (35 min): Participants are invited to introduce themselves through an object they bring (personal, found, or field-related). These objects become



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mediators that connect individual experiences to broader territorial and ecological assemblages.

- Expanded cartography exercise (60 min): Using a three-dimensional mapping device designed for the workshop, participants collectively situate their objects within a space-time matrix: The horizontal axis represents spatial trajectories and affective associations (emotions, memories, or attachments). The vertical axes represent three temporal dimensions—everyday time, life trajectory, and geological time. Through a system of threads, knots, and labels, participants connect objects, places, emotions, and temporalities, visualizing the entanglements that constitute our material existence in the Anthropocene
- Speculative reflection and dialogue (45 min- 60 min): The workshop concludes with a collective discussion, where participants interpret their mappings and speculate about pluriversal futures—ways of inhabiting the world that recognize multiple temporalities, interdependencies, and more-than-human agencies.

This workshop combines techniques from participatory design, speculative and critical design, and geographical visualization to facilitate embodied understanding of how space and time can be reimagined as spiral and relational rather than linear and fixed.

3 Participant contribution modalities

Participants will play an active role as co-researchers and co-cartographers rather than passive attendees. Each person contributes:

- An object linked to their personal or professional experience of environmental, social, or technological transformation;
- A narrative describing how that object relates to space, emotion, and temporality;
- Their participation in the collective act of mapping through manual engagement: threading, connecting, annotating, and positioning materials in dialogue with others.

The workshop values diverse epistemic and cultural perspectives, welcoming participants from academic, artistic, activist, and community backgrounds (figure 1). No specific technical expertise is required, only a willingness to share, listen, and collaboratively reimagine how we inhabit the planet's entangled space-times.

4 Relevance to Participatory Design and the conference theme

Pluriversal Mapping directly responds to PDC 2026's call to reimagine participatory design as an agent of dialogue, and coexistence. By working with speculative mappings of conflictual territories, the workshop enacts participation as a process of reparation, enabling participants to visualize and negotiate interdependencies among humans, technologies (extractive technologies in particular), and ecologies.

The workshop mobilizes the more-than-human turn in participatory design, expanding participation to include non-human actors and material agencies. It also engages with digital and spatial



Figure 1: Discussions about objects and ontologies at in the First School of Climate Pluriverses, PUCV, Viña del Mar, Chile. Produced by the Authors.



Figure 2: Pluriversal Mapping workshop at the Seminar SOSOET "Pluriverses and values of nature: Building paths towards alternative futures" in Universidad de O'Higgins, San Fernando, Chile. Source: Produced by the Authors.

storytelling tools as instruments for re-establishing dialogue between communities and their environments. In this way, it contributes to the political dimension of participatory design, addressing how design can mediate post-conflict, post-extractive, and post-anthropocentric transformations (figure 2).

5 Justification for holding the workshop at PDC

PDC 2026 provides a relevant occasion for critical and collective experimentation with participatory methods that bridge theory, practice, and activism. Holding Pluriversal Mapping at this conference enables an intercultural dialogue between Global South epistemologies and the participatory design community worldwide, fostering mutual learning around ecological attunement, and decolonial futures.

Within the context of PDC, this workshop contributes a Latin American perspective grounded in the lived experiences of territories affected by extractivism and climate injustice [6, 7]. It expands the conference's focus on more-than-human coexistence by demonstrating how participatory mapping can serve as a speculative and reparative practice, a means to work with conflict and weaving together fragmented space-times.

By staging this exercise within PDC's collaborative and inclusive framework, Pluriversal Mapping aspires to inspire new methodologies of cartographic co-creation, enabling participants to envision participatory design as a form of situated care, attentive to memory, matter, and the multiple temporalities that shape our shared world.

6 Expected Takeaways for Participants

Participants will leave with:

- A speculative cartography visualizing the entanglements of their object with ecological and technological systems.
- A reflective understanding of pluriversal design as a practice of coexistence and community building.
- Tools and frameworks for integrating affective and more-than-human perspectives into participatory design processes (figure 3).
- The possibility of taking part in an emerging network of researchers and practitioners engaged in participatory mapping and ecological justice, and the exploration of the forms that this topics might take in different context.

7 Positioning of the Workshop: novel initiative, part of a series, or embedded in a broader project

Pluriversal Mapping is part of an ongoing series of workshops and research-creation activities developed since 2023 in Chile and Europe. It has been conducted within the framework of the projects Artifacts of Entanglement: In the Web of Extractive Urbanization and Climate Pluriverses, and has been presented at the International Conference "Crafting Methods in Design Research" (Valparaíso, 2024) and the International Seminar "(Post) Extractivism and Ecological Controversies in Design Research" (Brussels, 2025) (figure 4).

This continuity ensures that the PDC iteration will both consolidate and expand a transnational dialogue around participatory design, speculative mapping, and ecological coexistence, positioning the workshop as a site of ongoing experimentation rather than a one-off event.

8 Min / max number of participants

Min.8 / max. 20 participants



Figure 3: Three-dimensional mapping device and objects gathered in the workshop delivered in the "(Post)Extractivism and Ecological Controversies in Design Research" Seminar, Brussels, 2025. Source: Produced by the Authors.

9 Organizers' expertise and short bio

Daniela Salgado Cofré is an industrial designer and Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and Design of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. She holds a PhD in Architecture and Urbanism from the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Her current research explores critical craft practices facing extractivism, and challenges the hegemonies of modern and contemporary design within the Chilean context. She has participated in international art exhibitions, as well as in numerous workshops and academic seminars. She is a member of the Artefactos Relacionales network.

Álvaro Mercado Jara is an architect and Associate Professor at the School of Architecture and Design of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso and PhD from the Université Libre de Bruxelles. His research focuses on situated speculative practices aimed at tracing and projecting transformations and forms of resilience within the web of life affected by extractive urbanisation in local and regional hinterlands across South America. He leads the interdisciplinary research project Artifacts of Entanglement and he is a member of the Artefactos Relacionales network.

Leonardo Aravena Yañez is an Industrial Designer from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (PUCV) and holds a Master's degree in Architecture and Design. He is a practitioner and a professor at PUCV, where he leads the digital fabrication laboratories MADLAB and Aconcagua FABLAB. He has developed several workshops through artefacts and materials, and he is a member of the "Artefactos Relacionales" network.



Figure 4: Discussions about the soil and materiality in the International Conference “Crafting Methods in Design Research” in Valparaíso, Chile. Source: Produced by the Authors.

Pablo Mansilla Quiñones is Professor at the Institute of Geography, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. He leads the Alternative Territories research group (www.territoriosalternativos.cl), which focuses on the intersection of Human Geography, Social Geography, Decolonial Theory, and Territorial Planning. He holds a Master’s degree in Geography and a PhD in Human Geography from the Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil. He currently leads the interdisciplinary project “Climatic Pluriverses” and is a member of the Artefactos Relacionales network.

10 Duration and modality

Three hours and will be conducted offline in the conference venue

11 Future Outcomes

The workshop outcomes will be documented and disseminated through an open-access digital publication, which will compile insights and results from this and previous iterations of Pluriversal Mapping. This publication aims to foster ongoing collaboration on participatory practices, extractivism, and adaptation across different geographical and disciplinary contexts. In addition, an exhibition at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso will present the material artifacts and mappings produced during the workshop, offering a space for public engagement and dialogue around design, ecology, and coexistence.

12 Equipment and Setup Needs

The workshop requires a comfortable and intimate space that can be arranged either indoors or outdoors, depending on the conference facilities. The setup should include four tables, each accommodating five participants, allowing them to sit comfortably and reach the center of the table where the material device provided by the convenors will be placed. A projection screen or large display will also be needed to show a reference image that participants can consult throughout the session. The space should support an atmosphere conducive to reflection, collaboration, and collective engagement.

Acknowledgments

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Confessions of a Participatory Designer: Navigating Values Misalignment in Co-design Practice

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Abstract

In this workshop, we focus on values misalignment as a central problem and use a "confessions" format for collective knowledge-building. The format deliberately creates space for vulnerability and honest reflection that typical academic formats discourage. This workshop emerges from our ongoing research on digital civics, civic technology, and values-sensitive design, representing a critical turn in our work from developing methodologies to questioning their limits and appropriate application—a move we believe is essential for the maturation and continued relevance of participatory approaches. What we have discovered through informal sharing of stories at conferences and in private conversations is both the widespread nature of these challenges and the tremendous relief researchers feel when given space to discuss them openly. These conversations have been valuable and cathartic, creating rare opportunities to feel heard, to recognize that struggles are shared rather than individual failures, and to begin collectively developing more honest and helpful guidance. This workshop extends that opportunity to a broader community of practitioners, creating a brave space for sharing "confessions", giving and receiving advice, and hearing from expert witnesses who can share both best practices and the messy realities of lived experience. Our goal is not to discredit participatory design, for we remain convinced of its democratic potential and transformative possibilities under proper conditions. Instead, we aim to strengthen the practice by acknowledging its limitations, examining when and how practitioners should apply it, and developing more honest, nuanced guidance for navigating its complexities.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing → Participatory design.

Keywords

Values Sensitive Design, Participatory Design, Participatory Methods, Values Alignment, Value Misalignment

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1 Introduction: Four Pathologies of Contemporary PD Practice

Participatory design has a rich history rooted in 1970s Scandinavian activism, emerging as a democratic tool for workplace transformation and conflict mitigation [6]. Through the late 1980s and early 1990s, PD evolved toward human-centered approaches, and by the 2000s, underwent significant diversification as it was adopted across disciplines, leading to methodological pluralism and increasingly flexible definitions of the practice itself [10]. Today, digital civics, HCI, CSCW, and related fields have enthusiastically embraced participatory and co-design approaches as methods to center diverse voices, foster inclusion and equity, and support marginalized communities in long-term systemic transformations [1, 4, 7, 9]. PD has become not just common practice but the expected standard—often the first port of call when engaging with communities or addressing social challenges. This widespread adoption reflects a genuine commitment to democratic values and recognition of expertise held by those with lived experience [8, 9]. Yet this enthusiasm masks growing tensions. More critically, as we navigate research and design practice under the duress of the "perma-crisis era" [2], we find ourselves questioning: When is participatory design appropriate? What happens when it becomes orthodoxy rather than choice? And most pressingly, how do we navigate the messy reality when values misalign between researchers, institutions, communities, and the technologies we design? Through our own practice and beyond, we have identified four interconnected pathologies that emerge from the current state of participatory design. Intersecting conditions emerge and shape these pathologies: actors (including universities, funding sources, community partners, and technologies), factors (moral, political, ideological, methodological), and the position and role within these complex dynamics. First, the challenge of resolving conflict and moving through differences. While values-sensitive design literature discusses the importance of negotiating values [3, 5], in practice researchers and communities struggle deeply to reconcile their value differences. This challenge grows especially acute as affective polarization and values-based misalignments between communities become more pronounced globally. Second, the problem of defining, articulating, and representing values. In the literature and practice, values are defined differently and inconsistently. We observe a crucial distinction, often conflated, between people's values and what people value. When we discover people's values through participatory processes, how are they meaningfully translated into design? What happens when expressed values shift

over time or contradict observed priorities? Third, the fraught question of researcher and designer agency. Participatory practices have always framed the work as partnership and collaboration between researchers, designers, and communities. Yet, partnership inherently involves imbalances in power and positionality. Researchers and designers often hold power, wield authority, and ultimately make decisions that can reduce the authenticity of partnership. Without genuine partnership, meaningful decision-making mechanisms, and careful power analysis, the benefits of participatory design are lost. However, we observe that complete ceding of power and agency by researchers and designers is equally inappropriate and misaligned with the method's intentions. Fourth, the problem of over-application. Amidst crises at global and local levels, while these methods offer tremendous opportunity and value, they are not applicable or appropriate for all scenarios. These methods are not frictionless. To elicit values and conduct values negotiation work entails risk, especially in moments of conflict and crisis. Before engaging with such methods, we must ask: Do we need to do this at all? Does it help the project? Does it help anyone? And is it worth doing? As funding and resources become increasingly scarce, we must acknowledge that any participatory method is resource-intensive, requiring extensive time from community partners.

2 Proposed Format, Methods, and Techniques

The workshop employs a "Confessions Court" format that balances vulnerability with collective wisdom-building. We begin with opening provocations, where organizers provide brief framing of key pathologies in current PD practice and share anonymized confessions from our own work to model vulnerability and set the tone for honest dialogue, introduce participants to different types of values misalignment and potential reconciliation methods, and establish a shared vocabulary for the day's conversations. The heart of the workshop involves testimony and witnessing, with participants engaging in small-group "testimony circles" of four to five people. In these intimate settings, participants share specific stories of values misalignment from their practice, guided by prompts. Following this, we reconvene for a session of expert witnesses and collective advice. Groups share anonymized patterns and dilemmas with the full workshop, and we engage in collective problem-solving where participants offer advice, alternative approaches, or simply affirm the difficulty of decisions made. We map connections between cases to identify systemic issues versus context-specific challenges, building toward shared understanding. The workshop then turns toward framework building, where we collectively develop initial guidelines for diagnosing when PD is and isn't appropriate, navigating different types of values misalignments, balancing researcher agency with community empowerment, and recognizing when to bridge differences, accept them, or work productively through them without resolution. We close by introducing participants to a post-workshop digital community space for ongoing confession-sharing and knowledge-building, inviting commitments for continued engagement.

2.1 Participant Contribution Modalities and Takeaways

Before the workshop, participants may optionally submit a brief confession (250 - 500 words) describing a moment of values misalignment in their PD work. These submissions will be anonymized and may be used to seed discussion, though submission is not required for participation. Participants will build a peer network, establishing connections with others navigating similar challenges and creating a foundation for ongoing support beyond the conference. They will gain access to resources through an invitation to an ongoing digital community space for continued learning and knowledge-sharing. Perhaps most importantly, participants will develop enhanced capacity for reflexive practice, or the ability to critically self-reflect about positionality, power, and agency in PD work without being paralyzed by that reflection. In terms of tangible outputs, participants will contribute to and receive access to an anonymized case repository through the digital community space; initial "Guidelines for Navigating Values Misalignment in PD" co-created during the workshop; a thematic map of common pathologies and reconciliation strategies; and the foundation for subsequent publication, such as "The Participatory Designer's Guide for Believers and Non-Believers."

2.2 Holding the Workshop at PDC

This workshop directly addresses PDC 2026's theme of Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence by confronting a paradox at the heart of participatory design: methods designed to foster dialogue and living together can themselves become sites of conflict when values diverge. Our focus on values misalignment speaks directly to the conference's call to foster dialogue across differences. We examine what happens when PD practitioners must facilitate dialogue between groups with fundamentally opposed values. PDC is the ideal venue for this workshop for several interconnected reasons. First, there exists a clear community need. Second, we find ourselves at a significant historical moment. As the call for workshops notes, PD has undergone re-politicization with explicit social justice commitments. Therefore, it is urgent to examine whether and how PD can genuinely foster coexistence across political and ideological differences—or whether some gaps cannot and should not be bridged through design processes. PDC is the venue where such fundamental questions can be asked without threatening the legitimacy of the broader enterprise. Third, PDC attendees represent disciplinary leadership. Participants are methodological leaders who both practice and teach PD. They also bring diverse experiences of conflict, governance, and values that are essential for developing truly useful guidance rather than Western-centric or context-specific prescriptions.

2.3 Logistics

This workshop will run for three hours as a full workshop session, conducted in-person. We require a flexible room setup allowing for both full-group discussion and small group work, materials including sticky notes, markers, and flipcharts or whiteboards. We seek a minimum of 12 participants to enable diverse testimony circles with a sufficient variety of experience, and a maximum of 30 participants to maintain the intimacy and depth of sharing necessary for this

workshop format. We desire participants who are researchers and practitioners with experience in PD, co-design, or values-sensitive design methods; a mix of early-career and experienced practitioners who can learn from each other's different vantage points; and diversity across geographies and application domains to ensure frameworks developed have broad relevance.

2.4 Future Outcomes

We will produce an anonymized confession repository launched during the workshop itself; an initial framework document titled "Navigating Values Misalignment in Participatory Design" that captures collective wisdom; and a workshop report for PDC proceedings that documents methods, participation, and key insights. Over the medium term, we plan to develop a digital community space called "Confessions of a Participatory Designer" for ongoing collection and thematic organization of stories; pursue publication of an edited collection or research paper synthesizing patterns and guidance that emerge from the workshop and digital community space; and organize follow-up workshops at related venues to continue building this community of practice. Our long-term vision includes developing a comprehensive resource guide addressing PD pathologies and practical solutions; creating pedagogical materials for teaching PD with emphasis on values navigation and appropriate application; sustaining a community of practice for practitioners navigating complex PD challenges; and potentially pursuing a book project tentatively titled "The Participatory Designer's Guide: For Believers and Non Believers" that brings together theoretical framing, practical cases, and actionable guidance.

3 Organizers

Margaret Hughes is a PhD candidate at the MIT Media Lab, affiliated with the Center for Constructive Communication. Her research lies at the intersection of civic technology, human-computer interaction (HCI), and computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW). **Ian G. Johnson** is a Lecturer in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Community Technologies at Open Lab, Newcastle University. His work is deeply place-based, participatory, and action-led, involving collaboration with community organizations through fieldwork and the design, deployment, and evaluation of novel community technologies.

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Creative Dialogical Spaces for Agonism - Embodied Making and Material Dialogue in Contexts of Conflict and Transformation

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Abstract

Creative and agonistic tensions lie at the heart of democratic participatory design, yet conventional frameworks often smooth out conflict or treat it as a failure. In this workshop, “Creative Dialogical Spaces for Agonism,” we invite researchers and practitioners to explore how artefact-based methods can cultivate more generative, pluralistic dialogues that move beyond superficial consensus or entrenched antagonism. Through three contrasting stations (LEGO modelling in personal transformation dialogues; low-tech remix walls in post-conflict community contexts; and SiPRuS mapping of shared governance), participants will enact, compare, and reflect on how material artefacts mediate power, voice, conflict, and imagination over time. The rotating structure encourages dialogue not only across participants, but between artefacts, contexts, and interpretive frames. Outcomes include a collective meta-map linking methods, contexts, and dialogical modalities; practice insights and heuristics to bring back to participants’ own work; and seeds for a collaborative publication or toolkit. By foregrounding temporality, situatedness, and the messy affordances of material dialogue, the workshop aims to strengthen the theoretical and practical foothold for agonistic participatory design.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Participatory design**; • **Social and professional topics** → **Socio-technical systems**; • **Applied computing** → **Computing in government**; • **Social and professional topics** → *Codes of ethics*;

Keywords

agonistic participatory design, artefact-based methods, dialogical spaces, temporal dynamics, material mediation

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1 Motivation and Positioning

Participatory Design (PD) has long been concerned with creating democratic spaces for dialogue and collaboration. Yet in practice, many PD processes oscillate between consensus-seeking, where tensions are smoothed over, and antagonism where disagreement escalates into opposition. Both tendencies risk diminishing democratic vitality: consensus may silence difference, while antagonism can entrench polarisation and exclusion. Drawing on Chantal Mouffe’s [11, 12] theory of agonistic pluralism, we approach friction or conflict not as a failure of participation but as a constitutive and generative element of democratic interactions [4, 5].

Building on recent scholarship, we consider how design might stage, perform, and sustain productive friction. Arets and Raijmakers [1] propose adversarial design as a practice that renders disagreement visible and actionable. De Roeck and Van Dooren [3] show how the performance and staging of friction through spatial, material, and affective arrangements shape whose voices are heard and how disagreement unfolds. Related are current debates on boundary objects [9], the role of emotion and exclusion in public debates [10], embodied and participatory design scholarship [6, 7, 13], and transformational practices [8].

Together, these perspectives highlight the need to experiment with tools and methods that keep discussions open, sustain diversity in perspectives, and nurture plural imaginaries. This need aligns with one of the themes in the conversation “What is next for Civic Design?” held by the authors at DRS 2024 [2]. Civic Design “should be about creating infrastructures, or spaces, for deliberation, with room for disagreeing opinions” (p. 5). Underneath this is an understanding of collective sense-making as unfolding through making and bodily experience rather than words alone. In this view, artefacts are active mediators in participatory encounters—enabling the expression of tacit knowledge, the negotiation of difference, and the collective imagination of futures.

Building on these understandings and needs, the workshop aligns with ongoing exploratory work on agonistic contexts by the three authors, each with its own focus:

- **Creative conversation methods** in tense one-on-one interactions between social professionals and clients (*Imagination in Transitions* project, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences).
- **Artefact-based participatory design** to build trust and foster group dialogue in post-conflict communities such as Shankill, Belfast (doctoral research, Ulster University).

- **Commons-based mapping tools** supporting community negotiation over shared resources (*Cooperative Cities Agenda*, Fontys University of Applied Sciences).

Based on experiences in these projects, we propose that action-oriented artefacts—such as LEGO models, maps, prints, poems, photographs, or loose parts—can help cultivate agonistic spaces in PD. By shifting interaction from face-to-face debate to shared acts of making, moving, and creating, artefacts open embodied and imaginative dimensions of dialogue that exceed purely rational—linguistic exchange. As Di Salvo’s work [4, 5] shows, artefacts can articulate issues, provoke contestation, and materialise publics. Here we extend this inquiry by asking: *how might artefact-based methods move us from consensus or antagonism toward agonism across different interaction contexts?*

2 Goals and Questions

This workshop brings together researchers and practitioners to investigate how artefacts function as carriers of dialogue in contexts of tension, conflict, transformation, and cooperation. We explore how artefact-based methods move us from consensus or antagonism toward agonism, understanding the latter as a relational and constitutive element of everyday democracy.

Participants will experience three artefact-based methods across three interaction contexts:

- LEGO in professional–client conversations** Navigating life transitions (e.g., returning to work) to reshape paternalistic conversations into co-creative dialogue.
- Mapping, printmaking, and loose-parts modelling** Trust-building and shared reflection in communities living with legacies of conflict.
- Commons-based artefacts for cooperative governance** Negotiating shared management and caring cooperation in neighbourhood contexts.

The setup fosters comparative reflection across these cases, enabling participants to identify patterns in how artefacts mediate dialogue differently across contexts. The following questions guide our reflection:

- What role can action-oriented artefacts play in diverse interaction contexts?
- What qualities make them effective mediators of dialogue and imagination?
- How can PD practitioners design artefact-making processes to support agonistic engagement?
- How are relationships affected in these processes?
- What principles and skills help move beyond consensus or antagonism toward agonistic pluralism?

3 Workshop Structure

The session is designed as a three-hour, hands-on workshop combining short inputs, experiential exercises, and collective reflection.

3.1 Practicalities

- **Duration:** 3 hours (two short stretch breaks included).
- **Modality:** In-person, using analogue materials (LEGO, fragments, props).

- **Participants:** 15–30 (small-group interaction).
- **Equipment:** Tables for group work, wall space for posters and remix wall, LEGO sets, printed fragments, sticky notes, markers, poster paper.

3.2 Setup and Flow

1. **Opening and introduction of the cases (30 min).** Brief overview of the three contexts and artefact methods.
2. **Rotating rounds (3 × 30 min).** Participants rotate through three stations (A–C), each focusing on one case and method. Within each round they examine:
 - What forms of dialogue, conflict, and meaning emerge through this artefact?
 - How does the material setting or context shape what becomes visible or sayable?
 Groups engage first with artefacts left by the previous group – responding, modifying, or contesting them —so each rotation becomes a dialogue not only between people but between artefacts, contexts, and interpretive frames.
3. **Collective Reflection and Mapping (40 min).** Joint synthesis of insights across all cases and methods based on the guiding questions. Discussion addresses how artefacts perform as mediators, how situationality shapes agonistic potential, and what this implies for designers’ positionality. Participants build a meta-map linking contexts, methods, and types of dialogue/conflict.
4. **Closing Synthesis (10 min).** Shared takeaways and next steps.

3.3 Station Activities and Contexts

Each of the three workshop stations immerses participants in a specific interaction context that foregrounds different dimensions of agonistic dialogue. Groups rotate through all stations, building on artefacts left by previous participants to experience dialogue as an ongoing, material conversation. This section outlines what happens at each station.

3.3.1 Station A: Imagination in Personal Transformations.

1. **Context.** This station draws on the *Imagination in Transitions* project at the Department of Work, Participation & Income (Amsterdam), where professionals and clients engaged in conversations about life transitions such as returning to work after long-term unemployment.
2. **Method.** Participants use LEGO bricks to model a “moment of conflict or transition.” Working in pairs or small groups, each participant builds a model that represents a tension, dilemma, or turning point in their professional or personal context. Partners then remix or extend each other’s models to imagine possible next steps or resolutions.
3. **Goal and Experience.** This hands-on process reshapes potentially paternalistic one-on-one conversations into co-creative exchanges. The act of building together creates safety, shifts perceived power dynamics, and sparks imagination—allowing conflicts to surface as shared material for reflection and action.

Table 1: Overview of artefact-based methods, processes, and outcomes explored in the workshop.

Artefacts	Process	Outcome
LEGO-based methods	Reshape paternalistic small-scale conversations into co-creative dialogue.	Create safety; shift power dynamics; spark imagination.
Low-tech artefacts	Create relational and reflective spaces that surface situational and contextual dynamics.	Build trust; shared reflection; collective imagination.
SiPRuS mapping	Expose situational and context-bound norms, attitudes, and behaviour.	Foster reflection and understanding for coexisting practices.

3.3.2 Station B: Conflict and Dialogue in Post-Conflict Communities.

1. **Context.** This station is based on doctoral research conducted in Shankill, Belfast, exploring how artefact-based participatory design can help rebuild trust and foster dialogue in communities living with the legacies of conflict.
2. **Method.** Participants work with a *Remix Wall* composed of fragments from the Shankill collaboration, including prints, quotes, and maps. Each participant selects one fragment, responds through drawing or short writing, and adds their contribution to the collective wall of reflections.
3. **Goal and Experience.** The activity engages participants with sensitive issues of place and memory while avoiding direct confrontation. The use of low-tech, tactile media supports trauma-informed ways of holding and transforming stories. Through collective remixing, participants experience how material artefacts can carry, translate, and contest meanings across time and groups.

3.3.3 Station C: Co-designing Neighbourhood Commons.

1. **Context.** This activity originates from research within the *Cooperative Cities Agenda* at Fontys University of Applied Sciences, conducted in a newly developed neighbourhood in Eindhoven aimed at co-designing a sharing community.
2. **Method.** Participants use the *SiPRuS* mapping tool (Situation, Players, Rules, System) to visualise and negotiate over a collective resource—such as shared green space or energy infrastructure. The tool invites participants to identify actors, describe existing rules, and imagine alternative arrangements for cooperation.
3. **Goal and Experience.** By collectively mapping relationships and boundaries, participants reveal implicit norms, attitudes, and behaviours that shape shared governance. The exercise exposes tensions between individual and collective interests and helps surface new possibilities for care, reciprocity, and coexistence.

Across these three stations, participants encounter diverse scales and modalities of agonistic engagement—from personal and interpersonal (A), to communal and historical (B), to systemic and institutional (C). Together they form a comparative landscape for reflecting on how artefacts mediate dialogue, conflict, and imagination.

4 Expected Takeaways and Outcomes

4.1 Immediate Outcomes

- Shared experiential understanding of how artefacts mediate dialogue across contexts.
- Collective visual record (poster or wall of participant keywords and insights).
- Practical takeaways—methods and prompts adaptable for participants' own PD practice.

4.2 Longer-Term Outcomes

- Foundation for cross-context comparison of artefact-based PD methods within debates on agonism, boundary objects, and civic design.
- Basis for a collaborative publication or toolkit synthesising the approaches trialled.
- Strengthening of the network of researchers and practitioners working at the intersection of PD, conflict transformation, and civic design.
- Continuation of conversations from DRS 2024 on Civic Design across scales (micro–meso–macro) into the PDC community.

5 Intended Audience and Recruitment

We will issue an open call (May 2026) inviting researchers, practitioners, designers, and community organisers engaged in participatory or co-design practices within contexts of conflict, transition, or collective care. Participants will submit a short statement or pictorial (max 1 page) including:

- A brief description of their professional or research practice (max. 200 words).
- A reflection (max. 500 words) on how their work relates to the workshop's themes of artefacts, dialogue, conflict, or coexistence.

Creative, visual, and experimental submissions (images, collages, photographed artefacts) are encouraged. Submissions will be reviewed collaboratively by the convenors to ensure diversity in geography, expertise, and practice. Accepted participants will receive pre-workshop prompts to reflect on their own artefact-based methods or experiences. In line with PDC guidelines, all participants will register for both the workshop and at least one day of the main conference.

6 Organisers

Mike de Kreek is a senior researcher at the Civic Interaction Design research group at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). As an action researcher, he focuses on collaborative learning processes between diverse community stakeholders, fuelled by creative and participatory methods. His work explores civic design as a means to strengthen collective agency and democratic innovation in urban contexts.

Ferry van de Mosselaer is a senior researcher with the Sustainable Urban Transformation research group at Fontys University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. He holds a PhD in social geography from KU Leuven, where his dissertation examined the role of co-creation in urban planning and development processes. His current work focuses on the intersection of design, social innovation, futures, community development, and participation.

Katrina Newell is a PhD researcher in design at Ulster University, Northern Ireland. She has a background in youth and community development through arts-based and collaborative initiatives. Her research investigates how artefact-based participatory design can foster dialogue, trust, and social transformation in post-conflict communities.

Together, the organisers bring complementary expertise in participatory design, civic design, and social transformation—linking micro-level creative encounters, community-scale collaboration, and systemic urban transitions. They have collaborated in previous international fora, including the DRS 2024 conversation “*What is Next for Civic Design?*”, and share an interest in cultivating dialogical and agonistic spaces for participatory practice.

Declaration of AI Use

The authors used AI-assisted tools including Writefull, ChatGPT, and Grammarly solely for copy editing and proofreading of the manuscript text. All original content, ideas, analysis, and conclusions were developed and written by the authors. No AI tools were used in the generation of research ideas, data analysis, or substantive content creation.

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Exploring Peace, Dialogue and Coexistence. Situated Actions in Milan and Worldwide

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Abstract

The paper presents the key issues emerging from the Situated Actions (SAs) track of the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026 and discusses how these actions engage with the themes of peace, dialogue, and coexistence. It frames SAs as performative, context-bound interventions that temporarily reconfigure local realities while resonating globally. The SAs—going to be enacted during and before the conference in Milan and worldwide—will span in diverse formats, from artistic installations and performative workshops to community rituals and narrative experiments. Examining these actions, the paper interrogates how participatory design can foster collective imagination, civic engagement, and ethical reflection amid global crises and political contestations over the meaning of peace. Ultimately, the paper positions the conference as a node within a wider ecology of participatory practices, emphasising pluralism, reflexivity, and the ongoing negotiation of what it means to enact peace, dialogue, and coexistence in situated contexts.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

Keywords

Situated Actions, Performative Practices, Relational Design, Critical Engagement

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1 GENERAL FRAMING

As researchers in design, we frame “Exploring Peace, Dialogue and Coexistence in Milan and Worldwide” through the lens of Situated Actions (SA), drawing on Donna Haraway’s [4] notion of situated knowledge and Guy Debord’s [1] situationism. From Haraway, we

inherit the epistemological claim that all knowledge is partial, embodied, and accountable to specific positions: peace, dialogue, and coexistence cannot be abstract universals, but must be understood as emerging from concrete, relational, and power-laden contexts. From Debord and the Situationist tradition, we draw attention to the construction of situations as critical interventions in everyday life, capable of disrupting dominant narratives and exposing the spectacle that often neutralises political meaning. Making art, artistic languages and everyday practices accessible to everyone (“banalising”) can lead to critical perspectives arising. By combining situatedness and situationism, we conceptualise “actions” not as generic best practices, but as context-bound, performative, and transformative engagements that reconfigure local realities while resonating globally. Our choice of the term “exploring” in the title of this paper, rather than “practicing” or “experimenting”, for example, reflects a deliberate epistemic and political stance: in the current international context—marked by the ongoing genocide in Palestine, severe repression of civil dissent in multiple countries, and the instrumental appropriation of the word “peace” by power institutions such as the so-called “Board of Peace”—the very word “peace” risks becoming emptied of meaning. To explore, then, is to remain critically attentive, to refuse premature closure, and to engage peace as a contested, situated, and continuously re-negotiated field of action.

This positioning also resonates with community-based Participatory Design [3] and traditions that frame design as a political and infrastructural practice and an agonistic space [5] where participation entails negotiation, conflict, and the continuous redefinition of roles and relationships [2].

As the conference is still several months away, many aspects of how the SAs will unfold remain open. This paper therefore reflects on their intended design, rather than on their situated enactment.

For the PDC 2026 SAs call, we kept the scope very broad to allow diverse interpretations. We sought proposals with a performative nature that engaged with a location and the community inhabiting it, both in Milan during the conference and elsewhere worldwide. Alternatively, the SAs could have taken place earlier, anywhere in the world, and then been presented to the conference as video documentation.

While the call was intentionally open to allow diverse interpretations, the selection process was guided by a set of curatorial criteria. In particular, we prioritised actions that demonstrated a strong sense of situatedness, understood as an explicit engagement with a specific context and its communities; a performative dimension, where participation unfolds through action rather than representation; and a relational accountability, in which authors showed

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awareness of the ethical implications of working with people, places, and institutions. These criteria informed the final constellation of SAs, shaping a selection that balances diversity of formats with coherence in approach.

2 Situated Actions in Milan

For the proposals scheduled to take place in Milan, the request was to imagine actions that could occur within a very limited timeframe, possibly coexisting with others in the same space at the same time. We were interested in actions with a performative aspect that engaged with the space and its inhabitants. It was essential for us that, from the moment of selection onward, the authors would be willing to engage with us and the hosting space, negotiating the various design and technical aspects along the way.

Three locations in Milan have been chosen for the SAs. The first is **Open Casello**, located in Milan city centre, near famous cultural and touristic landmarks on one hand - as Sant’Ambrogio Cathedral, Navigli, and the San Vittore prison on the other; the second is the space of the cultural association **Nuovo Armenia**, located in the northern semi-peripheral area of Milan. The third is the **Bovisa campus** itself, which is hosting the conference. This will be the venue for the SAs most engaged with issues pertaining to the campus and the conference, aiming to engage the academic community, in particular.

2.1 Open Casello

Since 2022, the Municipality of Milan has promoted the reuse of vacant public spaces for young people. Open Casello, a renovated historic tollhouse, is a pilot project co-managed with youth aged 14–35. It combines space activation, mentoring, orientation services, and training in community management, aiming to foster youth protagonism, peer support, and the creation of an autonomous body for public space care and community activation. It is located in the city centre, an area with a high concentration of important cultural institutions and landmarks, such as Navigli, Porta Genova railway station, San Vittore prison, the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo Da Vinci, Cattolica University, and Cadorna railway station.

Open Casello is where 4 of the Milan SAs will be hosted: ‘Re-worlding Milano’, ‘Visiting De Pastorie: (re)narrating more-than-human perspectives in participatory design research’, ‘Extending dialogue beyond the prison: the San Vittore Situated Vocabulary’, ‘Filo: Weaving Connections’. They offer diverse experiences engaging participants as players and “visitors”, exploring words, hands-on activities, and urban walks as different ways for addressing asymmetries.

Reworlding Milano is an urban play: a speculative, relational method of world-building that nurtures existing cultural, ecological, and social patterns. Set in Milan 2050, the SA stages an urban play adventure in which participants role-play collective responses to cascading climate crises. Through reconnection, reimagination, and regeneration, they co-create alternative, posthuman futures grounded in place-based and Indigenous-informed knowledges. This SA fosters civic imagination, inviting communities to reshape urban life through play, care, and shared ecological responsibility.

Visiting De Pastorie: An interactive exhibition experimenting with more-than-human storytelling in Participatory Design. This SA is conceived as a staged encounter that mobilises narration and curation as civic practices. It centres on the ongoing transformation of De Pastorie into a living lab, but approaches it from the perspective of the building itself. By adopting a more-than-human narrator, the SA reframes participatory design as an arena through which fractured community relations, socio-environmental transitions, and multispecies entanglements are made present and contestable, without appropriating their standpoint.

Extending dialogue beyond the prison: the San Vittore Situated Vocabulary. This Situated Action invites collective reflection on positionality, representation, and the ethics of co-presence in design. Through a participatory exhibition, it gathers situated meanings around San Vittore prison, a historical panopticon which is located close to the Open Casello, engaging both local residents and PDC participants. Structured into two moments—pre-conference and during PDC 2026—it stages an impossible dialogue between inmates and the broader prison community and society, which surfaces marginality, institutional limits, and asymmetrical voices within the shared urban context.

Filo: Weaving Connections: a hands-on activity where visitors collaboratively weave colored threads around the cube structure provided. The low-tech collective practice combines hands-on workshops, participatory experiments, and therapeutic making sessions. Participation emerges as a complex, situated process shaped by power relations, material configurations, and social dynamics. Design artefacts and devices are not neutral instruments but socio-material assemblages that participants appropriate, negotiate, and at times contest, becoming sites of alignment as well as friction within and across communities of practice. In this light, *Filo* unfolds as a collective, embodied practice where meaning is generated through ongoing interactions among materials, people, and contexts.

Within the Open Casello context, participation is enacted as building paths of connection: connecting people to the urban landscape by exploration and play; connecting different social groups and places by words and meanings; connecting experiences by storytelling; and physically making connections making and assembling artifacts. Across these SAs, participation emerges as a process of co-creation and critical encounter, where asymmetries, more-than-human perspectives, and marginalized voices are actively negotiated and made visible, thus foregrounding participation as an ethical and transformative engagement with urban and social complexity.

2.2 Situated Actions at Nuovo Armenia

The association Nuovo Armenia is located near the Polimi Bovisa Campus in Milan. Nuovo Armenia has been offering an inclusive and multidisciplinary cultural program aimed at broadening one’s perspective beyond Italy’s borders, particularly through film screenings from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Nuovo Armenia’s home is an old Milanese farmhouse and its garden. Especially in the summer, Nuovo Armenia becomes an important public space for the neighbourhood’s social life.

Nuovo Armenia is where four of the SAs will be hosted:

Drifting Bodies through Algorithms: Participatory Choreographies for Embodied Experiences of Coexistence presents a structured choreographic exploration based on the Boids flocking algorithm, which models collective movement through three fundamental principles: alignment, cohesion, and separation. The core of this SA lies in exploring the relationships among space, bodies, the behavioural rules of flocking algorithms, and the interstitial fields of attention. It seeks to evoke a shared sense of care and attunement—toward oneself, toward fellow participants, and toward both the physical and the digital environments. This SA thus invites participants to inhabit, through the body, the interplay between the digital realm and the physical, sensorial world, engaging it as both an individual and a collective experience.

Coexistence RAVE: Relational Attunements, Vibrations & Entanglements aspires to function as a temporary space and a collective ritual in which dance operates as a method of reflexivity through perception-with-others, enabling the practice of spatial and relational coexistence through shared rhythm, movement, and vibration. The proposal thus seeks to open an unstructured field in which to reflect upon and make sense of the ideas emerging throughout the conference, thinking them through the embodied act of dancing.

Utopian Epistles on Dissent, Disagreement, and Disillusionment, by contrast, is a more intimate SA, grounded in the practice of writing postcards to one another as a way of collectively reflecting on one's own design practice. Within the quiet interiority of handwriting, a space opens for personal expression to surface and take form. This SA does not seek to produce reconciliation at all costs; rather, it aims to cultivate a space capable of holding and articulating even divergent ideas, as participants jointly question what role participatory design might play in peace-making beyond the boundaries of academia. The space envisioned in this proposal serves not to reconcile, but to articulate differences. The physicality of postcards forces participants to enter even more deeply into a slower pace and to allow personal reflection to emerge. The collection of these postcards, through a portable archive, will preserve the memory of a chorus of ideas and reflections exchanged among participants.

The SA ***Walkshopping Parco La Goccia's Past, Presents and Futures*** will take place at Parco La Goccia, some days before the PDC conference. Later, in Nuovo Armenia, the authors will present their documentation. This SA is centred on walking, as a way to get to know a place and its interconnections. In this case, the place is Parco La Goccia, in a former industrial area that, after being abandoned, had time to become a forest again. It is here that several citizens' committees, along with institutions, artists, and others, have been debating and discussing the possibility of protecting this new urban forest. Through its walking activity, this SA will explore the relationship between the human and the non-human.

Utopian Epistles on Dissent, Disagreement, and Disillusionment, Drifting Bodies through Algorithms: Participatory Choreographies for Embodied Experiences of Coexistence and Coexistence RAVE: Relational Attunements, Vibrations & Entanglements require an exclusive attentiveness, a commitment to being here and now. For this reason, they will unfold sequentially, allowing participants the time to fully enter into and gently conclude each experience. Walkshopping Parco La Goccia's Past, Presents and Futures will

instead present, at Nuovo Armenia, a photographic documentation of the work previously done, as a fixed element during the two hours of activity in the space.

The four SAs taking place in Nuovo Armenia share several common threads. First, they foreground the active involvement of the body: they invite participants to inhabit space together—to listen, to sense, to move. *Walkshopping Parco La Goccia* has walking at the centre, while *Drifting Bodies through Algorithms* and *Coexistence RAVE* calls for movement through the spaces of Nuovo Armenia, *Utopian Epistles* proposes a slowing down—an invitation to write physical letters, to send and receive them, to read and archive them. In this context, bodies and movement are the peculiar forms of participation.

2.3 Situated Actions at Campus Bovisa Polimi

Since the late 1980s, the Bovisa neighbourhood has been undergoing a phase of neo-urbanisation: the former industrial sites that characterise the area were undergoing a profound regeneration effort. In 1994, the School of Architecture, and later the School of Design of Politecnico di Milano, moved into the renovated former Ceretti & Tanfani factory. While the campus has brought a new population of approximately 9,000, it has also inevitably created invisible boundaries between the university community and the neighbourhood, as well as the adjacent public spaces that are not used as much by the neighbourhood's residents. These boundaries have been slowly breaking down in recent years thanks to a number of inclusive initiatives, such as Coltivando, the community garden on campus.

The three SAs hosted at the Bovisa campus are engaging in dialogue with the university itself and the conference participants and require their continuous presence during the conference.

Among these, the SA ***An Elephant in the Room: A Participative Visualisation of the Collaborations Between Politecnico di Milano and Companies Fuelling Israel's Violence Against Palestinians*** explicitly requires its presence on campus, precisely because it questions the host institution, the Politecnico di Milano. The action interrogates the university's potential entanglements with the arms industry and their implications for ongoing geopolitical violence. Between January and May 2026, *The Elephant in the Room* will compile, cross-check, and publicly present verifiable digital traces of university-industry relations, focusing on links between departments, research funding streams, and companies identified by credible monitoring organisations as materially supporting Israeli state violence.

The SA ***The Coexistence Archive: Traces of the Participatory Design Conference***, on the other hand, aims to collect the ideas, impressions, and suggestions of conference participants, acting almost as an archive of voices and a radio station for the conference. For this reason, it was essential that its work take place on campus, at specific, jointly curated times.

Finally, ***Imaginaries for Sharing and Repair Practices*** is an interactive exhibition that grows throughout the conference, structured around participants' collaborative contributions. The project foregrounds the co-construction of speculative imaginaries of social practice where sharing and repair are embedded modalities of daily life.

Within the Bovisa campus context, participation is enacted as a situated engagement that unfolds through the continuous presence and contributions of conference participants, directly implicating them in the production of knowledge and critique. Across these SAs, participation emerges as a reflexive and collective practice that not only bridges institutional and urban boundaries but also invites participants to interrogate, document, and reimagine the socio-political and ethical conditions of the university itself.

3 Worldwide Situated Actions: Distributed Practices Across Diverse Contexts

The Worldwide Situated Actions selected for PDC 2026 extend the conference beyond Milan by enacting context-specific interventions across diverse geopolitical, ecological, and institutional contexts.

Rather than functioning as “remote” contributions, these actions extend the conference’s field of action beyond its venue, activating situated practices that remain in dialogue with the Milan gathering. They are embedded within specific communities and will subsequently be presented at the conference through video documentation. This approach reconfigures the conference space in three key ways: first, it becomes a space for resonance, where local meanings echo across contexts; second, it enables the movement and transformation of ideas between diverse settings; finally, it invites reflection, encouraging the conference’s participants to engage thoughtfully with the documented experiences.

The Worldwide Situated Actions can be interpreted through four interrelated trajectories of diverse experiments in structuring participation. Each is grounded in a specific context, yet collectively they expand the repertoire of participatory design practices across various sites and scales.

3.1 Staged Encounters for Civic Dialogues and Political Imagination

Several Situated Actions employ performative formats such as legislative theatre, serious games, and speculative role-play as civic devices for rehearsing participation through constructed situations. Participants are invited to assume roles, engage in scenarios, or enter speculative environments. These projects establish staged encounter spaces where action precedes reflection and meaning arises from enacted experience. Beyond immersive engagement, participants can gain concrete outcomes—such as enhanced facilitation skills, shared propositions, or practical frameworks for navigating conflict—that can be translated into their local contexts. In this way, performative methods may serve as catalysts for collaboratively addressing complex social issues.

Scenes of the Unseen utilises Legislative Theatre as a participatory device to address everyday micro-violence in Mexico City, transforming spectators into “spect-actors” who rehearse alternative civic responses. Instead of merely representing conflict, the action stages it as a space for collaborative experimentation, allowing participants to intervene directly in unfolding scenarios and test new responses to violence. This performative structure enables self-reflection and shared dialogue through embodied engagement, foregrounding theatre as a civic rehearsal space where coexistence is explored through collective improvisation.

Guardians of the Mangroove presents a multispecies role-playing experience in Bahía de Banderas, Mexico, where participants embody both human and non-human agents within a fragile mangrove ecosystem. Through speculative simulation and collaborative mural-making, the Situated Action foregrounds ecological interdependence. By negotiating decisions from more-than-human perspectives, such as those of crabs, trees, birds, and fish, the action encourages participants to rehearse relational accountability beyond anthropocentric frameworks, while the mural serves as a living archive of shared commitments.

Empathy Games: Exploring Alternate Practices of Feeling for Others investigates play as a method for challenging normative understandings of empathy. Through playful and reflective activities, participants explore alternate practices of feeling for others while reflecting on the uses and politics of empathy in participatory design. By assuming a *queer*, empathic approach that allows one to think obliquely, destabilise, unsettle, and problematise, empathy is challenged and critically examined, while new strategies for a more ethical, contextual, and reflexive practice of understanding others can emerge.

Across these actions, participation is structured through controlled situations that temporarily redistribute roles and agency, highlighting how civic dialogue can emerge from embodied negotiation rather than discursive consensus.

3.2 Narrative Reconfigurations

Other Situated Actions structure participation through processes of collective reinterpretation and narrative reframing. These practices invite participants to revisit lived experiences, unfinished processes, or shared histories and to reassemble them through storytelling, ritual, collage, or conversational exchange. Participation unfolds as meaning-making: fragmentation becomes material for reflection, and vulnerability becomes a shared resource. Through these practices, participants do not merely express perspectives but co-construct alternative readings of events and relationships. The outcomes often take tangible forms—archives, visual compositions, collective statements, or renewed relational commitments—that remain with participants beyond the encounter. In this way, narrative reconfiguration operates not only as a reflection but as a method for reshaping how communities interpret their context and imagine their capacity to act.

Cemetery of Good Intentions reframes the conclusion of design projects as a collective ritual of ethical closure. Through an in-person workshop in New York City and a publicly accessible digital archive, this Situated Action fosters collective reflection and dialogue about design endings. Through the symbolic creation of “tombstones” for unfinished or dissolved projects, participants reflect on responsibility, accountability, and the emotional residues of participatory practice. Drawing inspiration from end-of-life care practices, the workshop frames closure not as failure but as an act of care.

Reimagining Oppression to Progression through Collaborative Collage Making utilises collaborative collage as a visual and tactile method for transforming experiences of protesting into shared imaginaries of agency. Participants physically deconstruct

and reassemble fragments of protest imagery to collectively visualise pathways from oppression toward peaceful progression. Collage-making functions as a participatory design method for reflection, dialogue, and peace-building. Through collective layering, juxtaposition, and reconfiguration, oppressive structures are rendered visible and thus negotiable.

These actions suggest that participation can operate as a process of collective interpretation, where meaning is not given but continuously reassembled through shared narrative labour.

3.3 Practices of Attunement

Another group of Situated Actions foregrounds embodied and sensorial modes of participation, emphasising the quality of presence rather than discursive exchange. Through movement, sound, shared making, and multisensory interaction, these projects cultivate forms of attentiveness in which dialogue emerges through rhythm, gesture, and co-creation. Participation is configured as mutual adjustment: participants listen, respond, and recalibrate in relation to one another within a shared field of activity. The central outcomes are ephemeral, leaving participants with embodied experiences of co-presence that can heighten relational awareness and inform how they approach collective processes in future.

Collective Somatic Counterpoint connects participants in Japan and Germany through a biodata-driven sonic installation that transforms presence and interaction into a layered soundscape. Each visitor's heartbeat and bodily rhythms become part of a shared contrapuntal composition that connects participants across geographical distance. The installation stages coexistence as a temporal and sensorial overlap, where past, present, and future participants resonate within a common acoustic field.

Safe Space beyond Body: A Situated Action of Co-Creative Choreography through Drawing incorporates drawing into choreographic creation, proposing visual externalisation as a mediating practice within co-creative dance processes. Through structured workshops in Yokohama, participants translated sensations into sketches before embodying them in movement, and then collectively reflected on the performance. Drawing serves as an external trace of internal cognition, allowing reflection and meaningful co-construction.

Art Evening: An Artistic Space for Dialogue and Conviviality operates as a participatory, interdisciplinary, and convivial format that integrates visual art, literature, music, and culinary practices into a unified experiential composition. As it tours across Japanese cities, the format becomes a shared ritual, where audiences become co-actors in the unfolding aesthetic environment. Cultural capital is generated dynamically through multisensory and dialogic engagement, repetition and embodied interaction.

Melodies of Coexistence: Community Music and Stop-Motion Animation Workshop for Family Dialogue in Suburban China is a community-based workshop held in suburban areas of Zhangjiagang, China, that integrates collective music-listening and making, and stop-motion animation to foster intergenerational dialogue within families. Situated in a context characterised by rapid socio-economic transformation and shifting family structures, the action establishes a shared creative process in which parents and children co-compose melodies and visual narratives. Music

serves as a relational bridge, while animation externalises emotions and generational tensions into tangible forms.

Setting the Killjoy Table invites young participants in Ireland to co-design and construct a table that serves as both a material artefact and a shared site of dialogue. Through collaborative making, frustration and institutional “brick walls” are named and transformed into opportunities for collective reflection. The act of building together foregrounds labour, negotiation, and the physicality of encounter, positioning the table as a relational device that invites engagement with tension rather than resolving it prematurely.

Here, participation is less about articulation and more about modulation—how bodies, rhythms, and attention align or diverge within a shared field.

3.4 Public Configurations of Situated Dialogue

This trajectory includes Situated Actions that turn everyday spaces into platforms for negotiation, encounter, and collective sensemaking, foregrounding how participatory design can reconfigure the infrastructures of public life. These Situated Actions transform marketplaces, healthcare environments, festivals, and community sites into platforms for encounter, inviting individuals who might not typically enter formal participatory processes to engage. The outcomes often extend beyond the immediate interaction, influencing local networks, institutional practices, or ongoing community initiatives. In this way, the design of public configurations serves as a catalyst for sustained engagement, embedding participatory dialogue within everyday environments rather than isolating it in temporary events.

Dispositivos Placeros: Voices of Resistance from Marketplaces in Colombia, Italy and Taiwan activates marketplaces in three different countries as dialogic infrastructures shaped by everyday practices, memories, and social relations. Through participatory workshops, vendors and community members co-create a dialogic device that functions as a living archive of stories, struggles, and situated knowledge. The marketplace is reconceptualised not solely as a site of commerce but as a space for identity negotiation, resistance and collective autonomy.

Playful Public Interactions for Unfolding Conversations about Digital Health facilitate conversations about digital health with local communities in London and Sheffield, enabling collaborative conceptualisation and exploration of digital health topics in new ways. Through iterative, low-fidelity installations in public health/care spaces, the Situated Action invites passersby to sketch, vote, question, and reconfigure digital health narratives.

Visibilize-ing Care Festival brings together different formats, workshops, panels, presentations, performances, and installations in a hybrid format that integrates artistic programming with participatory reflection about care. The festival renders visible the often-invisible labour and affective infrastructures of care. The Festival positions care not as a private obligation but as a shared civic practice that can be collectively re-imagined and re-valued.

In general, while the Worldwide Situated Actions remain anchored in their specific contexts, they contribute to the collective exploration of the conference themes Peace, Dialogue and Coexistence at PDC 2026. Through diverse practices, these actions expand the possibilities for structuring and experiencing participation as

relational processes unfolding in particular places and continuing to resonate beyond them. In this way, the conference becomes one node within a broader ecology of participatory practices already active across various contexts and communities.

In these cases, participation is infrastructural: it depends less on invitation and more on how conditions of access, visibility, and interaction are materially configured.

4 Final thoughts

Across the selected Situated Actions (SAs), several shared threads emerge. First, they are collective propositions developed by transnational working groups that bring together researchers and practitioners from multiple institutions, disciplines, and cultural contexts. This plurality generates epistemic richness while foregrounding participation as a negotiated, relational process. The collaboration between academia and practitioners proves particularly generative, as it combines critical reflection, methodological rigor, and situated, experiential knowledge. Such hybridity can foster reflexive experimentation, in which theory is tested in action and practice is critically reframed. At the same time, situating actions in Milan—within neighbourhoods and communities not previously known to SAs' authors and participants—poses ethical and methodological challenges: risks of extractivism, misinterpretation, or superficial engagement must be carefully addressed. In this regard, local communities may benefit from encountering the PDC network through expanded visibility, new alliances, and opportunities for dialogue that connect local concerns to global debates. Hosts play a pivotal mediating role: they anchor the actions in place, translate between communities, and safeguard relational continuity. In return, they

gain access to international perspectives, resources, and collaborative imaginaries, while contributing situated knowledge that grounds the conference in lived urban realities.

If Milan functions as a temporary site of convergence, the Worldwide actions demonstrate that the conference is only one node within a broader ecology of participatory interventions already unfolding elsewhere. To explore, in this context, means to remain attentive to how these different modes of participation travel, resonate, and sometimes frictionally intersect across places and communities.

Ultimately, what emerges across the selected SAs is a plural repertoire of situated practices through which peace, dialogue, and coexistence are continuously explored and framed as situated, often fragile practices that emerge through embodied negotiation, collective imagination, and the confrontation of structural tensions. This pluralism reflects the contemporary condition in which “peace” is both urgently needed and politically contested. To explore, in this context, is to keep open the question of how participatory design can intervene without closure—remaining responsive to place, accountable to relationships, and attentive to the frictions that shape collective life.

