Publics, Participation and the Making of Umeå Pantry

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This paper is about the making of Umeå Pantry, a public participatory art festival performance on matters of concern regarding local food production. Participatory projects have been criticized for the way that researchers harness the creative outputs of collaborative work while safeguarding the underlying power structures. In addressing such critique this project focused on design's relational and socio-political form rather than the value-added object of design. We argue that a public orientation, as in the case of Umeå Pantry, involves a critical enquiry and reflexive approach, which goes beyond participatory design within institutional boundaries and that there is a need for informal tactics to navigate this open public space. Thus, the paper argues that public participatory design needs to rethink its sensibilities and aim for a greater emphasis on the relational and socio-political underpinnings of a project. Articulating notions such as an open program, movement, relational exchanges and infrastructure, we are trying to find out more about what it takes to prototype new participatory design practices engaging with public matters of concern.

Keywords **–** Food Production, Participatory Design, Publics, Social Design, Social Innovation.

Relevance to Design Practice **–** The study contributes to social design practice by providing insights on issue based participatory design with publics.

Citation: Pawar, A., & Redström, J. (2015). Publics, participation and the making of the Umeå pantry. *International Journal of Design*, 10(1), 73-84.

Introduction

We are interested in how established traditions of participatory design are being expanded and challenged by the, sometimes, radical appropriation and innovation that happen in socio-cultural contexts by place-based communities. In this paper we report on a study of prototyping a participatory practice. The site of the study was a public art festival performance in Umeå. We were interested in the use of participatory design in creating formats for staging public engagements. Our analysis of the success of this participatory design collaboration leads us to argue that the design methods and practices in the service of industrial production need to shift from studying people or bringing them into the design process to creating formats for staging public engagements.

Early participatory design studies in the Scandinavian countries (Bjerknes & Bratteteig, 1995; Bjerknes, Ehn, & Kyng, 1987) were typically situated within institutions. Proposing and prototyping shared artifacts, they sought to mediate between the practices, or 'language-games', of workers, designers and other stakeholders (Ehn, 2008). Since then a variety of formats have been skillfully applied to designing with people, among others 'co-design labs' (Binder & Brandt, 2008; Buur & Bodker, 2000) and toolkits for ideation and expression (Sander & Stappers, 2008). More recently, in the Atelier research project, the authors borrow a conceptual frame from Bruno Latour (2005) and use the term *thing* (collectives of humans and non-humans) to describe the work of putting together socio-material assemblies that stretch beyond institutional boundaries to open public spaces (Telier et al., 2011).

The verb *thinging* is of specific relevance to the project presented in this paper, as it addresses the work of designers as a performative staging of relations between people, activities, skills, knowledge and materials (Bjögvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2012; Binder, Brandt, Ehn, & Halse, 2015). This interest in performative practices of staging does not imply that participatory design is about extracting insights about the social world and the lives of the people. Consider, for instance, how the performative is framed in the work of Judith Butler (1988) on gender, such as that there are no gendered subjects, rather gendered subjects come into being through endless repeated 'doings'. Similarly design as a performative practice means that the world comes into being through the repeated practices, implicating both the designer and the other actors involved in the design work. Ezio Manzini suggests that collaborative social design projects need to contain sustainable qualities (Manzini & Tassanari, 2012). These qualities through the design activity are then deeply embedded in the social fabric of a place in such a way that they tend to "produce society" (Manzini, 2015). The staging aspect of the practice implies the necessary infrastructure needed for collective deliberation and to cultivate the emerging publics (Ehn, 2008).

Social innovation and design have played an important role in fostering the development of localities through collaborative design activities with citizens and other stakeholders. For example the DESIS (Design for Social Innovation Towards Sustainability)

Received Sept. 28, 2015; **Accepted** Feb. 5, 2016; **Published** April 30, 2016.

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lab network consists of projects such as Amplifying Creative Communities in New York City, The Neighbourhood in Malmö and Creative Citizens in Milan which emphasize the place making which is based on the embedded practices of creative communities (Meroni, 2007; Manzini, Jégou, & Penin, 2008). Further, the attention to a place in these projects emphasizes the situated nature of design work. The Neighbourhood Living Lab (Malmö) is worth mentioning in this regard, as it describes its practice as rooted in artful enquiries, borrowing the term from Schön (1983) to imply a reflection in action approach rather than reliance on particular methods (Ehn, Nilsson, Topgaard, 2014). With regard to food production, a number of design projects have supported needs of growers, consumers, rural economies and communities of place (Meroni, 2007; Cantù, 2012). The social impact of such work is seen not only as a growing set of hybrid relationships from solidarity groups, farmer markets, collaborative services to community food production, as well as providing a stage for grounding people in common purpose, nurturing a sense of responsibility to a place and encourage mutual learning. Our motivation for attaching our work to the social design discourse is to focus on the latter set of qualities and an interest in exploring how design practices can play a part in making a response-able civic society.

