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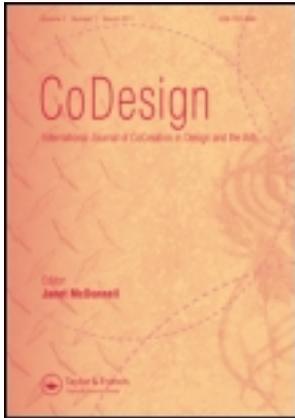**Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:**

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Agonistic participatory design: working with marginalised social movements

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Participatory design (PD) has become increasingly engaged in public spheres and everyday life and is no longer solely concerned with the workplace. This is not only a shift from work-oriented productive activities to leisure and pleasurable engagements, but also a new milieu for production and 'innovation'. What 'democratic innovation' entails is often currently defined by management and innovation research, which claims that innovation has been democratised through easy access to production tools and lead-users as the new experts driving innovation. We sketch an alternative 'innovation' practice more in line with the original visions of PD based on our experience of running *Malmö Living Labs* – an open innovation milieu where new constellations, issues and ideas evolve from bottom–up long-term collaborations among diverse stakeholders. Three cases and controversial matters of concern are discussed. The fruitfulness of the concepts 'agonistic public spaces' (as opposed to consensual decision-making), 'thinging' and 'infrastructuring' (as opposed to projects) are explored in relation to democracy, innovation and other future-making practices.

Keywords: agonistic; democracy; design; infrastructuring; innovation; participation; thinging

Introduction

Participatory design (PD) faces considerable challenges when entering the public sphere. From a political perspective, this is a shift that is characterised by a movement beyond the challenge to design towards democracy at work towards PD in and for open democratic public spaces, an emerging shift from design with predefined groups of users towards engagement with publics around controversial issues. Influenced by Dewey (1927) and the democratic challenge of giving space to multiple emerging, often marginalised publics to raise their issues and by Foucault's (1973, 1977, Barry 2001) expanded notion of governing and the political, we write 'publics', rather than public in the singular, since we view that the governing of public concerns generates multiple terrains that blur traditional distinctions made between public and private and the state and the market. This shift towards publics is a movement away from design projects and towards processes and strategies of aligning different contexts and their representatives, where differences between

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current issues and how the future can unfold can be made visible, performed and debated as a kind of 'agonism' (Mouffe 2000). Agonistic democracy does not presuppose the possibility of consensus and rational conflict resolution. Instead, the hegemony of dominant authority is potentially challenged through manifold forceful but tolerant disputes among passionately engaged publics.

The authors have all been involved in a number of traditional workplace PD projects (Ehn 1988, Hillgren 2006, Björgvinsson 2007), but we have shifted our focus since 2007 towards activities articulating publics and forming public agonistic spaces. This has been done with *Malmö Living Labs* (MLL) as our platform for PD interventions. The lab has existed for almost five years and some 50 design experiments have been carried out together with some 500 participants and more than 25 organisations and companies. We will reflect upon three successive and interconnected collaborative design explorations and the publics that have been articulated as well as the agonistic public spaces that have emerged from them.

The first originates from a collaboration with *RGRA* (*The Voice and Face of the Street*), which is a grassroots hip-hop organisation whose members are first and second generation immigrants. It started almost four years ago and is being chosen because it highlights how the lab has worked with ongoing alignment and close experimental working relations among the lab partners to produce innovation outcomes that would have been hard to achieve within predefined project settings, and how the various constellations raise controversial issues in an agonistic public space. The second exploration concerns *Herrgårds Women Association* (HWA), which is a resourceful group of immigrant women living in a multi-ethnic and contentious suburb of Malmö. They are engaged in developing collaborative services. The collaboration commenced some two years ago, and has been chosen to exemplify both dilemmas and opportunities of articulating a public, rendered invisible by hegemonic social and business logic, and forming an agonistic space around social innovation (as opposed to a narrow focus on technical innovation). Our third example is truly agonistic, with multiple stakeholders around the formation of an incubator for social innovation based on grassroots activities in the city of Malmö.

We conclude by further discussing the three cases in relation to agonistic democracy, and argue for the value of seeing design milieus as agonistic public spaces and questions concerning passionate engagement where differences are raised.

From democracy at work to agonistic public spaces

Contemporary innovation and design literature, often profiled as 'open innovation' (Chesbrough 2003), 'co-creation' (Prahalad and Krishnan 2008), 'crowdsourcing' (Surowiecki 2004), 'lead-user development' and 'user-driven innovation' (von Hippel 2005), tends to be technical and expert oriented as well as market driven. Innovation within such discourses, even if it has some resemblance to PD strategies, is interpreted largely as producing what Barry (2001) calls universal novelty products that can be marketed rather than judging innovation by the degree it opens up for possibilities and questions. The underlying rhetoric is rooted in the idea that a market economy – that increasingly thrives on the speed of producing novelty products – is a precondition for democracy (Mouffe 1993). Defining what innovation is, who innovates, where and under what conditions innovation occurs, is therefore

an important battleground within society today. Where does PD stand in this controversy?

