

Lerner reports that institutions as diverse as the United Nations, the US Army, and grassroots community groups are already using games and game-like processes to encourage participation. Drawing on more than a decade of practical experience and extensive research, he explains how games have been integrated into a variety of public programs in North and South America. He offers rich stories of game techniques in action, in children's councils, social service programs, and participatory budgeting and planning. With these real-world examples in mind, Lerner describes five kinds of games and 26 game mechanics that are especially relevant for democracy. He finds that when governments and organisations use games and design their programs to be more like games, public participation becomes more attractive, effective, and transparent. Game design can make democracy fun – and make it work.

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Chapter contents

In the introductory chapter, *Should democracy be fun*, the research questions treated in the book are presented. What does it take to make democratic participation an activity with fun? Can public participation be made gratifying, interesting, and enjoyable, and how? Can games contribute to making democratic participation a funny activity? Additionally, the structure of the book is outlined.

The second chapter, on *Games, Play and Democracy* defines games and explores the ways politicians and activists use games for political and social purposes. The author presents examples from North and South America and discusses how they can be integrated *in and as political action* so as to strengthen democratic practices.

In Chapter 3, *What Game Design*, the author questions what can we learn from game design theory that can be applicable in politics so as to strengthen citizens' engagement. He elaborates on key game design concepts and names 26 specific game mechanics that can be the most useful for government and public organisations.

In Chapter 4, *Not just child's play: games in democratic process*, the author, analysing The city of the children in Rosario, Argentina programme, discusses how games can be used in order to develop public policy proposals. He showcases how both children councils and adults can use games and game-like activities in order to encourage democratic dialogue and potential challenges/risks of use.

Chapter 5, *Rosario Habitat: designing participation like a game*, reports on how games can be inserted into public meetings and entire political processes can be designed or redesigned to become more game-like, in order to revitalise citizen engagement.

In Chapter 6, *Toronto Community Housing: Game Design in less fertile soils*, the author reports on the challenges he faced while trying to integrate games and game mechanics in North America, within the Toronto Community Housing in Canada. He analyses new opportunities and challenges for game design and participation, to be used in a remodelling effort of participatory processes.

The seventh chapter, *My Game design experiment*, highlights results of the 2-year programme that the author implemented in Toronto Community Housing, designed to evaluate and improve the local participatory budgeting effort by instilling game mechanics in the participatory budgeting processes. The author analyses if and how the use of games (and not just game mechanics) can improve the quality of citizen participation in politics.

The concluding chapter, entitled *A toolbox for fixing democracy*, presents a typology of games (animation, team-building, capacity-building, analysis, and decision-making) and game mechanics (conflict and collaboration; rules; outcomes; and engagement) introduced in Chapter 3 that can be appropriate for public affairs. The author discusses the effects and dangers that these game mechanics may engender (violence; unfair outcomes; lack of fun; trivialisation; and manipulation) and finishes up with proposing a number of strategies for optimising game offering in politics: *engage the senses*; *legitimate rules*; *generate collaborative competition*; *linkage of participation to measurable outcomes*; and *design for participants*.

Significance for the state of research and practice

Declining voter turnout, public disengagement, political apathy and abstinence from many aspects of political life are a growing problem worldwide. At the same time, forms of civic resistance have increased. People have become far more likely to participate in boycotts, demonstrations, and social movements of opposition.

Is there a way by making democracy more enjoyable to boost citizen demand for engagement, deepen democratic power, and improve public trust in government? This is the key issue discussed in the book. By offering a series of case studies of the use of games in very different settings and a variety of public programs in North and South America, the author argues in favour of a new approach for strengthening the relations between citizens and policy makers by updating and refreshing traditional public procedures, such as children's councils, social service programs, and participatory budgeting and planning. He presents an original and innovative point of view explaining the ways in which, when governments and organisations use games and game mechanics to design their programs and activities, public participation becomes more attractive, effective, and transparent.

Defined as serious games, educational games, digital game based learning, instructional games, game-based training and the like, digital games are learning methods that use the characteristics of computer games in order to playfully instil specific knowledge to their users (Zyda, 2005). What differentiates these forms of gaming from traditional computer games are their purposes and their realism as, in their case, all characteristics of computer games, the plot, the rules, the goals, rewards and results of player decisions have to reference reality (Balzert et al., 2012).

