CoDESIGN: CALL FOR SPECIAL ISSUE

Designing Things Together: Intersections of Co-Design and Actor-Network Theory

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In this call, we acknowledge the emergence of an interesting space at the intersection of co-design and Actor-Network Theory (ANT), especially as design research is confronted with increasingly complex issues such as sustainability, social responsibility, inclusion and democracy; and new approaches such as design activism, design participation, and social and participatory innovation. The influence of Science and Technology Studies (STS) on design research has a long history and it is still enjoying a great deal of attention (Hanset et al., 2004; Ingram et al., 2007; Woodhouse and Patton, 2004). Through the establishment of pioneering work in various disciplines such as architecture (Yaneva, 2008), participatory design (Ehn, 2008), human-computer interaction (DiSalvo, 2012), user-centred design (Steen, 2012), critical design (Ward and Wilkie, 2010) some design scholars have already started to explore this ‘coming together’ of theoretical thinking and design practices where different traditions, approaches and people meet. The interest is mutual and while some STS scholars have started to appreciate design as a key concern (Latour, 2008a,b, 2013; Yaneva, 2009; Storni, 2012), the more activist wing of STS are looking at design to extend and re-think the impact of social research (Woodhouse et al., 2002; Venturini, 2010). As technology is becoming ubiquitous and pervasive, and design is increasingly recognized as a driving force for social change, approaches that draw on both STS (conceptually equipped to deal with socio-techno-scientific issues), and design (methodologically equipped to intervene in such issues) are of increasing importance.

In this context, we are interested in exploring, mapping and more systematically investigating approaches emerging from exchanges in which ANT (as well as related STS approaches such as post-phenomenology, feminist and post-colonial studies) and co-design become mutually relevant. Indeed, participatory and collaborative design has a long tradition of focusing on the politics of design, the methods, tools and techniques used for democratic design, and the nature of participation (Kensing and Blomberg, 1998). These concerns seem to be shared by recent developments in ANT (e.g. Latour, 2004, 2008a,b) to further affirm that this emerging area is worth exploring and mapping.

We believe that this intersection can be explored in different ways and with different purposes bringing a range of different contribution. Based on previous experiences (Storni et al., 2012; Storni and Venturini, 2012) we outline some of these possible perspectives.
From one point of view, ANT represents an interesting framework with potential to extend or re-think collaborative and participatory design theories and practices. Based on the key principle of irreducibility and a relational understanding of things and their agency, ANT offers a rich cosmology of concepts to look at the relationships between materiality and the social, acting as a powerful tool for those concerned with technology, design and society. Many of these ideas have already been appropriated and explored in design research: from the group A.Telier reflecting on the idea of designing things to Nickelsen and Binder’s (2008) understanding of design practices as heterogeneous engineering; from Galloway discussing designing in the ‘parliament of things’ (2005) to Jeisma and Knot’s (2002) development of a ‘script’ approach to service design or innovation in ICT. Actor-network theorists themselves have also discussed how ANT can contribute to design and innovation practices, and highlighted the importance of the “art of interessement” and of ‘choosing a good spokesperson’ (Akrich et al, 2002a,b).

From another perspective, ANT constitutes a refreshing analytical tool to explore, map and describe socio-technical processes. With a symmetrical anthropological approach, strongly inspired by ethnography and/of, but emphasizing the tracing of actors and controversies, ANT has demonstrated the ability to pose problems differently and to provide ‘rich and risky accounts’ (Latour, 2005). In this sense, ANT may be useful to help designers engage at a conceptual level as well as to provide them with good descriptions, i.e. of the complex social settings they are designing for (as in Stuedahl and Smørdal, 2010) and of the design practices and processes themselves (Dubuissons and Hennin, 1995; Houdard, 2008; Yaneva 2005, Storni, 2012) that may encourage designers to reflect on their own actions and thinking.

From yet another perspective, ANT’s more recent concerns with democracy and participation in techno-science (Latour, 2004, Callon et al. 2009) strongly resonate with participatory design agendas and may suggest a convergence in both theory and practice (Le Dantec and DiSalvo, 2013). More recent impulses from Latour recognize the relevance of design, and often sounds like a recognisable design agenda (Latour, 2008a,b, 2013). The idea of a ‘parliament of things’, the need for ‘re-assembling the social’, ‘building a common world’ and ‘making things public’, or the image of the designer as a ‘cautious Prometheus’, all have the potential to pose deeper questions about design, and, at the same time, to show design as a way forward. In this vein, exhibitions such “Making Things Public” (Latour and Weibel, 2005), the array of design practices mobilized in “Mapping Controversies” (Venturini, 2010), and the more recent “Modes of Existence” project (Latour, 2013), confirm how ANT have started to look at collaborative and participatory design as a key resource to extend more traditional social research, and to support empirical research and social intervention.

In this call, we aim to create an opportunity for exchange and reflection on the interesting intersections between ANT and co-design. We seek theoretical discussions as well as empirical case studies carried out using methodologies underpinning the ANT approach. We seek reflections, connections and mutual influences; we seek new questions, a forward-looking attitude and constructive critical analysis.

Specific topics may include but are not limited to:

**ANT as a conceptual framework for participatory design and co-design**

- ANT and material-semiotic/relational perspectives on design;
- Design, dasein, (post-)phenomenology and ANT;
- ANT to unpack the relationship and mutual shaping between design, technology and society;
- ANT to rethink the design/use divide: design, meta-design, and appropriation;
- How to use ANT as a pedagogical tool with design students;
ANT as a descriptive tool for co-design
- ANT as a descriptive tool supporting social investigation, design research and design processes;
- ANT to re-think traditional notion of design and participation;
- ANT to re-think (participatory and collaborative) design methods;
- Design as translation/composition/instauration: implications for design and the design of designs;
- ANT to rethink the ontological status of the design object/subject;

ANT and design for democracy and participation in techno-science
- ANT and design as a social experiment, design to make things public, design (for) public participation, design as mode of (co)existence;
- ANT and critical design, design for debate;
- ANT, ‘cautious Prometheus’ and the issue of re-presentation: the role of design in the Ding-politik;
- Design, care and matters of concern;
- Mapping controversies, mapping participations, mapping design processes: implications for co-design;

References


**SCHEDULE**

Submission of intentions to contribute: March 17, 2014

Notification of relevance: April 14, 2014

Deadline for submission of full papers: September 1, 2014

Post-review notification of decisions: November 24, 2014

Deadline for submission of revised papers: February 27, 2015

Post-review notification of decisions revised papers: April 27, 2015

Final selected papers to production: June 29, 2015

Publication of special issue: September 2015

**INSTRUCTION FOR AUTHORS**

*Submission of intentions to contribute*

In the first instance, potential contributors are invited to send an intention to contribute, in the form of a document of 1500 – 2000 words that outlines the content of the paper. The document should be sent by email to cristiano.storni@ul.ie in MS-Word format (.doc or .docx).
Submissions of full papers (for pre-selected authors only)

Following an initial evaluation of the potential of submitted proposals, full manuscripts will be invited, these will be subjected to the normal review procedure of the journal.

Manuscripts should be prepared according to guidelines which can be found on the journal website (http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/ncdn - link “Instructions for Authors”).

All submissions should be made online at the CoDesign Manuscript Central site at: http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ncdn.

Authors submitting to CoDesign for the first time will need to create an account. Instructions on how to do this can be found on the same website. All published articles will undergo rigorous peer review, based on the guest editors initial screening and anonymous refereeing by independent expert referees.

Potential authors should contact cristiano.storni@ul.ie with any questions about this special issue.

For further information about CoDesign go to: http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/ncdn