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Walkshopping Parco La Goccia's Pasts, Presents and Futures

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Abstract

This Situated Action proposes a walking workshop (walkshop) exploring Parco La Goccia, a contested urban forest in Milan. Participants will use custom-made speculative research devices, or 'scroll-maps,' to navigate the forest's perimeter, engaging with its history, pollution, and possible futures. These devices, developed for the Co-Designing Forests research project, prompt users to document their responses through drawing and writing, fostering a deeper connection with the environment. The walkshop aims to introduce a new research methodology, gather feedback on the devices, and explore more-than-human-centred design by encouraging altered relationships (we tentatively suggest noticing, empathy, attunement, but welcome others) with non-human beings.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

Keywords

more-than-human-centred-design, designing urban forests, wildlife

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1 Introduction

1.1 Walkshop rationale

Our proposal is for a walking workshop (walkshop [3]) that will explore Parco La Goccia, a contested urban forest next to the conference venue (see Figure 1). Encircled by railway tracks, it has previously hosted industrial factories and gas storage facilities and now contains several hundred trees. During the walkshop, we will deploy custom-made speculative research devices [2] that we call 'scroll maps' and invite conference participants to explore the forest's history, contestations, reclamation, pollution and damaged eco-systems, and to speculate on its possible futures. For this walkshop, each participant will be given a research device to use throughout (shown in Figure 2, Figure 3). These custom-made, yet lo-fi devices contain printed paper scrolls that users are invited

to scroll through, interact with, and respond to as they walk. The scrolls contain a series of prompts and invitations for thinking, feeling, understanding and imagining the landscapes while guiding users along a route and providing space to document responses by way of drawing and writing.

The devices have been developed as part of the AHRC-funded research project *Co-Designing Forests*, which explores access, participation, and the design of 'wild' spaces and woodlands. The project explores human/non-human relationships (and their design) on various sites, including nature reserves, urban centres, migration routes, woodlands (and so on). While sharing traits with our existing project, Parco La Goccia, would represent a new space for us to bring to bear our design-research on access and 'wild' places. The devices have so far been used to gather research data that can be drawn on during ongoing design-research projects and processes (an approach inspired by cultural probes [1]). The aim of this research is to enhance our understanding of how different publics relate to 'wild' spaces, while also strengthening those relationships, and considering multispecies coexistence.

Our intention with bringing this practice to Milan is to show a methodology for participants to gain an understanding of the urban forest near to the conference venue, as well as opening a discussion about new and alternative ways of engaging with their own research contexts. We also seek to demonstrate the design of our research devices to PDC colleagues and peers, to gain feedback and responses to their design, and to invite invaluable critical feedback. In doing so, we seek to address the conference's theme of dialogue. Our work addresses the other conference theme of coexistence by exploring more-than-human-centred design methods that prompt participants to empathise with other-than-human beings by considering how they think, feel, and experience their surroundings and relationships. Through the provocations on our scroll maps, we ask participants to consider how pasts, presents, and futures can coexist, and to explore how our devices can make sense of this. Importantly, these devices are designed in situated ways to be used outside while walking in specific spaces, creating a novel way of approaching research 'on the move'. We hope that these devices will inspire other practitioners who also work in changing contexts employing walking and movement as research methods.

1.2 Walkshop route

The proposed walkshop will begin on the university campus and will closely follow the edge of the Parco La Goccia forest before looping back around to the campus. We have made contact with the Siamo il Comitato la Goccia; an activist group who are campaigning to open the forest to the public, and while we are working to secure access to the forest itself, we believe that walking some of the forest perimeter will provide a fascinating case study for thinking



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about the relationship between cities, urban forests, and those that dwell in them. This perimeter view will give participants enough opportunity to observe and think-with the forest as well as some of its immediate surroundings, allowing them to contextualise their observations. A single walk would involve a group of up to twelve participants. With the lo-fi nature of these walks, there is potential to conduct multiple walks throughout the conference duration, and for devices to be borrowed at other times during the conference proceedings if participants are interested in continuing their observations.

1.3 Background information

The specific nature of the research devices and the workshop is largely based on our work with the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust (Figure 4). While the primary focus of the *Co-designing Forests* research project that gave rise to the devices we will use centres on more traditionally wild spaces such as recognised nature reserves, in recent months, we have found that the research devices work particularly well in fostering discussions in urban and peri-urban areas. Realising that adding diversity to the areas we studied helped not only by providing a richness of data, but also by more varied responses from participants driven by the different surroundings. Our proposed workshop around Parco La Goccia will provide an excellent opportunity to build on this.

Our proposition for this situated action will not only provide a unique environment for conference participants to engage in our research but also offer us an opportunity to expand our research into new environments that may provide entirely new insights into how people relate to so-called ‘wild’ places. The design of the scrolls map research devices will also be made open source and an ‘instructables’ guide will also be shared with participants who wish to make their own, or re-mix our design.

1.4 How will it work/public interaction:

In small groups of up to 12, we will go on short semi-guided walks where each participant will receive a scroll device (Figure 2) that will provide directions and simultaneously ask questions of the user that they will engage with for the duration of the walk. Time permitting, at the end of the walkshop, there would be a short discussion about how each participant has responded and to give space for reflection.

1.5 Author Biographies

Dr Liam Healy is a design-researcher and lecturer working across participatory speculative design (PSD), and science and technology studies (STS). This proposal builds on his current design-research ‘*Co-designing Forests*’ and collaboration with the Wildlife Trust exploring how access to wild places is mediated and negotiated, as well as the contribution paths and trails might make to woodland and human well-being, and climate resilience. His PhD in Design (2020), awarded by Goldsmiths, University of London, investigated formal and informal design processes and participation in the context of the European borderscape.

Sam Lodder-Knowles graduated with a Masters in Architecture at the University of Sheffield in 2025 before starting work on the *Co-Designing Forests* Research project. Before this, Sam had worked

in architecture practices in both Sheffield and London. Sam’s research and design interests focus on collaborative production, social infrastructure and interactions and relationships between humans and more-than-humans.

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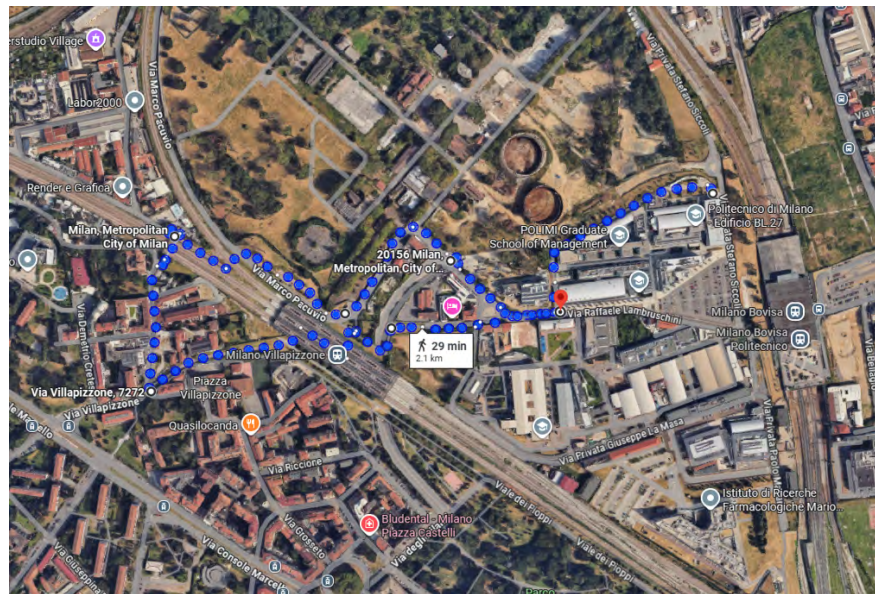


Figure 1: Screenshot of Google Maps showing possible walking route



Figure 2: Photograph of a Scroll Map device before use.



Figure 3: Photograph of Scroll Map kits during a walkshop before use.

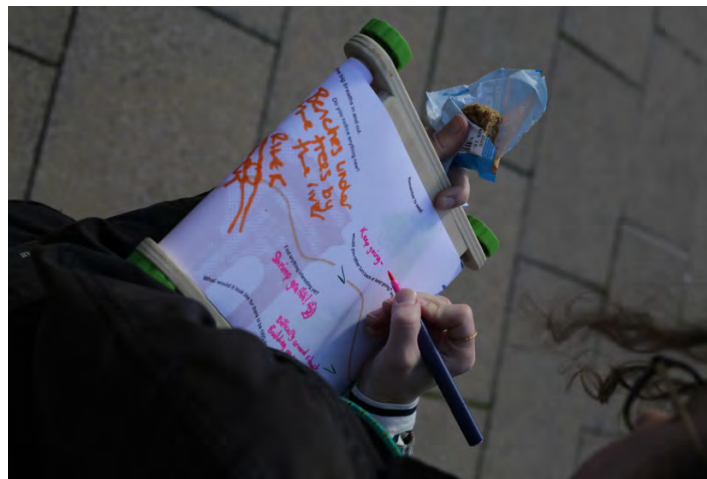


Figure 4: Photograph of Scroll Map kits in use.

Scenes of the Unseen

A Legislative Theater Co-creation of Peace, Inner Change, and Institutional Imagination

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Abstract

Violence rarely exists only in its extreme forms. It can be reproduced daily through subtle interactions that sustain cycles of distrust and fear. This Situated Action explores this dynamic to address everyday microviolence in Mexico City through a legislative theater as a participatory design approach. Grounded in Global South traditions, Theater of the Oppressed, and peaceshaping theory, the project invites affected citizens to transition from spectators to spect-actors who rehearse and negotiate alternative responses to violence. Developed through participatory workshops with artists, activists, and cultural practitioners, the performance activates Inner Development Goals to bridge individual reflection and collective civic agency. By fostering empathy, dialogue, and collaborative meaning-making, this situated initiative positions participatory performance as a living platform for civic empowerment and peace-shaping, contributing to SDG 16 while advancing participatory design scholarship on embodied, community-based responses to structural and cultural violence.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design; • **Applied computing** → Arts and humanities; Performing arts; Law, social and behavioral sciences; Psychology.

Keywords

Legislative theater, Peaceshaping, Sustainable & Inner development goals

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire [1] argued that “...dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed”. This vicious cycle of violence begetting violence is further intensified in social environments where large-scale acts of violence overshadow the subtle ways aggression is embedded in day-to-day life. An example of such interplay is the current social landscape of Mexico, where persistent violence has progressively shaped society to live amid institutional distrust and social fragmentation.

Ranked 135th out of 163 countries in the Global Peace Index [2], Mexico stands second to last among Central and North American countries. Within this context, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, faces significant setbacks, with several targets showing regressive trends that reflect both global geopolitical tensions and localized social polarization [3]. While organized crime has been recognized as the main driver of extreme violence, the consequences of this environment permeate emotional well-being, civic participation, and social cohesion by shaping how individuals experience safety, trust, and belonging in their daily lives. Just in Mexico City, 50% of residents perceive their surroundings as unsafe, while deep distrust in the justice system leads citizens to report only 25% of crimes [4]. Under these conditions, everyday encounters frequently become spaces where exclusion and silent aggression are reproduced across institutional and social settings.

Although less visible than organized or criminal violence, these forms of symbolic or microviolence sustain cultures of distrust and fear which influence how individuals understand themselves, relate to others, and engage with public institutions. Recognizing the persistence of these tensions highlights the importance of engaging individuals' emotional and cognitive capacities to understand how violence is interpreted, reproduced, or challenged in their daily interactions. This is where empathy, compassion, trust, hope, and dialogue come in. They become bridges between individual agency and institutional peaceshaping efforts, especially in contexts where structural and cultural violence have become normalized across family relations, workplaces, public institutions, and digital spaces.

Because these dynamics do not occur in isolation, participatory approaches fostering dialogue among affected communities emerge as necessary for broader peaceshaping actions. Even if modest in scale relative to the magnitude of violence in Mexico, such experiences can open spaces for collectively reimagining social relations and exploring alternative responses to conflict through forums that echo widespread protests among Mexico City inhabitants to reclaim their voice and agency in a context marked by fear and insecurity.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMING, FORMAT & PUBLIC INTERACTION

To respond to this desire for civic voice and rooted in a deep Global South tradition, this Situated Action (SA) proposes a participatory forum in the form of legislative theater through which citizens can rehearse, negotiate, and collectively articulate alternative responses to everyday violence. Within Mexico City's longstanding culture of civic protest, artistic activism, and community-based theater, participatory performance has served as a culturally resonant and ethically grounded design inquiry extending civic expression beyond traditional demonstration into collaborative experimentation.

Drawing from Boal's theater of the oppressed [5] and peaceshaping approaches [6], this SA invites stakeholders to intervene, improvise, and test alternative responses on stage. Audience members transition from passive spectators into spect-actors who collectively deliberate and propose alternatives. By activating the ability of participants to be, think, relate, collaborate, and act, this SA seeks to foster human development capacities aligned with the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) [7]. These are framed as participatory triggers to address challenges related to SDG 16. Figure 1 offers a visual synthesis of this structure, positioning SDG 16 at the core, with five scenes of everyday violence as participatory entry points, and IDGs and peaceshaping as situated capacities supporting the co-creation of alternatives.

This SA is intended to take place within the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura (INBAL), Mexico's national institution dedicated to artistic production, education, and cultural rights. Situating the performance within INBAL provides a symbolic and publicly accessible arena where artistic practice intersects with civic reflection. While the project emerges from a postgraduate design program within this institutional environment, it is conducted as an independent academic initiative reflecting exclusively the scholarly perspectives and civic responsibility of the co-authors.

The dramaturgical design of the performance was developed considering the manifestations of violence in Mexico City and the



Figure 1: Conceptual model of the legislative theater, inter-relating SDG 16, scenes of microviolence, peaceshaping, and the IDGs.

authors' positionality as researchers, educators, and creative practitioners embedded within the city's social and cultural context. All co-authors are either native to or long-term residents of the capital and have engaged academically and personally with everyday manifestations of microviolence portrayed in the performance. This shared lived experience provides an epistemological grounding informing the interpretation of violence and the ethical orientation of the participatory design process. The methodological development for this proposal also reflects the authors' formation within the CYANOTYPES competencies framework for creative professionals, which integrates technical practice, systemic understanding, and ethical reflection on the social consequences of design decisions [8].

The five scenes of the performance were developed through an iterative participatory process informed by personal experiences, community narratives, public discourse, and observations of policy and legislative gaps focusing on economic pressure, psychological violence toward oneself, institutional exclusion, digital aggression, and workplace harassment. These narratives were refined through three participatory workshops conducted in November and December 2025 with 25 participants that shaped scenario development while revealing their capacity to trigger reflection on civic responsibility and structural violence. Insights generated during these sessions informed content refinement and facilitation strategies to guide participatory engagement, allowing the intended audience to emerge as conceptual contributors of the performance.

Accordingly, the SA seeks to engage participants from artistic and civic advocacy sectors, including artists, art and design students, creative practitioners, cultural workers, academics, and members of non-governmental organizations. While contributing diverse professional perspectives, these participants share the lived experience of navigating everyday violence as residents of Mexico City. This joint experiential ground is epistemologically significant positioning participants as situated knowledge holders whose embodied understanding of violence informs collective reflection and deliberation.

3 RELATION TO PDC 2026 & INTENDED OUTCOMES

This SA responds to the themes of PDC 2026 by offering a space where peace as experiential rehearsal, dialogue as participatory dramaturgy, and coexistence as relational negotiation are core to audience's engagement with staged stories. By integrating the IDGs and SDG 16, this SA seeks to become a living platform of voice and solidarity that reactivates communities and reimagines participatory design through peaceshaping and embodied interaction.

At the individual level, the SA is expected to foster self-reflection regarding personal behaviors by stepping into staged scenarios and experimenting with alternative actions. At a collective level, the performance aims to generate shared dialogue around lived experiences of microviolence and collaboratively surface alternative responses to these situations. Given the participation of creatives, activists, and engaged audiences, the proposed alternatives may combine imaginative and experimental approaches with contextually grounded strategies for addressing conflict.

While the SA draws from legislative theater traditions, its focus is based on adapting participant proposals into civic agency as a foundational step toward longer-term institutional transformation. Knowledge generation within the SA is expected to emerge through multiple participatory modalities, including performance improvisation and facilitated verbal dialogue among participants. Documentation will prioritize capturing participant narratives, proposed alternatives, and dialogical themes through facilitation notes and participant-generated reflections.

By foregrounding embodied ethical participation and collaborative meaning-making, this SA contributes to participatory design scholarship by exploring how performative co-creation processes can support peaceshaping practices and civic engagement in contexts characterized by everyday forms of violence.

4 AUTHORS' SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

The authors form an interdisciplinary group of postgraduate researchers and design practitioners of the Masters of Creativity for Design at EDINBA, Mexico, exploring the role of design in addressing complex societal challenges. Their work bridges sustainable development policy, digital governance, cultural sustainability, environmental stewardship, public health, and educational well-being through participatory, human-centered, and systemic design approaches.

Liliana Del Villar Arias is a specialist in sustainable development policies, with academic and professional experience integrating design, economics, environmental law, and international cooperation to foster systemic, evidence-based solutions for institutional transformation and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Georgina Arriaga Arana is a human-centered designer and postgraduate researcher analyzing digital public services in Mexico City, exploring how strategic design and technology can address complex challenges and improve inclusivity in citizen–government interaction.

Carlo Campuzano Ramírez is a postgraduate researcher and textile artist with research focusing on visual narratives in embroidery to challenge aesthetic hierarchies and preserve indigenous women's cultural heritage.

Ana Gómez Mayorga is an information designer and postgraduate researcher focused on urban environmental change, exploring citizen and expert perceptions to promote participatory, sustainable management of urban trees, and green infrastructure.

Tatiana Siachoque Moreno is an industrial designer and postgraduate researcher exploring how design can support cultural sustainability through crafts preservation, strengthening collective memory, identity, and creative economies.

Eréndira Vázquez Vega is a graphic designer specializing in textiles and postgraduate researcher focused on childhood mental health, exploring school environments that promote emotional well-being, self-care, and prosocial relationships in public primary education.

Yoo-kiusi Zamora Arvea is a postgraduate researcher in industrial and multimedia design researching self-medication in urban sports, analyzing body culture, communication, and social dynamics to inform public awareness and regulatory strategies around health and substance use.

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Drifting Bodies through Algorithms: Participatory Choreographies for Embodied Experiences of Coexistence

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Figure 1: Drifting Bodies through Algorithms workshop in Bolzano 2025

Abstract

Performative and embodied practices such as role-playing and enacting are used in Participatory Design (PD) to experience different perspectives. Inspired by choreography-informed participatory design, which maps the spatial, emotional, and relational dynamics of participation between the human and non-human, in this Situated Action (SA), participants are guided into a choreography based on a flocking algorithm. Flock algorithms simulate coordinated group movements, such as birds or fish, and are often employed in computer science applications. However, coded into software, these algorithms are removed from their embodied and experiential meaning. Building on our experience organising two “Drifting Bodies through Algorithms” workshops in Italy and Germany, we bring an embodied experience of co-existing into the realm of PDC26. We expect that this SA produces reflections on inclusion, collectivity,

and collaboration, and prompts insights into embodied approaches in PD.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing → Participatory design.

Keywords

choreography, Flocking algorithm, embodied interaction

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1 Introduction

In Participatory Design (PD), performative and embodied practices, such as role-playing and enacting, seek to involve different perspectives of humans [4, 8, 9, 12] and more-than-humans [3, 7]. Performance as a PD method can enable the inclusion of different perspectives while producing situated and embodied experiences,



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which create an enhancement of collaboration and connection between participants [2]. Within performative approaches in PD, Devonas Hoffmann and Høeg Karlsen coined the term “choreography-informed participatory design” [4] to refer to activities that map the spatial, emotional, and relational dynamics of participation through embodied practices between human and non-human.

Drawing on this work, in this Situated Action (SA), we propose a guided choreography in which participants move and interact with others based on the principles inspired by flocking algorithms [13]. Flocking algorithms simulate coordinated group movements, such as birds or fish [13]. They have been applied in various domains of computer science, such as computer graphics, animation, and robotics, to study complex behaviour in systems or model cooperative decision-making [11, 14, 17]. However, coded into software, flocking algorithms are removed from their embodied and experiential meaning.

In this SA, we employ the Boids algorithm, a flocking algorithm that simulates group movements by applying three rules: *alignment*, *cohesion*, and *separation* [16]. By bringing flocking algorithms and human movements into dialogue, we explore the emotional and relational dynamics of participation by experiencing rules of collective animal behaviour, both from a first-person perspective and from the perspective of spectatorship.

Referring to this year’s conference themes, in this SA, we focus on the embodied notion of coexistence through choreography. This alternative way of sensing, feeling, and experiencing coexistence can give rise to “an attitude of care and commitment” [6, p. 54]. Participation becomes a relational process of intra-actions [1] through which bodies engage in what Frischkorn defined as “more-than-human choreography”, meaning “iterated, embodied, and felt acts of relating to non-humans in situated instances of intra-action” [5, p. 6]. In this way, this activity seeks to add an experiential contribution to how choreographic and embodied approaches can be used in PD.

Building on our experience organising two “Drifting Bodies through Algorithms” workshops in Italy (May 2025) and Germany (September 2025), we bring an embodied experience of relating, intra-acting, and co-existing into the realm of PDC26. Participants will first be invited to move, attune with each other, and experience an embodied understanding of co-existence through the Boids algorithm as a foundation for participatory practice. This activity is guided by an experienced choreographer (the first author). After, participants are invited to collectively reflect on the experience, and the other researchers (co-authors) mediate this discussion through interactive visualisations.

From a research perspective, we question: How can algorithmic rules become a choreographic score that shapes an embodied understanding of inclusion, collectivity, and collaboration? Building on our previous work on embodied experiences [10, 15], we expect that participating in this SA facilitates reflections on ontological questions related to where bodies start and end, and how human and non-human bodies are entangled within the process of collective meaning-making.

2 Embodying Algorithms

2.1 First engagement - INTRA Project

The Designing Embodied Human-Data Intra-action project (INTRA, 2023-2026) creates embodied experiences of data to investigate how agency is produced through relational entanglements. In this context, the first author (choreographer) was invited to lead the workshop Drifting Bodies through Algorithms, which was co-designed by the other three authors.

The workshop took place on May 30th, 2025, in Bolzano (Italy). A total of ten people participated, including the authors, and it lasted ca. two hours. All participants were engaged in the academic field of design, ranging from students to professors. We worked in a large, spacious room at the university and occasionally used music to evoke or emphasise different states of movement. All the exercises were guided by the choreographer (see Fig.1).

During the workshop, we explored the embodiment of flocking and sorting algorithms to gain an experiential understanding of how each rule-based system invites different ways of relating to the self, other people, and the space. While the participants engaged with the Boids algorithm rules as one unified group, we divided them into smaller groups of four when working with the sorting algorithm. By engaging with both algorithms, participants experienced the deterministic and individualistic nature of the sorting process in contrast to the self-organising collective behavior of the flock. In this paper, we only describe the experience with flocking algorithms, as they will be the focus of the SA at PDC’26.

The workshop began with exercises to attune the ‘bodymind’ of each participant to the self, the others, and the space we worked in. We started in pairs and used hands-on feedback, such as tapping and stroking, to become aware of the different parts of the body. We continued to work individually, focusing on how small shifts of weight resonate in the whole body. Then we transitioned into moving as a collective, using hearing and peripheral awareness to attune to one another and the space. We added speed and proximity and generated different collective pathways in the space without clear leaders or followers. These so-called ‘attunement exercises’ facilitated a sensorial introduction towards the generation and observation of movement and formed the basis for the exploration of rule-based systems in an embodied way.

Drawing from the rules of the Boids algorithm, we explored *alignment*, *cohesion*, and *separation*. We began with *alignment* as this connected to the previous attunement exercises. All participants were invited to orient themselves to the average heading of their neighbours. This meant that all group members would move in the same direction and that every change of direction was a collective decision. We continued with *cohesion*: all participants oriented themselves to move towards their neighbours’ average position. This meant that the group kept gravitating towards the same point in space. We alternated *alignment* and *cohesion* as choreographic rules to explore different pathways and points in space, resulting in emergent group behaviours that ranged from very dynamic to more static. The third rule *separation* meant that participants had to steer away from their neighbours’ average position. This introduced distance as a choreographic dimension, contrasting the first two rules that focused on proximity.

After these exercises, we projected an interactive visualisation of the Boids algorithm on the wall. This simulation was created by the second author using a custom script developed in Processing⁴¹. The simulation included the three parameters used in the participatory choreography (i.e., *alignment*, *cohesion*, and *separation*), and it was instrumental for guiding discussions. Participants reflected on their bodily sensations and how the activities helped them attune to the other participants and the surroundings. They also described an increased understanding of how the senses are key instruments in becoming a collective that tries to move together as seamlessly as possible. Overall, the workshop revealed how the embodiment of algorithmic rules can generate a complexity of perceptual and social dynamics, propelling embodied reflections on the relations among the individual and the collective.

2.2 Second engagement - Choreographic Coding Lab

The Choreographic Coding Lab is an interdisciplinary workshop that brings together dancers, choreographers, and digital artists to explore movement, code, and data, seeking to bridge choreographic ideas and digital artefacts. The 2025 edition took place from September 8th to 12th in Mainz (Germany) with 27 participants from different countries - mainly countries in Western Europe and a few participants from South America, West Asia, and East Asia. During these five days, the first and second authors further explored how tracked bodies can relate to non-human digital entities, focusing on a flock of particles inspired by the same Boids algorithm as in the first engagement. On the final day of the Lab, we organized three activities: two short workshops with five participants each, and a concluding workshop that included all participants as performers or spectators.

We captured videos of the participants in an area marked on the floor using a webcam, tracking their movements in real-time using the MoveNet model from the ml5.js BodyPose library in p5.js². The system tracked the participants' hands and heads, and these data were processed in real time into an interactive visualization. The virtual flock followed behavioral rules (i.e., *alignment*, *cohesion*, and *separation*), and the same rules, with different parameter values, were applied to the tracked body points to influence the Boid, enabling participants to influence its behavior. The visualisation was projected onto a large wall, creating a physical interactive space where participants experienced how their individual movements, collective interactions, and the rules of the flocking algorithm influenced each other (see Fig.3). The system supported multiple participants simultaneously and was tested with up to five bodies at once. During the interaction, the second author operated the system behind the camera, while the choreographer guided the session from outside the tracking area. All sessions and participants' feedback were video-recorded with their consent.

During the three sessions, we set up a guided and open-ended exploration rather than aiming for performative outcomes. We intended to investigate how participants' attention shifted between physical movement, collective interaction, and the digital projection, and how these influenced one another.



Figure 2: A group of participants interacting with each other and with the algorithmic visualisation of flock movements

The sessions were led through verbal prompts by the first author, who invited the participants one by one into the tracking area. The prompts first focused on mediating the attention between the projection, the floor, the other people in the space, and the tracking camera. Then, the focus of the prompts shifted to collective movement that entailed negotiating shared direction, proximity, distance, and alignment - mirroring the behavioural rules of the flock. This setting emphasised negotiation, attunement, and collective decision-making (see Fig.2).

Participants reported a continuous shift of attention between the screen, their bodies, and the collective group. Initially, their focus was primarily on understanding how individual movement affected the projection. Over time, they reported that their attention moved towards sharing the space, making the participants forget the digital layer. Several participants noted how the camera's perspective flattened space, collapsing depth, and causing bodies to overlap visually on the projections. This altered spatial perception, influencing how participants moved and related to each other. When movements were not clearly reflected in the visualisation due to tracking issues, participants felt frustrated and disoriented.

Some participants underlined how personal and professional background may have influenced their perception, attention, and behaviour. For example, people with a background in computing quickly understood the setup and focused on the visualisation of their movements, while people with a background in dance or movement focused on moving together. These observations led to a discussion on distributed agency and individual expectations: when participants did not receive the expected feedback from the Boids algorithm projected onto the wall, they often felt frustrated or disappointed. In this sense, interaction with a complex system, where multiple human and non-human forces are entangled, appeared to be dissonant with typical interaction principles such as 'causality' (e.g., knowing that my actions will produce an effect) and 'predictability' (e.g., knowing what that effect could be). Overall, this second workshop showed how human bodily interactions following collective animal behaviour rules and mediated through choreography and interactive technologies, can create spaces for experimenting and reflecting on attention, action, and a sense of being together.

¹<https://processing.org/>

²<https://editor.p5js.org/quark-js/sketches/ERVvj1IpeY>

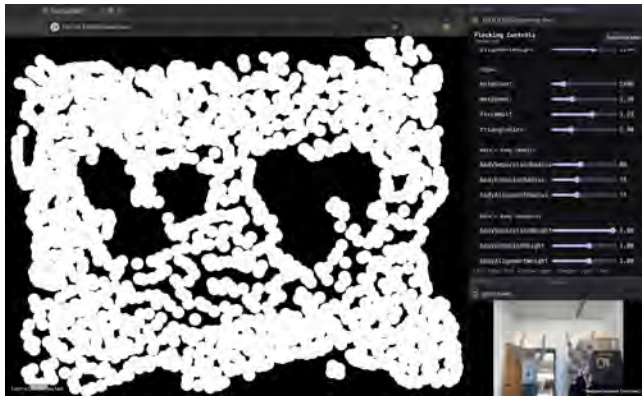


Figure 3: Example of the software interface with the used parameters and interactive visualisation

3 Situated Action at the Participatory Design Conference '26 in Milan

During the first engagement at INTRA Project, participants reflected on bodily sensations, collective attunement, and how embodying algorithmic rules revealed complex perceptual and social dynamics between the individual and the collective. During the second engagement at CCL'25, participants reflected on how the shifts of attention between the physical and the digital exposed tensions between individual agency, collective movement, and unpredictable interaction. These insights inform our proposal for the PDC conference context, where we will explore how the embodied experience of collective animal behaviour can shape participatory processes and open them to more-than-human forms of inclusion. Based on our previous learnings, our SA at PDC26 will focus on the relationships between space, bodies, the behavioural rules of flock algorithms, and the in-between spaces of attention. This engagement aims to evoke a sense of collective care and attention towards the self, the other participants, the physical, and the digital space.

In practice, the participants will engage and interact with the Boids algorithm as choreographic material. For 25 minutes, the first author will verbally guide the participants through a choreographic score with open-ended instructions, while the second author will be live-editing the input to the Boids algorithm based on the movement tracking parameters. The instructions will be focused on attuning to the self, others, and the behavioral rules of the algorithm. In this way, we seek to produce an embodied dialog between human bodies and non-human digital entities. At the end, we will facilitate a brief collective reflection where participants will be invited to share their experience and insights.

4 Organisers' Short Bios

Roos van Berkel is a dancer and choreographer who blends art, science, and technology. Since Sept 2025, she is a PhD Fellow at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design. Her research focuses on the agency of digital movement in socio-material practices.

Rocco Lorenzo Modugno is a visual designer, creative coder, and design educator whose research spans academic and independent contexts, focusing on collective doing and algorithmic practices.

María Menéndez-Blanco is an Assistant Professor at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. In her work, she explores how digital technologies shape participation. She is part of the INTRA project and leads the Embodied Data Lab, which approaches data as design material for creating interactive installations that allow experiencing interconnectedness in nature.

Seçil Uğur Yavuz is a design researcher working in the blurring boundaries between digital and analogue experiences. Through participatory design and co-design methods, her research focuses on designing relational objects, probes, and technologies fostering social and ecological change.

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Setting the Killjoy Table

Youth Co-Design as Affective Practice

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Abstract

This Situated Action stages a youth co-design experiment in which a table is not only built as an object, but also set as a site for reckoning with conflicting affects, and marginalized forms of labour and knowledge. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's reflections on kitchen tables as infrastructures of feminist publishing and mutual support, the Killjoy Table translates critical feminist theory into an embodied, collaborative design protocol with young people in Limerick, Ireland. The project asks how a seemingly modest act—constructing and using a table together under material and institutional constraints—can become a way of practising dialogue, coexistence, and peace across generational divides. Young people who are usually positioned as "consulted stakeholders" or research subjects are here invited as co-designers and knowledge-holders. Their everyday encounters with "brick walls" (rules, spatial decisions, bureaucratic procedures) are taken as starting points rather than background context: it is their irritation, boredom, exhaustion, and refusal that set the terms of the design brief. The Killjoy Table thus treats frustration not as a problem to be smoothed out by participatory techniques, but as a resource for collective imagination and critique.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Human computer interaction (HCI); HCI design and evaluation methods; Field studies; • **Social and professional topics** → User characteristics; Age; Children; User characteristics; Cultural characteristics.

Keywords

youth co-design, crafts(wo)manship, participatory design

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1 Introduction

1.1 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

The action is grounded in feminist and affect theory that foregrounds the politics of everyday obstruction. Ahmed's notion of "brick walls" [1] captures how institutions wear down those who do not fit normative expectations, while the history of Kitchen Table Press shows how a table can become an alternative infrastructure for circulation of work and mutual recognition among women of colour. ([5], cited in [2]) In this project, the table is similarly treated as an infrastructural object: it organises bodies, gestures, and conversations, and therefore also reveals the norms that structure who is welcomed, who is centred, and who is kept at the margins.

Sianne Ngai's account of "ugly feelings" [4] (such as irritation, anxiety, or stuplimity) informs how we work with the emotional atmosphere of the workshop. Rather than aiming for enthusiasm and consensus, the protocol creates room for low-intensity, ambivalent affects that often signal suspended agency. Technical failure, slow progress, or disagreement become indicators of how political frustration is lived in the body. Following Dreessen et al., [3] we reframe such moments as the "emotional signature of learning resilience": they show participants learning to stay with difficulty and to rework it, rather than being pushed back into compliance.

Finally, the action draws on design-through-making and participatory co-production approaches that treat material fabrication as a way of thinking with others. The Killjoy Table protocol uses simple, low-tech materials and a deliberately rough aesthetic to resist the polished, depersonalised finishes associated with institutional design. This material stance is part of the critical argument: it makes visible the labour, negotiation, and compromise that usually disappear behind smooth surfaces.

1.2 Situated Context, Participants, and Setting

The action takes place in Limerick, Ireland, a city whose peripheral housing estates—most notably Moyross and Southill—were shaped by mid-twentieth-century social housing policies that concentrated disadvantaged populations far from the city centre, severing them from services, transport, and civic visibility. After decades of stigmatisation and a national regeneration programme that displaced and rehoused many families, young people in these neighbourhoods continue to navigate environments where public space, school infrastructure, and mobility routes are decided without their input. It is this lived tension between ongoing regeneration promises and everyday spatial exclusion that makes Limerick a particularly generative site for the Killjoy Table.

The workshop is organised in collaboration with the University of Limerick, building on an existing secondment within the Reworlding network (Horizon Europe MSCA Doctoral Network on social housing estates). Through this partnership, the action connects to local community organisations active in Limerick's regeneration areas—youth services and neighbourhood centres that already maintain trusted relationships with young residents. This institutional embedding ensures that the workshop is not a one-off academic visit but is grounded in ongoing relational and organisational work.

Participants will include approximately 15–20 young people aged 14–18, recruited through the partner community organisations in Limerick's regeneration estates. The group will thus be composed of young residents who experience the city's socio-spatial inequalities first-hand: limited access to safe recreational spaces, lengthy and unreliable transport connections, and school buildings whose design assumes a different population. The facilitation team consists of the two junior researchers from Irish and Belgian universities. The choice of site, schedule, and material resources is negotiated with the local community partner to respond to existing rhythms (school calendars, transport, family obligations) rather than imposing an external timetable. In this way, the action is situated not only conceptually but also logistically: it must bend around local constraints rather than asking participants to bend around it.

1.3 Purpose and Expected Outcomes

The purpose of the Situated Action is twofold.

First, it offers young people a concrete opportunity to articulate and share how they encounter institutional problems in their everyday lives and to experiment with alternative spatial and organisational arrangements. By naming a "brick wall," [1] reimagining it, and collaborating on a prototype, they link personal frustration to a shared spatial and political problem.

Second, it produces a 3-minute video that functions both as documentation and as a standalone narrative of youth co-design. The video will foreground youth voices, hands, and gestures rather than explanatory commentary. Short testimonies ("What did your body learn?", "What changed in how you see this place?") will be combined with close-ups of materials, tools, and prototypes to convey how affect, friction, and collective thinking unfold over time. For the PDC26 audience, this video is an invitation to witness how young people work through difficulty together and to reflect on what counts as "successful" participation.

2 The Killjoy Table Protocol as Situated Practice

The Killjoy Table unfolds through five movements, each of which is adapted to the specific community and place. Crucially, the protocol is designed so that dialogue, disagreement, and coexistence are not merely hoped-for by-products but structurally embedded in each step.

2.1 Naming Friction

Participants begin by identifying a concrete "brick wall" [1] they face in their school, neighbourhood, or city. These may be spatial (a playground that does not fit their bodies), procedural (rules that make them feel unsafe or unheard), or relational (spaces where

they feel watched or out of place). This step situates the protocol in the lived experience of the group rather than in abstract design challenges. Because participants name different—and sometimes incompatible—walls, the step immediately surfaces disagreement: friction is not a shared monolith but a set of divergent, occasionally conflicting experiences that must be heard alongside one another.

2.2 Claiming Power

Working from these examples, participants imagine acts of refusal or "queer use"[6]: how might this wall be re-used, subverted, or redesigned for their own needs rather than institutional expectations? This is intentionally not framed as "finding compromises" but as practising agency and re-authoring the brief. Here, dialogue operates between youth and the implicit institutional voice that produced the brick wall: participants learn to name the decision-maker behind the rule or layout and to formulate a counter-proposition addressed to that decision-maker—whether a school principal, a city planner, or a housing authority.

2.3 Collaborative Making

Small groups use simple materials—wood, cardboard, fasteners, hand tools—to build a rough prototype that materialises their response. The prototype does not have to be a literal table; it can be any spatial structure that reconfigures relations between bodies, objects, and rules. Material friction (pieces that do not fit, tools that are hard to use, limited time) mirrors the structural friction participants described, creating a parallel between physical and institutional struggle. Because each small group must negotiate limited resources, conflicting ideas, and divergent skill levels, this step functions as a micro-practice of coexistence: participants experience what it means to hold space for someone whose frustration, aesthetic preference, or bodily capacity differs from their own while still producing something together.

2.4 Documentation and Testimony

During and after making, youth are invited to speak about what is happening: Where did it feel stuck? Who decided what? What surprised you? Short interviews and collective reflections are recorded on video. This stage foregrounds the affective and relational dimension of the work rather than only its physical outcome. Dialogue here unfolds between youth and facilitators—and, crucially, among peers: participants are invited to respond to one another's accounts, noting moments where their experiences diverged and where they found unexpected common ground.

2.5 Killjoy Commitment

The session closes with a brief round in which each participant formulates a personal or collective commitment: a way of continuing to notice and resist institutional friction in their everyday life, or a demand they wish to bring back to their school, family, or local authority. These commitments are recorded and shared with the partner community organisation, which can carry them into existing dialogue channels with Limerick City and County Council, school boards, and neighbourhood forums. The Killjoy Commitment thus extends the workshop's practice of coexistence

beyond the session itself: it is designed to seed ongoing conversations between youth and institutions, ensuring that the critical energy generated around the table does not dissipate when the workshop ends.

The protocol is thus “situated” not only because it takes place in a specific location, but because each step responds to that location’s institutions, conflicts, and affordances. Another city, school, or group would produce a different table, a different set of walls, a different configuration of affects.

3 Dialogue, Conflict, and Coexistence as Embedded Practices

The Killjoy Table does not treat peace, dialogue, and coexistence as abstract aspirations but as practices that must be rehearsed through design. Three forms of dialogue are structurally produced by the protocol:

Youth–institution dialogue. By naming brick walls and formulating counter-propositions (Steps 1–2), participants articulate grievances that are usually silenced or deflected. By channelling Killjoy Commitments through the partner organisation’s existing advocacy networks (Step 5), these articulations can reach institutional interlocutors—school boards, local authorities, regeneration agencies—in a form that is legible and actionable.

Peer-to-peer dialogue across difference. The collaborative making and collective testimony steps (Steps 3–4) require participants to work with—not merely alongside—others whose bodies, frustrations, and imaginaries differ from their own. Disagreement is not smoothed over but recorded and reflected upon: the video captures moments of friction and negotiation as evidence of how coexistence is practised, not just professed.

Intergenerational and facilitator–youth dialogue. The workshop ensures that facilitators (two junior researchers) arrive having identified their own brick walls within academia. This shared vulnerability repositions the facilitator–youth relationship as one of mutual recognition rather than extraction, enabling a form of dialogue in which adults learn from young people’s situated knowledge rather than directing it.

Together, these three layers address that the Killjoy Table contributes to coexistence not only during the workshop moment but in the institutional afterlife of its commitments and in the reflexive formation of its facilitation team.

4 From Pedagogical Workshop to Youth Action

The youth workshop is preceded by a two-day pedagogical workshop within facilitators –i.e. junior researchers. This preparatory event introduces the theoretical framing (Ahmed, Ngai, affective labour in making) and trains facilitators in reading emotional and temporal dynamics in participatory projects. It also allows them to experience the Killjoy Table protocol themselves before facilitating it with young people.

By first practising the protocol among peers, facilitators learn to recognise their own “brick walls” [1] within academia and to notice how affect flows through design processes. This peer-learning context is crucial: it cultivates ethical attentiveness and reflexivity so that, in the youth workshop, facilitators can listen and respond rather than steer toward pre-defined outcomes. The Situated Action

thus embeds capacity-building for future participatory work in the local context.

5 Publication Format and Contribution

The 3-minute video submitted to PDC26 will combine five elements in a simple arc: situating youth voices and their “brick walls,”[1] showing sequences of collective making, foregrounding affective moments of friction and breakthrough, presenting the prototypes as unfinished propositions, and closing with youth commitments. Rather than presenting a polished final product, the video will foreground the messiness of co-design and the embodied, affective work of staying with trouble together.

As a published extended abstract, this text aims to stand on its own: it situates the action in Limerick’s regeneration estates, articulates its theoretical grounding in feminist and affect theory, explains why the Killjoy Table is a genuinely situated protocol rather than a generic format, and outlines the pedagogical and political stakes of inviting young people to “set the table” on their own terms.

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A author bio

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Coexistence RAVE: Relational Attunements, Vibrations & Entanglements

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Abstract

Coexistence RAVE is a situated, participatory action developed for the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026, hosted by Politecnico di Milano in Milan, Italy. The project brings together designers, researchers and educators from different geographies and backgrounds, whose work spans participatory design, co-design, design futures, regenerative practice, queer theory and relational design. Across these fields, the group shares an interest in embodied, collective and place-based approaches to coexistence. Developed in collaboration with Migarden [1], a Milan-based social promotion association that activates overlooked urban spaces through cultural events, the action takes place in a local community venue beyond the formal conference setting. The event is conceived as a temporary, low-infrastructure environment shaped by sound, light, space and facilitation. Informed by dance countercultures and research on affective atmospheres, RAVE frames the dance floor as a site of participatory design inquiry, inviting participants to explore attunement and new forms of coexistence.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design; • **Additional Keywords and Phrases:** Coexistence, Rave, Relational Design, Participatory Design;

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1 Introduction

Coexistence RAVE is a Situated Action programmed as part of the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026 in Milan. The action will be hosted in a local community venue, situating the work beyond formal conference spaces and within a socially embedded setting. This location provides an intimate environment in which sound, light and movement converge as a collective experiment, enabling close proximity, shared presence and participatory engagement.

This action draws on the activist lineage of 1970s–80s dance countercultures that gave rise to contemporary electronic dance music, and is informed by scholarship that frames dance gatherings as sites of collective attunement [2, 3]. Coexistence RAVE adopts the RAVE format—understood here as Relational Attunement, Vibrations and Entanglements—as a way of working through collective presence, embodied sensing and shared intensity. In this sense, this Situated Action functions as a temporary space of belonging, reflexivity and experimentation, dissolving boundaries, inviting movement and allowing new relational possibilities to emerge.

1.1 Peace, Dialogue and Coexistence

Between pulse and stillness, light and shadow, Coexistence RAVE unfolds as a collective and reflexive ritual. Here, dance operates as a method of reflexivity through sensing-with-others, enabling the practice of spatial and relational coexistence through rhythm, movement and shared vibration. In contrast to academic conference contexts where dialogue is primarily mediated through words, papers, keynotes and institutional protocols, the rave opens an unstructured space for reflecting on and making sense of the ideas that emerge across the conference through embodied languages. Held within a neighbourhood venue, it also extends the conference beyond its walls, inviting local communities into the field of encounter. By attuning bodies, senses and unexpected connections, this form of relational dialogue otherwise allows new meanings and relations to emerge, orienting participants towards care, respect, coexistence and peace.

Coexistence RAVE is developed in collaboration with Migarden [1], a Milan-based social promotion association that organises cultural events to reactivate overlooked urban spaces through music, art and collective experiences. Their community-oriented, site-responsive and care-centred approach makes them a meaningful local partner for situating the action within the city's grassroots cultural ecology.

Grounded in Suchman's [4] conception that action is always situated and embodied, Akama et al.'s [5] call to bring our whole selves to design encounters, and Escobar et al.'s [6] argument that rituals are a necessary condition for designing relationally, this situated action draws on a constellation of embodied and relational onto-epistemologies. These include *sentipensar* or thinking-feeling with the Earth [7, 8], which challenges rational, mind-based approaches to knowledge; Anzaldúa's [9] *conocimiento* as embodied and transformative awareness; Ortega's [10] exploration of relational and spatial rituals within participatory settings; and Cotsaftis et al.'s [11, 12] proposition that design can cultivate the conditions for coexistence. Together, these perspectives inform a view of movement not simply as representation or expression, but as a relational practice of becoming.

Within this context, Coexistence RAVE mobilises music and collective movement as a means of enacting and experimenting with coexistence. Drawing on Escalante et al. [13] who frame movement as a means of grappling with the abstract yet intimate effects of socio-technical systems, the rave functions as a provisional protocol for living together, one that foregrounds presence, listening and collective attunement. Through shared rhythm and motion, participants experiment with sensing, negotiating and aligning with others in ways that exceed verbal articulation. Drawing on embodied practices from dance, rave culture and ritual, the action enacts coexistence as a rhythmic and situated negotiation rather than a fixed agreement among participants.

Raves have long operated as politically charged practices that contest institutional control, normative uses of space and forms of structural violence. Through embodied forms of resistance, they reappropriate space and carry emancipatory potential by enabling communities to reclaim bodily agency, resist normativity and cultivate care through temporary safe spaces for experimenting with alternative modes of being and belonging [14]. In Italy, raves carry added subversive value: following their legal ban in 2022 under the framing of security threats, such autonomous events are struggling, but try persisting underground, precisely because they offer spaces of autonomy, resistance and collective expression. Situated within this lineage, Coexistence RAVE reclaims the rave as a critical, embodied practice for experimenting with coexistence.

2 Structure and Public Engagement

RAVE is informed by precedents in embodied movement practices that intentionally decentre performance, spectacle and normative aesthetics in favour of presence, anonymity and relational attunement. This includes the Australian-founded community-based movement practice No Lights, No Lycra [15], which uses darkness to disrupt visual self-surveillance and invite participants into a non-judgemental, affective relationship with their own bodies and others. It also draws from Gabrielle Roth's 5Rhythms [16], a

dynamic movement practice that frames dance as a process of sensing, releasing and reconfiguring embodied energy through shifting rhythms. The action is further informed by research on Ecstatic and Freeform Dance [17], which frames non-choreographed collective movement as a practice through which embodied awareness, relational sensing and social cohesion can emerge via shared rhythm, presence and bodily expression. Together, these practices foreground movement as a form of embodied inquiry, demonstrating how carefully designed sensory conditions, particularly sound, light and collective presence, can cultivate spaces of care, self-awareness and coexistence. Coexistence RAVE extends this into a collective, participatory setting aligned with participatory design, positioning dance as a method for exploring relationality, difference and shared becoming, but also as an unstructured space for reflecting on the knowledges and experiences that emerge during the conference.

Participants will be invited into a 30-minute facilitated session beginning with guided prompts to attune to their bodies, the rhythm, and the presence of others. RAVE hosts will open the event with some collective agreements and care and safety protocols, for example, there will be no phones allowed, there is no-contact and no drinking alcohol. Participants can wear what is comfortable but shoes must be worn, there are no teachers, no prescribed steps, no judgement, but the creation of space for expression, physical release and community connection. Music will be curated from diverse cultural traditions and electronic soundscapes will provide a shared rhythmic ground enabling both synchronisation and divergence. The playlist for the opening rituals and facilitated session will be preset, but participants may be invited and encouraged to request tracks as the event moves into an open RAVE.

On arriving, participants will be invited to an opening ritual, finding their way around the space, to first stand still and adjust to the conditions (whether closed and low light or an open outdoor atmosphere). From there, hosts will guide participants in some small movements, for example, to make a path, or a map around the room, as a way of grounding participants in the space and to find their own area where there would be room to move, but no contact with others. Another prompt might suggest that participants ground their feet into the floor and limit their movements, and feel the heaviness or sensing of restrictions. Other movement prompts will follow, inviting participants to explore different types and forms of movement and transition into more embodied forms of engagement. For example, participants can also be prompted to reflect on something that resonated from the conference, either as a concept, a presentation, a method, and so on, but from the body: how can the body help us in making sense of knowledges and new meanings otherwise? From here, the action transitions into an open RAVE where anyone may continue moving, remain still, or witness the unfolding atmosphere. The event will not be captured with any particular output, nor reflections sought from participants, to centre the experience and the embodied temporary nature of this action. The RAVE concludes with a closing phase in which participants are gently grounded back into the space as the soundtrack shifts to a slower pace and softer volume.

The 'rave' is thus a participatory environment where everyone is a dancer and contributes to the atmosphere in their own way. The action creates space to explore coexistence as embodied inquiry: how do we hold space for one another, how do we resist,

or move together? The interaction is immersive, visceral and relational, centred on the shared doing of coexistence rather than its discussion.

3 Space, Sound, Light and Facilitation

Our situated action uses simple, site-responsive participatory methods that bring together movement, sound, light and gentle facilitation to support embodied reflection and collective awareness. It is designed as a temporary, low-infrastructure intervention that creates the conditions for the experience.

Space: An open, unobstructed area where participants can move, pause, sit or lie down without fixed orientations or focal points such as stages or screens.

Sound: A continuous, immersive sonic environment that establishes a shared rhythm and supports collective movement.

Light: The action uses light interventions to soften self-consciousness and encourage attention to bodily and relational awareness. This may take the form of low-light conditions or the use of materials to shape light in a daytime setting.

Facilitation: The action begins with a brief arrival and safety framing, including simple agreements such as no phones, no recording, no physical contact, no alcohol and no judging. Facilitators then offer slow, open prompts such as sensing the space, noticing boundaries and attuning to breath and collective presence before stepping back. Participants are free to move, remain still, observe or leave at any time.

4 Authors' Biographies

Georgina Nolan is a designer, researcher, sessional teacher and PhD student within the School of Design at RMIT University. Her research sits at the intersection of design and futures studies, exploring how design can open space for multiple ways of knowing and imagining futures, particularly through participatory and creative methods that engage with place, community and interspecies relations.

Dr Andrés Ortega is an architect and design researcher and practitioner, Chilean born, currently based in Naarm (Melbourne), teaching at Monash University. His PhD research (RMIT University) examines relational manifestations that emerge by exploring the notion of *cosmovision*, also known as worldviews, in participatory settings. Besides this practice, Andres has an extensive involvement with electronic music culture, either as a sound explorer, dj, curator and festival organiser (Mutek.cl, 2004–2011) and is an active participant of a community-based dance-as-you-want collective.

Valentina Ferreri is a PhD candidate in Design at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano and affiliated with POLIMI DESIS Lab. Her PhD research critically investigates, in a situated inquiry, how queerness can act as a lens for reimagining how we design, inhabit, and care for the city, exploring the challenging intersections between queer theory and participatory design towards more plural, embodied, and politically aware approaches to urban public space, in order to challenge normative and binary frameworks.

Dr Nicola St John is a design researcher and educator within the School of Design at RMIT University, Australia. Her research is largely collaborative; partnering with First Nations creatives,

community schools, and design organisations to foster student belonging, intercultural collaboration, and design entrepreneurship.

Dr Olivier Cotsaftis is a researcher-practitioner within the School of Design at RMIT University. His research engages living systems, critical ecologies and material entanglements, contributing to regenerative futures. Through engagement, publications, exhibitions and partnerships, his practice explores design's role in enabling coexistence, mutualism and place-based regenerative transitions.

Dr Malé Luján Escalante, Senior Lecturer in Co-Design at University of the Arts London. My practice integrates research and teaching via knowledge exchange collaborations for socially responsive learning. My recent work seeks to reconceptualise Design as spiritual, political, embodied and joyful practice—a foundation I call 'Utopian Imagination'. Utopian Imagination harnesses the power of collective imagination as emancipatory act, facilitating "slowing down" in urgent times, and cultivating capacity to be present as a condition to move towards "wild possibilities".

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Imaginarities for Sharing and Repair Practices

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Abstract

The situated action explores how participatory formats can democratize the process of creating future visions with a focus on circular consumption practices. Through an interactive and generative exhibition during the PDC26 in Milan, the communities present at the time and place, including conference attendees, persons affiliated with the campus and the public, is invited to create social practice imaginaries – visions in which sharing and repairing as everyday practices are the norm. Contributions can be made continuously, with participants adding their visions to a growing collective canvas using various materials and hands-on reflection. This situated action builds on the themes of the conference, which focus on facilitating dialogue around sustainable transitions through collaborative decision-making and the development of systemic interventions. In addition to finding visions for the future of circular practices, it reflects on the methodology: What levers are needed to move from participation to action? How can participatory formats democratize future-making and ensure lasting impact? Who can critically design the future?

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Interaction design; • Interaction design process and methods; • Participatory design;

Keywords

social practice imaginaries, sharing, repair

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1 BACKGROUND

The purpose of this situated action is to provoke thought about circular consumption practices [1] and the ways to use participatory methods to engage citizens in developing alternative futures in this space. It is crucial to create alternative societal visions in this space to maintain good and just living conditions on the whole planet. In light of fostering circularity this can mean reflecting on how we *possess possessions* – and beyond, and therefore the situated action will specifically address the practices of repair and sharing.

In this sense, the practices of sharing and repairing position themselves against the predominant throwaway mentality in many societies. Sharing things means having temporary access to an object of need or using something without owning it individually. Repairing means putting an existing item that is damaged, broken, worn, or not working correctly back into a usable condition, thus avoiding the need to replace it. Beyond self-guided sharing or repair, urban environments already offer numerous supported initiatives (such as Repair Cafés, online sharing platforms, local networks, and commercial repair services). Yet one of the key challenges lies in routinization: integrating these practices into everyday habits. Achieving this requires a deeper, more fundamental shift in how we relate to the objects we own and use.

In the European context, many cities, communes, and regions are already working towards making sharing and repairing practices more accessible and frequent in their urban environments, for example by supporting local initiatives and researching new concepts (examples: INTERREG Europe Good Cities: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-cities>, ShaRepair Practices: <https://sharerepairpractices.nl>). As such projects acknowledge, embedding sharing and repairing in urban life requires the active involvement and inclusion of affected stakeholders.

This is well reflected in the ideas of participatory design. The field's historical ideals of workplace democracy have long expanded to include democratization of everyday life and public sphere. Even back then, participatory design researchers were advocating for alternative and pluralistic perspectives on participation and democratization [2]. However, co-design workshops are often the medium of choice in most project setups, and while they offer good opportunities for collaboration, they represent just one possible mode of engagement. Enriching a process with other formats can make participation more democratic by enabling involvement from people who might not choose or be able to attend face-to-face sessions [3]. This is important, as our interactions span broader landscapes, the interventions we design must also reflect the broader spectrum of experiences. And yet this is challenging: We are part of larger systems where decisions are often made far from those affected, making people feel unheard.