According to Patokorpi et al. (2012) games are a suitable tool for interaction between the authorities and the citizens with several benefits in the context of e-government as they are easily intelligible to citizens, and well-suited to illuminate complex, ill-structured issues. Games can provide a cost-effective way to give information about economic, ecology and social issues and they enable the use of real information in real time. In addition, games free their users from geographical, spatial and temporal constraints, although they can be equally well designed for context awareness, exploiting the information emerging in a particular place, time and situation.

More generally put, the dynamic nature of virtual environments is considered to encourage the “active participation by the player”, thus leading to “a fertile ground for the generation of real cognitive conflicts ensuring a personal and solid build of knowledge” (Mouaheb et al., 2012). In this context, games can potentially create and strengthen trust among individuals and local community groups, link this sort of trust to confidence in the process of engaging, and encourage interactive practices of engagement, often defined as civic learning. Games can mediate isolated acts of participation to produce deeper, more interactive forms of civic engagement (Gordon and Baldwin-Philippi, 2014).

According to the author, just like democracy, games always involve participation and decision making, by design. Unlike democracy, though, games are inspiring engagement, earning trust, and gaining power. The author argues that governments and organisations should make democratic participation more fun, to increase citizen engagement and trust in democracy, and to empower people to democratically decide more issues that affect their lives not only through digital technologies, but also in face-to-face interactions.

This is clearly a comprehensive visionary approach that opens the way for a new domain of research that has to do with both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the usage of games to address public and social policy challenges. Additionally, as Gordon and Schirra (2012) mention, we should consider not just how games can change the context of decision making, but also how games can change the tone of decision making and make it fun, as well as the new modalities of public participation that they can bring forward (Gupta et al., 2012). And this is exactly the point that the author underlines when he presents the typology of games and game mechanics that can be appropriate for public affairs and proposes a series of strategies for optimising game offerings in politics.

Significance for managers and instructors

According to Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015), fun has become more than just a frill in public participation. Games give citizens a chance to test their knowledge, strengthen their relationships and come up with their own solutions to public problems.

Although digital games are in the forefront of technological development, the use of games and game design for e-government purposes has been modest. Still, games have several certain characteristics that make them suitable for education, communication and the promotion of civic skills in e-government: hypertextuality, interactivity, reusability, updateability, object-likeness, reprogrammability, personalisability as well as multimodality.

By drawing on both theory and practice, the author offers a better understanding of games and game mechanisms that can be utilised by a wider spectrum of organisations in the arena of public policy. The book, thus, offers a new perspective to the effective use of

digital games for empowerment and social inclusion (DGEI) of people and communities at risk of exclusion, an area that according a 2013 study of the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (Stewart and Misuraca, 2013) will be shaped by, and may influence the development of the growing serious games industry, the latter being broadly defined as a network of firms, users, research and policy makers from a variety of sectors that supply game products, services, technology and researches.

For academic tutors, undergraduate and postgraduate students, the book offers theoretical debates, but also real-life stories from different political and social environments (ranging from Latin American to Canada) and different policy areas and life-cycle stages, from local planning decisions to policy design.

From a political science and sociology standpoint, the book can prove a very useful reading, bringing insight into new trends on initiatives that can strengthen the relations of citizens and policy makers relation along different settings and new forms of civic learning (Gordon and Baldwin-Philippi, 2014).

For the whole ecosystem of game designers and developers, at the same time, the book is offering practical insights and know-how that can serve the goals of public policy, as well as examples of specific techniques to use, such as the five ‘winning strategies’ put forward at the concluding chapter.

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Chapter contents

In the introductory text of this collective volume, Matt Ratto and Megan Boler present the concept of the book, originating from a 2010 conference convened by themselves, namely DIY citizenship, a term used to highlight the diverse ways in which citizenship is enacted and performed, and the role of the internet as an enabler for a shift in political engagement and citizen participation in politics.

In the first part of the book, entitled *DIY and Activism: New modes of civic engagement and participatory politics*, contemporary forms of activism and digital collectives and networks are analysed from a DIY perspective, in an effort to identify what role citizens can uptake in modern politics.

In Chapter 1, *Maktivism: Authentic Making for Technology in the Service of Humanity*, Mann defines as Maktivists all those doers, personally committed individuals who via technological and media-related tools act as social change makers. The author gives a series of concrete examples of people and activities that fall in this concept.

