URBAN INTERFACES

Image: *Smart Citizen Sentiment Dashboard*

Utrecht University

2017-2018

URBAN INTERFACES

MCRMV16045

elective, course period 3

Instructors

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Class Schedule

Tuesdays 10.00 – 12.45 (Drift 23: 0.20)

Content

In this course, we will 1) investigate how media technologies and interfaces pervade urban space, 2) examine 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 around mobile and situated media, art and performance can be used to reflect on the role of media and technology in urban space and culture.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, cultural researchers have been concerned with how modern media technologies, rapid urbanization and massive social upheavals impact social mobility, civic engagement and modes of belonging. Today, globalization, the widespread 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, 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 issues through a 'critical making' approach. This entails critical reflection by creating design interventions that give rise to debate. Critical making was a term coined by Matt Ratto "to describe the combination of critical thinking with hands-on-making: a kind pedagogical practice that uses material engagements with technologies to open and extend critical social reflection." During a two-day workshop that is a compulsory part of the course (6-7 March 2018), you will develop in multidisciplinary teams a collective critical design project that explores and reflects on contemporary issues in our technologically mediated cities.

This course actively connects to ongoing research of the [urban interfaces] research group at the Department for Media and Culture Studies (urbaninterfaces.net). The research group [urban interfaces] investigates contemporary urban transformations and the role of mobile and situated media, art and performance in urban public spaces. During the weeks of the course you will hear more about ongoing research, 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 6 2018, 5PM

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 consist of a well-motivated and documented **DESIGN CONCEPT**. This will be based on the concept developed in the Critical Making workshop (6-7 March 2018) for a reflexive and tactical urban interface that gives rise to critical debate.

Requirements
The portfolio (max. 3000 words excluding footnotes, bibliography and appendix) consists of design proposal, an academic and theoretical grounding and reflection, and a concluding discussion, to be divided in the following parts:

- **Description**: a description of the design process and developed concept for an urban interface (based on the workshop process and product);
- **Reflection**: a reflection on the way this design concept connects to (e.g. sheds new light on) theories and debates on issues concerning contemporary urban frictions;
- **Debate**: a concluding discussion about the role of media, art and performance in relation to the issue(s) 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.

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.

Assessment

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

- **level 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;
- **level 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

Week 1 6/2	**Urban Interfaces**	**Reading:** • Shepard, Mark. 2011. "Toward the Sentient City." In: *Sentient City: Ubiquitous Computing, Architecture, and the Future of Urban Space*. Edited by Mark Shepard. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 16-36 • Toft, Tanya and Susa Pop. 2016. "Preface." In: *What Urban Media Art Can Do: Why, When, Where & How*. Edited by Susa Pop, Tanya Toft, Nerea Calvillo, Mark Wright. Stuttgart: avedition GmbH: 21-30 **Assignment** • Read the assigned literature and the course manual. • Prepare yourself to introduce yourself and your interests that are relevant to the course.
Week 2 13/2	**Urban Frictions**	**Reading** • Brenner, Neil, and Christian Schmid. 2015. "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?" *City* 19, 2-3: 151- 182 http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/abs/10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712?journalCode=ccit20& • McQuire, Scott. 2016. "Introduction" and "1. Transforming Media and Public Space." In: *Geomedia, Networked Cities and the Politics of Urban Space*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 7-49 https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=4675591 **Assignment** • Read the texts and bring your questions. • Find a recent case of urban media, art, or performance designed to make visible and debatable the friction(s) that arise from omnipresent (media) technologies in the city.

Week 3 20/2	Urban Dashboards	**Reading** ● Drucker, Johanna. 2013. "Performative Materiality and Theoretical Approaches to Interface." *DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly* 7, 1 http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000143/000143.html ● Mattern, Shannon. 2015. "Mission Control: A History of the Urban Dashboard." *Places Journal* https://placesjournal.org/article/mission-control-a-history-of-the-urban-dashboard ● Valkanova, Nina, Sergi Jorda, and Andrew Vande Moere. 2015. "Public visualization displays of citizen data: Design, impact and implications." *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* no. 81:4-16 https://www-sciencedirect-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/science/article/pii/S1071581915000282 **Assignment** ● Read the texts and bring your questions. ● Bring points of discussion in the form of two statements about the role of interfaces for (data) visualization.
Week 4 27/2	Critical Making	**NO CLASS** **Reading** ● Herz, Garnet. "What is Critical Making." http://current.ecuad.ca/what-is-critical-making ● Ratto, Matt and Megan Boler. 2014, *DIY Citizenship Critical Making and Social Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Introduction + additional chapter(s) of your choice. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=3339737 **NB** you are all invited to join the meeting of the research seminar on Urban Frictions on Wednesday 28 (3-5PM, Parnassos, Kruisstraat 201) where these texts will also be discussed. For more info: https://urbaninterfaces.net/seminars/urban-friction-the-urban-interfaces-graduate-seminar-2017-2018/
Week 5 6/3-7/3	Workshop	**Pressure Cooker Workshop: Critical Making of Frictional Urban Interfaces**
Week 6 13/3	Urban Publicness and Civic Participation	**Reading** ● Iveson, Kurt. 2007. *Publics and the City*. Oxford: Blackwell. Chapter 2 "Publics and the City" (pp. 20-49). http://proxy.library.uu.nl/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=306556 ● Gordon, Eric and Stephen Walter. 2016. "Meaningful Inefficiencies: Resisting the Logic of Technological Efficiency in the Design of Civic Systems." In: *Civic Media : Technology, Design, Practice*. Edited by Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis. MIT Press. pp. 238-260 http://proxy.library.uu.nl/login?url=http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=4573752 **Assignment** ● Read the texts and bring your questions.
Week 7 20/3	Pitches & Pizzas (or pitas)	**Assignment** ● Prepare in your workshop team a pitch for your individual assignments. ● Everyone will bring something to eat/drink for a shared lunch!

Week 8 27/3	**Office Hour** (by appointment)
Week 9	**Deadline**: Friday April 6, 17:00, via email 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 (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