Thus, creating touchpoints beyond formalized workshops can add significant value by reaching a wider group of affected people and inviting them to contribute. Such invitations help democratize and energize socio-technical transformation processes. When individuals begin shaping their own small-scale changes, these personal transformations can accumulate, generating momentum for broader, grassroots change.

Building on this perspective, Huttunen et al. [4] emphasize the importance of engaging citizens in transition research through creative, participatory methods and describe furthermore the creation



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of future visions as a relevant approach. Future-making refers to the process of imagining and shaping possible futures and working actively and collaboratively towards desired outcomes. In considering practices, social practice imaginaries acknowledge that social practices are shaped by, and in turn shape, materiality. Social practice imaginaries are visions of possible futures around everyday practices [5].

Therefore, this situated action explores how communities can shape future practices by facilitating spontaneous, low-threshold moments of participation. It is essential to engage communities through participatory formats to complement decision-making in higher governance structures and democratize the process of shaping the future. This will enable us to co-create alternative future scenarios and we can use the participatory process itself as a form of intervention. This means reflection, empowerment and demonstrating to people that change is possible. Policies can offer direction, but to achieve societal uptake, we need to engage and create momentum in the communities we hope to change.

2 Format

Embedded in the setting of the PDC26 in Milan, the situated action will take the form of an interactive exhibition which will be located on the university campus and be open to all passers-by – conference attendees, persons affiliated with the campus and the public. Therefore, the campus setting offers an opportunity to engage with both the local Milanese community as well as an international public coming from the conference and the wider university environment. Each person brings their own knowledge and experiences allowing for multiple interpretations, which is wanted for this format. The situated action invites visitors to collaboratively create social practice imaginaries where sharing and repairing are everyday practices. Participants can contribute at any time, adding their visions to a growing collective canvas. Over time, as contributions accumulate, a unique snapshot emerges shaped by the diverse communities present. In addition, the author will be present and facilitate the situated action within defined time slots of the conference program.

The situated action pursues two goals – one focused on the substantive content and its community relevance, and one on the meta-level reflection of the methodology itself: Through reflective prompts, such as What would a society look like where sharing and repairing are the norm? Can repair elevate an object? Does sharing offer unexpected benefits? What democratic alternatives to consumption could we imagine?, the installation encourages reflection on the social norms and values embedded in our consumption practices. It also challenges deeper assumptions, asking: Do technologies break more than they fix? To ground these reflections in experience, the installation includes materials that invite small acts of participation. Visitors may perform a simple repair or share an object with another attendee during the time of the installation to spark deeper reflection on the topic at hand.

Moreover, the situated action explores social practice imaginaries as a participatory method for envisioning futures. The methodological reflection ranges from practical considerations such as timing, set-up and location to questions about how participation can lead to concrete actions and changes in practices and attitudes,

and finally to an examination of the designer's role in (not) facilitating this process. It asks, for instance: What levers are needed to move from participation to action? How can participatory formats democratize future-making and ensure lasting impact? Who can critically design futures? and What role do designers play in initiating participatory processes?

3 Relation to Conference Themes

Aligned with the PDC 2026 theme, the situated action opens a dialogue on participatory decision-making across scales – from local communities to broader governance systems. It addresses the social, technical, and political dimensions of sustainable transitions: The format invites visitors to reflect on consumption, repair, and sharing practices and contribute ideas for future scenarios. Through low-threshold engagement, the installation intends to explore how collective future-making can be democratic and inclusive when diverse voices come together. It aims to counter the inertia often felt around initiating change, demonstrating that participation can be simple, meaningful, and enjoyable.

4 Outcome and Dissemination

The situated action is intended to create meaning in several ways. An immediate take-away is that visitors of the situated action leave with positive experiences, motivation, and ideas to share within their own communities and networks. The insights gathered through the situated action can inform the development and communication of imaginaries for sharing and repair practices. This can support subsequent participatory activities within and beyond the communities encountered in Milan. Disseminating the project will also involve refining the participation format to make it adaptable to different contexts.

Furthermore, this situated action will provide data for the researcher's doctoral project. The outcomes of the situated action will be summarized and published, specifically within the ShaRepair Practices project (<https://sharepairpractices.nl>). This project explores how sharing and repair practices can reshape urban life and reduce our environmental footprint using social practice theory – an analytical framework to explain how practices are shaped by meanings, skills, and materials, and how they connect to broader socio-technical systems [6]. The ShaRepair Practices project focuses on the Netherlands, particularly the Amsterdam region and cities in the Gelderland province. The work package in which the researcher is engaged focuses on co-designing circular consumption practices with citizens.

5 Author

Julia Knabe is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering at TU Delft. Her work is focused on how design interventions for sharing and repair practices can be co-created.

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Visiting De Pastorie

(Re)narrating and (Re)curating More-than-Human Perspectives in Participatory Design Research

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Abstract

The Situated Action ‘Visiting De Pastorie’ is an interactive experiment in exhibiting more-than-human perspectives in Participatory Design (PD). Participants are invited to visit, (re)narrate, and (re)curate more-than-human perspectives through the story of the PD project De Pastorie, with De Pastorie itself as a more-than-human narrator, using materials from previous exhibitions and a written narrative of the project.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design; Human computer interaction (HCI); HCI theory, concepts and models; • **Applied computing** → Arts and humanities.

Keywords

Participatory Design, more-than-human, visiting

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1 Introduction

De Pastorie, a former rectory in the municipality of Houthalen-Helchteren, Belgium, has evolved over five years into a living lab for participatory circular design within the context of the large-scale infrastructural transition project Noord-Zuid Limburg (NZL), Belgium. Project NZL, initiated by the Flemish government [7] through its independent body De Werkvennootschap, concerns the redesign of a high-traffic road between the cities of Hasselt (Belgium) and Eindhoven (the Netherlands), which currently affects the quality of life, mobility, and biodiversity of the municipalities and the natural areas it runs through. In the road’s redesign process, houses and gardens were expropriated and scheduled for demolition by De Werkvennootschap. This raised urgent questions

among inhabitants, local collectives, and the design and research consortium of project NZL (Studio NZL): How can communities and their environments coexist in the face of fragmentation? What if the ‘lost’ materials, spaces, landscapes, and memories could be reassembled to nurture new forms of coexistence?

De Pastorie became the subject of a research project that explores how PD can support communities in reimagining their environment during large-scale infrastructural transitions. The former rectory transformed into a living lab for participatory circular design through the collaboration of the local community, Studio NZL, UHasselt, De Werkvennootschap, the Flemish government’s environmental department, the municipality of Houthalen-Helchteren, and several architectural practices. Through their co-creation in workshops and design experiments, materials (e.g., bricks, wooden beams) and natural elements (e.g., plants, soil) planned for demolition were harvested and reused to co-create public spaces and landscapes in and around De Pastorie.

2 Situated action

The Situated Action (SA) explores the story of the ongoing transformation of De Pastorie into a living lab from the perspective of the building itself. We draw inspiration from Arendt & Beiner’s [1:43] notion of “visiting”, an imaginative ethical practice that explores how to “make others present”, and Haraway’s [2] call for ‘staying with the trouble’, a commitment to remain within complexity in the face of environmental uncertainty. Both concepts shape the process of narrating the story of De Pastorie from a more-than-human (the building) perspective, inviting participants to explore how De Pastorie nurtured coexistence and co-creation between humans and more-than-humans (e.g., bricks, plants) during the socio-environmental transitions of project NZL.

We, the authors of this SA, used the act of “visiting” to research how to curate an exhibition of De Pastorie for a Flemish design competition (Henry van de Velde Awards) in which we were asked to present the project without spoken explanation. The design competition had a predefined and limiting format for presenting projects, in which our exhibition space consisted of two tables (80 cm x 160 cm) on which we displayed seven thematic boxes with curated materials from the project. To present the story of De Pastorie, and explore the human and more-than-human entangled perspectives it comprises, we wrote a story about the transformation process of De Pastorie from the perspective of the building itself, to add to the lids of the seven boxes. The writing process was characterised by insecurities regarding the more-than-human perspectives we were writing about, as we were writing as humans, as well as finding a

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suitable tone and vocabulary for experimenting with more-than-human storytelling (how to avoid overly romanticising the story, how to combine human and more-than-human perspectives, how to narrate through the perspective of a building, etc.). As in the field of curatorial research, we explored the curatorial format described above to articulate questions, insecurities, doubts and insights [5] into complex and shared matters of the PD project of De Pastorie. This process involved exploring how to select ideas, materials and (human and more-than-human) perspectives to present the project, thereby nurturing and opening up a process of knowledge production [5].

Since we (authors of this SA, our narrative, and exhibition of De Pastorie) have experienced challenges, doubts, insecurities and strengths of experimenting with more-than-human storytelling and curating, this SA actively prompts participants to take on the challenge of narrating and curating more-than-human perspectives by being critical of our attempt and by sharing their insights, struggles, and concerns through a **small-scale participatory experiment in narrating and curating**. Therefore, the SA focuses on two research questions, posed from the more-than-human perspective of De Pastorie: ‘How would you narrate me?’ and ‘How would you curate me?’.

To explore both questions, the SA takes the form of a small-scale participatory curatorial exhibition combined with a speculative narration experiment that unfolds in three brief moments. First, participants **encounter** an interactive exhibition, consisting of an ‘exhibition toolbox’, a surface for curating, and a brief written narrative from the perspective of De Pastorie itself, as a more-than-human narrator. Participants are introduced through this brief narrative about the transformation process of De Pastorie (based on the Exploratory Paper submitted for PDC by the authors), which reflects on how De Pastorie facilitated dialogue and reconciliation in a community fractured by infrastructural development by foregrounding multispecies coexistence in PD experiments. This narrative is attuned to the agencies and care relations of more-than-human actors [4, 6] in the project of De Pastorie. In this initial encounter, the SA also serves as a small exhibition for participants who prefer not to interact further with the SA. The levels of interaction are decided by the participants. Second, the SA will invite participants to **intervene** in this narrative by experimenting with and speculating through more-than-human storytelling and curating by adding, erasing, (re)narrating, and (re)curating more-than-human perspectives in this participatory experiment.

For the **experiment in curating**, participants are invited to unbox an ‘exhibition toolbox’, providing extensive (textual and physical) material about the project. This material, of which a selection is visualised in Figure 1, will be a combination of (1) materials we gathered and analysed (e.g. printed pictures, books, booklets, postcards, masterplans, written anecdotes, architectural renders, etc.) from different actors in workshops, site visits, Live Projects, festivities, prototypes, etc., which were organised in and around De Pastorie over the past five years (2) the material previously used in the exhibition by the authors about De Pastorie in the Flemish design competition, and (3) the material from an exhibition from master students of the faculty of Architecture and Arts at Hasselt University of a Live Project that took place in De Pastorie.



Figure 1: Collage of a selection of the material for the Situated Action. Figure by Leen Vansteenkiste.

The SA invites participants to work within a predefined format, which includes a limited exhibition space, allowing them to participate in small-scale interactive experiments within a brief timeframe. Participants can utilise all the material provided by the organising team and (re)curate the project of De Pastorie by starting from personal experiences, questions, and uncertainties about more-than-human perspectives or storytelling, among other approaches, such as starting to curate from the aesthetics of the material, or by just immersing themselves in the provided material. We propose that narrating and curating the story of De Pastorie from the perspective of the building enables us to explore more-than-human perspectives and relations that conventional documentation might overlook [3], while also examining how we navigate the limits of expressing more-than-human perspectives within conventional curatorial frameworks.

For the **experiment in narrating**, the SA invites participants to question the narrative we, as the authors, have written by: being editors of the narrative, sharing which perspectives are currently forgotten, adding voices that are missing or being marginalised, extending the story with perspectives that could be part of a future living lab, but also by sharing which perspectives are participants struggling to visit in the narrative of the project, which experiences in more-than-human PD and storytelling can they share among participants (and how do we curate these struggles and insecurities otherwise in our exhibitions).

After (re)curating and (re)narrating the project of De Pastorie, participants are invited to take a picture of their exhibition using the provided camera. This way, the SA collects the various ways that participants curated the story of De Pastorie through multiple human and more-than-human perspectives. (Participants might also take a picture of the materials they found the most interesting, inspiring, or confusing. The levels of interaction are up to the participants.) Dialogues will be held during and after the experiments, where participants are asked to **reflect** on the participatory experiment to capture how their process of curating a more-than-human narrative was perceived. The SA creates a space for reflection on what was difficult, absent, or uncomfortable in these acts of (re)curating and (re)narrating. The SA is a continuous experiment, meaning that we can ‘reset’ the interactive exhibition with every new participant.

We explore “visiting” as a practice of dialogue, care, and coexistence. The project of De Pastorie creates a space to reflect on repair and reconciliation in communities affected by environmental disruption and transformation. This SA fosters dialogue through a shared narrative and curatorial practice in which participants negotiate whose voices (human and more-than-human) are made present or remain absent. It explores coexistence by foregrounding multispecies relations and tensions, inviting participants to speculate on how built environments, materials, plants, animals, and humans might coexist differently during socio-environmental transitions.

3 organising team

The SA is organised by a team of researchers from the research group Civic & Policy Design at Hasselt University’s Faculty of Architecture and Arts, Belgium. The team is composed of doctoral researcher Chioma Fears, whose PhD explores engaging with (othered) emotions in PD processes in the context of socio-ecological transitions, doctoral researcher Leen Vansteenkiste, whose research explores PD processes with soil in the sustainable transition of project NZL, and Professor Liesbeth Huybrechts, she leads research on the political and relational dimensions of participatory spatial planning and design.

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The Coexistence Archive: Traces of the Participatory Design Conference

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Abstract

The Coexistence Archive: Traces of the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) is a situated action that explores recording and listening as a participatory practice. Installed in a semi-public area of PDC 2026 in Milan, the archive invites participants to record short voice memos and sounds reflecting on peace, dialogue, and coexistence. These individual traces will merge into a collective sound composition, respectively, an evolving sonic portrait of the PDC community. Beyond documenting the event, *the Coexistence Archive* reimagines the archive as a living, participatory infrastructure that listens, connects, and continues to resonate beyond the conference.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing → Participatory design.

Keywords

Coexistence, Soundscape, Archiving

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1 A Situated Action for Dialogue and Listening

The Situated Action (SA) *The Coexistence Archive: The Participatory Design Conference (PDC)* is motivated by a critical exploration of the concept of ‘coexistence’ through a sonic lens. Framed by participatory sound art theory, sensory ethnography, and drawing on oral narratives as archival material, this participatory sound installation is composed of three aspects: firstly, a collective voice archive of PDC 2026, creating a sonic trace of the community in its diversity; secondly, a short audio composition as a final sound collage and online dissemination; and thirdly, a methodological reflection on listening as participation, to be extended into an academic paper on sound, visualisation, and hybrid infrastructures of coexistence.

The SA is located in an accessible corridor that connects outdoor and indoor spaces at the Bovisa campus. This threshold space reflects the archive’s liminal nature. By transforming the archive from a passive container into a living participatory system that listens and evolves, the SA invites continued dialogue long after

the conference ends. The Bovisa campus is an ideal site for this SA because it is already an open place for everyday shared experiences and spontaneous interventions, where social interactions naturally occur alongside movement through halls and staircases[4]. The campus’s spaciousness creates an effective environment for exploring the development of embodied practices, mutual awareness, and the negotiation of coexistence during the conference period. To be more precise, the setting enables informal encounters, in which participants can pause, listen, and contribute their voices. Compared with conference sound archives, such as those maintained by *The International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives*, this SA is designed to encourage informal interactions and to include short contributions that fall outside the main conference agenda (e.g., papers, panel discussions) [2]. By serving as a transitional zone between activity and reflection, the following three interconnected components form the core of the project:

- *A Collective Voice Archive of PDC 2026*

The primary mission of the SA is to compile a collective voice archive of PDC 2026. This involves collecting audio contributions, such as short reflections, statements, and ambient sounds, from participants throughout the conference, including paper presenters, session chairs, conference organisers, and students. It aims to create a detailed sonic archive that captures the event’s overall atmosphere, diverse ideas, and emotional depth. In short, the archive is designed to reflect the community’s diversity, giving voice and presence to perspectives that may not be represented in academic papers or visual documentation.

- *Sound Collage and Listening Composition*

The collected audio material will be converted into an ongoing listening composition, and after the performance of the SA, into a final sound collage. This composition serves as a poetic, abstract summary of the conference, synthesising individual voices and elements into a listening experience. A final version of this listening piece will be presented online, ensuring that the aural legacy of PDC 2026 extends well beyond the physical event and endures. In line with Salomé Voegelin, the act of listening is conceptualised as a form of sensory engagement and, critically, as an act of peace and dialogue. By positing that our senses function as filters, Voegelin examines perception as a subjective interpretation [7]. In this sense, the sound collage allows listeners to engage actively with the overlapping, fragmented sounds, fostering multiple interpretations.

- *Methodological Reflection*

In addition to the immediate listening practice and the outcome of the sound collage, the SA project incorporates a



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methodological reflection on listening as participation. The process of collecting and presenting sound as part of the archive is a design exercise in itself. By asking critical questions about how sonic infrastructures can foster collective memory of the conference events, the reflection will be further developed and extended into a study. Drawing on the *Oral History Manual* by Sommer and Quinlan, the SA regards narratives as meaningful entities rather than mere representations of events: “Through [oral history], information that otherwise might have been lost can be collected and preserved as primary-source material for researchers.” [6, p. 4]

In short, by recognising sound as a vital resource of the conference community, the SA safeguards the diversity of voices and the polyphony of ideas generated during the PDC. Furthermore, it serves as a performative artistic expression that captures facets of the Milan experience and sets the stage for sharing the conference’s spirit with a broader audience. Finally, the academic reflection will explore key theoretical areas, including the role of sound in participatory contexts and the infrastructures of coexistence.

2 Theoretical Framework: From Archive to Coexistence

The Coexistence Archive: Traces of PDC listens for the micro-sounds of coexistence that arise throughout the conference, capturing multilingual expressions and fragments of reflection. Grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that moves beyond the traditional view of an archive as a static repository, this SA draws primarily from three interconnected areas: Participatory Design, Sound Studies and Archival Theory (specifically concerning situated and living archives). The central theoretical move is to conceptualise the archive itself as a participatory infrastructure of coexistence. The archive explores coexistence as a situated, material, and participatory act.

Drawing inspiration from the Haus der Kulturen der Welt publication *An Archaeology of Listening - Coming to Know*, the archive is not seen as a static repository, but as a situated, relational practice that emerges through embodied acts of listening and shared engagement [1]. In response to the exhibition “A Slightly Curving Place”, the curators note that resonance, collective sense-making, and non-visual epistemologies offer critical reference points for understanding archival work as an ongoing process of listening. The exhibition’s contributors explore how sound can impact our interpretations of pre-modern and contemporary sites [1]. The aim of the SA aligns with this perspective to emphasise how experiences are perceived aurally. By asking the following questions, the SA responds to PDC’s call to design for living together by transforming archiving into a collective practice:

- How can listening become an act of peace, dialogue, and coexistence?
- How can an archive itself become a space of dialogue – not for preserving the past, but for enacting it in the present?

Each contribution (a short voice message or sound recorded in situ) becomes part of a shared sonic memory of the conference. The archive celebrates diversity and multiplicity, capturing the many

tones, languages, and emotions that coexist within PDC’s community. By inviting participants to record their voices, the action transforms the ephemeral nature of dialogue into something tangible yet fluid. The archive becomes a living, polyphonic collection of sounds that grows throughout the conference. Rather than documenting outcomes, it documents relations and resonances. The archive collects embedded traces of participation that appear throughout the Milan conference. The concept of sensory ethnography, as proposed by Sarah Pink, is employed to elucidate the experience of these spaces, wherein the idea of coexistence is understood as both felt and enacted within the environments themselves [5].

Every participant becomes both an archivist and a contributor by leaving an imprint of coexistence. Through this process, the archive illustrates how peace and dialogue take shape in micro-encounters across cultures. It thus reimagines the archive as a participatory soundscape, a performative structure that connects people through the traces they leave behind. Consequently, the SA transforms into a participatory sound installation.

2.1 Interaction with Conference Participants and Guests

“Sound in participatory sound art exists in a dialectical unity of doing and undergoing, being the object of both aesthetic production and reception, often at the same time. Moreover, it is inextricably linked, on the one end, to the material and medial components of the artwork and, on the other end, to the listener-participant, establishing a relation between the two.” [3, p. 8]

According to Vadim Keylin, an academic, poet and artist from the University of Hamburg, sound in participatory sound art has a dual nature. First, the sound is simultaneously created (“aesthetic production”) and experienced (“reception”) by the listener-participant, highlighting a fluid boundary between the artist and the audience. Secondly, the sound acts as a bridge, linking the physical components of the artwork (the “material and medial components”) to the person interacting with it (the “listener-participant”) [3, p. 8]. In the context of the SA being a participatory sound installation, this means the sound is not just passively listened to but actively shapes and is shaped by the participant’s interaction with the installation’s physical elements. At the conference venue, the SA is set up as a small installation. A sign encourages conference attendees and guests to express their opinions by answering a designated question, for example:

- What does coexistence sound like to you?
- Say one word that symbolises peace or dialogue for you
- Record a sound or sentence that reflects your experience of coexistence during the PDC

Participants can contribute in any language and are encouraged to speak, hum, whisper, or capture ambient sounds from their environment. Participants record short audio snippets (up to 30 seconds) using a recording device. The recordings will be automatically uploaded to a shared online folder, where each contribution becomes part of an evolving soundscape played back in the space. Before recording, participants will be presented with a short, easy-to-read consent notice on the recording device screen. As the conference progresses, the station plays a looped mix of accumulated recordings, becoming a choral archive in which new voices blend with

earlier ones. The space slowly fills with overlapping sounds of dialogue and presence, embodying the dynamics of coexistence. A small journal at the station lets participants record what they contributed and why, including brief context such as location, emotion, or theme. These entries are not personal identifiers but describe situations, such as “in the garden”, “after a talk”, or “feeling inspired”. On the final day, the collected sounds are mixed into a short composition, shaping an audio portrait of PDC 2026 as experienced through its participants’ sounds. The final piece will be shared with the participants and later archived online for public listening. The SA station unfolds as an open, evolving installation that remains accessible throughout the conference.

Overall, the SA aims to deliver tangible results that serve both the academic PDC community and the broader public, thereby achieving its dual purpose as a performative SA and a piece of critical research. It encourages conference participants and guests to contribute through simple, low-threshold actions, collectively creating a dynamic collage of coexistence.

3 Bio of Author

Luisa Hilmer is a design historian and PhD candidate at Leuphana University Lüneburg, in Germany, affiliated with the Faculty of Culture and Society and the Institute for Urban and Cultural Area Research. Her doctoral project, titled “Potentials and Challenges

of Hybrid Participatory Design Tools in European Urban Planning”, investigates how online mapping, VR/AR, and AI-based tools can boost resident involvement in urban planning by fostering new forms of dialogue, visualisation, and contextual participation. Hilmer’s research connects participatory design, spatial theory, and media studies, focusing on how visual and sensory technologies facilitate communication among residents, designers, and other stakeholders. She has presented her work at PDC 2022 (Newcastle, UK), PDC 2024 (Sibu, Malaysia), Mensch und Computer 2025 (Chemnitz, Germany), and Livable Cities 2025 (Barcelona, Spain) and is especially interested in how participatory processes leave behind visual, material, and emotional traces that influence collective city imaginaries.

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Visibilize-ing Care Festival

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CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing**; • **Participatory design**; **Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms**; • **Applied computing**; • **Arts and humanities**; • **Social and professional topics**; • **Sustainability**; **Socio-technical systems**; **Community-based research**;

Keywords

Care, Design, Art, Pedagogy, Caregiving, Resilient Communities, Environmental Care, Inclusive Democracy, Relationships

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Visibilize-ing Care Festival (the “Festival”), a Situated Action, has been organized at The New School, a university in New York City. The New School is a university where design, social research, and the arts drive approaches to addressing the challenges of our time. The Festival is a response to an array of disruptive events over the past several years that have shaken people around the world. Globally and nationally, we are confronted by health and climate crises, threats to democracy, socio-economic and political polarization, human rights abuses, devastating war and human loss; and daily acts of hatred and violence. A common element across these crises is the deprioritization of care for fellow humans and the more-than-human beings with which we share this planet. These broader crises significantly impact higher education and challenge educators to wrestle with their responsibility to prepare students for an uncertain and complex future.



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It is this context that sparked the idea for the Visibilize-ing Care Festival. By selecting care as the focus we hope to engage the whole university in a dialogue about its meaning and the implications for scholarship, teaching and creative practice. More specifically, this dialogue is centered around two questions:

- If students are to be the builders of more inclusive, resilient and caring communities where all humans can flourish and coexist, what are the mindsets and capacities they need and what pedagogies will support their development?
- How can design, media & art be tapped to imagine and realize new futures (practices and infrastructures) that prioritize care and collective well-being in society?

The Festival began with a series of activation workshops on campus in Fall 2025 to foster dialogue about care and catalyze widespread interest to participate in the Festival Symposium and Exhibition that will take place at The New School from March 4 - 6, 2026. These activations generated applications from faculty, students and alumni from 32 different degree programs across the university including: Strategic Design, Design and Urban Ecology, Fashion, Interior Design, Drama, Classical Music, Psychology, Economics, Anthropology and more.

A committee reviewed applications and selected 82 projects. In March, these projects - which reflect scholarship and creative practice - will be featured in different formats including workshops, panels, presentations, performances, and installations. Over the three days of the Festival Symposium and Exhibition, we anticipate the engagement of the entire university community and the public in an expanded dialogue about diverse dimensions of care within systems, communities, organizations, and relationships.

2 THE CONTEXT OF THE FESTIVAL.

The Visibilize-ing Care Festival offers a space for reflecting upon and learning how to “live with each other in peace.” As Martin Luther King, Jr. stated:

“We have inherited a large house, a great “world house” in which we have to live together – black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu – a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.” [1]

The conceptual basis for the Festival is informed by Critical Care Theory, Feminist Economics, Mutualism, Design Practice & Care, Awareness-Based Systems Change, Social Practice Art, Embodied and Somatic Theories, and Health Equity and Healing Justice. For example, *The Care Manifesto* by the Care Collective serves as a framework that positions the Festival as a reaction to systemic carelessness, and as a space to challenge it. [2] The work of the Othering and Belonging Institute, led by John Powell, provides groundbreaking research, policy, and ideas that examine and remediate the processes of exclusion, marginalization, and structural inequality [3]. And the recent Club of Rome (Earth for All) report highlights the overlooked inner dimension of system change - psychological, social and spiritual factors - crucial to sustainable solutions in an interdependent world. [4]

The faculty and students in the Festival are largely from Parsons School of Design, working and studying in the fields of architecture, interior design, product design, design and technology, strategic design, and urban design. There is a deep recognition among the Parsons community that “designers do not so much need new instruments or methods, as skills and sensibilities that allow them to attend to the fragile attachments among the human and nonhuman others for whom they design.” [5] The Festival is also situated within some of the principal dimensions of Sharon M. Ravitch’s FLUX Pedagogy, like Emergent Design, Student-Centered, Active Pedagogy; Critical Pedagogy and Storytelling; or Brave Space Pedagogy, which inform some of the projects. [6]

3 HOW THE SITUATED ACTION IS ADDRESSING THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE PDC CONFERENCE.

Based on the submissions, several themes emerged to focus the dialogue at the Festival: Caregiving and Care Labor, Resilient Communities, Environmental Care, Inclusive Democracy, and Relationships. Below we describe several Festival projects that illustrate these themes and label how they connect with the main topics of the PDC conference:

3.1 Caregiving (Coexistence)

Caregiving is essential to nurturing and sustaining life. The need to provide care - to children, older people or those who are affected by illness or disability - is universal. Illustrative Festival projects include:

3.1.1 *The Lost Ledger*. This digital intervention visualizes women’s unpaid labor—the “second shift”—making visible the economic and emotional burden that remains unrecognized in traditional metrics. Through data storytelling and participatory research, the project reframes care work as essential to societal functioning and calls for new frameworks of value and accountability. Apoorba Nayak, Parsons Student, MS Strategic Design and Management.

3.1.2 *Tether – A Family Support Kit for Dementia*. Tether is a multi-stakeholder toolkit designed to help families—especially children—understand and navigate the emotional and practical challenges of dementia. Through illustrated guides, communication tools, and shared activities, the kit supports families in processing change together and maintaining connection as caregiving responsibilities

evolve. Saniya Aphale, Parsons Student, MS Strategic Design and Management.

3.1.3 *Intergenerational Design*: Intergenerational Design, a course which explores designing opportunities for meaningful intergenerational engagement between the young and the old, by creating spaces and experiences that build resilience, support lifelong learning and overcome isolation and loneliness. Marisa Morán Jahn and Laura Nova, Faculty, Parsons School of Design Strategies.

3.2 Resilient Communities (Coexistence)

Across the world, communities are grappling with rapid economic change, climate disruptions, and political polarization. Projects explore creative ways to foster social connection and community resilience.

3.2.1 *Outer Seed Shadow Project (OSS)*. Figure 2. OSS Project uses art and design to empower and strengthen underrepresented communities, promoting and building economic and environmental resiliency. Artists and community members come together to design, build and use urban gardens as platforms for educational programming, celebrating identity, knowledge sharing and cultural preservation. Juanli Carrion, Faculty, Parsons School of Design Strategies.

3.2.2 *Karaoke in the Cemetery (A Night of Grief Karaoke)*. A traveling participatory karaoke event set in cemeteries, inviting people to express grief through communal singing. By breaking social norms around public grief, it creates a space for emotional release, shared mourning, and collective presence. Leigh Davis, Faculty, First Year Parsons Program.

3.2.3 *Human Library*. Human Library Workshop provides a safe, structured space where people become “books,” sharing personal stories that invite understanding and connection. Participants practice “unjudging” through attentive listening. The workshop fosters empathy by breaking down assumptions and promoting dialogue across lived experiences. Madiha Siddiqui, Alumni, Parsons School of Design.

3.3 Environmental Care (Coexistence)

Climate change requires that we quickly re-imagine how we care for the planet. Projects explore ways individuals and communities can be active stewards of the environment, for example:

3.3.1 *Incantations for the Unseen*. An immersive sound project amplifying the hidden ecologies of soil, water, and microbes in Far Rockaway and northern Bali. Through sensory installations and collective listening, it highlights climate resilience, displacement, and ecological care. Camila Morales, Faculty, Parsons School of Constructed Environments.

3.3.2 *CHARTr – Caring Through Data*. This project examines how community-centered environmental data tools can democratize ocean-health information for the coastal communities most affected by climate change. Using a case study in Cornwall, it demonstrates how accessible, ethically governed data systems transform environmental monitoring into an everyday practice of ecological care and

collective safety. Rohit Gavali and Aakanksha Marulkar, Parsons Student MS Strategic Design and Management.

3.4 Inclusive Democracy (Peace & Dialogue)

Inclusive democracy seeks to ensure that all members of a society have meaningful power and voice in governance and decisions affecting their lives. Projects explore ways in which people of color, the formerly incarcerated, and immigrants have been excluded and approaches including organizing, mutual aid networks, voting and policy initiatives that seek to amplify their voices, agency and power.

3.4.1 Care and Devastation. The New School Community Amid Geopolitical Disruptions: A moderated panel exploring how global conflicts shape community cohesion and care within The New School. It seeks to identify cross-community solidarity practices and concrete steps for supporting one another across identities and roles. Du'aa Moharram, Staff, Student Success (Academic Advising).

3.4.2 Know your rights: Mutual Aid Networks and Sanctuary Cities. A workshop focused on current government policies, immigration laws, and how they impact our campus community. Alexandra Delano, Faculty, Lang/NSSR, Politics and Global Studies.

3.4.3 Color is not a Crime – Street Activism in NYC. Figure 1. A 10-minute documentary film about how fashion and street-art activists support the Black Lives Matter movement. It highlights murals as healing spaces and memorials for victims of police violence. Janneke Wade-de Jong, Faculty, Parsons, School of Art, Design, History and Theory.

3.5 Relationships (Dialogue & Coexistence)

Embodied, sensorial, visual, contemplative and storytelling practices can promote healing, connection, reflection and awareness. Figure 3.

3.5.1 Unsent Letters Mailbox. The Unsent Letter Mailbox offers a home for unsent letters, anonymous confessions, unspoken thoughts, and raw truths. The Unsent Letters Mailbox was set up as a pop-up installation over several days at different locations across The New School buildings. An exhibition and reading of these hundred anonymous letters provoked connection and a deeper sense of our shared humanity. Sofia Kavlin, Parsons MFA Design and Urban Ecology with support from Monisha Raju, MS Strategic Design and Management, and Kyra Assibey-Bonsu, MFA Creative Writing, facilitated the pop-up installations.

3.5.2 Voice and Vision of the Child. This creative storytelling and movement workshop invites children to explore emotions and identity through mask-making and collaborative play. Drawing from Fred Rogers' puppetry methods, Indian mask traditions, and ATD Fourth World's Story Garden, the experience encourages imagination and empathy as communal practices. Atharva Sonawane and Kshitij Palresha, Parsons Students, MFA Transdisciplinary Design; Vijay Palaparty, Parsons Faculty and Founder, Spilling Ink; Nalini Prakash, President, Spilling Ink and Faculty, Drexel University.

The hope is that the Festival will be catalytic. By inviting the university community into a dialogue about the meaning and manifestations of care in society we hope to spark collaboration within



Figure 1: Still from Color is Not A Crime documentary. Janneke Wade-de Jong.



Figure 2: Happy Healthy Latina Sofrito Workshop at OSS#MH. OSS Project.

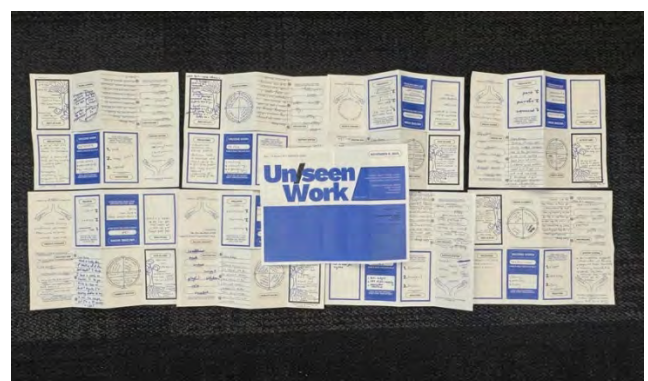


Figure 3: Un/seen Work in a zine format. Ayano Iwasaki, Ezgi Eyigor, Ari Jauregui Malpartida, Shannon Lavelle.

The New School centered on creating a future of care in society where collective well-being is prioritized.

4 AUTHORS BIOS

Juanli Carrion, Assistant Professor of Design Strategies and Director of the First Year Program, Parsons School of Design and Co-founder of OSS Project. Carrión has been internationally recognized for his research, design and education of community engaged artistic practices addressing social and environmental justice.

Anne Gaines, Executive Dean, Parsons School of Design and Associate Professor of Contemporary Art Practice in the School of Art, Media, and Technology. Anne focuses her study on community centered opportunities for individual transformation through embodied art praxis.

Michele Kahane, Professor of Professional Practice in Management and Social Innovation, Parsons School of Design Strategies. She is founder and co-director of Parsons Care Lab, a research and innovation lab focused on building new practices and models of care and mutual aid in communities, organizations and cities.

Marisa Morán Jahn, Assistant Professor of Design Strategies and Director, BFA Integrated Design, Parsons School of Design. Marisa Morán Jahn is an artist of Ecuadorian/Chinese descent. She is a Senior Researcher at MIT. With architect and MIT professor Rafi

Segal, she coauthored *Design and Solidarity* (Columbia University Press) and cofounded Carehaus, the US's first care-based co-housing project.

Acknowledgments

The following graduate research assistants are important collaborators in the Festival: Kyra Assibey-Bonsu, Izzy Groenwegen, Paola Machuca Hernandez, and Monisha Raju.

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Cemetery of Good Intentions

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Abstract

Design practice, like human life, unfolds through beginnings, transformations, and endings. Yet while design ethics and participatory frameworks emphasize responsible starts and ethical operations, they rarely address how projects end. Cemetery of Good Intentions responds to this ethical gap by creating a participatory environment for designers to reflect on concluded or dissolved projects. Framed by the question What does it mean to end well, it redefines closure as an act of care rather than failure. Through a workshop in New York City, participants contribute symbolic “tombstones” and stories representing unfinished intentions, followed by dialogue and ritual guided by a Death Doula. The project culminates in a digital archive and film presented at PDC 2026, extending local reflections into a global conversation. By reframing endings as moments of reconciliation and shared learning, this Situated Action invites peace, dialogue, and coexistence through the ethics of closure.

CCS Concepts

• Participatory design; • Empirical studies in interaction;

Keywords

Participatory design, Project closure, Collective reflection

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1 THEME AND CONCEPT

Design practice, much like human life, unfolds through cycles of beginning, transformation, and closure. Over the past several decades, participatory design and equity-centered approaches have made significant progress in articulating how projects should begin responsibly. Design literature such as Design Social Change [1], Liberatory Design [2], and Beyond Sticky Notes [3] emphasizes collaboration during the early and middle phases of projects, including community engagement, reflexivity, power awareness, and inclusive decision-making. These works argue that how designers enter communities, frame problems, and distribute power at the outset has ethical consequences that extend well beyond project outcomes.

Despite these advances, far less attention has been given to how projects end. When projects conclude without care, ethical responsibility does not disappear with the cessation of activity. Unresolved endings can leave communities without clarity regarding ownership, responsibility, or next steps, while designers, researchers, and collaborators may carry emotional and professional burdens tied to unfinished commitments or misalignment between stated values and final outcomes. Community partners may be left managing incomplete systems or abandoned processes without the resources or authority to sustain them. In such cases, the absence of closure can reproduce the power asymmetries that participatory design seeks to address.

Cemetery of Good Intentions responds to this gap by foregrounding design endings as a distinct site of ethical reflection. Conceived as a Situated Action, it is a hybrid on-site workshop and online archive. It invites designers to reflect on how projects that began with good intentions sometimes—often unintentionally—come to an end, by framing these endings through symbolic practices inspired by end-of-life rituals. Rather than evaluating project performance or outcomes, the project centers on the process of ending itself and the ethical implications of departure, shifting attention away from design artifacts and outcomes toward design as a practice constituted through relationships, responsibilities, and decisions that unfold over time, including how projects are concluded.

This project builds on prior research on ethical transitions in design practice, which examined how designers navigate accountability, power, and responsibility during project handovers and exits [4]. While that research resulted in a practitioner-oriented toolkit, Cemetery of Good Intentions translates these insights into a public, participatory provotype. The action creates a space for collective storytelling, reflection, and ritual, enabling designers to confront unresolved endings together.

Because design offers few established practices for addressing how projects end, the project looks beyond the discipline for inspiration, drawing from end-of-life care practices that explicitly engage with endings and transitions. Within this domain, end-of-life doulas offer a model for approaching inevitable endings with preparation and care. The International End-of-Life Doula Association defines a death doula as “a nonmedical companion who provides personalized and compassionate support to individuals, families, and their circles of care as they encounter and navigate death, loss, and mortality.”[5] This project explores end-of-life practices not to equate death with the end of a design project, but to draw from a field that treats preparation for endings as a moral responsibility. By framing closure as a process that warrants care rather than a sign of failure, Cemetery of Good Intentions positions design endings as opportunities for reconciliation, learning, and coexistence.



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2 SITUATED ACTION

The Situated Action unfolds through two interrelated components: an in-person workshop in New York City and a publicly accessible digital archive. Together, these components create both a bounded site of collective reflection and an ongoing platform for dialogue about design endings.

New York City is characterized by constant emergence and disappearance, making it an appropriate setting for examining endings and transitions. Over the past half century, entire neighborhoods have cycled through collapse and renewal—some losing as much as 60% of their population in a single decade, others seeing the most dramatic surges [6]. Data also indicate that New York exhibits high rates of business entry and exit relative to other U.S. states [7]. These shifts create the conditions in which design interventions are conceived, funded, and just as often, quietly concluded.

Designers working in civil service, social innovation, urban planning, nonprofit programming, and community-based practice are especially attuned to this reality. These fields operate under time-bound contracts and pilot-base funding, making questions of closure, responsibility, and transition salient. The Situated Action brings together practitioners from these fields to collectively examine and reflect on a shared professional experience on how design projects end.

2.1 THE WORKSHOP AS A SITE OF COLLECTIVE RITUAL

Formalized death rituals function as structured social practices that use shared language and collective action to help communities respond to endings [8]. Drawing on this understanding, the workshop functions as a communal ritual in which endings are acknowledged together, given form, and held together.

Beginning with introductions and a facilitated dialogue, a trained Death Doula opens the session by sharing how end-of-life care practitioners approach the inevitability of endings—as moments to be prepared for and witnessed. The comparison to design practice is drawn carefully with the limits of the analogy made explicit, emphasizing learning rather than comparison to death, and inviting participants to consider what design practice might gain by learning from a field that understands preparation for endings as a relational and ethical act of care.

Participants then engage in an individual reflection supported by the Four Dimensions framework [4]. The framework prompts sense-making across four interrelated dimensions of transition—leadership, financial, relational, and momentum—inviting participants to consider how leadership continuity and decision-making responsibilities are sustained or handed over; how funding, resources, and long-term viability are affected at moments of closure; which relationships, partnerships, or forms of trust are at risk or carried forward; and how collective energy, motivation, and morale shift as projects come to an end. This framing functions as a tool for noticing what may have been present throughout a project's life but never explicitly named.

That naming becomes literal as each participant works with craft materials to create a small handmade “tombstone” representing a concluded project, including its intention, timeframe, and metaphorical “cause of death.” The act of making draws on Schön's

account of reflective practice [9], in which practitioners come to understand their experience through interaction with materials. By externalizing experience in tangible form, participants are able to encounter their project endings differently than verbal reflection alone permits.

Arranged together as *the Cemetery of Good Intentions*, these tombstones form a shared memorial landscape in which individual project endings become publicly acknowledged. The collective dialogue that follows deepens this recognition. Participants share their artifacts and the stories behind them in a conversation oriented toward listening, pattern-finding, and forms of witnessing that professional norms rarely make room for.

As the session closes with a brief ritual, it deliberately marks the end of the workshop itself, enacting the very care the Situated Action advocates. This act of closure does not resolve the projects discussed but establishes a shared acknowledgment from which the archive continues the dialogue beyond the room.

2.2 THE ARCHIVE AS A SITE OF CONTINUED DIALOGUE

The second component of the Situated Action is a digital archive that preserves and extends what is generated during the workshop. With participant consent, the tombstones are scanned and cataloged into a digital archive alongside short audio reflections narrated by their makers.

The archive allows the material and conversations initiated in New York to remain accessible beyond the temporal limits of the gathering. Visitors are invited to explore contributions and add their own stories, allowing the cemetery to continue growing and the dialogue to remain active over time.

3 PEACE, DIALOGUE, AND COEXISTENCE IN PRACTICE

In this Situated Action, peace is not understood as resolution or agreement but as acknowledgment. By creating structured space to recognize how projects end, the workshop introduces a reflective pause within professional practice. This pause allows responsibility, relationships, and emotional residue to be named before attention shifts elsewhere. Peace, in this sense, is not the settling of conflict but the willingness to sit with what has occurred.

Dialogue unfolds through this shared acknowledgment. In the workshop, participants encounter one another's project endings through the material artifacts and stories that accompany them. The act of publicly placing a “tombstone” within the collective cemetery transforms private experience into shared discourse. By setting aside evaluative expectations, participants are able to articulate endings as lived experiences rather than professional failures. The archive extends the dialogue beyond the room, enabling asynchronous engagement and allowing others to encounter and contribute to the growing collection.

Coexistence becomes visible when multiple project endings are held together without being reduced to a single interpretation. Within the Cemetery of Good Intentions, projects of different scales, sectors, and outcomes stand side by side. Their simultaneous presence makes it possible to recognize patterns across experiences

while preserving difference. What may initially feel isolated becomes legible as part of a broader condition of practice.

By framing endings as inevitable, relational, and worthy of care, the Situated Action repositions closure as an ethical dimension of design. Peace arises through acknowledgment, dialogue through shared articulation, and coexistence through the visible presence of multiple endings held together over time.

Acknowledgments

Tomo Morikawa is a service designer at NTT DATA, a Japan-based global IT company, working between Japan and the United States. She holds an MS in Strategic Design and Management from Parsons School of Design and focuses on how organizations and individuals navigate change through design.

Abbey Manlicic is a New York-based strategic designer whose practice is informed by her experience working closely with local communities in the Philippines. Her ongoing research on ethical design exits and transitions began during her graduate studies at

Parsons School of Design, and has since evolved into an independent practice.

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Collective Somatic Counterpoint

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Abstract

Collective Somatic Counterpoint is a sonic installation which seeks to explore how the unique experiences of each visitor can become a permeating presence within two spaces simultaneously (Japan and Germany). While more often than not our individual experiences are kept to ourselves, this work attempts to allow our personal experiences to become externalized as part of a larger contrapuntal soundscape which allows past, present, and future experiences to co-exist and intertwine with one another. These unique responses from each and every visitor will become permanent threads within this ever-expanding and evolving sonic tapestry. In this way, *Collective Somatic Counterpoint* is largely about a co-existent dialogue across times, spaces, and experiences.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Participatory design**; *Auditory feedback*.

Keywords

sound art, biofeedback, art research

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1 Theoretical/Conceptual Framing

This work is conceptually grounded in theories of embodied participation and biodata-mediated interaction [1][2], in which physiological signals are treated not merely as measurements but as expressions of lived experience. Rather than positioning participants as passive listeners, *Collective Somatic Counterpoint* frames

the body itself as a generative interface whose rhythms and fluctuations shape the evolving sonic environment. The installation further explores mediated co-presence across geographic distance, investigating how asynchronous yet interconnected encounters can foster a sense of relational dialogue between participants who never physically meet. These conceptual perspectives directly informed the design choices of the installation, including the tactile artifact that emphasizes bodily engagement, the long-term accumulation of biodata-derived sound to foreground temporal coexistence, and the delayed inter-site data exchange that transforms distance into an active compositional element.

2 Location of the Exhibit

Collective Somatic Counterpoint will be shown simultaneously in Yokohama, Japan and Essen, Germany (Option 1 in the call for Situated Actions). Each location will have a direct data link from the other, allowing for long-distance interactions between the participants. It will be presented as a concurrent remote exhibit, with a 7-hour delay between locations to account for the time difference between the locations.

The choice of Yokohama (Japan) and Essen (Germany) is not arbitrary, but reflects two distinct yet interconnected contexts shaped by different institutional and cultural approaches to art, technology, and public participation. The participants in each location include students, researchers, artists, and local visitors engaging with the installation within university-affiliated and research-oriented environments. By linking these sites, the action explores how culturally and socially situated experiences—shaped by local rhythms of daily life, institutional frameworks, and collective memory—can be translated into a shared sonic space. The installation therefore responds to the specific social conditions of each location, emphasizing dialogue between contexts rather than proposing a universally transferable interaction.

3 Design Intent and Participatory Dialogue

Collective Somatic Counterpoint addresses the themes of dialogue and coexistence through the use of sounds and vibrations which are directly tied to and derived from real-time physiological data of



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participants, thereby externalizing their experience. This externalized experience can be recorded, replayed, and co-exist with future participants, both within the same physical location and within the secondary location. This allows these unique experiences to engage with one another and influence each other. In designing this experience for the maximum coherence of interaction, we sought to develop the experience around human-computer interaction that is easily recognizable and experienced by the user. Following situated action perspectives [4], the interaction design emphasizes recognizable and accountable bodily engagement, allowing participants to intuitively understand how their actions influence the evolving soundscape. Rather than functioning solely as an interactive artwork, the installation operates as a research-through-design probe, using embodied interaction and biodata exchange to investigate how distributed participants negotiate co-presence, memory, and dialogue across distances and times.

4 Collective Somatic Counterpoint in Action

The installation space will be a dimly lit room, with 4 speakers surrounding the space and a glowing egg-shaped artifact on a pedestal in the middle. When visitors approach and place their hands on the sides of the artifact, it will respond with visual and haptic feedback, while also incorporating their physiological data into the soundscape. The biodata of each participant generates a unique piece of audio, continuing traditions of biofeedback-driven sonic practice [3], which then exists within the soundscape as a lasting trace of the participant's presence. These sonic traces will begin with a slightly muffled sound, emulating the manner in which we all heard sounds while in utero. As these individual experiences permeate throughout the space, they will become more clear and prominent for a time, until they again recede and blur into the background, as though they are the ghostly past of what happened before. This process of experience-sharing and cycle-of-life-inspired interactive sound art will propel the participants' typically internal experiences into external dialogues between past, present, and future people in both Japan and Germany.

5 Biodata Artifact

The artifact is a custom-built egg-like object with a hard semi-transparent exterior, approximately 40cm in length by 30 cm in height. The inside of the artifact is filled with a soft material, features LED lights and haptic actuators inside of it to allow for an enhanced tactile feeling. The two ends of the artifact will have openings for the participants to place their hands into the soft material, allowing them to feel the rhythmic pulsations of the recorded heartbeats from the same space in the second location. Sensing electrodes and PPG sensors are placed in these open areas to read the heart and EDA data. Two semi-modular synthesizers are installed inside of the artifact, driving the entirety of the sonic interpretation of the visitor's experience. Due to the time differences between Japan and Germany (7 hours), there will be a 7-hour delay from Japan's data to Germany's data, allowing for participants to experience each other at the same local time.

6 Author Biographies

6.1 Danny Hynds

Danny Hynds is a sound artist and researcher whose work seeks to explore how real-time physiological sensing and bespoke software design can allow for new methodologies of live sonic art. He is currently Project Assistant Professor at X-Music Lab and Creative Technologist/Sound Designer at VIE, Inc.

6.2 George Chernyshov

George is an engineer who holds a PhD from Keio Media Design and works on Art & Tech projects.

6.3 Hua Ma

Hua Ma is a smart wearable designer and interaction designer. She has engaged in research on smart fabrics, smart garments, and interactive installation design since 2020.

6.4 Giulia Barbareschi

Giulia holds a PhD in Disability and Assistive Technology Design. She has expertise in participatory design with marginalized users, accessibility and international development. She is currently Professor of Inclusive Technology and Collective Engagement.

6.5 Chihiro Sato

Chihiro received a Ph.D. in Media Design. Her expertise is in community-based design, service design, digital humanities, economic geography. She is currently Associate Professor at Keio University Graduate School of Media Design.

6.6 Shinya Fujii

Shinya Fujii is a drummer and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Environment and Information Studies at Keio University. He directs the Research Center for Music Science at the Keio University Global Research Institute and is the Principal Investigator of the x-Music Laboratory and the NeuroMusic Laboratory at Keio University SFC. His research interests lie in the neuroscience of music, particularly the neural origin of rhythm and beat perception and production.

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Utopian Epistles on Dissent, Disagreement, and Disillusionment

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Abstract

This Situated Action proposes the building of a correspondence archive, initiated by Pelle Ehn, and now expanded towards the PDC community. In this proposal, we turn from the archive's current focus on peace, dialogue, and coexistence towards a generational turn that considers the need for expressing and making space for dissent, disagreement, and disillusionment. In a world in disarray, we turn to unpacking our own participation in systems of oppression and rethinking the role of participatory design in those same mechanisms. This action encompasses the making and starting of an archive in honour of the conversations that need to happen between us to build the dialogue and coexistence we dream of in our utopias.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing → Participatory design.

Keywords

correspondence, co-design, letters

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1 Introduction

Milan will be the location for a second iteration of a reading of letters: a slow exchange between researchers and others interested in discussing the past, present, and future of participatory design. In this situated action, we continue a tradition started in 2025 by Pelle Ehn, with an emphasis this time on co-designing an archive for these epistolary exchanges. In this short article, we first introduce the first iteration of this event, followed by a description of where we collectively seek to take this initiative.

1.1 The First Letter Exchange in Aarhus 2025: “Utopian Epistles: Computing [Codesign] Crises”

At the Sixth Aarhus Decennial Conference (AAR '25, August 2025), Pelle Ehn presented his essay “*Utopian Epistles: Computing [Codesign] Crises*.” The piece took the form of ten letters [5], each addressed to younger generations of design researchers and practitioners. Written in an epistolary style, the letters reflected on fifty years of participatory design and co-design, while projecting forward to future crises and possibilities.

The epistles explored enduring tensions in design, such as memory versus nostalgia, labour versus capital, collaboration versus conflict, and democracy versus autocracy. Ehn adopted a reflective and personal voice, situating design within broader political and social struggles. A recurring phrase that resonated publicly was his reference to “dark times,” coupled with a call for new (less utopian)

“songs” and stronger collectives to sustain democratic and critical alternatives in design.

Ehn invited five researchers from different generations and career stages to respond publicly to the letters. The invitation came in the form of a proposal to participate in a joint performance at the Aarhus conference, in which each response letter was read out loud to the conference attendees and paired with a song. In this way, the letters came to function as a passing of the baton between well-established researchers and new voices in the field, and the epistolary style opened for responses beyond the academic framings usually applied to the topics at hand. The invited group comprised Shaowen Bardzell, Sanna Marttila, Erik Sandelin, Ida Larsen-Ledet, and Mafalda Gamboa. Their response letters ranged from deeply personal and touching to amusing and provocative. During the performance, a conference workshop [15] provided a material response in the form of a small embroidery kit for attendants to work on.

The situated action at PDC in Milan 2026 is the next iteration of the Utopian Epistles. This present action continues the thread of dark times, new songs, and stronger collectives, thus picking up on challenging aspects of dealing with such dark times.

1.2 Second Letter Exchange and Situated Action in Milan 2026: “Dissent, Disagreement, and Disillusionment”

Our focus and drive this time is “Dissent, Disagreement, and Disillusionment.” We aim to host a space for slow protest and engagement with conflicts of the PD community, as well as asking how participatory design as dissent and protest may have a role in peace-making in the world beyond academia. In this iteration, we seek not to shy away from contentious issues within participatory design, for example, but stay with the trouble by discussing the refusal to engage in a shallow manner with local spaces or communities that may already be in dire need of less labour being pushed upon them. This dilemma of engagement is central to ethical, inclusive, and non-extractivist forms of participation.

Our situated action is grounded in political, decolonial, and pluriversal approaches within PD. We align with Björgvinsson et al.[2], who, drawing on Chantal Mouffe’s political theory, challenge consensus-oriented ideals in PD. By foregrounding Mouffe’s notion of agonistic pluralism, which rejects consensus as the objective of democratic practice, she positions conflict as a necessary condition of democracy. Building on this perspective, Björgvinsson et al.[2] argue that design spaces should be co-constructed through the articulation of difference and should not be expected to be fully reconciled. Instead, PD efforts should be directed toward creating “publics,” where different values, interests, and worldviews can confront and challenge one another, rather than be aligned or harmonised. This agonistic participatory design approach is concerned with amplifying marginal voices, challenging hegemonic positions, and designing collective gatherings that bring together diverse and opposing perspectives around specific issues [2, 4, 10].

Similarly, learning from decolonial and pluriversal perspectives in PD, it seems that attempts to resolve differences or conflicts through consensus risk reintroducing dominant epistemic and ontological logics, thereby marginalising alternative ways of being,

knowing, and designing in the world [6, 9, 14, 17]. Working against universalising tendencies and dominant design [1, 3], these approaches call for participatory frames that allow multiple worlds to meet without collapsing into a singular outcome, embracing tension and making collective struggles visible.

