



URBAN INTERFACES

Image: Smart Citizen Sentiment Dashboard

Utrecht University

2018-2019

URBAN INTERFACES

MCRMV16045

elective, course period 3

Instructors

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Class Schedule

Tuesdays 13.15 – 17.00 (KNG 20: Grote Zaal) – first class 5 Feb. 2019

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 (www.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 5 2019, 5PM (email to both instructors)

Assignment 1 Each week you are expected to prepare for the seminar meetings by closely and critically reading the assigned texts and possible additional readings, and by preparing one **PROPOSITION** in advance (max. 200 words in total, ex. references; 4 in total in weeks 2, 3, 4, 5). These propositions must be grounded in the compulsory texts. Propositions are not questions, but arguments that spur discussion. During class, we will use these to spark the debate (so you should be ready to present and initiate the discussion based on your proposition).

N.B.: You will also submit these propositions as *part of the appendix of your final portfolio*. The propositions are not graded separately but are required for course completion.

Assignment 2 During the course weeks, you will develop your 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 report of your **DESIGN CONCEPT**. This will be based on the concept developed in the Critical Making workshop (19-20 March 2019) for a reflexive and tactical urban interface that gives rise to critical debate.

Requirements

The portfolio of your design concept (max. 3000 words excluding footnotes, bibliography and appendix) consists of the design proposal, a theoretical 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 urban commons and the right to the city;

- **Debate:** a concluding discussion about the role of media, art and performance in relation to the theories 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. *PLUS, include the four propositions written as weekly assignments.*

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: 5/2 Urban/Interfaces

Reading:

- Drucker, Johanna. 2011. "Humanities Approaches to Interface Culture." Culture Machine 12. <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/download/434/462>
- 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
- Look at the journal <https://interfacecritique.net/journal-1> and the introductory chapter "Towards a Critique of Interfaces" in the edited book "Interface Critique" <http://interfacecritique.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Interface-Critique-Intro.pdf>

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: 12/2 Urban Commons & The Right to the City

(including seminar meeting 1: 15:30-17:30)

Reading:

- 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 a proposition.

Seminar meeting

Readings:

- Foster, Sheila R. "Collective Action and the Urban Commons: Introduction." *Notre Dame Law Review* 87.1 (2013): 57-64.
- Harvey, David. "The Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53 (2008): 23-40.

Preparation:

Choose one photo that shows according to you an urban common or a struggle to the right to the city and send this photo to urbaninterfaces@uu.nl and l.vandermolen@uu.nl before Monday 11 February 1PM.

Assignment:

Find for your blogpost (±750 words) an example of an urban intervention that makes visible and/or reflects upon the right to the city. By conducting this case study analysis you'll show that you understand the concepts of urban commons and the right to the city and that you can position yourself within the field of urban studies and can critically reflect upon and critique an urban intervention. You can build your argument upon the course literature or any additional sources.
Deadline: February 19, 15:00

Week 3: 19/2 Urban Data

Reading:

- 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>
- de Lange, Michiel. 2019 (forthcoming). "The Right to the Datafied City: Interfacing the Urban Data Commons." In *The Right to the Smart City*, edited by Rob Kitchin, Paolo Cardullo and Cesare Di Felicianantonio. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/h7m3q61qlfi78sp/de%20Lange%20v2%20edits%20cdf%20pc%20rk-Michiel%20de%20Lange.docx?dl=0>
- 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 proposition.

Week 4: 26/2 Urban Publics

(including seminar meeting 2: 15:30-17:30)

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>
- Verhoeff, Nanna and Karin van Es. 2018. "Situated Installations for Urban Data Visualization: Interfacing the Archive-City." 117-136 in Pedram Dibazar and Judith Naeff (eds.), *Visualizing the Street: New Practices of Documenting, Navigating and Imagining the City*. Cities and Cultures. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330281769_Situated_Installations_for_Urban_Data_Visualization_Interfacing_the_Archive-City

Assignment:

- Read the texts and bring your proposition.

Seminar meeting:

Reading:

- Novy, Johannes. "Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New 'Spaces of Hope'?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37.5 (2013): 1816-1838.
- Reia, Jhessica. "Chapter 7: 'We Are not a Protest'. Street Performance and/as Public Art in the City of Rio De Janeiro." *Performative Citizenship: Public Art, Urban Design, and Political Participation*. Eds. Laura Iannelli and Pierluigi Musarò. Fano: Mimesis International, 2017. 133-150.

Assignment:

Write a short blogpost (± 750 words) on the struggle of the right to the city within your own city. Who are the dominant voices and who are the marginalized ones? How is this tension between them made visible? Or how can you make this friction visible? You can build your argument upon the course literature or any additional sources.

Deadline: March 5, 15:00

Week 5: 5/3 No Class!

Week 6: 12/3 Whose Right to the City? A More-Than-Human Perspective

(including seminar meeting 3: 15:30-17:30)

Reading:

- Harraway, Donna. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press: Introduction and Chapter 1.: <https://utrechtuniversity-on-worldcat-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/oclc/934194942>

- Foth, Marcus & Caldwell, Glenda Amayo. 2018. "More-Than-Human Media Architecture." In *Media Architecture Biennale*, 13-16 November 2018, Beijing, China. (In Press).
<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/121705/>

Assignment:

- Read the texts and bring your proposition.

Seminar meeting

Reading:

- Hertz, Garnet. "What is Critical Making?" *Current*. November 13, 2018. <<http://current.ecuad.ca/what-is-critical-making>>.
- Ostrom, Elinor. "Similarities among Enduring, Self-Governing CPR Institutions." *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 88-102.

Assignment:

Write a short blogpost (± 750 words) on the relationship between critical making and the right to the city. Through the use of the critical making method, how can you reveal the struggle for the right to the city and the frictions concerning the urban commons? How do technological changes affect how we think about these concepts? Which practical and theoretical effects do these changes bring along?

Deadline: March 16, 15:00 [be aware: this is earlier than usual due to the pressure cooker!]

Week 7: 19/3+20/3 Pressure Cooker Workshop

Two-day critical making workshop

Week 8: 26/3 Pitches & Pizza (or Pinxos)

Bring a poster about your design concept and some food to share

Week 9: 5/4 Deadline

Friday April 5, 17:00, via email to both instructors

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>