The main approach to innovation in PD research has been to organise projects with identifiable stakeholders within an organisation, paying attention to power relations and the empowerment of resources to weak and marginalised groups. This has been the rationale for PD in contributing to democracy at work. However, design activities today are rather heterogeneous, partly open and public, engaging users and other stakeholders across organisational and community borders. To capture this change we think it may be useful to shift the frame of reference from design politics for democracy at work towards democratisation as political design in an agonistic public framework. This would be in line with Carl DiSalvo's view on political design, where he makes a distinction between 'design for politics' that supports the established political discourse, and political design with an agonistic perspective that challenges and articulates power relations and evokes new questions and themes (Mouffe 1993, 2000, DiSalvo 2010, 2012).

Our analytical frame of reference is the 'agonistic' approach presented by Chantal Mouffe in *The democratic paradox* (2000). For Mouffe, 'agonistic struggle' is at the core of a vibrant democracy. Agonistic democracy does not presuppose the possibility of consensus and rational conflict resolution, but rather proposes a polyphony of voices and mutually vigorous but tolerant disputes among groups united by passionate engagement. These are political acts and always take place against a background where hegemony is potentially challenged. In this view, public spaces are plural where different perspectives confront each other. Public spaces are striated and hegemonically structured by dominant groups. In our case, dominant views have been pushed through research and development funding bodies and municipalities demanding market-driven approaches to innovation. The mass media and their largely negative portrayal of immigrant areas have also played a role in that they have become the dominant view of many citizens in Malmö. Our work has also faced patriarchal family views prevailing within some immigrant families. The goal of democratic politics is to empower a multiplicity of voices in the struggle for hegemony and at the same time find constitutions that help to transform antagonism into agonism, from conflict between enemies to constructive controversies among adversaries who have opposing matters of concern but also accept other views as legitimate. These are activities that are usually full of passion, imagination and engagement. As such, they are more like creative innovations than rational decision-making processes (Mouffe 2000).

It may be noted that this agonistic view of democracy is very much in line with the early Scandinavian model of PD (Bjerknes *et al*. 1987, Ehn 1988) and struggles for democracy at work. Hegemony within companies was at stake and constitutions or negotiation models to transform antagonistic struggles within the companies into passionate agonistic design and innovation strategies were tried out, with special focus on workers and their local trade unions, and on their empowerment and skills. Hence, it may be argued that an agonistic perspective on design and democracy is just a continuation of early approaches to PD. But agonistic challenges are also different when we move into public space and when one tries to make controversies public, as we are finding with the MLL experiences. In public space, as Dewey argued in *The public and its problems*, the democratic challenge is the possibility for publics to emerge around 'matters of concern' (Dewey 1927).

We suggest approaching design in, for and with agonistic public spaces as 'thinging' (Binder *et al.* 2011). Things in ancient Nordic and Germanic societies were originally assemblies, rituals and places where disputes were dealt with and political decisions made. Bruno Latour has called for a contemporary 'thing philosophy' and to make things public (Latour 2005). In this view, things are seen as socio-material 'collectives of humans and non-humans' through whom matters of concern or controversies are handled.

Hence, we find it constructive to think of design milieus like MLL as processes of agonistic thinging, especially if aspects of democratisation are at stake. This helps us to explore these environments as socio-material frames for matters of concerns and the alignment of controversies, ready for unexpected use, opening up new ways of thinking and behaving. It also helps in inquiring into how designers may act in a public space that permits heterogeneity of perspectives and in this way engaging in potential alignments of their conflicting matters of concern.

Infrastructuring is a related concept that we find powerful. Central issue that we faced when establishing MLL were, first, where to locate innovation and, second, what type of infrastructure is suitable for social innovation. Infrastructure is a central issue since innovation today, to a large degree, demands extensive collaboration over time and among many stakeholders. But this demands, as Star argues, that we see infrastructure not as a substrate that other actions can run on top of, but rather as an ongoing alignment between contexts (Star and Ruhleder 1996). Similarly, Suchman (2002) argues that we need to move away from viewing things as discrete objects and as networks of devices but instead start viewing design work and technological development 'as entry into the networks of working relations – including both contexts and alliances – that make technical systems possible' (Suchman 2002, p. 92). This is hard work where various contexts or practices and technologies concurrently undergo change and therefore demand continuous infrastructuring and aligning of partly conflicting interests (Star and Ruhleder 1996). Hence, infrastructuring can be seen as an ongoing process and should not be seen as being delimited to a design project phase in the development of a freestanding system.

As a consequence, what needs to be established through activities of thinging and infrastructuring are public agonistic spaces as long-term relationships through artful integration. In this process, continuous co-creation can be realised, as Suchman (2002) argues, by paying attention to, and working with, how technologies connect to wider systems of socio-material relation. This acknowledges co-creation as a collective interweaving of people, objects and processes.