Our situated action builds on these perspectives by aiming to co-create and hold a space for difference in thinking, knowing, and designing within PD. Through the use of postcards, we seek both to cultivate a polyphony of voices, which are sometimes conflicting, sometimes attuned, and to create moments of pause for listening to dissent, disagreement, and disillusionment. In doing so, the situated action enacts and performs agonistic world-making, where friction is treated as a condition for critical engagement, collective reflection, and mutual learning.

This situated action thus directly addresses the conference’s theme of *Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence*; both in the content of the letters and in the format of the situated action itself. To move towards peace, dialogue, and coexistence, a space for disagreement and dissent must exist. To work with the tensions and power structures explored in the first set of epistles, we must acknowledge and address the disillusionment that can arise from compromise and from attempts to approach conflict with reconciliation.

We aim to involve the PDC community directly, and we purposefully engage local connections through letter sending rather than momentary in situ exchanges only. This time, we will not only pass the baton among different generations but also more deliberately move across borders, both national and disciplinary boundaries.

With our use of letters, this situated action will draw its strength from the combination of the personal and the public. Although public, the letters leave room for less formal and more personal expression. With this, the utopian epistles will be anchored in participants’ own experiences of dissent, disagreement, and disillusionment rather than in scholarly foundations, which we hope will help us transcend disciplinary borders. This anchoring, we hope, will help expose and critique dominant narratives through the counter-narrative of the personal [8]. Letter writing can make the personal “productively usable in ways in which it was not prior to being written down” [8, p. 54] by serving as an act of reflection that transforms how the sender’s experience – as a researcher, a citizen, or whatever role(s) they find themselves in as they write their letter – is interpreted and framed. Crucially, letters as a genre are familiar to a much broader public than academic texts would be, and so it makes it possible to extend an invitation to people outside academia, hopefully starting with citizens in Milan.

2 Before Milan: Letter Sending

This situated action has two phases; before and after Milan. To continue the dialogue in written form, we have chosen this time to spread the invitation more broadly, but in a shorter invitation format. We will use postcards as the medium for invitations to contribute to the situated action; sent through regular postal service delivery¹.

¹Curiously, during the development of this situated action, Denmark discontinued its state-run postal service. Anecdotally, one of the authors of this submission has now turned to a parcel delivery service to send documents. More on this can be found here: <https://group.postnord.com/news-media/2025/postnord-to-discontinue-handling-mail-in-denmark-in-2026-focusing-exclusively-on-parcels/>

Physical mail has a slowness that is conducive to reflection and to paying attention to others' contributions (letters), and using the postal system to maintain networks and communicate dissent is an established aesthetic genre, e.g. [7, 11, 16]. The physical medium is also an act of dissent against digital surveillance capitalism. Physical letters — postcards, in this case — enable us to communicate outside of for-profit digital platforms that can easily be subject to political control, and where use can be conceived as a form of indirect consent to the agendas of the institutions that own and operate those platforms. Taking the letters off the digital network is also an act of dissent against people's words being harvested for artificial intelligence.

Using postcards is also a way for us to more easily include a broader group of people without putting out a completely open call. To this end, 100 postcards will be sent from the existing set of corresponding people (each of us will send a set of 10 or 20 postcards). We use the materiality of the postcard to invite others into the conversation. Out of the answers we get, we will contact 4–5 of the responding authors and invite them to write full letters and be part of the situated action in Milan. Along with the postcards sent to 100 recipients, a short instruction on the format for the engagement will be provided.

To allow for a more local connection, a number of these postcards will be sent to local actors in Milan, including the venue where the action itself will happen.

3 Situated Action in Milan: Reading and Archive Building

The performance will be similar to the one that took place in Aarhus 2025, pairing music with letter readings. Milan will be the first attempt at continuing this tradition: Our suggestion is to broaden the situated actions, including a new set of participants who will read and enact their own letters.

As a backdrop to this performance, we will create an exhibition of the postcards that we have received. These postcards and letters will be exhibited at the conference venue in a manner that allows the audience to read them independently. To this end, we will create a physical letter archive that can travel with us from Scandinavia (where it is currently located) to Italy.

3.1 The Archive

The letters and postcards produced during the situated action will be added to a growing body of work. The situated action is therefore the building and opening of the Archive; it involves both the writing, the performing, and the curation and decision of how the archive is accessed, transported, and contributed to. This action is the first attempt at evolving a somewhat ephemeral performance in Aarhus towards a more permanent and expandable artefact.

In the process of this travel to Milan, the archive will be co-designed amongst the organisers, in a manner that will open to further redesign at the site of the conference. The emerging conditions and contingencies of this travel will become part of the history of the archive's design. This situated action is a negotiation on what characteristics of the archive we (those who contribute) want to invest in; treating it as a work in progress and as a collectively owned cultural object. For example, issues of accessibility,

openness, and levels of digital dimensions need to be negotiated. Importantly, questions of what meta-data could be applied to this archive is part of what we want to discuss with others in Milan.

For this co-creation process, we turn to the political act of the archive and an archive as a form of participation (see e.g. [12, 13]). Therefore, the archive is not yet fully defined, as it needs to be co-created with those contributing to it and the forms of correspondence they wish to include. In designing the physical letter archive, we expect to draw on forms from historical and contemporary epistolary storage (trunks, heaps, cabinets) and exchange (stamps, seals).

4 Short Bios

Mafalda Gamboa is a design researcher and PhD student, arguably a specialist on dissent.

Ida Larsen-Ledet is a postdoctoral fellow at University College Cork, where she is exploring a methodology for engaging members of the public in ethnographic co-research.

Sanna Marttila is an associate professor with a research interest in how designers can engage with relationality, commoning, and infrastructures of participation.

Erik Sandelin makes prototypes to instigate and investigate gracious modes of life. He is a postdoctoral fellow in the Data+Feminism Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Shaowen Bardzell is a professor who works at the intersection of feminism, humanistic computing, sustainability, and HCI.

Lone Koefoed Hansen is an associate professor. Her work spans participatory design, speculative design, feminist and posthumanist design, and design fiction. She explores how design practices can engage with political, ecological, and non-human concerns.

Anna Seravalli is an associate professor in (participatory) design engaging with collective action and precarious presents.

Pelle Ehn has for more than half a century been engaged in design research as democratic design experiments.

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An Elephant in the Room: A Participative Visualisation of the Collaborations Between Politecnico di Milano and Companies Fuelling Israel's Violence Against Palestinians

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Abstract

Universities increasingly maintain partnerships with corporations embedded in defence and security industries, yet these relationships often remain opaque to the communities they shape. In the context of documented human rights violations in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territory, such entanglements raise questions of institutional responsibility. This Situated Action mobilises participatory and information design methods to reconstruct and visualise university–industry relations at Politecnico di Milano. Drawing on publicly available digital traces, the project assembles an evidence-based dataset and translates it into a participatory mapping installation during PDC26, enabling attendees to collectively examine and discuss institutional ties.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Visualization; • Visualization theory, concepts and paradigms; Human-centered computing; • Interaction paradigms; • Participatory design.;

Keywords

Institutional accountability, Critical data practice, Agonistic design

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1 WATCH OUT FOR THE ELEPHANT

On 18 September 2025, Amnesty International called on public institutions, private companies and research organizations worldwide to end practices that materially sustain Israel's military operations in Gaza and its broader system of occupation and apartheid [1]. Complementary findings from the UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) [2], Human Rights Watch [3]

and B'Tselem [4] document how state actors, corporations and knowledge institutions contribute to the infrastructures enabling these violations. These reports frame violence not only as the outcome of military action, but as the product of extended political and economic ecosystems in which research, technology development and industrial supply chains play a decisive role.

Universities participate in these ecosystems through dense and often routine forms of collaboration with industry. Corporate-funded doctoral programs, industry-sponsored laboratories, dual-use research contracts, sponsored internships and exclusive recruitment pipelines increasingly bind academic work to defense, aerospace and surveillance sectors. Under the language of innovation, excellence, and employability, these relationships normalize the transfer of publicly funded knowledge into military and security applications, while obscuring their ethical and political implications.

Recent shifts in European research policy further intensify these dynamics. Across the European Union, public research funding frameworks historically framed as civilian (i.e. *Horizon Europe*) have progressively expanded to include security and defense priorities [5], alongside the creation of dedicated instruments such as the *European Defence Fund* [6]. These programs explicitly incentivize collaborations between universities, technology providers and military industries, normalizing the integration of academic research into defense supply chains. As significant portions of public research budgets are redirected toward dual-use security and strategic autonomy agendas, institutions risk facing structural pressure to align with military and surveillance sectors in order to remain competitive for funding. In this context, university-industry partnerships are not exceptional choices but systemic outcomes of policy design. The militarization of research funding therefore cannot be understood as a marginal phenomenon; it constitutes a broader political-economic shift that embeds higher education within infrastructures of warfare at a continental scale.

These dynamics are particularly acute within large polytechnic and engineering universities, where close alignment with industrial partners is presented as a strategic necessity for competitiveness in research funding and innovation ecosystems. Direct scrutiny of collaborations is often constrained by confidentiality agreements and opaque contractual arrangements, limiting public accountability. What remains accessible are fragmented digital traces: job postings, social media announcements, calls for theses, lists of sponsors and event partnerships. While individually mundane, these fragments collectively signal patterns of institutional alignment.

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Transforming these dispersed traces into forms that render institutional responsibility legible constitutes an epistemic challenge. The problem is not only ethical – whether such relations should be questioned – but methodological: how to systematically collect, verify and organize partial evidence so that it becomes publicly interpretable and open to scrutiny. This challenge is particularly salient for researchers operating within the very infrastructures under examination.

The authors of this Situated Action (SA) occupy precisely this position. As researchers within the host institution, we are simultaneously beneficiaries of and subject to the same organizational and funding structures we seek to investigate. Our teaching, funding and career trajectories are shaped by the industry relationships under scrutiny. This positionality complicates any claim to neutrality, but it also affords situated access to the institutional contexts in which these entanglements operate. Rather than observing responsibility from a distance, we examine it from within the everyday spaces where it is enacted.

Responding to Amnesty International’s call therefore becomes not only a matter of solidarity but of institutional accountability. Treating the campus itself as a site of political design practice, the proposed SA asks: *How can participatory design methods be mobilized to reconstruct, visualize, and publicly interrogate academic institutions’ relationships with companies implicated in documented human rights violations in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territory?*

By taking institutional infrastructure as the object of inquiry, this project reframes the university not as a neutral backdrop but as a contested field in which knowledge production, economic interests and political responsibility intersect. The proposed SA emerges from this problematisation as an attempt to make these relations visible, discussable and open to collective scrutiny.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND SITUATED ACTION

To address the research question and render academic relations publicly legible, the project combines methods from Participatory Design (PD) and Information Design (ID) with systematic data reconstruction and triangulation. This section details three components: (1) the collection, verification and analysis of publicly available institutional data; (2) the design and implementation of the SA as a participatory device for visualizing and collectively interrogating these relations; and (3) the expected outcomes and forms of knowledge produced through the intervention.

2.1 Data Reconstruction: Assembling a Dataset from Platform Traces

Between January and May 2026, the proposed SA will compile and verify publicly available digital traces of university-industry relations that link departments and funding streams to companies identified by credible monitors as materially supporting Israeli state violence [1, 2, 7–9]. As a first step, in early January we scraped our institution’s career services platform to assemble a comprehensive list of affiliated companies, including those without active vacancies. Following the Digital Methods framework [10], the platform is conceptualized as an institutional trace of recruitment-facing

relationships. This initial corpus was subsequently narrowed to companies appearing in the above-mentioned studies documenting forms of corporate involvement in Israel-related harms. From January to May, the platform will be revisited every 15 days to record new job postings by these companies, generating a longitudinal record of recruitment activity. The resulting dataset will comprise company identifiers, full and short company names, involvement classification, source documentation, cited actions or relationships, company categories, open positions, and other qualitative notes. This dataset will inform the creation of a participatory, tangible network visualisation designed to render visible the institutional structures through which such relationships are sustained.

2.2 Situated Action: Participatory Mapping of Institutional Responsibility

The SA unfolds across the four days of the conference through a low-tech, participatory installation designed to render academic-industry relationships publicly visible and collectively interrogable. The intervention centres on a large-format printed network positioned in a high-circulation area of the campus. The poster presents a partially pre-constructed relational map with the scanned, host institution (Politecnico di Milano) at its centre and connected nodes representing companies with which formal collaborations have been identified. These companies are clustered by sector (e.g., defence, finance, food, technology), foregrounding the breadth of institutional entanglements.

To increase visibility within the dispersed conference environment, a short looping animation derived from the same visual language is displayed on existing campus screens. This animation functions as an invitation device, directing passers-by toward the physical installation rather than constituting the intervention itself.

Participation occurs through a simple tangible interaction. Adjacent to the poster, a set of printed tickets presents individual pieces of evidence drawn from the dataset. Each ticket combines two elements: (1) a documented action or involvement of a company in relation to human rights violations in the oPt, and (2) a trace of that company’s relationship with the university (e.g., internships, scholarships, research collaborations). After reading a ticket, participants place a coloured marker on the corresponding company node on the poster and retain the ticket. Through these successive contributions, the map gradually accumulates visible markers, materialising the density of relationships over time. This minimal interaction lowers barriers to engagement and allows participation to occur within the everyday flow of the conference. Rather than requiring extended commitment, the act of selecting, reading and placing a marker positions attendees as witnesses and co-analysts of the evidence presented. The growing concentration of markers transforms the poster into an evolving record of collective scrutiny, making patterns of institutional responsibility increasingly legible.

On the second-last day of the conference, a 30-minute session facilitated by the authors presents the dataset, reflects on the challenges of reconstructing these institutional ties, and uses the completed map as a basis for collective discussion. This moment shifts the intervention from distributed witnessing to structured dialogue, inviting participants to interpret the network, compare experiences across institutions, and debate possible forms of accountability.

Across these phases, the SA operates through two complementary modalities: public visual disclosure and participatory reconstruction. Visualisation is thus framed not as the presentation of finished knowledge, but as a shared process through which institutional responsibility becomes progressively observable, discussable and contestable.

The SA's participatory core consists therefore in two interlocking modalities. First, *distributing witnessing*: the public display of the network invites passers-by to confront fragments of institutional evidence within the everyday circulation of the campus. Second, *collective reconstruction and dialogue*: the tangible mapping activity and the final facilitated discussion convene students, staff and delegates in a shared, data-driven inquiry into institutional responsibility, foregrounding an agonistic form of co-analysis, in which participants interrogate evidence, contest interpretations and articulate divergent positions without requiring consensus.

2.3 Forms of Knowledge Produced

As the SA will take place after the submission of this work, the following contributions are articulated as anticipated forms of knowledge rather than evaluated outcomes. Consistent with participatory and intervention-based research, the project does not aim to measure behavioural change or consensus, but to create conditions under which institutional relations become publicly legible and open to collective scrutiny.

First, the intervention is expected to generate institutional knowledge by systematically reconstructing and evidencing university-industry relationships that are typically dispersed across administrative documents and digital traces. By assembling these fragments into a shared visual artefact, the project renders otherwise opaque connections observable and discussable. Second, the installation seeks to produce situated public awareness within the campus environment: by embedding the visualisation within everyday circulation spaces, the intervention lowers barriers to engagement and enables members of the academic community to encounter evidence of institutional responsibility as part of their routine activities. Third, the participatory mapping and final discussion are intended to support collective interpretation and agonistic dialogue, inviting participants to interrogate evidence, articulate divergent positions and surface ethical tensions surrounding university-industry partnerships. In this sense, the project treats disagreement as a productive condition for democratic inquiry [11]. Finally, by situating the intervention within an international PD conference, the project aims to foster comparative and transferable knowledge: exchanges with researchers from other institutions may reveal similar configurations of responsibility and generate shared strategies for addressing them, extending the discussion beyond the local context.

These contributions therefore position the SA not as a vehicle for persuasion, but as an epistemic device: a means of making institutional responsibility visible, contestable and open to dialogue within and across academic communities.

3 RECLAIMING THE POLITICAL IN (PARTICIPATORY AND INFORMATION) DESIGN

The SA draws theoretically on agonistic [12] and adversarial design [13] traditions and on critical data practices that treat visualisation as both an epistemic intervention [14] and as narrative device [15, 16]. We consider the process of data visualization to be inherently political [17, 18], and therefore seek to subvert its conventional use in favour of a participatory, critical act of knowledge disclosure. The SA also engages settler-colonial scholarship to situate university-industry relations within broader structures of dispossession [19, 20]. Rather than seeking consensus, the SA cultivates conflicts as a condition for participatory knowledge production: visualising data is an interpretative political practice opening agonistic spaces.

Positioned within Participatory Design (PD), the SA responds to longstanding concerns that the field has progressively lost some of its original “political tooth” [21], reorienting PD toward institutional accountability by demonstrating how participatory data visualisation [22, 23] and public disclosure can operate as legitimate research methods for interrogating the power structures that shape academic work itself. By turning participatory techniques inward toward the university's own funding ecologies and organisational infrastructures, the SA reframes the campus as a site of political design practice. In this sense, the project argues that dialogue and coexistence are meaningful only when grounded in transparency and contested knowledge, and participation is mobilised to surface conflict, rendering institutional tensions explicit and open to collective deliberation.

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A APPENDICES

A.1 Authors' Biographies

Silvia Cantalupi

Silvia is a design researcher with a strong interest in social innovation, participatory approaches and public engagement. She is currently a Research Fellow and a Ph.D. student at the Department of Design at Politecnico di Milano. As Research Fellow, she is working on a EU-funded project exploring co-creation and co-design approaches in the recycling of fiber-reinforced polymers; as PhD student with Polimi DESIS Lab, she is carrying out her inquiry around the phenomenon of design activism in urban public spaces, stressing on the exploration of the relationships between design for social change, spatial design and *the political*.

Elena Aversa

Elena Aversa is a postdoctoral researcher in Information Design at DensityDesign and an adjunct professor at Politecnico di Milano, NABA, and Poli.design. Her work sits at the intersection of data, design, digital methods, and public understanding. Her main research interest concerns how misleading information visualisations construct and circulate meaning across digital media, and participatory approaches to Digital Media and Information Literacy that position data visualisation as an accessible practice for understanding and engagement.

Dispositivos Placeros: Voices of Resistance from Marketplaces in Colombia, Italy and Taiwan

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Abstract

The project explores marketplaces as active rural–urban meeting points within contemporary cities, understood as living spaces shaped by everyday practices, memories, and social relations. Framed as sites of dialogue, resistance, and identity autonomy, marketplaces reveal plural forms of situated knowledge expressed through material culture, soundscapes, and collective memory. The project develops a Situated Action based on participatory workshops leading to the co-creation of a dialogic device activated within marketplaces in Colombia, Italy, and Taiwan. Grounded in principles of co-creation, participation, and knowledge exchange, the device functions as a living archive that documents struggles related to self-organization, gentrification, and intergenerational change. Through cross-border and inter-place dialogues, the project builds transnational networks that connect local experiences of resistance and coexistence. By positioning marketplaces as living infrastructures of cultural coexistence, the project challenges urban-centric narratives and contributes to public debate, policy reflection, and the safeguarding of tangible and intangible placero heritage.

Keywords

Marketplace, Dialogue, Rural-urban, situated knowledge

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1 Marketplaces, dialogue, situated knowledge

This project interprets market squares as rural–urban meeting points within contemporary cities and as active agents shaped by merchants, customers, neighbors, and visitors. Within modern urban structuring, rural–urban relations are marked by tension and play a central role in urban imaginaries. Marketplaces operate as sites where rural-urban communities experience plural conflicts and expressions which enter into dialogue, becoming processes of resistance, vindication, and identity autonomy, building vital nodes

for prevailing socioeconomic issues [1]. This plurality emerges through soundscapes, material culture, graphic elements, and everyday practices that evoke rural memory within urban dynamics, enabling cities not to forget their rural origins.

The Situated Action (SA) consists of participatory workshops leading to the collective construction of a dialogic device across marketplaces. Activated through dialogue and documentation, the device is designed in close relation to each context—its products, materials, spatial conditions, and situated knowledge. Grounded in co-creation, participation, and knowledge exchange, dialogue is framed as both a methodological and political practice.

The project encourages plural dialogues, co-creation of context-specific content across Colombia, Italy, and Taiwan, and knowledge exchange as a form of public agency. It aims to strengthen the impact of marketplaces within local environments and broader public policy and institutional arenas. The device is structured around three thematic axes: (1) public–private disputes concerning the self-determination and self-organization of marketplaces; (2) identity transitions shaped by processes of gentrification and urban revitalization; and (3) intergenerational meanings, understood as points of conversation and collective action in relation to change, disappearance, and resistance across generations.

These dialogues are expected to provoke reflective questions among participants seeking to establish a cooperative dialogue characterized by balancing the place of speaking and listening [2], through questions such as: How do I define my way of eating in the city? What is my relationship with rurality? How do urban–rural transformations manifest in my surroundings? What knowledge have I learned or exchanged in the marketplace? How does food sovereignty influence my food choices? What cultural expressions emerge within the market? What is the relationship between the marketplace and memory?

2 Context of the Situated Action

The SA takes place in three marketplaces facing contemporary struggles across Colombia, Italy, and Taiwan, with a possible activation in Milan. The project fosters participatory dialogues on resistance, documenting collective memory, and situated knowledge. By framing marketplaces as hybrid rural–urban spaces, the SA challenges narratives of disappearance and reinforces their role as infrastructures of coexistence.

The selected markets are “Plaza del 12 de Octubre” in Bogotá, “Mercato Comunale di Viale Monza” (Mercato Crespi) in Milan and “Shilin Night Market” in Taiwan. The selection of the markets was based on previous relations between market actors and the team



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of researchers and the relevance of these markets in processes of resistance in front of urban transformation.

The SA starts at “Plaza del 12 de Octubre”, Bogotá, an indoor market where stories of work, displacement, and resilience form the first layer of the dialogic device. This market square is known for its location in an area of economic activity involving movable goods, in a popular neighborhood of the city, and internally for its social organization with the establishment of cooperatives since 1990.

In Milan, the action takes place at Mercato Comunale di Viale Monza (Mercato Crespi), an indoor market for the sale of food and other products by independent producers or retailers [3]. Facing eviction linked to managerial reconfiguration, traders and residents have formed a committee to preserve the market’s social and symbolic value through co-creation and participatory decision-making [4].

In Taiwan, “Shilin Night Market”, originated in the early 20th century as a local agricultural trading hub, has expanded over the decades into a vibrant social and culinary center, embodying xiaochi culture and community exchange [5, 6]. Today it faces pressures from tourism, modernization, and generational change, raising debates on authenticity and vendor resilience [7, 8]. This context is interesting because of the tensions surrounding migration and gentrification that have been found in research on the hypothesis of the loss of local identity and the consolidation of global identity.

Methodological adjustments with each market respond to varying relational conditions: strong and continuative cooperation in Bogotá, disrupted collaboration in Milan due to eviction processes, and initial engagement in Taiwan. These differences allow reflection on how academic–territorial relationships shape participation.

3 Modes of Interaction, Participatory Process and Device Structure

The project adopts a mutable, co-created device functioning as a living archive within each marketplace, where memory, dialogue, and documentation converge. The placero device responds to debates on marketplace heritage by promoting a situated interpretation of placero sociocultural value through listening and dialogue. Each device includes life stories, a context-sensitive graphic shell, and a collective symbolic co-creation activating memory as present resistance.

The project follows a phased participatory process combining in-situ workshops, market-based activation, and cross-market communication. The first phase consists of participatory workshops where vendors, neighbours, and visitors collectively shape the device as a material and symbolic artefact reflecting local knowledge, products, and experiences. The initial workshops are conducted in Bogotá, and their outcomes inform the process in the other two markets. Workshops are embedded in market rhythms and use design tools and prompts on urban–rural relations, memory, and cultural expression to surface shared values and identities. The aim of this process is to generate devices that narrate the story of each marketplace from an initially blank space, progressively filled with participants’ experiences of struggle, adaptation, and resistance.

The second phase activates the device within each market as a conversational artefact, expanding dialogue to broader participants, and then across markets based on reflection-on-action as a tool to explore unfolding situations wondering what happens and why it happens [9]. This action enables the mediating translocal exchanges among Colombia, Italy, and Taiwan based in global-local research, suggesting that these exchanges develop knowledge that becomes ideas for the co-creation of translocal spaces [10]. Knowledge gathered can be shared with civil society and policy actors, positioning the device as a tool for collective learning, resistance, and memory safeguarding. The first activation occurs in Colombia, followed by Milan and Taiwan, with adaptations responding to distinct relational conditions.

The third stage connects marketplaces through digital platforms and collaborative dialogues, producing an international conversation on shared struggles and creative resistance.

4 Conceptual Framework

The SA is grounded in Participatory Design (PD) and its democratic and emancipatory principles, aiming to empower communities to envision alternative futures through locally situated practices. By actively involving participants—particularly those often excluded from decision-making—the project fosters reciprocal learning between researchers and communities. Within an increasingly interconnected world characterized by plural knowledge systems, PD positions design as a responsible, action-oriented practice capable of addressing urgent social concerns related to politicization, diversification, relationality, and transformation [11].

While we talk about participation, an issue emerges that is important for mediating situated participation: cultural creation. This concept can be understood as the result of creative activities carried out by a group that shares common values, objectives, and interests, united by a shared identity in peasant’s markets [12]. Culture and its study allow strategies to be established to safeguard tangible and intangible heritage to recover its value and generate visibility for citizens. Experiences in marketplaces in Colombia, where design, culture, and history come together, show that management and planning processes have revealed the need to map social actors: companies, educational institutions, the state, and society. This leads to the creation of strategic alliances and the coordination of processes that generate results with integrated objectives [13].

Within this framework, marketplaces are understood as living infrastructures of cultural coexistence—spaces where multiple forms of existence and resistance converge through daily practices of exchange, work, storytelling, and memory. The project focuses on contexts where rural–urban tensions emerge as productive encounters rather than conflicts.

5 Transnational Exchange and Legacy

Across all stages, researchers act as facilitators rather than external observers, ensuring responsiveness to local rhythms.

The resulting devices function as material and digital living archives, supporting cultural advocacy, community learning, and institutional recognition. At a transnational level, the project builds a learning network across Colombia, Italy, and Taiwan, reimagining the marketplace as a space where dialogue becomes a practice of

existence grounded in multiplicity rather than consensus, while also opening pathways to exchange situated modes of resistance among marketplaces facing similar conditions.

6 Authors' short bio

María Andrea Luque is a designer and researcher focused on social innovation and public sector transformation. She teaches as a full-time professor at Universidad de los Andes and has collaborated with several public institutions in Colombia on participatory and service design projects. Her current research, "Prototyping the Public", develops tools that help public servants design, build, and test prototypes for more empathetic and informed public decision-making.

Kevin Fonseca-Laverde is a designer, educator, and activist focused on memory, sovereignty, and resistance. After specializing in collective memory, human rights, and resistance, he is studying for a master's degree in education, society, and politics at FLACSO-Uruguay. He works with open methodologies, cultural management, and self-management networks, with a strong emphasis on autonomy, territory, identity, and anti-speciesist memory.

Lucia Viganego Ballesteros is a PhD student at Polimi Desis Lab, a research unit at Politecnico di Milano. She has previous experience in Design for sustainable food systems in urban areas and is currently conducting PhD research on Design for positive peace in post-conflict scenarios in Colombia.

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Melodies of Coexistence: Community Music and Stop-Motion Animation Workshop for Family Dialogue in Suburban China

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Figure 1: From Instrument Experience to Collaborative Animation Creation Across Three Workshops

Abstract

From August 2024 to August 2025, three participatory arts workshops were held in suburban communities in Zhangjiagang, China, with approximately 45 parent-child pairs in total attending. The workshop design combines immersive listening (live performances of traditional Chinese music by local professional musicians) with active collaborative creation (parent-child stop-motion animation creation), aiming to provide suburban families with doorstep access to high-quality creative activities and to foster multi-layered dialogue. After each workshop, we collected surveys from both parents and children, and conducted semi-structured interviews with 1-2 parents to understand their experiences. The results showed that the workshops triggered four types of dialogues: between parents and children, between musicians and participants, between tradition and technology, and between the community and residents. At PDC26, we present the highlights of the dialogues in a 3-minute video: children trying traditional instruments with musicians, families making animations together, and neighbors discovering community ties. The video also explains the workshop design: intimate performance settings, focus on local resources, and use of accessible materials and technologies. These elements support sustaining and promoting this model and offer guidance on transforming community centers into venues for family, cultural, and community dialogues.

CCS Concepts

• **Applied computing** → **Performing arts**; **Collaborative learning**; • **Human-centered computing** → **Participatory design**.

Keywords

participatory arts, community engagement, parent-child collaboration

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1 Introduction

In China’s rapidly urbanizing landscape, cultural and educational resources are concentrated in urban centers, while suburban communities have fewer opportunities to participate in creative activities [4]. This gap is particularly evident in third-tier cities like Zhangjiagang. Zhangjiagang, where this Situated Action took place, is a coastal city in eastern China, about 130 kilometers northwest of Shanghai, with over 61% of its communities being suburban [9]. Although the city center in Zhangjiagang still has resources such as concert halls, art galleries, and art education programs, suburban families still face various obstacles to accessing these resources. One illustrative example can be the most basic transportation obstacle: the only public transportation in the city is the bus, so people mainly rely on private cars for travel. It takes approximately 30 minutes to commute from the suburbs to the city center, which is considered “troublesome” locally.

Beyond the resource inequality mentioned above, educational policies have also exacerbated structural barriers. In China, creative subjects are often marginalized in formal schooling [3, 7]. For example, music and art classes in primary schools are only offered once a week, and often give way to other exam-oriented subjects when needed [7]. Furthermore, class content usually focuses on technical skills rather than cultivating artistic literacy or creativity [3]. In addition to the structural barriers mentioned above, the parent-child interaction patterns in East Asia pose unique challenges to collaborative creative activities. As shown in the study by Katuka et al., collaborative dialogue enhances satisfaction and co-creativity in collaborative creation [1]. In such dialogue, neither party’s (parents’



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nor children's) views need to be correct. Instead, the discussion process is more important. However, in East Asian cultures, parents are often seen as authority figures, focusing on academic achievement and skill acquisition rather than open-ended exploration [2]. This situation inhibits collaborative dialogue between parents and children.

The aforementioned challenges, including structural barriers to creative resources and cultural contexts limiting parent-child dialogue, create opportunities for interventions that address both. Therefore, we propose a workshop model combining immersive listening (live traditional music) and active co-creation (parent-child stop-motion animation) to give suburban families access to creative activities and foster multi-layered dialogues (between parents and children, musicians and participants, tradition and technology, and community and residents). From August 2024 to August 2025, we implemented this model three times in different suburban communities in Zhangjiagang, engaging about 45 parent-child pairs (children aged 6–12). The workshops were co-designed with the Zhangjiagang Musicians Association and local communities, bringing traditional musicians and suburban families together in community centers.

At PDC26, we show a 3-minute video edited from footage of three workshops, highlighting how different layers of dialogue unfold. The first part shows dialogue between artists and participants, focusing on participants engaging with traditional musical instruments and listening to live performances. The second part highlights dialogue between parents and children, and between tradition and modernity, showing how families co-create stop-motion animations and how participants translate their understanding of traditional music into modern animation. The third part presents dialogue between the community and residents, showing how they use the community as a venue to interact, build new social relationships, and access high-quality creative resources.

2 Workshop Design

2.1 Participatory Arts as Guiding Principle

The workshop design is grounded in participatory arts, which refers to creative activities involving active engagement in artistic processes facilitated by professional artists in community settings [5, 6, 8]. Key characteristics of participatory arts include process-over-product orientation, no specific skill requirements, and person-centered, in-the-moment engagement that allows participants to create and collaborate without reliance on prior knowledge or abilities [6].

Research demonstrates that participatory arts fosters mental health improvements, enhanced social connections, and creative empowerment across diverse populations [5, 6]. These benefits arise through mechanisms including establishing trust and safety in non-judgmental spaces, fostering community connection, and enabling self-expression [6].

2.2 Two Key Workshop Experiences

The workshop design aims to provide two key experiences: one is the live performance of traditional Chinese musical instruments, and the other is the production of stop-motion animations that parents and children can collaborate on. The live performance of

traditional music is based on listening, rooted in traditional culture, and has a relatively short duration. In contrast, the production of stop-motion animations is making-based, using modern technology, and the works can be preserved for a long time.

These two experiences may seem different at first glance, but we deliberately integrated them to create opportunities for dialogue: we asked the musicians to record segments they would perform in advance, sent the recordings to participants after the live performance on the day of the workshop, and let participants use the recordings as the background music for their stop-motion animations. The design details of the two experiences will be explained in the rest of the section.

2.2.1 Listening (live traditional music performance).

- Invited local professional musicians to perform at suburban community centers, bringing resources to residents' doorsteps, overcoming geographical barriers.
- Musicians performed pieces from different cultural backgrounds (e.g., Chinese pentatonic scale, Japanese minor keys, Central Asian, Western music, etc.) using traditional Chinese musical instruments (i.e., Chinese Zither, yangqin, pipa) to present diverse musical styles, broadening participants' cultural horizons.
- Established an intimate performance setting where the distance between musicians and participants was less than 1 meter, thereby breaking the hierarchical relationship between musicians and audiences in conventional stage performances.

2.2.2 Making (parent-child collaborative animation creation).

- When making animation scenes, participants used easily accessible craft materials (e.g., origami, clay, colored pens, cardboard boxes, etc.) so that they can replicate the workshop experience at home, making the dialogue initiated by the workshop last longer.
- When shooting and editing animations, participants used simple technologies (a free App called Stop Motion Studio available on phones and tablets).
- Encouraged participants to visualize their understanding of traditional music through digital animation creation.

2.3 Workshop Flow and Dialogues

Each workshop integrates the two key experiences explained above and gradually builds multi-level dialogues through a three-part flow.

2.3.1 Part 1 (30 minutes): Listening experience (musician-participant dialogue). At the beginning of the workshop, musicians introduce the instruments and invite participants to touch and try playing them. This tactile interaction establishes an immediate dialogue between the instruments and participants, breaking down the sense of alienation that traditional instruments may bring. Then, the musicians play four carefully selected pieces at close range, allowing participants to observe the movement of fingers on the strings and even feel the vibration of the instruments. After each piece is played, the musicians briefly introduce the historical and cultural background of the piece, preserving the participants' unfiltered

imaginative responses to it. This session triggers a dialogue between musicians and participants.

2.3.2 Part 2 (50 minutes): Making experience (parent-child dialogue & tradition-technology dialogue). After the live performance, each parent-child pair selects a piece of music that resonates with them the most and works together to create a stop-motion animation using simple craft materials and stop-motion animation app introduced in section 2.2.2. This stage creates opportunities for parent-child dialogue: choosing which piece of music, deciding what story to tell, figuring out how to visualize the images in their minds, whose idea to try first, and selecting which materials all require communication and negotiation. Since many parents are not familiar with stop-motion animation either, it may disrupt the traditional role of parents as “teachers”, creating a more equal cooperative dialogue. In addition, the dialogue between tradition and technology is reflected in the participants’ use of modern digital technique to express their understanding of traditional music.

2.3.3 Part 3 (10 minutes): Sharing and reflection (community dialogue). At the end of the workshop, each family displays their completed animation on a shared screen. A short guided reflection session prompts thoughts such as: How was the experience of co-creation? What new discoveries have been made about music or each other? This collective sharing transforms each family’s individual interpretation into a dialogue from different perspectives. Participants witness how the same piece of music can evoke different interpretations. At the same time, residents of the same community get to know each other through the workshop, establish new social connections on the community platform, and trigger dialogues between the community and its residents, as well as among residents themselves.

3 Implementation and Outcomes

3.1 Three Implementations

We held three workshops in three different communities in Zhangjiagang to test whether this workshop model could trigger dialogues at different levels. The first workshop was held in August 2024 at the Zhangjiagang Art Salon. Unlike the later two workshops, the positioning of this attempt was not yet clear. In terms of location, the Art Salon is located in the city center and is a regular venue for activities of the Zhangjiagang Musicians Association. It is not a real residential community but rather a community of music-loving citizens. In terms of participants, this workshop did not restrict participation to parent-child pairs; both children and adults could participate, making it more like a public benefit activity for all citizens. For this workshop, we collaborated with Musician 1 (Chinese Zither player), Musician 2 (yangqin player), and Musician 3 (pipa player). During this workshop, we discovered the feasibility of this workshop model and its potential to trigger dialogues, and thus began to consider whether it could be promoted to suburban communities that are more in need of such artistic resources. This led to the second and third workshops.

The second workshop was held in December 2024 at the Maqiao Community Center. We recruited 15 parent-child pairs with children aged 6-12 residing in the community, and collaborated with Musician 4 (Chinese Zither player). The third workshop was held

in August 2025 at the Shazhou Community Center. The participant recruitment criteria was the same as in Maqiao Community, and the collaborating musicians were Musician 1 and Musician 3.

Although the communities, musicians, and participating families differed across the three implementations, the workshop structure remained consistent, and all three implementations generated rich dialogues. The following sections will present evidence of the four types of dialogues observed in the three implementations.

3.2 Data Collection

During the three workshops, we used various methods to collect data. First, there was a post-workshop parent survey. Immediately after each workshop, parents filled out a short questionnaire to reflect on their experience and their views on parent-child collaboration. Second, there was a post-workshop child survey. We designed age-appropriate questionnaires for children, allowing them to note memorable aspects of the workshops through writing or drawing. Third, there were post-workshop interviews. After each workshop, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 1-2 parents to further explore their experiences of communicating with their children during the animation creation process. Finally, the first author and a research assistant kept observation notes throughout the three workshops.

3.3 Evidence of the Dialogues

3.3.1 Parent-child dialogue. The stop-motion animation task has promoted continuous parent-child dialogue. Survey results show that parents and children generally have positive experiences in terms of collaboration. When asked about moments of building positive connections with their children, parents all emphasized collaborative behaviors, such as “making animations together,” and “cooperating happily while making clay animations.” One parent described complementary roles: “My daughter made the animation, and I added music; we cooperated actively.” Children also had similar feelings. One child wrote, “I like co-creation the most. I learned to use the application and also learned to cooperate with my mom.”

Parent interviews indicate that animation tasks have redefined the traditional parent-child interaction model. One parent said, “There was a lot of communication during the production process. Everything went at the child’s pace, and I just cooperated with her.” This parent also emphasized that parent-child interaction was the most important outcome: “The greatest gain was the increase in parent-child time together. For those of us who work during the day and whose children go to school, such moments are rare.” This reflection places the workshop in the broader context of busy family life, where dedicated parent-child time is scarce. The creative tasks in the workshop not only provided activities but also offered structured opportunities for parents and children to engage in continuous and focused dialogues.

3.3.2 Musician-participant dialogue. The intimate performance setting fostered dialogue between professional musicians and participants. Children’s survey responses revealed appreciation for direct musical exposure: “feeling the beauty of art,” and “realizing the importance of music.”

Parents recognized the value of close artist-participant interaction. One parent reflected: “Being able to interact with professional

musicians closely built a role model for my daughter. We didn't know Chinese Zither could sound so beautiful."

3.3.3 Tradition-technology dialogue. Participants used digital animation to interpret traditional music, establishing a dialogue between traditional culture and modern technology tools. One child expressed surprise at the technological process: "So high-tech can make videos through photos!" Parents reflected on how this combination deepened their understanding of traditional culture: "Combining traditional Chinese culture with animation that children can participate in and find interesting helps us understand classical music more deeply." Another parent said that their children's horizons were broadened: "My child and I realized that music can be rich and varied, and can be expressed in different ways." This data actually can tell us that digital creation tools do not necessarily distance children from cultural heritage; on the contrary, they can provide them with a more engaging way.

3.3.4 Community dialogue. Bringing professional creative experiences to suburban community centers created dialogue between institutional spaces and everyday family life. One parent discovered unexpected community connections: "We ran into my son's classmate in the workshop today. We didn't know we live in the same community before, now we can hang out together." The workshop thus functioned as a catalyst for neighborhood relationships.

Community leaders recognized the workshop's role in strengthening community bonds. The Maqiao community leader reflected that the workshop "improved resident satisfaction" as part of "happiness projects," while fostering "sense of belonging to the community." This positions community centers as active facilitators of both creative access and social cohesion.

4 Conclusion

The three participatory arts workshops demonstrate that combining live traditional music with collaborative stop-motion animation creation can foster multi-layered dialogues in suburban communities with relatively limited creative resources. By inviting local professional musicians to perform at community centers and using readily available creative tools (i.e., smartphones, free apps, simple craft materials), the workshops were designed to allow suburban families to engage in creative experiences and to collaborate as equal partners.

The four types of dialogues we documented, including parent-child dialogue, artist-participant dialogue, tradition-technology dialogue, and community resident dialogue, could not happen without carefully designed choices: musician proximity during performances, tasks requiring genuine collaboration, and placing creative experiences right at residents' doorsteps. These choices offer insights for participatory design practitioners working in resource-limited environments that meaningful creative engagement and social connection flourish when we foster dialogues rather than simply providing content. We hope that this Situated Action will invite readers to consider whether and how this design can apply to their contexts, thereby initiating discussions on how we can foster more family, cultural, and community dialogues through easily accessible, community-based interventions.

5 Author Biographies

Jiayi Lu is a researcher at Keio University Graduate School of Media Design, with a Ph.D. in Media Design. Her research integrates community-based service design, nonformal education, and participatory arts to foster creative learning opportunities in Chinese suburban communities. She is also an amateur Chinese Zither player.

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Art Evening: An Artistic Space for Dialogue and Conviviality

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Figure 1: Collages of *Art Evening* activities; visual art, literature, music, and culinary art.

Abstract

Art Evening is a participatory, interdisciplinary art project integrating visual art, literature, music, and culinary art into a unified aesthetic and social experience. The project originated in 2018 as a small-scale experimental practice centered on literary reading, and subsequently evolved into its current form, which was formally established with a public presentation in Kyoto on March, 2024. Since then, *Art Evening* has been developed as a touring project across eight cities in Japan. Situating the participant agency through Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, this paper looks into its structure and interactions in order to clarify how participatory artistic practices generate, circulate, and extend cultural capital through multisensory and dialogic engagement amongst the various performers/artists, production staff, audience, and operational supporters. Framed through the concept of conviviality, the study argues that *Art Evening* functions not merely as an art event, but as a situated practice that enables dialogue, shared agency, and the redistribution of cultural and emotional resources through embodied interaction.

CCS Concepts

• Applied computing → Performing arts.

Keywords

participatory arts, cultural capital, exhibition

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1 Introduction

This study examines *Art Evening* as a long-term practice-based inquiry into exhibition structures and interpretive communities. Rather than documenting a single participatory event, it theorizes a thirty-year trajectory of structural redesign aimed at expanding cultural circulation while maintaining economic viability.

The first author, Yasuhiko Tsuchida debuted as an exhibiting artist in 1993, primarily focusing on his Venetian glass works. During this period, he observed that the audience of the glass market primarily composed of insiders and specialists. In Bourdieusian terms, symbolic capital circulated within a relatively closed artistic field, limiting cross-field exchange and constraining market growth [2]. If interpretive communities remained narrow, both cultural vitality and economic sustainability would stagnate. This recognition initiated a sustained rethinking of exhibition architecture. The central question became how artistic presentation might cultivate broader communities of reception while preserving economic viability. Over three decades, Tsuchida gradually integrated culinary collaboration, musical performance, and literary reading into exhibition contexts. These incorporations were not decorative additions but structural interventions intended to reorganize audience composition and expand interpretive participation. The naming of “*Art Evening*” in May 2023 marked the crystallization of this long-term exploration into a coherent multisensory format.

This paper positions *Art Evening* within Participatory Design discourse, particularly in relation to Situated Action. While many participatory practices emphasize co-creation as a procedural method, *Art Evening* foregrounds relational reconfiguration through the orchestration of time, space, and sensory media. Artistic authorship remains clearly defined, yet participant agency emerges through embodied interaction within designed conditions. Dialogue is understood not merely as verbal exchange but as embodied negotiation across difference. Through listening, tasting, witnessing, and

coexisting within shared temporal structures, participants move beyond passive reception toward relational engagement. *Art Evening* reframes exhibition from a mode of display into a condition for situated dialogue.

2 Methodology

2.1 Exhibition Concept

Art Evening is structured around Tsuchida's Venetian glass works, public readings from his novel *Who Knows What Tomorrow Brings* [5], live music performances, and shared dining. Participants engage bodily and temporally with these elements, becoming actors within the unfolding situation rather than passive spectators.

This configuration emerged from long-term experimentation. Tsuchida's culinary training in Paris and Venice, combined with his early production of glass tableware, enabled integration of food culture into exhibition contexts. Music and literary reading were later incorporated, forming a four-part structure. These incorporations were motivated by the need to cultivate broader interpretive communities and to align cultural reach with market sustainability. Tsuchida plans and directs the entire configuration, maintaining artistic authorship while designing conditions for participant agency. His dual position as practitioner and researcher constitutes a methodological condition. The practice is not framed as cultural export but as relational negotiation shaped by local contexts. Reading functions as a temporal hub, mediating visual, auditory, and gustatory dimensions through rhythm, silence, and voice, producing coherence while preserving openness.

2.2 Implementation Structure

The touring format was formally established with a public presentation in Kyoto in March 2024. Since then, *Art Evening* has been implemented across eight Japanese cities. The project comprises 53 chapters, with approximately 50 performances completed. Each session accommodates roughly 40 to 90 participants. From Chapter 36 onward, performances in Hakodate were consecutively sold out, indicating expanding public engagement. The structure maintains experiential coherence while adapting to diverse spatial and cultural conditions.

2.3 Data Collection

Following editions in Hakodate (November 2025) and Kyoto (December 2025), 104 participants were interviewed in person or through digital platforms. Interview transcripts and written responses were analyzed qualitatively to capture lived experiences before, during, and after participation.

3 Findings and Discussions

3.1 Actors and its roles

Four actor groups are distinguished: performers, production and technical staff, audiences, and logistical/support actors. Audiences function as co-actors whose interpretive engagement shapes the emergent atmosphere. Agency is distributed relationally without dissolving artistic authorship.

3.2 Cultural Capital as a Dynamic Resource

Drawing on Bourdieu, cultural capital is understood as embodied sensibility and evaluative capacity rather than static symbolic distinction. In *Art Evening*, cultural capital circulates through multi-sensory interaction and cross-domain encounter. During the Kyoto edition, an opera singer and a beatboxer were observed backstage exchanging vocal techniques. This interaction represents direct transfer of embodied cultural capital across distinct artistic domains without mediation by institutional hierarchy. In conventional artistic fields such practices rarely intersect. Their encounter within *Art Evening* indicates that the event's structure temporarily reconfigures boundaries of specialized cultural capital, enabling horizontal negotiation of expertise. Participants also reported increased confidence in interpretive articulation after repeated attendance. Cultural capital thus emerges as a dynamic resource generated through embodied participation and relational exposure.

Interview accounts illustrate this dynamic. For example, a musician who participated for the first time in the eighth edition stated that he "did not understand art at all" when asked about the artwork. When the same musician later participated again in a much later edition, he offered confident and insightful interpretations of visual works. This shift suggests not the simple accumulation of information, but the gradual internalization of sensibility and evaluative language through iterative exposure to cross-disciplinary expression. Similarly, another musician described how participation transformed her relationship with exhibitions, moving from avoidance and lack of confidence to continued exhibition-going and growing interest beyond her own field. These accounts indicate that cultural capital in *Art Evening* is cultivated through practice and repetition, rather than transmitted through one-directional instruction.

Interview data also reveal how cultural capital is reconfigured among backstage professionals. A chef who supported the Kyoto edition described how Tsuchida's works intersected with the temporal flow created by music and reading, and how his own emotions felt integrated into the experience as the evening deepened. He came to understand art not merely as something to view, but as something to listen to, feel, and live alongside. Such accounts show that operational roles can become affective and interpretive participation, repositioning culinary expertise as part of cultural meaning-making rather than mere service execution.

Audience interviews further suggest transfer and reuse of cultural capital across domains. Participants engaged in tea-related practices reported rethinking the structure of their own tea gatherings, articulating shared qualities between tea practice and artistic expression—such as technique, expressive language for sensation, sensitivity to insight, and sustained commitment. A business owner emphasized that the integration of art, literature, music, and food functions as a total sensory stimulus, noting its relevance to contemporary business contexts that increasingly value intuition and embodied judgment. Another executive described how connections formed through shared time can become networked into "culture," pointing to the circulation of cultural resources through social relations.

3.3 Participation Levels and Situated Agency

Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation [1] clarifies gradations of agency. Interview data revealed levels ranging from informing and consultation to partnership and limited delegated influence. First-time attendees often operated at informational levels. Returning participants began offering interpretive suggestions. Collaborating musicians negotiated sequencing decisions, indicating partnership-level engagement. Culinary collaborators co-designed presentation elements within an artist-led framework, approaching delegated influence. The structure therefore enables graded agency while preserving authorship.

3.4 Situated Reconfiguration Across Cities

Art Evening adapts to local contexts rather than replicating a fixed template. In Hakodate, one of northern Japan's historically significant port cities shaped by maritime trade networks, environmental elements—harbor atmosphere, sea air, and autumn wind—resonated with the opera program presented that evening. As regional historical literature notes, Hakodate's growth as a northern port was shaped by maritime trade and exchange networks, providing a cultural-historical backdrop for the event's harbor setting [4]. Sensory alignment between environment and performance structured interpretation.

Collaboration with a small local whisky producer extended the event's impact. Products introduced during the performance were purchased by many attendees, generating significant revenue and contributing to expansion into broader national markets. In Bourdieusian terms, embodied and relational cultural capital facilitated conversion into economic capital. *Art Evening* thus operates as a mediating structure linking local cultural resources with participants in ways that produce tangible circulation. In Kyoto, where the Kamo River flows through preserved urban space, a literary passage referencing Shijo Bridge overlapped with the venue's proximity. Participants revisited the bridge after the event, extending dialogue into public space. Narrative geography and physical geography intersected, transforming literary reference into spatial practice.

In Onomichi, a hillside port town known for slopes and regional cuisine, collaboration with a prominent local chef transformed menus into poetic texts referencing literature and tableware. Participants described the experience as "eating poetry," indicating transformation of consumption into interpretive engagement. Regional food culture became structurally integrated into artistic practice. Across these cases, *Art Evening* functions as a Situated Action structured through local redesign rather than uniform replication.

3.5 Conviviality

Referring to Illich [3], conviviality is understood as a condition enabling autonomous and creative interaction without domination by institutional authority. Artistic media function as shared tools for encounter rather than instruments of distinction. Through repetition and continuity, participants renegotiate relationships to art and to one another, producing relational infrastructure sustained beyond the event.

3.6 Cultural Diffusion

Several participants described shifting from consumer identity toward questioning potential contribution. This reflexive reorientation suggests cultural diffusion beyond the event context, as interpretive capacities travel with participants into other social and professional domains.

4 Conclusion

Art Evening demonstrates how exhibition structures can integrate cultural expansion with market sustainability through multisensory orchestration. Positioned within Participatory Design and Situated Action discourse, the practice maintains artistic authorship while enabling graded participant agency. Through situated reconfiguration across cities, cultural capital circulates dynamically and converts across symbolic, relational, and economic domains. From its origin in 1993 to its naming in 2023 and touring configuration in 2024, *Art Evening* represents a sustained practice-based inquiry into exhibition models capable of aligning cultural breadth with economic viability. This study contributes to Situated Action discourse by demonstrating how artistic authorship and graded participant agency can coexist within a multisensory exhibition architecture that structurally integrates cultural expansion and market sustainability.

5 Author Biographies

Born in Osaka in 1969, Yasuhiko Tsuchida is the only Japanese artist based on Venice's Murano Island, known as "the poet of glass" for his philosophically rich and expressive works. Expanding beyond glass, he now collaborates across literature, culinary art, architecture, film, and music. His multidisciplinary project *Art Evening*—a fusion of art, literature, music, and food—has grown from a small gathering into a nationwide event attracting over 2,000 people. A 2021 film about him, *MAGONE*, won five international awards, and in 2025 he was named one of "The 15 Creators Representing Osaka" in Louis Vuitton City Guide Osaka 2025.

Chihiro Sato is currently Associate Professor at Keio University Graduate School of Media Design with a Ph.D. in Media Design. Her expertise is in community-based design, service design, digital humanities, economic geography. She is also a pianist that has given performance at the prestigious Carnegie Hall in New York City.

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Safe Space beyond Body: A Situated Action of Co-Creative Choreography through Drawing

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Figure 1: Collage of ‘Safe Space beyond Body’ in Japan. From left, Choreographic output from a 45-minute workshop, Drawing during the workshop process, Layered drawings from the workshop, Workshop environment.

Abstract

This paper presents Safe Space beyond Body, a Situated Action exploring how drawing can function as a mediating practice within choreographic creation. Conducted through three studio-based workshops in May 2025 Yokohama, Japan, the project integrated drawing into the early phase of choreography and structured the process as a co-creative exchange between two participants each time. The findings revealed that drawing externalized and slowed individual creative cognition, while collaboration transformed these visual traces into relational negotiation, reconfiguring choreography from a solely embodied output into a trainable and shared practice sustained through reflection and dialogue. At PDC26, the project is presented through a 3-minute documentary film capturing the workshops’ spatial setting, process structure, and outcomes, allowing audiences to understand how the workflow operates and how ideas first articulated on paper are translated into embodied movement. By introducing drawing into dance training, the action challenges habitual movement-based thinking and proposes an alternative pathway for supporting creative development in contemporary choreographic practice.

CCS Concepts

• Applied computing → Performing arts.

Keywords

Dance Choreography, Participatory Design, Creativity

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1 Introduction

Performing arts, particularly dance, exist in a unique temporal condition. Unlike static artworks, they unfold through the body in time and disappear once performed. What audiences encounter on stage is the visible outcome of a much longer and often invisible process of listening, imagining, rehearsing, revising, and negotiating meaning. Dance emerges not only from technical training but from the capacity to interpret music, construct situations, and embody ideas. Yet this process is increasingly challenged in contemporary contexts. In a media environment shaped by rapid circulation and algorithmic visibility, movement vocabularies and choreographic styles are quickly normalized. While access and participation have expanded, the risk of homogenization has intensified, and dancers may find themselves reproducing familiar structures rather than developing distinct authorship. The studio—once a space of exploration—can become compressed into efficiency and repetition rather than reflection.

Creativity in the arts is not merely the production of new forms but the ongoing shaping of artistic identity. Identity develops through process—through decisions, revisions, and experimentation preceding a finished work. In many disciplines, such processes are externalized through sketches or drafts that enable ideas to be revisited and refined. In choreography, however, thinking often occurs primarily through the body. While improvisation is essential, relying solely on movement can limit reflection. Without mechanisms to pause and externalize ideas, creative impulses risk becoming habitual rather than transformative. Dancers seeking to cultivate authorship therefore require structured yet flexible practices that



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treat creativity as a trainable process rather than spontaneous inspiration.

This Situated Action responds by proposing a designed yet open workflow embedded in everyday choreographic practice, integrating drawing as a mediating medium and structuring the process as a co-creative exchange. By introducing visual externalization and collaboration early in choreography, it creates a repeatable space for dancers to pause, reflect, and reshape thinking within a safe environment. The action aligns with Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence: peace as protected vulnerability, dialogue as embodied negotiation through drawing and movement, and coexistence as the encounter of diverse stylistic identities. Rather than treating creativity as spontaneous inspiration, the project frames it as a relational practice sustained through shared reflection, asking whether drawing and collaboration can cultivate choreographic authorship in contemporary contexts.

