ID5070: Deep Dive into Civic Media Design

Masters elective course, Q1, 2019-20

Dr. Roy Bendor, Dept. of Industrial Design, IDE
email r.bendor@tudelft.nl
office C-3-210

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Introduction

While free and fair elections are the formal criteria for democracy, public participation in civic life is democracy's lifeblood. When we come together as a community, care for others, and pursue common interests and goals, our democracy becomes stronger and healthier.

This course provides students with an opportunity to dive deeper into some of the ideas behind participatory democracy and community building, and to consider how designers could help foster new, meaningful ways to reimagine civic life. Our focus will be on designing civic media: "the technologies, designs, and practices that produce and reproduce the sense of being in the world with others toward common good".[1] Civic media may include physical or virtual objects, analog or digital interactions, platforms, services, and environments.

Format

The course is offered as a design seminar following the Deep Dive format, and is governed by the same rules and requirements as other electives.[2] The course is comprised of an introduction week and three cycles of two weeks. Each cycle includes a short introductory lecture, followed by reading homework, a seminar-style session with active discussion, a relevant design assignment, and presentation of design concepts (see diagram below). This quarter, due to a large number of registered students, design assignments will be done in small groups of 3.

We meet once a week for 4 hours. Additionally, students are expected to prepare for class on their own for about 8 additional hours (for a total of no more than 12 weekly hours).

For every assigned reading, students will be asked to propose a guiding question for in-class discussion, and provide concrete examples that demonstrate or bring to life the main concepts or conclusions of the reading.

For all three design assignments, students will be asked to design for a specific group or community of their choice. There is no requirement to conduct primary research on these groups (interviews, etc.), but some familiarity with group background, needs and aspiration is essential (we will further discuss this in class). Design assignments should be exhibited in class on A3 posters.

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[1] E. Gordon & P. Mihailidis, Introduction to *Civic Media*, MIT Press, 2017, p. 2.
[2] http://studenten.tudelft.nl/en/students/faculty-specific/industrial-design-engineering/education/organisation/board-of-examiners/education-rules-and-regulations
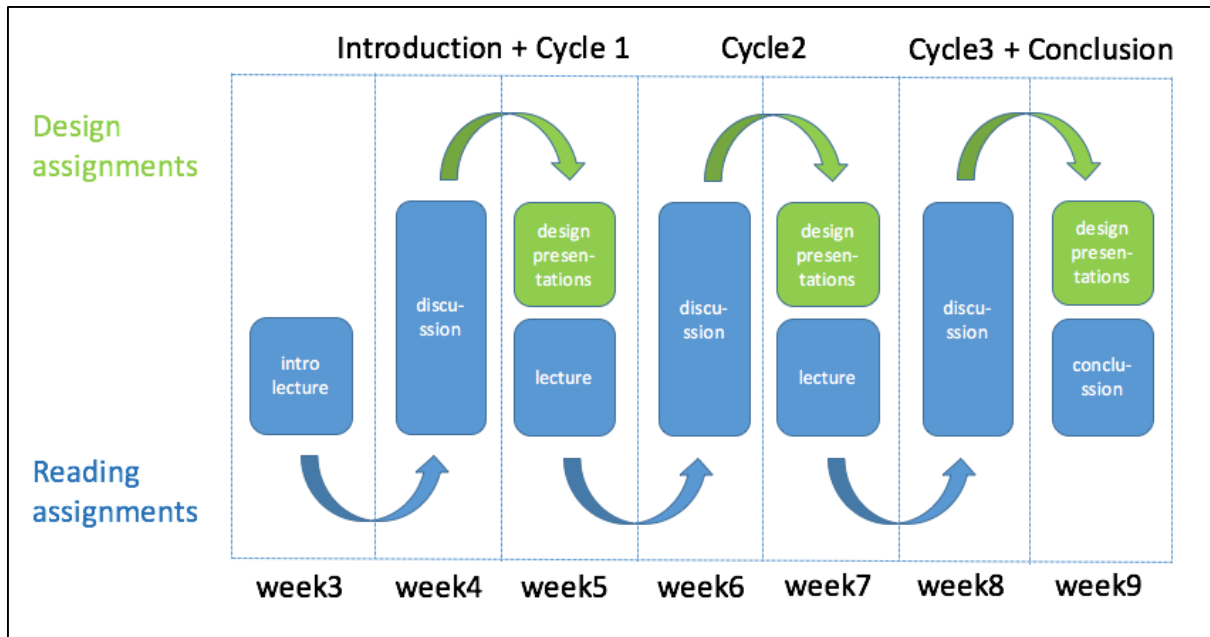
Diagram of course structure

Themes

Class activities are organized around 3 main themes (each constituting a two-week cycle):

1. *Formal participation in civic life*: how can designers encourage more diverse groups to participate in existing social, cultural, and political processes associated with citizenship?
2. *Collective ownership of civic assets*: how can designers counter social alienation and economic fragmentation by creating new modes of collective sharing or "commoning"?
3. *Imaginative appropriation of existing processes*: how can designers enable users to interpret and use media based on their own interests and goals – even if such media were designed with different goals in mind?