Malmö Living Labs as social innovation agonistic public spaces

Ten years ago, Malmö, with some 300,000 inhabitants in the south of Sweden, was a dormant city. All major industries had disappeared. Today, it is a vibrant university city with an increasing number of small and medium-sized information technology (IT), media and design companies, and a lively cultural scene. It is also a segregated city, with the highest number of immigrants in Sweden from the Baltic region, Iraq, Afghanistan and various African countries. The way in which bridges may be built between dispersed groups, communities and competences is thus a central agonistic issue in the city. What could democratising design and innovation mean, or rather what futures can people make under such urban conditions? These are some of the issues we have set out to explore, practically, with MLL.

When developing MLL, we aimed to establish long-term relationships, to allow participants to become active co-creators, and to make it so that what is being designed enters their real-life context. This is in contrast to many co-creation approaches and living lab initiatives where users often are seen as participants to sample or are simply involved in a design processes to help elicit user needs.

There are more than 200 innovation milieus within the European Living Lab initiatives. The way in which the labs operate varies, but they share some characteristics. They all argue that the labs are situated in real-world environments, are user driven, and collaborate with research organisations, companies, and public and civic sectors with the aim of collaboratively developing new services and products. Living labs emerged as a response to innovation environments that were too closed, and which often resulted in failure to innovate, partly because of limited and late interaction with potential markets (Stålbröst 2008). Foregrounding the importance of users' role and real-life contexts in innovation has thus been central to the living labs approach. Common to many of these approaches is, however, a product-centric view rather than a focus on socio-material working relations. Buur and Mathews (2008), for example, point out how von Hippel focuses too strongly on technology and too little on the match between people, technology and context.

Closer to our approach is the notion of design labs (Binder 2007) that foreground active user participation. What Binder and his co-researchers put forward is that we can see such labs as collaborative learning and future-making environments where a chain of translations occurs across organisational and community boundaries.

Design for social innovation is, however, the view on innovation that has had the strongest impact on MLL. Social innovations can be products or services just like any innovation, but they can also be a principle, an idea, a piece of legislation, a social movement, an intervention, or some combination of them. The key aspect is their capacity to simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relations. The Young Foundation in the UK has been a major player in developing the social innovation perspective in theory and practice (Murray *et al.* 2010). Italian designer and researcher Ezio Manzini and the international group around him have been the main drivers in spreading such design practices, where new ideas emerge from a variety of actors directly involved in the problems to be solved. The actors included-end-users, grassroots designers, technicians and entrepreneurs, local institutions and civil society organisations. In this perspective, design is no longer just a tool for the development of functional innovative consumer products, but is increasingly seen as a process for radical change in developing services, systems and environments which support more sustainable lifestyles and consumption habits. A main concept for Manzini and his colleagues (Jégou and Manzini 2008) is 'collaborative services'. The role of the designer is initially to support the development of new concepts and later to make them attainable so that they can result in social enterprises.

With MLL using an interventionist action-research-oriented approach, we are exploring innovation as future making within a historically and geographically located phenomenon (rather than as a universal and ahistorical one). As participants make interventions in the city of Malmö, we explore whether innovation in practice can be about opening up spaces for questions and possibilities (rather than seeing innovation purely as producing novelty products to be marketed). At the same time, we attempt to connect disparate parts of the city and to build bridges between groups and competences. Hence, we explore whether innovation must be delimited to

specific privileged societal groups, experts and lead-users, or whether a more democratic future-making approach is possible.

MLL, which started in 2007 as Malmö New Media Living Lab, expanded into two additional labs in 2009. In order to maintain close working relations and trust we have kept MLL together as three small collaborating labs rather than one large lab. As mentioned, the city of Malmö is characterised by its multi-ethnicity, cultural production, youth culture and new media industry. This is also the rationale behind the orientation and cultural and geographical position for the three collaborating living lab milieus, which we call 'the Stage' for cultural production, 'the Neighbourhood' for collaborative services and 'the Factory' as a peer-to-peer production space. Although different in orientation and geographical locations, these three living labs are all founded on shared ideas and values. They are all based on user-driven design and innovation activities and, of central importance in our work, they all grow out of social movements.

Clearly, the picture described above says very little of the actual thinging and infrastructuring that is going on within MLL, or of which specific matters of concern and controversies are at stake in these agonistic public spaces. In the next section we will give a more detailed account from three future-making/innovation cases carried out in collaboration with the lab that focus on agonistic matters of concerns and controversies.

Innovation, agonism and public space with a hip-hop youth organisation

We shall start a more detailed account on infrastucturing and thinging agonistic public spaces through MLL with an example taken from the collaborative culture production lab, called the *Stage*. We start here because it was the first lab (established 2007), and has been a prototyping experience for the two latter collaborating labs (established in late 2009 and 2010).

We began by establishing a network of actors consisting of cultural producers, grassroots organisations, and people from IT and media companies. The aim was to explore how new media practices could grow out of ongoing cultural productions and grassroots activities centred around the arts and performance centre *Inkonst*. This functioned as a cultural and geographical bridge between the different parts of the city.