2 Workshop Design

2.1 Participatory and Co-Creative Orientation

The workshop design is grounded in participatory and co-creative choreographic practice. Rather than positioning participants as recipients of instruction, the action frames them as active contributors to the creative process. This orientation emphasizes process over product, shared authorship, and in-the-moment negotiation. Creativity is treated not as a performance outcome, but as a relational and embodied practice that unfolds through interaction.

Within this framework, the workshop is structured to create a psychologically safe and non-judgmental environment, where experimentation, hesitation, and revision are considered essential components of artistic development. Drawing and collaboration function as mediating practices that externalize thought and invite dialogue, enabling participants to encounter alternative perspectives before fixing ideas into movement.

2.2 Theoretical Framing

This Situated Action is grounded in *Service-Dominant Logic* [Figure 2], which understands value not as embedded in outcomes but as co-created through ongoing service exchange among actors [7]. From an actor-to-actor (A2A) perspective, each participant enters the workshop as a resource integrator, carrying distinct embodied expertise, stylistic traditions, choreographic habits, and aesthetic orientations. These differences are not treated as variables to be aligned or unified, but as productive tensions that enable coexistence within a shared creative structure.

In this framework, coexistence is enacted as a lived practice rather than an abstract ideal. Diverse identities and movement logics are placed in relation without erasing their specificity. Drawing functions as a mediating device that externalizes tacit embodied knowledge, creating a negotiable surface where differences can be acknowledged, interpreted, and reconfigured before being fixed into movement. Dialogue therefore unfolds not only verbally, but through visual traces and embodied response. The Situated Action thus contributes to participatory and Situated Action discourse by foregrounding how creative coexistence emerges through the integration—rather than homogenization—of distinct artistic identities within studio-based practice.

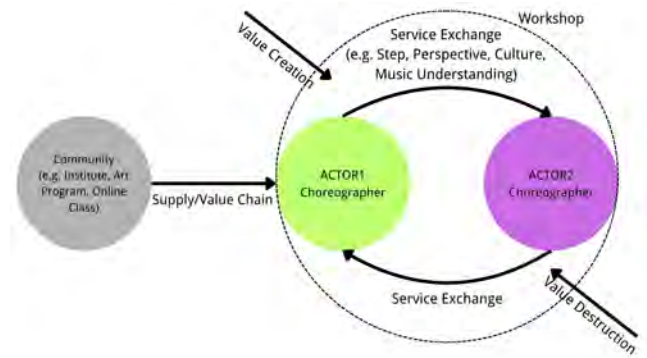


Figure 2: A2A in Dance

2.3 Visual Mediation in Choreographic Thinking

2.3.1 Drawing as Mediation. Within dance, choreography has been understood as an interplay between intentional design and emergent discovery [1], unfolding through embodied perception rather than pre-scripted notation [3]. From co-creative and enactivist perspectives, creativity emerges through situated interaction and negotiation [4][6]. Drawing operates within this framework as a mediating practice that externalizes ephemeral sensations into visible traces, enabling reflection, dialogue, and collaborative alignment without prematurely fixing ideas into movement [2]. As seen historically in choreographic processes such as Trisha Brown’s use of sketches to structure spatial logic [9], drawing functions not as representation but as a cognitive and compositional device, supporting meaning-making and “thinking through doing” prior to movement generation.

2.3.2 An Exploratory Studio Experiment with Drawing. Building on these perspectives, drawing was introduced through an exploratory studio experiment in which a dancer drew freely while listening to music before choreographing. Although abstract, the completed drawings became concrete references for rhythm, intensity, and spatial direction, functioning as provisional visual anchors rather than fixed scores. When movement followed, the dancer could return to initial sensations instead of defaulting to habitual patterns, and shared drawings supported discussion without relying on verbal explanation. The experiment demonstrated drawing as a mediating practice that slows decision-making, supports reflection, and opens a shared imaginative space. These insights informed the Situated Action, positioning drawing as a method for cultivating creative authorship and co-creative dialogue within studio practice.

2.4 Structure

2.4.1 Participants and Location. The project was situated in Yokohama, Japan, within a local art residency community influenced by experimental performance cultures such as the Netherlands theatre festival model. *Art Residency community* [11] Yokohama’s performing arts ecology—particularly through platforms like *Yokohama International Performing Arts Meeting (YPAM Fringe)*—has cultivated a network of artists who actively seek new forms of expression and cross-disciplinary dialogue. This context was intentionally chosen.

Japanese dancers are widely recognized for technical refinement and strong stylistic traditions, yet also operate within distinct cultural frameworks different from the first author's background. The intervention therefore emerged from a desire to create productive collision across training systems, artistic identities, and cultural sensibilities.

Three professional Japanese dancers were invited from this community. While all shared an openness toward experimentation and authenticity, their levels of choreographic experience and stylistic expertise differed: two regularly practiced contemporary choreography, while one, trained primarily in ballet, was transitioning into contemporary practice and had not independently choreographed before. Communication occurred largely in English, yet embodied language predominated. This convergence of cultural background, movement vocabulary, and artistic role created a site where service exchange—of expertise, perception, and interpretation—could unfold, making Yokohama not merely a location, but an enabling condition for situated value co-creation.

2.4.2 Four Key Workshop Experiences. This situated action followed a typical choreographic process while integrating drawing as a vital stage of creation. The workflow includes four phases: (1) 10-minute drawing while listening to music, (2) 20-minute choreography, (3) 1-minute performance, and (4) 15-minute collective reflection. At each stage, participants engage in dialogue and sharing, translating drawings into movement and meaning. As shown in [Figure 3], the process reflects how collaboration begins with an invitation, builds mutual trust, and concludes with co-creation and reflection—embodying the project's core values of peace, respect, and coexistence.

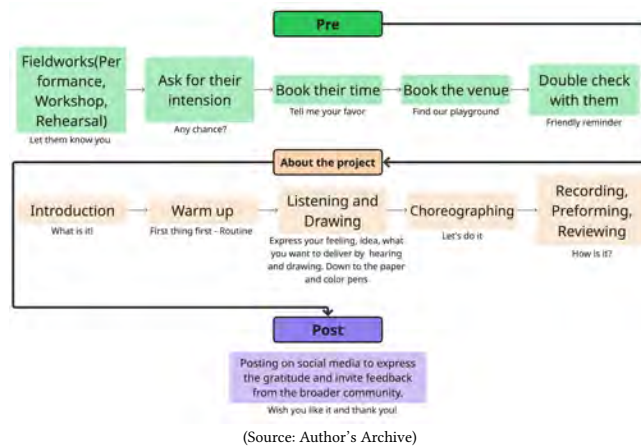


Figure 3: How the Co-Creative Choreography Workshop Process looks like

2.4.3 Data Collection. Data collected by video documentation, artifacts, and post-session reflections. The analysis will qualitatively combine *autoethnographic* [8, 10] insight with four *contextual design* models [5]—Flow, Artifact, Sequence, and Identity—to interpret how embodied and visual interactions shaped co-creative dialogue and creative decision-making.

3 Workshop Outcomes

- (1) **Choreographic Work** [Figure 4]: Each workshop concluded with a collaboratively generated movement sequence, captured through multi-angle video recording. These choreographic pieces served not only as performance artifacts but also as reflections of the dancers' co-creative processes, shaped by real-time interaction.



Figure 4: Workshop Outcomes

- (2) **Creative Sketches (Paper-Based Expression)** [Figure 4]: In addition to movement, all participants produced visual sketches, drawings, annotations, or written, reflections on paper during the "Listening and Drawing" phase. These sketches provided valuable insight into how dancers externalized emotions, rhythms, and abstract concepts before and during choreography. The use of nonverbal media supported deeper self-expression and helped reveal personal creative strategies that might otherwise remain implicit.
- (3) **3-minute Documentation Video:** To archive and interrelate the outcomes, a documentary video was created as part of the final presentation. The film brings together excerpts from the three workshops, showing the spatial setting, structured workflow, and the transition from drawing to movement. Rather than simple documentation, it functions as a narrative bridge, revealing how visual sketches and choreographic sequences are connected within the designed process.

Through this multi-layered documentation, the Situated Action makes both the creative process and its material traces accessible beyond the workshop setting.

4 Findings

4.1 Author Reflection

Drawing and collaboration significantly altered the internal rhythm of choreographic creation. Placing drawing before movement created a necessary interruption—a pause that made internal sensations visible and revisitable. Rather than immediately responding

to music through improvisation, I was required to externalize structure, pacing, and atmosphere visually. Across the workshops, this slowed tempo “allowed reflection and meaningful co-construction”. Drawing functioned as a cognitive scaffold, interrupting habitual movement tendencies and enabling compositional reframing. For example, in the first workshop, M.H.’s “manga frames” metaphor reshaped my understanding of spatial sequencing and structural organization. Collaboration further transformed authorship. Working with dancers from different backgrounds, I felt “emotionally safe, professionally seen, and creatively energized”. However, the third workshop revealed how fragile such conditions could be; the presence of an observer subtly shifted my focus toward “performing” rather than freely generating. This contrast underscored that creative authorship within this design emerged not only from individual skill, but from carefully sustained relational and spatial dynamics.

4.2 Collaborative Reflection

Drawing consistently operated as both a communicative bridge and a catalyst for creative expansion. In Workshop 1, M.H. observed that working within the same team over time can reinforce habitual approaches, and described collaboration as “a refreshing creative shift”. She further noted that “while drawing can contribute to forming clearer imagery, the process of translating experience through drawing is often more intricate than simply responding to music through movement”, suggesting that this added complexity deepened the creative process. In Workshop 2, N.H., who initially expressed nervousness about drawing, later described the drawing phase as “refreshing and meaningful, opening new possibilities for nonverbal exploration”. The visual exchange reduced reliance on verbal explanation and accelerated trust-building. Across sessions, drawings externalized texture, timing, and compositional intent, transforming private impulses into shared, negotiable material. Collaboration therefore extended beyond joint production; it became an ongoing negotiation between intention and interpretation, structure and improvisation, allowing choreographic thinking to expand beyond individual authorship.

These findings suggest that drawing and collaboration operate at complementary levels. Drawing provides a revisitable trace of individual cognition, slowing and deepening the internal creative rhythm. Collaboration transforms these traces into relational negotiation, expanding how authorship is formed and shared. Interwoven, they reconfigure choreography from a solely embodied output into a trainable, relational practice sustained through reflection, dialogue, and mutual responsiveness.

5 Conclusion

This Situated Action integrates drawing and structured collaboration into everyday choreographic practice to support creative authorship within a specific studio-based context. The findings suggest that drawing and collaboration operate at complementary levels: drawing externalizes and slows individual cognition, while collaboration transforms these traces into actor-to-actor negotiation of embodied expertise. Together, they reframe choreography as a trainable and relational practice grounded in value co-creation

rather than spontaneous output. Situated within Yokohama’s experimental performing arts community, the project demonstrates how diverse cultural backgrounds, stylistic traditions, and levels of choreographic experience can coexist without homogenization. By cultivating a safe space where difference is not erased but integrated, the design enacts peace as relational stability, dialogue as embodied exchange, and coexistence as the productive negotiation of distinct artistic identities.

6 Author Biographies

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Empathy Games: Exploring Alternate Practices of Feeling for Others

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Abstract

In this Situated Action, participants explore alternate ways of giving and receiving empathy for and from others, including people, communities, organizations, nonhumans, and AI. Empathy has been a key differentiator in design methodologies for decades, including participatory design. However, many designers and researchers have discussed the limitations of empathy, including the ways in which it is a gendered construct and a commodified process. The use of empathy is also criticized for centering the designer, leading to empathy fatigue, and exploiting the user. Yet as climate change, political polarization, and the erosion of democracy continue to negatively and inequitably impact people worldwide, the need for care and concern for others has become even more urgent. This situated action responds to the themes of PDC 26 by asking: Is empathy necessary for peace, dialogue, and co-existence? Empathy for whom or what? In the three months leading up to PDC26 in Milan, participants (in their own respective locations) in this Situated Action will be invited to co-create empathic approaches through a series of “empathy games”. These playful and reflective activities prompt participants to explore alternate practices of feeling for others while reflecting on the uses and politics of empathy in participatory design.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

Keywords

empathy, design methods, design games

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this Situated Action, participants will explore alternative ways of giving and receiving empathy from and for others, including people,

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communities, organizations, nonhumans, and AI. Empathy has been a key differentiator in design methodologies for decades, including participatory design [10, 11, 15, 21]. However, many designers and researchers have discussed the limitations of empathy [12], including the ways in which it is a gendered construct [14] and a commodified process [17]. The use of empathy is also criticized for centering the designer [4], leading to empathy fatigue [16], and exploiting the user [8].

At the same time, empathy is under attack in broader political and global spheres. Elon Musk recently said, “The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy, the empathy exploit” [23]. Studies also indicate that empathy is declining, in part due to changes in technology use and individual isolation [24, 25]. As climate change, political polarization, and the erosion of democracy continue to negatively and inequitably impact people worldwide, perhaps we need more empathy for others, not less. This situated action responds to the themes of PDC 26 by asking: Is empathy necessary for peace, dialogue, and co-existence? Empathy for whom or what?

We attempt to address the critiques of empathy as it is currently used in design practices by exploring alternate forms of caring for and with others. In the months leading up to PDC26 in Milan, participants (in their own respective locations) will be invited to co-create empathic approaches through a series of “empathy games”. We develop these approaches with an orientation of *queering* empathy. Queer orientations allow us to think obliquely, destabilize, unsettle, and problematize those unjust conditions. Together, new orientations of queering empathy in design could: challenge the normative, claim our terms, attend to the body, cultivate an ethics of care, focus on materialities, and redirect power. Queering empathy can provide new strategies for a more ethical, contextual, and reflexive practice of understanding others.

2 BACKGROUND

As it is used in commercial design processes, empathy is commonly described as the “understanding of what others see, feel, and experience” [5]. However, the commodification of empathy has led to abstracted, codified methods that shortcut the relational interactions needed to develop authentic empathy for another. Yet much of this empathy is performative—designers go through the same prescribed motions to understand users [4, 17]. Simplified methods used to empathize with the user overlook empathy’s complexity and the need for dynamic, narrative descriptions. Due to time and resource constraints, designers take shortcuts in empathic processes [14]. Rather than generating deep understanding, this creates “a vague, general sense of knowing the user” [18:p.83].

Even though designers who pioneered empathy in design stated that empathy should be user-centered rather than designer-centered [3, 13], the design processes currently used to cultivate empathy actually create further distance between the designer and user by centering the designer as the ultimate interpreter of knowledge. The designer's own understanding and feeling is centered rather than those for/with whom we are designing. Without adequate reflexivity about one's own positionality, empathy privileges one's own interpretation over others [4, 12]. Taken together, many of these critiques create a condition in which empathy serves as a substitute for ethics. Especially in commercial design, empathy has become a stand-in for ethical consideration of the human [22]. Empathy may even be "dangerous" when it leads to stereotypical evaluations and bias [14]. When it becomes decontextualized, empathy ignores power dynamics and universalizes experiences. These varied critiques highlight the challenges in delineating how we understand empathy and distinguishing it as a phase in the design process.

3 EMPATHY GAMES

In response to these criticisms, we offer orientations for queering empathy, offering new strategies for a more ethical, contextual, and reflexive practice of understanding others. This situated action explores the value of empathy in design processes and examines how queer theory and queering methodologies question, challenge, and disrupt normative limits and oppressive arrangements. These approaches can help designers move past "walking in someone else's shoes" towards intersectional design processes rooted in political responsibility. Examples of these "empathy games" will include playful and reflective activities that prompt participants to explore alternate practices of feeling for others while reflecting on the uses and politics of empathy in participatory design:

Queering Empathy: *Changing the orientations between the empathizer and empathizee.* As designers, we center orientation as a key part of our sensemaking and problem-framing processes, including orientations to the future, to change, and to action. Shifting orientation is a critical queering strategy in developing new ways of thinking. Ahmed [2] theorizes a queer phenomenology as this kind of shift, where one orients oneself to recognize and support that which is "oblique, strange, and out of place" (p. 570). Queerness then becomes *disorientation*.

Embodying Empathy: *Tracking empathic responses in the body.* From a phenomenological perspective, an embodied relationship is crucial to empathy [9]. Phenomenological approaches to empathy can provide an ethical lens through which designers can examine the relationship between self and other, othering, whose shoes they can stand in, and for whom they are designing [12]. It can also help designers shift from designing with empathy to designing for empathic experiences, which roots the use of empathy in design doing [7].

Refusing Empathy: *Rejecting others' empathy for one's own conditions.* Queering empathy in design also requires questioning the relations between empathy and power. There are uneven distributions of power in empathy and design processes which necessitate a "shift from transferred to shared experiences" [4:2]. This also requires ongoing reflexivity of one's own positionality and power

when working with others. We can also challenge those power relations by refusing the "gift" of empathy from another [1].

Empathy for the Planet: *Practicing empathy for nonhumans in the environment.* Building on approaches to use participatory storytelling to invoke empathy for the planet [19], we can explore how cultivating affective relations create shifts in feeling for nonhuman stakeholders. Ecological story co-creation that centers the planet as a key stakeholder has the potential to help people imagine new possibilities in response to climate change.

Empathy Bot: *Exploring empathic exchanges with AI.* Recent scholarship on empathy and AI observes that humans perceive AI technologies as more empathic than humans [6]. How is this relationship of care being expressed and felt? As designers and design researchers work with ethics of care to develop more empathic and relational design interactions [20], can that care be extended to AI relations? Through the lens of care ethics, we will explore how we might experience empathic exchanges with AI.

Our audiences for these games will be designers at varying levels of experience with participatory and codesign practices. In some cases, we will work with student designers in analog games, while other games will engage more experienced participatory designers in virtual environments. We adjust the games accordingly so that they are context-specific, responding to local conditions of the communities we engage with.

4 Conclusion

The games will include both analog and digital formats. Participants will be asked to document their responses in both written and visual form. These responses will be collected and displayed in an exhibition/event during PDC26 in Milan. All of these artifacts and interactions will be documented in an online repository that will be accessible for continued use.

Through these games, participants will actively engage in practices that might challenge some normative approaches to empathizing in design processes, towards more effective, less biased ways of understanding (attuning to) humans and nonhumans in context. Can these new queered empathic approaches lead to better understanding and dialogue with others, allowing us to coexist more peacefully?

5 BIOS

Jessica Meharry, MFA, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the School of Design at DePaul University in Chicago. Jessica (she/her) is a designer, researcher, facilitator, and educator who focuses on justice-oriented design methodologies in professional practice. At DePaul, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in graphic design and human-centered design. Her scholarly research focuses on three intersecting lines of inquiry that explore equitable design methodologies in both practice and pedagogy: anti-oppressive design practices for professional designers; envisioning anti-racist futures through design methods; and equity-oriented experiential education within design pedagogy and curricula.

Jes Klass, MFA, is a Professional Lecturer in the School of Design at DePaul University in Chicago. Jes (she/they) recently completed her MFA in Game Design at DePaul University. At DePaul, she teaches courses in game design, game art, and social media. Prior

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Reimagining Oppression to Progression through Collaborative Collage Making

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Figure 1: Process of collaborative collage-making using artworks from the rapid-response exhibition *Rumpun+3+2* in Japan.

Abstract

Rumpun+3+2 is a rapid-response exhibition and situated participatory action responding to the 2025 Indonesian political crisis. The project mobilized 1,900 protest artworks submitted by 1,606 artists across 10 countries, materialized through a public exhibition in Tokyo. Building on this archive, we conduct a facilitated collaborative collage workshop in which participants physically deconstruct and reassemble fragments of protest imagery to collectively visualize pathways from oppression toward peaceful progression.

We present this work as a situated action that frames collaborative collage-making as a participatory design method for reflection, dialogue, and peace-building. A three-minute documentary video that are structured around the exhibition process, the workshop interactions, and the resulting collective artifact will be screened at PDC 2026. The work contributes an embodied, low-barrier approach to participatory reflection on political injustice, demonstrating how material negotiation and shared authorship can support collective

meaning-making across cultural and political contexts. Figure 1 provides an overview of the exhibition context and the collaborative collage-making process, illustrating how protest artworks were transformed into shared material for participatory reflection.

CCS Concepts

• **Applied computing** → *Media arts*.

Keywords

Collaborative collage-making, positive peace, peaceful progression

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1 Background

On August 2025, large-scale protests erupted across Indonesia in response to parliamentary allowance hikes, economic grievances, and the police killing of a taxi-bike driver, triggering widespread

public protests both on the streets and online [8–11]. Visual expression became a central mode of protest, with artworks circulating rapidly through social media as symbols of resistance and solidarity amongst Indonesians.

In response, the researchers organized *Rumpun+3+2*, an open-call, rapid-response exhibition held in Tokyo on September 2025. By situating the exhibition outside of Indonesia, the project offered a socio-political distance that enabled reflection and expression amid ongoing censorship and risk. Japan’s relatively low incidence of violent protests and its high ranking in the Global Peace Index further positioned the exhibition as a safe site for transnational engagement [7]. The exhibition assembled protest artworks into a shared visual archive, foregrounding collective expression rather than individual authorship.

Table 1: Framework on Levels of Reflection[6]

Level of Reflection	Definition
(R0) Descriptive	describe experiences or actions without delving deeper
(R1) Explanatory	providing explanation for one’s actions
(R2) Dialogic	explore connections and causality between different aspects
(R3) Transformative	entails a profound shift in perspective
(R4) Critical	critically evaluate yang apply to own experience

Reflection is central to this work. Drawing on Dewey’s conception of reflection as an experiential and relational process [5], and Fleck and Fitzpatrick’s articulation of reflection as occurring across levels [6] (see Table 1), this project treats reflection as something that emerges through action, interaction, and material engagement. Collage-making, as a non-linear and narrative visual practice, has been shown to support reflective processes by enabling participants to externalize thoughts, negotiate meaning, and work with metaphors rather than propositional language [2, 3]. Participatory Design research conceptualizes participation as a spectrum rather than a binary, emphasizing varying degrees of agency, power, and interaction, as articulated in foundational frameworks such as Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation[1]. Building on this, more recent work distinguishes between levels of participation and modes of interaction, using a two-dimensional matrix to analyze differentiated engagement across actors, particularly in large-scale or distributed participatory contexts[4].

This layered understanding of reflection is particularly relevant for participatory practices in which everyone is in the highest level of both participation and interaction by being in the same room having a direct interaction and collaborating.

2 Designing a Collaborative Collage-Making Workshop: *Rumpun+3+2, Reimagined*

Building on *Rumpun+3+2* exhibition archive, a 150-minute collaborative collage workshop was conducted with 11 participants of mixed nationalities. The workshop involved two facilitators and one documenter with all three holding dual roles as participants during the session.

The workshop took place in a private space in Itabashi, Tokyo. Participants worked as a single group to discuss notions of oppression and peace, and to physically cut, rearrange, and recombine reproduced artworks from *Rumpun+3+2* onto a shared blank A1

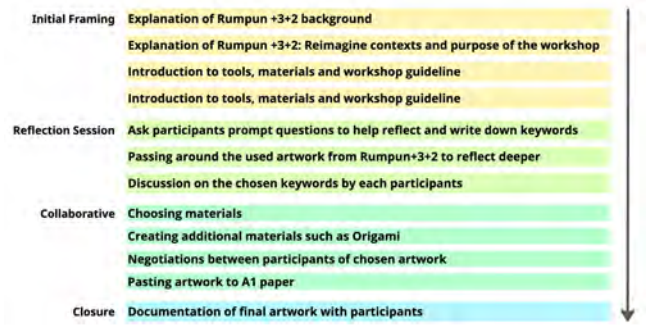


Figure 2: Phases of the collaborative collage workshop, outlining progression from initial framing to closure.

Table 2: Design framework of the collaborative collage workshop

Component	Description
Initial Framing	Introduction to <i>Rumpun+3+2</i> , outlining socio-political context, emergence, and rationale for the exhibition and workshop.
Reflection Session	Written keyword responses to two prompts on oppression and peace, followed by a five-minute individual writing period using memo notes while reproduced artworks circulated.
Collaborative Action	Collective selection, cutting, and recombination of materials onto a shared canvas.
Closure	Completion of the collective collage and group documentation.

canvas. The central provocation that were introduced to the participants was: “Using these fragments of protest, collaboratively build a visual imagery for peaceful progression.”

This situated action extends reflection beyond viewing toward collaborative making. It invited participants to collectively reconfigure fragments of resistance imagery, shifting the focus from representations of oppression towards a shared vision of peaceful progression. These frameworks are used analytically rather than prescriptively, informing how reflection is interpreted in the situated action rather than evaluated as individual performance.

2.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected with an ethnographic approach, with researchers acting as facilitators-participants-observers documenting interactions during the workshop. Visual documentation, including photographs of the workshop and videos were treated as analytical artifacts observed throughout the conversation, revealing how reflection occurs among participants, how this unfolds in practice, and how it may impact the finalized artwork.

2.2 Workshop Design

Figure 2 presents an overview of the workshop structure, which was organized into four phases: initial framing, reflection session, collaborative action, and closure.

As summarized in Table 2, each workshop component combined reflective prompts with shared material engagement to balance individual interpretation and collective action.



Figure 3: Stages of the collaborative collage workshop. (1) Initial framing and group discussion for exhibition context and workshop focus. (2) Individual reflection session (3) Collaborative action (4) Closure with participants presenting the completed collage.

The collaborative collage workshop was designed as a situated participatory activity emphasizing shared material engagement and collective reflection. Reflection was approached as a process that emerges through interaction with visual materials, other participants, and the evolving artifact, rather than as an individual or outcome-oriented exercise.

The 150-minute workshop combined short periods of individual reflection with extended phases of collaborative making. This structure allowed participants to articulate initial associations with oppression and peace, while remaining open to reinterpretation as the collective collage developed. All activities were conducted in a single group to maintain visibility of actions and enable ongoing interaction. Figure 3 documents how participants moved between discussion, individual reflection, and collaborative making, emphasizing the continuity between dialogue and material negotiation.

The session began with an initial framing that introduced the background of *Rumpun+3+2* and the origins of the protest image archive. Facilitators explained the exhibition context and the purpose of using the artworks as materials for reinterpretation rather than as fixed representations.

The reflection session was supported through brief written keyword prompts responding to the terms “oppression” and “peace.” Participants recorded their thoughts on memo notes during a five-minute writing period. These notes functioned as personal reference points during later discussion and material selection, without requiring participants to formalize or justify their interpretations.

Collaborative collage-making formed the central activity of the workshop. Participants worked together on a single A1 canvas, cutting and recombining reproduced protest artworks alongside adding paper materials using basic tools such as scissors, glue, and markers. The shared canvas required participants to attend to existing placements of other’s materials recontextualizing and reading meaning in real time.

3 Workshop Outcome

3.1 Participation and Discussion

The workshop’s participants are 11 individuals of diverse nationalities, extending beyond Indonesians. Participants include students,

Table 3: Workshop participants and observed reflection levels (see Table 1 for reflection level definitions).

ID	Role	Nat.	Ref.
P1	F/P	ID	R3
P2	CF/P	ID	R3
P3	D/P	ID	R2
P4	P	MM	R4
P5	P	LK	R3
P6	P	UK/JP	R1
P7	P	CN	R2
P8	P	ID	R1
P9	P	ID	R3
P10	P	ID	R2
P11	P	ID	R2

Notes. Roles: F = Facilitator; CF = Co-facilitator; D = Documenter; P = Participant. Reflection levels: R1 = Explanatory; R2 = Dialogic; R3 = Transformative; R4 = Critical. Nationality codes follow ISO country abbreviations.

creative practitioners, and researchers residing in Japan, each bringing their own distinct cultural, political, and personal perspectives to the collective process. Rather than positioning one’s participation as sole individual contributions, the workshop was designed to help interaction, negotiation, and mutual dependency through shared material engagement.

Participation occurred through multiple modes: verbal discussion, written material, and manipulation of visual materials. Working on a single A1 canvas required participants to continuously respond to others’ actions—placing, removing, or reconfiguring fragments in relation to what was already present. This structure aided a form of relational participation, where meaning emerges not only from isolated expression but through ongoing interaction with others and the evolving artifact.

3.2 Reflection to Reframe Oppression

Reflection during the workshop emerged as a collective and situated process shaped by differing depths of individual engagement (Table 3). While participants demonstrated varying reflection levels. These individual reflections merged through shared material negotiation, contributing to a coherent collective artifact.

The workshop involves in-person collaboration to create a collage and all participants engaged in the highest level of participation (see Table 3) with direct interaction amongst each other and co-creating the artwork. Facilitators were positioned among the participants to support the activity while observing and documenting participants’ reflective engagement. However, due to space constraints, most material negotiations and reasoning occurred within participants’ immediate physical areas. Due to this, the analysis of the levels of participation reflects the overall group interaction rather than participants’ interaction with each other.

Participants engaging on an explanatory and dialogic level primarily articulate associations between selected keywords and personal interpretations of oppression and peace. These contributions supported the framing of initial themes but did not substantially shift perspective. By contrast, participants exhibiting transformative and critical reflection articulated causal relationships, reconsidered assumptions through dialogue, and adjusted word choices or visual compositions in response to others’ interpretations. Notably, moments of perspective shift often occurs after participants



Figure 4: The final artwork of the workshop

encountered narratives from different national or political contexts, prompting reframing beyond Indonesian-specific experiences.

These reflective processes materialized in the final collage through deliberate linguistic and visual decisions. Protest phrases such as “*Tidak Terima Pembongkaran*” (“Do not accept liars”) anchored expressions of injustice, while cut and recomposed words—“*trust*,” “*better*,” “*safe*,” “*courage*,” and “*light*” formed sequences depicting peace and hope. Visual metaphors further reinforced this reframing: interlocking hands emerging from the frame symbolized solidarity; imagery of cats confronting rats drew on Indonesian popular symbolism to critique corruption; and the transformation of victim imagery into scenes of leisure and vitality suggested alternative futures. Materials such as origami and circular layered forms introduced symbols of peace recognizable in different cultural contexts, enabling non-Indonesian participants to contribute meaningfully without relying on local political iconography.

Rather than erasing protest or conflict, the collective collage re-configured expressions of injustice into a shared speculative vision of peaceful progression. The artifact thus reflects how reflection levels, when situated within a shared material and dialogic process, can collectively support the reframing of political injustice toward coexistence and hope.

4 Conclusion

Within an increasingly complex political and digital landscape, the meanings of peace and oppression continue to be recontextualized and redefined. Reflecting the fluidity of human interpretation, *Rumpun+3+2* demonstrates how rapid, situated participatory design interventions can respond to political crises by transforming protest artifacts into shared material for collective reflection. *Rumpun+3+2 Reimagined* further affirms the power of participatory, material practices to hold space for collective sense-making during periods of political upheaval. By combining the open submission of protest expressions with their recontextualization through collaborative collage-making, this situated action enables participants to physically negotiate fragments of protest imagery. Through this process, the work opens pathways for dialogue and peaceful progression, illustrating how design can function as a catalyst for solidarity, reflection, and hope across borders.

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Playful Public Interactions for Unfolding Conversations about Digital Health

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Abstract

The use and adoption of digital health (the combination of digital technologies with health and care) within healthcare provision is increasing globally. Research suggests that the design of public research engagement activities may be influenced by the meta-objectives of the groups or organizations that facilitate them, such as easing concerns or fears, limiting meaningful opportunities for public dialogue. We reflect that as public involvement and co-design practitioners working in digital health, our own assumptions of what the public may be interested in or concerned about may influence our design of public engagement and co-design activities and resources. Similarly, we note that participatory digital health engagements are often framed within formalized environments (such as meetings, focus groups, and/or workshops), the format(s) of which may inform how and who of the public is invited to participate. In response, we propose a Situated Action (SA) that invites the public to participate in a series of playful activities installed in public health/care spaces (or 'Interactions'); inspired by how creative acts can mediate playful dialogue and support critical and reflective engagement. A series of three Interactions will be installed in two sister locations (London and Sheffield, UK) over a three-month period, with subsequent Interactions being informed by previous public responses. In doing so, we will facilitate a dialogue with local communities, situated within local communities, to collaboratively conceptualize and explore digital health topics in new ways.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing**; • **Interaction design** → Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design;

Keywords

Digital Health, Dialogue, Co-Design

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1 Introduction

As digital health - the integration of digital technologies into health and social care - continues to expand globally, there is a critical need to ensure these innovations are developed equitably and collaboratively with those it aims to serve. Equity can be described as 'aim[ing] to identify and remove barriers that prevent some of us from fully participating [...] recogniz[ing] that each person has different circumstances and allocat[ing] resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome' [3]; with equity in supporting wider participation in research advocated as key areas for development within the Digital Health Equity Charter [3], maintained by a growing digital health community of practice (ourselves included). However, inviting wider participation presents issues in how and who is invited to participate, including at the earliest stages of digital health research and engagement.

Existing research indicates that public engagement activities are often shaped by the 'meta-objectives' of the facilitating organizations, which may focus on alleviating public concerns rather than opening space for genuine, critical dialogue [7]. As practitioners in patient and public involvement and co-design in digital health, we recognize that our own professional assumptions regarding what the public finds interesting or worrying can inadvertently limit the scope of engagement. This limitation is often reinforced by the use of formalized environments, such as traditional workshops and focus groups, which may dictate both the format of the conversation and the specific demographics of the public who are able or invited to participate.

In response, this paper proposes a Situated Action (SA) that transitions digital health dialogues into everyday public health and care spaces. We view this approach as an important route to supporting equitable future co-design practice for digital health [5, 8], where public and patient voices are meaningfully included from earliest stages of research and design; expanding how public and

patients may be invited to participate in ongoing digital health decision making, design, and research.

Our approach is centered on a three-part series of activities – ‘Interactions’, which will take place in two sister locations (London and Sheffield, UK) over a three-month period. The proposed Interactions in this SA deliberately avoid being solution focused [1], instead exploring alternative formats for equitable dialogue in public spaces, and how playful interaction mediums might invite wider participation to guide research priorities. The SA will ensure three key points: First, promote playful dialogue, using creative acts to mediate reflective and critical engagement. Second, make engagement accessible and reach diverse audiences, including those who may not participate in traditional collaborative research activities. Third, foster iterative collaboration, where each subsequent Interaction is based on previous public responses, thereby allowing for an evolving conversation. This approach is informed by participatory museum approaches that invite the public to actively engage in early sense and decision making to guide ongoing work [e.g., 2] – co-developing themes to shape their practice in dialogue with their audience(s) while challenging power imbalances.

By situating dialogue directly within local communities, we aim to collaboratively conceptualize digital health topics in ways that move beyond solution-focused agendas and toward a more equitable and participatory future.

2 Relationship with PDC 2026 Conference Topics

This SA addresses conference themes by facilitating a playful public dialogue, creatively exploring how conversations about digital health topics may take equitable shape(s) in public health space(s). This approach, where people are passing through, invites diverse audiences to take part; expanding the invitation to participate to those who may otherwise be unable or uninterested in taking part in other collaborative research activities (such as co-design workshops or advisory groups). We aim to explore how researchers may approach new means for dialogue with those we seek to collaborate with, with aspirations to support wider involvement.

3 Situated Action Overview

3.1 Location

This SA will take place concurrently in two locations (London & Sheffield, UK) in advance of the conference. Three Interactions will be installed in two ‘sister’ public locations relating to health-care (e.g., hospital cafeteria or lobby, community center) over the course of three months; each time being installed in the same location at each site to allow for spontaneous and/or repeated dialogues with their respective communities (including staff, carers, patients, service users, and visitors). These spaces, where people’s health and wellbeing are a priority, were purposefully selected for their informal and transitory environments. While exact specifications of the Interactions will be adapted in partnership with the venues to suit their respective conditions and needs, communal and casual settings within both sites (such as a cafeteria or lobby) were chosen as spaces where the public may be open to spending short periods of transitional time: sites of passing through or pause creating

space for a moment of playful dialogue within a familiar health context.

3.2 Interactions Design

Three Interactions will be installed over three months. Each Interaction will be installed for a minimum of a half-day, duration dependent on the venue’s requirements and restrictions. Interactions will be designed similarly for both locations (London and Sheffield) to be inviting and unintrusive in public spaces, and to open up discussions on digital health in quick, fun, and playful ways. Responses to both locations will be reviewed together to inform the subsequent Interaction(s), with previous responses displayed as a collaged thematic mapping alongside each new installation to show topic development. Each Interaction will include (1) an explanation of the SA, (2) an interactive activity, (3) researchers’ contact details and research website URLs, and (4) a previous Interaction(s) response collage.

The three Interaction stages below give an overview of potential interactive activities; however, these will be refined based on pragmatic place/space requirements of the installation locations. Interactions 2 and 3 will also develop flexibly in response to previous engagement. All Interactions will be framed in consultation with the King’s Health Partners’ Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) members, who will support ongoing review of the SA.

Stage 1 will focus on conceptualizing what ‘digital health’ means to people. This stage will invite the audience to consider existing definitions of ‘digital health’ and respond with their own ideas. Individuals will be invited to respond through sketching, written text, and/or reconfiguring or adding words as a form of word-based play (e.g., fridge magnet poetry [6]).

Stage 2 will focus on the perceived importance, interest, and/or concern the audience feels for digital health topics. A range of topics (such as data privacy, cost of digital health tools, etc.) will be shown, drawn from and informed by responses to Stage 1. Individuals will be asked to respond to these topics through a graffiti format: adding new topics or responses to existing ones, and/or ‘voting’ with size-coded stickers on or near topics that interest or concern them (inspired by Yayoi Kusama’s ‘Obliteration Room’ installation [9]).

Stage 3 will focus on inviting curiosity towards different digital health technologies (such as wearable or smartphone devices) related to topics highlighted in Stage 2. Individuals will be invited to ask questions to, or make demands of, these technologies. These can be given by completing a sentence using a string connecting different option points (inspired by ‘Data Strings’ installations [4]); and/or submitting written questions or concerns.

Insights from this SA will guide a future public exhibition on digital health. Across and beyond the SA we will invite communities across both sites to stay connected to see how their input contributes to this unfolding work: through collaged summaries at each Interaction, a webpage that evolves with the project, and acknowledged within the future exhibition. While the situation of this SA is ephemeral, we aim for these Interactions to illuminate the potential of expanding the means, and location(s), and the invitation of digital health research involvement: exploring how

situating a moment of play could help expand who gets to shape the future of digital health.

4 Author Biographies

Dr. Kiersten Hay is a Research Fellow at the South Yorkshire Digital Health Hub (Sheffield Hallam University), where her design research focuses on supporting meaningful involvement within digital health research.

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Dr. Annie Howitt Sprent is the Senior Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Officer for the King's Health Partners Digital Health Hub (King's College London), where she coordinates the Hub's public involvement and engagement activities.

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Reworlding Milano

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1 Introduction

Want to imagine a different world? Start with urban play.

Reworlding is a method of speculative and relational world building. To reworld is to nurture and develop existing patterns in culture, nature and society—evolution over revolution. Reworlding embraces actions for change, do-it-together skills and speculative design to answer the question: when one world collapses, how do we build the next? The workshop comprises a thirty-minute disruption in future city of Milan in 2050, working together to imagine how the city would respond to cascading impacts of climate crisis, culminating in an urban play activity where participants share their findings together.

The planned action is proposed to take place in Milan in June 2026, facilitated by the author involving the participation of 16–32 people, including a number of local residents. Local assistance in scoping and researching the location ahead of time will provide situation and context. Urban play materials such as musical instruments and props will be provided, including supporting technologies such as portable speakers and mobile devices.

During an urban adventure situated in the neighbourhood, a series of urban play events invite participants to roleplay scenarios running over four seasons of game time. This includes simulations of extreme weather events, wayfinding and exploration, character interactions that are prompts for the players to reimagine their everyday urban environment and connection with one another.

In this situated action, players engage in collective responses to climate disasters facilitated on the street, while also asking them to speculate on who they would be in 2050—and how they would ‘reworld’ the city about them to find ways of living well together. These actions are framed in relation to the following themes through urban role play.

Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world offer new epistemologies, often circular ways of thinking that connect the human, the animal, and the technological—they are already posthuman. In this context, the technological is not defined in the typical

sense of digital technologies but rather place-based knowledges that connect language, maps of place, visual communication, design objects and stories to form technological systems that encode knowledge into place in complex and sophisticated ways. These knowledges overlap with many of the objectives of locative media art and ubiquitous media and precede these more recent technologies by several millennia. Reconciling these two knowledge systems that coexist in contemporary urban environments recognises the impact of Indigenous place-based knowledge and in doing so may also contribute to the development of digital place-based technologies.

Reworlding is the act of imagining or constructing alternative ways of being in the world—often as a response to dominant, often colonial or destructive worldviews. The idea is to create or reclaim ‘worlds’ that allow for different relationships to land, people, knowledge, and each other. Dialogue through reworlding opens up spaces for exchange, understanding, and collaboration between different perspectives, knowledges, and communities.

Urban play is a convergent methodology for practice-based research, a circular and experiential process cycling through three methods: reconnection, reimagination, and regeneration. To situate these methods and processes tactically in relation to the world, it is place-based, playful, and posthuman. These are defined in relation to a posthuman subject and, as this is circular methodology, also define the same posthuman subject.

Reworlding is a conscious, collective transformation of society’s values and pathway to peace. When people adopt new ways of thinking—such as prioritizing empathy, interconnectedness, and sustainability—they may become more inclined to resolve conflicts peacefully. This shift in worldview could reduce social tensions, promote unity, and foster understanding across different cultures and communities.

Play is dynamic and disruptive, but also immersive and generative. For adults, critical play introduces reflection, analysis and observation of a play experience. These speculative and imaginative aspects are often drawn upon by ‘serious play’ designers who focus on these qualities for problem-solving, critical thinking or as research methodology. Urban play situates this way of being directly in relation to urban life.

Reworlding encourages coexistence by reimagining and reshaping our relationships with the world—especially with nature, other species, and different cultures—in ways that are inclusive, reciprocal, and sustainable. This happens through new cultural narratives where coexistence is celebrated, not sacrificed. It challenges the dominant worldview that sees humans as separate from nature. Instead, it promotes coexistence with ecosystems as living, interdependent systems by inviting ecological stewardship rather than



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Figure 1: Reworlding: urban play during resource collection game

domination. It creates spaces for imagination and hope through storytelling and community practices to imagine better futures.

Speculative design explores future impacts and implications of entanglements between science, technology, and people. It questions these relationships by highlighting implications of technology and design through provocative future design scenarios. These proposals often draw upon imaginative world building methods from speculative fiction or climate fiction, extrapolating on things happening in the present into probable, near-future design problems.

Considered within the relationships between urban design and urban life, these methods provide another approach to disrupting and critiquing public space. Considerations of the world building capacities of games and intersections with urban play are central to the hybrid practice of reworlding.

2 URBAN PLAY

In this situated action, players join an experiment in shared world creation in an immersive role-playing game on the streets of Milan 2050. The design of this original game is informed by research by urbanists, designers, artists, First Peoples, policymakers and gamemakers on design and cities. What kind of world will you build together? Play to find out.

Players at the end of a world enter into a street game level created for urban spaces in Milan through collaborative, imaginative and creative play situated across four phases. Live play is documented and shared with conference participants during the Situated Actions program at PDC 2026.

2.1 Character Creation

Players are brought together by the facilitator—the reworlder—and invited to imagine on who they might be in 2050 and what role they may play in this setting.

2.2 Urban Adventure

During a 30-minute walk around the neighbourhood, a series of urban play events play out a scenario running across four seasons. This includes simulations of extreme weather events, wayfinding and exploration, character interactions that are prompts for the players to reimagine their everyday urban environment and connection with one another.

2.3 World Building

To reflect on their journey, time together, and opportunities that emerged through urban play the workshop concludes with a neighbourhood building workshop, a collective reworlding of place working with materials collected along the way.

2.4 Anticipated Outcomes

Outcomes for the situated action include:

- introduction to posthuman methods for urban play
- speculation and reflection on Milan as a future city
- collaborative world building through creative play
- collaboration and interdisciplinary interactions
- establish affirmative ethics for interconnectedness



Figure 2: Reworlding: neighbourhood adventure and exploration

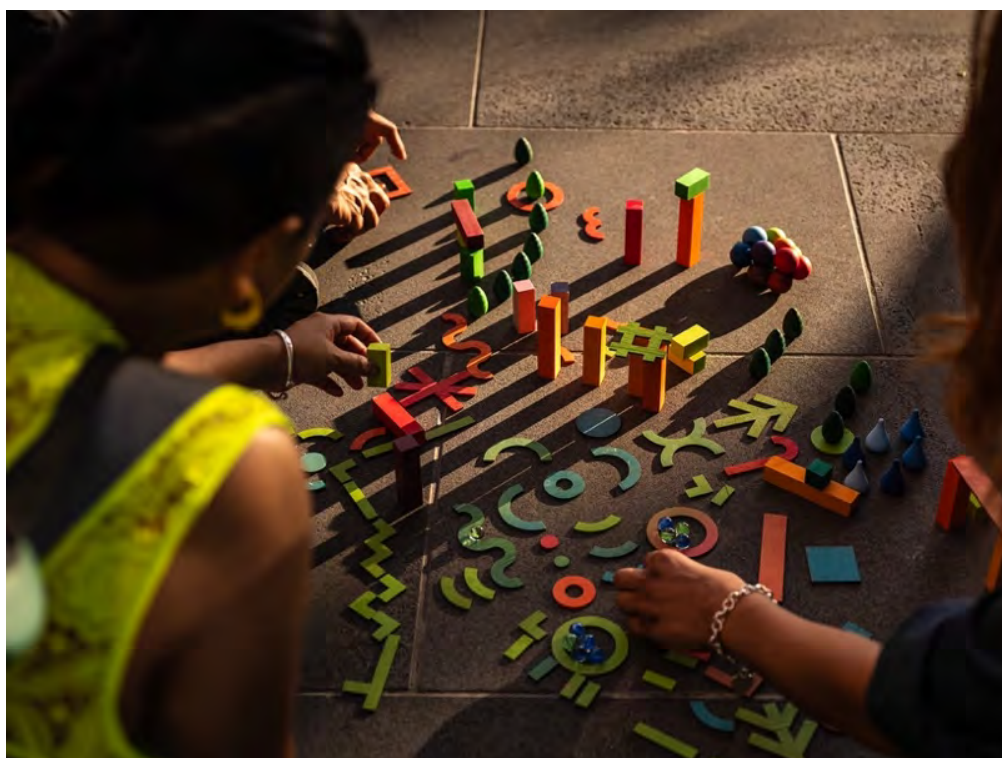


Figure 3: Reworlding: neighbourhood building together at end of walk.

3 BIOGRAPHY

Dr Innocent (he/they) is an urban play scholar, artist gamemaker and Director of the future play lab at RMIT University in Naarm Melbourne. The lab develops socially engaged and site responsive urban play connecting experimental game design, public space, posthuman methods, and creative technologies. Working with the city as a material, their approach to reworlding develops posthuman methods that reimagine, reconfigure and reconnect with the world. This involves transdisciplinary practices across design, sculpture, animation, sound, light and installation using methods of multiplatform storytelling that connect objects with their environment to build speculative worlds that playfully defamiliarise and disrupt

urban life. This work has been situated in Aarhus, Melbourne, Bristol, Barcelona, Istanbul, Ogaki, Sydney, Tampere, Seoul, and Hong Kong.

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Extending Dialogue Beyond the Prison: The San Vittore Situated Vocabulary

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Abstract

The Situated Action is part of San Vittore Situated Vocabulary, an ongoing participatory research project developed inside Milan's San Vittore Prison. During the PDC2026 Conference, the action is hosted at Open Casello (Milan), in close proximity to the prison, and it stages an "impossible dialogue": an indirect yet reciprocal exchange between the prison and the city, through a spatial and writing-based installation. The meanings of four key words emerged from co-design sessions with inmates, prison staff, and volunteers – Life/Death, Justice/Injustice, Responsibility, Fun/Boredom – are presented as fragmented textual constellations holding tension, silences, and contradictions embedded in everyday carceral life. Participants are called to move through reading and informal conversation and are finally invited to live a personal response. Rather than seeking consensus, the action invites contributors to position themselves within unresolved tensions. The collected reflections will later be reintroduced inside the prison, extending the dialogue and positioning participatory design as a situated and agonistic practice that holds plurality and disagreement as conditions for coexistence.

CCS Concepts

• Participatory Design;

Keywords

Agonistic Practice, Situated Knowledge, Prison

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1 BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, AND METHODOLOGY: SAN VITTORE SITUATED VOCABULARY

San Vittore Situated Vocabulary (hereafter SVSV) is an ongoing participatory research project launched in 2023 within San Vittore prison in Milan (Italy) [1], as part of the Off Campus San Vittore¹ initiative of Politecnico di Milano. The project extends a previous Situated Vocabulary experience developed in Milan's Nolo district within the Off Campus Nolo initiative [2, 3], widening the project's methods and objectives in response to the radically different conditions of the prison context.

SVSV explores the transformative potential of words as agonistic spaces [4] for collective reflection and negotiation, where complex issues within the community can be articulated, contested and re-imagined.

Within San Vittore prison, the Imagis Lab research group (Design Department, Politecnico di Milano) in collaboration with Virginia Tassinari (former member of POLIMI DESIS Lab, now at TU Delft's Department of Human-Centred Design), experimented with the collaborative making of a Situated Vocabulary in this contested and highly institutionalised context. Although San Vittore prison is located in the very centre of Milan, it remains physically and socially detached from its surrounding neighbourhood. The carceral system operates through layers of power and institutionalised silences, where dialogue is structurally constrained. This results in interactions that are often fragmented and structured around three main pillars—security, education, and health—each driven by



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¹Off Campus is an initiative promoted by Politecnico di Milano with the aim of strengthening the presence of university in the city of Milan to advance the idea of a more socially responsible university, attentive to societal challenges, open, and closely connected to local territories and communities. Launched in 2018, the initiative opened its first Off Campus space in the San Siro neighbourhood (April 2019), followed by three additional hubs: Nolo (September 2020), the San Vittore prison (October 2022), and Cascina Nosedo (December 2022).

distinct institutional logics and objectives that can be misaligned or even conflicting. This situation particularly affects the relationships between prison staff and detainees, resulting in limited verbal communication, often reduced to functional exchanges or deliberately avoided for safety reasons. This lack of exchanges framed our project as an “impossible dialogue”: a form of discourse that, because it cannot be fully realised within the system, becomes both urgent and revealing. The impossibility of the dialogical interaction is not in the absence of voices but in the asymmetrical conditions under which voices can be expressed, heard or silenced, always shaped by roles and power relations embedded in everyday prison life [5]. Dialogue is not approached here as a reconciliatory practice aimed at consensus, but as an ongoing negotiation across differences that may remain unsolved: the project acknowledges that some forms of dialogue will always be partial, mediated and asymmetrical, and precisely for that, politically revealing.

Methodologically, SVSV is grounded in co-design and participatory action research. Building on this approach, the project experiments with forms of co-creation that acknowledge opacity and conflicts not as obstacles to participation but as its very conditions. Researchers engaged inmates, prison officers, operators, and volunteers in an ongoing process of co-creating shared and situated meanings [6]. Rather than focusing solely on individual keywords and producing a fixed lexicon, we worked on oppositional pairs of words, exploring the liminal space, the margins [7], where semiotic meanings blur.

In a carceral setting, meanings are rarely univocal: concepts such as oppressor/oppressed [8] and right/wrong intersect in ambiguous and often contradictory ways. Oppositional pairs were not predefined but emerged through facilitated discussions, where tensions were negotiated rather than resolved. Each word in the SVSV refers to its opposite and to the nuances of meaning in the queering space in-between them. Working with oppositional pairs allowed participants to articulate tensions: meanings are allowed to coexist even when they remain incompatible, without being forced in coherent narratives.

The keywords were first selected by Young Adult detainees among the ones emerged from the exploration of San Vittore microcosm, then shared with the other prison actors, enabling comparison across roles. The four keywords—each understood through an oppositional tension—around which the SVSV revolve are *Responsibility* (and its contested boundaries), *Fun / Boredom*, *Life / Death*, *Justice / Injustice*.

Between November 2023 and December 2024, the researchers facilitated a series of co-design sessions involving 66 participants across different groups: 26 detained people, 14 correctional officers, 18 operators (including educators and healthcare staff), and 7 volunteers. Each one-hour session invited small groups to discuss personal interpretations and emotions associated with the words, with the aim of collecting and comparing meanings across diverse perspectives and collaboratively constructing a vocabulary that could hold these differences together. This process generated a collective and situated understanding that revealed the matrices of power [9, 10], and subtle tensions and negotiations of daily life in prison. The process was also conceived as a way to allow these meanings to move beyond the prison walls, fostering mutual



Figure 1: San Vittore Situated Vocabulary at For Love of The World. Philosophy, technology and art festival, March 29, 2025, Theatre de Veste, Delft. Credits: De Schaapjesfabriek.

understanding between the inside and the outside. It engages multiple publics — including the neighbourhood community around San Vittore, as well as experts from different fields such as artists, philosophers, and scientists — in order to gather diverse perspectives and reintroduce them into the prison context. In doing so, it seeks to create a space of exchange between realities that rarely have the opportunity to encounter one another.

2 THE SITUATED ACTION – PERFORMING AN “IMPOSSIBLE DIALOGUE”

The project unfolds as a series of situated actions across places and times. Following an initial presentation at *For Love of the World: Philosophy, Technology and Art Festival* (TU Delft, 2024) (Figure 1) [11], the SVSV will now be enacted again in Milan as part of the 2026 Participatory Design Conference, hosted by Open Casello², opening the project to the local community of San Vittore surroundings and an international design audience. This second iteration aims to re-situate the work in a new institutional and cultural setting, inviting participants to engage in a collective reflection on positionality, representation, and the ethics of co-presence in design.

It combines a spatial reading experience and a lightweight participatory writing practice that invites local publics and PDC participants to contribute their own meanings to the ones that emerged from the exploration of the San Vittore microcosm.

2.1 Enacting the Situated Action

Rather than proposing a direct encounter with incarcerated people, often impossible due to ethical and institutional constraints, the Situated Action stages an indirect conversation articulated in two complementary and temporally distinct moments: a pre-conference

²Open Casello is an urban experimentation hub housed in a refurbished former toll-house in Piazzale Cantore, Milan, dedicated to youth-led creativity, participation, and social innovation. It functions as a public space where young people can propose projects, organize events, and access guidance services, while institutions and cultural operators use it as a platform to connect policies, talents, and community initiatives.

engagement with local publics in Milan, followed by a second moment that takes place during the 2026 Participatory Design Conference. The first is dedicated to local citizens –neighborhood residents who rarely interact with the prison as well as the community of Open Casello –Young-adults creative and innovators– and invites them to engage with the Situated Vocabulary to offer their own perspectives, generating an initial collection of insights from those who inhabit the same urban area as San Vittore prison, for whom the presence of the carceral institution often remains opaque, normalised, or socially unacknowledged. This first corpus of situated meanings serves as the point of departure for the second moment, which addresses the international community of design scholars and practitioners of the PDC Conference.