The study presented here is an account of organizing a participatory art performance called Umeå Pantry, the purpose of which was to make matters of concern on food production public. The Umeå Pantry attempts to prototype a situated social design practice and in doing so reflects on the complexities of participatory design with publics. The authors of this paper are design practitioners who were embedded in a multidisciplinary team that organized the events. The authors' position in this paper moves back and forth between that of researchers giving an account of this study and that of belonging to the Umeå Pantry's organizational team; note that these positions influence each other. The next section explains the methodology used followed by fieldwork investigations that sensitized the team of the key matters of concern. After a description of open tactics used in the making of the events, the section Pantry Talks reflects on the situated actions and its implications for participatory social design. We conclude with reflections on the challenges for participatory design with publics and the future scope of investigations.

Research Approach

As this study was a public facing art event, we did not want to reinforce traditional market relations and private enterprise by suggesting solutions. The public orientation embodies a commitment to socially sustainable systems of food production, and more importantly, widens the scope of concerns by an emphasis on the public, as opposed to purely economic issues. It extends an invitation to a heterogeneous public including academics, activists, and practitioners alike to rethink 'matters of fact' as universal categories (e.g. consumer, producer, commodity, urban, rural, private, public) and opens up for exploring the role food can play in their lives and in making a place. The heterogeneous public here refers to communities of place (located in and around the city of Umeå) and also a notion of the public described by Dewey (1927) as a confederation of bodies that temporarily form and dissolve around an issue. The phrase 'matters of concern' is distinguished from 'matters of fact', in such a way that the matters of concern allow for a diversity of issues to emerge and be debated and, in turn, constitute their own publics (Latour, 2005). As Bruno Latour has said:

> 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. (p.19).

Pelle Ehn (2005) refers to these participatory acts as *public things*. He goes on to argue that it is not enough to just gather people but, rather, imperative to question the socio-political dimensions of how the project is done. The Umeå Pantry engages in an enquiry, which draws together practices that are fragile, agonistic and often inconclusive, and makes them public. Through its various physically engaging (performative) activities in-situ such as the experience of harvesting, foraging, cooking and critical dialogues, the project intends to support the relational and socio-political program of public things. The political qualities of the work advocate pluralism and agonistic democracy (Mouffe cited in DiSalvo, Clement, & Pipek, 2012). This means the designers and participants are both involved as political actors in this situation with the intention of influencing the context of Umeå. The relational implies the interactions between people who are assembled as part of the events and the mutual learning they experience.

In terms of a basic approach, we have been combining a range of methods, ranging from enacting participant-observation to more experimental design interventions (cf. the notion of design research in the 'field' as discussed in Koskinen, Zimmerman, Binder, Redström, & Wensveen, 2011). For instance, fundamentals of participant observation (Button, 2000; Wasson, 2000) formed a framework for how the authors worked as members of the organizing team for the Umeå Pantry. The method entails the researcher to take an internal stand towards the meaningfulness of ongoing activities within a culture and reflect on these before, during and after participating. However, the following reflections are not generalizable to theories of culture or practice but instead are specific to the socio-cultural codes of the people involved.

Rather than applying more formal strategies, universal methods or toolkits, the inherent complexity and ambiguity of the project and its setting led us to adopt informal tactics when

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designing with communities. This poses certain methodological challenges and involves a continuous process of reflecting and communicating findings to a wider audience during and after the project. As such, this project is part of a bigger inquiry into what it takes to prototype new design practices, including both methodological and theoretical concerns.