Although initiatives and ideas could come from any lab partner, we have focused on enhancing existing cultural practices by exploring various emergent innovation practices without *a priori* ideas regarding what lab partners should collaborate on, which technologies should be used, or how innovation practices should be organised.

Through the performance space *Inkonst* we became engaged with *RGRA*, a grassroots hip-hop youth organisation whose members are first and second generation immigrants living in the suburbs of Malmö. These teenagers travel geographically and culturally between the periphery and the centre of Malmö and Swedish society. Many of them feel marginalised and do not have the opportunity to express themselves in their own terms in the public sphere, whether in the urban environment or in the Swedish media landscape. Mainstream media has one-sidedly depicted their suburbs unfavourably, with the result that many of the teenagers feel stigmatised. Central to RGRA's approach are multi-ethnic encounters through cultural activities. Issues of integration are not explicitly on their agenda, but are

indirectly addressed, as they rap, dance and make graffiti. Many of the teenagers are creative and skilled rappers and beat makers.

Being seen: street journalism – mainstream media

Initial meetings and workshops with the RGRA group revealed that they wanted to explore how their presence in the urban landscape and the current media landscape could be enhanced. Their ambition was to run an online Street Magazine on their webpage. Prior to this, they had made some videos that had been published on the web. We introduced them to a variety of new communication possibilities that could enhance their practice, some of which came from the lab's business partners.

More than two years down the road, what started out as broad, open-ended explorations has resulted in various ongoing things that have explored how RGRA could engage in street journalism through mobile video broadcasting, dealing with dilemmas such as: how professional media and grassroots media can collaborate; and how to mediate a talent competition, aimed at letting different parts of the city and different musical traditions meet.

Urban presence: legitimacy and visibility

Collaborative design experiments have centred on making RGRA's presence in the urban environment more legitimate and visible. These urban media explorations, whether short or longer term, have revealed various controversies as we have organised thinging events around matters such as: how the youngsters could feel at home and appropriate commercial spaces; how they could become more visible in semi-public spaces by spreading their music on buses; and finally, how the stigmatisation of their neighbourhoods could be diminished through urban gaming.

The issue of feeling at home and feeling free to appropriate commercial spaces was explored through *Barcode Beats*, an instrument developed by interaction design master students from our university in collaboration with RGRA. With the consent of the owner of Malmö's biggest grocery store, a live performance took place, where the teenagers jammed by scanning grocery barcodes that were converted into unique hip-hop loops that resonated through the store. This playful performance should be seen in the context that many Arab immigrants in Malmö feel that they have to behave more exemplarily in public spaces than native Swedes do. In fact, they feel constantly under surveillance while shopping (Sixtensson 2009). The performance, then, from our perspective, became an agonistic thing challenging the hegemony of the dominant Swedish culture.

Another longer term agonistic thing concerned how RGRA could become more visible in the urban environment. At an early workshop, between us and RGRA, the idea came up that they could set up Bluetooth poles at strategic places or that Bluetooth senders could be placed in buses, transforming the bus company into a media provider (buses being a space where many youngsters spend up to two hours a day when commuting back and forth to school) (Figure 1).

Do-Fi, a company that specialises in developing Bluetooth services, was contacted. They saw potential in the idea and agreed to participate in setting up a first round of experiments. Two research colleagues with expertise in place-centric computing were engaged. Skånetrafiken, a company in charge of the public transport

Figure 1.   A passenger listening to a song he has downloaded to his mobile phone.

in the region, and Veolia, which operates many of Malmö's bus routes, also agreed to participate and provide access to their buses.

The general outcome of the experiments was interesting, given the constellation of partners with disparate matters of concern. RGRA saw the potential in gaining access to a new space where they could distribute their music and which would make them more visible in the city. The bus company saw a potentially new commuter service beyond traditional transportation. They suggested quizzes for commuters and they could also see the potential of distracting teenagers from destroying the bus seats. Do-Fi saw the potential of developing a new product and new services in collaboration with the company Epsilon Embedded Systems. The researchers saw the potential for developing a new research project focusing on place-specific media. The network of actors applied for research funding to develop a working prototype, which was granted, and led to *BluePromo*, a research project on developing a portable low-cost media hub.

In one sense, the Bluetooth bus undertaking can be seen as just another experiment, but that does not tell the whole story. It was also a thing. The experiment revealed not only the possibility of aligning different matters of concern, but also controversies and conflicts. One controversy concerned the constellation of partners. RGRA had split emotions on whether they should collaborate with Veolia, because the international branch of the company was at the time engaged in building transportation infrastructure in East Jerusalem, which is perceived by many Arabs to be Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory. At the same time, they saw that they could gain financially from participating and benefit from having access to the network of actors. RGRA ended up participating with the condition that their and Veolia's logotypes would not appear next to each other in any press material. They were foremost collaborating with the researchers and the IT company and only indirectly with Veolia. The bus experiment also generated debates around immaterial and commercial rights; who could apply for patents, and who should gain financially if a new form of Bluetooth push technology were developed. Questions were also raised around what type of (media) space the interior of the bus could be. Could it be transformed into a more public and inclusive space or would it remain an exclusive space leased out only to commercial actors, as is the case today?

