TRACK 09. SPECULATION, DESIGN, PUBLIC AND PARTICIPATORY TECHNOSCIENCE: POSSIBILITIES AND CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Over the past decade there has been an increasing engagement between design and STS. One emerging and novel area of exchange is concerned with exploring the ways in which practices of 'speculative design' and STS concerns of publics, participation, politics as well as expectations come together to inform one another, to critique one another, and to collaborate in developing new modes of co-production of contemporary technoscience. Although such associations are promising, they are nascent and in need of articulation and critical examination. Our proposed track is intended to provide the beginnings of such articulation and critical examination, by soliciting participation from STS scholars, design researchers and from practicing designers.

By speculative design we refer to a set of design practices and outcomes that are moving away from common notions of design as "problem-solving" or "styling", towards framing design as a means for surfacing and materializing issues and contributing to the formation of publics and futures. In this move, design is increasingly cast as a possible mode of intervention into technoscience, thereby establishing renewed associations with STS. With speculative design the performativity of the object comes to the fore as a concern for both designers and theorists, as its objects and outcomes are often brought into being to, and interpreted as, materially and discursively enacting values, identities, agendas and beliefs. A challenge for STS then is to describe and characterize the performativity of the objects of speculative design in new ways that avoid recourse to the familiar positions and debates concerning 'the political of artefacts'.'

In this track we will solicit participation from STS scholars, design researchers as well as practicing designers. Our objective is to present a range of scholarly approaches and exemplary projects in order to explore and outline this field of convergence. Within the track, presentations will be organized thematically. Key questions we hope to address include the following:
- How does a convergence of STS and speculative design reframe the notion of intervention?
- How does the convergence of STS and speculative design perform issues of politics and the political?
- How does speculative design operate to articulate issues, and what are its limitations in these endeavors?

- What kind of futures and expectations are performed in the doing of speculative design?
- How can we understand novel objects and materiality as forms of engagement and involvement?
- What are working strategies for supporting this convergence of STS and 'speculative' design?
- What are the limitations of STS methodologies in contributing to the design process and analyzing the objects of design?
- What are limitations of design practice and methods to seriously taking up STS concepts and methodologies?

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be sent by email (following website instructions) by 2010 March 15th".

Convenors

Carl DiSalvo is an Assistant Professor in the School of Literature, Communication and Culture at the Georgia Institute of Technology. His research interests concern design and publics, the political qualities and affects of design, and the role of speculative design in contemporary technoscience. (http://lcc.gatech.edu/~cdisalvo3/)

Tobie Kerridge is a Visiting Tutor in Design at Goldsmiths, the Royal College of Art and Edinburgh College of Art. He is writing his PhD thesis, which is an account of an entanglement between speculative design and public engagement of science and technology. (http://www.tobiekerridge.co.uk)

Alex Wilkie is a Lecturer in Design and a Visiting Tutor in Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London where he is also completing his PhD. His research interests include user involvement in design, relations between design and social science, the politics of technology and object centered practices. (http://www.alexwilkie.org)