Contextual Background

The context for this event is Umeå, Sweden and its surroundings. Historically, Umeå has been urbanized as a result of growing industries (e.g. mining, forestry, and hydropower), requiring larger workforce and migration from rural areas. Unlike many other cities in this part of Sweden that grew around a certain industry, Umeå is largely oriented around regional functions in healthcare and governance, as well as the university. Food production is still spread across the sparsely populated municipality. An increase in urban population and consequent urban lifestyle has made food production and consumption an important issue for environmental sustainability. The threat of climate change is predicted to raise temperatures in the northern parts of Sweden where Umeå is located. Further, the human mobility from rural to urban areas has led to the abandonment of small towns and encouraged new growing practices around the city, for example, peri-urban agriculture, defined as food production within and around cities. The aging farm population is also a concern for the future of food production in the region. Simultaneously, indigenous occupations such as reindeer herding and foraging in the forests continue to be practiced. In all, this makes food a matter of serious concern, not only for select groups like farmers and the government but also the public.

More recently, experiments with across-the-board adaptations to agriculture, education, energy, and economy for a sustainable future city are in progress, sometimes referred to as the transition movement (Hopkins, 2008). This movement is also visible in Umeå, driven by activist and politically active communities concerned about food issues. For example, Umeå is known to have a large number of vegans, whose socio-environmental ethics is influential in the city (Larsson, Rönnlund, Johansson, & Dahlgren, 2003). Urban gardening communities who often rally for sustainable changes in the city bolster the practice of farming in and around Umeå. In spite of this, the membership in these communities remains low and limited to the same individuals. Another hindering tendency is for these communities to become closed in, captive to their own singular activity such that they are unable or unwilling to evolve their practice in response to changes in the city. In this setting, the participatory art event also hopes to highlight a multitude of existing food-related practices and reconnect individuals and communities.

The Umeå Pantry event was created through collaboration between artist-collective Myvillages, artist-run Verkligheten Gallery and public art museum Bildmuseet, mandated by the Umeå municipality. The main idea behind the Umeå Pantry, as proposed by Myvillages, was to highlight local food through the construction of a communal pantry, around which different events could be organized. The event was a non-profit initiative that ran for five weeks and was supported by donations of food and volunteers. The promotional website (Umeå Pantry, 2014) for the event states:

> …Umeå Pantry portrays a city's local food. What grows in and around Umeå? Who are the producers and how do we get hold of their produce? If we were to create a common pantry in central

Figure 1. The Umeå Pantry serves as a backdrop for dialogues on food production.

> Umeå, what would it contain? What we strive for is to create a real pantry, a room filled with the foods produced in Umeå and its vicinity. We will follow and document the trajectory of every food item and share the stories with the visitors of the festival.

The organizational team for the Umeå Pantry consisted of a multidisciplinary group of artists, a designer, agricultural scientist, curator, human geographer and food growers. The authors were invited into this group as designers. Their role as part of this group, referred to as the design team or team in the rest of the paper, was not well defined at the onset of the project and involved a multitude of skills and capacities from designing, planning, hosting to facilitating and making the event infrastructure. The design team exercised a fair degree of freedom in developing the program for the events in counsel with Myvillages. That is not to say that the collaboration within the team was free of conflict, especially since the organizational team was appropriating a space claimed by artist collectives who had a veto in all decisions.

The participating publics in the events, although expected to be mostly sustainability-minded communities, was a hybrid mix of experts, activists, students, academics, various kind of food growers and people in the business of food. The festival was promoted through posters around the city, word of mouth and social media. However, since most of the activities were in open public spaces, each event attracted a significant number of casual drop-ins.

In the Field

The design team organized field trips to producers to research the context of agriculture in the region. Simultaneously hosting activities such as a bread-baking day and urban foraging walks to invite interested individuals with a strong concern for food into a dialogue with the team. The practical purpose of these field trips was to ask for donations for the communal pantry and to invite the producers to contribute in the joint enquiry on food production in the region.

During the field visits, the design team was surprised by the variety of reasons people took up farming, from an impulse for an agrarian life to self-sufficiency. The ingenuity of the farmers was noticeable in the way they made best of the resources available to them. One of the farmers had opened up her farm for public harvesting, some were experimenting with cooperative farming and others growing heirloom seeds, to give some examples. The field trips gave an insight into such highly localized practices, some of which would feed into the debates during the events.

The aim was not to make an exhaustive survey through the field trips; instead, it brought together the farmers in dialogue with the team and sensitized us to the concerns around food production. The team learnt to appreciate and respect the farmer's way of being, and the farmers appreciated the work we were trying to do, which they thought was overly challenging but important. This reciprocal exchange was made apparent from an email received from a farmer, which read as follows:

> "I actually learned a lot about my farm and what we do here from talking to you […] as you know I've thought a lot about small-scale food production and was trying to be explicit about my beliefs and what is needed for me to get involved in your project".