Urban controversies

Just as RGRA sensed that they should behave differently in public spaces and felt that they were to a large degree invisible in the urban environment, they also felt that their neighbourhoods were largely unknown by youngsters living in other parts of the city. A common view is that their neighbourhoods are dangerous.

The open-ended structure of the MLL environment enabled a new thing to emerge that could deal with this issue. Our open-ended structure allowed the assembly of RGRA, Do-Fi and the researchers, with the company Ozma Game Design and the city of Malmö. The strategy was to see how the mobile game platform *UrbLove*, developed by Ozma, could be used to create new experiences of RGRA's neighbourhoods. With the platform, participants could explore urban environments by solving 'text' quizzes related to specific places. Combining their gaming platform with Do-Fi's Bluetooth technology also seemed fruitful since that would give the players the opportunity to download media files at specific spots when playing a game. In an initial experiment, youngsters from RGRA helped to develop a game path and produced media related to their neighbourhood.

The game path was tried out by other youngsters and revealed interesting outcomes. First of all, it seemed like a proper approach to explore unknown urban environments. It demonstrated how the game created a spontaneous interaction between the players and locals. Perhaps the most important outcome was that the participants expressed the need to continuously develop their own game paths, which was difficult within the existing system. The experiment provided a base to obtain more research money to develop the platform into a more open and more easily administrated game engine. We are in the midst of creating a process where several more routes and narratives, having been constructed by RGRA, will allow not only youngsters, but all kinds of people (such as politicians and tourists) to participate in exploring their neighbourhoods (Figure 2). The right to positively expose their marginalised neighbourhoods of the city was certainly an important controversial issue dealt with in these experiments, an issue with consequences far beyond the initial game route.

Figure 2. RGRA youngsters explore a neighbourhood through a mobile game.

The process of thinging also raised agonistic concerns about the that role actors like RGRA can have when collaborating with companies or the university. We wanted to avoid a situation where they solely acted as a user group that provides information and test results. To avoid this, we will pay close attention to how they can be a part of potential future commercial services (e.g. constructing tourist routes through mobile games). We have therefore carefully promoted their role in the constellation and tried to make their participation more equal with the other partners (e.g. providing them with some financial support and continuously stressing that they should be regarded as a potential business partner). It remains unclear whether RGRA will be able to gain as much from this collaboration as the business and university partners. However, they have recently been selling game paths to the City of Malmö as a joint business with Ozma and sharing the profits.

We will return to further reflections on this case in the concluding discussion. For now, we turn to the collaborative neighbourhood lab and immigrant women as social innovators.

Herrgårds Women Association: social innovation, cultural controversies and the city

One of the areas in Malmö considered as having the most social problems is the neighbourhood called Rosengård. From an agonistic perspective it became important for us to see how this area and the people living there could become part of MLL. We started to look for participants who were visible and recognised social innovation actors in the district. Every time we talked to officials such as civil servants and every time we had students going out to do research, we got the same answers: the most prominent actors were Drömmarnas Hus and Yalla trappan. These are indeed very good examples of social innovators. However, they are fairly well established and also supported by the municipality (and we would argue therefore more a part of the hegemonic structure of the city). What about other, more invisible actors? Through our infrastructuring process, RGRA connected us to other stakeholders, who were much more marginalised. One such marginalised, but also highly innovative and skilful group, is the non-governmental organisation (NGO) *Herrgårds Women Association* (HWA). Five women started this association eight years ago because they felt excluded from Swedish society. Its members include 200 women and 200 children. The members are primarily Afghan, but include Iranian, Iraqi and Bosnian nationalities. Many of the members are illiterate and have limited Swedish language skills. Central to the association's objectives is to raise the women's self-esteem. Other activities include study circles on sexual health and social issues such as 'honour'-related violence, catering, sewing clothes, and crafting textiles and carpets.

Taking the agonistic approach seriously, HWA seemed like a very relevant stakeholder with which to start a collaboration. The purpose of the collaboration for our lab was to explore how to enable them so that their skills and competencies could be acknowledged and valued more by Swedish society.

Our strategy was to build a long-term relationship with them in order to understand the group and their matters of concern. This was done through small joint experiments prototyping their ideas and exploring ways for them to connect to the rest of the MLL environment. One experiment explored how they could help newly arrived refugee orphans and another investigated how they could develop food services to companies (Hillgren *et al.* 2011) (Figure 3).

Figure 3.   Herrgårds Women Association hosting a cooking class with refugee orphans.