In both moments, the SA serves as a tense space where words condense actual experiences, institutional limitations, and asymmetrical positions rather than as a neutral collection of meanings. *Responsibility*, for example, condenses opposing viewpoints—care and safety responsibilities for prison officers, accountability and familial pressure for detained individuals—and, when re-situated in the situated action, prompts participants to consider how responsibility is divided between individuals and institutions. *Fun/Boredom* invites to consider the moral frameworks through which incarceration is conceptualized by exposing the unequal regulation of time, pleasure, and legitimacy in prison life. In the *Life/Death* debate, vulnerability, hope, and despair emerged, posing questions for external audiences regarding whose lives are made livable and the shared responsibility for maintaining hope after incarceration. Lastly, *Justice/Injustice* invites participants to consider how injustice is created, normalised, and experienced differently by revealing systemic tensions shared across roles: overcrowding, delays, and structural inequalities affecting detained people—especially the most vulnerable—as well as the working conditions faced by officers. The spatial installation will consist of four large printed panels, each dedicated to one keyword, that from afar appear unified. As visitors approach, it becomes clear that the words are composed of other words: meanings, sentences, fragments of conversations held within San Vittore prison, brought into dialogue with one another. Aside from printed postcards with the same words and a box to collect the participants' meanings and reflections.

The Situated Action unfolds through this sequence: (1) visitors will be invited to read through meanings at their own pace, allowing for spontaneous exchanges; (2) researchers acting as mediators, facilitate informal discussion situating these insights within the lived experience of the prison and narrating the research process while maintaining an intimate and reflective tone; (3) participants will be invited to engage with the installation by interacting with its meanings annotating their own perspectives on the postcards, which will be placed in the collection box.

At the end of the situated action, the collected postcards constituting a tangible corpus of traces – written reflections, annotations, and positional statements – will be archived, analysed, and reintroduced inside the prison to be discussed with detainees and other actors, thus extending the dialogue across prison and society.

2.2 Situating the Project within PDC 2026

The San Vittore Situated Vocabulary directly engages with the PDC 2026 themes of Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence, exploring how design can act as a mediator of coexistence in spaces of exclusion.

The project proposes a participatory practice grounded in dialogue and confrontation. Dialogue in SVSV is understood as an ongoing negotiation across asymmetries, valuing tensions, silences and disagreement as part of the collective reflection.

Within this perspective, peace emerges not from the absence of conflict – in the carceral setting cannot be reduced to calm or order – but as the capacity to face disagreement and discomfort collectively. Coexistence is approached as a constantly renegotiated condition rather than a stable outcome, and it emerges through ongoing practices of listening, disagreement, and care. Through this lens, the project explores participatory design as a situated and agonistic practice [4] that does not eliminate difference but holds it through dialogue, a form of collective inquiry capable of holding spaces for plurality and vulnerability, within the everyday dynamics of coexistence.

The situated action enacts this agonistic dialogue by placing fragments of prison-based testimonies, such as conflicting interpretations of *Responsibility* from officers and detained people, into a shared public space, where external participants are invited to respond. The juxtaposition of internal and external positions, and their later reintroduction inside the prison, materialises dialogue as a chain of mediated and potentially dissonant exchanges. In this way, agonism is not only theorised but staged through the installation's structure and participatory sequence.

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Assistant Professor at TU Delft (NL) in the Human-Centered Design Department, she explores the role of philosophy in shaping design discourse, with a focus on topics like the (cosmo)politics of design. She is also a design researcher at Pantopicon (BE), where she explores the making of beyond-the-modern futures. Recently, she co-edited *Designing in Dark Times: An Arendtian Lexicon* (2020) and co-authored of *(Designing) Beyond the Modern: Moments, Dialectics, Potentialities* (forthcoming 2026) with Eduardo Staszowski, and co-edited *Re-Framing the Politics of Design* (2021) with Liesbeth Huybrechts and Oswald Devisch and *Situated Vocabularies. A Situated and Agonistic Conversational Platform* (2026, forthcoming) with Francesca Piredda and Francesco Vergani.

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Research Fellow at Politecnico di Milano's Imagis Lab and Laboratorio Carcere, she specializes in narrative-driven co-design within marginalized contexts. At the San Vittore prison "Off Campus" site, she leads Storylab, a participatory storytelling workshop, and contributes to action-research projects like ReverseLab and Methexis. As a media artist and creative producer, she explores collaborative audiovisual languages through the collective Tokonoma, earning recognition in the ADI Design Index 2023 and a 2021 FNR Award. Her work extends to live cinema performances at venues like the Last Supper Museum and lecturing on multimedia design at the Civica Scuola di Cinema "Luchino Visconti."

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Service designer graduated with a MSc in Product Service System Design at Politecnico di Milano. Her focus is on participatory, democratic and non-dominant practices related to socially engaged

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Filo: Weaving Connections

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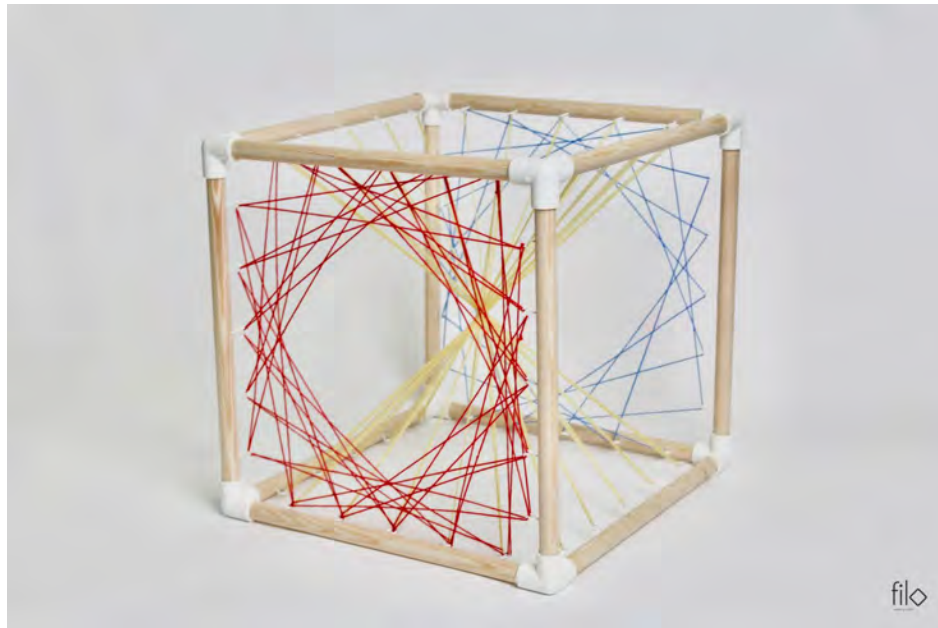


Figure 1: Warsaw, 2023: Photography of Filo by Duchna Łosiak

Abstract

Filo: Weaving Connections is a hands-on, situated action created for the Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2026, held at Politecnico di Milano in Italy. This project engages participants in a collaborative workshop where they weave colored threads around Filo, a modular cube. Filo originated as an academic social design project developed in 2023 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. The design introduces a simple weaving cube as a tool for creative and therapeutic making, aiming to promote creativity and collaboration among people with diverse abilities and backgrounds.

The event takes place on a public avenue near the conference, allowing both conference participants and city residents to participate simultaneously. Ultimately, the goal is to create a fully completed and designed filo through a moment of cooperation and participation, resulting in a visual representation of the conference themes: peace, dialogue, and coexistence.

Keywords

Participatory design, Therapeutic Making, Weaving

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1 Introduction

The Situated Action (SA) **Filo: Weaving Connections** is designed as a format that integrates elements of a hands-on workshop, participatory design experiment, and therapeutic making session. This activity adopts a co-creative approach in which participants are not treated as users or subjects but as active contributors and “experts of their own experience”. They engage directly in material exploration and meaning-making, shifting design from expert-led problem solving toward collective creativity grounded in lived experience, as described by Sanders and Stappers [9]. This positioning aligns with the tradition of participatory design, where design is understood not only as the production of artifacts but also as a process of social engagement, dialogue, and situated meaning-making [2] [10].



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Filo operates in the “fuzzy front end” of design [6], emphasizing open-ended exploration. The modular weaving cube serves as a generative tool that fosters collective creativity through making, enabling participants to collaborate across different levels of skill, confidence, and expressive capacity. In this sense, the activity aligns with co-creation as a broad practice of shared creativity. This format reflects a shift in the roles of designers and researchers - from authors to facilitators - who provide scaffolds that encourage participation while allowing space for autonomy, interpretation, and dialogue. Through embodied, craft-based interaction, Filo creates a situated environment where peace, dialogue, and coexistence are enacted both materially and socially, demonstrating how simple, low-tech participatory formats can promote collective well-being and shared understanding.

2 Context and Methodology of the Situated Action

Filo is a design object developed in response to a design challenge proposed by the Italian association Anffas during a Social Design workshop held at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Anffas is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting solidarity and social inclusion across various domains, including healthcare, social assistance, education, employment inclusion, sports, charity, and the protection of human and civil rights. The organization places a particular focus on supporting people with disabilities and their families [3]. Within this context, the design brief called for the creation of an inclusive design intervention that would facilitate a shared activity for a group of participants with diverse physical and cognitive abilities. The primary objectives were to foster participant autonomy, enable meaningful engagement regardless of individual capabilities, and support collaborative group work. Filo was conceived as a response to these requirements, positioning material interaction and collective making as central strategies for inclusion, empowerment, and social participation.

During the design process, the main goal was to develop an artifact that could be realistically constructed using materials readily available to the institution. Ensuring ease of fabrication and low production costs was essential, as the design needed to be economically viable and easily replicable by the association in different contexts. This emphasis on accessibility and scalability informed all material and structural decisions, reinforcing the project's commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. Consequently, the design employs a construction system composed exclusively of materials commonly found in local hardware stores. The artifact is assembled using only three standardized components: wooden dowels, PVC joints, and C-clamps.

This deliberate reduction in material complexity not only simplifies the building process but also minimizes the need for specialized tools or technical expertise. This simplicity lowers barriers to participation and supports what Manzini [8] describes as diffuse design, where non-designers actively participate in creative processes that shape social innovation. By relying on familiar, low-cost materials and straightforward assembly techniques, the design supports institutional autonomy, enabling the artifact to be reproduced, adapted, and maintained independently over time while preserving its functional and participatory intent.

In the context of the Participatory Design Conference, this Situated Action can be understood as an experimental workshop that integrates design practices into city life. It is a process that emphasizes learning through action, participation, and reflection [1]. **Filo: Weaving Connections** proposes a deliberately open-ended, low-tech, and adaptable format that does not aim to present a finished design solution, focusing instead on activating a shared situation where meaning, relationships, and collective artifacts emerge through participation [4]. This workshop materializes as a participatory design process grounded in performance rather than representation, closely aligned with “design-by-doing” conceptualization of participatory design described by Gerhard Fischer and Eric Scharff [5].

When participatory design is viewed through the lens of communities of practice, participation is revealed as a complex and context-dependent process shaped by power relations, material arrangements, and social dynamics. Design artifacts and devices are not neutral tools but socio-material entities that participants seek to appropriate, negotiate, and sometimes contest, making them sites of alignment and tension within and across communities of practice [7]. From this perspective, Filo unfolds as a “making together” and embodied activity in which meaning arises through interaction with materials, people, and contexts. Human action and participation are therefore not separated into physical, social, or cultural dimensions; instead, distributed across and sustained by their interrelations, emphasizing participation as an integrated and performative practice rather than a discrete or purely cognitive act.

The weaving cube operates as a performative design device that invites participants to engage bodily, materially, and socially, where material artifacts function as boundary objects that bind together different forms of knowledge, skill, and experience. The cube and threads are not neutral tools, but active participants in the process, shaping interactions and enabling collective meaning-making. Through weaving, participants perform their understanding of collaboration, tension, rhythm, and coexistence, making tacit knowledge visible through action.

From a methodological perspective, Filo can be understood as a form of research-through-design (RtD), in which knowledge is generated through the iterative processes of designing, facilitating, and reflecting on the Situated Action itself [11]. Rather than positioning the SA as a finalized design outcome, the project treats enactment as both an intervention and a site of inquiry, where material configurations, participant interactions, and facilitation strategies serve as sources of insight. In this sense, Filo can also be situated within participatory design processes grounded in communities of practice, where participation is understood as a holistic act involving doing, feeling, thinking, and belonging. Its open-ended and non-prescriptive format enables participants to appropriate the design device in unforeseen ways, reinforcing the understanding of design meaning as continuously negotiated through use. By foregrounding embodied performance, collective action, and material engagement, Filo exemplifies participatory design as an ongoing, situated practice that privileges cooperation, inclusion, and shared experience over fixed outcomes.

In conclusion, **Filo: Weaving Connections** is a low-tech, performative, and open-ended participatory design intervention grounded

in collective making and embodied engagement. Rather than delivering a fixed outcome, the SA activates a shared situation in which design meaning, social relations, and collective artifacts are continuously negotiated through action. By foregrounding material interaction, performance, and collaboration, Filo positions design as a situated, relational, and transformative practice, demonstrating how simple material systems can support autonomy, dialogue, and coexistence. Within the context of the Participatory Design Conference, the Filo methodology creates a format that emphasizes design as a social process.

2.1 How Filo addresses Peace, Dialogue and Coexistence

The Situated Action (SA) Filo: Weaving Connections addresses the theme of peace, dialogue, and coexistence by engaging participants in a shared creative practice grounded in collaboration, material interaction, and social care. In alignment with the conference's framing of participatory design as a means to facilitate living together in contexts marked by fragmentation, conflict, and disconnection, Filo proposes a process-oriented activity that foregrounds collective creation as a catalyst for relational engagement and mutual understanding.

Peace within the Filo workshop is not framed as a static goal but as an emergent process fostered through the meditative and repetitive act of weaving. The physical rhythm of wrapping threads around a shared modular structure encourages calm, focused attention, and supports emotional regulation through embodied making. This approach aligns with the PDC 2026 theme, which sees peace-building not as an outcome but as an ongoing, participatory process involving the acknowledgment of conflict, care for others, and the reactivation of communal bonds rather than merely resolving disagreements. The act of weaving creates a slow, inclusive tempo in which participants cultivate trust, patience, and reciprocity, essential for nurturing peaceful coexistence in social contexts.

Dialogue in Filo emerges organically as participants coordinate material choices, negotiate shared space, and respond to one another's gestures and decisions. This form of interaction reflects the conference's emphasis on participatory approaches that create convivial spaces for diverse voices, negotiation, and the co-production of meaning. Participants communicate not only verbally but also through gesture, rhythm, and material intervention, highlighting how participatory design practices can open alternative channels of understanding across difference.

Finally, coexistence is embodied in the collective woven artifact itself. Each individual contribution – first thread, then pattern and finally form – interlaces with others to create a structure that represents interdependence, diversity, and harmonious collaboration. The artifact becomes a tangible testament to shared effort and collective meaning-making, echoing the PDC 2026 call for design practices that foster inclusive participation, solidarity, and the reconstruction of social fabrics in contexts of division and conflict.

2.2 Performing the Situated Action in the Conference Space

The Situated Action (SA) is part of the Participatory Design Conference program and takes place in a public or semi-public venue

near the Politecnico di Milano in Milan, the host of the conference. The SA is designed to be open and accessible, encouraging participation from both conference attendees and members of the local community. This setting underscores the project's commitment to inclusivity and situated engagement beyond the confines of the conference itself.

The event is conducted through a thirty-minute participatory session involving approximately twelve participants at a time. Participants will be introduced to the weaving cube Filo and invited to collaboratively weave colored threads around three to four modular cube structures. This activity encourages free experimentation with tension, layering, patterns, and color combinations, allowing participants to engage at their own pace and according to their individual abilities. Interaction with the public is direct, organic, and hands-on, with participants actively shaping a shared material outcome.

Moments of informal reflection and conversation are integrated into the session, inviting participants to connect their experiences to broader themes such as participatory design, cooperation, and coexistence. Much of the interaction occurs through gestures, shared attention, and material negotiation rather than verbal exchange, fostering attentive listening and mutual respect.

The resulting woven artifacts may remain on display throughout the conference as collective and evolving testaments to shared creation, interdependence, and collaborative presence.

3 Short Biographies

Cátia Ascensão is a designer and researcher with a master's degree in sociology from the University of Coimbra. Her work focuses on how collaborative and participatory design processes contribute to more active and effective citizenship, particularly among marginalized social groups. Her dissertation primarily explored how co-design can facilitate children's participation. She has worked on topics such as children's rights, child participation models, and co-design processes.

Duchna Łosiak is a designer and researcher pursuing a Master's degree in Design and Research at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, and studying Art Therapy at the Academy of Psychology in Warsaw. Her work explores the intersections of materiality, sound, and human experience, often through participatory and craft-based methods. She has a background in product design and industrial design.

Marta Kamieńska is a graduate of the Faculty of Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, she is currently a student at the Institute of Textiles at the Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź. She has always been passionate about workshop activities and collaborative work, particularly in the context of crafts and weaving. She co-founds the Flara collective, whose primary medium and field of experimentation is printed fabric. In her work, she combines traditional weaving techniques with the exploration of new forms of application, emphasizing playfulness, experimentation, and creative freedom.

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Guardians of the Mangrove

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Abstract

The ongoing degradation of mangroves worldwide gravely undermines essential ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and the maintenance of biodiversity, diminishing their crucial role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. In regions such as Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico—one of the country’s most ecologically and socially vulnerable mangrove areas—this degradation has reached critical levels, threatening not only local flora and fauna but also the livelihoods and cultural practices of surrounding communities. Addressing this urgent challenge, participatory design emerges as a powerful tool for ecological restoration and social engagement. By involving community members and international participants in a virtual role-playing game, where they embody both human (e.g., fishermen) and mangrove species (e.g., crabs, birds, mangrove trees), the project fosters empathy, systems thinking, and shared decision-making. Following the game, participants co-create a collaborative digital mural—alongside a physical mural in Mexico—that serves as a living archive of their experiences, reflections, and insights fostering further interactive dialogue.

CCS Concepts

• **Applied computing** → Computer-aided design.

Keywords

Multispecies, More-Than-Human, serious games, speculative design

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1 INTRODUCTION: Mangroves as multispecies agency

Mangroves are among the most vital ecosystems on the planet, providing essential services such as carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and biodiversity conservation. These ecosystems act as natural climate regulators, storing three to five times more carbon

per hectare than terrestrial forests and serving as critical buffers against storm surges, flooding, and coastal erosion [1] [2] [3]. Despite their importance, mangroves are one of the most threatened ecosystems globally, with significant losses driven by urbanization, tourism, and land-use changes [4]. In Mexico, which hosts 6% of the world’s mangroves, these ecosystems are particularly vulnerable [5], especially in regions like Bahía de Banderas, located on the Pacific coast and spanning the states of Nayarit and Jalisco.

Bahía de Banderas is a biodiversity hotspot and a critical area for climate resilience. Its mangroves not only protect coastal communities from extreme weather events but also sustain artisanal fisheries and cultural practices that are deeply intertwined with the local way of life. However, rapid urban expansion and tourism development have led to habitat degradation, pollution, and hydrological alterations, threatening the ecological balance and the livelihoods of surrounding communities.

Traditional restoration approaches often prioritize anthropocentric benefits, overlooking the needs and capacities of non-human species that are integral to these ecosystems. This gap underscores the need for innovative, inclusive, and multispecies approaches [6] [7] [8] to conservation. Guardians of the Mangrove responds to this challenge by leveraging participatory and speculative design to create a space for reflection, dialogue, and co-creation. Situated in Bahía de Banderas, this hybrid activity combines a virtual role-playing game with a collaborative mural creation to foster empathy, systems thinking, and shared decision-making. Participants embody both human and non-human roles—such as fishermen, mangrove trees, crabs, and birds—exploring the interdependent relationships that sustain the mangrove ecosystem. By engaging local and international participants, the project aims to empower communities, amplify diverse voices, and envision regenerative futures for mangroves as living infrastructure for climate resilience.

We aim that a digital mural will be created (at PDC), where designers, students, teachers, researchers, and people involved can reflect on the issue and capture their experiences and observations, becoming a visual archive that can be exhibited and shared globally, connecting local communities with international audiences. We aim that the digital mural become alive inspiring participants to create a physical mural within the communities in Bahía de Banderas and the surroundings of Puerto Vallarta. By foregrounding the local context of Bahía de Banderas and integrating global perspectives, Guardians of the Mangrove seeks to inspire scalable, nature-based solutions that can be adapted to other vulnerable coastal regions in Mexico and beyond.



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2 Context: Bahía de Banderas (puerto vallarta Área)

Bahía de Banderas, located on the Pacific coast of Mexico, spans the states of Nayarit and Jalisco and is renowned for its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage. The region's mangroves play a crucial role in supporting artisanal fisheries, protecting coastal communities from storms, and maintaining the ecological balance of estuaries and lagoons. However, the rapid growth of tourism and urbanization has led to significant habitat loss, pollution, and hydrological alterations, threatening the resilience of these ecosystems.

Local communities in Bahía de Banderas have a deep cultural and economic connection to the mangroves, yet they often face barriers to participating in conservation efforts. Guardians of the Mangrove seeks to address this gap by creating an inclusive and participatory space that empowers local stakeholders to take an active role in envisioning and implementing regenerative practices. By situating the physical mural in a community space within Bahía de Banderas, the project ensures that the voices and experiences of local residents remain central to the conversation.

3 INTEGRATION: PEACE, DIALOGUE, AND COEXISTENCE

Recent research highlights the importance of participatory and community-based approaches in environmental conservation, emphasizing the need for inclusive, context-sensitive interventions that empower local stakeholders [9] [10]. Participatory design has shown promise in fostering empathy, systems thinking, and collaborative action by involving diverse participants in the co-creation of solutions [11] [12].

Peace is promoted by resolving conflicts and negotiating resources and actions with others. By simulating the effects of collective actions, participants experience how cooperation and empathy can generate harmony or conflict in contexts where interests may seem opposed. Dialogue will take place through constant communication between players, forcing them to listen, argue, and negotiate perspectives, creating a metaphorical and educational dialogue about different needs and voices, and creating a space for exchange between ways of life.

The mural or participatory installation amplifies this conversation, allowing diverse voices, whether local or international, to connect to a collaborative reflection on the future of ecosystems, with the aim of encouraging participants to leave proposals or ideas. The simulation promotes coexistence by understanding the interdependence of species and communities, reinforcing the importance of planning actions that respect all actors in the ecosystem and reflecting on how decisions affect the whole, reflecting how humans and nature must coexist.

4 PUBLIC INTERACTION METHOD

A speculative activity, to picture a multispecies mangrove future, will function as a social laboratory [13] where designers, researchers, students, and the general public can experiment with new forms of dialogue between species, capturing the perspectives of both human and non-human agents.

A remote live connection is expected to bring together some PDC conference participants located in Milan with some members

of the coastal community here in Mexico. The SA is divided into two main phases:

1. Virtual Role-Playing Game: Participants connected will receive character cards (human and non-human), interact in a simulated mangrove ecosystem, and collaboratively make decisions affecting the shared environment. The role-play is facilitated through guided scenarios, digital whiteboards, and live video streaming. Time frame: 40 minutes
2. Collaborative Mural: After gameplay, participants co-create a digital mural that later will be manifested in and a physical mural (in Mexico) to document experiences, collective reflections, and proposals for action. The mural will become a living archive, fostering continued dialogue and sharing across communities.

The piece will raise awareness not only about mangrove ecology, but also promoting the creation of international collaboration networks, driving future participatory and regenerative projects. The digital mural will serve as an open platform to continue adding reflections and ideas, inviting more designers and communities to contribute after the event to create a real mural.

The SA action here proposed is open to all—designers, students, researchers, local stakeholders, and the general public—irrespective of prior knowledge. It represents an active engagement. Rather than passive observation, participants are co-creators, decision-makers, and storytellers within the SA. The use of play and speculative futures invites creativity and action, while the collaborative mural provides a low-barrier, expressive outlet for diverse voices. The SA structure supports both live, synchronous engagement (through video streaming and digital boards) and ongoing, asynchronous participation (through the digital mural and chat). This flexibility ensures broad, sustained, and meaningful interaction.

5 fostering more-than-human Care and Replicability

The plan for this project post-conference is long-term. Our vision of Guardians of the Mangrove extends beyond Bahía de Banderas. By fostering collaboration among municipalities, NGOs, local enterprises, and international participants, the project aims to build a network of stakeholders committed to mangrove conservation. The digital mural will serve as a repository of ideas and best practices, enabling other regions in Mexico and beyond to adapt and replicate the SA methodology. With continued international support, this initiative has the potential to inspire a nationwide movement for participatory and regenerative design, addressing the urgent need for climate resilience and ecological restoration.

Guardians of the Mangrove offers a compelling and innovative approach to addressing the ecological and social challenges of mangrove degradation in Bahía de Banderas. By combining participatory design, speculative futures, and collaborative art, the project creates a space for reflection, dialogue, and action. Grounded in the local context yet open to global participation, the SA fosters empathy, systems thinking, and shared responsibility, empowering communities to envision and co-create regenerative futures for their ecosystems. Through its hybrid format and emphasis on inclusivity, the project not only addresses the immediate challenges of mangrove conservation but also lays the foundation for a broader

movement toward sustainable coexistence between humans and nature.

Acknowledgments

Cassandra Díaz Contreras Amador, Mexican designer and researcher interested in multispecies design practices in coastal communities. Her work focuses on creating dialogues between people and ecosystems to foster empathy and sustainable coexistence.

David Sánchez Ruano, Industrial designer, Phd in design, professor and researcher specializing in eco-philosophy, regenerative design, and eco-technologies. He is currently leading the Advance Design Processes Research Group at the School of Architecture, Art, and Design at Tecnológico de Monterrey and is a member of the National System of Researchers.

Cristina Cortés Gómez, Industrial Designer and Phd in Sustainable Development. Her work addresses the management of marine-coastal resources from a transdisciplinary approach. She has collaborated with tourism-fishing cooperatives in the Mexican Caribbean, promoting community circular management strategies and community science focused on public policy. She coordinated internationally funded reef restoration projects in Cozumel. Recently, she has collaborated on sustainable financing initiatives for coastal ecosystems, strengthening multi-stakeholder governance

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Challenging Extractive Participation: Spatiality, Power, and Lessons from PDC Places

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Abstract

This paper re-reads participation through the lens of spatial politics, arguing that spatiality is not a neutral backdrop for relational processes but a contested terrain. This terrain is shaped by power, exclusion, and the situated resistances that emerge within it. We use “resistance” to refer to agonistic practices of imagination — acts that resist erasure, marginalization, and the extractive and solutionist logics that often underpin design interventions. Drawing on decolonial thought and the notion of epistemic extractivism, we examine how Participatory Design, when not critically attuned to these dynamics, risks reproducing centralized models of knowledge production. These conditions are not peripheral to design — they are already there, and they cannot be ignored. They are entangled in place: shaping how entities (human, non-human, less-than- and more-than-human) are confined, erased, or rendered dominant. Participatory Design enters this terrain. It does not operate outside of it. Therefore, we argue for the need to explicitly address the spatial dimension of oppression in Participatory Design practices — to recognize spatiality as a structuring force that defines who may participate, how, and on what terms. We present PDC Places as a curatorial and infrastructural experiment within the Participatory Design Conference 2026, conceived as a decentralized constellation of place-based initiatives, problematizing entangled forms of oppression from their situatedness. A constellation suggests neither hierarchy nor homogeneity. It is a pattern perceived across distance, composed of bodies that maintain their own trajectories. Thinking Places as a constellation resists central-peripheral logics and instead foregrounds relational alignment without subsumption. What connects them is not thematic uniformity, but shared tensions around power, spatiality, and participation. Rather than satellite

events, Places were framed as situated ecosystems grounded in local urgencies, networks, and struggles that need to be identified, and understood to envision more just Participatory Design engagements. Through this initiative, we sought to challenge extractive participation — where knowledge is often gathered and mobilized toward innovation within frameworks that ignore or flatten local struggles — and to foreground *Place* as an ethical and political condition of participation. We argue here that challenging extractive participation requires learning to attune to situated practices already in motion. This paper aims to further articulate a theoretical positioning on spatiality and power in Participatory Design by engaging with the Places presented at the PDC2026 conference, functioning there as distributed enactments of these tensions.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Participatory design;

Keywords

Spatial politics, Power asymmetries, Epistemic extractivism

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1 Introduction

Participatory Design (PD) has long positioned itself as a practice committed to inclusion, collaboration, and democratic engagement. Yet, as the field has expanded across global contexts and institutional frameworks, participation itself has become increasingly contested and ambiguous. This ambivalence stems from a tension at the heart of PD: while it seeks to redistribute agency, it often operates within institutional infrastructures that centralize validation, authorship, and visibility. Participation thus unfolds within asymmetrical circuits of recognition, where some knowledge travels and

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others remain located. Participation risks there becoming symbolic, procedural, universalistic, or instrumental, rather than truly transformative and just. Participation itself can become extractive when *situated knowledges*, memories, and struggles are mobilized within institutional circuits without questioning how subjects and *ways of being and knowing* are already placed within intersecting axes of colonial, patriarchal, and racialized power. From this positional stance, “place” here does not simply refer to physical space but rather carries an experiential and relational density: it is sedimented through memory, affection, repetition, and struggle. In this sense, it is not something external to the subjects inhabiting the space but is rather relationally constitutive. We are not pre-existing beings who then enter relation with place but are rather constituted through relations — with other humans, with histories, with more-than-human ecologies, with temporalities and territories. Relationality is not additive; it is ontological. Yet these relations are not necessarily neutral or harmonious. They are shaped by intersecting axes of colonial, patriarchal, racialized, and capitalist power. Territories are shaped by shared memory and collective practices, but also by imposed borders, forced separations, and regimes of exclusion. Place can sustain belonging and solidarity, but it can also be the outcome of displacement, segregation, and containment.

Drawing on decolonial thought and the notion of epistemic extractivism [1], [White in 2], [Gutiérrez in 2], [3], [4], [5], [6], we examine how PD can reproduce centralized models of knowledge production by abstracting place into the essentialist understanding of “context” and community into “stakeholders”. Such translations neutralize situated divergences and reframe relational worlds within institutional regimes of legibility.

Communities generate knowledge continuously through processes of organizing, conflict, and survival, often beyond the reach of academic validation [7]. When participatory processes translate lived struggles into stakeholder categories, they risk rendering this movement-based learning invisible. Recognizing epistemic extractivism therefore also requires acknowledging that knowledge production is already taking place in territories before design intervenes.

Challenging extractive participation therefore requires more than acknowledging spatial politics; it requires refusing the reduction of situatedness [8] to “context” and rethinking participation beyond the “stakeholder” model — toward what Marisol de la Cadena calls a “complex we” as “a shared condition from which “self” and “other” emerge relationally as intra-acted assertions of divergence” [9, p. 478].

PDC Places, developed within the framework of the Participatory Design Conference 2026, is conceived as a decentralized constellation of place-based initiatives, foregrounding ecosystems, local urgencies, and plural voices rather than stand-alone events. Through this initiative, we sought to decentralize PD and to cultivate modes of listening capable of engaging *situated knowledges* formed in struggle, marginalization, and refusal.

“I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.

[...] Feminism loves another science: the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood. Feminism is about the sciences of the multiple subject with (at least) double vision. Feminism is about a critical vision consequent upon a critical positioning in unhomogeneous gendered social space.¹⁶ Translation is always interpretive, critical, and partial. Here is a ground for conversation, rationality, and objectivity — which is power-sensitive, not pluralist, “conversation”. [...] Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular”. [8, pp. 589-590]

By articulating this theoretical positioning, we address the selected Places as distributed enactments of a spatially — i.e. attuned to their situatedness — grounded critique of extractive participation.

To rethink participation, we must rethink *placeness*; not as backdrop, but as political condition. The PDC Places initiative was conceived as an experiment in this direction. Rather than treating local events as satellites orbiting a central conference, PDC Places proposed a distributed constellation of situated gatherings, rooted in local ecosystems and shaped by specific urgencies. It sought to foreground place — the ground from which we design — as an epistemic and political condition of participation, and to question extractive and centralized models of knowledge production within PD itself.

This contribution develops a theoretical positioning around the notions of spatial politics, epistemic extractivism, and decolonial PD, and reflects on how PDC Places attempted to operationalize these concerns. The first part articulates a critical re-reading of participation through spatiality and power. The second part briefly narrates the constellation of selected Places as situated enactments of these tensions.

1.1 Challenging Extractive Participation

1.1.1 Extractivism Beyond Resources: Participation as Epistemic Extraction.

Epistemic extractivism [1], White in [2], [3], [4] occurs when knowledge, memory, and situated practices are mined from specific contexts, translated into academic categories, and circulated within centralised institutions, often without altering the structures that produced marginalisation in the first place. Participatory or community-oriented forms, despite their emancipatory aspirations, are not immune to this dynamic. Communities become “stakeholders.” Memories become “inputs.” Territories become “contexts for cases.” Participation becomes a method for accessing local knowledge, which is then re-articulated within dominant epistemological frameworks. The spatial location of knowledge production remains asymmetrical: peripheral contexts feed central conferences, journals, and institutions.

Conferences, journals, and funding structures frequently function as centres of epistemic validation. Knowledge produced in peripheral contexts travels toward these centres, where it is reformulated, cited, and institutionalised. Meanwhile, the conditions under which that knowledge emerged often remain unseen. This spatial asymmetry reveals that participation alone does not decentralise knowledge production.

In this configuration, space is treated as a site of intervention rather than as a politically structured terrain. The “local” becomes

a resource to be mobilised. Participation, in turn, risks reinforcing the very asymmetries it seeks to challenge.

Challenging extractive participation therefore requires confronting not only methodological issues, but spatial ones: Who speaks at the centre? Whose knowledge remains located, untranslated, or unheard?

Embracing place also invites us into epistemological practices of humble not-knowing [10]. In whatever way you try to capture or extract a place, it is always more and flows across categories and analytical concepts. Not-knowing does not mean that you potentially could know, it means that it goes beyond what can be known with traditional scientific inquiry. What you humbly can do is to establish a complex contact zone, a cautious and sensitive probing which can include experiences, feelings, observations, intuitions, conversations but that reject simple extractivism (ibid).

1.2 Re-reading Spatiality: Power, Exclusion, Situated Resistance

Drawing from María Lugones' concept of *spatiality of the praxis* [11], we understand space as deeply shaped by power — determining who can move, speak, act, and belong, and as something actively shaped by intermeshed oppressions — and, crucially, by practices of survival, memory, and situated agency. In this sense, spatiality is not secondary to action but constitutive of it. As Lugones reminds us, where one may, must, or cannot be is never a neutral fact: it reflects histories of domination, intermeshed oppressions, and strategies of marginalization.

Space is never neutral. Where one may, must, or cannot be reflects histories of domination and strategies of marginalisation. There are racialised geographies in which place becomes both a site of exclusion and of potential resistance. Post-colonial borders overwrite porous spatialities. Migrant communities are structurally segregated in peripheries and labour camps. Displacement is not only spatial but ontological: certain bodies are marked as out of place [12], as produced others, denied full participation in the imagined “national body”.

“Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.”” [13, p. 9]

“Racial ‘Others’ and their presence are seen as the cause of ‘national ugliness’ because it is imagined that before their arrival the nation was ‘beautiful.’ But now the nation is ‘ugly.’ It is the presence of non-nationals in the nation, the non-We in the We space, that makes the nation ugly, disfiguring it, infecting it, dirtying it. This aesthetic schema of beauty and ugliness constructs differences between insiders and outsiders. [...] The same associative chains are also visible in the debate on national identity discussed in the first episode, where national ‘Others’ are often defined as *Ausländer* or immigrants, and immigrants are often defined as illegal immigrants. If immigrants are illegal’, they are lawless-, if they are lawless»they

are criminals’, if they are criminals, they are dangerous’, if they are dangerous, one fears them; if one fears them, one has the right to be hostile or even to eliminate them. A chain of equivalents legitimates racism by fixing identities in their place: immigrants - illegal immigrants - lawless - criminal - dangerous - fearful.” [14, pp. 105 and 74]

Spatial control intersects with epistemic violence. As Rolando Vázquez [6], [15] argues, modernity’s epistemic order erases non-Western, Indigenous, and migratory temporalities. Knowledge produced in struggle is rendered unintelligible within dominant frameworks. Participation, if uncritically enacted, risks reproducing this erasure — when it operates within institutional logics that seek clarity, control, and deliverables, thereby filtering out *knowledges* that resist translation, abstraction, or resolution.

PD must therefore confront how it contributes to mapping and stabilising these geographies rather than questioning them. Arturo Escobar [16] warns of “placelessness” produced through development and design practices that abstract local lifeworlds into universalised solutions. Placelessness, as he suggests, is not simply a geographic condition but a symptom of the modern epistemic order — one that detaches culture and identity from their embodied, grounded, and lived contexts. Escobar emphasizes that place continues to matter. Even participatory processes can translate place into data, memory into narrative fragments, community into manageable categories — often at the cost of situated knowledge, plurality, and voice.

Re-reading spatiality means recognising *place* as a politically charged terrain, where power is sedimented but also contested. Margins are not simply sites of lack; they are sites of knowledge, refusal, and alternative world-making. To recognise margins as sites of world-making requires resisting the developmental gaze that frames them as problems to be solved. Instead, margins can be understood as epistemic frontiers where alternative political imaginaries are rehearsed and sustained. PD must therefore question whether it approaches margins as partners in transformation or as reservoirs of authenticity.

Situatedness is not merely contextual specificity; it is an epistemological stance asking for less essentialist and universalist, more embodied forms of *knowledges*. In this light, the question becomes how PD can truly engage with these margins — not by reproducing modern logics of participation, but by cultivating an increased awareness of how design itself, and the spaces it operates in, are political as sites of (epistemic) resistance [17], [18]. To do so means questioning not only what is designed and who participates, but also how the politics of designing shape what is made visible, thinkable, and possible.

1.3 From Inclusion to Decentering: The Political Intent of PDC Places

The PDC Places call was shaped by these concerns. It did not simply invite additional events; it sought to discuss the spatial politics within the conference itself. Conceiving Places as an infrastructural experiment means intervening not only in formats, but in the underlying architectures of recognition and circulation. Conferences function as infrastructures that concentrate visibility and

validation. Decentring therefore requires rethinking how knowledge travels, how credit is distributed, and how situated practices remain accountable to their territories rather than being absorbed into central narratives.

Rather than treating PDC Places as satellites, we framed them as a constellation: decentralised, place-based initiatives unfolding prior to the main event. We explicitly asked for ecosystems, not one-off activities. We invited proposals grounded in existing networks, struggles, and local urgencies. We asked participants to engage actors within and beyond academia — activists, organisers, community members — and to address power asymmetries, conflict, and situated tensions with forms of knowledge production that are more situated and embodied, and less universalist.

The call foregrounded questions such as:

How do we acknowledge and disrupt power relations in PD processes?

What does it mean to participate from the margins as sites of resistance?

How can PD move beyond extractive, techno-centric frameworks?

How can we learn with and from places, recognising memory and knowledge as inherently situated?

These questions were not rhetorical. They aimed to provoke a shift from inclusion toward decentring. Decentring does not simply mean multiplying sites of participation. It entails questioning where authority, authorship, and agenda-setting reside. It requires redistributing not only voice, but also interpretative power: who frames the problem, who defines relevance, and who decides what counts as knowledge. Instead of asking how to “include” marginal voices within existing structures, we seek here to ask how PD might learn to listen differently, hearing what modern epistemologies have rendered unintelligible, without willing to create shortcuts or reduce complexity into a consensual mode of knowledge production.

Listening, however, cannot be reduced to receptivity. Speaking from the margin is an act of resistance precisely because dominant structures are not organised to hear it [19]. Yet the centre often seeks to incorporate marginal voices without relinquishing authority. Listening, in this context, cannot mean absorbing difference into the existing framework. Dialogue, as Freire [20] argues, is not a neutral exchange but a political encounter grounded in humility and mutual transformation, one that presupposes the recognition of the other as a subject of knowledge rather than as a beneficiary of inclusion. This also requires the recognition of how the other has been produced as such: marked as different, *marked as some others as stranger than other others* [12], *classed as less- than, as less educable, as less desirable, as less knowledgeable, as less valuable* [21]. In this light, listening requires confronting one’s own location and worldview within asymmetrical structures of power and remaining open to forms of knowledge that challenge institutional certainties. Something that also provides us with opportunities to “work knowledges together” [22] where we respectfully learn together across diverse knowledge systems.

These theoretical commitments translated into specific curatorial criteria for selecting the Places. Rather than evaluating proposals solely on academic merit or thematic relevance to the conference, we sought initiatives that: (1) explicitly engaged with spatial asymmetries — who can participate, from where, and on what terms;

(2) demonstrated accountability to local struggles, networks, and ecologies rather than treating place as a resource for extraction; (3) embraced friction, dissent, or agonism over consensus-driven participation; and (4) resisted translation into stakeholder models or solutionist frameworks. The Places were not chosen as exemplary cases of “good participation” but as situated enactments of the very tensions, between centrality and marginality, legibility and opacity, extraction and reciprocity, that our theoretical framework seeks to problematize.

1.4 The Constellation in Practice: Narrating the Places

Before narrating each initiative individually, we briefly synthesise how the theoretical concerns of spatial politics and epistemic extractivism manifest across the constellation as a whole. Across the Places, several common, though not universal, patterns emerge. First, many initiatives position margins as epistemic frontiers rather than as deficits: rural depopulation zones, polarised urban districts, post-colonial borderlands, and contested peace/conflict terrains become sites of knowledge production rather than intervention. Second, extractive participation is resisted through methodological commitments to slowness, impermanence, and non-translation: walking, temporary commons, ephemeral disturbances, and hybrid workbooks privilege forms of knowing that resist capture into deliverables or policy recommendations. Third, spatiality is treated not as context but as a relational and contested medium — shaped by histories of displacement, segregation, and racialised bordering, but also by practices of communing (the practices of place- and community-making as a radical alternative to commodification), solidarity, and refusal. Finally, this constellation reveals that decentring requires infrastructural work: hosting, listening, provisional coalitions, and the redistribution of visibility across sites that are not equally positioned within academic circuits of recognition. These shared orientations do not imply thematic uniformity; they index a family of design practices that foreground place as a political condition.

The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail invites residents, artists, researchers, and curious walkers to collectively create a narrated atlas in Modigliana between the Acerreta and Tramazzo valleys. Here participants walk along the trail where they, through written notes and sketches, try to articulate the rich entangled layers of history, culture, ecology, and lived experience in the area. This is place-making that embraces walking as an aesthetic and political act where sensitive attention is brought to silenced voices, neglected stories and ecological tensions.

The Re-Commoning the Rural initiative unfolds in the mountain region of Trentino-South Tyrol (Italy), in collaboration with BASIS Vinschgau-Venosta, a social activation hub created through the reclamation of a former military barrack. In response to depopulation, declining services, and socio-ecological pressures, the Place builds on existing commoning practices that sustain collective life in rural areas. Through a one-day gathering, local actors such as residents, activists, designers, and organisations, explore how PD might support already ongoing practices of care and cooperation.

The Ethics, Values and Culture Symposium takes place at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering (IDE), TU Delft. Through

intersecting lenses, they explore more critical and reflexive approaches concerning mutual recognition, just transitions, empowerment, tensions in design ethics, and pluralistic perspectives, this symposium works at connecting diverse research communities across the three departments, exploring design research's politics as a shared platform for collective inquiry.

PDC Place 2026 - Copenhagen takes place in Sydhavn (Denmark), a socially polarised district shaped by the coexistence of stigmatised working-class neighbourhoods and newly redeveloped waterfront areas. Although PD is deeply embedded in Danish public institutions, the organisers highlight how consensus-oriented traditions can inadvertently reproduce exclusion by privileging familiar voices. The one-day seminar brings together university actors, public servants, and civil society organisations who work to broaden participation beyond dominant groups. Through case presentations, mapping exercises, and situated visits, the Place creates space to reflect on how participation is structured locally and how it might be extended across social and institutional divisions.

Make Your Own Table: Places of Collective Making proposes the table as a material object and a site for collective inquiry bridging Venezuela, Denmark, Germany and Italy. Through a series of local events distributed, supported by a shared workbook, participants are invited to build their own tables as spaces for gathering, negotiation, and shared creation. From community kitchens to feminist bookstores and university living labs, each location experiments with how material practices shape dialogue and coexistence. The resulting constellation connects heterogeneous contexts through shared commitments, allowing each encounter to remain locally rooted, highlighting how participation is mediated by material and embodied arrangements.

PDC Place Maranhão (BR) - Lisbon (PT) 2026: Participatory Design as a Driver of Community-Centred Approaches establishes a transatlantic laboratory connecting the Federal Institute of Maranhão (Brazil) and the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon (Portugal). Building on prior collaborations, the initiative explores PD as a driver for community-centred practices and social innovation across distinct socio-cultural contexts. Through hybrid workshops, theoretical exchanges, and community co-creation labs, the Place creates dialogical spaces where knowledge, practices, and institutional experiences circulate between Brazil and Portugal. Participation is framed not as consultation, but as a relational process through which communities co-produce knowledge, cultivate autonomy, and strengthen collective capacities. By linking institutional platforms, research groups, and community networks, the Place experiments with how PD can sustain transnational solidarities and extend the temporal and geographic reach of the conference beyond its central site.

The Encounter - The Mobile Neighbourhood House on Wheels collaborate in Amsterdam-Noord to explore what it means to host place as a living, relational infrastructure rather than as a fixed site of intervention. Through a caravan and cargo bike that transform into temporary commons in public squares and marketplaces, De Ont/moeting — a neighborhood on wheels — creates low-threshold spaces where residents gather, converse, and co-shape the social fabric of their neighbourhood. The initiative experiments with arts-led, dialogical approaches that privilege trust, reciprocity, and collective imagination over predefined solutions. In a district marked by

social and cultural heterogeneity, the project repositions participation as an embodied and processual practice of hosting, where tacit knowledge, care, and informal solidarities become central. Rather than framing participation as problem-solving, the Place investigates how temporary commons can sustain longer-term infrastructures of co-ownership and relational commitment. In doing so, it extends PD by foregrounding the art of mediated dialogue and by treating place not as context, but as a fragile and mobile commons continuously shaped through encounter.

The Pasts and Futures of Latin American Participatory Design: Thinking and Making Participation from Where Our Feet Stand emerges from the trajectory of Rede Design & Opressão (Design & Oppression Network), a distributed collective of researchers, educators, and activists committed to critical and popular PD across Brazil and Latin America. Rooted in regional epistemologies and social movements, the initiative revisits the genealogies of PD through figures such as Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda, Augusto Boal, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, and Lélia Gonzalez — foregrounding liberatory pedagogies, embodied methodologies, and struggles against structural racism, sexism, and dependency. Rather than treating these traditions as peripheral influences, the Place positions them as foundational yet historically marginalised within dominant PD narratives. Through a hybrid, multi-site gathering across Brasil, the network creates a translocal space for memory, dialogue, and collective speculation.

Design Happening: Immersive Design Research Lab (IDRL), Downtown Long Beach unfolds at IDRL@Mosaic, the off-campus urban laboratory of the Immersive Design Research Lab, located in the Downtown Long Beach Design District (California). The Place explores how immersive, sensory design practices can cultivate embodied dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Through site-specific, participatory happenings, participants engage in unscripted, co-creative experiences that blur the boundaries between art, design, and everyday life. The initiative investigates “wonder” as a physio-cognitive and affective condition, one that fosters curiosity, attentiveness, and relational openness.

PDC Place: A Collective Envisioning of the Next Chapter of Community-Based Research in Central Kentucky. We Are the Change We Have Been Waiting for in Kentucky is initiated by the Community-based, Applied and Participatory Research Group (CAPR) at the University of Kentucky (USA). Rooted in long-term community-university partnerships, the initiative creates a collective moment of pause to reflect on trajectories of collaboration and to imagine more resilient futures for community-based research. Through dialogues, storytelling sessions, and speculative design exercises, faculty, students, and community partners share experiences of resilience and articulate the tensions that shape equitable collaboration — particularly in contexts marked by budget cuts, rising service demands, and political pressures.

Design Fiction for Peace arrange distributed workshops in Manchester, Ulster, Kharkiv, Espoo, Kaunas and Milan where participants explore how design and literary fiction can be used to foster empathy, dialogue, and sustainable peace in contexts of conflict. Drawing on peace studies and PD they work with place-making within local communities that both include active war zones and areas of post-conflict and non-violent tensions.

Placing through participatory design research unfolds at MUS-LAN - Wool Museum of the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã, Portugal), within the framework of the UBI Social Design Days and the DESIS Network. Situated in a mountain region marked by geographic isolation and structural fragilities, the initiative explores how participatory and speculative design can support social innovation in rural territories often marginalised within dominant innovation paradigms. Bringing together doctoral researchers, local communities, and international DESIS Labs, the hybrid session creates a platform for dialogue grounded in ongoing projects. Through shared reflections, collective mapping, and transdisciplinary exchange, participants interrogate how design might move beyond industrial and solution-driven frameworks toward more context-sensitive and relational practices.

2 Conclusions

This contribution has examined participation in Participatory Design through the lens of spatial politics and epistemic extractivism. By foregrounding place as a politically structured condition rather than as contextual background, we have argued that participation unfolds within infrastructures that organise visibility, recognition, and authority. When *situated knowledge* is translated into institutional formats without addressing these infrastructures, participatory processes risk reinforcing asymmetries in the circulation and validation of knowledge.

The PDC Places initiative provided an opportunity to explore these tensions within the conference ecology itself. Conceived as a decentralised constellation of place-based initiatives, Places sought to engage with existing networks, struggles, and forms of situated knowledge prior to and beyond the temporal boundaries of the main event. The diversity of initiatives demonstrated that participatory practices are embedded in heterogeneous political, economic, institutional, and territorial conditions. These conditions shape how participation is articulated, who is heard, and what forms of knowledge become legible within academic arenas.

Reflecting across this constellation, we observe that the Places did not simply apply concepts of spatial politics and epistemic extractivism but returned insights to them. For instance, several initiatives demonstrated that extractivism is resisted not through louder voice but through withdrawal, untranslatability, or ephemeral formats, challenging PD's habitual emphasis on durable outcomes. Others showed that spatiality operates not only as oppression (borders, segregation) but also as a resource for mobile, temporary commoning that evades institutional capture. These insights, grounded in situated practice, suggest that a spatially-attuned PD must learn to recognise when not to translate, when not to stabilise, and when not to centre — lessons that extend beyond conference design to participatory praxis more broadly.

Addressing extractive participation therefore requires sustained attention to the spatial and political arrangements through which PD operates. This involves examining how authority is distributed, how agendas are framed, and how institutional infrastructures mediate encounters between academia and situated practices, marking a set of shared concerns among researchers and educators who are critically engaging with the role of academia within broader systems of power [Abdulla in 23, 24]. Listening, understood as

an ethical and epistemic orientation, entails reflexivity regarding one's own positionality within these arrangements and an openness to forms of knowledge that may resist translation into dominant design frameworks.

Reconsidering participation through placeness ultimately invites a broader reflection on the discipline's conditions of operation. The challenge ahead for Participatory Design Community is therefore not simply to expand participation, but to interrogate the infrastructures that organise it. In this light, PDC Places can be understood as a situated inquiry into how this field might be reconfigured in response to ongoing struggles over knowledge, power, and territory.

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The Encounter - The Mobile Neighbourhood House on Wheels

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Abstract

Across many European cities, growing polarization and individualization coincide with the disappearance of spaces where different inhabitants can connect, belong, and build trust across difference. In Amsterdam-Noord, this challenge is especially urgent amid rapid urban transformation and social fragmentation. In response, Framer Framed / Werkplaats Molenwijk and De Ont/moeting—a mobile, social arts-based community house—join forces with researchers from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS, Civic Interaction Design research group) and the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AUA, Academy theatre & dance research group). Together they explore how hosting creative, radically participatory places can foster solidarity, social sustainability, and coexistence. As part of the PDC Places programme, De Ont/moeting and Werkplaats Molenwijk (Framer Framed Noord) will organize a series of creative and dialogical gatherings to investigate the delicate balance of hosting such places. Grounded in Participatory Design, Social Art, and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), the collaboration privileges emergent, process-based forms of agency and trust over predefined solutions. In doing so, it contributes to design research and practice by experimenting with mixed, arts-led methodologies that reimagine participation as an embodied and collective practice of living together otherwise.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design theory, concepts and paradigms; Collaborative and social computing..

Keywords

Participatory design, social art, dialogic art, reworlding, community development, commons, reciprocity, care, imagination

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1 Introduction

Amsterdam-Noord is undergoing rapid social and spatial transformation [11], marked by urban regeneration, migration, and widening socio-economic divides. While cultural institutions and grassroots initiatives provide important platforms, many residents still experience a lack of accessible, experimental spaces for belonging [12].

This local dilemma mirrors a broader tension in Participatory Design (PD): its tendency toward solutionism and designerly answers often overshadows the relational, tacit, and processual dimensions of participation [15]. What if PD aligned more closely with socially engaged art and community development—fields that can privilege process over product, commons over ownership, and questions over answers?

De Ont/moeting – Neighborhood on wheels positions itself at this intersection in close collaboration with Werkplaats Molenwijk (Framer Framed)—an established cultural anchor in Amsterdam-Noord with deep expertise in community engagement and artistic practice, part of cultural institution Framer Framed. It experiments with how PD can learn from the social and artistic domain, extending the contemporary participatory design agenda with an arts-led, situated approach that draws from dialogical art [1–3, 10, 13], and emerging frameworks such as Reworlding [4, 9].

Through a caravan and cargo bike that weekly transform into temporary commons in public squares and marketplaces of Amsterdam-Noord, De Ont/moeting provides a low-threshold space where residents can collectively create and co-own their neighborhood’s social fabric. It functions as a real-life laboratory for exploring what it means to host place: not simply to facilitate encounters, but to cultivate infrastructures of reciprocity, imagination, and trust. De Ont/moeting has been initiated by Professional Doctorate candidate Nadja van der Weide (AUAS & AUA) as part of her research on *The Art of Mediated Dialogue: Ownership and Dialogic working in Building Local Commons*.

2 Place description

2.1 Vision and Theoretical Grounding

The project addresses a central dilemma: while Participatory Design has opened spaces for inclusion, it often retains a bias toward solution-oriented thinking. De Ont/moeting repositions PD as a practice of hosting relational processes rather than producing outcomes. By integrating arts-based methods and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as a sustainable, community-driven approach that identifies and mobilizes existing local strengths, skills, and relationships to empower residents to drive their own development and create social improvement, it shifts toward process-based, commons-inspired, and question-led approaches. The project

contributes to PD by bringing sensibilities from the social arts—foregrounding tacit knowledge, embodied dialogue, and care—as essential to cultivating trust, reciprocity, and co-ownership as primary goals rather than side effects.

The project is grounded in several intersecting theoretical perspectives. From Reworlding Participatory Design [9, 14] it adopts the call to move beyond extractive participation and to design for plural, situated worlds. Relational trust as cultural commons [6] reframes trust as a fragile infrastructure enabling reciprocity and long-term commitment. Engaged pedagogy [8] situates dialogue and presence as central to learning across difference, while Pirate Care [7] foregrounds informal, often precarious practices of solidarity that resist bureaucratization yet sustain community resilience. Drawing from the Art and Solidarity Reader [5] the project treats art not as representation but as an infrastructure for collective imagination. Following the Participatory Design agenda of diversifying [14], it embraces multiplicity—contexts, actors, knowledges, and lifeworlds—ensuring participation sustains plural ecologies rather than enforcing consensus. Together these frameworks situate De Ont/moeting as a mobile commons where artistic, social, and civic practices converge to explore *how to host a radically participatory place?*

3 Collaboration and Methods

Developed with Framer Framed / Werkplaats Molenwijk—a key cultural anchor in Noord with deep roots in community art—De Ont/moeting collaborates with MOHA Collective, contributing performative and care-based methodologies; Building Conversation, offering dialogical art and radical listening; the Civic Interaction Design Research Group (AUAS), exploring participatory and hybrid civic infrastructures; and the ATD Research Group (AUA), advancing dialogical artistic research. Together with the participants and inhabitants connected to Werkplaats Molenwijk and De Ont/moeting, these partners form a transdisciplinary ecosystem investigating how artistic, social, and design practices can co-create spaces of belonging and solidarity.