We also encountered farmers who refused to collaborate without compensation even though the events were not for profit, which we duly recognized as important to value their labor and time. On the other hand, some food growers donated plenty of food and volunteered their own time to the events because they were keen to engage in the public dialogue. Often we bought a token amount of produce to thank them for sharing their stories.

We started our enquiry using cultural probes based on an approach proposed by Bill Gaver, in the form of booklets with open questions (Gaver, Dunne, & Pacenti, 1999). It was soon evident to us that the farmers did not respond well to this format. After a few such trials, we settled on the format of a walk because the farmers were more expressive when walking the land and pointing out objects of interest. During the walk, we asked open questions such as: how is it to live in a rural farm? What is your main produce? Can you show us what might be worth taking pictures of?

This is a good example of when situated actions challenged the assumed universalism of design methods. At the end of the field visits the producers who were eager to be a part of this joint enquiry were invited to help us give form to this event, both at a programmatic and at a content level.

The exchanges between us, the public, the site and other objects took shape as walking-together, eating-together, making-together, trading-together activities. In essence, the process of conducting fieldwork was understood as assembling the socio-material while at the same time fostering a set of relations and common commitments. These relations, we anticipated would be important in creating trust and commitment to the enquiry, withstand agonistic discourses and further foster partnerships after the festival was long over.

The fieldwork was not peripheral—merely leading us to the public festival performance, rather, it was an integral part of the Umeå Pantry where the emphasis of the design work was in the movement of bodies, actions and the relational qualities of doing this work. Thus how and who we invited to participate, where and who we decided to visit and how we were implicated in these relationships were constantly evaluated.

The Open Program, Movement, Infrastructure and Exchanges

Below, we introduce the key notions of an *open program, movement, infrastructure and relational exchanges* that became a way to articulate the participatory design practice in the making of the Umea Pantry. Reflecting on the team's tacit and situated actions developed these notions; Argyris and Schön (1996) would

have called them theories-in-use. Theories-in-use are those that can be inferred from the action, as compared to espoused-theories, which are based on formal or idealized claims.

Open program

The notion of a program referred here is close to the everyday use of the term i.e. programming a festival as well as the notion of the programmatic in experimental design research (cf. Redström, 2011). In particular, we made use of programs to direct unfolding design activities, as opposed to a research structure starting from a particular question or hypothesis. In the Umeå Pantry, we worked with an open program (cf. cross programming as discussed in Tschumi, 1996), a framework within which people could juxtapose their own programs and participatory activities; such a program permitted a discursive arena within which the design activities were positioned. This became an entry point for the participants to claim ownership of the events, as volunteers with delegated responsibilities and more than that as advisors and initiators of activities within the festival.

The participants who would be presenting, hosting or demonstrating during the Umeå Pantry were grouped based on complementary interests or practices and assigned a theme. For example, the team chose the theme 'Farming and Landscape' as it could bring together urban and rural farmers and 'Why Food Matters' was selected to bring together sustainability activists and other critical thinkers. Few of the themes were named so that they could become carriers for a conversation around a locally relevant issue. For example 'The Taste of Transparency' as a theme was thought of as a critique of the long (unsustainable) food supply chains and the imports driven food industry in the region.

In this way, the open program was realized through five (weekly) themes or thematic enquiries derived from the experiences in the field and the interest of communities or individuals to participate. Each thematic enquiry also encouraged the public to visit various sites inside the city besides rural farms and forested areas. The themes were named such that they would be open to interpretation and at the same time concentrate the enquiry around certain common concerns:

1. Farming and Landscape: The site of food production and the rural and urban farming landscape as a field of enquiry.
2. The Taste of Transparency: The transparency of the food supply chain as a field of enquiry.
3. Why Food Matters: The political, economic, environmental, social and ethical concerns of food production and consumption as a field of enquiry.
4. The Art of Transformation: Cultural aspects of food including domestic techniques of food preparation as a field of enquiry.
5. Pantry Manifesto: A joint reflection session to gather the matters of concern as a manifesto.

Movement

A rhythm was followed throughout the event: food collection during the weekdays and community cooking on the weekends. The food collection entailed a trip to the local farms (or sometimes forests) to harvest produce. The weekend cooking was accompanied by presentations and activities, for example cooking workshops, live demonstrations and harvest parties. The combination of collective cooking and discussions was a signature ritual introduced in the project and named *Pantry Talks*.