The women in HWA were resourceful and capable when given the opportunity to act. The refugee orphans highly appreciated their services and the companies considered their food service more than satisfying. Some municipality representatives also stated that the women's engagement was valuable 'because they relate to the orphans in a different way than a Swedish civil servant would do'. At the same time, we could see several obstacles to fuller engagement, such as the fact that the women lacked a full understanding of the Swedish cultural context and some specific skills related, for example, to business processes. To address this, we connected HWA with the Göran Network, a large network of businesswomen. This would later turn out to be a process with several implications.

Supported by our business partner DoDream, who hired a facilitator, women from these two networks volunteered to meet to see how they could collaborate. Initially, it seemed successful, with several groups and focus areas emerging such as catering services and a common book project about children's stories. But there were also controversies. A major issue was the actual forms of collaboration, where DoDream (and women from the Göran Network) were focusing on how individuals from the two networks could be paired so as to collaborate, which would lead to the formation of new group constellations. This was not well received by the HWA women, who felt uncomfortable leaving their group. The HWA women repeatedly stressed that what is most crucial for them is to be able to sustain a collective. They are motivated by working together. They would only dare to approach the Swedish society if they could do it collectively in the group they themselves have organised. Both HWA and Göran work and fight for women's rights, but they do it in different ways. For HWA, the individual woman is not as important as the group, while the individuals participating from the Göran network emphasised the individual women as a foundation to build from. The HWA women do not want to continue the collaboration with Göran if they have to do it as individuals, and at present its unclear how the process will unfold and what role the lab may play in this controversy.

By exploring future possibilities like these, opportunities, questions and dilemmas have emerged. In addition to the importance of the collective, there is

the issue that if the women carry out commercial services as members of an NGO, they do not compete under the same conditions as companies, because their taxes and social security fees are much lower. Will the trade unions, which were the starting point for Scandinavian PD, confront the women for competing under unfair conditions that threatens regular jobs? Another dilemma concerns the power relations within their own families. The women state that their position within the family is complex. While the women are strong in their own right, they also uphold patriarchal traditions, as is common in many Afghan and Iraqi families. The husband is seen as the family provider; he earns money and deals with politics and societal issues or similar matters of concern. However, most of these men have lost their authority on arriving in Sweden since many of them are unemployed. If the women's association develops into a successful business, it will give them a position in society that their husbands lack. The women are not sure how to handle this and traditionally their strategy has been to keep quiet about what they do so as to avoid trouble at home.

Challenging authority and hegemony is not without serious costs. The women have had several attacks targeting them. Twice last summer the HWA premises where fire bombed, threatening the women both physically and psychologically. Their documents were stolen and they have not been given access to new facilities. Police and public authorities are alarmingly passive on the matter. A non-threatening cost, but one of concern to us as researchers, is the importance of research responsibilities in agonistic engagements.

The social incubator: agonism, issues and controversies

The third case and design interventions we want to highlight includes RGRA and HWA, but also concerns the process of designing an incubator for social innovation in the city of Malmö.

The municipality of Malmö took the initiative to explore whether such an incubator could be established. As a part of this process MLL was given the opportunity to conduct three design workshops to elaborate how the incubator could be structured, as well as how its main features and support functions should be designed. Once more, the first crucial question for us, as in all participatory projects, was: Who should have a say in this process? Who should be included?

Having the infrastructuring process going on for several years before the incubator initiative started made it possible to mobilise rather diverse competences, perspectives and stakeholders into a workshop process. So we designed the workshops as agonistic thinging events with adversaries for diverse interests and perspectives, including civil servants representing different municipal departments, people from organisations supporting social entrepreneurial initiatives, investors, business developers and researchers; but the agonistic process was centred around six potential future users of an incubator for social innovation (Figure 4).

This group included the RGRA/Do-Fi and HWA initiatives described above, and also included groups that ranged from *Feedus*, a group of young men from one of the toughest areas in Malmö with a business idea to set up a repair and recycling workshop engaging the youth in that area, to more established initiatives like the magazine *Aluma* sold by homeless people. Other participants had started as grassroots initiatives but have been able to grow and become established as a part of the municipality, giving them the experience of being both within and outside the

Figure 4.   Agonistic thinging around the issue of a 'social incubator'.

more established institutions. All these stakeholders have been taking initiatives and in different ways struggling to achieve social change in their local environments. We therefore decided to set up a significant part of the workshop process around their everyday practices, capabilities and needs.

By permitting the normally marginalised potential users of a future incubator for social innovation to become central actors in the agonistic thinging process, others – normally being the powerful key actors – were rendered to a secondary and supportive role. Most participants accepted this, whereas a few really powerful actors opted out and perused their agendas in less public spaces.

Some of the outcomes from the workshops reflected questions about incubator ownership from the broad and diverse group of participating stakeholders. The questions, for example, centred on: who would judge incoming propositions and should the municipality be the only one to own the idea and be in control of it? The general view was that it would be preferable that the social innovators should be some of the more central owners. One of the more central and interesting outcomes regarded the basic structure and the location of the incubator. The municipality had stated that they preferred a centrally located incubator with a more traditional set-up with some few people employed such as business developers. During the workshop that structure was contested and many participants favoured a more distributed model, closer to social innovators such as RGRA, HWA and Feedus and local city services, hence, building on already existing resources and locating activities out in the different city districts.