Within this ecosystem, two ongoing projects have significantly shaped my methodological understanding: Fabric of Us and De Ont/moeting – Buurthuis op Wielen.

Fabric of Us—a quilting and storytelling project co-developed by social artist-researcher Nadja van der Weide and artist Hanna Steenberg and starting to collaborate with the textile community of Werkplaats Molenwijk—has revealed how reciprocity and ownership emerge through shared making. Participants increasingly articulate a deep sense of belonging: several have said, “we are a family now, so we should care for and after each other.” This desire to own the collective quilt, both symbolically and materially, exposes how artistic co-production can shift from participation toward co-ownership and shared responsibility. At the same time, it raises ethical and practical questions about stewardship—who gets to hold or keep the work, and how care circulates within and beyond the group. These experiences inform my approach to participation as an ethic of reciprocity, where care and responsibility become entangled with material practice.

Similarly, De Ont/moeting – Buurthuis op Wielen, a grass-roots creative mobile neighborhood house traveling through public

squares and marketplaces, has become a living laboratory for hosting the commons in motion. The project’s open, mobile nature attracts residents, NGOs, and even municipal actors who now approach De Ont/moeting to propose collaborations or initiate their own activities. This shift signals that belonging, reciprocity, and collective ownership are becoming more alive and self-sustaining within the network of relations. Yet, this also exposes another recurring tension: much of the responsibility and coordination still falls on a few shoulders. The ongoing methodological question—how to balance initiative, care, and distributed ownership—remains unresolved, offering a rich site of learning about sustainability and governance in participatory art and design.

Both projects show that participatory design, when led through artistic and community-rooted methods, blurs the boundaries between facilitation, authorship, and care. They have deepened my understanding of participation not as a one-time event or outcome, but as an evolving practice of maintaining reciprocity and belonging across time, materials, and relationships.

3.1 Ethical considerations

Inspired by Trust as Cultural Commons [6] trust is treated as the foundation of participation—cultivated through hospitality, care for dissent, and reciprocal accountability. The project actively resists extractivism and tokenism by co-designing with local partners, negotiating consent, and returning outcomes to the community, aligning with the Reworlding Participatory Design principle of relational responsibility [16].

4 Practical Overview

4.1 Encounters and Formats

1. We will further develop a Co-production project: Fabric of Us (quilting and storytelling) will be developed with Artist Hanna Steenberg, the textile community of Werkplaats Molenwijk and artist-researcher Nadja van der Weide to host sessions on belonging in the neighborhood, quilting as a means for fostering community, and ownership.

2. Dialogical practices: The collaboration partners (Mothers of North, woman home cooks that emancipate through catering work, AUAS, AUA, MOHA, Building Conversation and Ludosofici) will develop several dialogic dinner sessions to foster dialogue on ownership, reciprocity and care (and other topics that arise from the co-production sessions and the weekly sessions in the neighborhoods) with different tacit and academic knowledge groups at the table, to have curated food for thought dialogues.

3. We will organize weekly sessions in contested neighborhoods like Buikslotermeerplein, Waterlandplein, Molenwijk with De Ont/moeting and Werkplaats Molenwijk where process is key, and chosen topics, and outcomes are navigated together with the community we work with. The iterative nature will inform further steps to take regarding these sessions, and potential ‘conclusions’ or learnings to share at the PDC conference in June 2025.

4. We will organize weekly Zine making sessions in collaboration with social worker Bishrel Bolor around the topics of authorship, care and belonging in local creative places;

4.2 Conversation starters at PDC 2026

These four formats will enable us to develop conversation starters to bring to PDC 2026. Resulting from the formats we will bring the quilt as an ‘outcome’ product, but mostly as a conversation starter and visual storytelling document to reflect upon the topics of ownership, reciprocity and care together with other Places contributions present at PDC 2026 in Milan. Also we will share documentation of the dialogic dinner sessions that we will summarize (in a written reflection) and bring to the PDC 2026 at an organized dinner dialogue on hosting and fostering dialogue with local communities. This dinner will be cooked by local emancipating home cooks from Milan in collaboration with social workers from Milan working in contested neighborhoods. And lastly we will bring the Zines made after each weekly session as conversation starter for a panel discussion at PDC on topics that arose from the weekly local sessions with De Ont/moeting and at Werkplaats Molenwijk. We are open to further discussion of the format of this panel with the PDC places Panel to find the best way to learn from each other during this session.

4.3 Duration & Participation

- March – April 2026: we host weekly gatherings on Thursdays with De Ont/moeting and Fridays at Werkplaats Molenwijk with the community connected to these places: inhabitants, NGO’s and policy makers. – participants 10-20 per session, diverse in age, ethnicity, expertise, but mostly having a shared living environment.
- March – April 2026 we host two dialogic dinners. Maximum of 30 participants very diverse, with academic and tacit knowledge.
- During PDC 2026 in Milan dinner dialogue. Maximum of 30 participants.
- In Milan PCD 2026 panel conversation with the Zines. Big number of audiences can join.

- Mode: ideally all in-person for the safe space of the people at the table, but with potential to find online ways of sharing via podcast, digital zine, and online discussion platform.

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Make Your Own Table: Places of Collective Making

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Figure 1: The table: considering sketching as collective making[8]

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing → Participatory design.

Keywords

research through design, participatory design, collective making, materiality, tables, workbooks

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1 Place Description

In this PDC Places proposal, we position the table as a site for collective inquiry through participatory making. We propose a series of distributed local events, that center tables as both literal and symbolic spaces where participants may gather as existing publics (i.e., pre-formed groups) or as emerging ones, coming together in response to a shared call. Specifically, we will introduce a design provocation in the form of a workbook, distributed to each

PDC Place event, containing narratives, prompts, and instructions for creating a table. Through this provocation, we ask: (1) What possibilities do material practices around a table offer for organising collectively? (2) What tensions might they allow us to engage and question? (3) What might our engagements with tables render visible? We propose that experimenting with distributed reconfigurations of tables might allow us to think “in terms of shared participation, governance, and negotiation” [7], whilst closely attending to the embodied and material aspects of such gatherings, which might bring about expanded understandings of collective making.

Political and social life unfolds through shared sense-making around material and symbolic sites such as tables. As Hannah Arendt notes, “a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it” [6]. Extending this, DiSalvo argues that the table “is not just a matter of convenience, it is a presence that is constitutive; remove the table and the relations of those who sit around it are redefined, perhaps even collapse” [6]. Sara Ahmed describes “queer tables as communication networks”, both “a record as well as a recorder” [2]. Within the frame of Peace, Dialogue, and Coexistence, tables become powerful symbols for designing how we live together. The making of a table exposes how coexistence is mediated by shared objects and gestures—who is invited, how it is set, and what relations it enables. By engaging publics in creating their own tables, this experiment explores how design can foster dialogue through shared making practices. Designers often talk about wanting a seat at the table, and here we are experimenting with what it means to

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build the table together, enacting practices of resistance and care to imagine many possible futures of living together otherwise.

1.1 Previous Tables

As authors, we share an interest in tables. This proposal builds on Vasconcelos's week-long public programme (figure 1), investigating sketching as collective making in relation to a long table and a shared paper roll [8]. Reflections on how the table's material setup supported collective making, led to a series of prototypes of travel versions of the table, that extend participation by taking the programme to communities elsewhere. We extend this inquiry using the making of tables as a *generative* method to surface and negotiate commitments to collective practices.

Rodríguez Alfonso asks what counts as design when a table must sustain collective life [5]. This stance is informed by her work in community kitchens in self-built settlements in Caracas, Venezuela. In this context, the table mediates labour and more-than-human relations (soil, food, water), metabolising new practices (compost sorting, soil learning) and caring routines that keep the kitchen's body alive. The table becomes a device that invites collectivity, vulnerability, and sensory attention (see figure 2).

Wiczorek develops design workshops (as shown in Figure 2) to bring participants together around diverse material practices (e.g. collage, sketching, etc.) to collectively surface situated concerns and articulate new cultural, social, and political understandings [9]. Here, the table serves as a space for creating critical dialogue and to explore possibilities through making. Wiczorek further extends this through broader acts of collective knowledge-making through books and zines, expanding research engagements for wider participation [10]. For example, as shown in Figure 2, she has co-organized the ACM DIS zine libraries to extend how knowledge from community-based and arts-based research can be understood and explored in scholarly communities [1].

Finally, Andersen, DiSalvo, and Forlano bring expertise in designing participatory workshops that situate material making *in place*. Together, we explore how tables as both site and practice, can hold space for collective inquiry and relation-building, through "unfolding dialogical relations with materials" [4], generating situated accounts that highlight personal perspectives while generating collective insights.

2 Practical Overview

In practical terms, this work will unfold through a series of making activities centred on instructions, recipes and correspondence. This will combine in-person, online and asynchronous modes of participation, using a range of formats such as workshops and making circles, to engage a wide range of collaborators and distributed ways of doing together. To scaffold how participants build their own table, we will develop a design provocation in the form of a workbook. Created through correspondence by the authors, the workbook will serve as a flexible invitation to prototype one's own table, as a means to enact the commitments of a community, and provide a surface for gathering. We envision the workbook will provide an open scaffolding where participants can build their own *Place* and create their own situated experiences. In turn, each *Place* will be supported to co-create their own workbook, using formats

such as recipe and letter writing, to extend their responses via correspondence to the other *Places*. The resulting workbooks will be gathered as a collective reader, distributed as a print publication, presented online and at PDC.

2.1 Places

This proposal is aimed at researchers, practitioners, and collectives, interested in making-based approaches to community building. Existing connections will form the basis of these *Places*.

Wiczorek & DiSalvo propose hosting a *Places* event in Atlanta, Georgia, USA in partnership with the Fulton County Public Art Futures Lab, whose mission is to connect artists, technologists, and residents to foster collaboration and shared learning, and the Atlanta Interdisciplinary AI (AIAI) Network, which explores ethical, equitable, and justice-oriented approaches to working with AI. The event will be organized as an open call inviting local practitioners to explore AI resistance through practices of care, solidarity, and everyday making, using the table as a site for collective creation and conversation.

Rodríguez Alfonso will host two *Places*. First working with a group of women running a community kitchen in a self-built settlement in Caracas, Venezuela¹. Participants will create a living recipe book, braiding stories of the past with the future. The second *Place*, co-hosted with Vasconcelos at Hasselt University's Living Lab, will invite the audience to "domesticate the university", rehearsing hospitable protocols—who is invited, how care circulates, and how conflicts are handled— as making practices for living together.

As a member of Colombina Clandestina - an activist collective organising as a carnival block - Vasconcelos will build on previous co-creation workshops², to engage the material practices surrounding the music and costumes of the collective. Vasconcelos will also engage, Greta³, a feminist bookshop with an active community that gathers around regular events such as book clubs, lectures and workshops.

Across our *Places*, participation will be entirely voluntary, and attendees will be fully informed about the purpose and activities of each event. Individuals may choose how they wish to engage and may decline or withdraw participation at any time. We are committed to fostering an atmosphere of respect and care, ensuring that all interactions remain considerate and inclusive. Any documentation will be collected only with explicit consent and handled securely to protect participants' privacy.

2.2 Value to PDC community

This proposal contributes to the PDC community by offering a design experiment in the form of a *workbook* that facilitates collective reflection on distributed, asynchronous action through material practices and collaborative making across locations. In doing so, it contributes the workbook as an open-source artifact that other designers and researchers can adapt, reuse, and experiment with in their own contexts.

¹El Sinaí is a self-built settlement in Caracas, Venezuela. As part of her research trajectory, the author has been working with the women running a Community Kitchen there, cooking a healthy lunch for 60 neighborhood children every day.

²<https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz8j1mmssLp/>

³<https://www.gretalivraria.com>



Figure 2: (Left): Rodriguez Alfonso shows Soil table "Trust your gut: an edible exploration of Participatory Design Language" in PDC2024. (Right): Wiecezorek shows how design workbooks foster collective making and how informal exhibitions like zine libraries spread critical making practices.

Our second contribution lies in the synthesis and sharing of the tables produced across *Places*. After each *Places* event, the authors will collectively review images, notes, scans, and reflections from site-specific activities. We will develop a reader, or artist book, that brings together the workbook, documentation from each *Place*, and our thematic reflections together as one body of work. This reader provides insight into how the workbook functions as a participatory device for collective making within a shared public, while foregrounding differences and resonances across contexts. The reader will be shared both digitally and at the conference.

Through this process, the project results in an emergent constellation of *Places*, connected not by uniform outcomes but by shared commitments and simple instructions that are interpreted, enacted, and transformed locally. These connections support ways of designing, thinking, and being together *otherwise*.

By drawing connections between *Places* through their material approaches, the reader assembles repertoires of practical knowledge that center on resistance and collective making. As a reader, it also reckons with collaborative editorial practice as a way of doing research through design [3]. For design research, this project explores how material practices shape collective forms of knowledge production and the possibilities they offer for dialogue and exchange. Its contribution lies in exploring how to design otherwise—through the material practices of a distributed, asynchronous constellation of *Places*.

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Design Happening: Immersive Design Research Lab (IDRL), Downtown Long Beach

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Abstract

Design Happenings, a program of the Immersive Design Research Lab (IDRL), are experimental, participatory design experiences exploring embodied dialogue, wonder, and coexistence in Long Beach, California. The IDRL's off-campus location, IDRL@Mosaic, is situated within the civic and cultural hub of the Downtown Long Beach Design District (DTLBDD) and serves as a dynamic urban laboratory for immersive design research - where creative arts, design, technology, and public life merge. As a PDC Place, the IDRL@Mosaic contributes an experiential research program of Design Happenings to advance the PDC themes of Peace, Dialog, and Co-existence. The objective of Design Happenings is to design for "wonder", a sustained state of curiosity and rapt attention that facilitates deeper embodied participation [8, 9, 11, 18]. The IDRL is investigating the physio-cognitive state of wonder in two ways: as a precondition for more affective co-created experiences and as a tool of participatory design in which communities, technologies, and environments engender connected experiences of reflection, connection and meaning-making. Design Happenings, as places of inquiry through lived participation, draw on art "Happenings" created by Allan Kaprow as unscripted, site-specific engagements that blur the distinction between art and life [12, 15]. There are few methodologies, frameworks, or opportunities for situated sensory design inquiry. Design Happenings hold space for participants to explore immersive, sensory, and spatial experiences that nurture peaceful coexistence and shared awareness. The experiential research methodology and analysis framework of a Design Happening expands the scope of design in its role as a social and affective practice, capable of creating a situated commons of empathy and exchange.



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CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Collaborative and social computing; Collaborative and social computing theory, concepts and paradigms; Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design; • **Social and professional topics** → User characteristics; Cultural characteristics.

Keywords

Emerging methodologies, Experience design, Neuro-architecture, Participatory design

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1 PLACE DESCRIPTION

Design Happenings, participatory design events exploring embodied dialogue and coexistence, require a publicly accessible space and place to accommodate co-creative, participatory, sensory experiences of wonder. The off-campus location of Immersive Design Research Lab, IDRL@Mosaic, is a ca. 130m² (1400 sq. ft) space situated within the civic and cultural hub of the Downtown Long Beach Design District (DTLBDD). With this urban location, on the corner of the pedestrian "promenade," the IDRL@Mosaic serves as a dynamic urban laboratory for immersive design research, where creative arts, design, technology, and public life merge. As a PDC Place, the IDRL@Mosaic delivers a Design Happening tailored to the PDC themes of Peace, Dialog, and Co-existence. Designing for wonder by co-creating experiences works toward achieving a physio-cognitive state in which communities, technologies, and environments engender reflection and connection.



Figure 1: Design Happenings at the Immersive Design Research Lab at Mosaic – Long Beach, California.

1.1 Theoretical and Ethical Grounding

For participatory design to be effective, participants must first be mentally and physically prepared to share and collaborate. The state of wonder is both physio-cognitive and emotional, a catalyst for curiosity, empathy, and transformative insight [4, 7, 8, 11]. Aligned to the goals of experience and practicality and activated through a ‘process-constructive’ theoretical framework, Design Happenings are built on phenomenological and pragmatic philosophies and informed by an Imagism methodology [3, 23]. Originating as an early 20th C. poetic movement, imagism, as a design methodology, provides the theoretical foundation for designing experiences that evoke wonder through mental images, sensation, and narrative affect [3].

The Immersive Design Research Lab recognizes the participant vulnerabilities within immersive experiences. Design Happenings are designed for accessibility and openness first, offering low barriers to participation, emotional, and spatial safety [14, 21]. Ethically, the research foregrounds care when working with bio-sensing, emotional, identity, or psycho-physiological data. By shifting the research view from human *participants* to human *constituents*, we invest in shared outcomes and hold a fiduciary duty of trust [22].

1.2 Situated Context

The IDRL@Mosaic is an urban research space located in the Downtown Long Beach Design District (DTLBDD). The DTLBDD works

to make space for creative work and bring the value of synergetic innovation to invigorate the city. As a collaborative initiative, created by uniting creative professionals, community leaders, students, and educators, the IDRL's downtown site at Mosaic, on the corner of the pedestrian Promenade, provides both an open studio and interactive exhibition environment, hosting public workshops, installations, and design research - blending physical and digital experiences. Drawing on Allan Kaprow's "Happenings" (unscripted, site-specific engagements that blur the distinction between art and life), the PDC Places' Design Happening is a platform for design inquiry through lived participation [7, 12, 15–17]. In a time of tension due to technological transformation, ecological uncertainty, and social upheaval, a Design Happening is a social and affective practice inviting diverse participants to explore how immersive, sensory, and tangible spatial experiences can nurture peaceful coexistence and shared awareness - creating a social, spatial, and temporal commons of empathy and exchange [1, 9, 13]. Each Design Happening is composed of a number of "features" - immersive scenes, actions, or installations that invite sensorimotor engagement and provoke reflection. Initially co-created through a social investigative process, sensory stimuli opportunities (haptic, movement, sound, etc.) are central to each *feature* [1]. During each Design Happening, the features are touched, moved, modified and re-shaped through the pluriversal interactions of unscripted and spontaneous public experiences [Figure 1].

1.3 Target Participants

Design Happenings are developed to engage a broad range of participants, reflective of the diversity in the city. As a co-created experience participants include artists, civic leaders, creative investigators, dancers, designers, families, invited experts, local community leaders, multidisciplinary teams, partners, residents, scholars, tourists, and the global PDC network.

1.4 Core Explorations

The IDRL's ongoing research program develops and refines immersive, participatory methodologies that connect people through sensory engagement, creative technology, and design ethnography. Its downtown presence expands this mission into the civic realm, making design visible, accessible, and participatory. Embedded in the city, the *IDRL@Mosaic* fosters situated and unexpected community-based design research - embodying coexistence, belonging, and engagement. Design Happenings provide a new vehicle for community-based design investigations and co-creation.

1.5 Research Lineage

The Immersive Design Research Lab's Design Happenings are influenced by the ethos of Antonin Artaud's, demand for sensory, visceral experiences in theater and structured per the 'rules' of Allan Kaprow's 1950s and -60s Art "Happenings" [2, 17]. The research foundation for Design Happenings is built on phenomenology, pragmatism, hermeneutics, social, and urban theory [13, 14, 20, 23]. To create a Design Happening, themes are developed through an Imagist methodology - reimagining experiential design through visualized narrative images. The development of imagism as a design methodology maps to the writings of Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Amy

Lowell, and Ezra Pound. This work owes much to the extensive body of place-based, participatory, and game design research, aesthetic theory, as well as the emerging field of neuro- architecture [9].

2 PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

As co-created, participatory, situated, and world-building event designing for wonder, the PDC Places Design Happening, "...And Its Double" is a four-day event, April 9-12, 2026 [Table 1]. Hosted and developed by the *IDRL@Mosaic*, situated in the Downtown Long Beach Design District, and overlapping with the Downtown Long Beach Art and Design Walk, PDC Places Design Happening, "...And Its Double" benefits from a community of advocates and synergies with parallel events [Table 2].

2.1 Type and Number of Encounters

Estimated 25 - 40 participants per session, directly engaging over 200 people through direct experience; with a total reach of 1250+ through public documentation and sharing.

2.2 Tentative Program

Type:	Design Happening, "...And Its Double " Participatory lab / exhibition / active engagements / workshop
Timeline:	PDC Spaces Live Event, April 09 - 12, 2026 (Research and documentation, February 02, 2025 - May 22, 2026)
Location:	IDRL@Mosaic, Downtown Long Beach Design District, 130m2+ (ca. 1400 sq. ft)
Duration:	Four-day engagement exhibition, open 2pm - 7pm Pacific time.

2.3 Participant Logistics

Inclusive design is central to every Design Happening: free entry, a wheelchair-accessible site, and captioned materials serve this goal. As a partner and featured event in the Downtown Long Beach Alliance's Art and Design walk, the Design Happening, "...And Its Double" is promoted through established community event channels and media - and benefits from foot traffic for that event. Additionally, the experience is promoted through university, program, and collaborator channels for greatest reach. Open calls and invitations reach community collaborators, civic leaders, and creative professionals to ensure broad attendance and recognition. The location is easily accessible by public transport and two-hour free parking on location is provided by the City of Long Beach.

2.4 Sharing Outcomes for the Milan Conference

A sense of wonder is a sense of peace. The IDRL Design Happenings respond directly to the PDC 2026 call to ground participatory design in peace, dialogue, and coexistence [21]. By designing for wonder and sharing the authorship of experience across designers and constituents, Design Happenings recalibrate who has agency across collaborative, creative, and meaning-making activities. Outputs will include a short documentary, materials as an interactive digital archive, reflections on embodied coexistence compiled into an exploratory paper or visual essay, and presentation or installation at

Table 1: Design Happenings Timeline

Phase 01			Phase 02			Phase 03			Phase 04	
2025 05.04	2025 25.06	2025 26.06	2025 29.06	2025 11.10	2025 18.12	2026 14.02	2026 09.04	2026 12.04	2026 01.05	2026 15.06
DTLB Art & Design Walk (IDRL@ Mosaic Pre- Launch)	Los Angeles Design Festival Design Happening (The future is Design is Happening – Ripple)		DTLB Art & Design Walk Design Happening (I’m Bringing the Monsters)	Light Experience (Human Experience Design Interactions)	DTLB Art & Design Walk (Co- Creation: Calling for Doubles)	PDC Places Design Happening (...And Its Double)	PDC Places Submit Materials	PDC Milan Conference Begin		

Table 2: Design Happenings Program Structure

Phase	Description	Participants	Outcomes
Phase 1: Listening to Place	Site walks, sensory mapping, and dialogue sessions exploring the affective landscape of Downtown Long Beach [20].	Creative investigators, IDRL, Local community	Annotated images, field notes, sound recordings, reflective image-sketches
Phase 2: Co-Creation and Workshops	Collaborative workshops building “Features”—immersive installations integrating sound, and motion [5, 22].	Artists, Dancers, Designers, Community, Investigators, Invited Experts, Multidisciplinary teams	Artefacts, prototypes
Phase 3: PDC Places Design Happening	Public, one-time sensing event inviting participants to experience and contribute to the installations in real time [6, 10, 19].	Dancers, Designers, Open community (residents, tourists, families, and civic leaders)	EEG sensing data visualizations, live performance, multi-media documentation, participant reflections [4]
Phase 4: Reflection and Dissemination (past and current)	Documentation and storytelling of the process; online sharing and remote connection to PDC Milan	IDRL + global PDC network	Creative impact report, design-ethnographic documentation, design framework, sensory archive, short film

PDC Milan. Project materials will be co-created with participants and made accessible to those unable to attend physically, ensuring a meaningful contribution to the global PDC network.

3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Immersive Design Research Lab recognizes the psycho-physical vulnerability of immersive experiences. Design Happenings prioritize shared authorship and situated knowledge creation. All constituencies are informed and can express consent or denial to engage. The research around Design Happenings’ “lead with a give”, providing non-extractive experiences. Through these practices, the IDRL seeks to expand the domain of participatory design through engagements as ‘natural interfaces’ – making space for research constituents to be agents of co-creation.

3.1 Consent and Care

The IDRL follows principles of open research and review protocols emphasizing informed consent, emotional care, data reciprocity,

and consent withdrawal. The ethos of “come unprepared” invites authentic, unscripted participation, embracing the unexpected, offering agency, and viewing exploration as shared learning and coexistence [14]. As real-world, project-driven investigations, Design Happenings are un-scripted and unpredictable; yet even in this context, we hold our work to a high level of integrity and transparency.

Acknowledgments

The Design Happening at the Immersive Design Research Lab (IDRL) is a place-based, participatory investigation of design for coexistence. It creates conditions for peace through shared sensory exploration, for dialogue through embodied experience, and for learning through wonder. Situated in Downtown Long Beach, the Design Happening as *Place* extends the principles of PDC 2026 beyond the conference hall and into the lived fabric of the city, where design is both a method of making and a practice of being together.

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PDC Place: A Collective Envisioning of the Next Chapter of Community-Based Research in Central Kentucky. We Are the Change We Have Been Waiting for in Kentucky

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Abstract

As members of the Community-based, Applied, and Participatory Research (CAPR) Group at the University of Kentucky, we aim to strengthen collaboration between the university and local communities through co-created research, shared learning, and social change. While our members are deeply engaged in diverse community partnerships, we seldom have the opportunity to collectively pause, reflect, and imagine new futures. Our proposed PDC Place offers a locally grounded yet globally connected forum for reflection, storytelling, and speculative design. Bringing together community partners, faculty, and students, we will share experiences of resilience, discuss the challenges of collaboration, and envision infrastructures that sustain equitable partnerships. Through dialogue and creative exercises, participants will explore how participatory research and design can reweave solidarity and foster conditions for living well together. The insights and artifacts generated will inform CAPR's ongoing partnerships and contribute to broader PDC conversations on sustaining just and inclusive collaboration.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Empirical studies in HCI**.

Keywords

community-based participation, Kentucky, collaborative reflection, community partners

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1 Introduction

As members of the Community-based, Applied and Participatory Research Group (CAPR) at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, USA, our goal is to foster collaboration across the university and the wider community. Our work focuses on building long-term partnerships that co-create knowledge, drive social change, and support professional development while attracting and managing external funding.

While our members are deeply embedded in diverse communities and engaged in developing shared research agendas, we rarely have the opportunity to pause collectively, reflect on our trajectories, and imagine new futures together. Our proposed PDC Place seeks to create such moments: locally rooted but globally connected spaces for reflection, experimentation, and imagination. By bringing our Place to PDC, we hope to surface issues that, while grounded in specific local contexts, might resonate with challenges faced by communities around the world. Situating our work within the broader PDC community allows us to move beyond inward reflection and instead cultivate dialogue, exchange, and unexpected connections. In doing so, we align closely with PDC's theme of promoting peace, dialogue, and coexistence in a world increasingly marked by disconnection, fragmentation, and conflict.

We envision our Place as the first of a series of gatherings of community partners, faculty, and students who will share stories of resilience, articulate the challenges of collaboration, and speculate on what infrastructures and practices might sustain equitable partnerships in the future. In a time when social, political, and technological systems are increasingly designed to divide and fragment, our Place will explore how participatory research and design can contribute to reweaving the ties of solidarity and designing for living well together. Our initiative aims to engage community organizations that are navigating challenges such as budget cuts, raising demand for services, and even persecution. We bring a focus on co-design that emphasizes building a shared vision for collective inquiry during crisis.



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The activities in our Place will be structured as dialogues, storytelling sessions, and speculative design exercises, allowing participants to exchange strategies and resources while collectively envisioning more just and inclusive forms of collaboration. Importantly, this Place is not a one-time event: we will document and carry forward the outcomes to strengthen CAPR's ongoing community-university partnerships and contribute back to the global PDC network, sharing our reflections on how locally situated practices can resonate across diverse contexts. Our model is planned to be replicable to go beyond single project-based participation towards broader interdisciplinary conversations so we can create more resilient infrastructures together.

2 Place Description

The CAPR group was established in 2023 to foster collaboration among faculty and students engaged in community-centered scholarship. Since then, we have met monthly and organized workshops designed to explore community-based research practices collectively. Most recently, in Fall 2025, we hosted a symposium that brought together faculty and students to reflect on CAPR's trajectory and envision its future direction. Through collaborative activities such as group assessments and goal visualizations, participants identified two immediate priorities, which included establishing CAPR as a hub for community-based and participatory research across the university, the Commonwealth, as well as advancing policy and practice changes that promote research equity and social justice. This proposal represents a key step toward those goals by convening faculty, students, and partners from across the university to share experiences and imagine how we might sustain and scale these efforts moving forward.

As part of the proposed event, we will invite a purposefully diverse sample of our existing community research partners to join us for an afternoon of dialogue focused on how we can collectively amplify our impact within the communities we serve. Table 1 provides a partial list of the partners we intend to invite.

Bringing together stakeholders from diverse projects can substantially strengthen participatory research, refining not only project outcomes but also the participatory methods themselves. Cross-project engagement surfaces both context-specific challenges and transferable insights that isolated initiatives might overlook. Our approach builds on prior participatory design work demonstrating how research embedded across institutions and communities enables cross-pollination of methodologies, collective reflection, and the development of practices that are more resilient, inclusive, and scalable [2, 3]. Moreover, such shared visioning helps address power asymmetries and establish enduring systems and structures that can confront bigger issues and sustain impact beyond individual project prototypes [1]. Ultimately, this collective approach to reflection amplifies impact by fostering shared ownership, increasing the transferability of tools and methods, surfacing implicit assumptions through diverse perspectives, and building legitimacy among stakeholders, thereby increasing the likelihood that outcomes will persist and evolve beyond the lifespan of any single project.

3 Practical Overview of the Program

At least 4 faculty members (leads and co-leads of CAPR), as well as one UK PhD student and one UK postdoctoral scholar will be involved in the planning of the program, the details of which we anticipate are below:

- **What:** “A Collective Envisioning of the Next Chapter of Community-based Research in Central Kentucky”. This initial envisioning workshop will serve as a starting point for bringing together community-based organizations in and around Central Kentucky that work to support and amplify the voices, perspectives, and ingenuity of various communities in the Commonwealth. Through their partnerships with researchers at the University at Kentucky and in their own organizational work, the represented organizations will participate in:
 - Dialogues where they will be encouraged to share the ‘bright spots’ and ‘pain points’ in their current efforts to support wellbeing and thriving within their community.
 - Storytelling sessions through which participants will identify cross-cutting themes and build bonds and bridges within and across community-based organizational teams.
 - Speculative design exercises to brainstorm the ways in which existing and new research may serve as useful tools in their ongoing collective action and community work.
 - Creating a zine that will document our conversations, insights, and action items that emerge.
- **Who:** The program will be facilitated by the CAPR leads and co-leads, but we anticipate making invitations to 8–10 community-based organizations/nonprofits partners and suggesting that they bring with them 2–3 members of their organizations/nonprofits. In total, then, we anticipate that up to 25 participants from the community, as well as the UK CAPR leads and group members (therefore around 30–35 total, anticipating cancellations).
- **Where:** Marksbury Public Library in Lexington, KY. We are choosing this public library purposefully because it is easily accessible to the community. The location also has free parking, free Wi-Fi, and newly designed community spaces and facilities with AV/tech equipment and a maker space with a host of resources and materials.
- **When:** Over one afternoon (4 hours) in the Spring/Summer of 2026, when we will also provide light refreshments (coffee and cookies) for participants. This length of program is what is most respectful of our partner organizations' time, resources, and availability. Limiting the workshop to four hours enhances its accessibility and avoids extractive demands on participants, thus aligning with our ethical values of equity and inclusion. Additionally, we plan on reprising this Place each semester, to build iterative and cumulative insights, as well as a sustained community of practice.

4 Dissemination at PDC

At the workshop, we envision creating a community zine that documents and celebrates the conversations, insights, and creative expressions emerging from our gathering. The zine will serve not just as a record, but as a participatory artifact of the diverse voices,

Table 1: Partial list of invited community partner organizations.

Casa de la Cultural CivicLex + LFUCG, Youth Commission Educational co-ops: KEDC, KVEC School districts (Fayette County Public Schools, Jefferson County Public Schools) Foundation for Latin American and Latin@ Culture and Arts Frazier History Museum KET Kids Vote NKY Kentucky Civic Education Coalition & Lexington Public Libraries Kentucky Council for Social Studies (and NCSS) Kentucky Department of Education Kentucky Dream Coalition	Kentucky Historical Society Kentucky Equal Justice Center Kentucky Office of Refugees Kentucky Student Voice Team Kentucky YMCA Youth Association Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives Kentucky’s Secretary of State Office Muhammed Ali Center RadioLex Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement Solidarity City
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sketches, reflections, and provocations that came together to tell the story of our collective inquiry. In the spirit of participatory design, we hope to experiment with inclusive and multimodal ways of representation, mixing text, imagery, and visual storytelling to foreground the lived experiences and perspectives of our community partners.

We hope to collaborate with the PDC Places organizers to explore a presentation format that aligns with the conference’s themes. This might include displaying the zine as an interactive installation, offering printed copies for browsing and annotation, or creating a digital version that invites ongoing contributions and dialogue beyond the event itself. Through our zine, we hope to extend PDC26’s breadth, reach, and place-based community engagement by drawing on the epistemological foundations of participatory design research, which treat knowledge as situated, co-produced, and accountable to communities, and by advancing the PDC Places track’s commitment to grounding theory in lived, on-the-ground practice. In doing so, the zine becomes not only an output of our session but also an open-ended design material that continues to evolve and invites new forms of participation long after the conference concludes. As we continue our Place each semester, we anticipate creating new volumes of this zine to capture the evolving conversations centered at each session.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere gratitude to our community partners for generously making the time to participate in our PDC Place and for sharing their knowledge and experiences with us. We are also deeply appreciative of the leadership within our School and College for their continued support of this work. Finally, we thank the PDC Place organizers and the editorial team for their thoughtful review of this article and for the constructive feedback that helped shape and strengthen the development of this PDC Place.

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Ethics, Values and Culture Symposium

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Abstract

This half-day symposium at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering (IDE), TU Delft, explores ethics, values, and culture in design research and education across IDE's three departments: Human-Centered Design (HCD), Strategic Product Design (SDE), and Design for Interaction & Social Innovation (DOS). The program features four 20-minute presentations of four IDE researchers (Özkaramanli, Colombo, Secomandi and Singh) from the three departments, followed by Q&A and a final panel moderated by Tassinari, addressing Design Anthropology for Social Change; Design under Pressure: Exploring the Tensions in Design Ethics; Designing for Mutual Recognition and Human Freedom; and Designing Feminist AI: Towards Inclusivity and Empowerment. An accompanying exhibition of provotypes, developed by approximately 400 master students, creates a material dialogue with researchers. The symposium is conceived as a dialogic and generative space of encounter and co-creation, engaging researchers, educators, PhD candidates, and students, aiming to generate internal discussion within IDE, strengthening the dialogue across the departments on the ethical and political implications of its ongoing design research and pedagogy and connecting it to the international design community through PDC Places. By hosting this event, IDE creates a plural, reflexive space that acknowledges the entanglements of design with patriarchal, colonial, and anthropocentric frameworks while exploring embodied, feminist, and decolonial ways of knowing, practicing, and teaching design, inviting participants to collectively reimagine what it means to do and teach design otherwise.

Keywords

design dilemmas, design ethics, decolonizing design, feminist approaches to design, design justice

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1 Introduction

At the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering (IDE), TU Delft, design research increasingly faces the urgent task of responding to societal and ecological challenges that are as ethical and cultural as they are technological. Across our three departments—Human-Centered Design (HCD), Sustainable Design Engineering (SDE), and Design Organization and Strategy (DOS)—an important emerging theme is how we engage with ethics, values, and culture in design. These dimensions shape not only the decisions we make in research and practice, but also the assumptions that underlie them, helping us to design in ways that are transformative, regenerative, and just [12]. These dimensions are central to participatory and socially engaged design, which at IDE is understood not as a settled method but as a site of tension, negotiation, and critical reflection. Reflecting on ethics, values, and culture encourages IDE researchers and students to become more critical, reflexive, responsive, and pluralistic in their practices, which are core skills in our recently renewed master curricula featuring courses such as designing responsible AI, social design, design justice, and consequences of design.

Aligned with the 2026 PDC Places call, the symposium foregrounds participation as a negotiated, situated practice [14], attentive to power, conflict, and marginality. It asks how participatory design can contribute to radical re-imaginings of the past and future beyond modern, extractive, or techno-centric frameworks, and how internal participation and discourse-building across departments with rather different histories and design cultures can foster pluralistic, ethical, and reflective design research, scaffolding collective discourse-building across the three departments. The symposium aims to spark internal discussion at IDE, generate a shared intellectual ground on design research as meaning-making, and spark a conversation on its value, ethics, and culture, while connecting with the international design community through PDC.



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Within this broad inquiry, in this symposium taking place in spring 2026 at IDE TU Delft, four IDE researchers (Ozkaramanli, Secomandi, Colombo, and Singh) explore these questions through four intersecting lenses: Design Under pressure: Exploring the Tensions in Design Ethics; Designing for Mutual Recognition and Human Freedom; Designing Feminist AI: Towards Plurality and Empowerment; Design Anthropology for Social Change.

A final roundtable moderated by Tassinari closes the Symposium, reflecting on the pedagogies of socially engaged design practices. These four lenses – chosen to represent the variety of IDE research on ethics, values, and culture – frame investigations into the ethical, cultural, and political implications of design, both in research and in teaching, and provide the conceptual foundation for a PDC Place at IDE TU Delft. We imagine this Place as a threshold—a space where design research and education meet the lived practices, gestures, and struggles that shape ethical, cultural, and political life. Rather than a conventional academic event, this symposium will be a space of encounter and co-creation, where researchers, educators, PhD candidates, and students come together with practitioners and community partners to explore how questions of ethics, values, and culture unfold through design practice and pedagogy at IDE. In line with the vision of PDC Places, this symposium engages with questions that matter—locally and globally—asking how design research and teaching can respond to issues of power, participation, and plurality in situated, reflective, and transformative ways. Our aim is to generate an internal discussion within IDE, involving colleagues, researchers, PhD candidates, and students, and to interface this dialogue with the international design community through PDC. The symposium will be accompanied by an exhibition of provotypes developed by over 400 master students as part of their first cross-departmental master course at IDE, TU Delft. Provotypes [2] are ethnographically informed, technically functional artifacts designed to expose tensions and challenge existing assumptions. By making implicit conceptions tangible, they create opportunities for reflection and discussion, prompting researchers to question current practices and imagine alternative possibilities. These provotypes act as material provocations, entering into dialogue with researchers during the symposium and serving as the centerpiece of a collective knowledge production exercise. This format brings together the perspectives of design researchers and design students, fostering experimentation, reflection, and collaborative inquiry across the faculty. By hosting this symposium at a technical university such as TU Delft as a PDC Place, we aim to create a grounded, plural, and reflexive space that acknowledges the entanglements of design with modern techno-scientific, patriarchal, colonial, and anthropocentric frameworks, while experimenting with alternative, embodied, feminist, and decolonial ways of knowing, practicing, and teaching design.

By hosting this Place at a technical university such as TU Delft IDE, the PDC Place Symposium creates a plural and reflexive environment that acknowledges the entanglements of design with patriarchal, colonial, and anthropocentric frameworks while experimenting with embodied, feminist, and decolonial ways of knowing, practicing, and teaching design. The symposium embodies the PDC Places principle that participation is both practice and political stance, attentive to tensions and refusals that risk going unheard.

It invites participants – within the TU Delft IDE participatory design community and the PDC community at large – to collectively reimagine what it means to research, teach, and practice design otherwise, as acts of reflection, care, and solidarity.

2 Practical symposium overview

We plan a half-day hybrid symposium, held in person at IDE. The expected duration is approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, with around 50 participants, including colleagues, researchers, PhD candidates, and students. The session could be recorded, with the video presented at PDC and/or a selection showcased at the Provotypes exhibition.

- 14:00-14:10 Introduction (Tassinari)
- 14:10-14:30 Exploring the Tensions in Design Ethics (Ozkaramanli)
- 14:30-14:50 Designing for Mutual Recognition and Human Freedom (Secomandi)
- 14:50-15:00 Break
- 15:00-15:20 Designing Feminist AI: Towards Plurality and Empowerment (Colombo)
- 15:20-15:40 Design Anthropology for Social Change (Singh)
- 15:40-16:20 Round table & open discussion (moderated by Tassinari)
- 16:20-16:30 Wrapping up and opening of the exhibition

3 Design under pressure: Exploring the tensions in design ethics

Design is often celebrated as a creative problem-solving discipline. Yet the challenges we face today, such as migration, climate breakdown, social inequity, and the accelerating rise of AI, are too complex, systemic, and value-laden to be “solved” in any straightforward sense. When design operates under this kind of pressure, ethical reflection becomes not just relevant but essential. This topic examines what it means to design ethically in conditions of uncertainty, tension, and conflict, and asks how we might reimagine ethics not as a constraint on creativity but as a generative and critical force within design practice [7]. While questions of social and moral responsibility [8] have long accompanied the field from calls for socially responsible design to critiques of its pragmatic ethics; design ethics remains fragmented and often narrowly focused on individual responsibility. Too often, ethics is confined to personal codes of conduct, overlooking the broader political, institutional, and economic systems that define what designers can or cannot do. This research instead approaches ethics as an ongoing practice of grappling with moral dilemmas which are moments when competing values, perspectives, and responsibilities collide [3]. By exploring dilemmas as sites of reflection and creativity, design ethics [5] can help practitioners navigate complexity and act with both sensitivity and awareness.

Three central tensions frame this inquiry:

- Agency vs. Systems: Designers are urged to act responsibly, but how much responsibility is possible within the wider political, social, and economic systems that shape design? What does responsibility mean when agency is distributed across many actors and institutions?

- **Problem-Solving vs. Problematisation:** Design culture often privileges speed, action, and innovation, whereas ethical thinking demands slowing down, questioning, and confronting discomfort. How can critical reflection and problematisation stimulate creativity instead of causing paralysis?
- **Methods as Ethics:** Every design method—whether personas, prototypes, or co-design workshops—embodies a. assumptions about people, futures, and values. How do these methods shape the ethics of design practice, and how might we re-examine them to expose their political and moral effects?

By working through these tensions, this topic invites participants to rethink design ethics as a situated and generative practice, one that helps designers respond to unexpected dilemmas and act with care amid uncertainty. It asks how ethics can be defined from within design, while drawing from philosophy, anthropology, history, and cultural studies to enrich its understanding.

4 Designing for mutual recognition and human freedom

This topic explores how design can actively contribute to human freedom and social justice within emerging technologies, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence and service interfaces [6]. Drawing on service design, post-phenomenology, and the philosophy of technology, it examines how design choices shape interactions, relationships, and power dynamics between designers and users [9]. A central insight in this research is the concept of “coerced recognition” [10], where users—through interactions with interfaces—are subtly conditioned to perceive themselves as subordinate or “other” relative to the designers who craft these systems. These dynamics, often invisible, have profound ethical implications. Recognizing these mechanisms opens a space to design for liberation, envisioning interactions where designers and users mutually acknowledge each other, co-creating engagement and meaning. Possible avenues to foreground mutual recognition in technology-mediated contexts include:

- Speculative design of alternative interfaces that actively promote mutual recognition, such as AI front-ends that enable feedback loops and negotiate power dynamics in real time.
- Critical analyses of existing service interfaces, tracing where coerced recognition may be embedded and proposing design interventions to transform these relationships.
- Story-driven or interactive design fables that dramatize the transition from coercion to mutual recognition, making phenomenological experiences of users tangible in poetic or narrative forms.

Through these approaches, the topic emphasizes that design interventions are not only tools or products, but ethical and relational acts that can shape more inclusive, emancipatory, and just technological futures.

5 Designing feminist AI — Towards plurality and empowerment

Continuous advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) offer great potential to transform sectors such as healthcare, government, and

education. At the same time, such technological evolutions raise significant ethical concerns, particularly regarding the lack of plural and diverse perspectives informing AI development and application. This deficiency can perpetuate systemic discriminations and reinforce inequalities, shaping technologies that often prioritize profit over justice, inclusion, and societal well-being. This topic examines how a feminist approach to AI can challenge power structures and foreground empowerment, participation, and pluralistic perspectives in the design and deployment of AI systems [13]. Feminist AI goes beyond gender questions alone, exploring how technologies can be designed to empower marginalized and vulnerable communities, support equitable participation, and promote ethical and just practices. Central to this approach is data feminism, which emphasizes participation, embodiment, and pluralism in data and AI practices, enabling designers to create systems that reflect diverse perspectives and lived experiences. Potential actions to address AI from a feminist lens include: critically assessing existing AI systems and applications, identifying embedded biases, and exposing power imbalances and embedded forms of oppression; proposing design approaches and methodologies that prioritize empowerment, participation, and justice for marginalized and vulnerable groups; developing design interventions, narratives, or critical prototypes that exemplify feminist AI principles in practice. Through these activities, the topic adopts feminist perspectives to emphasize AI as a relational and ethical practice, where technical innovation is inseparable from questions of justice, inclusion, and social responsibility. Participants are invited to explore how feminist principles can shape the design, development, and deployment of AI to foster equitable, pluralistic, and empowering technological futures.

6 Design Anthropology for Social Change

Neighborhoods and communities are increasingly treated as test beds for sustainability transitions. This topic explores how design anthropology can inform energy and climate transitions, focusing on fairness, inclusion, and non-market value exchange, including reciprocity, gifting, sharing, and bartering, and considering perspectives from non-Western relational worldviews [4]. Much of contemporary transition thinking, policy, and design rests on neoliberal assumptions: that people are rational, self-interested actors motivated primarily by financial incentives. While partly true, this perspective sidelines the social and cultural dimensions of everyday life and overlooks alternative modes of exchange and cooperation emphasized in non-Western contexts [1]. Beyond self-interest and rationality, our behaviors, desires, and values are shaped by social relationships, such as with partners, friends, neighbors, and communities, as well as by diverse social, cultural, economic, and moral frameworks [15]. Design anthropology reframes local transitions by attending to the plurality of social relations and the myriad ways people exchange value beyond market transactions. Communities routinely share tools, gift time, barter skills, and reciprocate care; traditions from mohalla customs and time-banking to Ubuntu-inspired mutual aid illustrate how well-being often depends on relationships rather than transactions. In energy and climate work, this may involve neighbors co-managing solar energy, circulating surplus heat or produce, or organizing care networks during extreme weather events. A just transition, therefore, is not only about

technology or price signals—it is about relations, obligations, trust, mutual care, and recognition. This theme can be explored through three strands:

- Design for Social Relations: *How can design transitions strengthen existing social ties and create new ones that enhance trust, fairness, and mutual support?*
- Design to Diverse Reciprocities: *How can design enable gifting, sharing, bartering, and other non-market exchanges alongside financial mechanisms, including tariffs, platforms, and policies that recognize care work, local knowledge, and collective ownership?*
- Designing from Non-Western Perspectives: *How can design grounded in non-Western relational worldviews support community-led transitions, reinforce social ties, and legitimize non-market forms of exchange within infrastructures, services, and policies?*

Methodologically, this research theme combines ethnography with co-design, mapping value flows, prototyping services, and co-developing tools with residents and stakeholders [11]. The aim is practical: to produce concepts, pilots, and policy insights that help communities transition in ways that are equitable, culturally grounded, and relationally rich.

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PDC Place 2026 - Copenhagen

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CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Participatory design.**

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1 Description

Participatory Design (PD), which emerged in Scandinavia in the 1970s, has long been embedded in the Danish public realm, famous for its open administration and consensus planning tradition [8]. Participatory methods and stakeholder involvement are widely institutionalised across public administration [3], civil society, and private-sector projects. However, Denmark’s relatively closed social structure and the ethos of equality and sameness [7] can inadvertently foster exclusionary dynamics, in which participation often involves the “usual suspects” — those already aligned with dominant social, cultural, or institutional norms. Such conditions may reinforce the tendency among researchers to “work with communities of users that are immediately sympathetic and generally shy away from a political stance” [2]. As a result, participatory processes risk privileging smooth collaboration and consensus over contestation and difference, marginalising underrepresented voices. This normalisation of harmony sustains the status quo. It limits the transformative potential of participatory design—contradicting its ethical and political commitment to giving voice to marginalised groups and enabling social change [4, 10]. Engaging users with complex needs or stakeholders embedded in complex systems remains a well-recognised challenge in participatory design [5]. Such challenges cannot be resolved through generalised methods, as participation is always contextual [1], “adjusted to the contexts, aims,

resources, and opportunities that are present” [6]. PDC Places offers a particularly fitting format for addressing questions that resist generalisation, as it grounds inquiry in a situated, real-world context. It provides a space to explore how local participatory initiatives are broadening the arc of participation and experimenting with context-specific strategies, approaches, and mechanisms—moving beyond the reductive notion of “just add users and stir” [6, 9]. Through this lens, we aim to foreground inclusive practices that expand participation, create space for diverse viewpoints, and amplify the voices of those often marginalised or unheard. PDC Place Copenhagen will take place at Aalborg University, located in the South Harbour (Sydhavn) district - a polarised social landscape - between a working-class neighbourhood, which experiences stigmatisation and limited access to the social and economic opportunities available elsewhere in the city, and the newly redeveloped waterfront districts designed to attract middle and upper-income groups. The event will bring together actors from universities, the public sector and civil society, who, in their everyday work, extend participation in Copenhagen and Sydhavn beyond dominant groups. By creating a shared platform, PDC Places Copenhagen will make common challenges visible, enable the exchange of situated practices, and support mutual learning across diverse contexts. Over the years, the Service Design Lab at Aalborg University has had only sporadic engagements with local actors in the neighbourhood, such as Karen Minde Kulturhus, Sydhavn Recycling station and KBHFF. These interactions did not consolidate into long-term partnerships, resulting in a limited understanding of the area’s participatory dynamics. At the same time, the Lab has developed an extensive network of actors, including organisations such as Demokrati Garage and Cirka CPH, academic partners from other universities, and public servants from local governance, who engage with and promote participation from multiple perspectives. Bringing these two strands together, PDC Places is conceived as an opportunity to strengthen connections among those committed to advancing more inclusive and contextually grounded forms of participation in the area, while laying the foundations for future collaboration. We envision that such collaboration could be manifested in more student projects connected to the neighbourhood, writing joint project proposals that include a partnership between Aalborg University, civil society



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organisations in the area, and the public sector, and developing new formats that allow the local community to benefit from the resources available at the university. In this sense, PDC Places is positioned as both a space for mutual learning and a first step toward building more durable partnerships in the neighbourhood. In alignment with the spirit of PDC Places, we aspire to involve participants from a wide range of fields—including those working with children, immigrants, marginalised communities, and perspectives that address more-than-human participation. In the spirit of our work at the Service Design Lab, we aim to dedicate particular attention to designing an open and welcoming event that fosters genuine engagement across differences, moving beyond academic boundaries toward reciprocal learning.

2 Practical Overview

The one-day seminar will consist of the following parts:

- Welcome and informal gathering.
- Case Presentations followed by a Discussion: We will host two round tables of five participants each, who will share their situated approaches to participation with the audience. The speakers will respond to questions such as: What is the context of your work? Who are the participants involved? What challenges arise in creating meaningful participation? How are these challenges addressed in practice?
- Visual mapping session: To facilitate social interaction, gain access to participants' tacit knowledge about participation, and encourage discussion, we will lead a joint visual mapping exercise in which participants will be invited to respond to prompts by working with materials and artefacts in the space.
- Discussion: Following the presentations and based on the visual map created by participants, a shared discussion will bring these perspectives together, enabling reflection across cases and highlighting tensions, strategies, and possibilities.
- Lunch: We will close the event with a community lunch, allowing participants to continue the conversation in an informal setting.

3 Other considerations

The event will take place at Aalborg University, Copenhagen. We will ask participants in advance to record and photograph the event for dissemination purposes. Data privacy will follow the university's guidelines and regulations.

4 Outcomes

The event will be documented in video and photos, resulting in a 10-minute film that captures the atmosphere, key discussions, and key learnings. This documentation aims to convey both the spirit of the gathering and its main takeaways, extending the event's impact beyond its immediate participants.

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The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail

Participatory walkshop on mapping storytelling and care of the territory

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Abstract

This contribution presents The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail, a participatory walkshop developed by Agrourbana APS in Modigliana (Italy), exploring collective mapping and storytelling as situated practices of care in the aftermath of environmental disruption. Following the 2023 flood that altered the relationship between community and territory, the project addresses tensions between institutional risk management and lived ecological knowledge, as well as between recognised heritage and overlooked micro-histories. Building on long-term place-based engagement, the Narrated Atlas redefines mapping as a relational and performative process. Participants collectively walk the Cantico Trail while producing situated interpretations of place through writing and drawing. Mapping shifts from a descriptive act to an embodied and co-authored practice negotiating memory, visibility, and belonging across human and non-human agents. Rather than producing a comprehensive representation, the atlas assembles plural narratives open to revision over time, supporting care and re-imagination of fragile commons.

Keywords

Collective Storytelling, Situated Mapping, Walkshop, Participatory Design

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1 Introduction

The Narrated Atlas project is rooted in a long-term, place-based engagement in Modigliana, a small town in the northern Apennines, where **mapping** has been developed as a **participatory and relational practice** rather than a purely representational tool. Agrourbana APS was founded through this ongoing process of collective mapping, aimed at re-activating existing heritage by observing, narrating, and transforming it in contemporary and situated ways. In this context, mapping functions as a form of participatory inquiry: a way to negotiate memory, visibility, and belonging in a territory often marginalised within dominant urban and regional narratives.

Modigliana, with approximately 4,300 inhabitants, lies at the boundary between Romagna and Tuscany. Its landscape is shaped by the convergence of three valleys—Tramazzo, Ibola, and Acerreta—making it a place where water, geography, and human settlement have always been deeply intertwined. The town's layered identity emerges through a dense stratification of historical, cultural, and vernacular narratives, ranging from medieval power structures to artistic and industrial histories, as well as everyday practices embedded in the landscape.

After the **severe flood of 2023**, which triggered thousands of landslides and widespread damage, the relationship between the community and its territory changed radically. What had long been perceived as a shared resource became a source of fragility and uncertainty. This environmental trauma intensified existing relational tensions: between inhabitants and institutions, between expert-driven risk management and lived ecological knowledge, and between officially recognised heritage and neglected micro-histories. These tensions form the core relational challenges addressed by the Narrated Atlas.

In response, Agrourbana shifted from fixed cultural events toward adaptive and situated actions responsive to an unstable landscape. The Narrated Atlas emerged as a participatory design framework that resists extractive documentation, proposing mapping as a slow and revisable collective process capable of holding contradictions and multiple temporalities. In doing so, it addresses key questions raised by the PDC Places call: Who gets to represent a place? Which voices are amplified, and which remain unheard? How can participatory design practices support care, repair, and re-imagination of the commons after environmental disruption?

The Narrated Atlas Framework



Figure 1: The Atlas of Monte del Tesoro being used at the top of the ridge.



