anne galloway

DESIGN IN THE PARLIAMENT OF THINGS

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

LEAVE

SALE

SALE

SALE

SALE

AIR CONDITIONING GRILL

WINDOW CCTV

ATRIUM

LOGO SHOP SIGN FACADE WESTERN MODEL NOVA STREET LIGHT

NEON

SHOPPING CENTRE TELEPHONE NUMBER TRAFFIC LIGHTS

ROAD SIGN

STREET CORNER LEAVES DON'T WALK WALK GLASS R

SONIC AND TAILS DAIRY QUEEN

LEAVES BRANCHES

HOTDOG ICE CREAM MORE SEATING UPSTAIRS SPECIAL OFFER BRANCHES

SEGA DON'T WALK WALK MALE MODEL BILLBOARD FEMALE MODEL WINDOW BOXES RESTAURANT CHROME PILLAR NOODLE BAR

CANOPY NO U-TURN BOUTIQUE MINORI DON'T WALK WALK NO PARKING

SHELTER DIRECTION SIGNS COCA-COLA SIGN DIRECTION SIGNS TREE CALM

SUBWAY ENTRANCE VENDING MACHINES MAN IN HAT BEARD POSTERS CINEMA PLATE GLASS

BASEBALL CAP HUMAN RESOURCES SHOP ASSISTANT DAY OFF SPECTACLES FACES IN THE CROWD STU TOURIST DINERS

WHITE T-SHIRT YAKUZA DAUGHTER MOTHER YOUNG EXECUTIVE PONYTAIL WIDOW GREY HAIR CAMERA

ARY UNCOMFORTABLE MIDDLE-AGED EXECUTIVE GREY SUIT LATE ME WORRIED TALLY DEAF T-SHIRT

N PERSONA PHOTOCOPIER USERS LAPTOP COMPUTER HUBCAP CASUAL BLUE SUIT JEWELLERY ANXIOUS RU

SHOPPING BAG SHOES ENGINEER ROAD LUNCH HOUR SATCHEL JEANS

HOOLGIRL STICK CART

RED EXHAUST FUMES RIGHT TAXI QUALITY CONTROLLER GUTTER

UCKSACK LE ZEBRA STRIPES TRAINERS

TEENAGER SHOPPING BAG RO

IN-STORE DJ KHAKIS BRACELET BRIEFCASE

COURT SHOES HANDBAG WING MIRROR

TENNIS SHOES REFLECTION

BLACK SKIRT TAXI

"To assemble is one thing; to represent to the eyes and ears of those assembled what is at stake is another."

\- Bruno Latour, *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public*, 2005

from OBJECTS to THINGS

"Long before designating an object thrown out of the political sphere and standing there objectively and independently, the *Ding* or Thing has for many centuries meant the issue that brings people together *because* it divides them…" - *Bruno Latour*

Etymology of **thing**: Middle English, from Old English, thing, assembly; akin to Old High German *ding* thing, assembly, Gothic *theihs* time. The oldest assembly or parliament in the world is the Icelandic *Althing* (from 930 AD).

Latour warns us that reviving this sense of 'thing' is risky, not least because of its "uses and abuses" by Heidegger, but he needs it for his concept of "ecologies of practice" (see Isabelle Stengers' *Cosmopolitics*). This sense of assembly is also used to transform Deleuze & Guattari's "assemblage" into something politically and ethically actionable ("*assemblies* that can make sense of all those *assemblages*").

> "The point of reviving this old etymology is that we don't assemble because we agree, look alike, feel good, are socially compatible or wish to fuse together but because we are brought by divisive matters of concern into some neutral, isolated place in order to come to some sort of provisional makeshift (dis)agreement." – Bruno Latour

So the important thing to remember about assemblies or parliaments is that **convergence** is more highly valued than *unity*. The **process** of (be)coming together is more highly valued than the *product* of consensus. This is the world **in play**.

These assemblies should also be understood to comprise both humans and non-humans, thinking and doing, words and things. Although understood to be different, there is no assumption that these differences are opposite, opposing, or necessarily in competition.

Etymology of **object**: Middle English, from Medieval Latin *objectum,* from Latin, neuter of *objectus,* past participle of *obicere* to throw in the way, present, hinder, from *ob-* in the way + *jacere* to throw

Objective - of, relating to, or being an object, phenomenon, or condition in the realm of sensible experience independent of individual thought and perceptible by all observers **:** having reality independent of the mind

from
MATTERS-OF-FACT
to
MATTERS-OF-CONCERN

In an assembly - in a parliament of things - design is not objective, not given, not matter-of-fact. Instead, design is a **matter-of-concern** that requires the convergence of difference, of **taking into account** and **being accountable to** things that appear irrelevant or contrary to our personal interests.

from *REALPOLITIK* to *DINGPOLITIK*

"Because we ourselves are so divided by so many contradictory attachments that we have to assemble…" - *Bruno Latour*

German **realpolitik** refers to "practical politics, in the sense that ideas and theories are unimportant and can be disregarded in the conduct of political affairs." Or, in other words, "politics based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations."