After the three workshops, we summed up the results in a report distributed to all participants. We also had a meeting with the civil servant responsible for the incubator process and the civil servant responsible for writing the memorandum and official report that would be the basis for further decisions in the city council. These civil servants did not really support the distributed incubator model, partly because they could see how hard it would be to gain support for such a model in the city council.

However, they realised that a traditional central incubator would need ideas and initiatives coming from the city districts with social problems and that it was important to consider the whole chain of innovation, including mobilising and supporting existing grassroots resources. During the meeting these considerations opened up for a creative act of bureaucratic translation. The distributed incubator model (including most of the findings from the workshop) was transformed into a new model consisting of two interconnected parts: a traditional incubator and a pre-incubator (where the latter contained most of the findings from the workshop). The skills of the bureaucratic civil servants made it possible to translate the workshop findings into a document that presented something new (and slightly radical) and that was still within in the safe zone for being accepted by the city council.

The city has now decided to invest in and build the social incubator. What this means is still an ongoing controversy where the different stakeholders make their moves. Hegemony has, on the one hand, not been altered, as those powerful actors who opted out from the agonistic workshop process will get their central business as usual entrepreneurial incubator for new jobs. On the other hand, the city has also initiated a parallel and integrated initiative on several pre-incubators for social innovation, called an innovation forum, located in the most contentious districts of Malmö.

'We are the social incubator', a participant exclaimed during one of the workshops. What he meant was that the workshops themselves were the kind of agonistic public space they as grassroots social innovators needed. They had some ownership over the workshop environment and it supported them in prototyping their ideas, peer-to-peer networking, as well as gaining access to civil servants, business developers and other resources.

The infrastructuring goes on in many different ways, not only with our original collaborators. Feedus, the youngsters with the recycling business idea, have, for example, finally obtained financial support for their activities and they will be supported by a very experienced grassroots social entrepreneur who they met at the workshop. MLL will also back up their activities. Another example is the social entrepreneur running the magazine with homeless people who, with support from the lab, is now prototyping another idea around a magazine for social innovation.

Discussion

Malmö Living Labs as agonistic public space

On a general level, the idea of MLL as a participatory thinging platform, and the focus on infrastructure as match-making activities, make sense as ways of structuring agonistic public spaces. Our approach, especially with the focus on open-ended participatory social innovation, potentially challenges hegemonic domination of innovation practices. Our work has tried to move from the dominant technocratic

and market-oriented view of innovation towards judging the value of an innovation as future making by the degree to which it opens up for constructive and sustainable questions and possibilities, within a specific geographically and historically located situation.

As Mouffe states, a prevailing view today is that the liberal market economy is the *precondition* for democracy (Mouffe 1993). This dominant view permeates our research financers and the public discourse, meaning that we have to operate within a space where antagonism must constructively be turned into agonistic controversies. One financing body expects MLL to generate new media innovations in close collaboration with private companies, while another financing body expects the lab to generate new jobs partly through social innovation and new start-ups. We do not oppose any of these concerns as long as they are allowed to *grow out of* specific historical and geographical concerns.

Agonistic thinging practices on the go

The agonistic approach become most apparent through the groups we included in our explorations, and our strategy has been to work with those marginalised by Swedish society in our local community, and see where their concerns may lead and what issues need to be raised. This led us to further consider with whom the marginalised groups could collaborate, given the constraints under which we operate. This has meant building agonistic thinging practices 'on the go', rather than through predefined constitutions and constellations or assemblies. The specific cases presented above started with an open-ended inquiry based on the RGRA's, HWA's and the other grassroots social entrepreneurs' existing practice and how they could become enhanced partly through developing new social innovation practices. The constellation of stakeholders was not predetermined, and neither were: what issues would be raised; what practices should be developed; or what forms of mediations and what technologies would become relevant. What drove the inquiry and which stakeholders would join the exploration were determined by the socio-material issue being explored. The participants that aggregated around the matters of concern did so because it had relevance to their practice. How it was relevant to the different stakeholders varied considerably and at times revealed dilemmas not easily resolved through consensus processes. The socio-material issue that assembles the various stakeholders could in many ways be seen as temporary joint endeavours that are assembled, undone and reassembled depending on what is to be achieved. A question that can be raised, however, is, how inclusive the process has been. Have these assemblies really been agonistic things? Could they have been more inclusive regarding participation from adversaries representing the hegemony?

