

URBAN INTERFACES



Image: *The Bridge* (Dropstuff, 2014)

Utrecht University

2016-2017

URBAN INTERFACES

MCRMV16045

elective, course period 3

Instructors

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Class schedule

Tuesdays 10.00 – 12.45 (Drift 23: 0.10)

Content

In this course we will investigate and examine 1) how media technologies and interfaces pervade urban space; 2) the diversity of creative, ludic and artistic practices in urban, public spaces, that involve media, art and/or performance, and 3) how creative design and practices of mobile and situated media, art and performance can be used to reflect on the role of media and technology on urban space and culture.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, cultural researchers have been concerned with how modern transport and communication technologies, rapid urbanization and massive social upheavals impact social mobility, civic engagement and modes of belonging. Today, globalization, the wide spread of digital information and communication technologies and the intensification of data and information flows in the urban domain, on the one hand, and the debate on participatory culture and civic engagement, on the other, spur further transformations of urban culture.

In response to these urban transformations cultural critics, scholars, as well as artists and designers enquire into how urban, public spaces may invite collaborative and playful practices of appropriation, engagement, resistance. In this course we will examine some of these shared questions by either 1) reflecting on the design of existing media, art or performance projects for urban, public spaces in the form of a design critique or curatorial critique, 2) formulating an agenda-setting proposal for an exhibition, event, or debate about a central theme with examples of existing works or projects in the form of a curatorial statement, or 3) formulating a proposal for a new project in the form of a design concept.

This course connects to ongoing research of [urban interfaces] at the department for Media and Culture Studies. This research group investigates contemporary urban transformations and the role of mobile and situated media, art and performance in urban public spaces. During the course you will hear more about current research projects and you will be offered possibilities to join and contribute to meetings and events.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you will have:

- increased your knowledge about (some) current debates about participatory media, art and performance situated in urban, public space, within the broader field of Media, Art and Performance Studies;

- trained to succinctly, clearly, and carefully analyze, summarize and discuss the main ideas as formulated in the assigned academic texts;
- trained to professionally communicate your insights, reflections and questions about the discussed topics in oral presentations and discussions as well as academic writing;
- trained to communicate reflection on the relevance of the topics and reading of the course in relation to your own research interests.

Assignment and Grading

Portfolio 100%

Deadline: April 11 2017, 6PM

Each week you are expected to prepare for the seminar meetings by closely and critically reading the assigned texts and possible additional reading. Additionally, you will develop your own research portfolio that will be assessed at the end of the course and counts 100% towards your final grade.

Your final portfolio will take the form of, either:

- A. **DESIGN REVIEW** or **CURATORIAL REVIEW** – a critique of a work, a series or project, an exhibition, event, or debate;
- B. **CURATORIAL STATEMENT** – agenda-setting proposal for an exhibition, event, debate, etc. with examples of existing works;
- C. **DESIGN FOR DEBATE CONCEPT** – develop a concept for a reflexive and tactical urban interface in the form of an art/design project that give rise to critical debate.

Requirements

The portfolio (max. 4000 words excluding footnotes, bibliography and appendix) includes the following elements:

- **Analysis or Proposal:** a description and analysis of, or proposal for, either a design or curatorial concept for (an) urban interface(s).
- **Reflection:** a reflection on the way this design or curatorial concept connects to theories and debates on issues concerning contemporary transformations of urban culture;
- **Discussion:** a concluding discussion about the role of media, art and performance in relation to these issues and debates;
- **Documentation:** a full bibliography (including projects, artworks, and other materials) and an appendix with relevant materials and documentation, such as drawings, images, descriptions, interviews, reviews, announcements, etc.

Team work

The portfolio is an individual assignment, but we encourage collaboration and team work. Discuss your ideas about collaboration with the course instructors in the beginning of the course.

Feedback

Early stages of this final project will be discussed in group meetings. You will pitch initial ideas and get feedback on your ideas and the subsequent steps from your peers and the course instructors during these meetings.

Students will also be asked to present a poster about their project towards the end of the course, which we shall discuss in a group session. Feedback and discussion after this presentation can be digested in the final version of the portfolio

Assessment

The assessment of the portfolio will be based on the following criteria:

- **quality of research:** the quality and volume of the portfolio; are the collected materials and reflections based on solid research, do they reflect a careful analysis of the curatorial

project or urban project(s), thorough reading of texts, and, if relevant, a critical digest of presentations, class discussions, and (peer) feedback;

- **quality of reflection:** does the portfolio provide a thorough and convincing motivation of choices; does it reflect on issues related to the course topics and discussions in a manner that evidences precise, nuanced and critical thinking;
- **academic professionalism and integrity,** as evidenced in the carefully written and correctly annotated reflections.

