Curated session: Co-Constructing City Futures:
Enabling Participation in Urban Planning Processes with ICTs

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This proposal for a curated session will be part of the 'Means and methods for making the future accessible' track and will examine the dynamics of how technology shapes participatory and co-creative processes in anticipating, designing and expressing urban futures.

The curated session will be an opportunity for interdisciplinary reflections on technology, participation and planning. The invited speakers represent an exchange between research and urban planning practices, and the session will provide opportunities for the conference audience to materially enact designs and methods that support generative activity. These democratic design experiments (Binder et al 2015) are central outcomes of the *Co-Constructing City Futures* project (Smørdal et al 2016; Pettersen et al 2017ab) and are based on reconfigurations of municipal planning practices and new modes of civic engagements in a large Norwegian city.

In recent years there has been a boon in the interest in (and use of) ICTs to facilitate citizen participation and engagement in urban planning processes. Despite noted challenges (Holman and Rydin 2013), the increasing ubiquity of mobile technologies and a push for more collaborative and communicative planning (Healey 1997) has seen ICTs embraced with the aims of reinvigorating citizen participation in the city, and improve how cities are planned and citizens live within them. The increasing interest in (and use of) ICTs to facilitate citizen participation and engagement in urban planning processes has generally been seen overwhelmingly in a positive light, with opportunities to deepen and broaden how citizens shape their cities (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010; Khan et al 2014; Kleinhans et al 2015; Levy et al 2015; Kahila-Tahani et al 2016).

Yet with this embrace some of the challenging or problematic aspects of ICT-led participatory urban planning may be overlooked or underappreciated. Given the widespread use and embrace of participatory ICTs for more democratic urban planning, there is still a need to reflect on the conceptual and practical issues regarding how the use of technology may or may not deliver on its promises or even have adverse effects or fail to deliver the benefits it is expected to. For instance, facilitating digital participation can simply magnify the complexity of information with which to make decisions; and does not guarantee representativeness of perspectives or how the perspectives are used in actual planning processes (e.g. Hasler 2017; Wilson et al 2017).

Furthermore, digital co-creation tacitly embraces an inherently interdisciplinary process of participation, involving a wide range of professional and non-professional stakeholders that must converge on a similar concept and 'speak a common language'. Such processes involve various dynamics of power and politics, and present both opportunities and challenges for the design and practice of democratic digital participation and co-creation.

We see a need to nuance this with an interdisciplinary reflection on (i) how technology shapes the breadth and depth of participation and co-creation, and the power relations within these processes; (ii) how outcomes of processes of digital participation in the city are shaped both for good and bad by the process itself and (iii) the practical lessons, challenges and implications emerging from the praxis of 'doing' co-creation.

In doing so we aim to (i) highlight some of the areas in which ICTs can have transformative impacts on urban planning and citizen engagement, (ii) how to avoid planning and participation being undermined by an overreliance or manipulation of digital technologies and (iii) consider the broader implications for governance and inclusion in the city.

We frame this discussion around two aspects of one may evaluate the lifespan of participation:
- the **breadth** of participation – meaning the extent to which participation is done to both cover a range of interests, stakeholders, groups etc and how much the engagement of citizens matters at different stages of the participatory process;
- the **depth** of participatory processes, namely how deeply participatory processes are undertaken, and how participation functionally operates to deliver outcomes that support the participatory process for all stakeholders.

We also consider three phases of the participation cycle:
- The **Intent** of participation: considerations about why is participation sought, by whom, and for what ends.
- The **Process** of participation: the actions and progression of participation, and the barriers that may exist.
- The **Outcomes** of participation: the end results of participatory processes for citizens, planners, cities and the participatory process itself.

Plan for the curated session:

- Introduction: Co-Constructing City Futures (10 mins)
- Reflections on impact from a municipal point of view (10 mins)
- Power and politics in urban digital civics (10 mins)
- Embodied exploration of different concepts of anticipation, facilitated discussion (20 mins)
- Roundtable discussion: Anticipation, co-creation and cities: Reflections on theory and practice on conceptualising and doing Co-creation: Interdisciplinary issues, pitfalls and successes of digital co-creation (30 mins)
- Summary and ways forward (5 mins)

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