Infrastructuring beyond the lab

In many ways, our living labs resemble, as mentioned, Binder's notion of the design lab as a collaborative learning environment (Binder 2007). Looking back, it becomes apparent that what drove the open-ended explorations was the continuous articulation of what it can mean to be a legitimate citizen, in regard to both the physical and mediated lived experience in Malmö today. Connecting actors together has given them insights and new competencies. These temporary assemblies transform the actors. Members of RGRA have stated that the experiments have

pointed out how they can communicate through new media channels that engage their members to produce and consume music and video in a new way. They also believe that such a media service would make them more known in the city. To them, the most central aspect of the process has been that they have gained knew insights into how the current media landscape functions and given them access to new social networks. It has organisationally entailed changes. RGRA has changed during the collaboration from being an informal grassroots organisation, which has been reluctant to organise, into a formal organisation so that they can apply for grants. With HWA, we can see similar transformations; the women, through gaining access to new social networks and producing obviously valuable services for society, have increased their self-esteem. We have also seen constellations go beyond a specific project into more sustainable and long-term learning and working relations. The relationship between the Do-Fi and RGRA has, for example, gradually emerged into a self-sustained collaboration. During the past two years, they have collaborated on several experiments within the framework of MLL. Their respective and complementary competencies have been mutually recognised as valuable resources. Now they have formed a company together.

The shift of focus from single projects to creating open agonistic public spaces where different practices can meet has meant foregrounding the practitioners' authorship. Consequently, this has meant focusing less on the interaction between the designers and the practitioners. The focus, for example, in the Bluetooth processes has been on infrastructuring: creating meaningful encounters at first between RGRA, Do-Fi and the bus company. The design researchers' infrastructuring role became primarily organising workshops and concrete experiments so that the disparate practices could collaboratively probe into future possibilities. Workshops and experiments thus allowed for joint explorations and the discovery of the consequences that various actions might yield. With HWA, the role has primarily been scaffolding their activities, providing them with new networks and connections as well as legitimising them (simply by providing them with an official connection to the university).

As we have seen above, as new knowledge, new networks and transformations have occurred, these things also brought dilemmas to the surface concerning messy issues that go beyond easy problem solving. And they also go beyond being identified as 'rights' or 'wrongs', which cannot easily be negotiated into consensus. In the interventions described above, agonism is instead played out by small-scale experiments which, through passionate engagement, reveal differences between and among the stakeholders.

Adversarial design

Although we, to some extent, have elaborated and presented concrete suggestions for new services (demanded by our media business partners and some of our financing bodies) and facilitated new constellations of actors (as described above), we have also put a lot of effort in articulating issues. It is in this latter aspect that we have tried to position our work and through our agonistic infrastructuring processes we would argue that we have succeeded in evoking relevant questions that challenge existing hegemony. In the case of HWA the questions included: what is a business; what is a business model; what role could an NGO have; and what does it mean to be an individual citizen or a collective in the society? In the

case of RGRA: how can they appropriate public space; what districts and stories in the city are worth attention; and what kind of public space is a bus? In the case of the social incubator: what constitutes an incubator and who are legitimate participants? What we, as researchers, could have done better, however, is to sustain the public debate around these issues.

In *Adversarial design* (2012), Carl DiSalvo argues along similar agonistic lines as we have done in this article, but the focus is more on the designerly means and forms that evoke and engage political issues. This designerly and political way of making marginalised people and issues public is still a challenge for our thinging approach.

The infrastructuring and the agonistic things have been too short lived. Although issues have been raised during the experiments, we have found it difficult in a designerly way to manage and package the result so that they would have enough impact to challenge the dominant hegemony. For MLL the challenge is how to maintain an agonistic platform that sustains and facilitates debates and struggles while protecting the people involved. We have asked ourselves whether we should have taken the issue around how youngsters could use public buses further. Some years ago, public transportation, such as buses and trains, was owned by the Swedish state. Today they are, to a large degree, outsourced to commercial actors who in turn outsource the media spaces on the buses to media and advertisement companies, which diminish citizen access to public spaces. Should we, together with RGRA, have gone into an agonistic negotiation with the bus company concerning who should own and occupy the digital spaces on the buses as well as the bus company's engagement in the Middle East? In the case of HWA, should the business controversy between a Swedish businesswomen's perspective and an immigrant NGO collective's perspective have been made public? Or, even more pressing: should the issue of threat and violence in social innovation thinging have been brought to the forefront? In fact, it seems that only in the case of the social incubator have we been able to support our partners' future making and create a sustainable agonistic space where the issue is literally being made public and the controversies are fought out. But even so, the social incubator may well end up as a business as usual job incubator far from the visions and dreams from the workshop report. Should this obvious controversy be publically staged?

Conclusions

A central challenge for PD today, just as four decades ago, is to provide for alternative perspectives on participation and on democratisation. This challenge means actively exploring alternative ways to organise future making and milieus for innovation that are more democratically oriented than traditional milieus that focus on expert groups and individuals. It also means moving away from the dominating technocratic and market-oriented view of innovation; a move towards practices where differences and controversies are allowed to exist, and dilemmas are raised and possibilities explored. The design researcher role becomes one of infrastructuring agonistic public spaces mainly by facilitating the careful building of arenas consisting of heterogeneous participants, legitimising those marginalised, maintaining network constellations, and leaving behind repertoires of how to organise socio-materially when conducting innovative transformations.

144 *E. Björgvinsson* et al.

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