The weekly rhythm of the project allowed the team to improvise activities in response to emergent situations; for instance, the weekend cooking menu was planned depending on the food donations and the harvesting activities over the week. Changes to the program could also be made contingent on interest shown by others to host events. These rhythms characterized the movement of the design team and the participants through the festival but more broadly were also synchronous to local food production cycles.

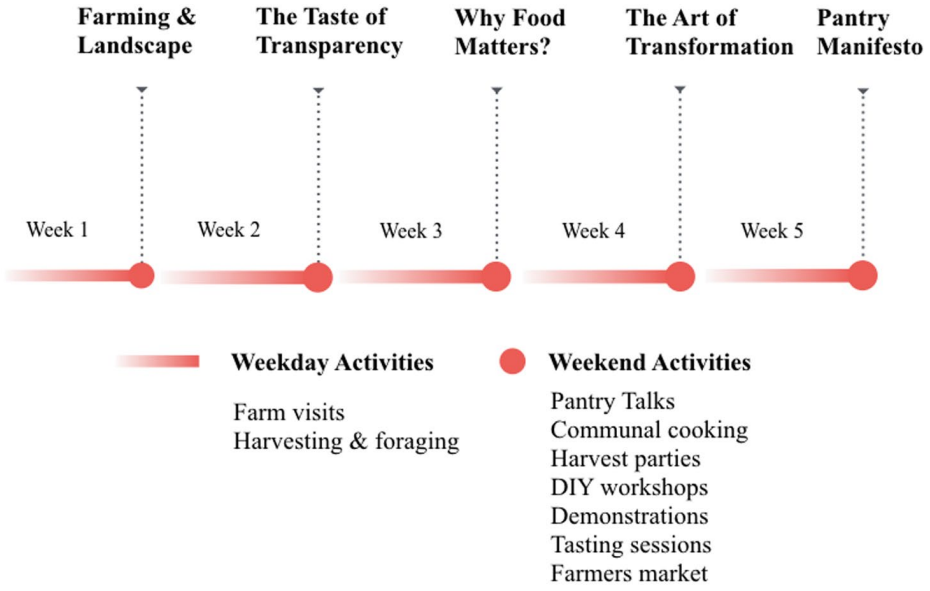


Figure 2. The diagram shows the weekly activities in the Umeå Pantry.

Figure 3. The picture above shows a potato-harvesting field visit as part of the weekday activities.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure that was central to the staging of these events was a communal pantry filled with food grown in the region. As the food was brought in the source and name of the producer was listed on the facade of the structure. In effect, it served as a common object in between the publics. The pantry itself was retrofitted inside a semi-covered shed with a setup of presentation equipment, which was used for the Pantry Talks.

The objects and spaces were adaptable in use and designed as open invitations to the public. For instance, it was decided not to have a door so that the pantry activities would be accessible to all passers-by. It was also important that the event space could host different sized publics. The kitchen and dining furniture were designed to be mobile so the events could be held at different sites.

Relational Exchanges

The weekdays started with field trips with activities such as collecting-together, harvesting-together, and foraging-together. As previously mentioned, communities and individuals could host their own activities fitting the themes. For example, the local urban gardening collective organized a gardening workshop and harvest party at their urban garden within a public park. As part of the event, the gardeners shared their program of the transition town movement (Hopkins, 2008) with the public while harvesting the vegetables they had been growing all summer.

The Pantry Talks were hosted on the weekend at the end of the weekly thematic enquiries. These were material-discursive (cf. Barad, 2003) events where the heterogeneous publics gathered along with their matters of concern. The Pantry Talks took various formats from open conversations, food tasting and demonstrations to trading events. To host an agonistic space for these talks required curatorial discretion from the team in inviting experts with a programmatic agenda and making choices about which programmatic agendas to juxtapose. For instance placing an animal husbandry scientist in conversations with a sheep farmer at a Pantry Talk on the theme of The Taste of Transparency.

The invited experts were placed in conversation with other experts and the publics along with the materials gathered during the field trips. These materials ranged from edibles, equipment, seeds, plants, photographs, videos, books and so on. The back talk of materials facilitated by the joint story telling by the publics created a rich dialogic space. In this hybrid forum (Callon, 2009), abstract concepts such as sustainability and taste were tied down to ordinary objects and experiences of the people owning the concern. Due to the repeating nature of the activities over multiple weeks, the team observed that the people participating in the event were getting to know each other within the bounds of the event and also outside. The next section of the paper takes up a few detailed examples of the Pantry Talks.