In Chapter 2, *(Re)making the Internet: Free Software and the Social Factory Hack*, Milberry refers to tech activists (hackers, coders, geeks) and to the ways in which these people have embraced human and democratic values in the way internet functions. Considering FOSS as a social movement, the author discusses the political nature of technology as well as the sociality of its production and the embedding of human rights principles and savoir faire in technology design.

In Chapter 3, *Fan Activism as Participatory Politics: the Case of the Harry Potter Alliance*, Jenkins presents a study of how civic engagement can come out of fan activism, with creative communities producing their own models of public participation. The case study used is Harry Potter Alliance, a group that targets young readers of Harry Potter books and tries to encourage them to become politically engaged.

In Chapter 4, *Radical Inclusion? Locating Accountability in Technical DIY*, Dunbar-Hester elaborates on civic participation via technical empowerment of citizens. The Pandora Radio Project is used as an example project, in which tech activists offered hands-on services to citizens, together with technology as well as advocacy to work on policy changes. This practice can be understood as part of a broader effort to facilitate technical and political engagement, through a 'demystification' of technology.

In Chapter 5, *Proportionate ID Cards: Prototyping for Privacy and Accountability*, McPhail et al. start from the fact that ID cards enable and delimit the way we participate in society. The authors then set out to discuss what a citizen-proportionate ID would look like, and how it could be used in practice, so as to permit thoughtful engagement with government and other organisations that require identification.

In Chapter 6, *Developing Communities of Resistance? Maker Pedagogies, Do-It-Yourself Feminism, and DIY Citizenship*, Chidgey refers to zines, alternative media used by various social movements, as the perfect channels for communication and creativity, offering social documents that can be useful to activists. Zines in this case are used as an example of potential mixed identity activity (both commercial and grassroots) with political connotation.

In Chapter 7, *Rethinking Media Activism through Fan Blogging: How Stewart and Colbert Fans Make a Difference*, Burwell and Boler follow up on the fan activism and analyse how fun production (sites commenting on The daily show, the Colber report) can give a useful insights on political expression, insisting on the fact that citizenship needs to include elements of emotion, enthusiasm, participation and sociability and redefine the boundaries of political engagement.

In Chapter 8, *Just Say Yes: DIY-ing the Yes Men*, Reilly describes civic activism as a simple personal affair. It is up to us to decide and do it. The author also presents the work and added value of Yes lab, a centre for experimentation in social change that helps citizens and groups design and implement civic projects.

In the second part of the book, entitled *DIY and Making: Learning, Culture, Hacking, and Arts* some key aspects of the issues treated in Part 1 are presented by analysing the DIY citizenship concept as a learning and cultural process and outcome.

In Chapter 9, *DIY Citizenship, Critical Making, and Community*, Orton-Johnson studies craft activities and communities to focus on the need to update the way we define citizenship so as to incorporate the relation between communities and identity. The author explains how social media networks enable craft communities of knitters to form and express citizenship identities through wider self-determining formations, beyond geographical boundaries.

In Chapter 10, *Mélange of Making: Bringing Children's Informal Learning Cultures to the Classroom*, Bal et al. elaborate on the need of a new cultural model that insists on DIY ethos, where citizens will be encouraged to activate themselves and become critical self-determined makers. Towards this end, formal education mechanisms need to profit from digital media and facilities in order to prepare young people to become active citizens.

In Chapter 11, *Power Struggles: Knowledge Production in a DIY News Club*, Jenson et al. follow up on the issue of education and discuss how children (particularly those from low socioeconomic conditions) can be engaged in digital media production in the context of formal education. The authors present examples of how the DIY culture via activities such as a school-based DIY media production club can contribute towards this end.

In Chapter 12, *Transparency Reconsidered: Creative, Critical, and Connected Making with E-textiles*, Kafai and Pepler examine youth and adult action during e-textile workshops, with a view to discuss the ways in which working with technology is a matter of cultural and personal choices, and may lead to increase transparency as well as reveal gender attitudes.

In Chapter 13, *Woven Futures: Inscribed Material Ecologies of Critical Making*, Rosner and Foster discuss the need and value of more virtually participative forms of education, analysing differences in formal learning environments and informal after school practices. As a case study, the authors examine an after-school club in Silicon Valley for predominantly African-American and Latino youth working on a collaborative craft project that connects specific handwork activities with digital video and imagery.

