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Lindström, Kristina; Maze, Ramia; Forlano, Laura; Jonsson, Li; Ståhl, Åsa
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Published in:
Proceedings of DRS2018

Published: 01/01/2018

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Please cite the original version:
Lindström, K., Maze, R., Forlano, L., Jonsson, L., & Ståhl, Å. (2018). Editorial: Design, Research and Feminism(s). In *Proceedings of DRS2018* (Vol. 2). (DRS International Conference Series). Design Research Society.

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Editorial: Design, Research and Feminism(s)

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doi: 10.21606/dma.2017.005

As design research matures and interacts more extensively with other academic disciplines, design research communities are engaging more profoundly and reflexively with the nature of research itself and the particular “situated knowledges” (Haraway) of design and the design researcher. Criticality, in design research today, involves interrogation of the theories and methods through which we do research. While early varieties of ‘criticality’ in design research drew largely from Frankfurt School critical theories, feminist theories are increasingly prevalent as a critical modality in design research by attending to issues such as power, positionality, embodiment, relationality, materiality, territoriality and temporality.

The agency of critical approaches has been of particular concern in contemporary (feminist) critical approaches. Feminist theories assert that things can be different and can extend beyond analytic modalities into practice-based, interventionist and activist modalities to propose, materialize and experience how things may become “otherwise” (Petrescu; Schalk et al; Forlano et al). This opens up further dimensions among design and (feminist) critical theories. For example, exploring how things may become “otherwise” as an approach to design as a “worldmaking” practice may involve (non-) human perspectives on socio-ecological challenges or design work as “making-with” to “stay with trouble” rather than solutions (Haraway; Forlano et al).

With this, our DRS’18 track on the theme ‘Design, Research and Feminism(s)’ invited contributions exploring notions of criticality and, or, feminism in design research. As part of a feminist practice of “staying with the trouble”, this track continues and builds on a conversation at DRS’16 in Brighton, where we catalysed a discussion around our own practices of “making a fuss” as feminists within design research. This theme was inspired by the book by Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss: The unfaithful daughters of Virginia Woolf*, which discusses changing academia from within. The conversation drew many reflective and propositional contributions from participants.

Interest in the theme has continued in the form of many strong paper submissions to this DRS’18 special track, of which 11 were accepted through double-blind peer review. The papers draw on diverse theories and build on material generated through various methods, but all share efforts to intervene into processes of transformation and “becoming”. They explore alternative futures concerning human and non-human bodies; in sites that range from zoo to maker-space; and with objects that range from garments to books and software. The ways of achieving change cover the diversity of activism, education, curating, partnerships with civil society as well as industry.



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Exploration of long-standing, still valid, feminist questions are alive in the papers, articulated in relation to design and research. Authors query forerunners and precedents to raise relevant and pressing questions for our contemporary context including: Who benefits from the design/design research? How is risk distributed? How to organize and how to negotiate the challenges that arise during the processes of designing, researching and distributing the outputs? What bodies are included and excluded in the processes? Who does what labour? Apart from Stengers and Despret, who spurred our first conversation at DRS'16, these authors also turn to and draw upon, for example, intersectional and decolonizing theories, as well as communities of various kinds, thus finding inspiration for alternatives both from within and outside of academia.

The accepted contributions have been divided into two sessions for presentation at the conference. In the first session, the first paper by Mariacristina Sciannamblo, Peter Lyle and Maurizio Teli explores the intersection between participatory design and feminist technoscience, arguing that knowledge-making and world-making practices are inseparable. In the second paper, Pablo Hermansen and Martin Tironi prototype multispecies environments as sites of mutual care, connection and interdependence. In the third paper, Sissel Olander reflects on a practice-based design project, challenging the dichotomies between engagement and analysis, problem-solving and critique, and pragmatism and speculation. In the fourth paper, Nassim JafariNaimi and Anne Pollock use experimental data visualizations that challenge binaries such as matter/meaning, subjectivity/objectivity, and self/other in order to create space for new kinds of feminist design explorations. In the final paper, drawing on third and fourth wave feminism, Sarah Homewood offers a critical feminist reading of menstrual cycle tracking technologies in order to inform the design of technologies that are more affirmative and inclusive.

In the second session, the first paper by Maryam Heidaripour and Laura Forlano explores the ways in which design engages in formgiving to alternative futures that incorporate activism and social justice, drawing on three core dimensions: temporalities, subjectivities and hack-abilities. In the second paper, Sasha Costanza-Chock describes principles of design justice, which focus on the ways in which design reproduces and, simultaneously, can be used to challenge what Black feminist scholars call the matrix of domination. In the third paper, Tanveer Ahmed, argues that bell hook's concept of "love" might allow the field of fashion design to build awareness of experiences of difference and resist stereotyping, appropriation and racist forms of representation. In the fourth paper, Isabel Prochner and Anne Marchand illustrate how a feminist perspective can inform design theory and practice, offering critical and alternative recommendations for the field of industrial design. In the fifth paper, Ramia Mazé argues for a critical and feminist practice of bookmaking that projects, activates and enacts alternative norms of academic work. Finally, Sarah Pennington explores the ways in which feminist notions of care might inform the curation of speculative and critical design.

1 Feminist reframings of design research topics:

- **Fostering Commonfare. Entanglements between Participatory Design and Feminism**
SCIANNAMBLO Mariacristina; LYLE Peter and TELI Maurizio
- **Prototyping multispecies environments: Attentiveness and friction as modes of knowing**
HERMANSEN Pablo and TIRONI Martin
- **Critique and post-critique in social innovation projects: between speculation and realism**
OLANDER, Sissel
- **Heart Sense: Experiments in Design as a Catalyst for Feminist Reflections on Embodiment**
JAFARINAIMI Nassim; POLLOCK Anne

- **Reframing Design Problems Within Women's Health**

HOMEWOOD Sarah

2 Feminist reframings of design profession/education categories:

- **Formgiving to Feminist Futures as Design Activism**

HEIDARIPOUR Maryama; FORLANO Laura

- **Design Justice: towards an intersectional feminist framework for design theory and practice**

COSTANZA-CHOCK Sasha

- **"All about Love": How would bell hooks teach fashion design?**

AHMED, Tanveer

- **Learning from Feminist Critiques of and Recommendations for Industrial Design**

PROCHNER Isabel and MARCHAND Anne

- **Bookmaking as critical and feminist practice of design**

MAZÉ Ramia

- **Taking care of issues of concern: feminist possibilities and the curation of Speculative and Critical Design**

PENNINGTON Sarah

3 References

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