Pantry Talks

The four episodes selected below from the Pantry Talks exemplify the relational public thing.

Episode 1:

This Pantry Talk was on the theme of Taste of Transparency and it questioned the transparency in the food supply chain. A design team member co-hosted this talk with the students of Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts. To investigate the supply chain the ensemble visited a range of food production sites including farms and a fish saltery (where fishing and processing of fish takes place). The group wished to nurture an ongoing relationship with the production site and producers before buying their produce.


(a)

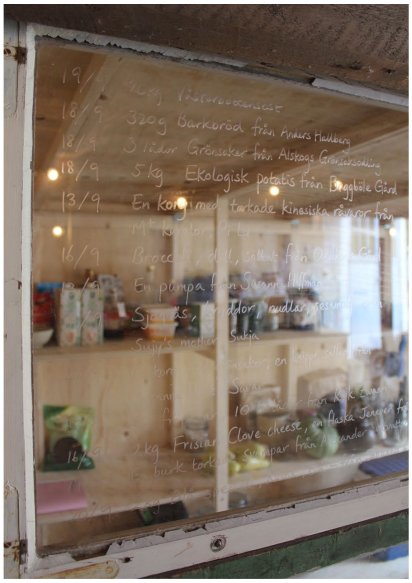

(b)

Figure 4. (a) The pantry with donated foods (b) Listing of food along with names of the producers.

Figure 5. A gardening workshop and harvesting party hosted by local urban gardeners.


(a)


(b)

Figure 6. (a) The culinary school students visiting fishermen (b) The students presenting the food to the public.

The Pantry Talks was organized around the preparing, cooking and serving of a meal along with anecdotes the students had brought back from their field trip. The performative serving up of the meal prompted the participants to rethink their role in the food supply chain and ask the question, what defines good taste? The discussion that ensued examined how as consumers we could change our conception of good taste to accommodate socio-environmental values.

Episode 2:

This Pantry Talk was about rearing sheep in Sweden. In this talk, multiple views on sheep farming were discussed through the materials and practice of a sheep-husbandry researcher from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, a sheep farmer and the design team who had been documenting the rearing of a sheep. The pictorial documentation of a sheep's upbringing alongside quantitative data on sheep rearing in Sweden became the setting for this dialogue. The debate centered on how the sheep was articulated from different perspectives as a commodity, food and an animal. Eventually, our own selves and our relationship with food replaced sheep rearing as a subject of enquiry.

Episode 3:

The week themed The Art of Transformation hosted the Pantry Talks as a participatory exhibit and market. The exhibit let people try out domestic techniques of food preparations and processing like making butter and pickles. The exhibit also presented alternative foods such as bread made out of birch bark, called barkbröd, which was created in response to crop failure or famine around Umeå in the past. The bark bread raised the discussion on the relation between food and human survival and hunger.

These demonstrations were accompanied by stories of how the foods and practices were linked to knowledge and sensibilities of place and environment. The edible matter (such as the preserved food) enabled a discussion on the relationship between everyday (domestic) culture and agriculture and what it means to cultivate a place.

Episode 4:

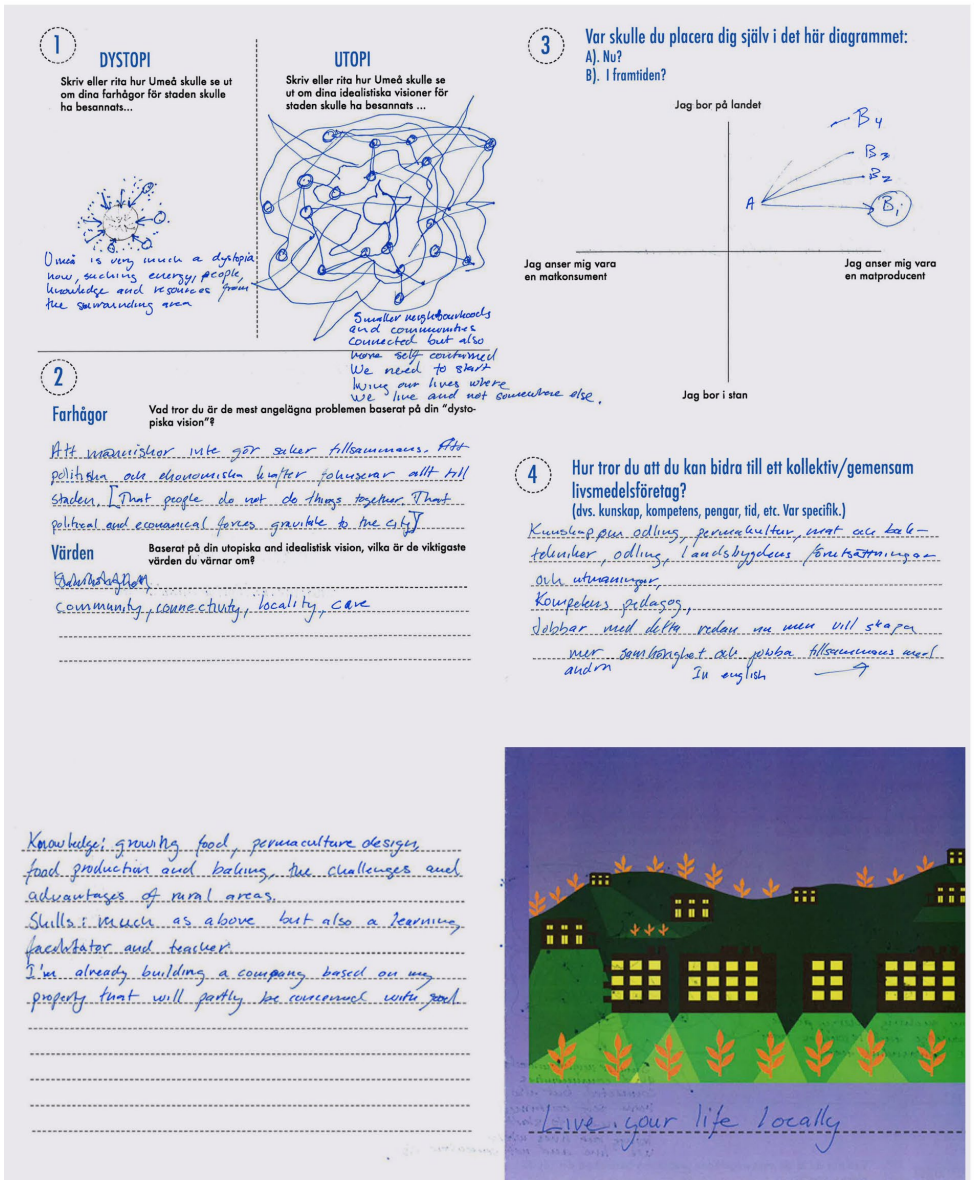
The Pantry Talk for the last week's theme Pantry Manifesto engaged the publics in a joint critical reflection. The design team's aspirations with this session were to encourage community stewardship around matters of concern that had emerged during the festival. The session was organized as a discussion on Umeå as a possible sustainable-utopia. Individual reflections were put down in a booklet in the form of a manifesto, which was then shared and discussed.

The questions in the booklet encouraged the participants to reflect on the events and address concerns they thought were important. After articulating their existing knowledge and skills, they identified the capabilities they needed in future to work on these concerns. For example, a participant acknowledged her skills in permaculture farming, baking and a keen interest in rural development, declaring teaching and working for her own company (promoting permaculture) as her future goals.

The session included an evaluation of the festival by the participants. One of the quotes in the manifesto read: "Umeå is very much a dystopia now, sucking energy, people, knowledge and

Figure 7. A farmer demonstrating how to make homemade bread and butter.

(a)



(b)

Figure 8. (a) A participant explains his vision for food production around Umeå (b) Pages from a sample manifesto booklet.

resources from the surrounding areas […] we need to start living our lives where we live and not somewhere else". The following discussions on rural-urban relations raised the question of the politics of holding the Umeå Pantry in the city while the matters of concern were acutely felt in the rural areas. The critique of the very site of the project positively appraised the agonistic space created in the Umeå Pantry and the team recognized the need for considering the politics of site as part of the design process.

Just as the bark bread inspired a discussion on human survival and practices of sheep rearing inspired a discussion on the perception of animals as food, the socio-material things opened up a discourse and encouraged the public imagination of the future of food production in Umeå. Though to shift the collective imaginary of food culture is a slow process of sharing experiences, language and practice and would take far longer than a single festival.

Concluding Reflections

During the Umeå Pantry, we investigated the situated practice of public participatory design. Our enquiry began with questioning the capability of participatory design as it is practiced within organizations to handle the uncertainty of design with heterogeneous publics. This section will summarize the reflections from the study based on the reflexive action of the researcher, highlighting the priorities, challenges and limitations for public participatory design.