Learning Goals

After completing the course students will be able to:

1. Explain and give examples of key concepts related to the design of civic media, including 'participation', 'commons' and 'commoning', 'co-creation', and 'creative appropriation'.
2. Present, discuss and critically evaluate assigned texts (short academic texts on civic media).
3. Conceptualize and design objects or services based on key concepts learned.

Grading

Students will be graded based on the level of their preparedness for class (25%), the quality of their contributions to discussion in class (25%), and the quality and suitability of their design concepts (50%). More detailed instructions about reading assignments and design presentations will be given in class.

Readings

All readings will be made available on Brightspace unless specified otherwise.

1. **Introductory reading** (to be completed <u>before</u> our first meeting)

- Levine, P. (2016). Democracy in the Digital Age. In Gordon, E., & Mihailidis, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Civic Media: Technology, Design, Practice* (pp. 29-47). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- DiSalvo, C., & Le Dantec, C. A. (2017). Civic Design. *Interactions*, 24(6), 66-69.
- [Optional] Keen, A. (2018). *How to Fix the Future* (pp. 29-51). London: Atlantic Books.

2. **Participation** (read before our second meeting)

- Fischer, G. (2011). Understanding, Fostering, and Supporting Cultures of Participation. *Interactions*, 18(3), 42-53.
- Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. Cambridge, MA; London, UK: MIT Press (pp. 151-164).
- Dunbar-Hester, C. (2016). Paradoxes of Participation. In Barney, D., Coleman, G., Ross, C., Sterne, J., & Tembeck, T. (Eds.), *The Participatory Condition in the Digital Age*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (pp. 79-99).

3. **Commoning** (read before our fourth meeting)

- Bollier, D. (2015). Commoning as a Transformative Social Paradigm. Available online: https://thenextsystem.org/commoning-as-a-transformative-social-paradigm
- DiSalvo, C., Clement, A., and Pipek, V. (2013). Participatory Design for, with, and by Communities. In Simonsen, J., & Robertson, T. (Eds.), *Routledge international handbook of participatory design* (pp. 182-209). New York: Routledge.
- Shareable (Ed.) (2018). *Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons*: Shareable (section 'Governance', pp. 251-270).

4. Creative Appropriation (read before our sixth meeting)

- Eglash, R. (2004). Appropriating Technology: An Introduction. In Eglash, R., Crossiant, J., Di Chiro, G., & Fouché, R. (Eds.) *Appropriating technology: vernacular science and social power* (pp. vii-xxi). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sengers, P. and Gaver, W. W. (2006). Staying Open to Interpretation: Engaging Multiple Meanings in Design and Evaluation. *Proceedings of DiS 2006*, 99-108.
- Sennett, R. (2009). *The Craftsman*. London: Penguin (pp.214-238).

Other useful resources

Gordon, E. & Mugar, G. (2018). *Civic Media Practice*. Available online at: https://elabhome.blob.core.windows.net/resources/civic_media_practice.pdf

Gordon, E., & Walter, S. (2019). Meaningful Inefficiencies: Resisting the logic of technological efficiency in the design of civic systes. In R. Glas, S. Lammes, M. de Lange, J. Raessens, & I. de Vries (Eds.), *The Playful Citizen: Civic engagement in a Mediatized Culture* (pp. 310-334). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Gablier, L. (ed.) (2018). Communities of Practice Towards Social Change. Available online: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gtXIy6ETvKhfZnBtlGMzXloAzESZ4O0N/view

Guide for Tactical Urbanism: http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/

Huybrechts, L., Dreessen, K., & Reijnen, L. (2014). *Participation is risky: approaches to joint creative processes*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lynch, M.P. (2016). *The Internet of Us: Knowing More and Understanding Less in the Age of Big Data*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Olivier, P. & Wright, P. (2015). Digital civics: taking a local turn. *Interactions* (22)4: 61-63.

Scholz, T. (2017). Platform Cooperativism. Available online: https://platform.coop/stories/what-i-really-said-on-the-canary-islands

Scholz, T., & Schneider, N. (Eds.) (2017). *Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of work and a Fairer Internet*. New York & London: OR Books.

Denecke, M., Ganzert, A., Otto, I., & Stock, R. (Eds.). (2016). *ReClaiming Participation: Technology – Mediation – Collectivity*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript.

Rules, Regulations, Policies

Attendance
Meetings with presentation and discussions are the core part of the course. Every participant in the course is expected to attend all meetings. When urgent matters require absence, this should be agreed on by the teachers beforehand.

Late work
Late work will be evaluated where possible.

Fraud
Free-riding is considered fraud, as is presenting other people's ideas as your own. If a participant's contribution is found lacking, this will affect his or her grade.

Illness
For incidental illness, students are responsible to inform the teacher and together work out a solution. If circumstances are such that multiple courses are affected over a longer time, it is recommended that an academic Councilor is consulted to help create the broader solution. In these cases, staff will work with the Board of Examiners and Academic Councilors to optimize the recovery of student's progress.

Course manual changes policy
Changes and errors in this manual will be announced on Brightspace.