In Chapter 14, *Making Publics: Documentary as Do-It-with-Others Citizenship*, Rose presents pros and cons of collaborative documentary practices in a civic engagement context and offers a new perspective of DIWO (do it with others) as the appropriate way to enhance active citizenship and public sphere as a participative space of co-creation.

In Chapter 15, *Mirror Images: Avatar Aesthetics and Self-Representation in Digital Games*, de Castell explores the social and political aspects of virtual worlds. She proposes a shift from individualistic to societal design and production, as a way to render design structure, rules and mechanisms more accountable and turn the time invested for development of virtual identities into an opportunity for civic engagement.

In the third part of the book, entitled *DIY and Design: Opening the black box and repurposing technologies*, concepts of design and participatory activities are addressed and examples are given that demonstrate the social value of technology along with participatory design mechanisms and practices.

In Chapter 16, *Textual Doppelgangers: Critical Issues in the Study of Technology*, Ratto discusses how critical and scholar analysis of technology loses its purpose if it not connected to end users, not only in terms of use but also in terms of design.

In Chapter 17, *The Growbot Garden Project as DIY Speculation through Design*, Di Salvo looks at how publics can be engaged through processes of speculative design to discuss issues of ethical and social concern about science and technology. To this end, he discusses one instantiation of the Growbot Garden Project that investigates how the festival was framed and opened up to citizens as a public engagement space enhanced with technology.

In Chapter 18, *Doing It in the Cloud: Google, Apple, and the Shaping of DIY Culture*, Murphy et al. focus on Apple and Google to review the technical and industrial

organisation of cloud computing, and the implications that it might have on new trends of technological, political and cultural forms of civic engagement.

In Chapter 19, *Citizen Innovation: Active Energy and the Quest for Sustainable Design*, Light presents a citizen innovation project realised through participatory art practice. Initiated as a co-design effort to engage marginalised people via digital tools in discussion about the future of network technology, this endeavour soon became a flagship project of how marginalised groups of elderly people can be involved in decision design processes.

In Chapter 20, *Le Champ des Possibles – The Field of Possibilities*, McSwiney and Michaud present an example of bottom-up participatory process whereas Les Amis du Champ des Possibles, a Montreal-based non-profit group, along with other community members, such as artists, botanists, educators and volunteers have tried to preserve a three-acre site, considering it as a common good.

In Chapter 21, *Distributed Design: Media Technologies and the Architecture of Participation*, McKim analyses the manner in which participatory forms of civic architecture arrive at reconciling technological innovations with expert opinions and citizen views.

In Chapter 22, *“I hate your politics but I love your diamonds”*: *Citizenship and the Off-Topic Message Board Subforum*, Swartz and Driscoll analyse online activity of the PriceScope community and the transformation of its forum from a gems forum to a political virtual space.

In the fourth part of the book entitled *DIY and Media: Redistributing Authority and Sources in News Media* the authors question the traditional form of public sphere and discuss how Web 2.0, participatory and interactive media have influenced the advancement of new perspectives of the concept of public. Contributing authors of this part embark on an investigation of the way in which social media practices are reshaping landscapes of news media, public spheres, and definitions of journalism in terms of ‘fairness’, accuracy, and authority.

In Chapter 23, *Redesigning the Vox Pop: Civic Rituals as Sites of Critical Reimagining*, McVeigh-Schultz focuses on the ritual of the vox pop interview as a site of design intervention in order to discuss how citizens’ public representation can be empowered.

In Chapter 24, *Alternative Media Production, Feminism, and Citizenship Practices*, Reitsamer and Zobl demonstrate how transnational feminist alternative media create spaces of informal learning processes and networking, thus encouraging civic engagement on issues, such as neoliberal politics, feminism and migration.

In Chapter 25, *Alternative Media, the Mundane, and “Everyday Citizenship”*, Atton analyses the production of virtual content by ‘ordinary people’ as a primary form of everyday cultural production, a key component of citizenship as previous authors mentioned.

In Chapter 26, *Critical News Making and the Paradox of “Do-It-Yourself News”*, Ananny discusses the way journalism is performed nowadays and questions the manner in which news are produced (and still shaped by institutional forces) to be consumed by citizens.

In Chapter 27, *Social Media, Visibility, and Activism: The Kony 2012 Campaign*, Meikle explores the use of social media in activist campaigns and stresses the importance of visibility in understanding them and the role of citizens in formulating the ways they are explored.

