

Introduction

In design work—especially participatory design where there is much desire to get to some kind of meaningful and collective action around a social cause or important initiative—there is often an effort to unify and converge the various interests among individuals and groups. This is not to say that the effort does not have its moments of divergence and of seriously taking into account alternative perspectives. For example, in the frequently used double-diamond model consisting of a repeated sequence of divergence-convergence that has become synonymous with design thinking to many, divergence is formally recognized as an important part of design. But as in many things within the realm of human experience, the realities of designing with and for people often do not match such clean-cut maps and representations. Rather than the expected tidy denouements, the territories of design activities can, instead, lead to unsettled conclusions. To put it another way, not only are designers able to tame and resolve wicked problems, they are also able to fuel important issues within problematic situations that may affect or influence the shaping of various markets, publics, and audiences. Sometimes they may further complicate the situation through provocations to drive a deeper appreciation of what is at stake to an otherwise obscure group of people. Designers may even question the participants' underlying presuppositions in order to open them up within their own assumptions. Such openings can serve as noteworthy design accomplishments.

The contributors of this special issue offer a suite of eclectic explorations on this theme of sustained divergence within the practices of participatory design and design as provocation. The guest editors Karin Hansson, Laura Forlano, Jaz Hee-jeong Choi, Carl DiSalvo, Tessy Cerratto Pargman, Shaowen Bardzell, Silvia Lindtner, and Somya Joshi provide a rich overview of this discussion around critical, speculative, reflective, political, and adversarial design anchored in what they refer to as “the shared struggles” of divergent and sometimes opposing perspectives.

One core commitment of *Design Issues* is to criticism. Even as design has been recognized for its ability to critically challenge other domains of human interest and experience, it is fully capable of revisiting and reimagining its own conventions, practices, and established frameworks. In this special issue, there is a demonstration of how this is being done within prevailing models of participatory design and the production of publics. It is this ability of design and designers to question, challenge, and dig deeper into the taken-for-granted conventions and convictions that shape our world that interests the editors of this journal.

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