Latour argues that this sort of practicality has led to, amongst other things, a politics in which we expect too much from our representatives. After all, how can we create 'the body politic' without reducing the interests and concerns of many by representing them by - or as - one?

He suggests, instead, a **dingpolitik**, where matters-of-fact are replaced with matters-of-concern.   Although mistakenly, I think, comparing this to object-oriented programming (his "object-oriented democracy"), and writing only from the perspective of contemporary European Union politics, I think that Latour offers us something of value here. Rather than bringing us together because we have the same opinions or answers, Latour assembles us in our shared concerns and questions. The risk here, of course, is that some people will not consider politics - assemblies and parliaments - to be matters of their (practical) concern.

(See also Alphonso Lingis' *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community,* Maurice Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community*, Zygmunt Bauman's *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* and *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, Giorgio Agamben's *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, *State of Exception* and *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.)

from REPRESENTATION to RE-PRESENTATION

"We are asking from representation something it cannot possibly give, namely representation without any re-presentation, without any provisional assertions, without any imperfect proof, without any opaque layers of translations, transmissions, betrayals, without any complicated machinery of assembly, delegation, proof, argumentation, negotiation and conclusion." – *Bruno Latour*

I do not wish to represent as matters-of-fact design or users or even the social and cultural. I want to see what happens when we re-present design, users, and even the social and cultural as matters-of-concern, as ***things in play***.

RE-PRESENTING DESIGN

invention & capitalism

speed & mobilisation

If we start by thinking about things in play, we must take into account and be accountable to unequal forces around and between us. All academic and design production takes place within the spaces of capitalism, where invention, innovation, originality - a.k.a. the new - are highly prized. And for the past few decades, these spaces have increasingly been characterised in terms of speed and risk, where mobilisation means to eliminate obstacles.

(See also: Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri's *Empire* and *Multitude*, Paul Virilio's *Speed and Politics*, Manuel De Landa's *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*, Joost Van Loon's *Risk in a Technological Age*, Keller Easterling's *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades*, Steve Graham's edited volume *Cities, War And Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics* and John McKenzie's *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*.)

The important thing, I think, to notice is that ***these spaces discourage assemblies***. They create and maintain oppositional binaries like work vs. play, thinking vs. making, us vs. other. To ***re-present*** design is, and will continue to be, a difficult endeavour. But I still want to trouble these categories and assumptions. I want to continue to imagine different possibilities.

RE-PRESENTING DESIGN

"My dreams and hopes are turned towards any process which would get people interested in the consequences coming together and being able to impose their questions, objections, counter-propositions. I do not ask that scientists as people become better or more enlightened, I ask that practices stop ignoring each other, stop creating practitioners judging away what escapes their question." - Isabelle Stengers, *A 'Cosmo-Politics' – Risk, Hope, Change*, 2002

For our purposes, I would put academics, designers and engineers beside her scientists. And I, for one, accept her challenge.

DESIGN IN THE PARLIAMENT OF THINGS

"How do we manage to bring in the relevant parties? How do we manage to bring in the relevant issues? What change does it make in the way people make up their mind to be attached to things?" – *Bruno Latour*

When we produce things, who are the relevant players (humans and non-humans) and what are the relevant issues? What would happen if we brought in the ***irrelevant***, the ***disabled***, all the outliers, all the anomalies, and gave them seats in our parliaments? What if we had to take into account and be accountable to that which is different from, or oppositional to, our interests? Would we produce old or new things? Would we understand each differently? Would we expect something different from them or ourselves?

DESIGN IN THE PARLIAMENT OF THINGS

"That's where the slowing down comes in – you can create new habits only by slowing down, because new habits also mean new feelings, new interests, new possibilities..."
– *Isabelle Stengers*

I believe in slowness and **becoming together**.

In a world of rapid prototyping and expectations of growth, I find it helpful to recall part of LEGO's research and design process: "We are not about rushing things because it frustrates the process of playful learning and developing…We stand for infinite options, unbounded imagination and curiosity."

If we slow down, get outside, on the ground, everyday, I think we can **witness things in play**, create provisional or situational assemblies, become accountable to our differences in tactics and strategies, and build new worlds.

THANK YOU

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