Figure 2: The Atlas of Monte del Tesoro being used at the top of the ridge.

In 2025, Agrourbana APS, in collaboration with the Municipality of Modigliana, launched the Narrated Atlas as a **travelling and open-ended workshop format**. The first edition, The Narrated Atlas of Monte del Tesoro, developed as a cyclical participatory design process articulated through four interlinked actions:

- **Mapping and Listening** – Conducted with local residents, historians, and associations to collect oral histories, local legends, and situated knowledge through interviews and field observation.
- **Materialisation and Sharing** – Translation of collected materials into a raw, geolocated map and audiovisual artefacts, making narratives accessible while preserving their provisional and open character.
- **Walkshop and Co-creation** – A collective walk guided by a writer and an illustrator, engaging participants of different ages and backgrounds. Through drawing and writing, participants produced personal and embodied interpretations of the mapped stories.
- **Curation and Restitution** – Collection, editing, and public sharing of participants' outputs in the form of a narrated atlas, later exhibited and distributed as a living and evolving artefact.

This framework operates as an adaptive loop: each iteration generates **situated knowledge through direct encounter** with the territory and remains open to revision in response to environmental or social change. The atlas is organised into small territorial fragments, allowing each section to be updated, reinterpreted, or even contradicted over time. Rather than offering a comprehensive or authoritative account, the atlas functions as a **flexible tool for understanding place as a dynamic and relational condition**.

2 Place description

The proposed Place, The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail, builds on the previous experience of the Narrated Atlas and extends the mapping process to a neighbouring path, **expanding the collective cartography** of Modigliana's landscape and contributing to an ever-growing atlas of interconnected routes. The Place unfolds along the ridge between the Acerreta and Tramazzo valleys, within

the municipality of Modigliana—a landscape characterised by dense and overlapping layers of history, culture, ecology, and lived experience.

The Cantico Trail traverses sites where different temporalities and narratives coexist and intersect. These include Bosco Studio, the forest retreat of a contemporary composer; the filming location of *Il Presidente del Borgorosso Football Club* (1970, starring Alberto Sordi); the remains connected to the Sikh Division's battles during the Second World War; the *balia di Pompegno*, a local site associated with practices of care and oral legend; and the Convent of the Friars, the original foundation site of Modigliana, overlooking the same landscape depicted by Silvestro Lega in *Donna nell'aia* (with 2026 marking the bicentenary of the artist's birth). Each of these **stops becomes a node within a collective and situated narration**, enriched both by the spontaneous contributions of participants and by the knowledge shared by local inhabitants.

The Place focuses on the third action of the Narrated Atlas framework—the Walkshop and Co-creation phase—bringing the mapping and preparatory work developed by Agrourbana into direct and embodied interaction with participants. Through writing and illustration, participants collectively reinterpret the mapped stories through direct bodily engagement with the landscape, **shifting mapping from a descriptive act to a performative and relational one**.

The project explores how collective mapping and storytelling can function as tools for care, repair, and re-imagination of the commons in the aftermath of environmental trauma. Walking operates here as both an aesthetic and political act: an embodied method for reactivating memory, negotiating coexistence between human and non-human agents, and confronting the fragility of the post-flood landscape. The act of moving together through the territory makes visible the entanglement of ecological processes, historical traces, and everyday practices.

Led by writer Sofia Assirelli and illustrator Serena Mabilia, the walkshop engages a heterogeneous group of participants, including residents, artists, researchers, and curious walkers of different ages and backgrounds. Together, they co-create a new narrated atlas through writing and illustration, intertwining multiple voices,

perspectives, and sensibilities. **Walking collectively allows hierarchies of authorship and expertise to loosen**, fostering a situated dialogue in which professional knowledge, lived experience, and informal observation coexist.

From an ethical perspective, the Place rejects extractive forms of documentation and adopts a slow, care-based process grounded in observation and listening. Contributions—whether sketches, notes, or shared stories—are treated as situated knowledge and become part of a plural authorship, rather than being forced into a unified narrative.

In relation to power dynamics, the initiative reflects on who is entitled to represent the territory and through which modes of narration. Rather than proposing a single authoritative account, the Place redistributes authorship through shared, co-authored storytelling. At the same time, it recognises that participation is uneven and that not all voices emerge under the same conditions. **Silences, absences, and fragmented contributions are therefore treated not as gaps to be filled, but as meaningful expressions of the social and ecological tensions embedded in the landscape.** These dynamics became particularly evident in the previous iteration of the project, *The Narrated Atlas of Monte del Tesoro*, which constitutes the foundational experience from which the Cantico Trail Place now develops. In that earlier atlas, political and ecological tensions did not appear as abstract categories but as fragments embedded in the terrain itself. They surfaced in accounts of heavier rains and recurring landslides affecting places such as Ca' Maioli, where climate change is experienced as soil instability and agricultural uncertainty rather than statistical projection. They emerged in seasonal rituals such as *lom a mêrz*, when pruning residues were collectively burned to welcome spring, revealing a shared ecological calendar now at risk of fading. Subtle agrarian hierarchies were recalled through gestures as simple as hanging a white sheet to signal the landowner's arrival, while forgotten infrastructures like the rural *Balie* spoke of informal systems of coordination that once sustained dispersed communities. The atlas also traced the memory of extractive ambitions—deep oil explorations that briefly pierced the mountain without leaving development behind—and recalled how a fascist decree in 1923 shifted the regional border, redrawing belonging through administrative power. Finally, resistance was inscribed in meadows and parish houses: in the retreat of partisans through the valley and in the protection offered by Don Beccatini at Santa Caterina. Through these layered fragments, the Monte del Tesoro Atlas revealed a territory shaped not only by geography, but by care, conflict, fragility, and acts of quiet defiance.

By building upon this previous experience, the Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail extends the same care-based and plural approach, situating the new walkshop within a continuity of practice while remaining open to new tensions, voices, and environmental transformations. In doing so, the Place embodies the PDC 2026 themes of power, place, and pluralities of participation. Walking, drawing, and listening emerge as more-than-human modes of participatory design, where design takes place through coexistence, attention, and care rather than through predefined outcomes or stable representations.

3 Practical overview

The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail will take place over two days in spring 2026. The Place is conceived as an open and adaptive walkshop, with activities unfolding after submission and remaining responsive to participants and environmental conditions.

The Place is open to approximately 10–40 participants of different ages and backgrounds. No prior training is required. Activities will consist of collective walking along the Cantico Trail, with moments of listening, discussion, and individual or collective writing and illustration guided by a writer and an illustrator. A certified hiking guide will ensure safety along the route. Participants will receive a notebook and materials. All contributions will be collected for documentation, curated into the Narrated Atlas, and returned to participants. Ethical participation is ensured through informed consent and the right to withdraw contributions at any time.

Outcomes and PDC presentation:

The collected materials will form *The Narrated Atlas of the Cantico Trail*, to be printed and shared publicly as part of Agrourbana's ongoing mapping practice. For the PDC conference, the atlas will be presented alongside selected notebooks and visual documentation, potentially through a large-scale narrative map installation.

Rather than showcasing a finished artefact, the presentation will emphasise the processual and relational nature of the Place. Through this contribution, Agrourbana aims to engage the PDC community in a broader discussion on how participatory design can emerge from small, situated, and interdependent acts—where design becomes a collective practice of care, negotiation, and adaptation in response to environmental and social change.

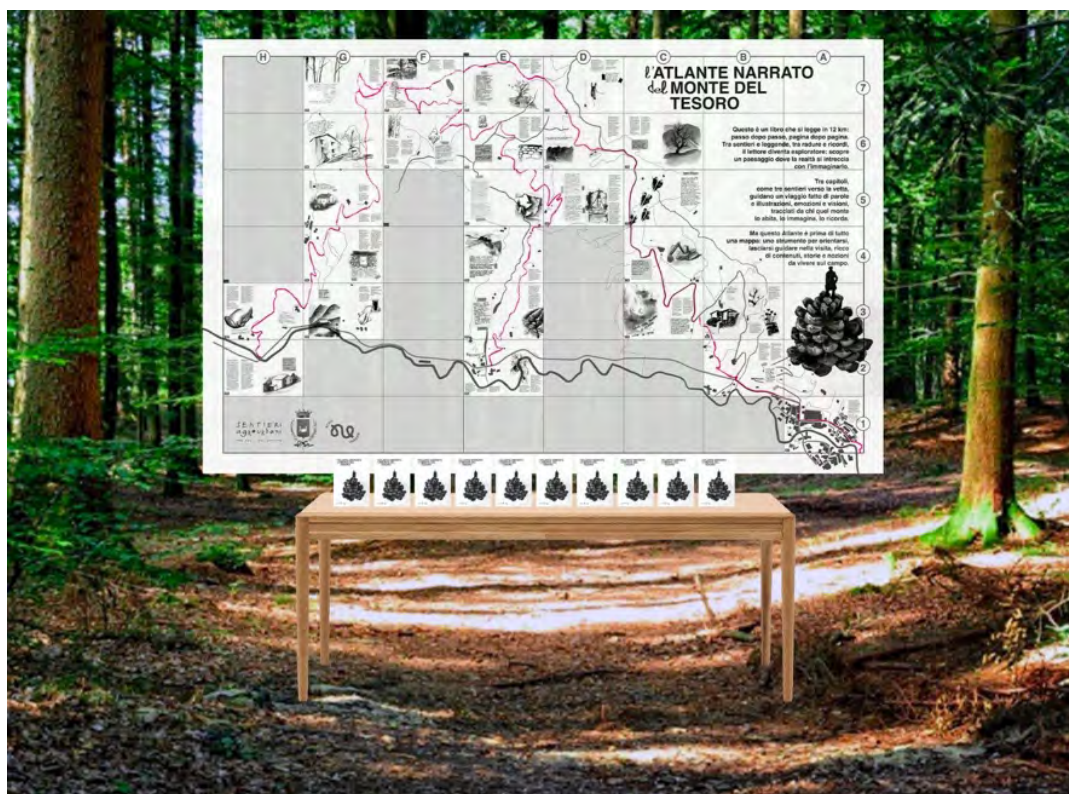


Figure 3: Mock-up of the information stand about the Atlas of Monte del Tesoro

Re-Commoning the Rural

Holding Space for Dialogue on the Insurgent Power of Commons in Rural Areas

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Abstract

“Re-commoning the Rural” explores how participatory design can support existing commoning practices that foster more inclusive, ecologically and economically sustainable futures in the rural mountain areas of Trentino-South Tyrol. In response to ongoing challenges such as depopulation and the decline of services and cultural activities, the initiative builds on local efforts like BASIS Vinschgau-Venosta—a social activation hub situated in a reclaimed military barrack in the Alps. In collaboration with BASIS, the PDC places proposal takes the form of a one-day event designed to support collective, situated dialogue and hands-on experimentation among local actors, including organizations, designers, residents, researchers, and activists on the possibilities offered by commoning practices for supporting more livable futures for rural communities. Through the exchange of knowledge and reflection on existing collaborative initiatives and participatory design approaches, methods and tools, the event will explore how participatory design might concretely support existing commoning practices that are reimagining rural life—fostering ways of living together, both among humans and with more-than-human others.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design processes and methods; Participatory Design.

Keywords

Participatory Design, Commoning, Rural areas

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1 Rural areas

Rural areas are fundamental to livable and sustainable futures for all people. Despite this, design, planning and policy debates on

sustainable futures have often concentrated on cities on the consideration that the future will be urban. In these debates, “the rural” has often been involved to the extent it supports “the urban” while rural villages and their communities have too often been left to their own devices [1]. Many rural communities today remain locked in a “circle of decline”. Low population density increases the costs and complexity for providing services and opportunities to rural communities which are increasingly concentrated in urban centers [2]. This reduces the attractiveness for people to live and work in rural areas and exacerbates the feeling of remoteness and social exclusion of rural communities. The result is a growing out migration of rural inhabitants, especially of women and young people [3]. At the other end of the spectrum exists the problem of overtourism which diminishes the quality of life for both human and more-than-human rural inhabitants [4].

Although the Trentino-South Tyrol region has managed to maintain a general vitality and livability of rural, mountainous areas, the region is also affected by these trends. Youth out-migration, lack of services (e.g. schools), cultural activities and opportunities for its inhabitants are matters of concern for people living in mountain villages.

In this situation, interest and experimentation with commoning as a participatory design practice in rural areas are emerging locally to address the needs and desires of rural inhabitants for the future of their villages. Examples of this renewed interest is for instance the Rural Commons Festival that took place in Trentino in 2021 and which explored how collective rural practices can contribute to more inclusive, self-generating communities that care for the human and more-than-human inhabitants in rural territories, their spaces, resources and services (<https://www.ruralcommonsfestival.com/>). Another example is the Upper Vinschgau citizen cooperative working on strengthening local cycles and social cohesion towards more ecologically and socially sustainable futures. In the same area, is also found the BASIS Vinschgau-Venosta a Social Activation hub, developed by reclaiming an ex-military barrack and transforming it into a rural common which focuses on the participatory imagination and mobilization of rural futures with focus on the areas of economy, culture, education and social affairs (<https://basis.space/en/>).

Starting from this local interest, “Re-commoning the rural” aims to open a dialogue on ways in which commoning practices can support moving towards more solidarity-based and ecologically and economically sustainable futures for rural mountains area in Trentino-South Tyrol and how participatory design can support this transition. While participatory design is increasingly spreading at an institutional level (e.g. local and national governments) with the

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ambition to support the involvement of people in innovation and urban and rural transformations, we see the need to reconsider how as participatory designers we can support courageous and caring citizens and groups which are already trying to create commoning practices as spaces for co-existence and solidarity in their everyday lives. Rooting the conversation in the alpine mountain areas, it is our intention to explore together with local commoners how participatory design, its approaches and tools could support them in their struggles to care for their commoning practices, each other and the vitality and wellbeing of rural populations more generally. Such practices are notoriously understaffed, under resourced and often too little valued by local governments as key activities supporting the cultural and social life and wellbeing of rural communities.

Towards this end, we propose to organize a one-day event in Silandro, in the Vinschgau-Venosta valley co-created with and embedded in the ongoing commoning practices of BASIS. Together we aim to hold a space for careful dialogues and exchange on the possible “insurgent power of commons” for supporting living together between humans and more-than-humans in rural, mountain areas in times of increasing separation between people and with their environment [5]. Bringing together local inhabitants, organizations, activists, designers and other interested actors around this matter of concern, we will together discuss commoning in rural areas, as “freedom-in-connectedness” other than in “separation” [5] exploring how commoning practices can emerge, develop and be sustained in rural areas. We will explore what role participatory design can play in all this with the intention to develop ideas and concrete actions for *re-commoning* the rural in the region and beyond.

2 Basis Vinschgau-Venosta as rural commoning practice

BASIS is a local Social Activation Hub located in Silandro-Schlanders a municipality in the Venosta-Vinschgau valley in the North-East of Italy. The hub was created by reclaiming a disused barracks for developing a space for working on the future of the region in relation to culture, economy, education and much more. In 2019, the space opened and has grown year by year ever since. Today, BASIS hosts several projects, ranging from Residency programs for musicians, artists, researchers, designers, technologists, and other interested practitioners to initiatives focusing on sustainability. In addition, it is a co-working and social space open to both local and international people. The increasing experience of BASIS makes it a key example of collaborative rural regeneration and rural commoning in the region and beyond. It is now able to share its expertise with others to support various realities in exploring, engaging with, and developing rural collaborative and commoning practices.

3 Re-Commoning the rural Event

In discussion with BASIS, we identified one of their recurring events named *All in!* as a context for activating the local dialogue “Re-commoning the rural”. Twice a year, *All in!* brings together the community of coworking spaces located in the villages of Schlanders, Mals and Naturns and supported by BASIS. In the event,

the co-workers, including creative practitioners, software developers and other freelancers, have the opportunity to meet each other, exchange about ongoing activities, explore collaboration opportunities and develop new project ideas while continuing to imagine the future of the rural community. The *All in!* event in March 2026, will become the opportunity for inviting co-workers and other interested local actors to explore together the state of commoning practices in rural areas in the region and imagine how they can contribute to livable rural futures at a local level. Bringing together the ongoing interest of Basis in commoning practices and unibz focus on participatory design, the event will be approached as an experimental and collaborative space for co-exploring and co-imagining concrete ways in which participatory design can support existing collaborative and commoning practices in rural areas while imagining new ones and how to set them up.

The event will take place over one day and include a keynote lecture, a community lunch, hands-on activities. All the activities will open participatory design concepts (e.g. mutual learning, commoning etc.) for participants to use as tools for imagining commoning practices in rural areas. The day will kick off with a welcome session and an introduction to PDC Places followed by a presentation by Bianca Elzenbaumer –feminist design researcher and founding member of the design practice Brave New Alps and the community academy La Foresta in Rovereto (IT). The presentation will delve into commoning and participatory design practices drawing from her practice in the region and will be integrated with inputs from the authors on participatory design. This will be followed by a community lunch which will be the opportunity for more informal exchange, convivial moments of collaboration and networking between participants. The lunch will also serve as an icebreaker between participants that later will exchange and collaborate in a workshop setting. In the hands-on workshop participants will together explore what and how participatory design concepts and approaches could support caring for and nourishing commoning practices in rural areas and how. Participants will be provided with inputs on key participatory design concepts and approaches and supported in developing posters that represent their vision for “re-commoning the rural”. At the end of the day, participants will present the results of the workshop and engage in a conclusive discussion.

The event expects the participation of approximately 20 people, in alignment with the budget we have secured through the Faculty of Design and Art at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

The documentation of the event and its results –envisioned to take the form of zines– will be made available to participants and presented during the PDC days in Milan to support the discussion on how participatory designers can humbly contribute with their practices and approaches to existing commoning practices in the rural. It will provide concrete insights into how as participatory designers we can support commoning practices in the rural as spaces of resistance, care and solidarity able to challenge power relationships between rural and urban and create spaces of coexistence.

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The Pasts and Futures of Latin American Participatory Design: Thinking and Making Participation from Where Our Feet Stand

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Abstract

The contributions of Latin American peoples, culture, science, research, and practice to Participatory Design urge recognition, summary, documentation, and sharing in Latin America by Latin Americans. Brazil is a significant place for affirming this identity, given its historical lack of self-identification as Latin American, in contrast to the inevitable other-identification as Latin American. This proposal stems from the research and practice of Rede Design & Opressão (Design & Oppression Network) conducted in Latin America and its diaspora. The proposed PDC Place seeks to reflect on and expand participatory design in Latin America, emphasizing design as a political, pedagogical, and aesthetic practice of freedom. Organized simultaneously as a hybrid event in Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba, and connected online to other regions, the event will include conversation circles, collective meals, and a collaborative workshop culminating in a visual collage that answers this question: What does Latin American participatory design mean? Rooted in care, listening, and consent, this event aims to strengthen ties between universities and social movements, decolonize participatory design, and make visible Southern perspectives by exhibiting the collage at PDC 2026 in Milan, Italy.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Interaction design; Interaction design process and methods; Participatory design.

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decolonization, critical pedagogy, Latin America

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1 PLACE DESCRIPTION

This proposal stems from the Rede Design & Opressão (Design & Oppression Network, D&O) trajectory, a collective that has brought together researchers, educators, and activists interested in critical, popular, dialogical, and participatory design practice [1-3]. Grounded in Latin American epistemologies, D&O understands design as a contested field shaped by power relations and the possibility of resistance. In this, design can either be a practice of oppression or a practice of freedom—a political and educational process through which people learn together and collectively strive to transform the material and symbolic conditions of life [2].

Formed in the aftermath of PDC 2020, held in Manizales, Colombia, D&O sought to fill the gap left by welfare-oriented, neoliberal, or agonistic forms of participation that did not work the same way in Latin America. Latin America has a tradition of popular participation in government and social movements based on conscientization, conflict, and reality transformation, theorized by thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Orlando Fals-Borda, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, and Lélia Gonzalez, who, although not always acknowledged, have made significant direct and indirect contributions to participatory design.

Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy and his culture circle method were very influential in the early years of Scandinavian participatory design [4-6]. Lesser known but equally influential is Orlando Fals-Borda, the creator of the participatory action research framework and the concept of *sentipensar* [7]. Augusto Boal, through the Theatre of the Oppressed, proposed participatory methodologies based on bodily experimentation and collective creation, which inspired performative approaches in design based on forum theater and other techniques [8-12]. Álvaro Vieira Pinto, while reflecting on technology and society, anticipated debates on autonomy and dependency that were later taken up by decolonizing participatory design initiatives [13]. More recently, researchers have revealed Lélia Gonzalez’s relationship with social design and design in partnership in Brazil [14]. In discussing the construction of *Amefrican* identity and denouncing structural forms of racism and sexism, Gonzalez offers key insights for conceiving a social design rooted in Black, feminist, and Latin American experiences.

While recovering the antecedents of Latin American participatory design, D&O also experimented with new theories and practices for contemporary participatory design. For instance, a relational ethics for design [15], a participatory design school for cooperating with social movements [16], and framing liberation as a project [17]. By revisiting the genealogies of participatory design in Brazil and Latin America, the Network seeks to recover the historical role of liberatory pedagogies, popular methodologies, and alliances between design and social movements. This reconstruction is not nostalgic but affirmative: it acknowledges that, in contexts of inequality and structural violence, design can only be transformative if it is committed to social justice, to confronting oppression, and to collectively imagining dignified futures [10, 18].

Against this existential backdrop, this event will create a temporary space for coexistence, reflection, and creation inspired by the Brazilian, Latin American, and Global South perspectives on participatory design. In dialogue with PDC 2026 themes, the event will explore the pluralities of participation from the Global South, especially from Brazil, questioning the hierarchies of knowledge and the Eurocentric centrality that still structures the field. Thus, this PDC Place will be a gesture of listening and articulation among the experiences of D&O, the affections and struggles that sustain it, and the practices that take shape in the margins and interstices, revealing other ways of doing and thinking design.

2 PLACE OVERVIEW

The proposed Place takes the form of a hybrid and distributed gathering, held simultaneously and in person in the cities of Rio de Janeiro (ESDI-UERJ) and Curitiba (UTFPR), and connected online to other locations where Rede Design & Opressão operates — Belém (Pará, Brazil) and Recife (Pernambuco, Brazil). This choice reflects the network’s decentralized structure, organized as a distributed collective with no fixed headquarters, whose strength lies in the territorial plurality of its members. The hybrid, multi-site format is not merely a logistical solution but a political and pedagogical decision: it allows the gathering to engage, in a situated way, with the different contexts and voices of the Network, while also enabling participation from individuals and collectives across Brazil and Latin America. In this way, the Place embodies the idea of “thinking

and making participation from where our feet stand” while creating an open space for translocal listening and dialogue.

The meeting will last two days, scheduled for March 2026 (TBA), in alignment with the proposed schedule for the Places and the academic calendar of Brazilian universities. The first day will be devoted to creating a shared space of memory and listening, bringing together experiences and trajectories that intersect participatory design in Brazil and Latin America. This moment will include conversation circles, audiovisual exchanges, and experience reports. The aim is to look at the past and future of participatory design, recovering Brazilian contributions to the field through the work of Rede Design & Opressão.

The second day will focus on collective creation. Building on the discussions of the first day, participants will be invited to co-create a collage about Latin American participatory design. This process will combine moments of dialogue with graphic experimentations, performances, and collective writing exercises inspired by methodologies previously developed by Rede Design & Opressão, such as Theater of the Techno-Oppressed workshops [9, 11], (Anti)Dialogical Letters [19], cultural synthesis [20], and Ciranda [21]. These collective dynamics will be carried out in sessions seeking to raise awareness and experiment modes of critical thinking/doing thought bodies, artifacts, and practices rooted on concepts like conscientization and popular education [22], among others. The idea is that the collage serves as a prompt for debate, a visual synthesis, as well as allowing for emerging expressions from participants, enabling the incorporation of multiple voices, gestures, and languages. Each location will make one physical collage, which will be exhibited at PDC 2026 as a digitally printed copy. Online participants will create a virtual collage using a digital board.

40 to 60 people are expected to participate in the in-person activities, including members of the Rede Design & Opressão, invited researchers, students, and activists from partner collectives. All activities will be broadcast online to enable participation from people and groups in other regions of Brazil and around the world, thereby expanding the discussion’s reach to a much larger audience.

Logistically, each venue will have dedicated spaces and support infrastructure for projection, documentation, and remote interaction. The use of simple, accessible materials — paper, fabrics, paints, and prints — is part of the event’s methodology, which understands the act of design as an embodied and convivial practice. Likewise, to facilitate online participation in the creative workshop, digital tools that enhance interaction will be utilized. The collective lunch is conceived as a moment to encourage local exchanges, recognizing the shared meal as a space of connection and affection. In addition to relationship-building, this moment is recognized as a necessary moment of openness, when interests and other dimensions of the participants’ lives can manifest themselves in another dynamic, extending the topics proposed in the workshop.

The expected outcomes go beyond the production of exhibition materials. The Place aims to strengthen ties between universities and social movements within the Rede Design & Opressão, encouraging the continuation of exchanges and projects across the network’s various locations and partners. The main outcomes will be shared during PDC 2026 in Milan in the form of a wall or hanging exhibition, where Latin American voices can be heard, as well as their methodological and epistemological insights.

Table 1: Activity Schedule

Day	Activities	Objective
Day one In-person in the cities of Curitiba and Rio de Janeiro Hybrid format for participants from other locations	Opening Circle / Inaugural Conversation Conversation Circle: Thinking from Where Our Feet Stand — The Origins of Participatory Design from Brazil Community Lunch Conversation Circle: Participatory Design in the Brazilian Context — Local Experience Reports	To reflect on and expand our collective understanding of Participatory Design from the perspective of the Brazilian/Latin American/Global South reality
Day two In-person in the cities of Curitiba and Rio de Janeiro Hybrid format for participants from other locations	Collaborative Workshop on what Latin American participatory design means? Community Lunch Reflective Session for Synthesis and Dialogue	To produce visual and textual representations of the reflections developed on the previous day.

Finally, the event will be conducted with ethical and relational care, ensuring informed consent for the use of audiovisual records, collective recognition of authorship, and a commitment to mutual care and accessibility practices. Thus, the Place will serve as both a moment of reflection and experimentation on participatory design and a practical demonstration of its principles: cultivating listening, sharing, and co-authorship as foundations for imagining other ways of living and designing together.

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Design Fiction for Peace

Participation empathy and place in peacebuilding and social cohesion

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Abstract

In these distributed workshops and exhibition, we examine fiction as a design method for the creation of service and civil society concepts, creating the conditions for empathy and dialogue in the context of conflict and peace. We explore how ideas emergent in design fiction, peace studies and peacebuilding practice can be applicable to participatory design practice and examine ways that these ideas can be applied to locations (places) around Europe that are experiencing different phases of violent conflict. Our hope is to

develop empathic appreciation within communities—by design—to reduce the polarizing effects of ‘othering’ and promote the conditions for peaceful, collective continuance.

Keywords

empathic design, civil society, peacebuilding, design fiction, literary fiction

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1 CONTEXT

In response to the PDC Conference *Peace, Dialogue, Coexistence* and to the theme of ‘How do we acknowledge and engage with conflict, dispute and negotiation in participatory design processes?’ our series of distributed workshops and final exhibit of work at PDC 2026 in Milan aims to explore how we can use the power of both design fiction and literary fiction to understand ‘others’ (who may be ‘enemies’) and to develop empathic concern for each other to encourage enduring and positive peace.

Our work is informed by ground-breaking work in peace studies [1], peacebuilding practice [2, 3 & 4] and civil society and [5] which acknowledge that the creation of long-standing, durable conditions of peace requires the enrolment of individuals and organisations at all levels of society—the so-called ‘top’, ‘middle’ and ‘bottom’ tiers of society [2]. Furthermore, we identify a possible gap in the social design and participatory design literature in applying these peacebuilding frameworks to the work of social design and design for social cohesion. In particular, we see the benefit of understanding the specific functions of civil society in peacebuilding [5, p.65].

In our ongoing work (Koskinen, et al, 2026, forthcoming; Ely et al, 2026, forthcoming) looking at the possibilities of peacebuilding frameworks to the design of peace and social cohesion, we recognize that ‘micro’-level concerns of person-to-person interaction are equally important for creating the conditions for peaceful ‘collective continuance’ [6] and particularly in processes of participatory design. Here, we build on previous work in empathic design [7-13] which has tended to focus on the *empathic* mindset of the designer in the creation of products and services. In response to this shortfall, we instead orientate our line of inquiry toward developing empathic mindsets *within* communities (and *between* community members themselves) using both literary and design fiction as empathic and participatory methods.

2 OUR AIM

Our aim in the distributed workshops in Manchester, Belfast, Kharkiv, Espoo, Kaunas and Milan is to develop participants’ understanding of the place-specific conditions of conflict and the different worldviews of the people who live in those communities. Each of the locations has been chosen as the site of different phases of conflict, some of which are undergoing actual violent conflict (a ‘hot war’ in Kharkiv, Ukraine) and others which are no longer experiencing violent conflict but are nevertheless still undergoing a process of enduring peace (e.g. in Ulster, Northern Ireland). Conflict also takes the form of non-violent tension within communities which is manifest through disagreement and dissensus [14]. With this in mind, participants (young citizens/designers) will, through empathic methods, begin to understand the diversity of these worldviews and—we hope—develop more positive and empathic appreciation for ‘others’ perspectives. Thus we aim to:

- Study conflict, its roots in experience and the resilience required to survive in conflict zones or conditions
- Develop concepts that create empathic and dialogical encounters or ‘discharge’ stereotypes and adversarial images that fuel conflict

3 FORMAT

Table 1 below, outlines the structure of *Design Fiction for Peace*. Each member of the proposing Authors will be coordinating and supervising a series of workshops at their location. The workshops build on previous work (Meloni, Botero & Koskinen) in 2025.

To develop empathic mindsets amongst our participants, designers taking part in the *Design Fiction for Peace* project will: Firstly, write a short (minimum 2-3 pages [1000-1500 words]) narrative fiction from the position of a character (in either first-, second- or third-person) living in conditions of conflict. These narrative fictions can be written from the position of a friend or foe. In preparation for such writing, participant designers will be encouraged to draw upon their lived experiences (of actual, lived conflict) or inspired by reading (e.g. Booker prize-winning *Milkman* by Anna Burns, 2018) or viewing (e.g. *Zone of Interest* film directed by Jonathan Glazer in 2023, loosely based on the novel by Martin Amis). Secondly, drawing on these narrative fictions (which may be shared within either the local or international cohort), participant designers are invited to consider the creation of a *design fiction* in response to such worldviews. Drawing on the work of Bleeker’s *Near Future Laboratory* [15] and exemplars from Cynthia E. Smith’s *Designing Peace* exhibition at the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum in 2022 [16], participants will design ‘future’ conceptual artefacts (e.g. products, services, experiences, forms of governance, forms of defence) that respond to community (and individual) needs for security, resilience and defence in the context of emerging, current existing or former conflict in the specific locations (places) where the threat of injury, death or disruption is real. Building on Paffenholz (a PDC keynote speaker) [5] Specific place-based considerations of the *purpose* of these design fictions in support of civil society include:

- Protection: For at-risk groups
- Monitoring: How can we track peace/defence/enemy actions for the benefit of communities?
- Advocacy & communication: How can we advocate for those (friend and foe) who deserve a ‘platform’?
- In-group socialization: How can we develop cultures of peace? How do we help people come together in their locality?
- Social cohesion: How can we create inter-group dialogue and living? (Especially foes)
- Facilitation: How can we bring ‘state’ and ‘community’ together?
- Service delivery: How can we provide the services the state is unable to provide?

As 1 above shows, a selection of designs from each cohort (curated by the participants themselves) from each location will be presented to all five cohorts in an international online workshop, who will then work together in curating a selection of works across Europe for the 2026 Participatory Design Conference in Milan.

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Table 1: Schedule

Date	Activity	Location
February 2026	Participants are invited to read novels (from a supplied reading list) and watch a series of films (from a given playlist)	Anywhere in the world
March-April 2026	A five-day <i>Design Fiction for Peace</i> workshop: Day 1: Introductory Talks (online) Day 2: Creating narrative fiction to understand experience Day 3: Creating Concepts Day 4: Group Crits Day 5: Online Presentations between all participants	Anywhere in the world At each partner location (Manchester, Belfast, Espoo, Kharkiv, Kaunas, Milan). At each partner location (Manchester, Belfast, Espoo, Kharkiv, Kaunas, Milan). At each partner location (Manchester, Belfast, Espoo, Kharkiv, Kaunas, Milan). Anywhere in the world
April-May 2026	Selected Teams from each location are tutored to create a collaborative exhibition for PDC conference	At each partner location (Manchester, Belfast, Espoo, Kharkiv, Kaunas, Milan).
June 2026	PDC 2026 <i>Design Fiction for Peace</i> Exhibition	Polimi, Milan
June 2026	Post-conference, selection from PDC Exhibition invited to Lecco, Italy to collaborate in workshop organized by <i>Ecosystems of Peace</i> (Polimi)	Lecco, Italy
June-July 2026	Participants produce an e-publication featuring the best concepts and insights	Lecco/Anywhere in the World

**Figure 1: The Design Fiction for Peace brand identity (Ely, 2026)**

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peace/

PDC Place Maranhão (BR) - Lisbon (PT) 2026: Participatory Design as a Driver of Community-Centred Approaches

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Abstract

The PDC Place Maranhão (Brazil) - Lisbon (Portugal) (PDC Place MA&LX) proposes a transatlantic program that reflects on participatory design as a driver of community-centered practices and social innovation. Building on previous collaborations between Portugal and Brazil, the programme integrates moments of theoretical study, exchange of knowledge, hybrid workshops, and community co-creation labs, strengthening the dialogue between local participatory design practices and citizen engagement. The PDC Place MA&LX presents participatory design as a socio-material and relational process that enables communities to co-produce knowledge, develop capacities for action, and cultivate autonomy.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Interaction design**; **Interaction design process and methods**; **Participatory design**;

Keywords

Participatory design, community-centered design, co-production, social innovation and sustainability, design research

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1 Introduction

Participatory design has increasingly established itself as a fundamental field in the promotion of innovative and socially valuable collaborative practices. Approaches such as co-creation and co-design are progressively recognised as instruments that enable the involvement of multiple actors—assuming an active and reflective position in the act of doing [11]—in processes of social transformation, articulating technical knowledge with situated experience [5, 10]. Through collaboration, design ceases to be an isolated act

and becomes a space of negotiation and mutual learning among different individuals and communities.

These dynamics can be understood, as suggested by Manzini [5], as “social conversations”—open and dialogical processes aimed not only at consensus but also at the productive confrontation of diverse perspectives [2]—or, as proposed by Binder et al. [1], as a place of conversation, a space of assembly, and a site for collaboratively projecting things. Participatory design thus operates as a mediator of social relations, capable of rendering power structures and inequalities among participants visible and open to transformation. By creating conditions in which each stakeholder can contribute their own knowledge, design fosters the co-production of more inclusive and contextually relevant solutions [3].

Within this framework, the role of design and of the designer is re-situated, shifting from that of an author and central protagonist of the process to that of a listener and mediator who facilitates more qualified forms of action, while valuing the principles of co-participation and co-authorship [11]. Participatory practice seeks not only to generate solutions but also to develop local capacities for action and autonomy. As Escobar [4] and Manzini [6] argue, design should be based on principles of plurality and social justice, recognizing citizens as agents capable of imagining and constructing their own realities. The goal is to create collaborative ecosystems where design acts as infrastructure for community action and grassroots social innovation.

Emerging design practices reflect this evolution by shifting from user-centered to community-centered approaches [9]. This shift broadens the focus of intervention, considering the social, human, and environmental ecosystem as an interdependent whole [7, 12]. Participatory design thus becomes a strategic tool for rethinking relationships between people, institutions, and territories, promoting dialogue between different forms of knowledge and experience. In this context, the designer acts as a facilitator of collaborative ecosystems, where design for communication, conviviality, and dialogue becomes a strategic tool for reactivating communities and co-constructing resilient local futures [8].

Within this framework, PDC Place Maranhão–Lisbon 2026 positions itself as a transatlantic laboratory for experimentation and collective learning. Its activities create spaces for encounters between contexts, knowledge, and cultures, where participatory design acts as a driver for community-centered approaches. By articulating theory, practice, and critical reflection, the programme aims to strengthen collaborative networks and imagine more inclusive and sustainable futures through joint action.



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PDC Place MA&LX is conceived not only as a parallel initiative, but as an active and visible contribution to the PDC 2026 ecosystem itself. Beyond dissemination through exhibitions and conferences, the initiative explicitly foresees the dissemination and activation of PDC 2026 within both host institutions—the Lisbon School of Architecture, University of Lisbon, and the Federal Institute of Maranhão—through academic activities, public sessions, and institutional communication channels. In addition, PDC Place Maranhão–Lisbon 2026 will contribute to the visibility of PDC 2026 through coordinated communication across the social media platforms and digital channels of all involved research groups and faculties (including CIAUD, TeiaDesignLab, and associated partners), reinforcing the conference’s reach among students, researchers, practitioners, and local communities in both countries. This multi-level dissemination strategy strengthens PDC 2026 as a transnational space of exchange and positions the PDC Place as an embedded initiative that actively extends the conference’s presence beyond its temporal and geographic boundaries.

2 Activity Plan

The activity plan of PDC Place Maranhão–Lisbon 2026 is structured around a sequence of educational, discursive, and practice-based initiatives taking place between April and May 2026, involving FA-UL and IFMA as the two host institutions. Together, these activities articulate theory, dialogue, and hands-on experimentation, positioning participatory design as a relational and pedagogical practice grounded in community engagement. In April, a set of open classes entitled Participatory Design as a Driver of Community-Centred Approaches will be held at FA-UL and IFMA (Monte Castelo Campus). These sessions are addressed to first- and second-year students of the Master’s in Interaction Design at FA-UL, as well as to students enrolled in the third year of the technical course in Graphic Design and the first year of the Bachelor’s degree in Design at IFMA. Conceived as in-person learning moments combined with participatory discussion, the classes introduce key concepts of participatory design and explore their relevance to community-centred practices. The activities are jointly organized by FA-UL, CIAUD, IFMA, and TeiaDesignLab. Also in April, FA-UL will host a hybrid event entitled Conversations: Participatory Design and Community Innovation, open to students, researchers, and professionals. This initiative takes the form of presentations and round tables that foster interdisciplinary debate around participatory design, social innovation, and community engagement. Organized by FA-UL, CIAUD, and DECISION NETWORK Lab, the event reinforces dialogue between academic research and professional practice. In May, the programme advances into a more intensive collaborative phase with the Joint Workshop: Collaborative Design Sprint Across Places (Maranhão–Lisbon). This two-day synchronous workshop is conducted in a hybrid format, connecting FA-UL in Lisbon and IFMA in Maranhão. Bringing together students from both institutions and across different study cycles, the workshop promotes collective problem framing, co-creation, and transatlantic collaboration through a shared design sprint. The workshop is organized by FA-UL, CIAUD, DECISION NETWORK Lab, IFMA, and TeiaDesignLab. The activity plan concludes with the Habitacidade Workshop: Co-design at the Urban Quilombo of Liberdade, a one-day synchronous

workshop held at IFMA in Maranhão. This initiative involves IFMA students and members of the Quilombo Urbano da Liberdade community and is based on the Habitability – Participatory Practices to Imagine Ways of Living with Rights methodology, developed by researcher Andrea Arruda (Lisbon School of Architecture, University of Lisbon), with technical support from TeiaDesignLab/IFMA. Situated in a specific urban and social context, the workshop encourages collective reflection on habitability and the right to the city through hands-on, community-based methodologies. It is organized by IFMA, TeiaDesignLab, NEABI, and GestualFAUL. Across all activities, the programme emphasizes participatory design as a means to foster mutual learning, interdisciplinary exchange, and collective reflection across diverse cultural contexts. The hybrid activities and sessions will be broadcast online and made publicly accessible, extending their reach beyond the immediate participants and reinforcing institutional collaboration between FA-UL and IFMA.

3 Expected Results

The sequence of activities embodies the principles of PDC Place, combining knowledge, practice, and reflection in ways that align with participatory design as a situated and relational practice [1, 3]. The following outcomes are expected: consolidation of transatlantic research and collaboration networks; development of community prototypes in local contexts in Portugal and Brazil; exchange of knowledge and practices located in both countries; and dissemination of results through exhibitions, publications, and open sharing of methodologies.

The transatlantic nature of PDC Place, which connects schools, researchers, design students, and communities from Portugal and Brazil, demonstrates the potential of participatory design as a (re)generative practice for local and hybrid communities, dialogues, encounters, and collective learning [4, 5]. The proposed activities (open classes, conference cycles, hybrid collaborative workshops, and practical laboratories) constitute a living network of “social conversations” that cross geographic and cultural borders, echoing design’s role as an infrastructure for collective sense-making and action [5].

Although the community-centered approach adopted by both schools is highly relevant, this proposal clearly articulates how the transatlantic connection translates into concrete learning outcomes. PDC Place Maranhão–Lisbon is structured as a living exchange laboratory, where moments of theoretical study, hybrid workshops, and community co-creation labs enable participants from both contexts to co-produce knowledge, compare situated practices, and develop collective action capacities [7, 9].

Beyond institutionally strengthening ties between the schools, the transatlantic lab creates a relational and experimental pedagogical space in which participatory methodologies are tested, adapted, and critically reflected upon across different sociocultural territories. In this way, the initiative contributes not only to the local communities involved but also to the broader field of professional design practice by offering replicable models of collaborative and intercultural learning [10, 12]. Additionally, it significantly advances the internationalization of design education in both schools, fostering intellectual and pedagogical mobility through which faculty and

students build relationships, exchange experiences, and co-produce knowledge in intercultural contexts.

Acknowledgments

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Placing through Participatory Design Research.

Transdisciplinary Dialogues for Social Innovation with Rural Communities

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Abstract

The proposed session explores alternatives to conventional, industry-oriented design through critical, speculative design (SCD) and participatory design in rural territories. Using participatory approaches, it questions dominant industrial paradigms and investigates how speculative design can foster dialogue, imagination, and coexistence within local communities. By engaging with rural contexts, the session reflects on design's potential to create peaceful and collaborative spaces that challenge extractive practices and promote shared futures. It highlights design as a mediator for peace, dialogue, and coexistence, emphasising situated creativity and collective agency beyond rural and industrial frameworks.

CCS Concepts

• Human-centered computing; • Participatory design;

Keywords

Participatory Design, Collaborative Learning, Designing Dialogue, Rural Place Making, Social Innovation

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1 Introduction

A PDC Place is proposed for March 18th, 2026, at MUSLAN – Wool Museum of the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã, Portugal). This is a hybrid session, proposed to take place as a satellite event of the V UBI Design Social Design Days, on the 19–20 March, organised by the ‘Design from the Margins’ Cluster from the DESIS Network, opening and reinforcing the reflection and critical action of design researchers and the communities with whom we interact and collaborate.

The proposed PDC Places explores alternatives to conventional industry-oriented design approaches, involving participatory design practices in rural areas. Rather than positioning design solely as a discipline focused on problem-solving or technological development, this initiative approaches design as a relational practice capable of mediating among different forms of knowledge, actors, and territorial realities.

In contemporary discussions on participatory design, design processes are increasingly understood as environments in which relationships among communities, researchers, institutions, and territories can be activated and sustained. As early as the 1970s, Victor Papanek argued that design should assume a clear social responsibility, responding to the real needs of society and contributing to improving people's living conditions, particularly those of the most vulnerable communities [12]. This perspective paved the way for understanding design not only as an aesthetic or industrial practice, but as a discipline capable of intervening in complex social systems.

In this context, authors such as Ezio Manzini highlight the role of design as a catalyst for social innovation, emphasising that collaborative practices and community initiatives can lead to sustainable solutions to local challenges. As Manzini [10] argues, design has the capacity to support the emergence of new forms of social and economic organisation by fostering collaboration between different

actors and promoting co-creation processes geared towards the specific needs of territories.

Given the growing complexity of current challenges — including environmental crises, social inequalities, and territorial transformations — a systemic approach to design is necessary. Don Norman [11] argues that design should be understood as an integral part of complex socio-technical systems, in which people, technologies and environments interact in an interdependent manner. Thus, the role of the designer expands, acting as a mediator of multiscale and interdisciplinary processes and contributing to the construction of more sustainable, integrated, and resilient systems.

In this sense, the role of design goes beyond the production of artefacts or solutions and becomes a catalyst for dialogue, reflection and collective learning. The proposed session, therefore, focuses on how participatory design can promote collaborative spaces in which diverse perspectives — community knowledge, academic research, specialisation, etc. — can be brought together.

These interactions open up possibilities for imagining alternative futures rooted in cooperation, mutual recognition, and shared responsibility.

The need to rethink the role of design is particularly evident in rural contexts and rural territories. These territories face structural challenges such as depopulation, ageing populations, limited access to services, and economic inequalities, but they also have enormous potential in cultural heritage, natural resources, and local knowledge. As recent research shows, initiatives based on participatory design, culture, and craftsmanship can help promote social innovation and sustainable development processes in these contexts [14].

2 Description of the Activity

Foundational work in participatory design has highlighted how collaborative design processes enable democratic engagement and shared agency in shaping technological and social systems [2, 4]. Social innovation frequently emerges from the relational capacities of communities and from their ability to collaboratively reconfigure everyday practices and shared resources. Rather than transferring expert knowledge to communities, participatory processes enable knowledge to emerge through situated dialogue and shared experience. In this sense, design becomes a space where relationships form and collective understanding can gradually develop through interaction.

The proposed hybrid session provides a platform for reflection and knowledge exchange among design researchers, local communities, and international DESIS Network Labs (UAL DESIS Lab; ESDA DESIS Lab; Ohio State DESIS Lab), incorporating ongoing doctoral projects in Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability.

It includes:

- Dialogue based on shared experiences of ongoing projects by doctoral researchers and community members, highlighting context, objectives, methodologies, initial outcomes, challenges and learnings;
- Collective mapping activity to identify how each project aligns with principles of peace, dialogue, and coexistence, revealing both theoretical and practical contributions;

- Open dialogue with other DESIS Lab representatives and attendees of the V UBI DESIS Social Design Days, fostering national and international knowledge networks;

This hybrid session builds on a doctoral research projects focused on the transdisciplinary co-design of a technological solution for social innovation in mountain territories. These regions, often characterised by geographic isolation, structural fragilities, and exclusion from innovation dynamics, face complex challenges that require collaborative, context-sensitive, and sustainability-oriented approaches. The research positions design as a mediating discipline between science, technology, and local knowledge, promoting collective knowledge-building and the co-creation of solutions tailored to territorial specificities.

This PDC Places event, understood by the authors as a Designing Dialogue session, invites participants to reflect on the role of design in promoting peace, dialogue, and social coexistence. Through sharing experiences, territorial narratives, and case studies from mountain regions in Portugal, the session examines how design can drive social transformation by mediating among scientific, technical, and civic knowledge systems and fostering inclusive, resilient innovation ecosystems.

This proposal aligns with the central themes of the conference by highlighting design as a tool for bridging diverse worlds, promoting active listening, respect for difference, and collective intelligence. By focusing on mountain territories, often peripheral in political and scientific agendas, the session challenges power asymmetries and hegemonic development models and encourages reflection on more equitable and collaborative ways of living together.

The PDC Places will be documented through audiovisual recordings and visual artefacts produced during the session. These materials will be synthesised into a short video piece and a set of visual elements to be presented at the Participatory Design Conference in Milan as an interactive installation.

The installation is conceived as a reflective and dialogical space rather than a fixed or technology-driven exhibit. It will present excerpts from the hybrid session—combining video, English subtitles, and visual traces of participatory activities (e.g., maps, prompts, and collective notes)—to foreground participants' voices and situated perspectives. While the session may include contributions in Portuguese, all video materials presented in Milan will be subtitled in English to ensure accessibility for the international conference audience.

The installation will serve as a catalyst for discussion, inviting conference participants to engage with the themes of peace, dialogue, territorial mediation, and social coexistence arising from the Situated Action. Following the installation presentation, the authors will facilitate an open discussion with the audience, reflecting on the outcomes, tensions, and insights generated during the Designing Dialogue session.

A preliminary programme for the presentation at PDC Milan consists of:

- Introduction to the PDC Places and its context;
- Screening of the synthesised video compilation;
- Collective discussion and reflection with conference participants;



Figure 1: Participatory design activities: DES'SIDE researchers teaming up with the communities.



Figure 2: Project “The Future of our Villages”, participatory workshops with Portuguese rural communities.



Figure 3: Project “The Future of our Villages”, participatory workshops with Portuguese rural communities.

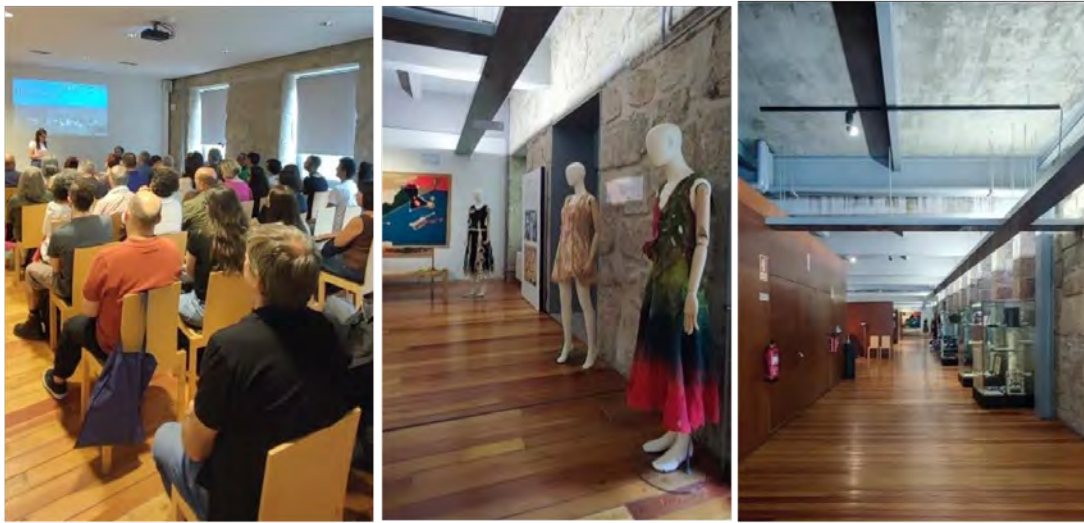


Figure 4: MUSLAN – Wool Museum of the University of Beira Interior

2.1 Session Format and Type of Interaction with the Audience

The session will last three hours and take place in a hybrid format at MUSLAN – Wool Museum of the University of Beira Interior, based in Covilhã.

Activities will be organised in small groups engaging in open and collective dialogue, supported by visual materials, participatory mapping exercises, and narrative prompts. Participants will be invited to share their perspectives, fostering the co-creation of ideas and strategies on the role of design in territorial mediation and promoting social coexistence. Online participants, including our partners Labs (UAL DESIS Lab; ESDA DESIS Lab; Ohio State DESIS Lab), will join the session via live streaming and will also have opportunities to contribute to discussions and activities.

2.2 Session Technical requirements

The session requires a quiet and comfortable space suitable for focused group interaction, accommodating approximately 10 to 15 participants and equipped with:

- Projector or screen for visual support;
- Basic sound equipment (microphone and speakers);
- Table and chairs for moderators and participants;

2.3 DESIS NETWORK // DESIS Cluster Design from the Margins'

iA* DES'SIDE Lab (organiser) <https://www.iartes.ubi.pt/laboratorios/desside> Dr. Ana Margarida Ferreira

UAL Desis Lab

<https://www.arts.ac.uk/research/groups-networks-and-collaborations/ual-desis-lab> Dr. Francesco Mazzarella

ESDA Desis Lab <https://esda.es/categoria/esda-desis-lab/> Dr. Cecilia Casas

Ohio State DESIS Lab <https://desis.osu.edu/about/> Dr. Susan Melsop

2.4 Venue

The venue will take place at MUSLAN – Wool Museum of the University of Beira Interior (Covilhã, Portugal) <https://www.museu.ubi.pt>

3 Organizers Information

Prof. Dr. Ana Margarida Ferreira is an Associate Professor with Habilitation, Director of the PhD Program in Design at the University of Beira Interior (UBI, Portugal), where she is also a Senior Researcher at iA* Arts Research Unit, coordinator of the UBI iA*DES'SIDE Lab and Scientific supervisor of several PhD students. She is actively involved in international Research Projects and international networks, such as the DESIS Cluster "Design from the Margins" and the Ibero-American Design Network.

<https://www.cienciavita.pt/portal/0613-C585-F347>

PhD Students:

1) Fashion Design for Health and Well-being. Development of a product for fecal incontinence in adolescence.

Inês Camaño Garcia is a PhD student in Fashion Design at the University of Beira Interior (UBI, Portugal). Her research focuses on developing a fashion product for a medical condition, fostering a transdisciplinary dialogue in the methodological approach to improve adolescents' well-being and quality of life.

<https://cienciavita.pt/portal/B51A-CBF0-29AF>

2) Transdisciplinarity and co-design of a technological solution for social innovation in mountain territories.

Natacha Ribeiro Pinto is a PhD student in Design at the University of Beira Interior (UBI, Portugal). Her research focuses on transdisciplinary co-design and social innovation in mountain territories, emphasising collaborative knowledge building and territorial sustainability. She has experience in participatory practices, science communication, and community engagement.

<https://www.cienciavita.pt/portal/3B1D-AE97-AB49>

3) Eco-socialab as a regenerative design model for the well-being of creative professionals and the communities.

Tabata Avilés Parra is a PhD student in Design at the University of Beira Interior (UBI, Portugal). Her research lies at the intersection of regenerative design, critical pedagogy, the creative economy, and decolonial epistemologies. The study proposes Eco-Sociallab, a regenerative model that seeks to enhance the well-being of creative professionals and communities through circular, symbolic, and collaborative processes.

<https://www.cienciavita.pt/portal/7A12-1E00-F93B>

4) Product Design for Social Innovation. Contribution to the Well-Being of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in primary school settings.

Inês Lopes is a PhD student in Design at the University of Beira Interior (UBI, Portugal). Her research focuses on developing a fashion product for a medical condition, bringing a transdisciplinary dialogue to the methodological approach, allowing the improvement of adolescents' well-being and quality of life.

<https://www.cienciavita.pt/portal/201A-EA71-3488>

5) Intergenerational Co-Design for social innovation. Contributions of digital technologies to the Preservation of memory and sustainability of local territories.

Her research explores new design solutions that foster intergenerational dialogue through collaborative and technological practices. By materializing local knowledge and memories into innovative design outcomes, her work encourages encounters between different ages and ways of living, promoting cultural diversity and community cohesion. Merging tradition and innovation, the project nurtures mutual recognition, respect for difference, and creative collaboration as foundations for a culture of peace. Through participatory methodologies and digital tools, it reimagines the relationship between tradition and contemporaneity, positioning design as an agent of coexistence capable of generating empathy, belonging, and continuity across generations.

<https://www.cienciavita.pt/portal/3515-B026-3334>

6) Participatory speculative co-design with communities in low-density territories. A Portuguese contemporary study. Hernâni Alves is a PhD student in Design at the University of Beira Interior (UBI). His research takes as a starting point the alternatives to conventional, industry-oriented design practice. It seeks to explore

and expand the boundaries of critical and speculative design (SCD) through a participatory approach, operating in low-population-density areas in the interior of Portugal.

<https://cienciavita.pt/E315-EF02-389D>

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