The study illustrates an idea of the public thing as a series of relational events. The weekend Pantry Talks being the major events supplemented by nomadic activities on the weekdays. To participate in a public thing means to do so from within the flow of activities, in correspondence with others and the matters of concern. The switching of roles where the audience hosted events while the design team participated or the relational exchanges serve as examples to the richness of this correspondence.

In this prototyped practice, we observe a number of nonconformities from participatory design within institutional boundaries. The sequential understanding of design-time followed by a use-time in typical design projects is problematized. The notion of an open program allows for the appropriation of the event in design and in use by the publics. In this case the priority shifts to the movement from one event to the other and how it draws together the socio-material. Further, relational exchanges are honed towards the opening up of the matters of concern, not to create solutions but to reveal possibilities, spark imagination and provide an orientation to the publics.

Key challenges for designers in such projects are the blurring of disciplinary boundaries and a distribution of agency. However, we maintain that the designer can still exercise deliberateness in the design of the relational exchanges and infrastructure that builds a specific movement in the program. For instance, apart from the movement from one event to the other, we also consider the events leading to a political rhetoric in the form of a manifesto to be a designed move. Another challenge is that of communicating a practice in its making. Even though the participatory project is staged in context, the designers are more than often part of institutions with their own structures and devices. The limitation (or opportunity) of a public participatory design project hinges on this dichotomy between an open programmatic agenda and an agenda forwarded by institutional programs. The designer composes a *thing* in situ starting out with institutionalized habits, methods and devices and working his way to prototyping a situated practice, perhaps a hybrid created in-between this dichotomy. The objects of this inventive practice are often ephemeral in the sense that they are rapid constructions made to work in the setting, but may not have a family resemblance to the objects of institutionalized practices. Evaluating this experimental practice and its objects falls back to the institutions with standardized assessment measures. This increases the responsibility of the participatory designer to make translation devices (models, diagrams, sketches, film etc.) that bridge this language gap. In the Umeå Pantry project, this took the shape of impromptu information sharing sessions, blogging and video documentaries. Deeper analysis of such devices would be the scope of another paper.

Collaboration between the author-designers and the artist collectives also deserves a remark. As mentioned earlier in the paper the design team members being multi-disciplinary and highly committed acted as catalysts for the event. This multidisciplinary collaboration introduced new hybrid practices at the confluence of various disciplines, actors and sites. The common ground for all of us was the idea of a participatory event even though it was contended i.e. to the artists it was associated with dialogic and relational art (Kester, 2004; Bourriaud, 2002) and for the designers as participatory design. Even as disciplinary practices of participatory art and design blended through the festival they were generative and suggestive of what participatory design with publics might be.

In the Umeå Pantry project we do not see results as immediately embodied products or services, however, the overflows (Callon, 2009) from the public assemblies create resonances in the communities and new programs are started elsewhere. For instance, new study groups (groups of people coming together to discuss a text or engage in a common activity) have emerged from the festival and a participating collective has adopted the format of the Pantry Talks to organize public engagement activities. We hope that with time the alignment of the disparate participating actors may result in stable relationships and shared boundary objects (Bowker & Star, 2000). Though evaluating the project solely on these outcomes is to undermine the relational value that it generated.

In light of participatory projects being criticized for harnessing the creative rewards of collaborative work while safeguarding the underlying power structures, the prototyped practice shifts our attention from the value-added object of design to its relational and socio-political form. We argue that a public orientation as in the case of Umeå Pantry involves a critical enquiry and reflexive approach, which goes beyond participatory design within institutional boundaries and uses informal tactics to navigate this open public space. This is demonstrated in the

project by articulating notions of the open program, movement, relational exchanges and infrastructure, and we think the experiences gained can be relevant to any participatory social design or public engagement project from open innovation initiatives to citizen science.

Acknowledgments

We thank the artist Wapke Feenstra from Myvillages who created the original artwork for the Umeå Pantry, curator Cecilia Andersson and assistant curator Sujy Lee from Bildmuseet (Umeå), representatives from Verkligheten Gallery (Umeå), Pavlos Georgiadis, Susanne Hjort, Tobias Westerlund and the sponsors of the project. Further, thanks to fellow members of the organizational team and volunteers, the farmers, urban gardeners and the public who donated food and actively participated in the event.

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