Course Schedule

Urban Interfaces		
Week 1 7/2	Orientation: (smart) cities & (urban) interfaces	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • In the first part of the meeting, we will introduce the course topic, departing from some current urban practices and research projects. • In the second part of the meeting we will introduce the working format of the course and the aim of developing critical design research. • In the third part we will form teams and discuss the planning of assignments. <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shepard, Mark. 2011. "Toward the Sentient City," In: <i>Sentient City: Ubiquitous Computing, Architecture, and the Future of Urban Space</i>, edited by Mark Shepard. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 16-36. • Tanya Toft and Susa Pop. 2016. "Preface." In: <i>What Urban Media Art Can Do: Why, When, Where & How</i>, edited by Susa Pop, Tanya Toft, Nerea Calvillo, Mark Wright. Stuttgart: avedition GmbH: 21-30. <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the assigned literature and the course manual thoroughly. • Prepare yourself to introduce yourself and your interests that are relevant to the course.
Week 2 14/2	Urban	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first part of the meeting, we will discuss the reading and explore some influential conceptions and theoretical lineages in studying of urban life. • In the second part of the meeting we will brainstorm about your individual research angle, domain, or thematic focus for your final assignment. <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brenner, Neil, and Christian Schmid. 2015. "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?" <i>City</i> 19, 2-3:151-182. • Rabari, Chirag, and Michael Storper. 2014. "The Digital Skin of Cities: Urban Theory and Research in the Age of The Sensored and Metered City, Ubiquitous Computing and Big Data." <i>Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society</i> 8, 1:27-42. <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the texts thoroughly, bring your questions. • Bring points of discussion in the form of two propositions about transformations in urban culture. • Think ahead about the possibilities for the final assignment and bring your ideas to the meeting.

Week 3 21/2	Interfaces	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the first part of the meeting, we will discuss the concept of interface and interfacing with relation to urban media, art and performance In the second part of the meeting we will explore the relationship between these ideas about interface/ing and principles of curation and design. Team 1 will announce the additional text for next week. <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hookway, Branden. 2014. <i>Interface</i>. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. "Chapter 1: The Subject of the Interface" (1-57) – read 1-19. Drucker, Johanna. 2013. "Performative Materiality and Theoretical Approaches to Interface." <i>DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly</i> 7, 1. http://digitalhumanities.org:8081/dhq/vol/7/1/000143/000143.html <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the texts thoroughly and bring your questions. Bring points of discussion in the form of two propositions about the role of interfaces (or interfacing). Team 1: find additional text to announce for week 4
Data Architecture Participation		
Week 4 27/2	<p>Debate and expert meeting: "IMAGING [URBAN] DATA VISUALIZATION" 15.00-19.00 at Parnassos Café (Kruisstraat 201, Utrecht)</p> <p>Recommended Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Vande Moere and Dan Hill. 2012. "Designing for the Situated and Public Visualization of Urban Data." <i>Journal of Urban Technology</i> 19, 2: 25-46. 	
Week 4 28/2	Data Spaces: Dashboards, Algorithms and Quantification	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team 1 will pitch the additional reading, moderate the discussion about this week's topic, bringing in one or more cases that are relevant for the topic. In the second part of the meeting we will discuss the progress of the final assignments. Team 2 will announce the additional text for next week <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valkanova, Nina, Sergi Jorda, and Andrew Vande Moere. 2015. "Public Visualization Displays of Citizen Data: Design, impact and implications." <i>International Journal of Human-Computer Studies</i> 81: 4-16. Mattern, Shannon. 2015. "Mission Control: A History of the Urban Dashboard." <i>Places Journal</i>, https://placesjournal.org/article/mission-control-a-history-of-the-urban-dashboard <p>Additional Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-compulsory but recommended reading, to be announced by team 1 in week 3. <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team 1: prepare pitch and moderation of the session Team 2: find additional text to announce for week 5.
Week 5 7/3	Urban Screens & Media Architecture	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team 2 will pitch the additional reading, moderate the discussion about this week's topic, bringing in one or more cases that are relevant for the topic. In the second part of the meeting we will meet with Fabian van Sluijs, curator of FIBER Festival Team 3 will announce the additional text for next