Finally in Chapter 28, *A Digital Democracy or Twenty-First-Century Tyranny? CNN's iReport and the Future of Citizenship in Virtual Spaces*, Bissonette discusses the role and potential of citizen journalism as a means for remodelling democratic practices.

Significance for the state of research and practice

Matt Ratto and Megan Boler's edited volume comes out of a 2010 interdisciplinary conference convened by themselves and showcases examples and practices of civic activism in the areas of public policies, learning, culture, hacking, and the arts, including do-it-yourself media production and collaborative documentary making.

The authors of the 28 chapters elaborate on how we can invest in technology, internet and social media so as to transform traditional models of civic participation in politics and achieve mass mobilisation.

Collectively described as digital social innovation, the aforementioned uses of digital technologies contribute to supporting participatory models of governance, co-creating knowledge and solutions for a wide range of social needs and thus, more broadly speaking, to the need for harnessing collective intelligence for social good which is also mentioned in recent literature (NESTA, 2014).

Under this angle the book, by exploring the concepts of DIY citizenship and critical making evokes their participatory and bottom-up nature so as to enlighten new trends and perspectives for civic activism and politics and enable new modes of civic engagement. Such an effort, more broadly speaking, contributes to the vision articulated by one of the editors, "... to reconnect our lived experiences with technologies to social and conceptual critique" (Ratto and Ree, 2012).

The collective volume presents a series of small- and large-scale projects and initiatives that introduce new commons in collective participation, enabling to upgrade the role of citizens as co-producers of knowledge and potential collaborators of institutional decision-makers.

At the same time, the book offers a comprehensive, evidence-based approach on how mechanisms such as complex system modelling, crowdsourcing and participatory platforms can contribute to upgrade the way governments work and improve their relationship with citizens.

Across the book chapters, scholars, activists, artists from different backgrounds and geopolitical environments report on the ways they are critically taking stock of concrete cases to explore the combination of new digital tools with a culture and practice of sharing and co-producing that can move the role of citizens upward in the public sphere.

The co-production concept, in this respect, considers citizens beyond the beneficiaries of public services, as important agents of information that is required for administrative purposes as well as co-producers of certain public services themselves. Citizens, in this way, become sources of personal knowledge and first-hand 'user information' about society, uptaking at the same time a role of producers of the exact public services that they use (Eriksson, 2011).

This general trend has further reverberations on areas such as participatory design and urban planning, as discussed in the literature. According to Alevizou et al. (2013), for instance, urban theory has undergone a veritable normative turn as community-led, co-design or participatory design practices are centred on issues around democratisation and the right of citizens to participate in, and collaborate over, the design of their built or

physical environment and public services and to creatively contribute to social capital, economic sustainability and cultural well-being of neighbourhoods and local businesses.

In this context, this volume is opening the way for future research on benchmarking and evaluating new civic dynamics and their potential, with a view to identify enablers and challenges from a social, cultural, economic and political perspectives.

Significance for managers and instructors

Following up on the recent rise of notions such as participatory culture, DIY culture, co-creation, creative place-appropriation, everyday creativity, participatory planning, social production and social entrepreneurship, alongside the discussion regarding the different types of citizen empowerment and political potential (Reestorff et al., 2014), this collective volume explores in practical terms the role of citizens as civic and political doers and showcases a series of efforts where citizens, groups, formal and informal entities take in their hands their own future by developing and realising interventions in public matters.

The volume, in its entirety, touches upon a wide range of areas such as activism, media and arts, education, community building, news production and diffusion and enlightens the potential role of citizens as co-producers of knowledge and action, and of a broad participatory public sphere that extends beyond protest, voting, and advocacy, to the concept of critical making.

The collective volume, structured in four complementary parts and 28 chapters, is written by a diverse group of authors, scholars, artists and activists from areas, such as politics, culture, arts, and technology. It comprises a valuable asset for postgraduate and undergraduate students in political science, social science, media and technology studies interested in combining theoretical knowledge with practical information about trends and perspectives of active citizenship, the transformation of politics through digital tools and practices and how political relationships are being reconfigured and new modes of cooperation, deliberation and representation are emerging.

Policy makers and public officials, on the other side, can find in this volume many interesting instances of alternative politics practice, as well as concrete examples of citizen entities embracing, and in turn (re)making, the new political and technological environment.

Last but not least, the book is of equal interest for the general public and activists, providing valuable accounts of the ways in which social networking and mobile computing are empowering citizens in their relationship with traditional forms of political power.

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