		<p>week.</p> <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papastergiadis, N. et al. 2013. "Mega Screens for Mega Cities". <i>Theory, Culture & Society</i> 30:(7–8), 325–341. Verhoeff, Nanna. Forthcoming 2017. "Interfaces of Media Architecture." In <i>Media Architecture: Using Information and Media as Construction Material (Age of Access? Grundfragen der Informationsgesellschaft)</i>, edited by Alexander Wiethoff and Heinrich Hussmann. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton: 43-58. <p>Additional Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-compulsory but recommended reading, to be to be announced by team 2 in week 4. <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team 2: prepare pitch and moderation of the session. Team 3: find additional text to announce for week 6.
Week 6 14/3	Play, Event, Intervention	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team 3 will pitch the additional reading, moderate the discussion about this week's topic, bringing in one or more cases that are relevant for the topic. In the second part of the meeting we will discuss the progress of the final assignments. <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> de Lange, Michiel. 2015. "The Playful City: Using Play and Games to Foster Citizen Participation." In: <i>Social Technologies and Collective Intelligence</i>, edited by Aelita Skaržauskienė. Vilnius: Mykolas Romeris University: 426-434. Debord, Guy. 1955. "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography." <i>Les Lèvres Nues</i> #6. http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/ Debord, Guy. 1958 "Theory of the Dérive." <i>Internationale Situationniste</i> #2. http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/ <p>Additional Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-compulsory but recommended reading, to be to be announced by team 3 in week 5. <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team 3: prepare pitch and moderation of the session.
Design Curation Debate		
Week 7 21/3	Posters	<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster presentations <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone prepares a poster to hang on the wall and act as a discussion piece for the final assignment (minimum A3 size).
Week 8 28/3	Feedback & Questions	Office Hour (by appointment)
Week 9 4/4		
Week 10	Deadline: Tuesday April 11, 18:00, via e-mail to both instructors + printed out in the course Pigeonhole at Kromme Nieuwegracht 20, downstairs.	

Course Evaluation

We are always looking to improve our program and are interested in your feedback on each course – both the good points and what can be improved. We will have informal moments of evaluation during the seminar meetings for which you will be asked about your experiences and possible suggestions for the course.

At the end of each block, you will also receive an invitation via email to fill in a questionnaire and to provide feedback for each course in the digital evaluation system Caracal (<http://caracal.science.uu.nl/>). You can log in to Caracal using your Solis-ID and password and find the course evaluations that apply to you. These course evaluations will be processed anonymously.

If you have more general feedback about the organization of the program of Media, Art & Performance Studies, please contact the program coordinator, Nanna Verhoeff (n.verhoeff@uu.nl) or your mentor.

Fraud & Plagiarism

Scientific integrity is the foundation of academic life. Utrecht University considers any form of scientific deception to be an extremely serious infraction. Utrecht University therefore expects every student to be aware of, and to abide by, the norms and values regarding scientific integrity.

The most important forms of deception that affect this integrity are fraud and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's work without proper acknowledgement, and it is a form of fraud. If fraud or plagiarism is detected, the study program's Examination Committee may decide to impose sanctions. The most serious sanction that the committee can impose is to submit a request to the Executive Board of the University to expel the student from the study program.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the copying of another person's documents, ideas or lines of thought and presenting it as one's own work. You must always accurately indicate from whom you obtained ideas and insights, and you must constantly be aware of the difference between citing, paraphrasing and plagiarizing. Students and staff must be very careful in citing sources; this concerns not only printed sources, but also information obtained from the Internet.

The following issues will always be considered to be plagiarism:

- cutting and pasting text from digital sources, such as an encyclopedia or digital periodicals, without quotation marks and footnotes;
- cutting and pasting text from the Internet without quotation marks and footnotes;
- copying printed materials, such as books, magazines or encyclopedias, without quotation marks or footnotes;
- including a translation of one of the sources named above without quotation marks or footnotes;
- paraphrasing (parts of) the texts listed above without proper references: paraphrasing must be marked as such, by expressly mentioning the original author in the text or in a footnote, so that you do not give the impression that it is your own idea;
- copying sound, video or test materials from others without references, and presenting it as one's own work;
- submitting work done previously by the student without reference to the original paper, and presenting it as original work done in the context of the course, without the express permission of the course lecturer;
- copying the work of another student and presenting it as one's own work. If this is done with the consent of the other student, then he or she is also complicit in the plagiarism;

- when one of the authors of a group paper commits plagiarism, then the other co-authors are also complicit in plagiarism if they could or should have known that the person was committing plagiarism;
- submitting papers acquired from a commercial institution, such as an Internet site with summaries or papers, that were written by another person, whether or not that other person received payment for the work.

The rules for plagiarism also apply to rough drafts of papers or (parts of) theses sent to a lecturer for feedback, to the extent that submitting rough drafts for feedback is mentioned in the course handbook or the thesis regulations.

The Education and Examination Regulations (Article 5.15) describe the formal procedure in case of suspicion of fraud and/or plagiarism, and the sanctions that can be imposed.

For more information, see: <http://students.uu.nl/en/practical-information/policies-and-procedures/fraud-and-plagiarism>.